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A Holistic Security Architecture for Distributed Information Systems – A Categorical Approach

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A Holistic Security Architecture for Distributed Information Systems – A Categorical Approach

- In modern heterogeneous interoperable systems such as **Distributed Information Systems (DIS)**
 - **higher-order** operations are needed as same conditions applied in different systems may lead to unpredictable results
- **Security** for Distributed Information Systems
 - Can be achieved by securing the processes and the channels used for their interactions and by protecting the resources against unauthorized access

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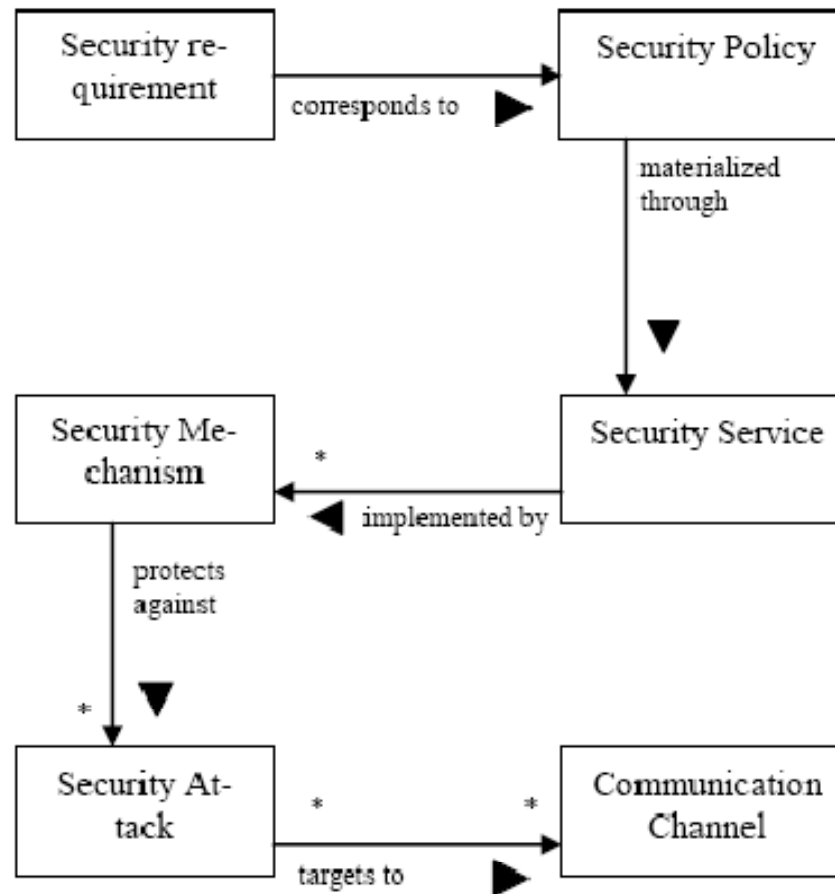


Fig 1: Security in distributed information system

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- Security is a higher order activity, related to issues as:
 - **data integrity**
 - enforcement of database integrity constraints
 - concurrency control
 - backup and recovery procedures, within
 - an overall security and access control framework
 - **interoperability**
 - among complex heterogeneous systems
 - a global requirement of higher order
 - cannot be handled in a complete and decidable manner by axiomatic methods such as first order predicate calculus

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- Current security approaches are characterized by their **locality**
 - They can be seen as **first-order** activities
- Organizations usually respond to security threats on a **piecemeal basis** following hardware and software solutions
 - inevitably leave gaps and generate inconsistencies, which can be exploited by intruders

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- **Bottom-up** approaches, such as *risk analysis* and *risk management*, are subjective
- **Top-down** approaches (e.g. *baseline* approaches), such as *ISO/IEC 27001:2005* specification and the *ISO/IEC 17799:2005 Code of Practice*, leave the choice of control to the user
- A complete security strategy needs to be layered
- A promising solution is to include security considerations as *core processes* of the system itself.

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- A **holistic approach** with *natural closure* seems necessary to describe a complete and global view.
 - Based on the **CIA security principles**, namely *confidentiality, integrity and availability*
 - Focused on securing the infrastructure itself by forcing users to adopt best security practices while ensuring that the system is “*secure by design*” rather than by post-rational customization

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- In the context of Distributed Information Systems
 - A **distributed computation** M , e.g. a *distributed transaction*, is composed of a dynamic group of **processes** P running on different resources and sites expressed in the form of a group of **communication channels** W
 - The processes P :
 - Have a disjoint address space
 - Communicate with each other by **message passing** via W using a variety of mechanisms, including unicast and multicast

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- **Category theory** provides a formal approach to process simply by the use of the **arrow**
 - It is inherently holistic
 - and with intrinsic natural closure
- A **category** :
 - A *class*, consisting of arrows between objects
 - It provides a much greater power than functions between sets
 - It is also of the nature of a *type*

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- Fundamental category theory shows that for physical existence the real world operates as a **Cartesian Closed Category** (that is a category of *real world objects*)
- It has been shown in previous work that, any realizable system can be conceptually expressed using *four interchangeable levels* in categorical terms (Figures 2 & 3)

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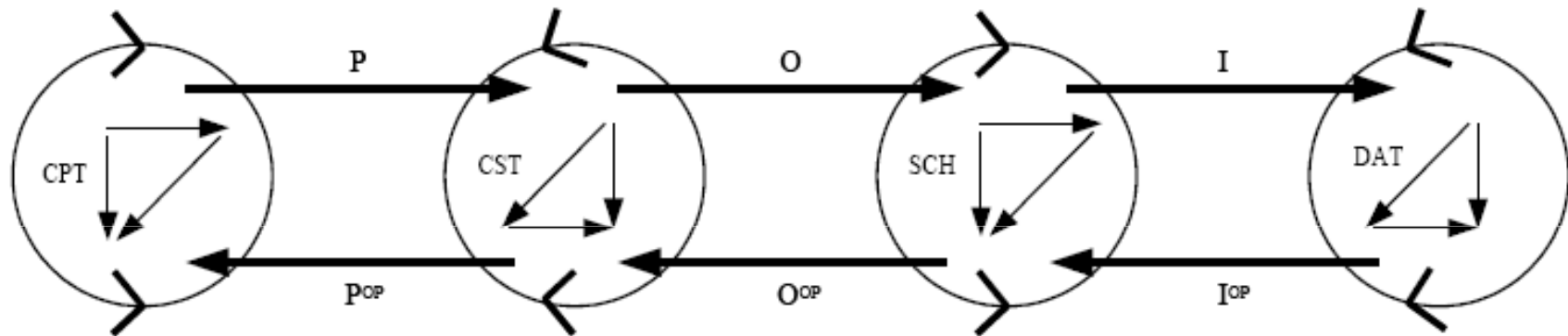


Fig 2: Natural composition of adjoint functors

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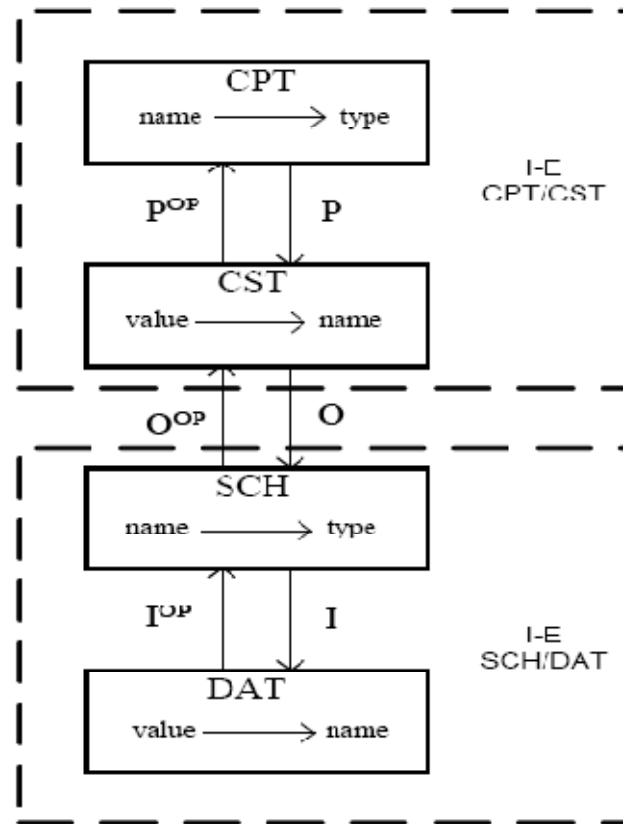


Fig 3: Four levels defined with contravariant functors and intension-extension pairs

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- **Adjointness** characterizes the unique relationship between these *Cartesian Closed Categories*
 - *Interoperability* is expressed in terms of the adjunction of the adjoint functors in Figure 4.
 - *Naturality* is based on the ordering and interoperability of the two free and open represented category systems
- From an **application** viewpoint, a useful view of an adjunction is that of *insertion in a constrained environment*
 - The unit η can be thought of as quantitative creation, the counit ε as qualitative validation (Figure 5)

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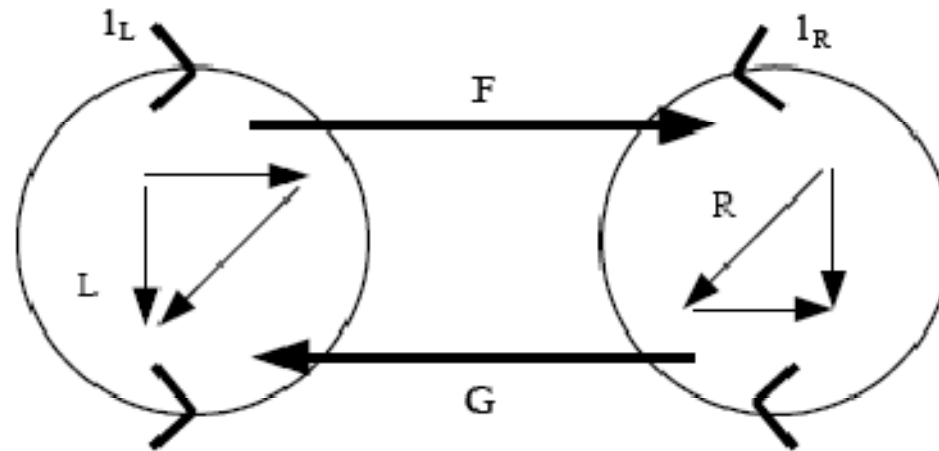


Fig 4: Adjointness between two systems

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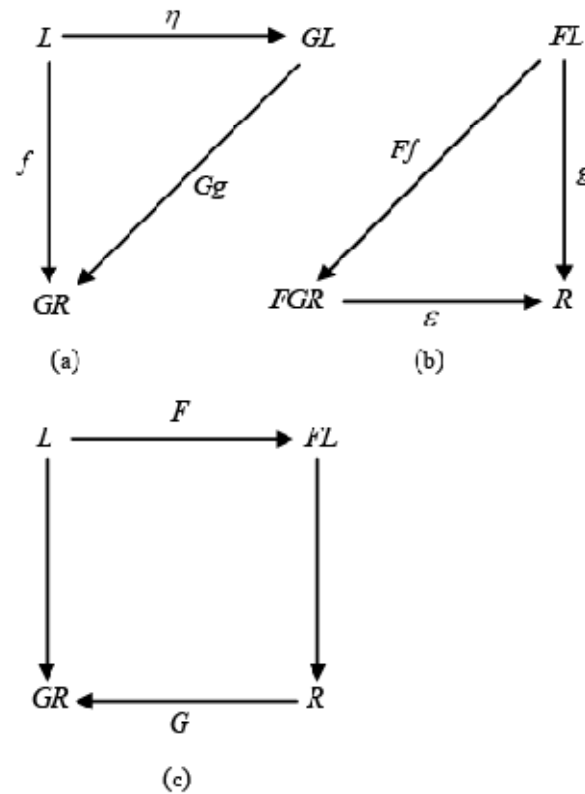


Fig 5: Adjointness between two systems L & R
(a) the unit of the adjunction,
(b) the co-unit of the adjunction,
(c) adjoint functors F & G

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- The proposed **Holistic Security Framework** is developed in two parallel stages
 - In **stage 1**, security entities such as objects and object hierarchies are *categorified* into Cartesian Closed Categories.
 - In **stage 2**, distributed computations, e.g distributed transactions, between processes or groups of processes (each one consisted of a series of events), can be broken up into a *series of composed adjoints*

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- The holistic security architecture, in categorical terms, can be visualized as **mappings between pairs of adjoint functors**
- For **example**:
 - *Local extensionalities*, e.g. local security policies in the form of **comma categories**, are interconnected one with another through *global intentionality* e.g. global security policy or meta-policy framework

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– Summary

- Current security approaches are characterized by their **locality** and are based on **axiomatic set theory**, which offend Gödel.
- **But**, security for heterogeneous distributed information systems is based on **higher order** activities.
- The object-oriented approach, in the context of distributed information systems security, needs to be founded in **applied category theory** to be **complete** and **decidable**
- A **holistic**, modular security approach provides *natural closure* and follows the ‘*process*’ approach of the DIS itself