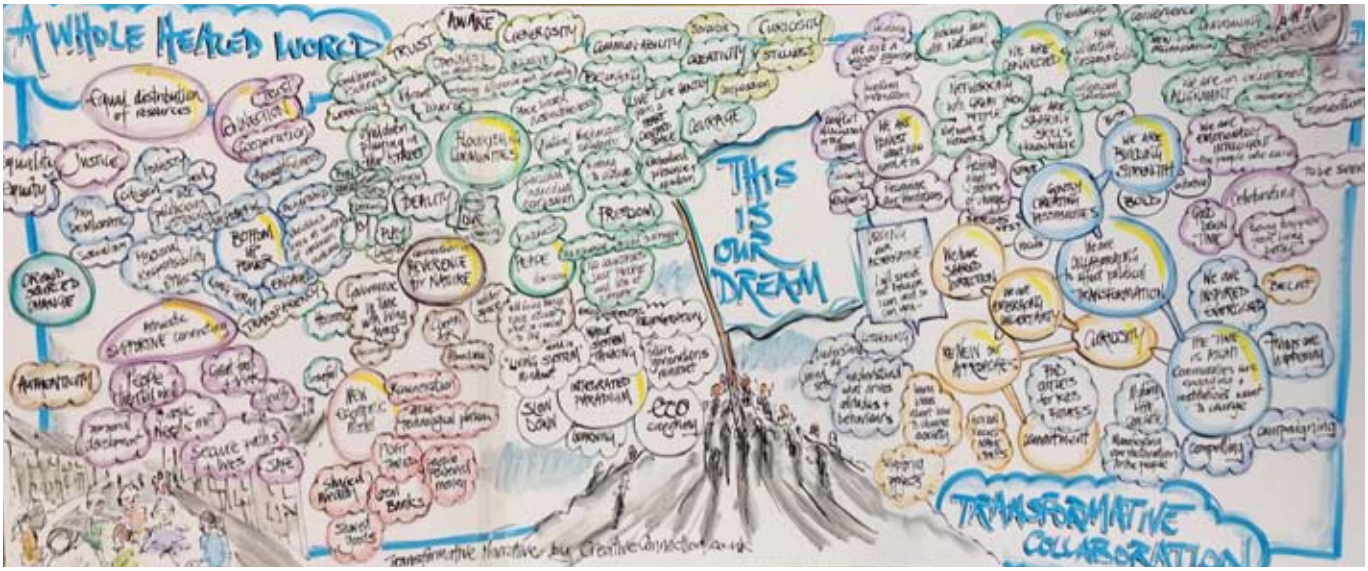
CTRL Shift

On the first anniversary of the triggering of Article 50, Ethical Consumer attended 'CTRL Shift: An Emergency Summit for Change' in Wigan.



Creative Connections' visual minutes.

What was CTRL Shift all about?

CTRL Shift was initiated in response to the myriad social, economic and environmental failures in our current system. Brexit signifies a time where great changes are possible, and CTRL Shift aimed to bring together the people working towards a time when social division, inequality, accelerating climate change and loss of biodiversity are replaced by meaningful participation, thriving communities and reconnection with nature, land and food.

It took place in Wigan because the town was seen by many as a typical 'Brexit town', with 64% of registered voters opting to leave the EU, according to Wigan Today. It is also, perhaps, considered a town neglected by the current Westminster system.

Why was it called 'CTRL Shift'?

The name refers to shifting control and controlling the shift. The CTRL Shift steering group outlined some of the aims as: "Combining our organisations' talents and visions to begin to shift control over our democracy, economy and environment, from Westminster and multinational corporations, to people and communities across Britain."

"Creating a strong, organised, vocal alliance through which we will have an unprecedented opportunity to control the massive shift the UK faces in a post-Brexit, social and ecological time of crisis."

What is Ethical Consumer's role?

The uncertainty caused by Brexit means that there is a great danger of our Government ceding power away from people and into the hands of large corporations, as it seeks to find new trade relationships and incentivise big business to stay.

At the core of Ethical Consumer is a belief that we, as consumers, as citizens, have power. Through supporting ethical business and regenerative practice, we believe that there is the opportunity to transform consumerism into something positive.

There is often an 'us and them' mentality held by civil society actors with regards to private enterprise, but businesses have a wide network. They connect their customers, their employees and all those working in their supply chain. It can be just as effective to support the devolving of power within corporations as well as away from them. Imagine if giving power to a corporation equated to giving equal power to all those connected to it, and not just to a small number of wealthy executives.

As Rob Harrison, co-founder of Ethical Consumer said: "At Ethical Consumer we know the importance of making change happen by working at many levels at the same time – on building new institutions (ethical companies) locally while reforming the ones we have globally (boycotts, social labels), at the same time as fighting to regulate all of them."

What happened at the event?

The event was attended by roughly 150 people across over 90 organisations. This included those campaigning for systemic and political reform as well as grassroots movements creating change on the ground.

Topics that were brought up included food, land, energy, democracy and participation, community, climate change, sustainability and regeneration, permaculture, diversity and inclusion, the economy, corporate power and alternative business models.

The event was intended as the beginning of something bigger and subgroups have already started meeting to work on projects to form concrete proposals in preparation for next year's event. It has started a conversation around how we can make the best of Brexit, which we all need to start addressing.

Find out more and get involved

You can find out more about CTRL Shift on the website at www.ctrlshiftsummit.org.uk where you can also view the film that Ethical Consumer made in collaboration with CTRL Shift (go to News, CTRL shift Summit Report 2018, page 4).

Email Dan Hurring at events@permaculture.org.uk for more information or if you think you or your organisation should get involved.