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?

WARNING

CCTV CAMERAS ARE IN OPERATION ON THESE PREMISES

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

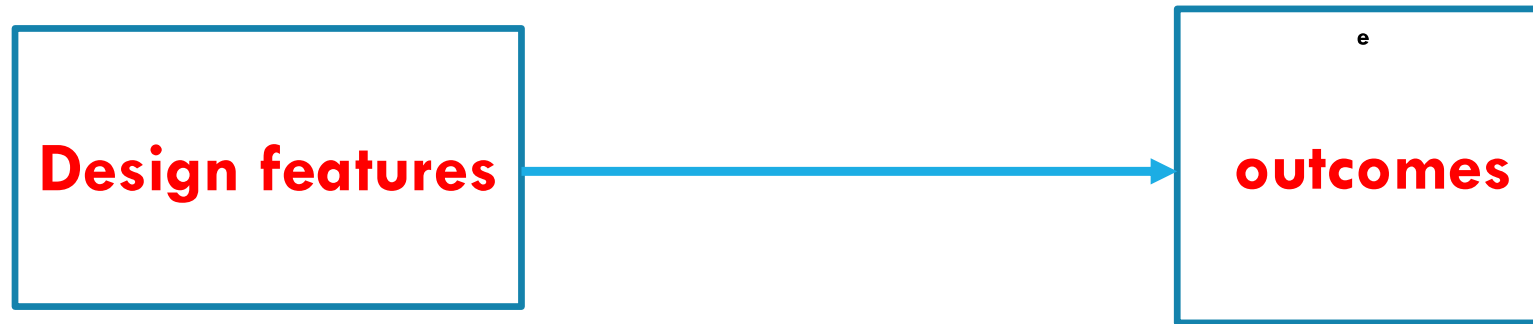| mechanism	Design and implementation
Caught in the act	Police capacity for instant intervention? Which CCTV?
You've been framed	Police capacity for investigating recordings? Which CCTV?

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

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┌─────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────┐
│                 │              │       e          │
│ Design features │──────────────▶     outcomes     │
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- No standard interventions, but *ambiguity on how they works*

- They are not autmatically *implemented*

- They address *reactive non-passive targets*

- They are *not* implemented in *neutral contexts*

IN FACT, POLICIES WORK LIKE THAT:

Implementation

Design

Targets beneficiaries

Contexts

CCTV
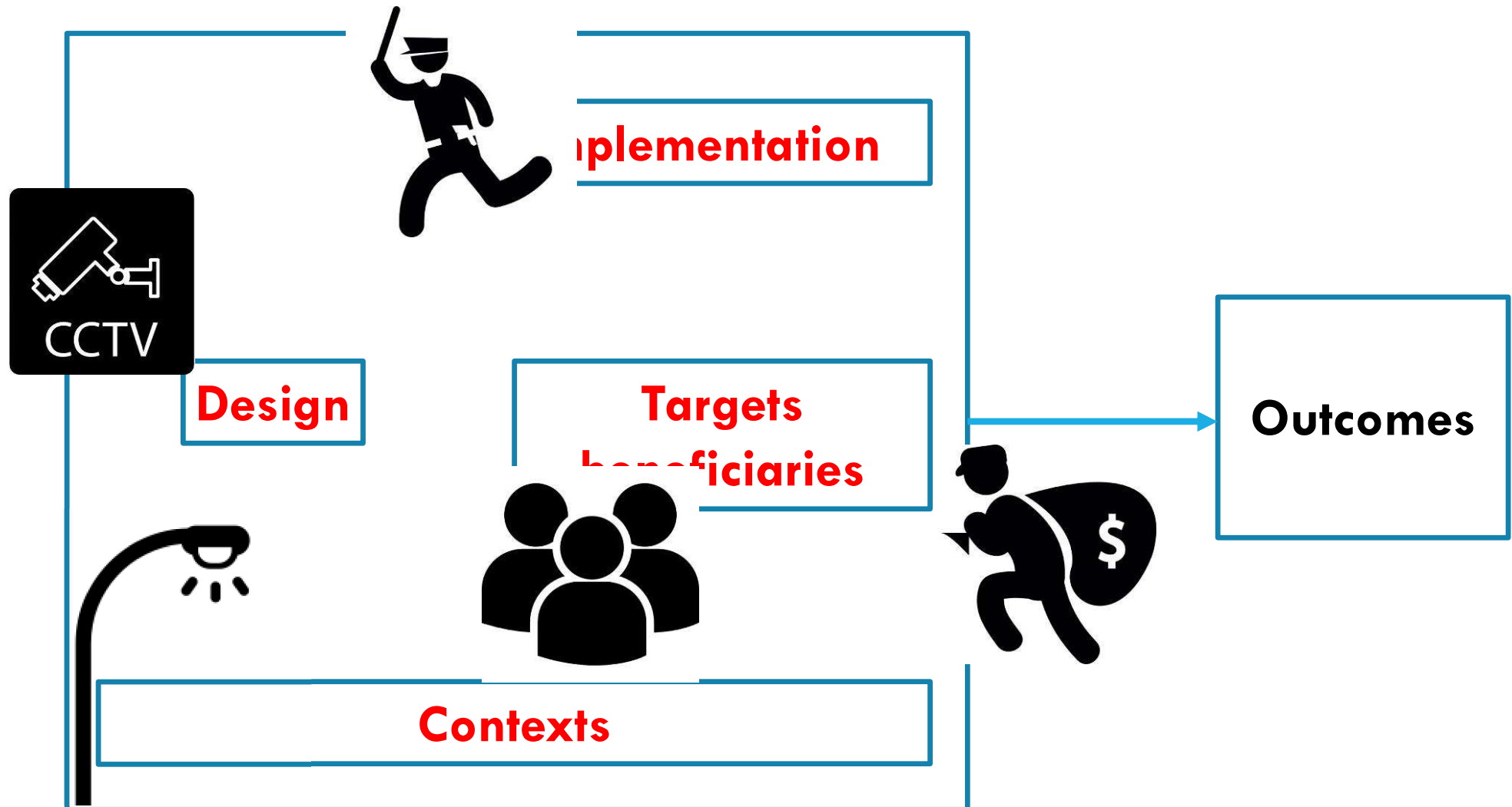
Outcomes

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 ≠ CAUSALITY
R=0.99

Divorce rate in Maine
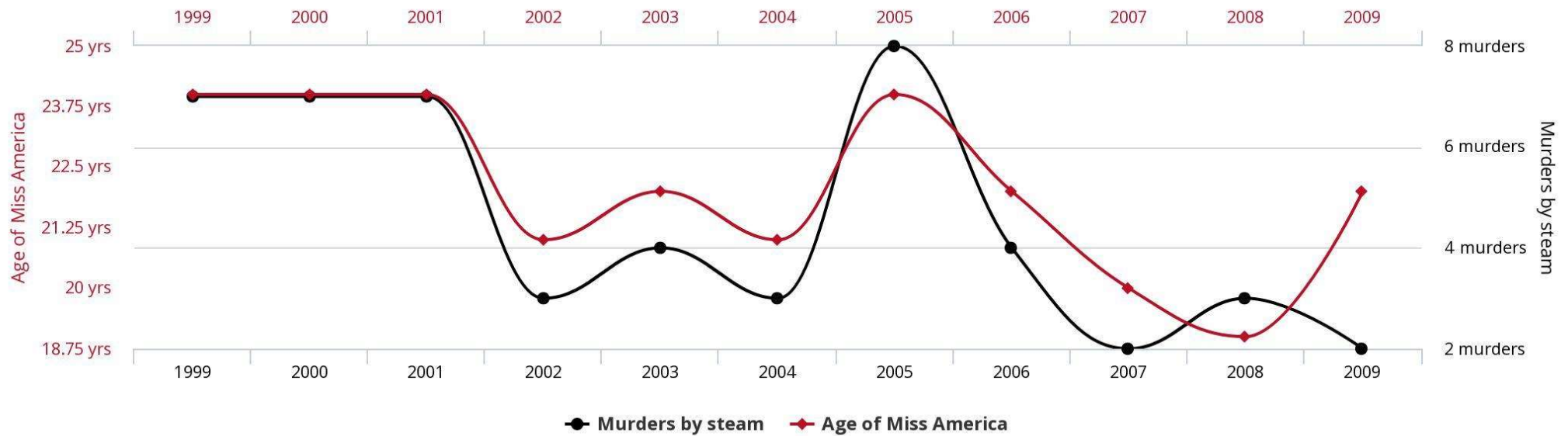correlates with
Per capita consumption of margarine
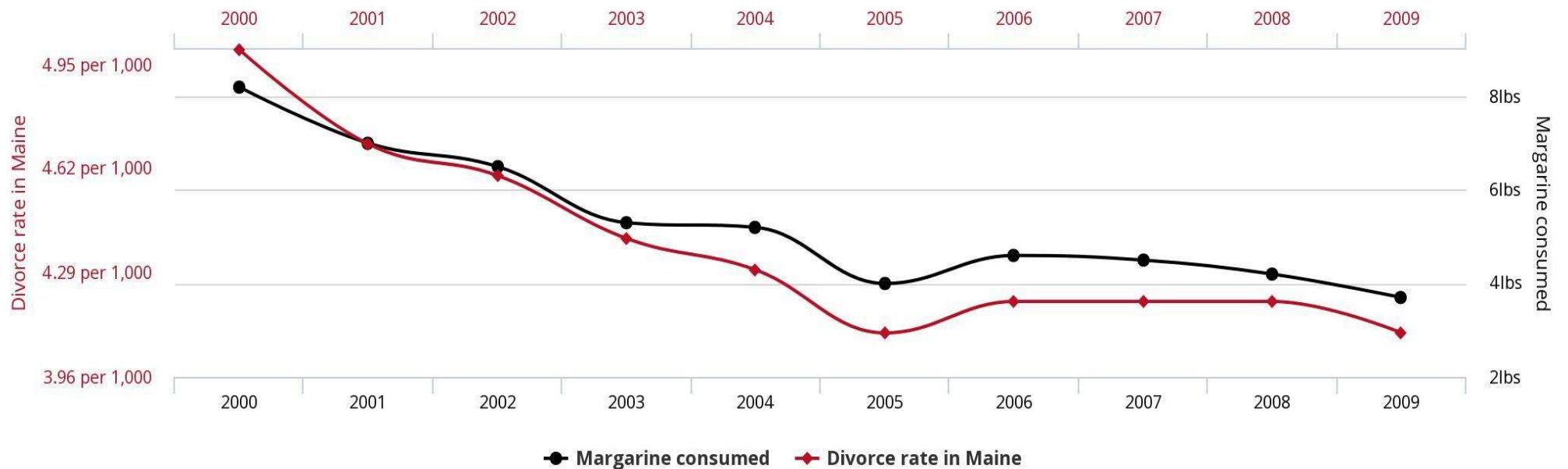
CORRELATION ≠ CAUSALITY
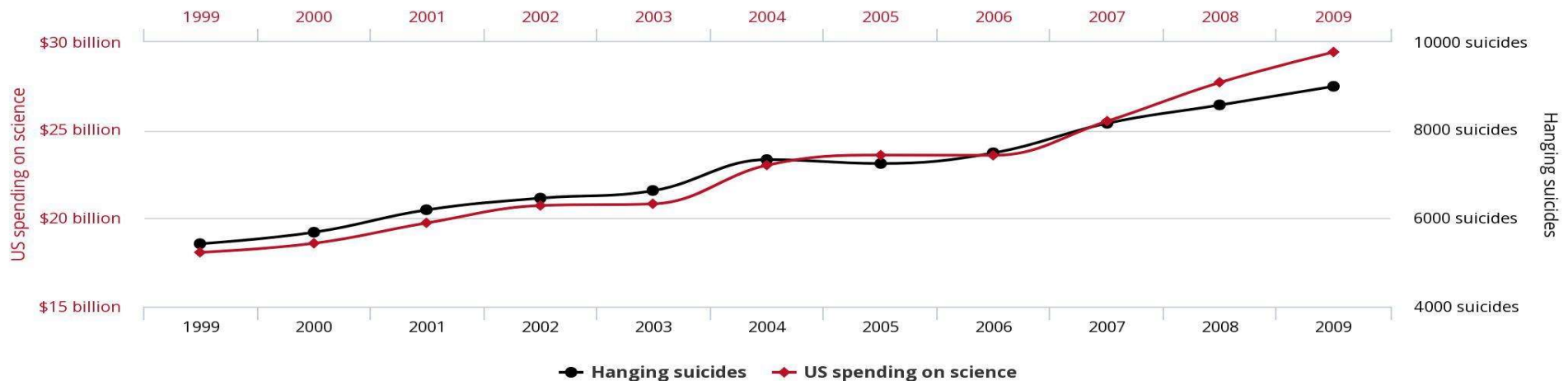# R=0.87

Age of Miss America
correlates with
Murders by steam, hot vapours and hot objects
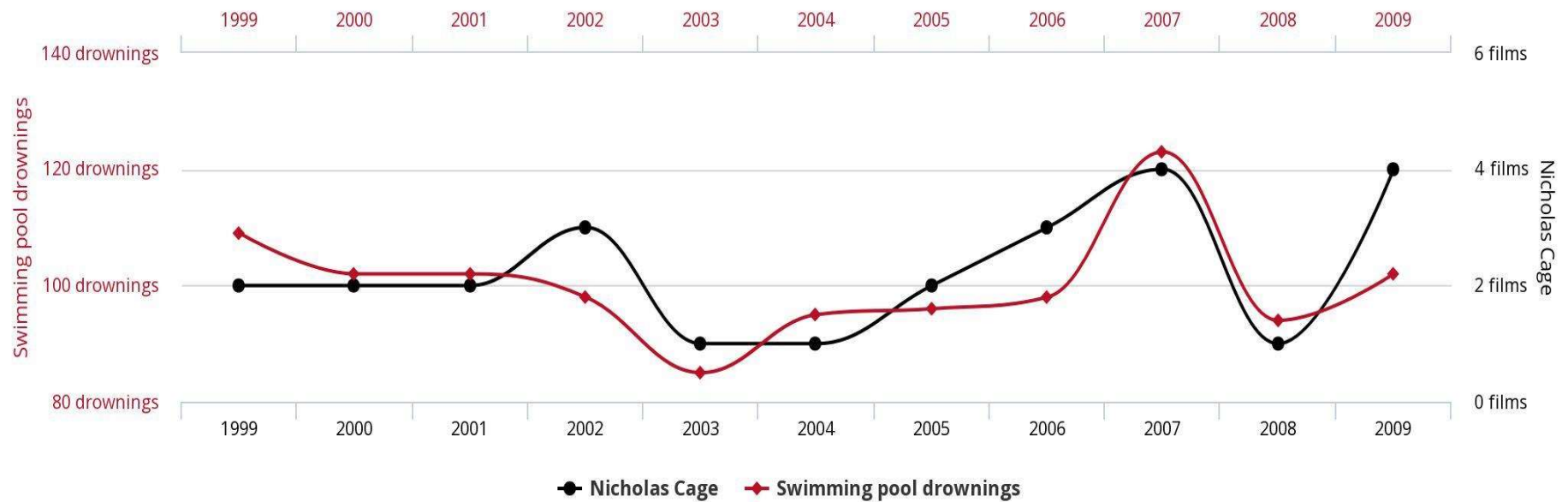
CORRELAZIONE ≠ CAUSALITÀ
R=0.99

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

CORRELATION ≠ 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 MECHANIMS

Generative causation

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

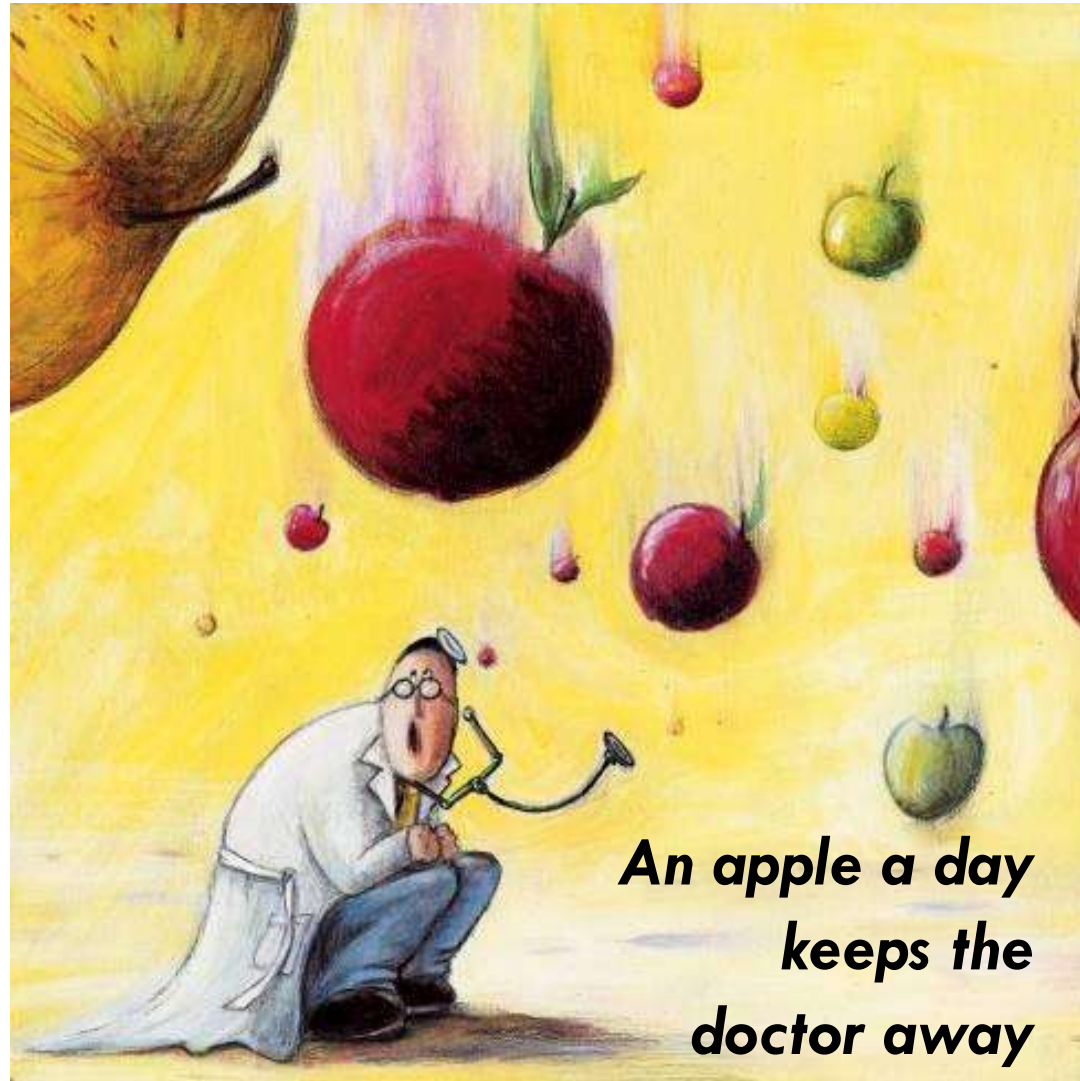You have to specify the 'causal power' of your design elements

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:

An apple a day keeps the doctor away

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?
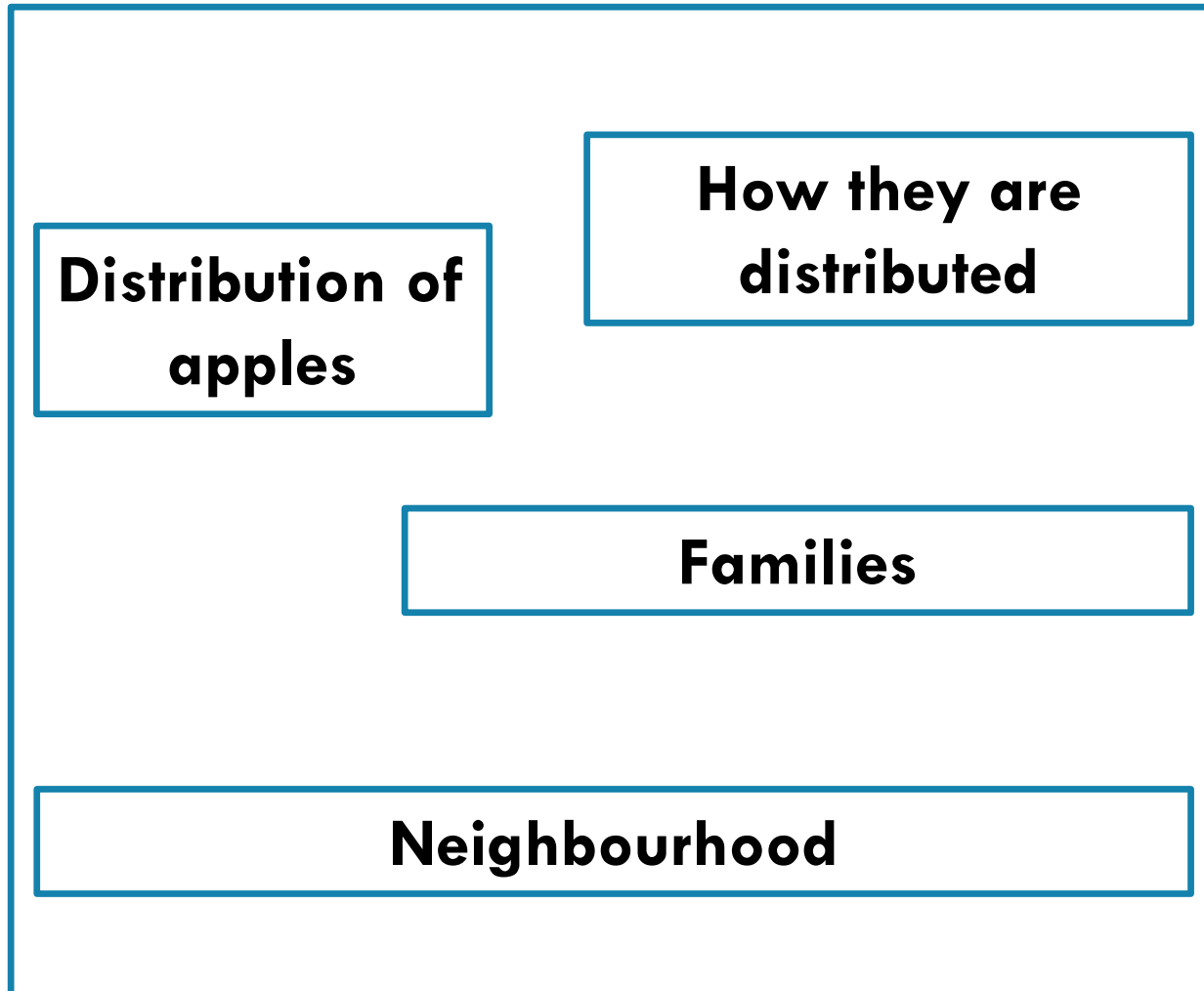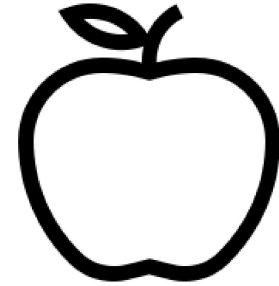
HOW SHOULD IT WORK IN THE FIRST PLACE?

T_1: **ROUTINIZATION**'

The apple at school promote good behaviour at home

T_2: '**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

Distribution of apples

How they are distributed

Families

Neighbourhood

Perché funziona?
- Routinisation
- Crowding out
- …

outcomes

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*

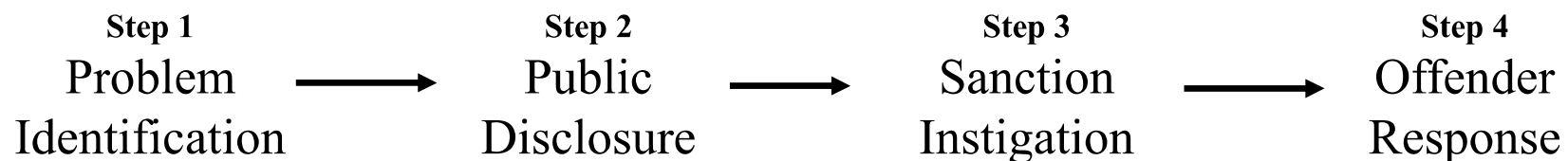# MECHANISMS ALSO HELP PREDICTING **IF** THE POLICY WILL WORK:
MEGAN'S LAW IN MICHIGAN:

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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| Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4
Problem Identification	$\longrightarrow$	Public Disclosure	$\longrightarrow$	Sanction Instigation	$\longrightarrow$	Offender Response

STEP 1:
IDENTIFYING THE CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR

136 Serious Sex Offences (offenders considered criminal sexual psychopaths)

100 no previous criminal record
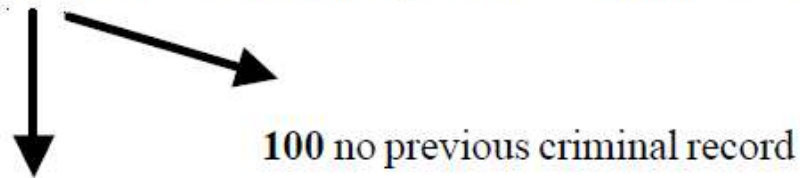
36 had a previous offence that would have been eligible for the registry

24 victims within family or known to offender
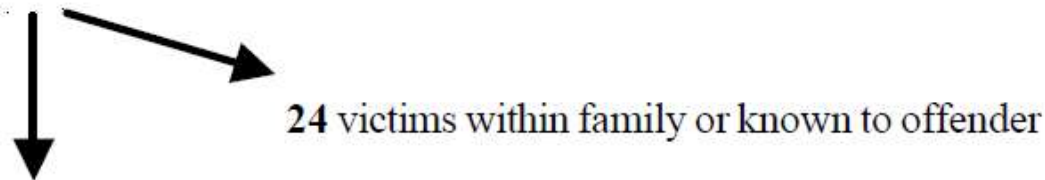
12 committed stranger-predatory offence

6 offenders from out of state
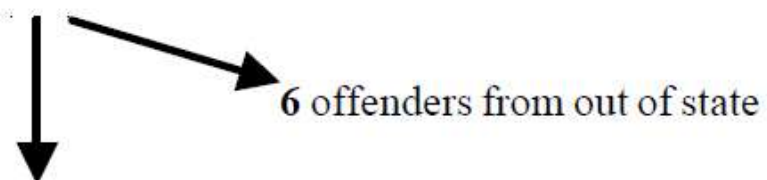
6 cases remain with the potential to respond to community notification

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)