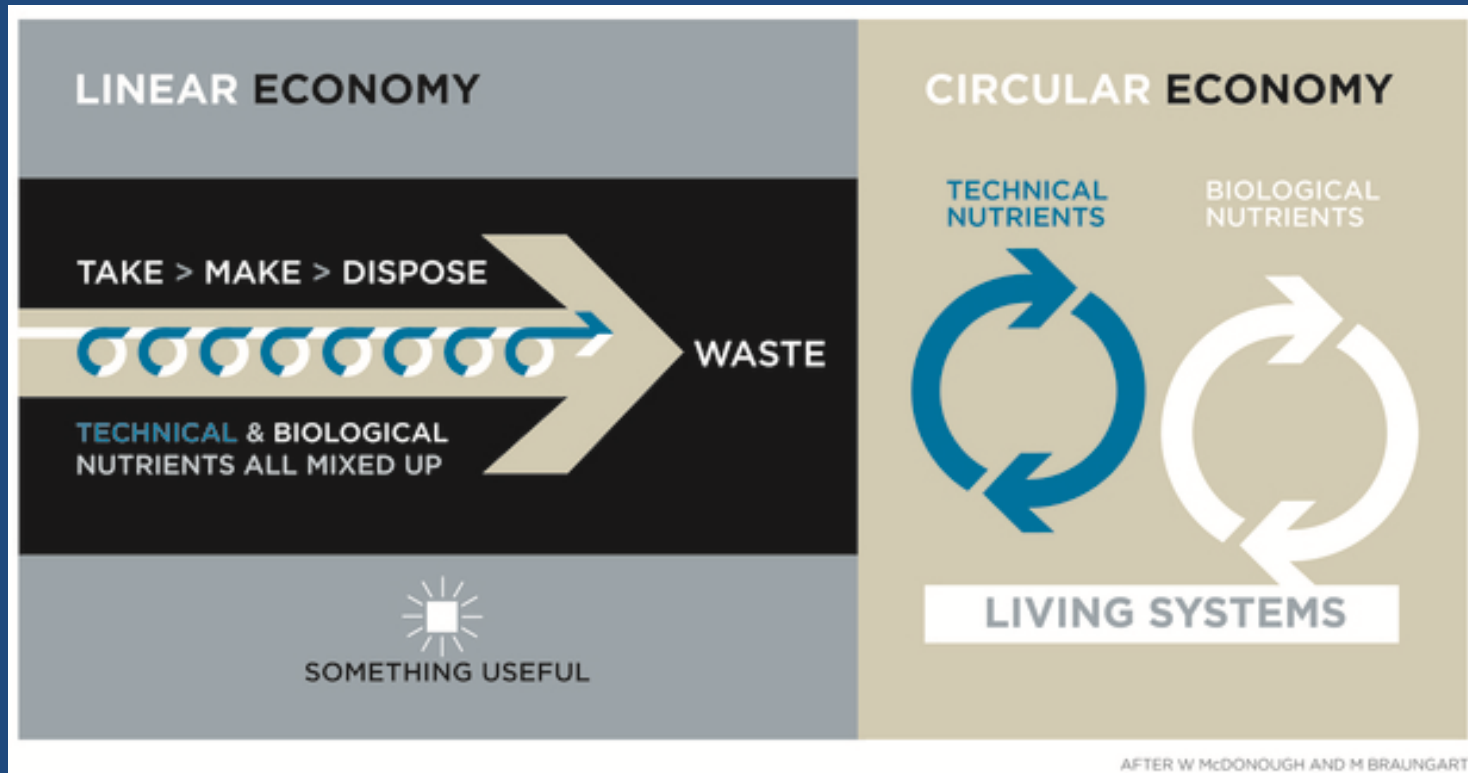


THE VALUE OF LONGEVITY: PRODUCT QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

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A NEW ECONOMIC MODEL



Source: Graham Pritchard / Ellen MacArthur Foundation

RECYCLING – THE SOLUTION?

‘Recycling offers business an environmental excuse for instant obsolescence.’

Simon Fairlie (1992), Long distance, short life: Why big business favours recycling, *The Ecologist*, 22 (6)

OBSOLESCENCE AND THE ECONOMY

- A patriotic duty during recessions

People should be 'buying for up-to-dateness, efficiency and style ... rather than simply for the last ounce of use.'

J George Frederick, in *Advertising and Selling*, 1928

- A marketing ploy during consumer booms

Instil in the buyer 'the desire to own something a little newer, a little better, a little sooner than is necessary.'

Brooks Stevens Associates (untitled brochure), 1953

THE SOLUTION TO RECESSION?



DESTROY EXISTING WEALTH IF NECESSARY!

The
Economist

Car-scrappage schemes Bangers and cash

Has the “cash-for-clunkers” scheme delivered anything useful?

Aug 24th 2009

Tweet

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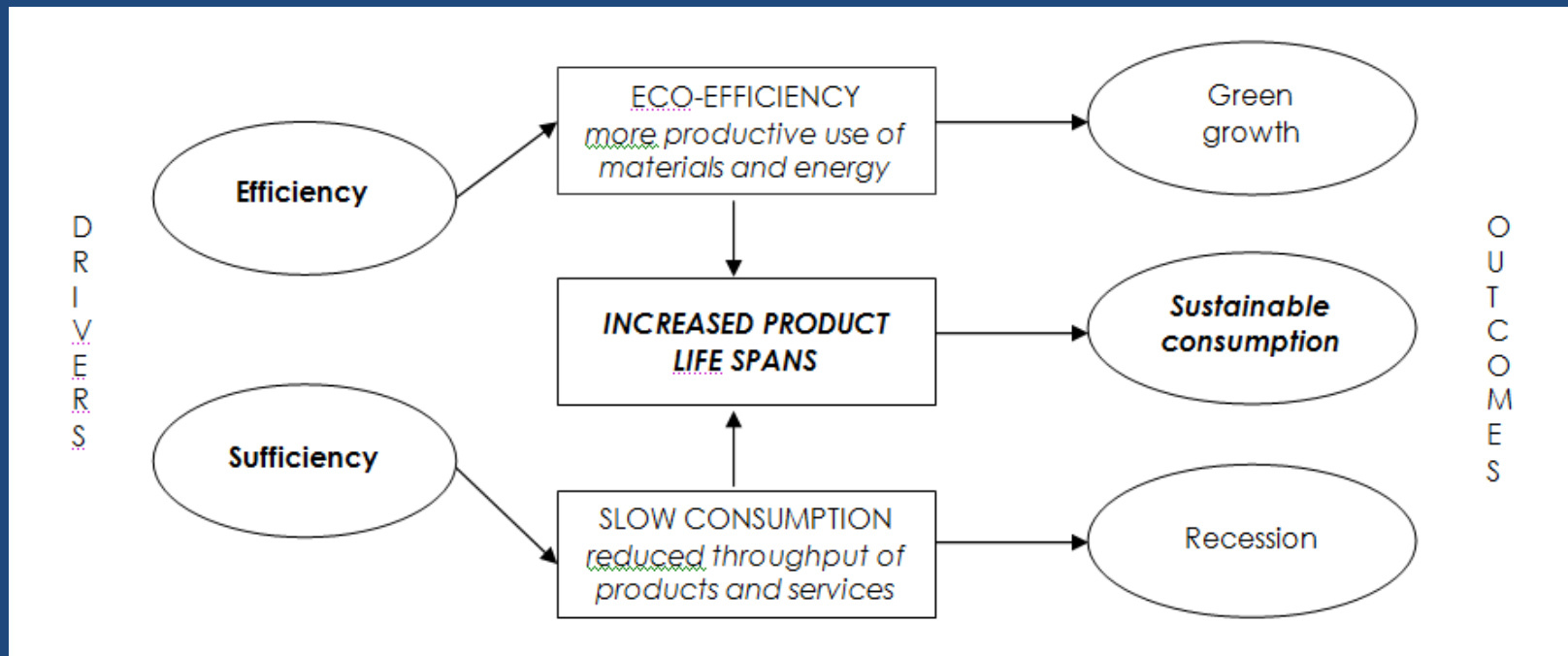
Like

IN ANY love affair the offering of gifts helps to sustain the ardour. But such are the favours showered by the American government on carmakers over recent months, it seems as if politicians have been atoning for a dalliance with another industry (banks, perhaps). Now the giving is at an end. On the heels of multi-billion-dollar bail-outs for General Motors and Chrysler and brief government-assisted bankruptcies, America's car-scrappage scheme ends on Monday August 24th.



“Cash-for-clunkers” was intended to give a boost to the car industry and the environment by offering incentives to get buyers to exchange their old gas guzzlers for something more frugal. It promised Americans up to \$4,500 to trade in a vehicle that returns 18 miles per gallon (8km per

LONGEVITY AND SUSTAINABILITY



Tim Cooper (2005), Slower Consumption: Reflections on product life cycles and the throwaway society, *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 9 (1-2)

TARGETS

- ◉ The desire for the new
- ◉ The convenience of disposability
- ◉ The justice of affordability



RESOURCE EFFICIENCY THROUGH PRODUCT LONGEVITY

- ⦿ EU Road Map to a Resource Efficient Europe
 - Commitment to assess product durability and reusability
- ⦿ Waste Framework Directive
 - Member states must develop waste prevention programmes
 - Product life extension cited as a means of reducing waste
- ⦿ Ecodesign Directive
 - Provides framework within which compulsory design requirements may be set - parameters include 'extension of lifetime' expressed through:
 - minimum guaranteed lifetime, minimum time for availability of spare parts, modularity, upgradeability, reparability'

UK REVIEW OF WASTE POLICY

- ⦿ Deliver an economy where resources are used sustainability ‘through design for longer life, upgrading, re-use or repair.’
- ⦿ Businesses to ‘design and manufacture goods that are more efficient, durable, repairable and recyclable.’
- ⦿ People to ‘see the benefits of extending the life of things they own and use, and for them to think about repair and re-use before considering replacing them.’

Defra (2011), *Government Review of Waste Policy*

ACHIEVING LONGEVITY

- ⦿ People do not associate product lifetimes with sustainability but with value for money
- ⦿ Maybe longevity can best be promoted not as 'reducing waste' but as providing *quality*

SUSTAINABILITY, LONGEVITY AND QUALITY

- ⦿ Sustainable consumption as *fewer but better products*

BUT

- ⦿ lowered expectations + small premium markets
1. Does quality always imply longevity?
 2. Why does inadequate quality still prevail?
 3. Is there unrealised potential for a rise in quality?



Statistically, people
change their partner before
they change their
Miele washing machine.

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STRATEGIES FOR ACHIEVING QUALITY

1. Range design awareness (education)
2. Make quality transparent (consumer advocacy)
3. Promote value for money, not cheapness (retailer rethink)
4. Introduce new business models that will support quality (strategic management)

CONCLUSION

- ⦿ Longevity a prerequisite for sustainability
- ⦿ Consumers do not equate longevity with sustainability
- ⦿ Sustainable consumption requires fewer but better goods
- ⦿ Promoting quality raises complex questions for businesses
- ⦿ Unrealised potential exists for new market developments

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