

# THIS IS THE #CITIZENSHIFT

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A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING & EMBRACING THE EMERGING ERA OF THE CITIZEN

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The New Citizenship Project is a social innovation lab, established in 2014 to help catalyse the shift to a more participatory society. Founded by brand purpose experts Jon Alexander and Irenie Ekkeshis, the company has worked on strategic and creative projects with a variety of organisations including Tate, National Trust, and BBC, and is running a collaborative innovation project with a range of leading membership organisations to explore innovative ways to involve members actively in their organisations' purpose. The organisation also has a regular media presence, on platforms including Sky News, Al Jazeera, BBC Radio 3 and 4, the Guardian, and TEDx.

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**“THE SHIFT FROM CONSUMER TO CITIZEN IS A TRULY BIG IDEA. IF YOU’RE IN A POSITION OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND YOU ENGAGE WITH THIS AND CONSCIOUSLY EXPLORE WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN FOR YOUR ORGANISATION.”**

Dame Fiona Reynolds,  
Former Director General, National Trust

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**“PROPERLY EXCITING. A COMPELLING WORLD VIEW IN THE HANDS OF PEOPLE WHO WILL CONVINCED YOU THAT YOU CAN DO SOMETHING TO DELIVER IT.”**

Alexander Stevenson, Author of *The Public Sector: Managing the Unmanageable*

# OVERVIEW

This report is an offer of a new way of understanding the period of intense change we all know we are in the midst of. We conceptualise this change as the Citizen Shift: the shift from Consumer to Citizen as the dominant idea of the role of the individual in society.

Understanding the current period of intense societal change in this way frames a radically different question which we can all work with: rather than thinking of people as Consumers, which leads us to ask only what we can sell to “them” (whoever “they” are), this approach prompts us to think of ourselves instead as Citizens, and to ask what it is we can all participate in and contribute to. The core proposition is that this shift in thinking provides a far more generative platform for ideas, innovation, social and environmental justice, and indeed economic prosperity.

As such, the report has two functions, and is split into two sections in order to address them: the first establishes the concept of the Citizen Shift; the second helps you figure out what it means for you.

## Section One: Introducing the Citizen Shift

We begin with an overview of the two key identity shifts of the last century: the Consumer Shift, starting in the aftermath of World War II and coming to full fruition in the 1980s; and the Citizen Shift, under way right now. We explore the year 1984 as a defining moment in the Consumer Shift, and review the evidence from social psychology of the inherently unsustainable nature of the Consumer identity. We then explore the Citizen Shift as it is currently manifesting, first by exploring three emerging pillars of the new identity, in the spheres of formal politics, community and commerce. This is followed by an examination of three key characteristics of the Citizen identity: the technology driving (and being driven by) it; the understanding of human nature at its core; and crucially the fact that contrary to what might immediately seem the case, this is not an anti-market proposition – as Citizens, we will still consume. Section One concludes with a table of concepts covering the three dominant identities of the last century, a quick-fire guide to stimulate thinking.

## Section Two: Embracing the Citizen Shift

If you want to get straight to the action, you may wish briefly to read the first chapter of Section One, and then skip to the summary of concepts, before going into Section Two. This section is divided into three parts; corresponding to the three first steps you need to take in your organisation to start exploring what the Citizen Shift means for you:

**Locate** • Understand what the potential role of your organisation is in the Citizen Shift, as a strategic opportunity not just an interesting trend.

**Question** • Articulate one or more challenge questions, which can drive innovation in your organisation and enable you to start exploring that potential role.

**Experiment** • Define a first specific action or set of actions that you can take.

The report concludes with an open offer of further conversation and exploration of the Citizen Shift with anyone who wishes to take it up.



**SECTION ONE**  
**INTRODUCING THE CITIZEN SHIFT**

# IDENTITY SHIFTS

The core hypothesis of this report is that at any given time, there is a single dominant idea of what the role of the individual is – a dominant identity construct – that comes to inform everything we do; and that this idea shifts over time.

Across the 20th and early 21st century, we have experienced one such shift in full – from Subject to Consumer – and are now in the midst of another – from Consumer to Citizen. This is primarily a Western view; but a Western view that has been rapidly propagating across the world.

Looking back to the early 20th century, the dominant idea might be thought of as something like the Subject: we broadly got what we were given. We were born into a station in life, and the right thing for us to do was to do our duty and make the best of it. The key icons of the era were religion and nation – God, King and Country.

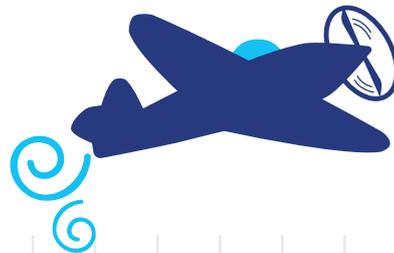
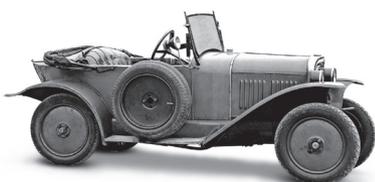
Coming out of World War II and building to a peak in the 1980s, a very different idea came to the prominence it still arguably holds today: the Consumer. This was in many ways a hugely liberating shift: as Consumers, we gained freedom of choice and we gained rights. As the year 1984 suggests, at its zenith the Consumer represented a kind of golden dream, an idea that through consumption as the defining means of participation in society, we could not only have everything we wanted, but could solve the world's problems by doing so.

Seen in this light, we can see the positives we have gained from the era of the Consumer. From hospitals to schools to the high street, with the support of initiatives like Which? magazine and the Consumers' Association, claiming our power in the form of the freedom of choice we have as Consumers has raised standards and accountability across the board. This progress has sat at the heart of a remarkable period of peace and political consensus.

But now things are changing again – and they need to, because that progress has come to a halt. At one and the same time, we are reaching the limits of the Consumer identity, as a series of social psychology studies suggests; and a new idea of who we are is coming up to replace it.



1930s



The limits of the Consumer are the shadow side of the positives: the shadow of independence is a focus on narrowly limited self-interest; that of freedom of choice is a kind of entitlement; and that of accountability is a focus on material measurability that often seems to exclude many of the things that matter most.

As the idea of the Consumer has become dominant, and moved beyond the realm of the relationship between individuals and businesses to a point where this identity has come to inform almost every interaction in our society, this shadow side has become problematic to the point where it is inherently unstable, and unsustainable.

What we have as a result is not a golden dream in which we all get what we want and solve the world's problems in doing so; but the lionising of immediate self-interest, and its spreading pursuit across the globe. Contemporary crises of inequality and ecosystem decline, to name but two, can in this light be understood not as anomalies to be ironed out, but as inevitable consequences of the idea we hold of who we are, and what it is right for us to do.

The emerging idea of the Citizen is coming in just at the crucial moment, taking these shadows and moving on from them just as the Consumer moved

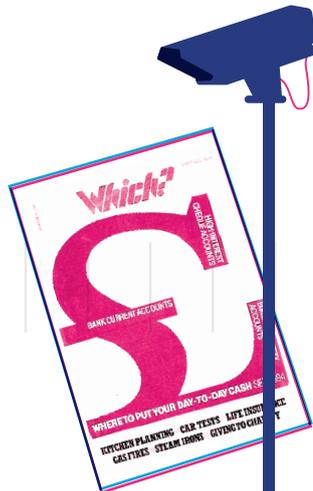
on from the Subject. The Citizen is an idea that brings with it the freedom not just to choose between the options offered to us; but also to play an active, creative role in shaping what those options are. This is a greater agency, and a greater responsibility: no longer do we tell ourselves that we are capable only of judging what is best for ourselves, as individuals, right now; instead we must all step up and have a say about what is best for society as a whole.

Although the transition is far from complete, and as such far from certain, there are as we will see new icons emerging as the Citizen counterparts to the events of 1984, putting flesh on the bones of this new promise.

Where we stand now is the moment where we can choose either to seize this promise, or let it slip. Our aim with this report is to inspire as many people as possible in as many organisations as possible to see this shift neither as a threat nor a moral crusade, but as a tremendous creative opportunity – and to seize that opportunity.

## This is the Citizen Shift.

1980s



Today



# 1984: A DEFINING YEAR

Five moments across the year 1984 speak powerfully to the idea of the Consumer. Taken together they paint a picture of this identity construct as a kind of golden dream: an idea that not only can we have whatever we want, but that by getting it, we can solve the world's problems.

## January

Apple launch the Macintosh. The launch is heralded by the world's most expensive advertisement, directed by Ridley Scott and broadcast only once, taking over the first commercial break of the Super Bowl. The ad is an interpretation of Orwell's dystopian novel, with lines of clone-like, shaven-headed men trooping down futuristic corridors to the backing of the voice of Big Brother, before a young woman smashes the screen from which his image projects. This is Apple portrayed as the final destroyer of the era of the Subject, breaking the effective monopoly of IBM in the personal computer market, and issuing a rallying call to other nascent "Consumer champion" brands: if this market can be disrupted, the game is on.

## April

The Body Shop floats on the stock market. Anita Roddick's retail revolution brings the idea that our wallets are our weapons to the mainstream, coining the idea that as Consumers we can save the planet in the course of getting what we want.

## June

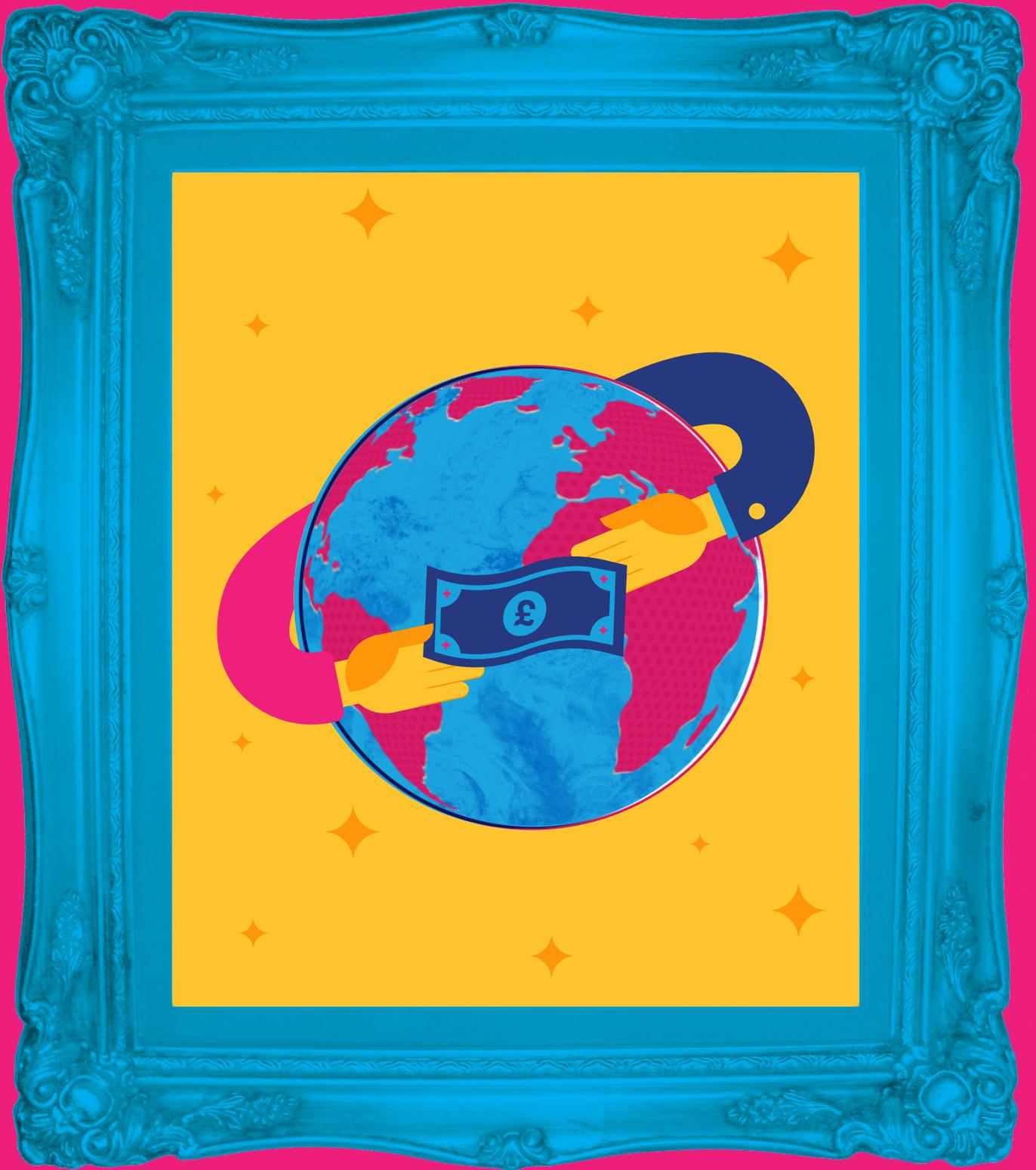
Virgin Atlantic's first flight, from London to New York. With tickets at £99, Branson's airline takes up the challenge set by Apple, championing the Consumer and deeply disrupting the flag-carrier-dominated airline market.

## July

Los Angeles Summer Olympics. The 1984 Olympics are the first ever to be funded by commercial sponsorship; Los Angeles, after the withdrawal of Tehran, are the only city to bid for the Games, and do so on the proviso that the IOC's rules on commercial involvement be relaxed. This Olympics establishes the idea that consumption could fund global sport and culture at global scale.

## December

Band Aid. Bob Geldof and friends create and sell the single "Do they know it's Christmas?" to raise relief funds for the famine in Ethiopia, topping the charts. This embodies the idea that as Consumers we can also solve global poverty.



# CUING THE CONSUMER

In a series of studies first published in 2012, led by Northwestern University's Galen Bodenhausen, a team of psychologists explored what effect priming people to think of themselves as Consumers had on various activities.

The most interesting was a resource dilemma. Participants were asked to imagine themselves as one of four individuals dependent on a single well for water, that is starting to run dry. As a group they need to use less water. Two key questions were posed:

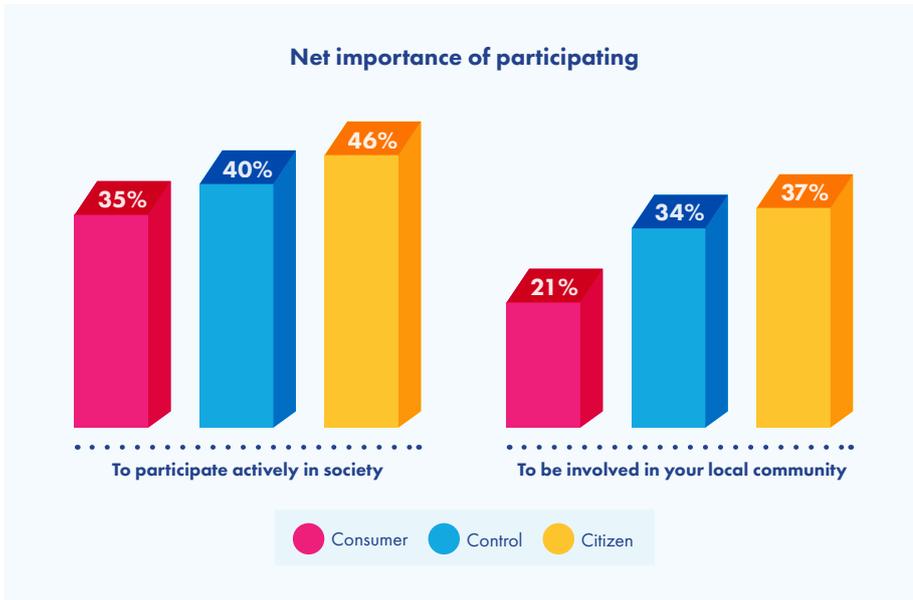
*To what extent would you be prepared to use less water yourself?*

*To what extent would you trust the other three to use less water?*

The subtlety is this: for half the participants, the scenario was framed in terms of individuals ("you are one of four individuals..."); for the other half, using the language of Consumers ("you are one of four consumers...").

With no other prompt, no explicit attention drawn to this language, and no significant differences between participants, the results were astounding. Those who answered as Consumers were significantly less likely to be willing to reduce their own water usage; and significantly less likely to trust their fellow dependents to do so.





We as the New Citizenship Project have since worked with research specialists including House51 and YouGov both to replicate these findings at scale and explore further. In the simplest of these, we asked three thousand nationally representative UK adults two questions:

*To what extent do you think it's important to participate actively in society?*

*To what extent do you think it's important to be involved in your local community?*

The sample was split into three groups:

**Consumers:** For one thousand people, before they saw these two questions, we asked a short set of normative statements intended to act as a light Consumer prime – for example, “To what extent do you think it’s important to find brands that fit your personality?”

**Control:** One thousand people just responded to the two participation questions

**Citizens:** The final thousand were asked a short set of normative Citizen primes – for example “To what extent do you agree that everyone is born equal?”

Regardless of the extent to which participants agreed with any of the consumer priming statements, those who were exposed to these statements were significantly less likely to see participation – locally or in society more broadly – as important.

Taken together, these findings point to the diagnosis that the very idea of people as Consumers is itself at the heart of the challenges we face – both as a cause, as for example in the case of environmental problems aggravated by over-consumption or of the rationalising greed that drives inequality; and also as a barrier to solutions, making us less likely to care about one another, or act collectively, even as such care and action becomes increasingly imperative.

# THREE PILLARS OF THE CITIZEN SHIFT

With the new era only now emerging, perhaps the best way to understand it is to consider some of what seem likely to become its icons – just as Apple and Virgin help make clear the concept of the Consumer. So far, these can be broadly grouped into three pillars.

# #1 CITIZEN DEMOCRACY: FROM REPRESENTATIVE TO PARTICIPATORY

Representative democracy may have been born long before the era of the Consumer, but it has taken a certain shape during that time. A look at the current state of play around the world suggests some serious problems have arisen as a result.

Over the second half of the twentieth century, membership of political parties declined significantly, both in the UK and in democracies around the world, as did voter participation. Perhaps most importantly, the idea of the vote has increasingly become framed as an expression of narrow economic self-interest. This became particularly clear one day in late May 2014, when “the battle for Scotland moved to a scrap over who would put more money in the pockets of the Scottish people” (Sky News), with the ‘No’ campaign promising a £1400 annual “UK dividend”, countered by the ‘Yes’ campaign’s promise of a £1000 “bonus of independence”. The current crisis of democracy is widely recognised: the Economist’s last three editions of its annual Democracy Index carry the subtitles “Democracy at a Standstill”, “Democracy in Limbo” and “Democracy and its Discontents”.

But as Consumer democracy wears out, Citizen democracy rises to meet the need. Here are three examples:

## Loomio

During Occupy Wellington, New Zealand, in late 2011, a group of doctoral students and social entrepreneurs found common cause in their frustration at the decision-making processes of the protest. One of so many initiatives that have their roots in those often-dismissed days, the online group decision-making tool Loomio that was conceived in that

moment is now a global proposition, used in dozens of countries by hundreds of groups to make thousands of decisions. Loomio is a critical part of the organising armoury of the new wave of political movements like the Spanish group Podemos, but equally useful to and used by less glamorous local neighbourhood planning, friends and other community groups of all shapes and sizes across the world. Loomio is not the only example: others include the Argentinian Democracy Operating System, which sits at the core of the increasing popular Partido de la Red (Network Party); and Icelandic Open Active Democracy (OAD), the interface used by the Better Reykjavik initiative which can boast over 50% of the city’s population in its user base.

## Change.org

“Click-tivism” is often disparaged, and in some ways can itself seem an extension of the logic of the Consumer, as expressed by the title internet sceptic Evgeni Morosov chose for his 2013 book “To Save Everything, Click Here”. But this is to underestimate the level of empowerment, way beyond freedom of choice, that sits at the heart of organisations like Avaaz, SumOfUs and UK-specific 38 Degrees at their best, and runs throughout the work of Change.org in particular. One of the many stories makes the point best: in 2010, a woman in a South African township became a victim of what is known as “corrective rape”, an as yet unacknowledged but widespread crime intended to “cure” lesbian women of their sexual orientation. Despite her apparent powerlessness, the Change.org platform enabled her to start her own petition from her own perspective; 170,000 signatures and a few months later, and the South African parliament had formed a national task force.

## Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP)

Participatory budgeting, a deliberative system which seeks to involve the population of a place directly in the management of the public budget of that place, has been around for some time. Born in Porto Alegre, Brazil, as long ago as 1989, it arrived on the UK public investment scene in the early 2000s to great fanfare, but has struggled to gain significant foothold. Around the world, though, the picture is very different, and increasingly the struggles in the UK seem to point more to a need for local context to be honed than a fundamental failure of the idea. Championing the process in North America, for example, is the New York-based Participatory Budgeting Project, which has since its incorporation in 2011 allocated \$98 million to local projects, involving over 100,000 people directly in the management of their municipal budgets.



## #2 CITIZEN COMMUNITY: THE REINVENTION OF SOCIETY

One of the defining quotes-that-never-was of the Consumer era is Margaret Thatcher's supposed affirmation that "there is no such thing as society" (up alongside George W Bush telling us to "go shopping" in the aftermath of the September 11th attacks). Thatcher's intended enemy was a sense that Government – rather than individuals, families and communities – should solve all problems. But many academics, sociologists in particular, nevertheless see the crumbling of collective society as a defining characteristic of the era in which she played such a key part, together with the man CNN called her "political soulmate", Ronald Reagan. Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community" (2000) is perhaps the most famous of these outside academia, using the disintegration of the bowling leagues that used to be ubiquitous across the USA as a metaphor for a broader decline in community affiliation.

As the era of the Citizen dawns, however, the revival Putnam alluded to in his subtitle appears to be under way, as these three examples reflect:

### London Summer Olympics 2012

More obviously a moment than a sustained change, at least as yet, the London Olympics nevertheless speak powerfully to the emerging concept of the Citizen because of the global scale of the signal an Olympics sends, and the marked contrast with the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. London 2012 could all too easily have become the most Consumer of Olympics, trying to best the incredible show put on in Beijing four years before, but held a very different resonance from the start. It became instead a celebration of the Citizen spirit of participation, and an embodiment of what it could achieve: from the representations of the NHS, the founding of the internet, and even the Industrial Revolution in the opening ceremony, through to Thomas Heatherwick's "petal" design for the Olympic cauldron, and of course the now famous army of 70,000 "Games Makers".

### Brixton Pound

Brixton has never got on well with the logic of the Consumer, as testified by riots in 1981, 1985, 1995 and to a lesser extent in 2015. But it is a place proud of its market, its local businesses, and its clear cultural identity, and in September 2009, a more hopeful moment occurred when the first local business took payment in a new currency: the Brixton Pound. The motivation is to introduce an additional layer of currency which discounts and therefore incentivises what might be called Citizen transactions: among local people, promoting local ecosystems of supply and demand, and thereby supporting sustainable local economies

and diverse local cultures. Brixton's was not the first, but is among the largest of the many "complementary currencies" that have sprung up and are now in circulation in localities around the UK and the world: at last estimate, indeed, there were over 4000. This is a global and a local phenomenon – but so far Brixton are still the only ones to have designed a banknote with David Bowie on it...

### Transition Network

The Transition Town movement originally began as a response to concerns about climate change and peak oil among a group of people living in Kinsale in Ireland. One in particular, Rob Hopkins, created an "Energy Descent Action Plan" for the community as a student project in 2004, and found to his surprise that it was downloaded by interested parties all over the world. The Citizen-driven community approach in the plan, just getting on with stuff and refusing to wait for the political establishment to move, had wide appeal. Moving to Totnes and collaborating with an increasing number of local people, Hopkins became part of the convening group of the Transition Network, establishing a basic process for communities across the globe to come together to reimagine and rebuild their worlds, starting with whatever was in front of them. There are now over 400 groups in locations across the world, but this is just the beginning: the true impact of Transition can really be measured in the spread of everything from local food networks to local currencies far beyond the named initiatives (the Brixton Pound, for example, was initiated as a Transition Town Brixton project).



# #3 CITIZEN BUSINESS: FROM PROFIT TO PURPOSE

Thatcher may or may not have declared the death of society; but Milton Friedman definitely did declare that “the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.” This bold statement, indeed, was the title of his cover feature in the New York Times Magazine on September 13th 1970 – not the Harvard Business Review, note, but the much more mainstream New York Times. This was as formative a moment as they come, and a strong expression of Consumer logic: the right thing for a business to do is to maximise its own narrow, material self-interest.

Despite revisions that even now seem more like slight compromises than core challenges, it has largely held firm in corporate thinking ever since. Even Michael Porter’s “Shared Value”, Harvard Business Review’s ‘Big Idea of 2011’, does little more than qualify the original statement with an extended timescale for profit-making. But...

## THERE IS MAJOR CITIZEN CHANGE ON THE HORIZON, DRIVEN AS MUCH BY PRACTICE AS THEORY.

As these three emerging (or in one case, re-emerging) movements testify:

### Profit for Purpose

This is a name we have chosen to apply to what is really a movement of movements, comprising social enterprise, B Corporations, and the Economy for the Common Good. At the core of all three sister movements – the first the slightly more serious Brit, the second the slick American, and the third the cultured European – is the core idea that profit should be made, but in explicit service of social or environmental purpose. This is a radical departure from ideas of corporate responsibility or even shared value, going right to the heart of organisational theory and structure. The three movements we have grouped here are different in many ways, but share this core idea – and the fact that they are growing fast. Benefit Corporation legislation, creating a new corporate structure which prioritises purpose over profit in American law, was first created in Maryland in 2010, and is now in 28 states; over 2000 companies are now part of the associated B Corporation voluntary certification, which is now spreading globally and arrived in the UK in September 2015; a similar number have joined the Economy for the Common Good movement; and as Social Enterprise UK’s 2015 Annual Report attests, social enterprise has a strong claim to being the most flourishing element of the UK economy.

### Co-operatives

The inclusion of co-operatives as a rising trend might come as a surprise: after all, the struggles of the Co-operative Bank in particular and the Co-operative Group which sits behind it were interpreted by many in the media at least as a sign that this way of operating had had its day. But both worldwide and here in the UK, and both in traditional and newer sectors, this surface story covers a very different underlying picture. Turnover from co-operative agriculture in the UK

has risen 29% to £6.2 billion since 2010; community-owned energy (the vast majority of it renewable) has exploded onto the UK scene, with turnover going from a baseline of £18 million in 2010 to £260 million in 2015. More exciting developments are on the way as the co-operative approach meets the digital era: Loomio, for example, is a worker co-operative; and the German company Fairmondo (the “co-operative eBay”) is building up to arrive in the UK in 2016.

### Investor Activism

Perhaps the deepest cut to the idea that the primary responsibility of business should be to deliver financial profit to shareholders, though, is the increasing evidence that this is not what shareholders want. In the Consumer era, we have come to think of shareholders as a faceless group of the wealthy, who simply put money into organisations in the expectation of getting more money back, fast. Now, though, there are increasing signs of what might be called Citizen investing, where individual shareholders and indeed institutional investors genuinely seem to see themselves as holding a stake in the business in question, and holding that business to account to their values not just their wallets. Examples include increasingly widespread fossil fuel divestment campaigns, the rapid growth of shareholder activism organisations like UK-based ShareAction, and the fast-developing narrative of investor stewardship, from the climate-focused concept of “forceful stewardship” recently written up in Forbes magazine to the Stewardship Manifesto of influential business thinktank Tomorrow’s Company. This phenomenon is set to increase rapidly in the UK with the advent of automatic pension enrolment, which will mean that shareholders are conclusively no longer “them” – because “they” are “us”.



NEW CITIZENSHIP PROJECT

It's time to listen



# THREE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CITIZEN SHIFT

Now that we have met some of the organisations exploring the edge of the Citizen Shift, we can start to draw out some of the underlying concepts.

# #1: CITIZENS STILL CONSUME

This point is absolutely critical: just because we should no longer think of ourselves as Consumers, that does not mean we will all stop consuming.

The era of the Citizen will still hold a very important place for the market. The point, as Harvard philosopher Michael Sandel puts it, is that there are – or need to be – moral limits to where markets should be in our lives. While we think of ourselves as Consumers, these limits are impossible to draw, and we find ourselves creating what Sandel calls a “market society”; as Citizens, we can instead achieve the balance of “a society with a market economy”.

In such a world, while aggregate consumption is not going to stop, what is likely to happen is that it will decrease, and ethical consumption will increase:

Aggregate consumption will decrease because it has been a feature of the era of the Consumer that the act of consumption has become a key part of identity construction: as Consumers, the brands we buy are our primary means of portraying who we are. In the era of the Citizen, a broader range of actions – what we do rather than what we own – are becoming just as if not more important.

Ethical consumption will increase because we will bring a different idea of who we are to bear on the act of consumption. Ultimately, as Consumers, the identity we currently bring to bear on the act of consumption means that when it comes to the crunch (and in online and offline environments when Consumer priming is at its zenith), we tend to look out for ourselves rather than make the ethical choice, no matter what we might say in surveys (the so-called Value Action Gap).

The key insight here is that nouns and verbs are different things – the Consumer is an identity construct, consuming is an action. Too much contemporary angst is wasted on over-consumption, when this is merely a symptom.

What is changing is that we are stepping into a new idea of ourselves:

## WE HAVE BEEN CONSUMERS WHO VOTE. WE ARE BECOMING CITIZENS WHO CONSUME.

### A parallel: Voting Voters

The distinction between noun and verb is another contribution of social psychology to this analysis. This time, the experiments in question were carried out by a team of Stanford psychologists in partnership with the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, and focused on surveys some days before voting day during both presidential and local elections in the USA in 2008 and 2009. For half the respondents, the question asked was “How important is it to you to vote in the upcoming election?”; for the other half, “How important is it to you to be a voter in the upcoming election?” Those who said voting was important were reasonably likely to follow through; those who described themselves as voters voted almost without exception. The inference is that being a voter concerns identity – it becomes part of the person’s concept of self – whereas the action is more remote. As the study’s authors write, “Noun wording leads people to see attributes as more representative of a person’s essential qualities.”

## #2: THE CITIZEN SHIFT IS DIGITAL

It is immediately apparent how crucial a role the Internet and digital media are playing in the Citizen Shift. Indeed, the idea of the Citizen can be understood almost entirely as the societal manifestation of digital technology.

This goes back to the 1960s media philosopher Marshall McLuhan's famous maxim "the medium is the message." What McLuhan meant by this was that the dominant medium of a society does not just remain a medium we use to do what we always did but more efficiently or effectively (although this might be what happens in the beginning); rather, the inherent capacities of the medium come to shape and reinvent what we do. As McLuhan is also supposed to have said, "First we shape our tools, then afterwards our tools shape us".

Put the Internet into this and you see the Citizen Shift very quickly. The dominant medium of the Consumer era was the television, a medium initially intended to improve on radio's ability to (in Reithian language) "inform, educate and entertain" the people as Subjects – but which, as channels and choice

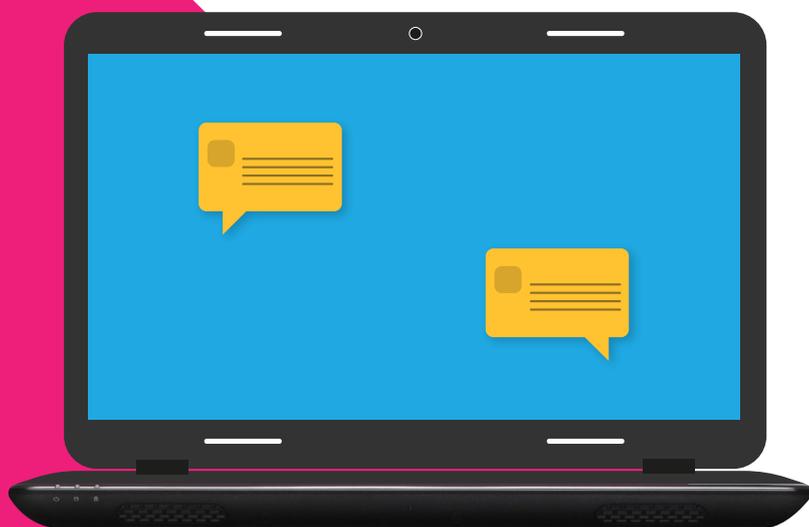
multiplied, and advertising dawned, came to embody the idea of society as a marketplace of newly empowered Consumers. As a one-to-many medium, television sits at the core of what remains a broadcast society where only a few have the power to shape what is possible, but one where we Consumers can at least choose the channel and experience it in technicolour.

Into this marketplace comes the Internet, and at present this function remains the vast majority of what we use it for. To date, digital media have primarily been used merely to expand the bandwidth and diversity of what is sold to us; with customisation and protest about as far as mainstream exploration of what is possible has taken us.

But at its core, the promise of the internet is something much greater: a many-to-many, not just one-to-many society, in which we can all play a part not just in choosing between the options offered to us, but in shaping them.

The digital prophet Clay Shirky has a memorable story of his three-year-old daughter crawling behind the television at his home; when asked what she was doing, she replied, "looking for the mouse". This is the potential that ideas like Loomio and Democracy OS are exploring. In her excellent TED talk, entitled "How to upgrade democracy for the Internet era", Pia Mancini of Democracy OS puts it like this: "Democracy in the era of broadband cannot involve merely uploading a few kilobytes of data every few years."

Just as the television was introduced for Subjects, and became the medium of the Consumer; so the Internet has been introduced for Consumers, but is becoming the medium of the Citizen.



## #3: EXPANDED (NOT ENLIGHTENED) SELF INTEREST

All the examples we have seen also have at their heart a deep shift in our conception of human nature: the story we tell ourselves about who we are.

Through the second half of the 20th century, as Milton Friedman's language attests, the idea of rational, material self-interest as the key driver of human behaviour played the dominant role. Political economists looked back to thinkers like Adam Smith and Darwin and placed narrow understanding of ideas like the invisible hand and the survival of the fittest at the heart of public policy: the invisible hand implied that each looking out for his own self interest in the marketplace would ultimately result in the best outcome for society as a whole, the survival of the fittest likewise; if some struggled or failed, this could be understood as being in service of the best outcome for the whole. As such the right thing for each of us to do was to look out for yourself; that in and of itself is your contribution to the whole. This was the Consumer – but more importantly, this was evolution.

As the logic of the Consumer has started to founder, compromises have come in at the edges of this thinking. In particular, the idea of "enlightened self interest" has gained currency, for example in the writing of anthropologist Jared Diamond, who declares it as his great hope that as individuals and as a species we can come to recognise that preserving the natural world on which we depend is in fact in our own self interest – as the natural world will then sustain us in return. This way of thinking lies at the heart of concepts like Ecosystem Services, whereby a financial value is put on the services delivered to us by nature; and management theories like Shared Value, proposing the pursuit of social purpose as instrumental to the long-term profitability of an organisation.

The logic of the Citizen, though, looks subtly but significantly different. The examples above are not of organisations and structures that adopt purpose as instrumental to profit, but quite the opposite. Purpose comes first; profit is a means to continuing to fulfil that purpose, but is important for no other reason.

If Darwin (or a particular representation of Darwin) lies at the heart of Consumer logic, then Frans de Waal, a Dutch animal behaviour specialist, has something big to contribute to the logic of the Citizen. De Waal's experiments, on species including monkeys, elephants, and even fish, are at the heart of a movement that is placing empathy and collaboration – as opposed to competition alone – at the heart of the evolutionary story.

What De Waal's experiments suggest is that self interest is not necessarily limited to the narrow individual, but that...

This is less accurately described as enlightened self-interest than as expanded self-interest, and it is key to understanding the era of the Citizen. As Citizens, we are not entirely separate from one another as completely independent individuals, but as fundamentally rooted in and interdependent with one another. But this is not a moral statement, of what ought to be; it is simply a new understanding of what is, now available to us to act on.

### **CREATURES OF ALL KINDS HAVE THE IN-BUILT CAPACITY TO RECOGNISE THE INTEREST OF OTHERS AS PART OF – NOT SEPARATE FROM – THEIR OWN SELF INTEREST.**

On this understanding, if I do something for you, I do it not because I expect something good to happen to me in return, but because at some level I consider your self-interest part of my own.

# SUBJECT, CONSUMER, CITIZEN: QUICKFIRE CONCEPTS

SUBJECT	CONSUMER	CITIZEN
DEPENDENT	INDEPENDENT	INTERDEPENDENT
TO	FOR	WITH
RELIGIOUS	MATERIAL	SPIRITUAL
DUTY	RIGHTS	PURPOSE
OBEY	DEMAND	PARTICIPATE
RECEIVE	CHOOSE	CREATE
COMMAND	SERVE	FACILITATE
RADIO	TELEVISION	INTERNET
BUREAUCRACY	HIERARCHY	PLATFORM
SUBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE	DELIBERATIVE

**“THE PRESENT CONVERGENCE OF CRISES – IN MONEY, ENERGY, EDUCATION, HEALTH, WATER, SOIL, CLIMATE, POLITICS, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND MORE – IS A BIRTH CRISIS, EXPELLING US FROM THE OLD WORLD INTO A NEW.”**

Charles Eisenstein





## SECTION TWO

# EMBRACING THE CITIZEN SHIFT

So far we've explored the emerging Citizen Shift "out there".

But if we leave it out there, it's just an interesting trend.

Our work as the New Citizenship Project is not just about observing and documenting the Citizen Shift; it's about catalysing it. By trade, we're an innovation company, not a thinktank. We know this shift isn't going to be about flicking some kind of utopian switch. It's going to require serious hard work from a lot of organisations and individuals.

So now it's time to bring it back to where we – or rather, you – are right now.

Our aim in this section is to give anyone in a strategic position in any sector the tools and inspiration to get started, supporting you to take three first steps:

### **Locate**

Understand what the potential role of your organisation is in the Citizen Shift, as a strategic opportunity not just an interesting trend.

### **Question**

Articulate one or more challenge questions, which can drive innovation in your organisation and enable you to start exploring that potential role.

### **Experiment**

Define a first specific action or set of actions that you can take.

# LOCATE

	PRE-CITIZEN STRUCTURE	CITIZEN STRUCTURE
CITIZEN PURPOSE	ENABLER	PIONEER
CONSUMER PURPOSE	BRIDGE BUILDER	HERO

There are 4 broad roles for organisations to play in the Citizen Shift.

Yours depends on two factors:

### Organisational form and structure

Does this derive from the era of the Citizen, or from before (either Subject or Consumer)? Are you better described as a network or platform, or as a bureaucracy or hierarchy?

### Organisational purpose

Is your organisation's purpose at home in the era of the Citizen, existing first and foremost to serve a social or environmental purpose and with revenue generation explicitly in service of this? Or in the era of the Consumer, with profit ultimately the key factor?

The four roles that result are:



## ENABLER

**The Role:** To enable us, the people, to participate in society as Citizens in as many aspects of our lives as possible

**The Change:** Opening up process rather than changing output or outcome – delivering the same outputs by working with and through people, not for us

**The Risk:** While we are still in the Consumer era, Enablers will come under pressure to serve Consumers rather than provide platforms for Citizens

**Sectors:** Local Authorities, Civil Service, NGOs, Public Services

**Examples:** BBC, NHS, City Councils, Open University, National Trust



## PIONEER

**Role:** To start the ball rolling, showing what is possible, and making it a party everyone wants to come to

**The Change:** Expanding focus beyond the immediate task, and doing as much as possible to invite the mainstream into the Citizen Shift

**The Risk:** Pioneers can portray what they have achieved in ways that seem impossible for the many, creating an exclusivity that undermines the bigger change

**Sectors:** Movements (primarily grassroots)

**Examples:** Transition Network, ShareAction, Social Enterprise UK, Co-operatives UK



## HERO

**The Role:** To be the new big guns, showing us the true potential of the era

**The Change:** Reclaiming the original purpose that sat at the heart of the idea at the beginning, and following that purpose through

**The Risk:** Heroes can be so desperate to be celebrated that they become co-opted by existing Consumer norms instead of fulfilling their true potential

**Sectors:** Social Media, Collaborative Economy

**Examples:** Kickstarter, Etsy, Airbnb, Facebook



## BRIDGE BUILDER

**The Role:** To do the hard work of bridging us from one mainstream consensus to the next

**The Change:** Resetting the whole organisation, looking inside to find purpose and outside to involve people in that purpose as Citizens

**The Risk:** The rewards are huge, but the gravitational pull of business as usual is huge so this will require great leadership; the Citizen Shift needs these organisations

**Sectors:** Private Sector, especially public limited companies and multinationals

**Examples:** Unilever, B&Q, Marks & Spencer, Nike, Apple

# QUESTION

For each of the 4 roles, we have identified some general challenge questions. You could work directly with these, or you could refine the question further to your specific organisation. In order to assist you, we've called out a few examples of where we see existing organisations in each sector starting to explore the questions (consciously or otherwise!).



## ENABLERS

### **How can we provide a platform for people to participate in delivering our outputs and outcomes with and through us as Citizens, not just serve them as Consumers?**

Simon Stevens, CEO of NHS England, has described the NHS he aspires to as a "social movement". Similarly, BBC Director General Tony Hall has talked of his ambition to move from "The BBC to My BBC and Our BBC," with the aim being that the BBC becomes considered "a shared endeavour for a shared service". These hint at refined Citizen Shift challenge questions that these two organisations could work with – and perhaps are already.

Two organisations for whom answers are already emerging are Leeds City Council and the Open University.

Leeds City Council began by initiating a Commission on the Future of Local Government in 2012, with the concept of "civic enterprise" at its heart. Their resulting challenge question was: "How can councils become more enterprising, businesses more civic, and citizens more engaged?" Initiatives have so far included supporting a network of over 40 community-based social enterprises across the city to work together to support 25,000 elderly people each year; convening social entrepreneurs to bring empty properties across the city up to standard and back to use; hosting a cross-sector leadership network across the city; and launching a wholly owned trading subsidiary providing business services from catering to fleet management to a range of cross sector

clients. By July 2014, the council had achieved £145 million in savings without significant impact on frontline services, a day lost to industrial action, or a single compulsory redundancy – and with widespread recognition that in impact they had become not smaller, but much bigger.

The Open University's challenge question was "How can we maximise the potential of new technologies to help us deliver learning outcomes for all?" Impressed by the possibilities that seem to be offered by the phenomenon of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), but concerned that these platforms treated people as Consumers of knowledge rather than Citizen participants in a process of education, the OU created a new partnership business to explore the potential of what the team thought of as "social learning". FutureLearn launched in 2013, with the OU at its core but another 25 course providing partners alongside them, and now has over 75 partners and 2.3 million users; the core of its proposition is learning that is participatory and social, integrating the best techniques of social media (the capacity, for example, to comment, like and follow both tutors and other learners within and beyond the platform) – and it continues to evolve.

What is apparent from these examples is the scale of ambition required: too many potential Enablers seem to have lost sight of their core purpose and instead have self-preservation as their primary obsession. Those who cannot reclaim that purpose and build from it for the emerging context may well not survive the Citizen Shift.



## PIONEERS

### **How can we inspire and invite everyone to be part of the Citizen Shift while staying true to our values?**

The difference between the B Corporation movement on the one hand, and the worlds of social enterprise and co-operatives on the other, illustrates the tension in this question perfectly. Too often the latter pair can feel earnest and worthy, to the extent of relying on implicit criticism of the evil of all their competition for people to choose them; equally, the celebrity factor and desire for scale of B Corps will raise dangers of co-option. This is the line organisations need to be on.

For Transition Network, concern about climate change and peak oil had long provided convening energy; but over time this had come almost to obscure the wonderful positive achievements of the network in promoting everything from local food to local currencies, and having a huge amount of fun in the process. Transition Network's version of this question is "How can we keep the sustainability at the heart of our movement without forcing people personally to confront huge global issues in order to get involved?"

This is particularly interesting in politics, where the tribal divisions between left and right represent a major danger for the Citizen Shift – if this becomes a phenomenon of one side or the other, the animosity could hold it back hard. To date, the political left has seemed the more natural home, but organisations like Podemos have been keen to push away from this designation: as they put it, their

work is not about right versus left, but about a new centre. The opportunity is for organisations like the newly launched Momentum, which has grown out of Jeremy Corbyn's leadership campaign, to open up to participation from across the political spectrum. 2016 will be interesting: a politician who has been if anything more vocal than Corbyn on the subject of participatory democracy has the Conservative candidacy for Mayor of London.



## HEROES

### **How can we prioritise – and hold ourselves to – higher Citizen purpose, and not become co-opted by Consumer norms?**

A comparison of Airbnb, Uber, Etsy, and Kickstarter is a great way to understand this question. All four are essentially marketplace organisations: they provide a more direct route than ever previously available for sellers and buyers of products and services to come together (“disintermediation” in the language of the moment). Their motivations and resulting actions as they have done so have however been starkly different.

Uber has always been a creature of the Consumer era in terms of its purpose. It explicitly exists to enable anyone to be a taxi driver without the need for the bureaucracy that has always been involved, cutting out huge cost as a result – maximising the Consumer benefit, and the financial return. There are widespread concerns about the long-term effect Uber will have on wages and employment – on everyone other than consumers.

Airbnb is different. Or is it? The original purpose was to change the way people travel, bringing human relationships back into what was in the Consumer era becoming an increasingly faceless and anodyne hospitality industry. Airbnb certainly do seem still to be exploring this question in terms of their marketing spend, with the recent global “Mankind” campaign. But with \$170m of venture capital and the resultant pressure on its market capitalisation, Airbnb’s ownership structure arguably means that at root, beyond the marketing, it is no different to Uber.

Etsy has done something different. First, it became a B Corporation, meaning not only that it had to go through a rigorous certification process covering everything from employee status and pay to environmental impact, and will do so every year; but also that its original purpose of “reimagining commerce in ways that build a more fulfilling and lasting world” is written into its articles. Second, prior to its recent stock market flotation, Etsy sold 5% of the company to the community who use the marketplace.

Kickstarter has so far gone furthest. The flagship crowdfunding platform, with its mission to bring creative projects to life, has not only certified as a B Corporation, but recently attained the legal status of a Public Benefit Corporation. The company is still profit making, and can still list on the stock exchange if it so desires; but it must report against its mission, not just its finances.

Hero organisations don’t necessarily need legally to become public benefit corporations or even certify as B Corporations; these are not the only forms. These are excellent external validation, but the core action is to articulate and hold a purpose; to evaluate meaningfully against that purpose; and to take decisions that ultimately link back to that purpose.

This is what Kickstarter co-founder Perry Chen was talking about when he said, “As younger companies come up and think about how they operate, maybe they won’t be so easily swept up by all the usual choices. Maybe they’ll be thinking long term, thinking about how to look after the things they care about”.



## BRIDGE BUILDERS

**How can we reset our organisation, looking inside to find latent purpose and outside to involve people in that purpose as Citizens? At the least, how can we make sure we don't get in the way?**

The Citizen Shift badly needs the business world to wake up in order to find its way to the mainstream – it is possible, but it is hard, because of the extent to which the language and therefore the idea of people as Consumers has become embedded in the mindset.

It is happening, though.

The discussion of the role of purpose in business is growing in volume and integrity, with a spate of books and associated consultancy practices and products, with our favourite example the Brunswick Group's Jon Miller and Lucy Parker, and their 2013 book "Everybody's Business".

The other approach is to invent the way forward with actions rather than strategy overhauls, as in the growing phenomenon of intrapreneurs (who might in the language of this report be thought of as Citizen – as opposed to Consumer – employees). These are people who can experiment within the bounds of organisations, stretching the ideas of what is possible. The flagship case study is mPesa, a mobile money service in Kenya, launched by two middle managers from Vodaphone and Safaricom from within their established companies in 2007; as of 2012 it had over 17 million customers, many of whom previously did not have bank accounts. B&Q's StreetClub, which

sees the DIY retailer exploring a new role as a provider of community tool libraries and skills training, is another excellent example.

The company that has been exploring questions relating to sustainable business in the most high profile way for many years is of course Unilever, under the leadership of Paul Polman. The company's Sustainable Living Plan, and in particular its internal challenge to every brand from Dove to Domestos to articulate a social mission, are pushing towards the Citizen Shift.

Making explicit the distinction between Consumers and Citizens, however, adds another level even to Unilever's work. They have articulated purposes for their brands – but now the challenge is to use those brands to give people agency in the world beyond the act of consumption; to involve us.

The case of Unilever also raises one further challenge: getting out of the way. We know from social psychology experiments that relatively light priming of people as Consumers can inhibit the Citizen Shift; yet the current name of the game in corporate advertising, arguably the most pervasive carrier of this prime, is to get advertising into ever more aspects of our lives. This trend is known as "madtech": advertising technology, with a hint of Madison Avenue. And Unilever are one of the biggest funders of Collider, a new accelerator programme for madtech start-ups.

# EXPERIMENT

By now we hope you've got your head around the Citizen Shift, and have started to get your head around what it might mean for your organisation.

That's great. But if it stops there, this is an opportunity wasted.

If you do one more thing, you'll have started the Citizen Shift for yourself. And in our experience, that'll tip you over. That's how experiments work. You get hooked.

So you'll find the opposite page is a postcard addressed to us. Our offer is this: if you write to us and tell us what one thing you're going to do next as a result of reading this report, whoever you are, you can have an hour of our time to discuss it with us for free. Within reason (!), we'll even come to you.

Here are a few suggestions for what you might want to tell us:

## RESEARCH

Tell us which of the many books and articles we've referenced you're going to read; or commission a research study for your organisation to explore what the Citizen Shift might mean for you

## AWARD

Celebrate or congratulate a project or a person you think embodies the Citizen Shift; or hold an internal awards ceremony in your organisation to celebrate where it's already happening (because it will be)

## CONVENE

Gather a group of friends, or of stakeholders in your organisation, and hold a conversation about what the Citizen Shift means for you, either as one organisation or individual, or as a community

## CHALLENGE

If you've articulated a challenge question for yourself, write a blog about it asking for ideas, or even hold a challenge prize (you might want to look at Open Ideo for ideas on how to do it)

## ASK

Of course, you might just have a question you want to ask us, or want our help...

We look forward to hearing from you.





[www.newcitizenship.org.uk](http://www.newcitizenship.org.uk)

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