



POLICY DESIGN: WHAT WORKS

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POLICY DESIGN: A DESIGNER'S DEFINITION

Design exists because the world around us does not suit us, and the goal of designers is to **change the world through the creation of artifacts**. Designers design by positing **functions** to be achieved and producing descriptions of **artifacts capable of generating these functions**. [...] Thus, design is **purposeful**, and the activity of designing is **goal oriented**.

John S. Gero, (1990) Design Prototypes: A Knowledge Representation Schema for Design, AI Magazine Volume 11 Number 4

An example: security in the car park (Pawson & Tilley 1997)

Imagine a programme to reduce car thefts by installing CCTV systems. Imagine you observe a reduction in car thefts.

Why do you think it worked?



Security in the car park (1) (Pawson & Tilley 1997)



Theories of change

'Caught in the act': Instant detention and arrest

'You've been framed': investigations on the base of recordings

'Nosy parker': Parking lots with CCTVs are more crowded

'Appeal to the cautious': Users of CCTVs parkings are risk averse

Analysing the example

1. The programme has a goal: reducing car thefts
2. This needs to **change the behaviour** of the **actors of the policy** (policemen, thieves, car owners)
3. But we have **only limited control** on those behaviours
4. Always think to the actors you need for cooperation and **how designs can support that cooperation**

Security in the car parks (2) (Pawson & Tilley 1997)



The theory of change tells you something about the implementation of the policy

mechanism	Design and implementation
Caught in the act	Police capacity for instant intervention? Which CCTV?
You've been framed	Police capacity for investigating recordings? Which CCTV?

Security in the car park (3) (Pawson & Tilley 1997)



Which other elements can contribute to success?

mechanisms	Context
Nosy parker	How the parking is used
Appeal to the cautious	Effectiveness of protections other than CCTVs

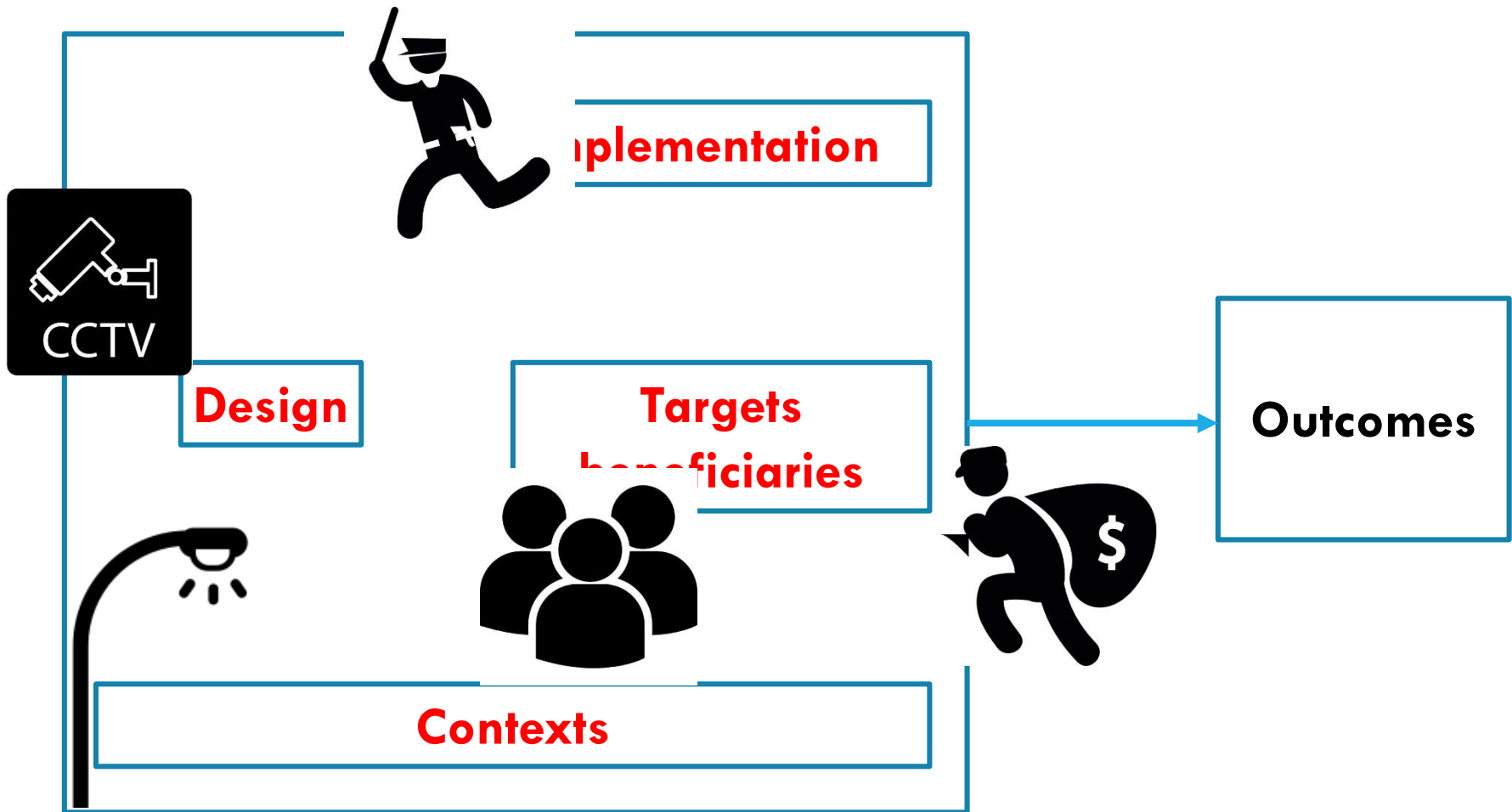
AGAIN:

POLICIES ARE NO STIMULUS-RESPONSE TREATMENTS



- No standard interventions, but *ambiguity on how they works*
- They are not automatically *implemented*
- They address *reactive non-passive targets*
- They are *not* implemented in *neutral contexts*

IN FACT, POLICIES WORK LIKE THAT:



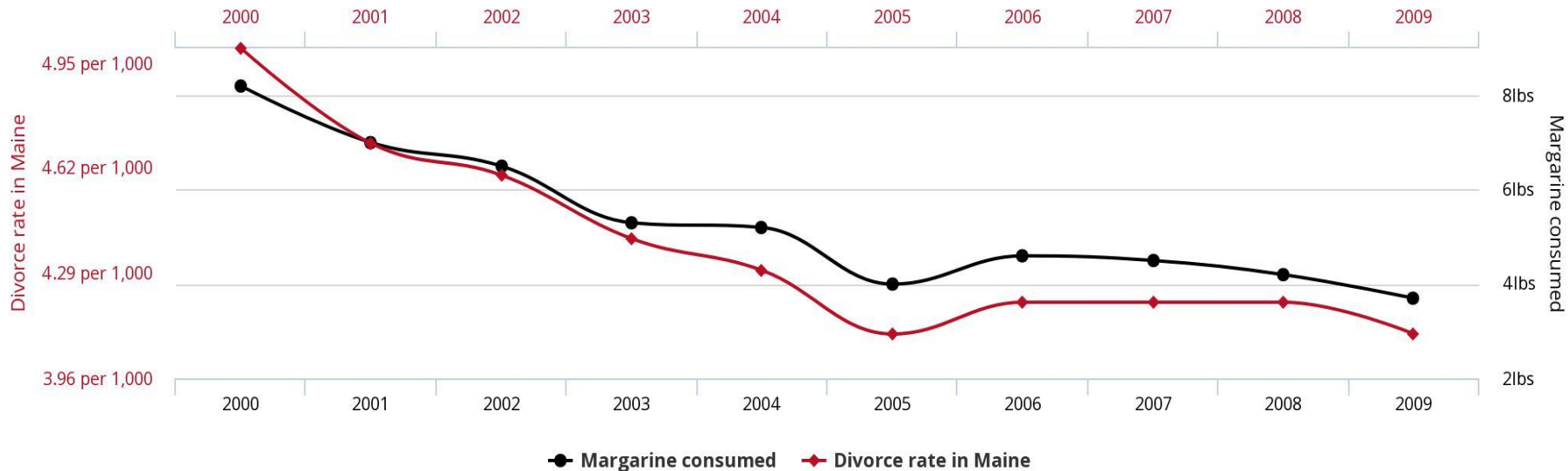
SUMMING UP:

1. Policy outcomes depend on **a set of factors** regarding design, implementation, targets, beneficiaries, and context
2. You cannot control all elements but you can certainly try to **consider them when designing**
3. If you start with a **hypothesis of how the policy should work** you may try to identify all relevant factors
4. **And especially the reactions of the actors you need**

CORRELATION \neq CAUSALITY

R=0.99

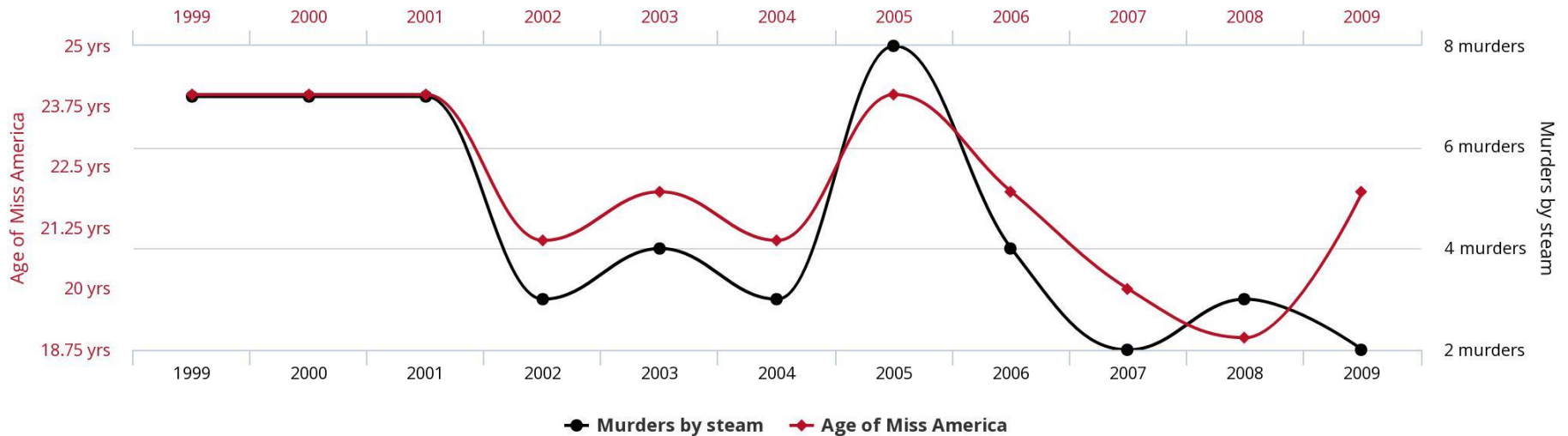
Divorce rate in Maine
correlates with
Per capita consumption of margarine



CORRELATION \neq CAUSALITY

R=0.87

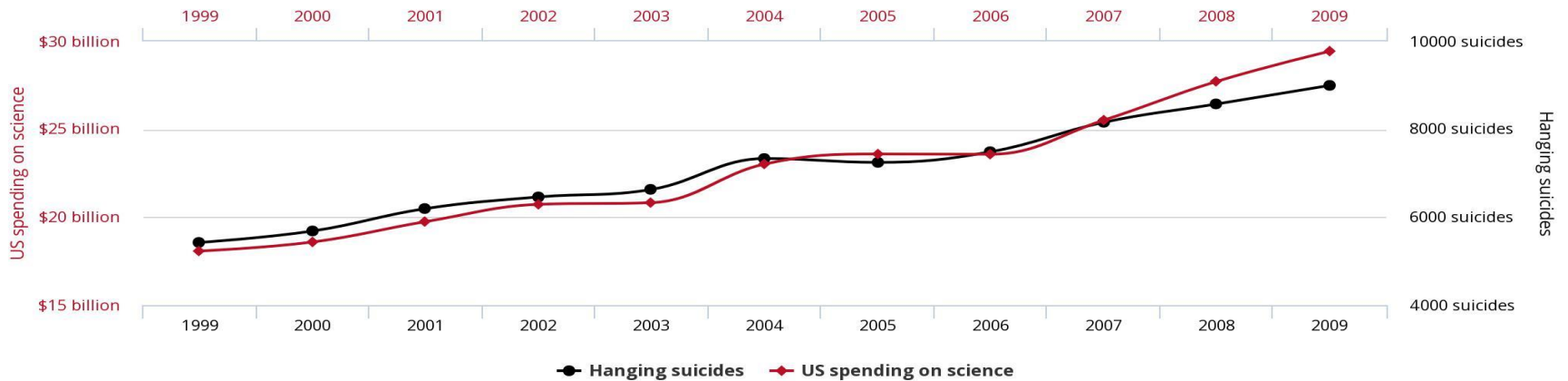
Age of Miss America
correlates with
Murders by steam, hot vapours and hot objects



CORRELAZIONE \neq CAUSALITÀ

R=0.99

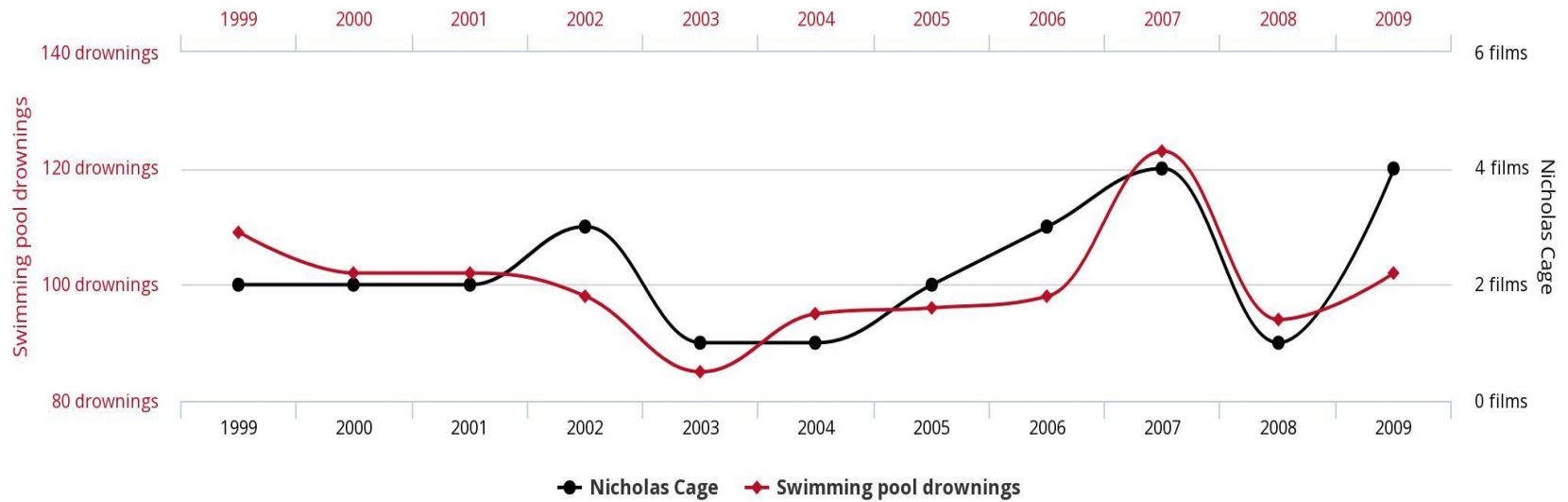
US spending on science, space, and technology
correlates with
Suicides by hanging, strangulation and suffocation



CORRELATION \neq CAUSALITY

R=0.66

Number of people who drowned by falling into a pool
correlates with
Films Nicolas Cage appeared in



SERIOUSLY:

In this cases, it is easy to see why the two phenomena are not linked.

But if they are not that 'distant', you can always find a hypothesis for explaining a certain pattern (and justify ex post that your policy is working as planned)

CAUSAL MECHANISMS

Generative causation

«A constant conjunction is not only insufficient, but also unnecessary to prove a scientific law» (Bhaskar 2008)

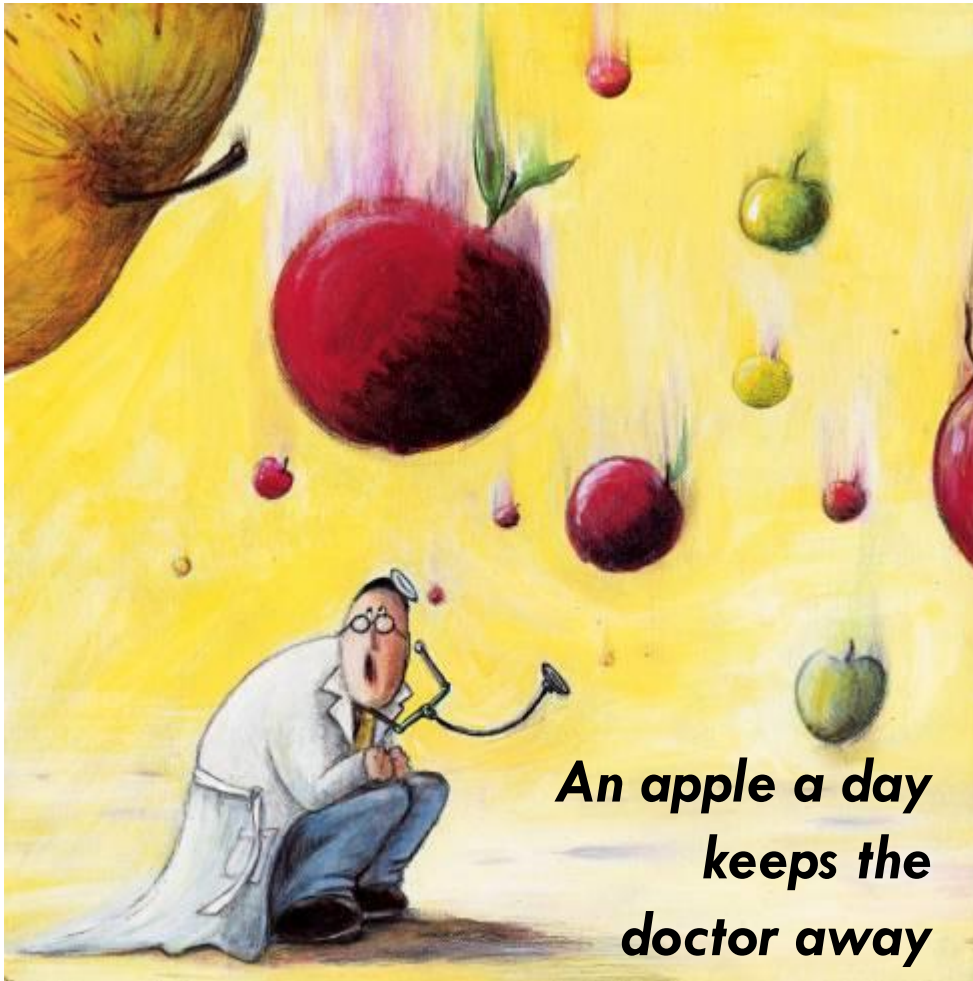
You have to specify the 'causal power' of your design elements

Configurational causality

Policies do not work alone!

There is always a 'causal recipe' (Ragin 2008: 10) or "special combination of factors" (Rihoux and Ragin 2009: xix) that is responsible for an outcomes

Another example:



Imagine a programme of fruit distribution for children in order to improve their diet

Let's say it works in some schools but not others

Why? How do we make it work in the place where it is not working?

HOW SHOULD IT WORK IN THE FIRST PLACE?



T₁: **ROUTINIZATION**'

The apple at school promote good behaviour at home

T₂: **'CROWDING OUT** '

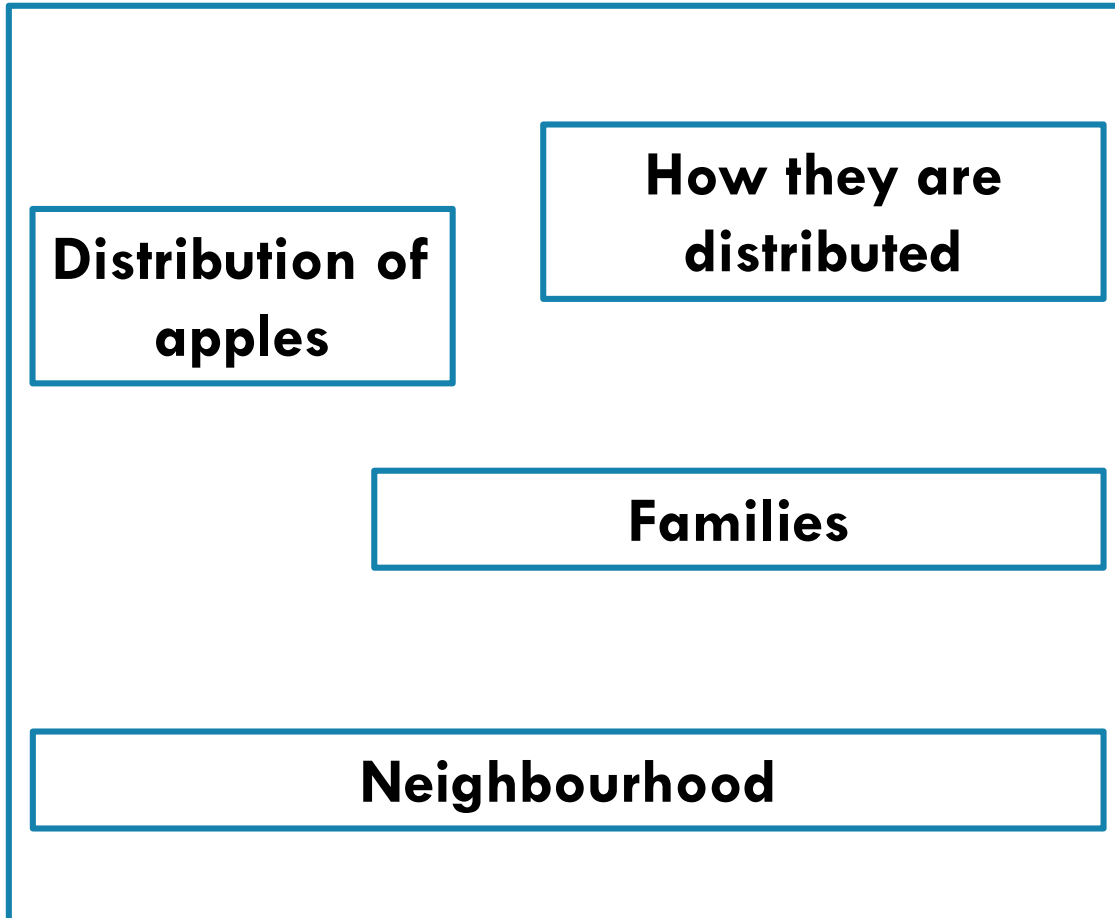
The apple at school avoid consuming junk food at school

Starting with these hypotheses one can work out how to (re)design the programme



Perché funziona?

- **Routinisation**
- **Crowding out**
- ...



IN PRACTICE:

1. *Start with the subjects who need to change their behaviour*
2. *Make a hypothesis on the causal power of design elements*
3. *Think to other causal factors*
4. *Include these elements into your design*

MECHANISMS ALSO HELP PREDICTING **IF** THE POLICY WILL WORK: MEGAN'S LAW IN MICHIGAN:

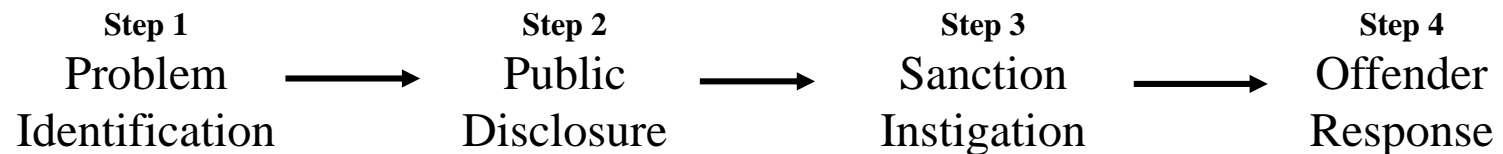
1. *DESIGN*: A state-level register for sexual offenders freely accessible to the public with the possibility to notify the community on the presence of sexual criminals
2. *TARGET*: Who needs to change his behaviour? What are your expectations?
3. *WHY/HOW*: Can you think of the causal logic of the intervention? (i.e., a multi-step theory of change / mechanism)

WHY AND HOW THE POLICY WILL WORK GIVES YOU CLUES ON IF IT WILL WORK: MEGAN'S LAW IN MICHIGAN:

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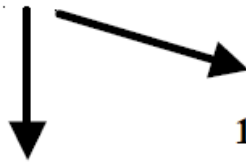
2. *TARGET*: Who needs to change his behaviour? What are your expectations?

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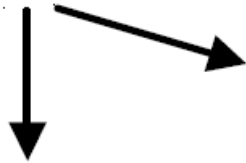
STEP 1: IDENTIFYING THE CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

136 Serious Sex Offences (offenders considered criminal sexual psychopaths)



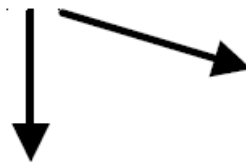
100 no previous criminal record

36 had a previous offence that would have been eligible for the registry



24 victims within family or known to offender

12 committed stranger-predatory offence



6 offenders from out of state

6 cases remain with the potential to respond to community notification

AN EXERCISE: NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICEMEN



Neighbourhood policemen



**Crime
reduction**

Il Poliziotto di quartiere nasce per essere più vicino alla gente. Lavorare nelle strade del quartiere lo porta infatti a conoscere la realtà quotidiana degli abitanti della zona, ad essere un punto di riferimento per i commercianti e un deterrente per cittadini poco onesti. Il poliziotto di quartiere opera "a piedi" nei 103 capoluoghi di provincia italiani.

Con le volanti, le pattuglie a cavallo e quelle in moto il poliziotto di quartiere vigila sulla sicurezza dei cittadini e dei commercianti del quartiere, integrandosi perfettamente nella realtà quotidiana della zona assegnata.

(poliziadistato.it)

ANALYSING NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICE: MANY GREAT IDEAS FROM THE STUDENTS

Targets:

People from the neighbourhood as informants (greater knowledge)

Micro-criminals under the spotlight (deterrence)

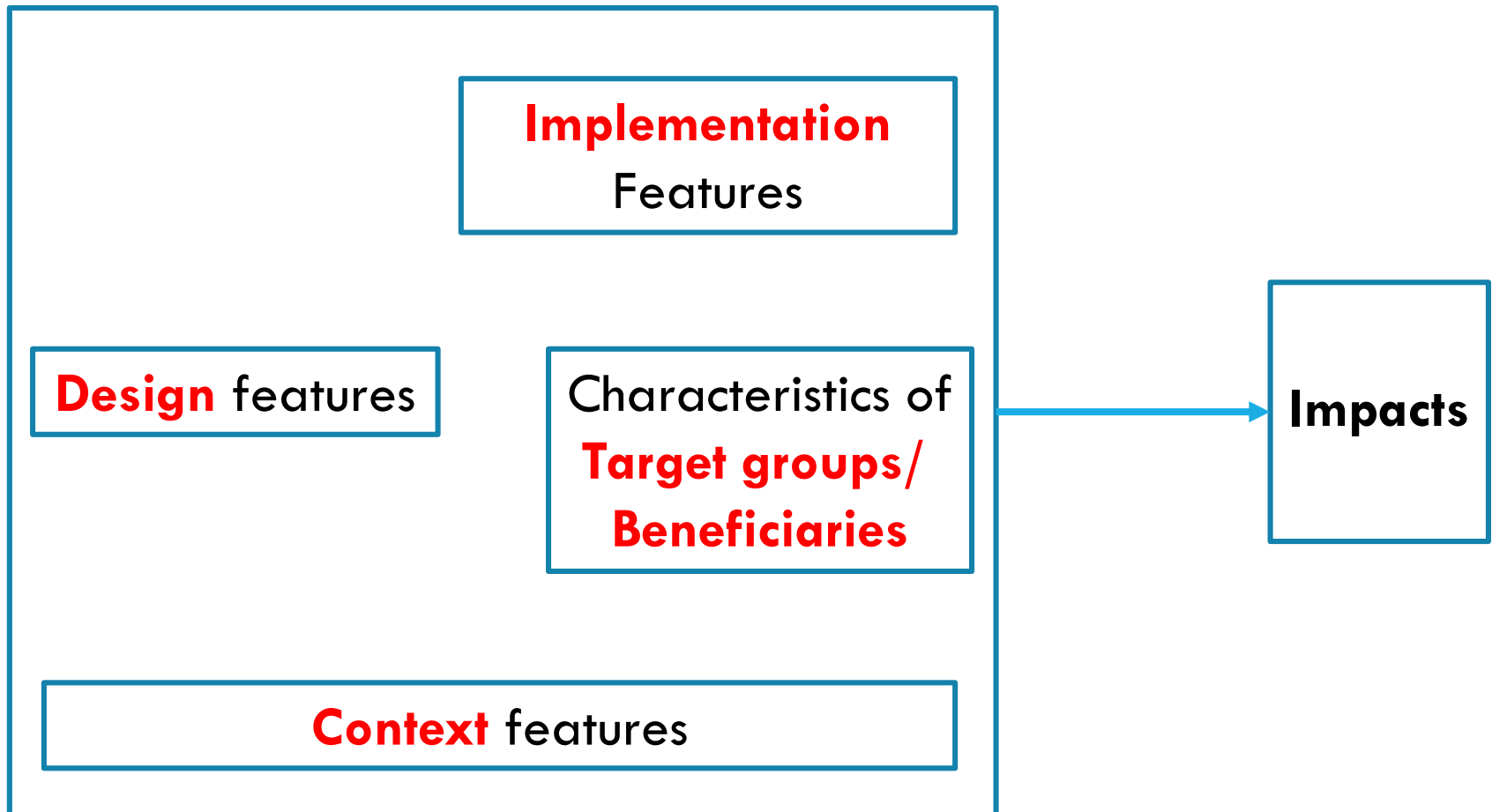
This is no task for ordinary policemen (policemen training)

The police department (new strategies)

MULTI-STEP THEORY:

1. information gathering; 2. information elaboration/interpretation; 3. design tailored strategies; 4. deploy the strategy; 5. criminals' responses

HOW DOES IT WORK?





**COPYING, BORROWING,
PINCHING IDEAS...**

COPYING FROM OTHERS IS A GOOD STRATEGY

Most of our learning is not direct, but vicarious (second-hand).

Policies are rarely brand-new innovations – they, or some of their parts, are often borrowed from other practices

This is a much used practice (ex: best practice research), it is ‘cheap’ but you need to know how to copy. If not:

- you reproduce irrelevant elements
- you do not reproduce relevant elements
- you might have problems in adjusting to contexts

AN EXAMPLE: COLLABORATIVE SURVEILLANCE

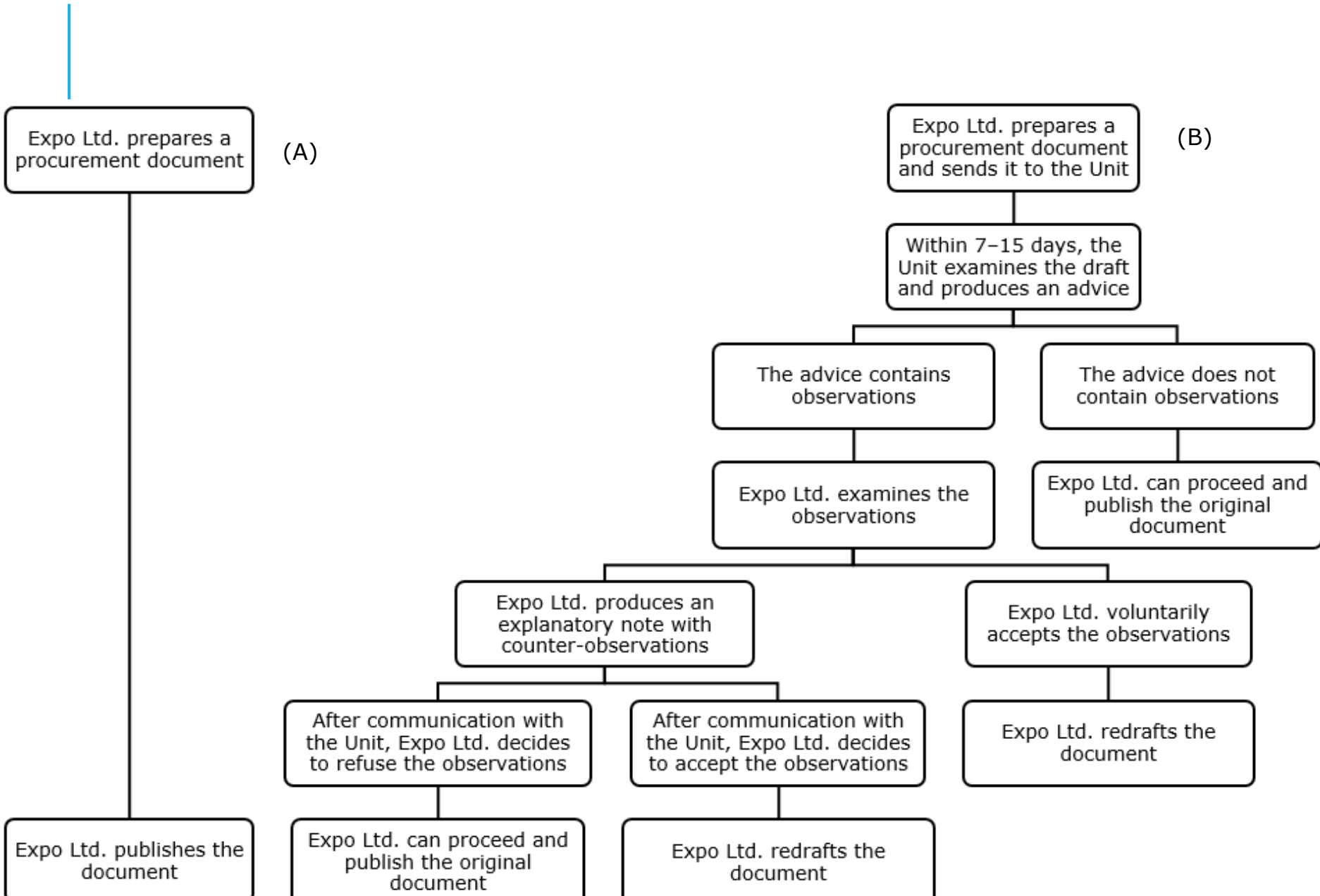


8^o of May 2014, less than one year from the EXPO: corruption scandals and arrests for the procurement of service infrastructures (involvement of the procurement manager of EXPO Ltd.)

24 June government decree 90/2014 establish special controls on procurement:

- Establishment of a Special Operative Unit (UOS) within the ANAC
- Preliminary control of all documents by the contracting authority
- Guidelines, recommendations, checklists on procurement
- Remarks by the UOS on documents, transparency of the procedure

PROCUREMENT AT EXPO: BEFORE (A) AND AFTER (B)



THE ACTIVITY OF THE UOS: BUREAUCRATIC RED TAPE?

	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Advices produced by the Unit	65	213	42	7	327
Observations on irregularities and legal issues	44	126	26	4	200
Observations accepted by Expo Ltd	36	101	16	1	154
Accepted observations / Advices	0.55	0.47	0.38	0.14	0.47
Accepted observations / Observations	0.82	0.80	0.62	0.25	0.77
Observations / Advices	0.68	0.59	0.62	0.57	0.61

... BUT THE CASE IS A GREAT SUCCESS

NOTABLE RESULTS:

- Greater speed of procurement
- A drastic reduction of appeals and litigations
- Increased quality of the procurement documents

QUICKLY INSTITUTIONALISED: from a very special procedure for the Expo to the 2016 Code of Public Procurement

AND REPLICATED:

- Used for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2015-2016)
- Reconstruction for the earthquake in Central Italy in 2016
- the 2019 World University Games
- Elaboration of a twin administrative practice of collaborative controls

WHAT IS TRANSFERRED FROM THE SOURCE-CASE TO THE NEW CASES?



DESIGN: preliminary controls

EXPO Ltd sends to ANAC all procurements documents for contracts > 40k €

UOS controls the documents and issue recommendations and remarks

EXPO Ltd may or may not accept the remarks

**BUT IS DESIGN SUFFICIENT FOR MAKING
A POLICY WORK?**

M1: THREAT ATTRIBUTION



Programme and non-programme features increase the perception of threat

PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Mandatory controls on all documents for contracts > €40,000

NON-PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Unescapable deadline and delays
- Corruption scandals and media attention
- EXPO company has its own unique goal in the event implementation
- ANAC and Unit first task and main test

Implementers behave cooperatively

- Over-working
- Informal communication
- Standardisation of control procedures through checklists

Implementation outcome

- Anticipation of the time threshold

M2: REPEATED INTERACTIONS



Programme and non-programme features increase the frequency of interactions and interdependence of actors

Implementers start to cooperate and value their relation

Implementation outcome

PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Mandatory controls on all documents for contracts > €40,000
- Observations are not binding, but Expo Ltd. is required to produce an explanatory note

NON-PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Organisational nature of Expo Ltd.

- Adjustment to the Unit requirements
- Reasoning and dialogue on redrafting the contracting documents

- Learning by Expo Ltd.
- Increased quality of procurement



M3: CERTIFICATION

Programme and non-programme features provide a source of certification

Implementers recognise certification

Implementation outcome

PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Mandatory controls on all documents for contracts > €40,000
- The Unit is made of police officers part of the Financial Police

NON-PROGRAMME FEATURES:

- Personal reputation enjoyed by the President of ANAC
- Direct political backing by the Prime Minister
- Endorsement by the OECD

- Losing companies prefer not to appeal to administrative courts
- Expo Ltd. uses ANAC strategically to resist pressures

- Greater speed in contract implementation

NOT ALL RELEVANT ELEMENTS CAN BE REPLICATED BY COPYING DESIGNS

1. Jubilee of mercy

- Comune di Roma \neq Expo Ltd (no repeated interactions and learning)
- No scandals and political/media importance
- Deadlines are not equally mandatory

2. Administrative practice D.LGS. 50/2016

- Voluntary and limited
- UOS is not involved
- No media effect

3. The earthquake

- Multiple regions and special offices \neq Expo Ltd
- Higher number of procurement contracts
- Deadline is less mandatory

SO, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

There will always be important elements that are found naturally in your source-case but are not present in your target-case!

BUT YOU CANNOT SURRENDER TO CONTEXTS! As a policy analyst you need to solve your specific problem in your specific context!

You can try to adjust the original design and look for **FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENTS**, i.e. design features that were absent in the original design but that you need to introduce in order to reproduce the same causal model/function

TWO SIMPLE EXAMPLES OF FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENTS

Introduce a unique office with decisional power for dealing with the controlled contract

Be flexible with the financial threshold for including contracts to be controlled (you want to ensure repeated interactions without overloading the administration)

HOW TO TRANSFER SUCCESS INSTEAD OF SIMPLY COPYING DESIGNS:

- Build a causal model of the source-case
- Highlight those elements that are naturally found in the source-case but not in the target
- Look for functional equivalents
- Adjust the original designs: making a good copy means redesigning

A FINAL NOTE (IMPORTANT)

Good causal models travel much further than good programmes

When you look for a good idea you can do one of two things:

Sector search: you look for programmes implemented elsewhere in your sector (education, environment, etc.) that pursue your same goal (improving math results, reducing pollution, etc.)

Causal search: you look for causal models that worked elsewhere and may be applied to your case disregarding the sector of application (a reputation system to make administrations perform may be copied from tripadvisor)

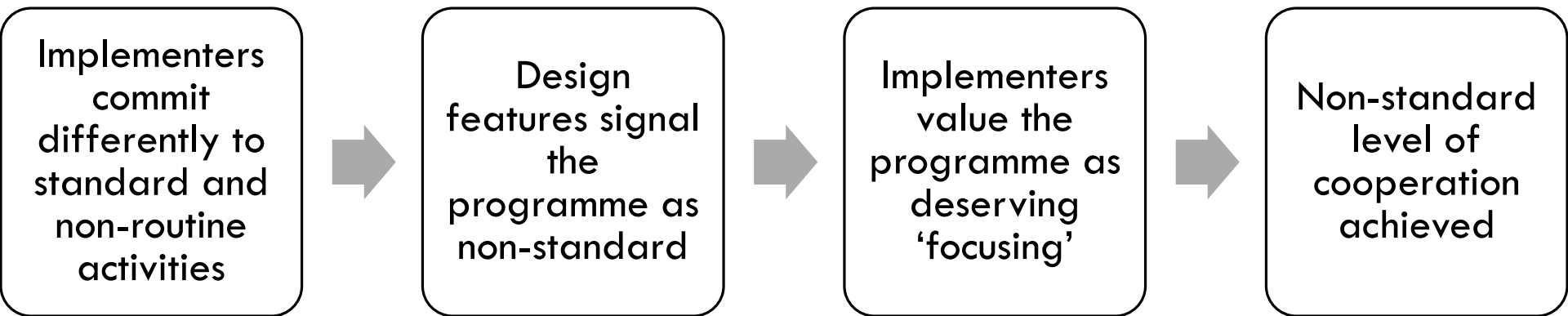


SOME EXAMPLES OF MECHANISMS TO DESIGN POLICIES



FOCUSING EVENTS

Implementers cooperate for a perception of exceptional importance



Examples: EXPO, PIUSS Toscana, Brazil in Action

Tips per designers: 1) try to increase the focusing character of the programme

OPPORTUNITY OF ATTRIBUTION



Implementers cooperate because they perceive specific direct benefits

Good implementation enlarges implementers' opportunity-set



Design features increase the perception of opportunity



Implementers cooperate in order to get the opportunity

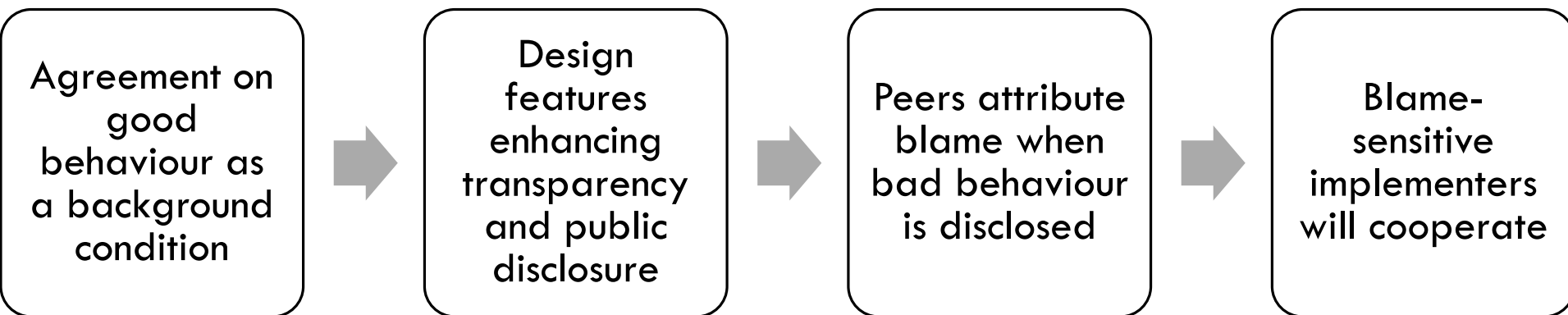
Example: Urbana Call in Andalucía

Tips per designers: 1) identify the opportunities valued by implementers, 2) increase the perception of opportunity

BLAME AVOIDANCE



Implementers cooperate because defection is considered inappropriate and sanctioned by peers



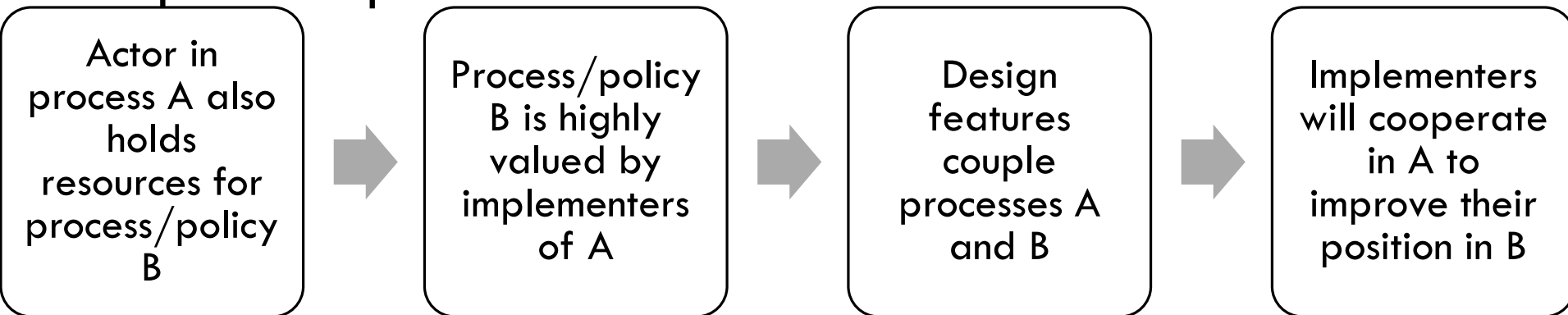
Example: EU Impact Assessment

Tips per designers: 1) Design a system of blame attribution, 2) identify and strengthen sources of responsibility 3) stimulate reactions by peers



ESEMPIO 5: EARNING BROWNIE POINTS

Implementers cooperate to earn advantages in parallel processes



Example: Standard Cost Model in the Netherlands

Tips per designers: 1) identify parallel processes which are of interest for implementers 2) couple those processes with those of your interest



**DO I ALWAYS NEED TO THINK |
CAUSALLY?**

THREE EXAMPLES

1. Congestion charge
2. Scientific facilities for research
3. Reducing class size

If the policy works well everywhere and you are confident in why and how it works, you probably do not need that