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The Police: A Tool, Machine or Technical Ensemble

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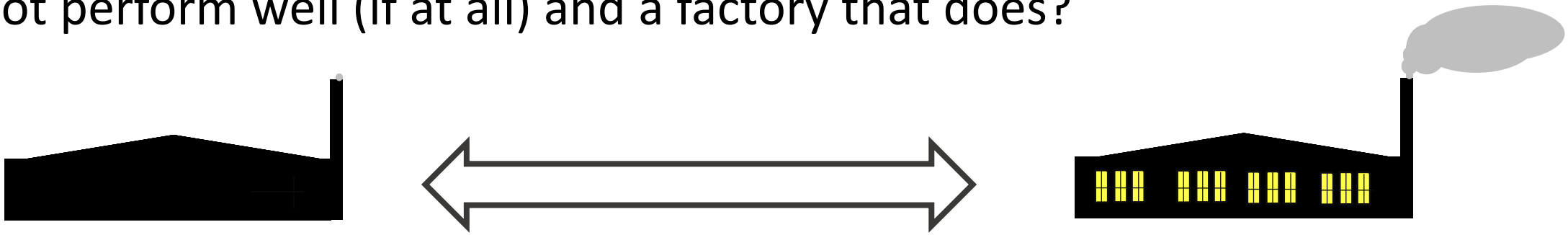
- On studying how to improve performance
- On explaining shortcomings in performance
- On our main challenge in explaining performance in complex systems
- Approaching the police as technology (the police as a nested system of technologies)

On studying how to improve performance

- How well x performs and how to improve the performance of x is are familiar concerns for RDI
- The challenge is in figuring out possible or best pathways for improvement
- There are several ways to do so. One is to find out why is the performance in some field or in a specific case less in practice than it is in theory (in ideal world)
- Comparison of the actual situation with the ideal one should help to point out the discrepancies between the two that are likely to explain shortcomings in the actual performance

The problem situation at the RDI is often the following

How would you explain the difference between a factory that does not perform well (if at all) and a factory that does?



Seeing a factory as a simple entity is likely to lead to simple explanations. What would explain a factory that does work, but not very well so.

On explaining shortcomings in performance

Two pathways to explanatory understanding

1: Figuring out law-like relations between events/phenomena

- Making our empirical data meet our statistical means in order to reveal the relations underpinning everything and connecting events with each other (Ideal: knowledge of laws).

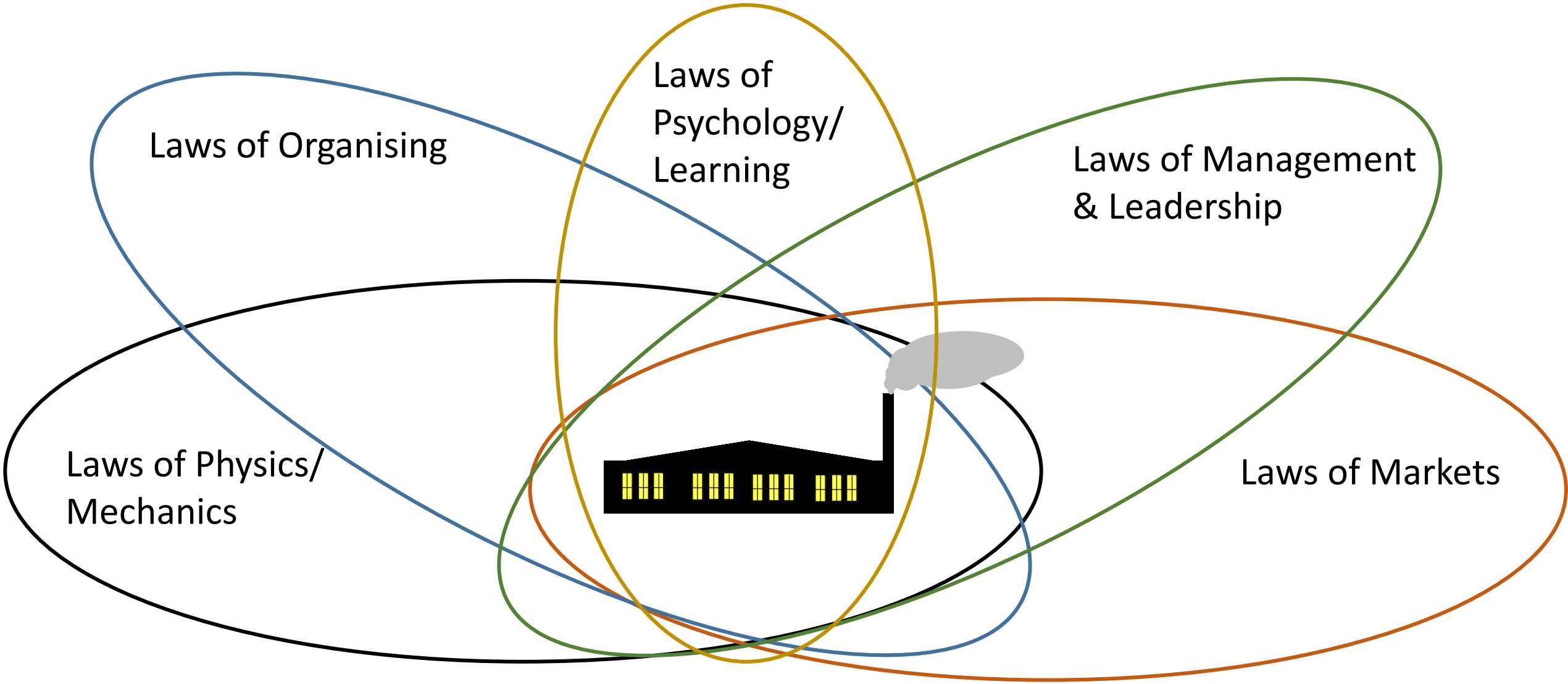
2: Figuring out the true inhabitants the world and the ways they are inclined to behave in different conditions because of their very constitution, kind or relations (ideal: knowledge of types/kinds and their interactions).

On explaining shortcomings in performance

- Thus, by knowing the true laws we can tell what is likely to follow from what [ceteris paribus] and our explanatory understanding is displayed by the ability to predict or control something (=> start collecting and processing empirical data). [Exclude or control]

- Thus, by knowing things and the structural capacities underpinning their behavioural tendencies we can explain the actual and potential events (=> develop theories that are able capture the true character of the things). [Identify]

Complexity behind ”peforming” from the point of view of laws



On our main challenge in explaining performance in complex systems

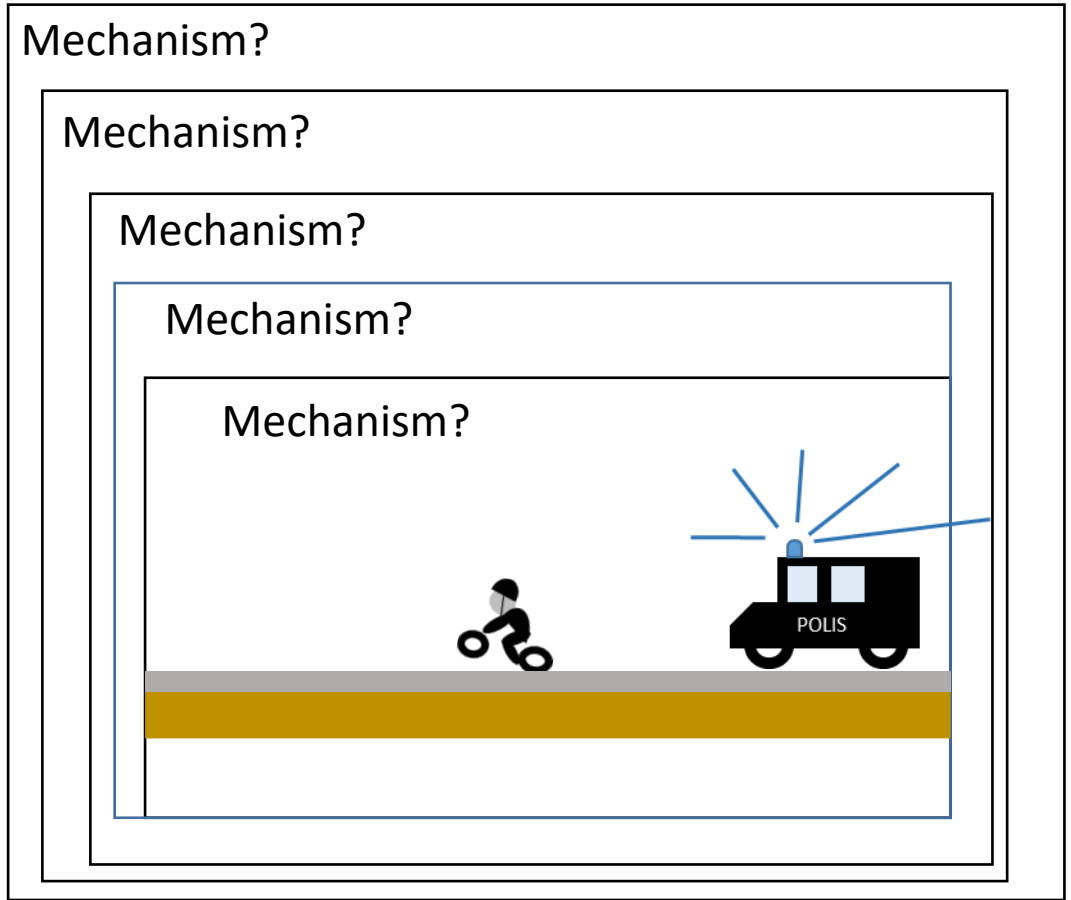
Ceteris paribus => the law-like relations will hold only when other things are equal and they are so whenever the expected outcome materialises, but we can know this only afterwards, i.e. ex post facto.

In open/complex/continuously changing world, the things are unlikely to remain equal (except in laboratory conditions).

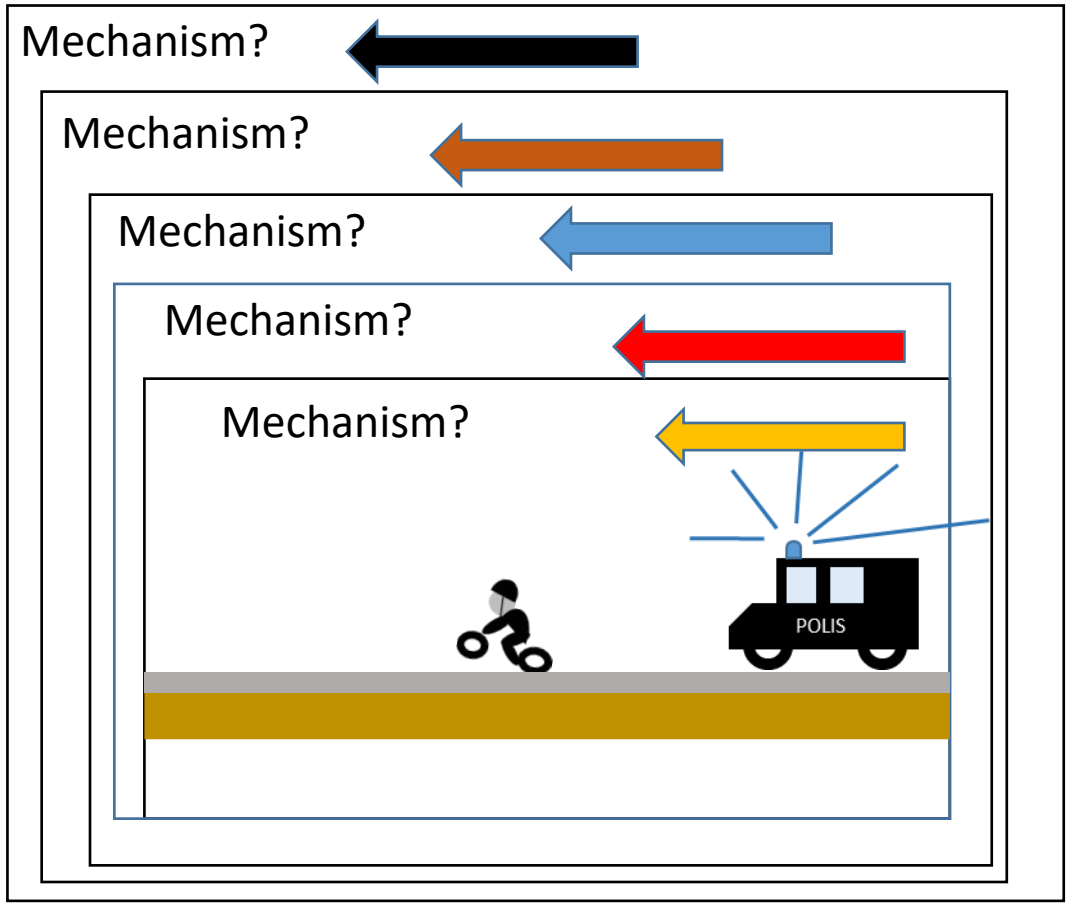
How to get a better grip of the conditions under which social sciences are expected to ”perform”, e.g. bring with such explanatory understanding that helps us to expand the sphere of intentional human control.

Entities as complex and structured

Layered structure of mechanisms underlying ”performing" in traffic policing

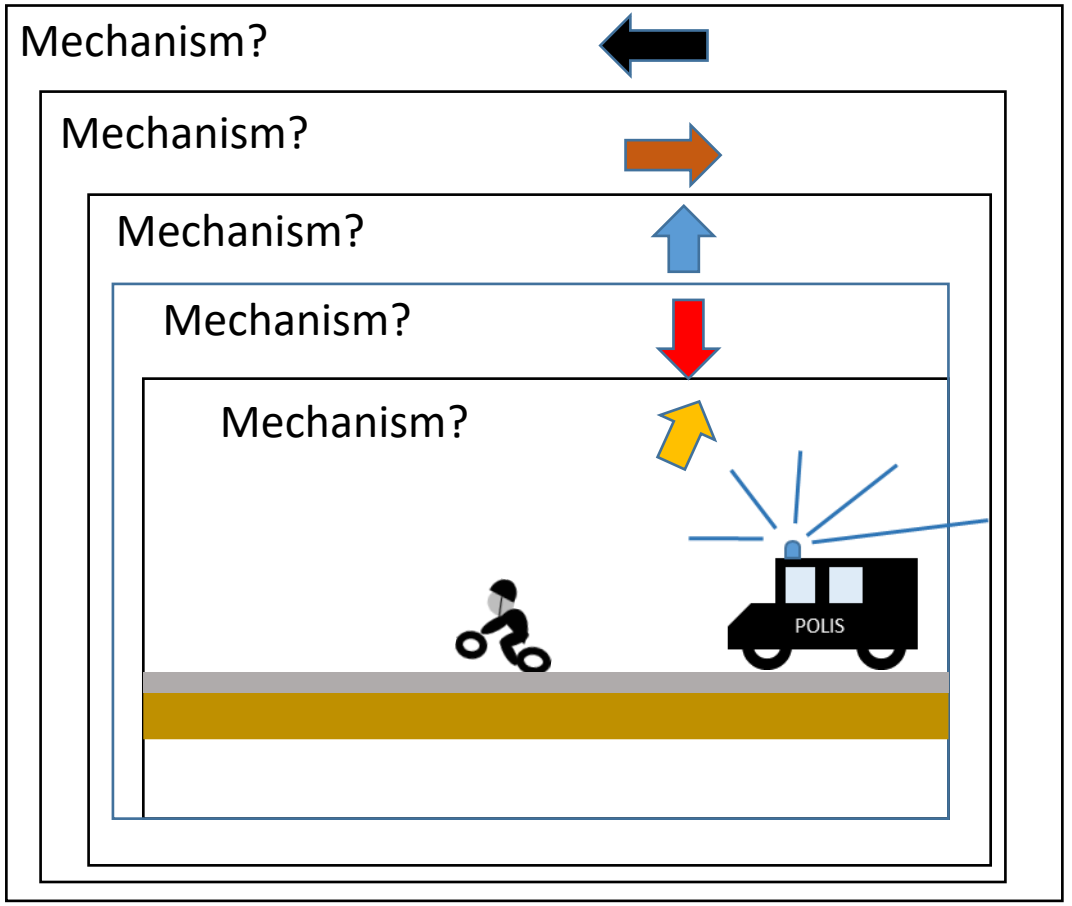


Ideally: the powers residing in different structures align perfectly with each other



One work – Unified purpose – Unitary effort

Actually: the powers deriving from different structures undermining or working against each other



Numerous works – Many purposes – Diversed efforts

How to get a better theoretical grip of the complexities behind performing

The object of interest should be approached from a perspective that has potential to cast light to the relations between the various layers defining it.

Three perspectives to technology – tool, machine, ensemble (three different analogies displaying increases in complexity, but sharing some identity in kind)

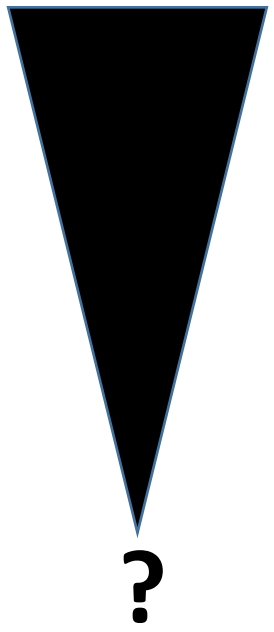
- The police as a tool
- The police as a machine
- The police as a technical ensemble

Approaching the police as technology?

- The police as a tool

When we see something as (nothing but) a tool, we agree to put aside all questions that are not limited to its tool-like characteristics. Tools lack truth-value, i.e. they are neither true or untrue, but only efficient or not, easy or hard to use, fit to the purpose of their use, possibly for several such uses, etc.

Imagining the police as a tool



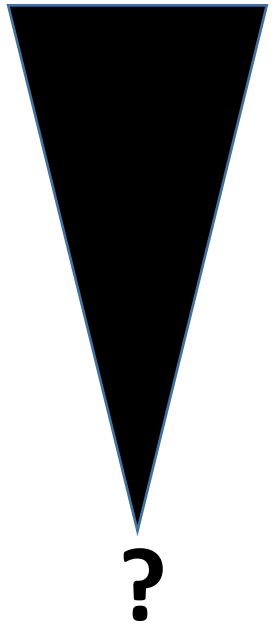
Fitness for the task/purpose

Approaching the police as technology?

- The police as a machine

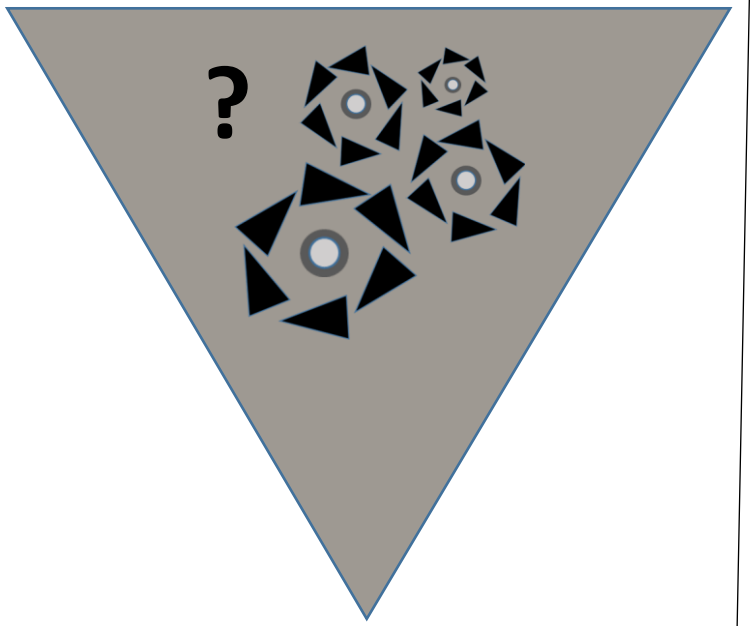
Machines are engineered systems consisting of (preferably) standardized, but perfectly organized, parts each of which succeeds in fulfilling its task in a coherent and well-coordinated manner. From a single cog or a spring, it would be impossible to figure out the whole machinery needed, say, for a functioning engine. The functioning of a machine depends on success in excluding any unwanted external or internal interference to it. What tends to interest us is questions related to engineering, design, running costs, efficiency, economics, need for maintenance, etc.

Imagining the police as a tool



Fitness for the task/purpose

Imagining the police as a machine-like system



Principles that make the tool-like parts to work together timely in purposeful manner

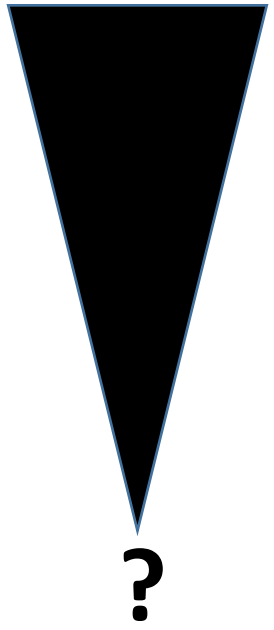
Approaching the police as technology?

The police as a technical ensemble

Ensembles are collections of individuals or complex objects consisting in true organisations capable in self-organising and merging technology with culture, but also to inform their respective environments (Iliadis 2015). In technical ensembles, technical individuals come together in ways that allows each to maintain its associated milieu. Thus, such an ensemble is necessarily a resident of several environments and also, in an uncoordinated way, dependent on their respective development.

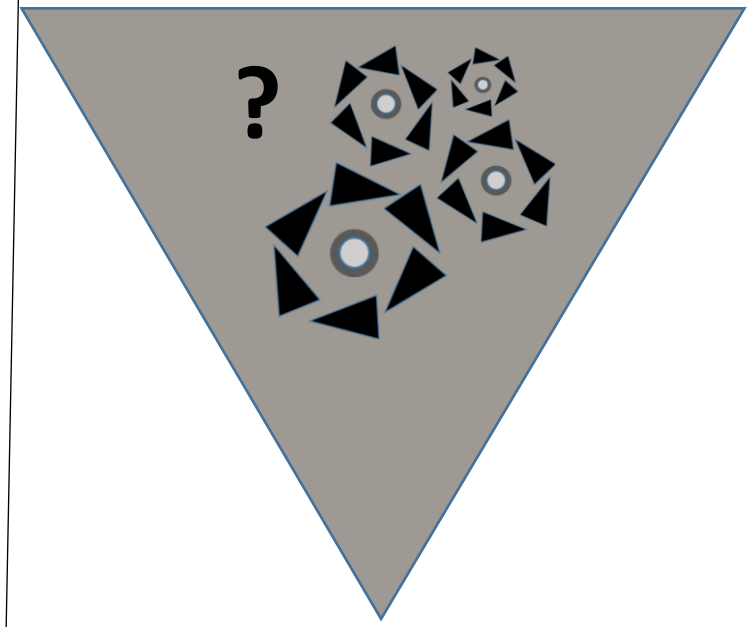
In a smoothly functioning ensemble, all technical objects with recurrent causality in their associated milieu are separated from each other and the objects are connected in a way that preserves the mutual independence of their associated milieus and thus ascertains the undisturbed realisation of their respective functions (Simondon 1980, pp. 71-73).

Imagining the police as a tool



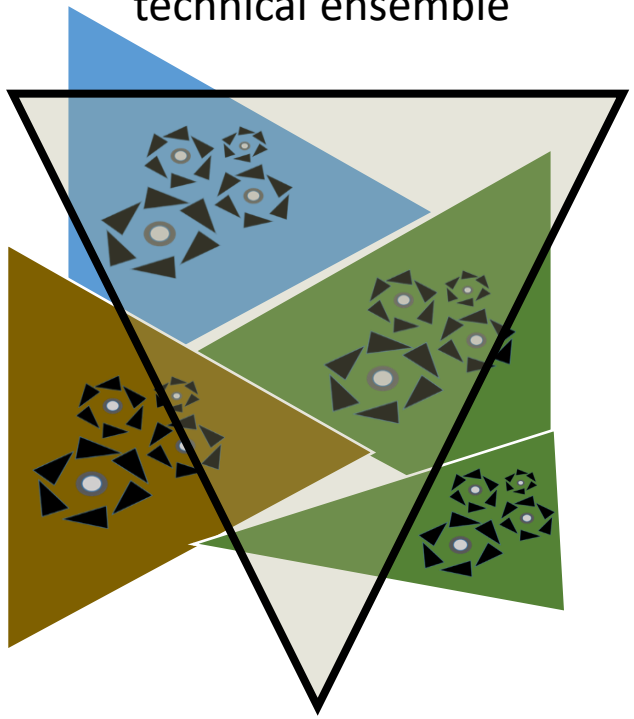
Fitness for the task/purpose

Imagining the police as a machine-like system



Principles that make the tool-like parts to work together timely in purposeful manner

Imagining a the police as a technical ensemble



Relations between a variety of systems the state of which define's the current path and character

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Work in progress… Thank you!

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