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What If Pigs Could Fly? Separating Myth from Possibilities through Fourth Industrial Revolution Technologies and Applications in Law Enforcement

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Abstract*:* This conceptual and imaginative paper explores the "what if" question, in relation to migrating from myths to possibilities, in the context of how fourth industrial revolution technologies and applications can enhance law enforcement efforts in combating crime. The paper argues that industry captains and political principals are not reimagining and re-engineering digitalisation fast enough to give law enforcement a competitive edge over the criminal underworld, which is perpetually looking for ways to outsmart the police by also using advanced technologies. To counter the problem, police managers and political principals have to overcome the "not possible syndrome" and be more open to what fourth industrial revolution innovations could bring in terms of operational efficiencies, that is if they dare to imagine, do pilot testing, and implement what is traditionally perceived to be impossible. This paper extrapolates the "what if" question by daring into uncharted terrains that may not have been explored using fourth industrial revolution technologies and applications to combat crime and promote sustainability. The paper thus gives recommendations on what can be done to migrate from the myth "it is impossible", to reimagining the possibilities that fourth industrial revolution technologies and applications could unlock. The research uses an imaginative methodology, making it qualitative desktop that draws from literature. In essence, the research combines parts of critical design with new materialist epistemologies and practice-based research to ignite imagination, challenge traditional assumptions, and to inspire alternative narratives on technologies, this to harness out of the box thinking around the fourth industrial revolution.

Keywords: Industry 4.0; Artificial Intelligence; Crime Prevention; Law Enforcement; Technology.

Introduction

"If pigs could fly" denotes an impossibility or a view that something can never happen. This phrase or cliché is humorous scepticism that denotes disbelief in the prospects of a particular event ever coming to reality. The famous folktales of witches flying on brooms is myth that has for centuries been relayed across all cultures of the world, from generation-to-generation. This is why this paper poses the "what if" questions. What if innovators were to create a small enough for one or two persons flying vessel, with structural designs that resemble a broom? What if such vessel or technological innovation was to be named or trademarked "the witches' shuttle"? With these thought-provoking questions in mind, this paper challenges industry captains and political principals to imagine what investment in, and the acquisition of cutting-edge technologies could do for law enforcement or police operations and crime prevention in general. To capture imaginations, Ehiane, Olifinbiyi and Mkhize (2023) argues that Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) or Industry 4.0 technologies/applications can be used to breed innovation, digitalisation and unprecedented levels of preparedness that are considered impossible in fighting crime.

This paper generally postulates that industry captains (senior police managers) and political principals are not reimagining digitalisation fast enough to reengineer and give the police a competitive edge over the criminal underworld. Digitalisation talks to the use of advanced technologies. This is automated changes to business models for the better, to create a competitive advantage, new job opportunities and bring good returns on investment (Karakikes et al. 2025). If the police don't deploy 4IR technologies and applications fast enough, they run the risk of being outsmarted by criminal networks, who are also deploying the same technological capabilities to keep abreast

(Matlala, 2025). To deal with the problem, police managers and political principals have to overcome the "not possible syndrome" and be more open to how 4IR technologies and innovations can be factored to improve operational efficiencies. By daring to imagine, piloting and implementing 4IR technologies and applications, police managers can demonstrate unprecedented crime prevention strategies that are traditionally perceived to be impossible.

For captains of industry and political principals, raising the "what if" questions is not only about digitilising, improving efficiency in fighting crime, or being boastful about the delivery and deployment of cutting-edge 4IR tools. These aspects are also critical for human development and sustainability. Apart from politicians canvassing for votes and police managers using the successes derived from 4IR for career advancement, Matlala (2025) postulates that there can never be human development and sustainability when safety and security is under the threat of soaring crime. Stakeholders in law enforcement thus need to invoke imaginative methodologies and think out of the box around workflows and processes in crime prevention, as a means to improve efficiencies and maintain a competitive advantage over criminal networks that include organised crime syndicates, religious extremists that breed terrorists, and crime in general. This means "making pigs fly" by using 4IR tools to dispel the myth that some things cannot be done. By being imaginative, police managers and political principals will also be advancing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16. The goal promotes peace, inclusive societies, sustainable development, access to justice, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in society (Arugay & Baquisal, 2024; Briones-Peñalver et al. 2024; United Nations, 2024).

Problem Statement

For most police agencies around the globe, particularly those that experience souring crime rates, the key success factors in managing crime reside in exploiting opportunities to protect communities and increasing safety and security. This is imperative in attaining sustainable development, which Matlala (2025) cogently opines on the non-realisation thereof if there are no safe and secure environments within communities. The lingering question of course is how to make pigs fly or how can police agencies exploit 4IR technologies and applications to digitalise and create conditions of safety. To this end, research by Butler (2023) has shown that budget constraints, inadequate resourcing, and improper training are some of the common denominators that hinder the proper functioning of police in the 4IR.

A key compelling factor identified in the research by Butler (2023) is how the identified problems, including the use of outdated technologies, render some police agencies sluggish when it comes to dealing with crime. This paper argues that the problems are not only about the (non)availability of resources, financing and/or inadequate training, but also relate to poor or lack of imagination by industry captains and to an extent, the abject lack of political will to capacitate police agencies. In their research, Bashir and Masood (2025) bemoans the gap in how creativity and innovation are lacking in frontline police work, a problem which they ascribe to policy standards with little or no formal mandate for innovation, as well as hierarchical bureaucracy where senior officials tell juniors what to do and how to do it, with no questions expected. The last named authors further argue that such dynamics along with political constraints, result in sluggish reimagination of business, lax business reengineering, poor service delivery, poor safety and security, and sustainability failures. This is why Matlala (2025) affirms security whose operationalisation is underscored by Industry 4.0 applications, as pivot to sustainability.

Methodology

The research in this paper is conceptual qualitative desktop which draws from literature sources to make inductive inferences. To triangulate, the research also follows imaginative methodologies that combines parts of critical design with new materialist epistemologies and practice-based research, to ignite imagination, innovation, curiosity, challenge traditional assumptions, and inspire alternative narratives and pragmatism on technologies and applications, this to harness out of the box thinking around Industry 4.0. Social Science proponent (Masys, 2023; Mische & Mart, 2025; Puecher et al. 2025) accept that imaginative methodologies expands science to challenge traditional ways of doing things and encourages the rethinking of approaches by provoking thought and encouraging practice to dare the unthinkable. These protagonists last cited herein show strong bias towards Industry 4.0 tools as enablers of imaginative methodologies. This paper thus also follows a theoretical framework in imaginative methodologies that consist in four axioms, expressed in clearly set out maxims or pillars. The following are the pillars: (1) strengthening curiosity; (2) asking the hard questions, (3) exploring new opportunities; as well as (4) purposely prioritising and cultivating curiosity (Butler, 2023; Masys, 2023; Briones-Peñalver et al. 2024; Bashir & Masood, 2025; Karakikes et al. 2025; Matlala, 2025; Mische & Mart, 2025; Puecher et al. 2025).

Curiosity Killed the Cats

"Curiosity killed the cats" in the contemporary, is a proverbial expression used in an attempt to stop a person from asking unwanted questions. In this paper, the phrase is argued to be the antithesis of making pigs fly. This goes against the maxims in imaginative methodologies, the grail that is the digitalisation efforts, and the processes that can help lift efficiencies in crime prevention and police work in general. Up until its redefinition in Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* in 1898, the phrase was commonly contextualised and interpreted using earlier versions thereof (Brewer, 1883). The maxim originates from European folklore and mythology (no exact date could be traced in epochs). Often all throughout history, this cliché' was construed in cynical ways. Examples of this can be found in the AD 397 writings by St. Augustine of Hippo, titled *Confessions*. In this work, the author coins in reductionist illusionism, that when God embarked on creation, first on the list was heaven and earth, and that God then created hell for the inquisitive (Cardman, 2019; McArthur, 2025; Squires, 2025). Like St. Augustine, proponents of this cynicism such a John Clarke, also implied in *Paremiologically* in 1639, that a person meddling with every cloud, runs the risk of being struck by thunderbolt (Clarke, 1639), whilst Lord Byron (1788-1824) in *Don Juan,* called curiosity that low vice that led to the cats' demise (Lewis, 2025).

The common divisor in the cynicism is that even though cats may have nine lives, curiosity would eventually wear them all out or would have them killed nine times over, until none of the lives are left. In the context of this paper, the cynicism talks to avoiding technology or technophobia. Fritscher (2023) defines technophobia as the intense fear or dislike of computers, advanced technologies and devices. This author highlights the relating symptoms that range from extreme to low. These include chest pains, fainting, dizziness, panic attacks, short breath, sweating, trembling, and small-to-moderate tension or anxiety when faced up with new technologies (Fritscher, 2023; Luo et al. 2025; Zhao et al. 2025). Whether there has been diagnosed and prognosis on technophobia cases is however not the focus of this paper. This paper is only immersed in making police managers more technocentric in approach. Matlala (2025) defines technocentricity as a research-driven and methodological approach that grounds operations in digitalisation, as a way of improving efficiency and removing humans from harm's way.

Although this paper does not concern itself with the medical or clinical modalities in technological anxiety, there are sociological, legal and socio-economic factors that cause reluctance in using technology. Some of the concerns include loss of and invasion of individual privacies (Singh & Kapoor, 2025), Artificial Intelligence (AI) overreaches (Veras, 2025), cybersecurity susceptibilities (Mercuri, 2025), job losses from automation (Overbeek, 2025), ethical dilemmas and biases from using advanced technologies (Mujtaba, 2025), human over-dependency on technologies (Frenkenberg & Hochman, 2025), the digital divide and inequality (Dyantyi & Mkabile-Masebe, 2025), misinformation and manipulation (Olanipekun, 2025), as well as the eradication of the human touch (Prakash & Bala, 2025). For police managers and political principals to give into such fears, Matlala (2025) argues that this will lead to missed opportunities in terms of digitalising crime prevention efforts. By implication, this also means failure in promoting peace and security, as contemplated in Sustainability Development Goal 16.

The Theoretical Premise

The aim of the research in this paper is not to diagnose police managers or political principals with technological anxiety disorder. On the contrary, the paper acknowledges nuances that may be linked with non or poor digitalisation in police work. The challenges range from lack of resources (Matlala, 2025), poor or no technological infrastructure (Romero, Abante & Vigonte, 2025), lack of political will to capacitate and resource the police (Mabunda, 2025), lack of financial resources (Moore, 2025), to fear of change or the unknown (Cunneen, 2025), reluctance to try new approaches (Lin, 2025), bureaucracy and red tape (Terpstra, 2025), including lack of imagination (Winter, 2025), lack of innovation and creativity (Laufs & Borrion, 2022), being dismissive (Van Der Schyff, 2025, and using outdated technologies (Spina, 2025). To disclaim, not all police agencies experience these nuances. Contextualised case research has shown what the inherent dynamics are within specific police agencies.

For the police, the concerns around digitalisation and the (non)implementation of advanced methodologies in crime prevention, especially Industry 4.0 technologies and application, resides in invoking imaginative methodologies. This paper argues that although curiosity may have killed the cats, this mythology should not apply to industry captains because they are law enforcement officers and not cats. It is common course that contemporary law enforcers will phase out, whether by retirement, death or any other eventuality. However, it is natural that humans are in a perpetual state of being recycled as new ones always come to being. Thus, there can never be shortages of new actors within the law enforcement space. What is required is actors who can implement or take imaginative methodologies forward. This the paper emphatically postulates that, espousing imaginative methodologies is what can see through the

migration from myth to possibilities, that is towards digitalised pragmatism. The theoretical premise for the methodology in this paper is therefore summarised in the following axioms:

Strengthening curiosity: The evolving landscape of law enforcement necessitates transformative approaches that extend beyond traditional crime prevention methods to cultivate curiosity, resilience, competencies, and sustainability. According to Ekeh (2025:838), these are the traits that are gradually recognised as vital in navigating the complexities of the 21st century. For police managers, cultivating curiosity should form part of continuous training, as a means to foster lifelong learning and adaptability to the contemporary times in which they operate. The key question in strengthening curiosity is for the police to ask what if they tried something new such as AI, machine learning, virtual reality, drones and data analytics in crime prevention.

Asking the hard questions: From a theoretical perspective, asking hard questions enables the acquisition of knowledge, critical thinking, the overcoming fear, the building of networks, improved communication and the promotion of innovation (Tanima et al. 2025). What this theoretical premise implies is that asking tough questions can in addition to facilitating information-sharing, also help police managers to overcome technophobia, as well as dispel the mistrusts that prevent them from engaging with other stakeholders such as communities and the business sector that can help in the capacitation of technological infrastructures for crime prevention. For the police to accept hard questions, there needs to be meaningful organisational culture changes that move away from the hierarchical thinking that boxes intellect into rank structures superiors and juniors. By extension, this means that police managers need to depart from the notion that only they can think critically. Leibovitch et al. (2025) admits that critical thinking in leadership development programs for police managers remains under-represented.

Exploring new opportunities: According to Chotisarn and Phutong (2025), technology facilitates the level of dynamism that enable organisations to be conscious of and embrace new opportunities, thus allowing the reconfiguration of the deployment of resources, to maintain competitiveness. If the police are to win the fight against crime, making pigs fly by embracing 4IR technologies and applications is thus non-negotiable. Whilst discourse on the approach or the implementation is a given, the sourcing of new technologies should become an imperative.

Purposely prioritising and cultivating curiosity: Research (Nottingham & Gosling, 2024; Halabi & Allam, 2025; Hardy III, 2025) shows that the best way for organisations to breed and prioritise curiosity is by nurturing the mindsets of employees; embedding curiosity into systems and processes; and creating teams/platforms for brainstorming and joint problem-solving. This paper argues that this type of approach is something not considered in some police agencies. This is largely to the command and control management approach used in most law enforcement organisations. According to Gulzar et al. (2025), command and control as a management approach, stifles creativity, demotivates employees, breaks down trust between leaders and team members, does not promote adaptability in rapidly changing business environments, and results in staff turnovers with the inherent skills attrition in law enforcement. This is the kind of approach that affirms “curiosity killed the cats” and “not possible” syndrome.

Making Pigs Fly by Trailblazing In Law Enforcement

The work of industry captains in law enforcement is to make pigs fly. This implies being imaginative by blazing the trail through piloting Industry 4.0 technologies and applications that have never been explored before. Equally, the job of political principals is to be custodians or owners of the filling or gas stations where the pigs can refuel before going airborne. What this means is that political principals should be imaginative themselves, have the will, the aptitude, and set the tone for ensuring that there are adequate policy and legislative changes to enable the implementation of Industry 4.0 technologies. The ownership also implies making financial resources available for the purchase of new technologies. To this end, Macnish, Wright and Jiya (2020) are convinced that lack of political will to recalibrate policy and legislation are the main challenges in adapting to imaginative policing methodologies. These authors further contend that policing could not move fast enough to become smart in the era of AI and smart societies which requires smart policing that is empowered through Industry 4.0 applications. Some of the key technologies that align with Industry 4.0 and imaginative methodologies are as follows:

Predictive Policing: This applies AI and machine learning to digitalise law enforcement operations. According to Raji and Sholademi (2024), predictive policing uses algorithms that analyse huge datasets to forecast on criminal activities through crime hotspots identification. This proactive capability is according to the last named author, key in improving police resource allocation and response times. The capability enabled through such tools purport the police to be some kind of prophets that can detect crime before it even occurs. In the context of this paper, such capability is in a manner of speech, “making pigs fly”. It is such capabilities that serve as a deterrence to would be criminals. The argument in this paper is that such capability can persuade would be criminals to ask “what if” the police are already waiting at the

location in which the planned crime is to be committed. Although this paper does not dwell into the technical challenges of this AI application, Raji and Sholademi (2024) highlights some relating challenges. Notably, the effectiveness of the application with mixed results, showing reduced crime in some areas and not in others; potential biases wherein the application was targeted at marginalised or impoverished communities in which crime is high, which suggest a discriminative approach; as well as ethical concerns that involved the intersection of AI, civil liberties, accountability, integrity, responsible and ethical usage, transparency, and public trust. To deal with the problem, generally requires a balanced approach that will integrate transparency, community engagement and regulatory oversight in the deployment of the tools.

Flying and Walking Cars: Flying cars are the future in transportation, and they combine aviation and ground-based transportation (Zilahy, 2025), whilst walking cars are robotics infused with legs that enable navigation on terrains that are traditionally difficult or impossible (Flores, 2024). These innovations are being piloted by Uber and Hyundai respectively. Such innovation begs imagination on what investment in and implementation of such pioneering technologies can do in terms of digitalising police patrols in urban and rural terrains that are not easy to navigate. This is where the will to "make pigs fly" should be purposely prioritised.

Advanced Human-Machine Interfaces (HMI): Imagine the kind of crime prevention capabilities where flying and walking cars are powered with HMI. This is an application that can enable humans (police) to interact with machines and operational processes by providing remote control of machines; user interface customisation; complex data visualisation in real time; touchscreen capabilities; and programmable logic control integration (Li & Peng, 2025). The digitalisation aided through HMI also means police officers are able to control machines remotely, from safer environments. This implies lesser police being killed in the line of duty.

Smart Sensors: Smart Sensors are Internet of Things (IoT) devices that use infrared, motion sensors, pressure sensors, proximity and thermal sensors (Wang, 2025). The devices takes inputs from the physical environment and computes predefined counteractions. For the police, Smart Sensors can enable accurate intelligence gathering, smart grids and the monitoring of crime hotspots, as well as propose appropriate counteractions (Hassebo, 2025). Smart grids refer to modernised electrical power systems that integrates advanced digital technologies and communication systems that enhance digitalisation efforts (Zakaria, Amr & Ragheb, 2025).

Drone Technology: Drones refer toe unmanned aerial vehicles that can help law enforcement agencies to monitor and collect data on crime hotspots from an aerial view (Matlala, 2025). This technology allows the police to cover vast areas faster at a lesser cost, compared to fuel-based vehicle patrols (Fox, 2022; Ana-Raluca, 2025; Bramble & Lydon, 2025; Matlala, 2025).

Forensic Databases: These are specialised systems that store and manage huge forensic datasets that are pivotal in solving crimes and identifying suspects (Pryor et al. 2025). Forensic databases include fingerprint and retinal records, DNA profiles and ballistic information among others. These databases also include information on how complex cases were investigated and thus serve as a crucial benchmarking tool in police investigations (Moawad et al. 2025). The issue with policing globally is that forensic databases are not connected. This lack of interconnectivity makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to share information, a gap that has, as this paper so cogently argues, allowed transnational criminal acts to thrive. To deal with the issues requires imagined pragmatism that can separate myth from possibilities.

Separating Myth from Possibilities: The Imagined Pragmatism

This conceptual and imaginative paper as cited, explores the "what if" question as a way of migrating from myths to possibilities, in the context of how Industry 4.0 tools can enhance law enforcement efforts. The paper thus imagines what the technologies and application can bring in combating some of the thorny issues such as organised crime, religious extremism and crime in general. To depart, the paper defines organised crime as centralised and syndicated criminal enterprises that engage in offences that are not limited to kidnappings for ransom, serial extortions, trafficking of contraband, drugs, firearms and persons, the infiltration of businesses and governments, as well as the provision of illicit services such as running forced prostitution rings, illicit artisanal mining, and forced child labour enterprises (Davies et al. 2021; Ciobotaru et al. 2024; Hufnagel, 2024; Junninen, 2025). Research (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2024) has shown that nuances and complexities in organised crime create conflict in socioeconomic fabrics in communities through violence, conflict, and diminishing livelihoods, thereby causing instability at the expense of sustainable human development.

There can be no doubt that the nuances and complexities in organised crime require innovative and imaginative law enforcement, supported through the use of advanced technologies and applications linked to Industry 4.0. This paper postulates that the police need to be more curious in what contemporary technologies and application can offer, how these can assist in combating organised crime, ask the hard questions in terms of what the inefficiency bottlenecks are, who is responsible for the blockages, who can unlock the stumbling blocks, why the blockages are in place, what needs to be done to unlock the enforcement capabilities/capacity, and what are the opportunities on offer to digitalise crime combating efforts. This implies that police managers have to dare to make pigs fly, that is to wonder imaginatively into unchartered terrains, dare to dream and innovate, make proposals to political principals, acquire the resources, do piloting, and turn the findings into strategy and operations.

If police managers and political principals dare to make pigs fly in dealing with organised crime, the same methodology can also be applied to crime in general and to religious extremism. Religious extremism refers to beliefs and the promotion of radicalism based on religion, often characterised in violence, intolerance to different views or beliefs, and imposition of own beliefs in others (Chunlin & Gunaratna, 2025; Hiyatma, Hidayati & Yanuar, 2025; Salido-Medina, 2025). According to Chunlin and Gunaratna (2025), religious extremism is deep ideological commitment and loyalty to a particular belief system. These authors have also highlighted such disposition as the main cause in the creation of terror groups that threaten state security, and by extension, community safety, and sustainable development. Terrorism is transnational organised crime (Maliyk, 2024; Geldenhuys, 2025; Ilić, 2025; Singh, Jagganath & Ojolo, 2025; Plachta, 2025) that requires a "runaway stallion" approach in police work.

A Runaway Stallion Approach to Law Enforcement

In simplistic terms, a runaway stallion is cliché that represents untamed creativity and infinite efforts that embody imaginativeness. The antithesis of this resonates with the rapid (runaway) evolution theory of Ronald Aylmer Fisher (1890-1962). Although the theory speaks to genetics, it also attempts to explain the rapid or runaway evolution of disadvantageous male traits in species such as the long, colourful, but cumbrous tails of peacocks (Fisher, 1934). Fisher's theory essentially talks to the posture by some political principals and police top brass that have technophobia and lack the political will to embrace 4IR technologies. Technophobia is by extension, sluggishness in the digitalisation of police operations.

Technophobic managers are most likely to be highly decorated persons, with medals and distinguished service records, but fear change in a rapidly changing world. The multipolar geopolitics, geoeconomics and digital revolution embraced the world over, means that the police also need to adapt. This means dying from the male peacock syndrome described by Fisher. Failure to adapt is likely to lead to the "not possible" syndrome, a lack of imagination and innovation, including strong resistance to change. This paper argues that resistance to change does imply inadequate use of authority and incompetence by police managers and political principals. As such, police managers and political principals need to embrace the runaway stallion approach by aligning with Industry 4.0, to keep abreast with technologies.

What is worrisome is that global cooperation in law enforcement has not shown seriousness or concerted efforts in attaining the levels of multipolarity and multilateralism required in contemporary times. Multipolarity talks to a global system of multiple centres of power (Petersmann, 2025), whilst multilateralism involves a grouping of countries (in this case, their police agencies) that work together in common purpose (Bhattarai, 2025). To explicate, the world has not seen a push by law enforcement agencies from developed countries making serious efforts to engage with, form partnership with and share technological resources with police from poor and developing nations. They remain the most resourced, thus centres of power that are most efficient in fighting crime. The aftermath of this is that transnational crime continues flow over from poor and developing jurisdictions, into developed nations. Chen et al. (2025) agree that technological apartheid does spill-over crime from poor to rich nations.

This shortfall also happens as the world is increasingly galvanising towards a multipolar and multilateral direction. An example of this is the G20 Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa on 22-23 November 2025. The summit resolved on promoting solidarity, equality and sustainability (Department of International Relations & Cooperation, 2025). Albeit the focus on climate, economics and global governance, the direction of the summit does have implications for law enforcement globally. To attain multipolarity, multilateralism and sustainability, the police also need to convene global summits, strengthen multilateral networks, share resources, share intelligence, share technological and digitalisation expertise, and benchmark from one another. Also, global bodies such as BRICS which aims to promote geopolitical and economic integration among its members (Kaura, 2024), need to get to a point where its multipolarity and multilateralism program includes cooperation in law enforcement.

At a local level, a key strategy in the runaway stallion approach is community policing. This strategy brings together the police and local communities into joint crime prevention efforts, this to promote community engagement (Savka, 2025). Community engagement in law enforcement is all about tapping into the social capital as a means to effectively fight crime (Board, 2023). This paper argues that community engagement supported by digitalisation instruments, could set the platform wherein crime prevention becomes imaginative and ventures into never explored before terrains. This essentially implies the prospects offered when tapping into Industry 4.0 technologies discoursed in this paper. In provoking imagined pragmatism in digitalising law enforcement work, this paper asks these questions:

- What if the police were to infiltrate organised syndicates, with undercover agents having contact lenses that are smart sensors powered?
- What if the lenses transmitted live pictures to systems that integrate biometric technologies that can do live identifications of suspects using facial, ear and retinal signatures?
- What if the police use forensic databases to profile modus operandi and to follow the money trails of the identified suspects, in their investigation of crimes such as money laundering?
- What if the police use drones, flying or walking cars to raid organised crime syndicate or terrorist network compounds?
- What if these machines are fitted with cameras that have forensic video, thermal imaging and photogrammetric capabilities, that can lock suspect movement from one camera to the next, detect heat energy to signal life in a suspect or victim, and electronically map and outline crime scene measurements from the camera pictures, respectively?
- What if these machines were unmanned and fitted with military-grade weapons to confront heavily armed criminals who do cash-in-transit heists?
- What if these robotics were remotely controlled to keep police officers out of harm's way?
- What if the police were to use AI to monitor activities of religious extremist or cults, child traffickers, online sex pests, and human traffickers?
- What if police databases were connected to private security armed response to identify a response patrol vehicle closest to victims or persons in distress?
- What if such response is enabled through a free download mobile App that can be used as a panic button?

Conclusions and Recommendations

Leading 4IR technologies such as digital forensics, AI, body cameras, digital forensics, real-time crime centres, automated license plate recognition, forensic photogrammetry, forensic video, virtual reality, body and dash cameras are transforming policing through digitalisation or process efficiency (Matlala, 2025). Given the plethora of Industry 4.0 technologies and applications, this paper disclaims that the "what if" questions raised herein are by no means exhaustive. The questions only serve as examples to encourage police managers and political principals to embrace imaginative methodologies, be more curious and cultivate innovative thinking. The following are thus the recommendations in this paper:

Training on Curiosity and Motivations: Law enforcement agencies need to and should invest in formalised training on curiosity. This should breed the level of creativity and innovation required to enable problem-solving, increased adaptability and resilience, enhanced learning and skills development/retention, improved collaborations, communication, and better decision-making. These are the requisite traits in making pigs fly or having a runaway stallion approach that employ Industry 4.0 technologies in fighting crime and attaining sustainability. Likewise, police agencies can benefit from inviting motivational speakers in areas of curiosity.

Strengthening global police cooperation: The level of cooperation required withing the global law enforcement space is that which should take multilateralism and a multipolar posture. The issue of a global and centralised forensic database to help with investigations and benchmarking is another aspect that the police need to bring to fruition, to enable effectiveness in combating transnational crime. Multilateralism and multipolarity will enable the sharing of knowledge and resources, thus ensuring equality of crime fighting capabilities, the world over.

Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships: These are networks that include local communities that can enhance community policing; the business sector that can help with the technological resources and training needed to digitalise police operations; civil and faith-based organisations that can help the police with social crime prevention and social media presence to educate the public on the dangers of crime and how to navigate and avoid victimhood; as well as higher education institutions that can give training on specific crime combating technologies such as drone piloting

and data analytics, to police officers and members of the community. These are the partnerships that also enable the police to tap into the social capital, which talks to community engagement in the quest to effectively combat crime as a social ill.

Conclusion

The pursuit of a runaway stallion approach or making pigs fly requires political will. Even if police managers were to cultivate curiosity, become innovative and have the passion to digitalise, the aspirations will not succeed if political principals or fuel station owners don't come to the party by making resources available. Equally, the police will not succeed in their efforts to curb crime to levels that promote sustainability if the approach does not follow multilateralism and multipolarity. A success factor in law enforcement is thus in breeding curiosity, strengthening global police cooperation, strengthening partnerships, and accepting that Industry 4.0 is the way of the present, and of the future.

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