



# Metaphor as a Method

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# Short introduction into Semiotics

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Semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign. A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it. Thus semiotics is in principle the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie. If something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth; it cannot in fact be used 'to tell' at all.

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Umberto Eco

# Semiotics is Foresight is

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the study of signs and sign systems, the investigation of apprehension, prediction and meaning; how it is that we apprehend the world, make predictions, and develop meaning

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# The importance of context

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<http://www.care2.com/ecards/build/1/4841>

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# Context is (in semiotics)

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- n Richards defined context as the “cluster of events that occur together.” Context is the whole field of experience that can be connected with an event—including thoughts of similar events.
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# Sign and Metaphor

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n A sign is everything which can be taken as significantly **substituting for something else**.

U. Eco

n Thinking is radically metaphoric. To think of anything is to take it **as of a sort**.

I.A.Richards

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# Three traps

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- n If a sign does not have context yet, we may tend to interpret the sign relying on its immediate surroundings.
  - n If the meaningful context of the sign is unknown, we have to create one for interpretation and we do it relying on our own Background, but this may be inaccurate.
  - n If people have different Backgrounds the *meaning* of the same *word* can be different, but one presupposes, that it is not...
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# The virtue and curse of metaphor

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- n It always has its context with it!
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# We are thinking in metaphors...

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- n Different metaphors create different associations, mental maps...
- n ... so they create different (re)search methods...
- n ...and different focuses.

*Using (unconsciously) only one metaphor,  
we can miss something important!*

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# If you have certain research idea...

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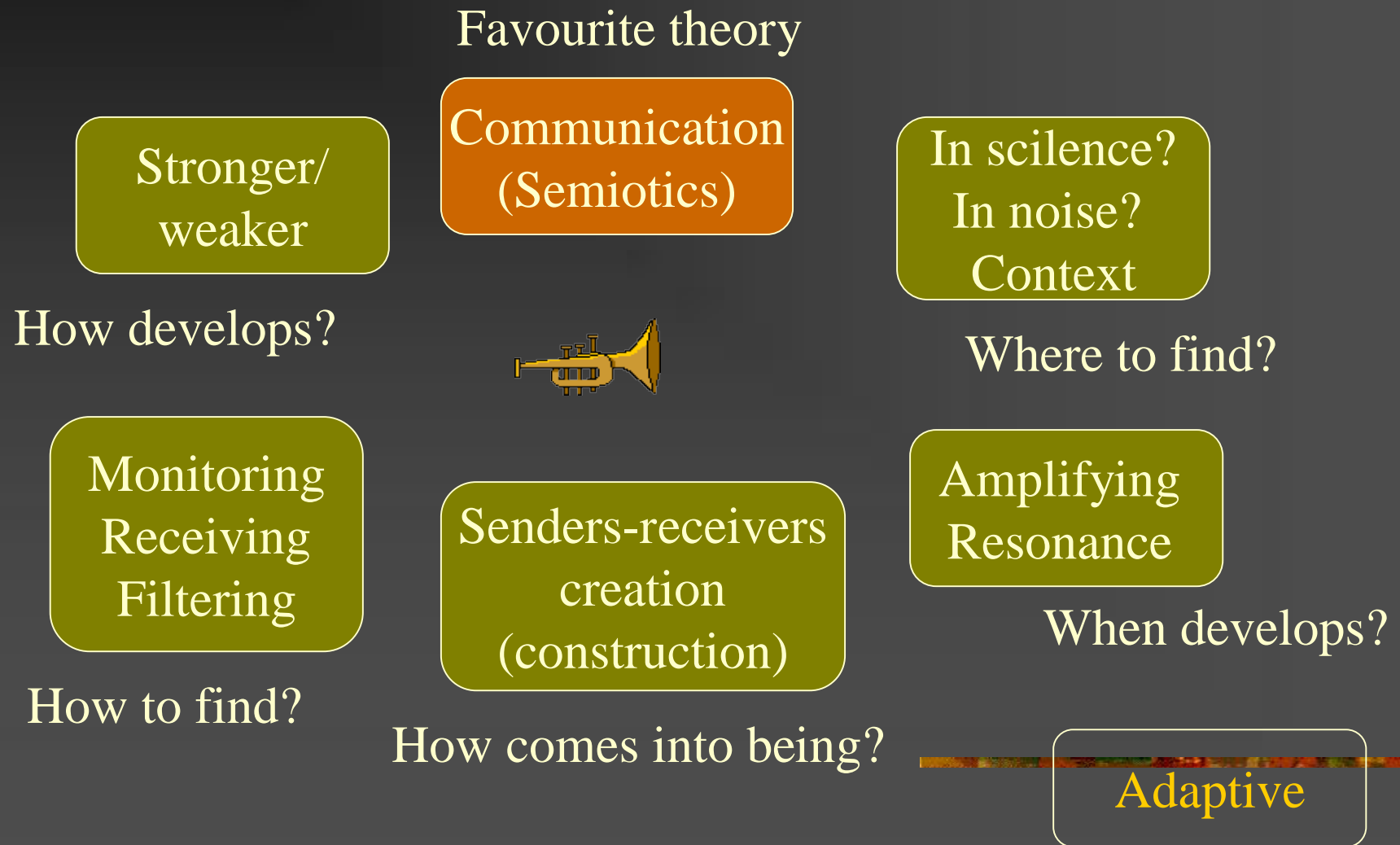
n ...there is always a question, how to approach:

n What theory to choose?

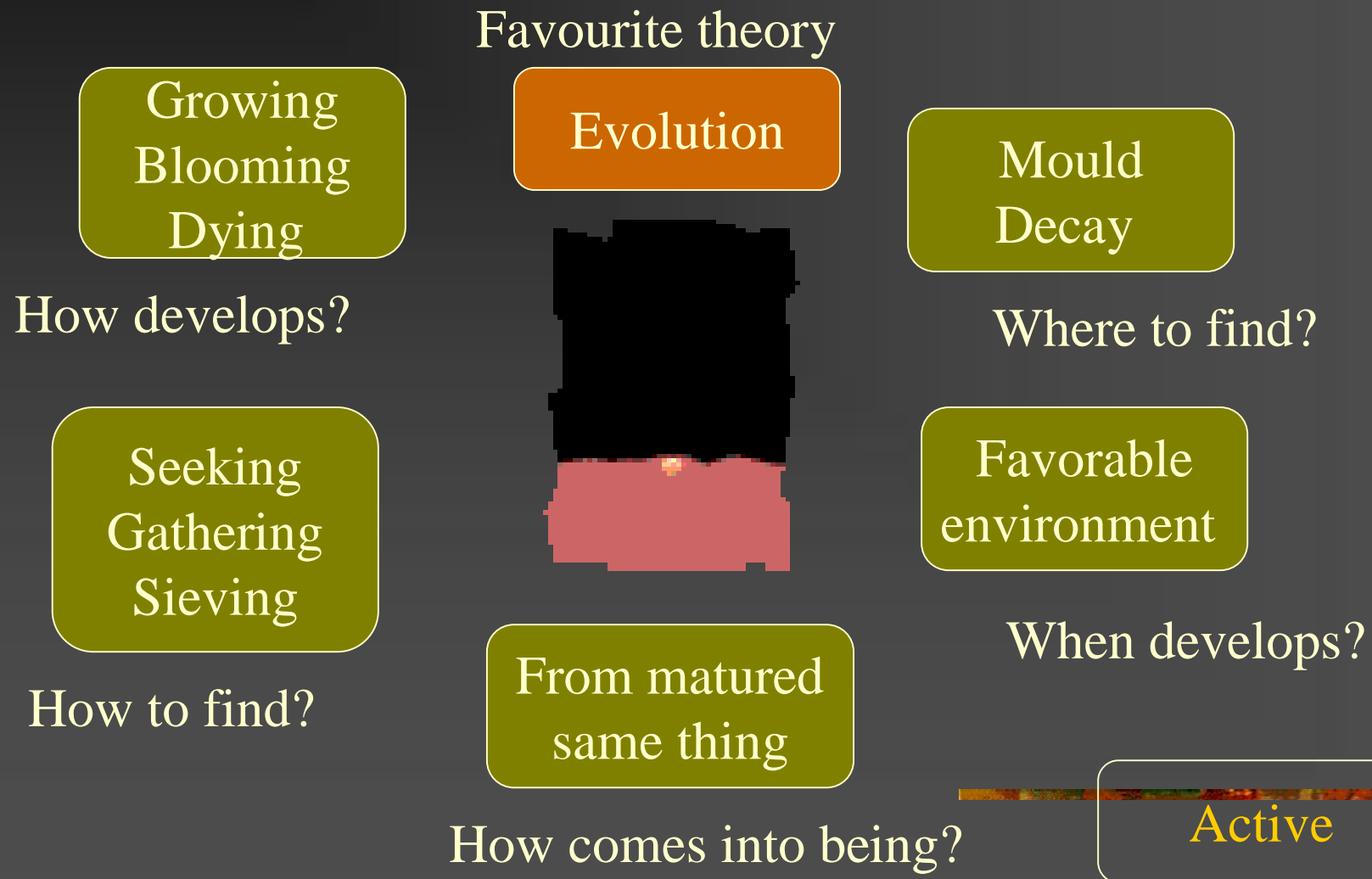
n What methods to use?

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# Metaphor creates its own Mental Map and Method 1



# Metaphor creates its own Mental Map and Method 2



# Metaphor creates its own Mental Map and Method 3

Favourite theory

Chaos

What to find?

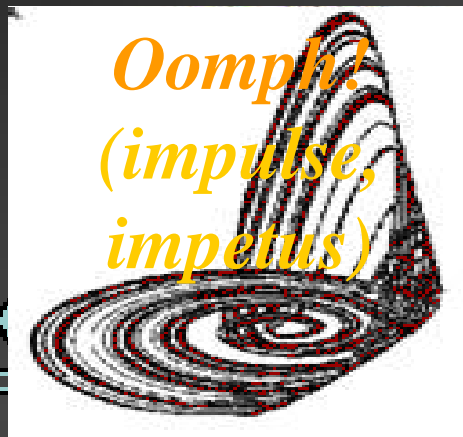
System of ties  
Sensitivity

Spreading

How develops?

Relevance to  
certain net  
(potentially  
arousing)

How to find?



Relations between nodes

Relevant stimulus  
(touch)

When develops?

Is inside  
potentially

How comes into being?

Proactive

# How to find the right approach?

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- n Easy to find methaphor?

- n Metaphor -> mental map -> theory -> methods

- n Easy to find theory?

- n Theory -> metaphor -> mental map -> methods

- n Avoid metaphoric trap!

- n Come up with another metaphor

- n Draw mental map

- n Check differences and if needed, combine

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# “Oomph” method

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- n What is the area of interest?
  - n Describe the system and ties, relations
  - n Describe the sensitivity (potential)
  - n What could be important impulses? (fly and spider)
  - n Is the fly out there?...
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# Main difference:

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- n Looking for the node and seeking meaning  
– signal, seed
  - n Looking for the net and potential – oomph
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# Words have no meaning...

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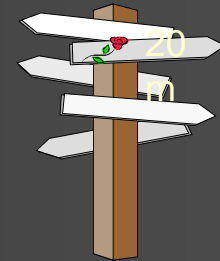
- n Because words are arbitrary symbols, they have no inherent meaning. Like chameleons that take on the coloration of their environment, words take on the meaning of the context in which a person encounters them. Most words, as they pass from context to context, change their meanings.

I. A. Richards

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# Three kinds of representations by Charles S. Peirce

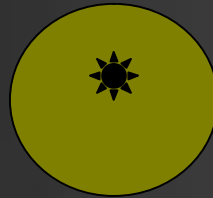
- n Those whose relation to their objects is a mere community in some quality, and these representations may be termed *Likenesses* or *Icons*
- n Those whose relation to their objects consists in a correspondence in fact, and these may be termed *Indices* or *Signs*
- n Those the ground of whose relation to their objects is an imputed character, which are the same as general signs, and these may be termed *Symbols*



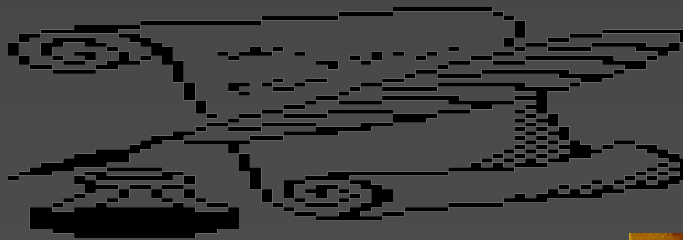
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# Context building 1

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# Context building 2



# Context building, steps 1

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1. Visualise the signal and draw a picture of it.
  2. Draw the environment (context) where it could grow.
  3. Discuss the picture (in its metaphorical state) with others, to improve the environment (context) and relations between elements of the picture.
  4. Discuss different possibilities of development (changes in the environment and changes of the signal) and draw them down.
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# Context building, steps 2

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5. Discuss different meanings of the elements of the pictures to reach common interpretation.
  7. Write down the stories the pictures are telling.
  8. Find similarities and differences in stories.
  9. If some stories point to the same phenomenon, look for missing elements in one or another and make supplements. (Stories that point on different phenomenon can be alternative scenarios)
  10. Write down complete stories based on common interpretation and understanding.
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