

Pulling apart the Population health intervention black box: The concept of 'mechanism' from a realist evaluation perspective.

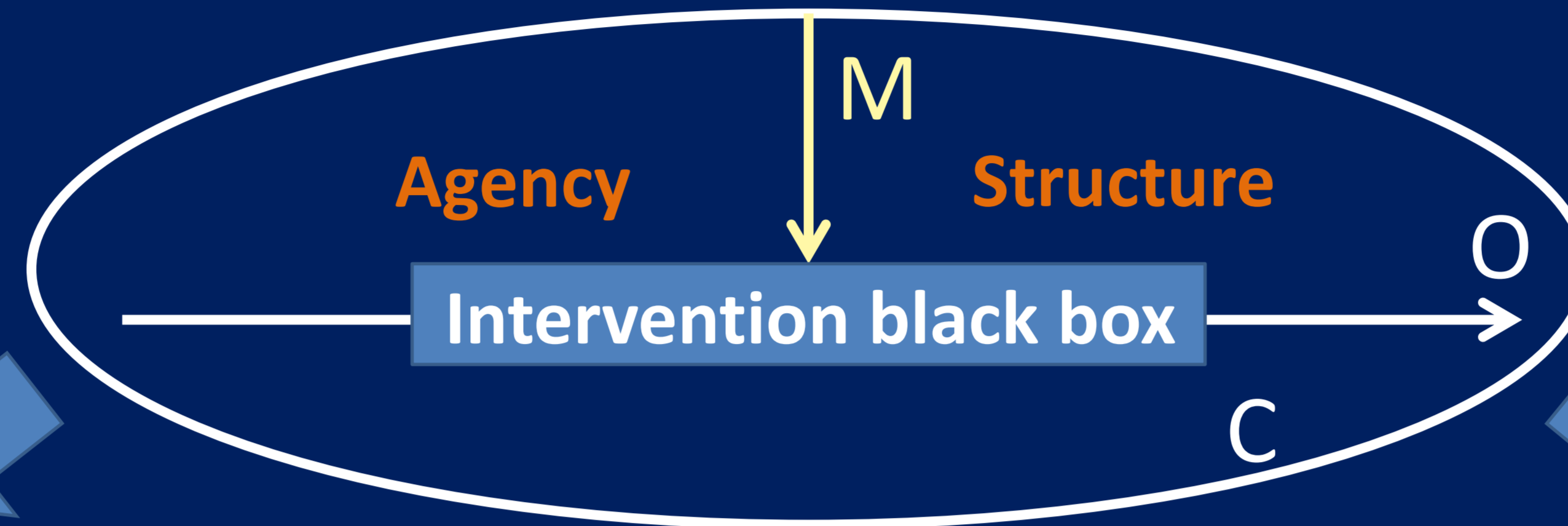
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To open the intervention black box, 3 reading keys per 'mechanism' (M):



FORCE / POWER

Generative causation

- M hidden, but real
- M produces outcomes (O)
- M depends on context (C)
- Existence of families of 'mechanisms'

RELATION / INTERACTION

Interrelationships Agency/Structure

- M: Reasoning/Resources
- M: Reactions
- Logic of intervention

DYNAMIC PROCESS

Implementation

- Anteriority/History
- Temporality

For Whom ?

Actors in Population health (PH) intervention
(Stakeholders, researchers, practitioners...)

Acting at different levels of intervention
(Practice, programme, policy...)

Involved in different issues

(Health system management, Health promotion, Healthcare access...)

What ?

Challenges of complex intervention evaluation

- Complex nature of context-dependant intervention
- Shortfalls of (quasi) experimental evaluation design
- **Realist approach:** a theory-based evaluation (*Pawson & Tilley, 1997*)
"Context-Mechanism-Outcomes" configuration

Scoping study

- Exploratory study of the grey and scientific literature
- Conceptual analysis: term, sense, referent (*Gerring, 1999; Sartori, 2009; Daigneault & Jacob, 2012*)
- 57 documents included (out of 1442 references) featuring an implicit or explicit definition of 'mechanism'

Defining the concept of 'mechanism'

- No consensus about the definition
- Clarification is required for a more coherent use (*Marchal et al, 2012*)
- Very recent debate in PH evaluation
- The proponents of the realist approach have suggested a general methodological framework rather than a strict one

How ?

Why ?

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