The Domestic Nexus

Bringing It All Back Home

Subterranean Homesick Blues (Dylan, B, 1965)

"Johnny's in the basement mixing up the medicine

I'm on the pavement thinking 'bout the government..."

Research & Analysis

Domestic Nexus and Social Practice as Nexus

- **Home – and everyday life – is where the strands in the nexus come together: a set of social practices (in time and place)**
- **Practices are the Nexus**

"…*practice as a temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings*"

(Schatzki 1996:89)

- **Nexus as a conjunction of silos (food, waste, water, energy)**
- **Practice as an intertwining of elements (materials, competences, images)**
- **Both underscore the systemic nature of sustainability challenges**

Which has the better chance of getting through to policy ('impact')?

Research & Analysis

8 Policy Problems with Practices

i. **Other disciplines got there first – eg. in departments' social research teams (psych) and analytical functions (econ)**

ii. **Implicit (sometimes explicit) criticism of policy/analytical teams' ability/understanding (qv. the ABC)**

iii. **Practices herald an end to 'command and control' policy making (cf. illusion of agency)**

iv. **Practice practitioners dislike 'interventions'; practice approaches lack 'evidence' or 'proof' (cf. Lords' Sci Tech Committee Enquiry 2010 / 2013) – hard to monetise (eg. RoI)**

v. **Nudge is the only show in town (theoretically inverse; practically closer?)**

vi. **Puts onus for change on governance, not individuals**

vii. **Genuinely chewy (eg. Schatzki's Wittgensteinian Approach)**

viii. **Socialist practices? (eg. Praxis is Marxist)**

Research & Analysis

Solution A?
Flip Flop ('Unlocking Habits/Reconfiguring Routines' - 2009)

Defra EVO502: Unlocking Habits / Reconfiguring Routines
A Literature Review - Final Report

Andrew Darnton, Bas Verplanken, Paul White & Lorraine Whitmarsh
First DRAFT - 7th September 2009

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Andrew Darnton Research & Analysis

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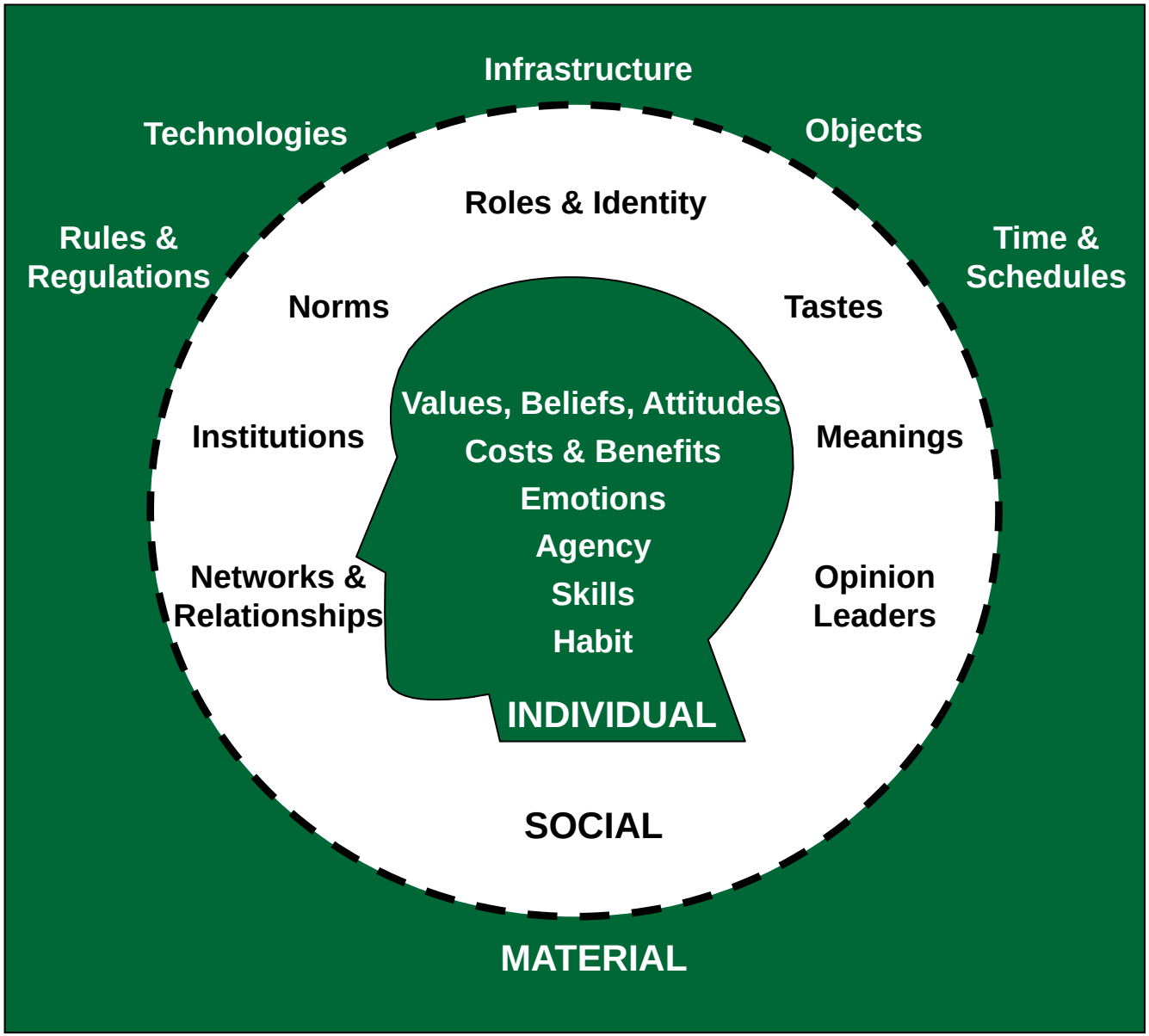
Solution B?
The ISM Model (Darnton & Evans for TSG 2013)



Research & Analysis

Worked Example: Eat Less Meat

- **‘Eat Less Meat’ as Perfect Nexus Issue/Storm**
- **Visible to Depts of Health and Environment**
- **Leadership coming from Civil Society**

  (eg. Eating Better, FCRN, GFS…)

Research & Analysis

Worked Example: Eat Less Meat

- ***"If you want to change a behaviour, first specify the target behaviour"***

  [AD's GSR Knowledge Review 2008]

- **Eating Better/ Esme Fairbairn workshop, October 2015, identified Top 12 'Eat Less Meat' behaviours…**

[behaviour]	[votes]	[goldstars]
Have a meat-free month (5:2 meat free days)	8	*
Don't eat processed meat (sausages?)	6	**
Only eat meat free lunches (never meat for lunch)	6	*
Caterers: don't list non-meat options as 'veggy' or 'meat free'	5	*
Learn veggy cooking skills/recipes	5	-
Make meat the side / cook veg-centric dishes	5	-
See meat as a treat (1 night per week)	3	***
Make 'meat' a special dietary requirement	3	**
Rethink your standard repertoire	3	*
Value meat / make it last (offcuts & leftovers)	3	*
Know more about how meat is produced	2	**
Cook only what you need / buy and freeze	2	*

ISM applied to... eat less meat (FCRN / Wellcome, October 2014)

- **S: Networks**
  Young people eat less meat

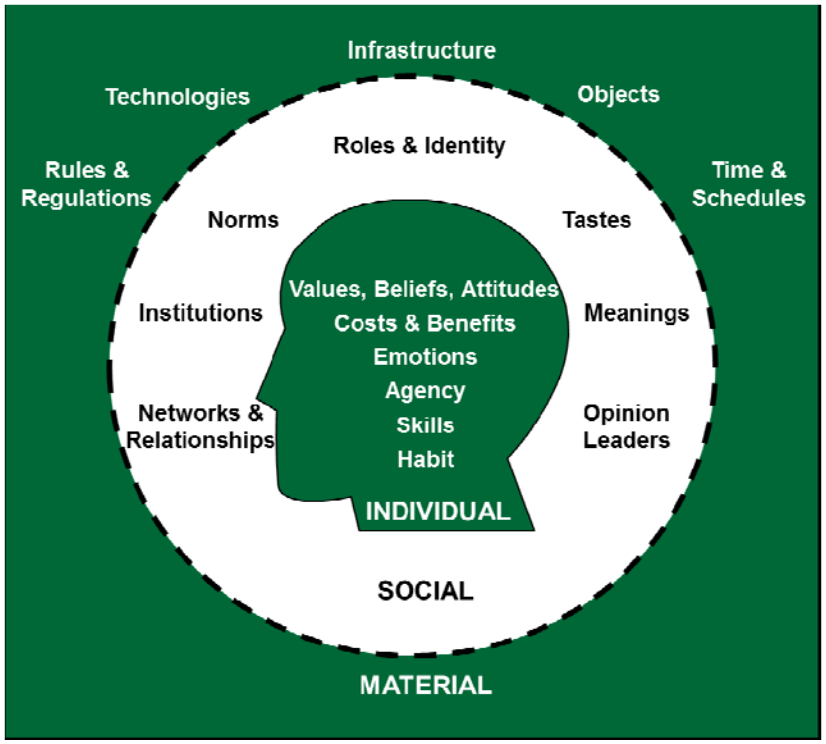
- **S: Tastes**
  Different meats/methods confer distinction

- **S: Meanings**
  'vegetarian', 'ethnic foods'

- **I: Habit**
  Familiarity Effect

- **I: Emotions**
  Filling and tasty

- **I: Costs & Benefits**
  Unhealthy/ processed foods deliver cheaper calories



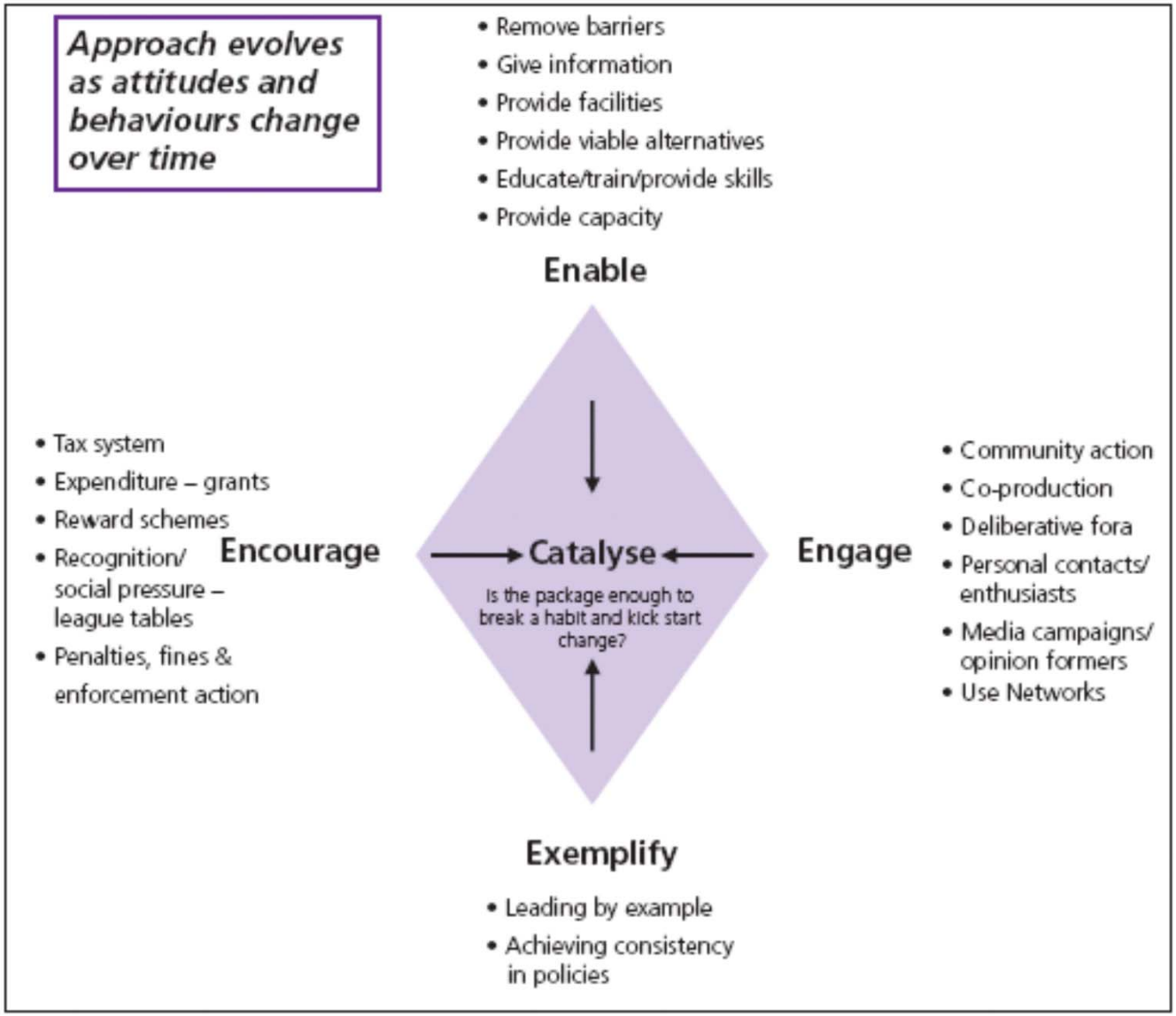
- **M: Infrastructure**
  Convenience stores (mini-supermarkets)

- **M: Objects**
  Ready meals

- **M: Technologies**
  Microwaves

- (PS a disembodied/everyman model: no guts, no gender)

Implications: Not the 4Es model (The SD Strategy, HMG 2005)

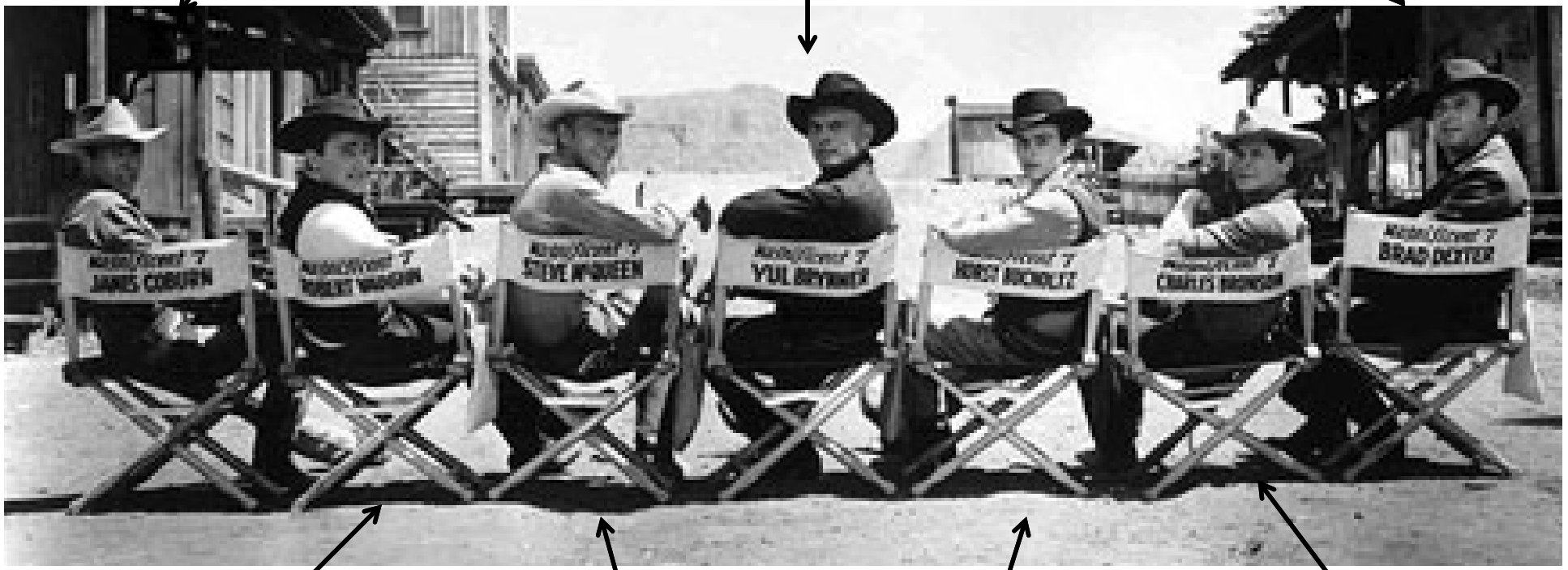


Implications: More like the Magnificent 7 Model

Industry Structure (supply chains)

Technology

Scientific Knowledge



User Practice & Application Domains

Policy

Infrastructure

Symbolic Meaning of Technology

Conclusions: Nexus or Practice?

- **Both are needed – behaviour change 'beyond the indivual'**
- **Maybe just maybe Nexus is a better way through to policy: 'convene the system'**
- **BUT requires working against all the machinery of govt (depts., silos, non-joinedupness, command and control, evidence inc RCTs, b theory as Nudge, ABC inc choice…)**
- **Will need a practice-focus, in order to link to everyday life (where the impacts are)**
- **AND neither has traction if central govt don't do publics**

Research & Analysis

Further Reading:

ISM User Guide

www.gov.scot/resource/0042/00423436.pdf

ISM Technical Guide

www.gov.scot/Resource/0042/00423531.pdf

www.andrewdarnton.co.uk