

NEW GESTALT VOICES



CLIMATE CHANGE MANIFESTO

August 2020

About NGV

New Gestalt Voices (NGV) is a UK-registered international not-for-profit organisation, part social movement, part “test bed” for innovation “with a mission to support application of gestalt to social justice, environmental and political challenges facing humanity”. We were founded in 2016, and incorporated as a non-profit company in March 2019. We have a leadership/advisory board of five, with backgrounds in corporate Learning & Development, the tech innovation sector, civil society leadership, and organisational consultancy and development.

The Relevance of Gestalt to Climate Change

The ultimate cause of unsustainable economies that lead to climate change is to be found in our “desensitisation” from the realm of the body, and our connection with the earth (Gaia) that supports us. Economic ‘laws’ and ‘models’ do not describe “reality”, instead they support our desensitisation (“out of touch-ness”) from our world. These are arguments that are also made by modern day sociologists such as Bruno Latour¹, and Harmut Rosa².

We believe the answer to climate emergency will come from a rapid raising of the “collective consciousness” – a re-sensitising to our connections with each other and with our planet. The Covid 19 crisis has shown an example of how our planet can “bite back”, making itself felt at the level of our sensate awareness, and economic decision making. Collectively we have the choice to respond by moving in the direction of an “economics of our bodies and our hearts” (what Latour calls our ‘first nature’), letting go of an illusory idea of an ‘economic system’ that puts us on collision course with the planet. Such a move can only come as a result of collective process that supports people to “get back in touch” and may involve experiments in different forms of valuing and economically supporting each other, and transformation at all levels of community, business, and polity.

We are aware that a problem with development of public policy, as with business practice, is that solutions are often identified without sufficient ‘sensing into the situation’. This top down, often longstanding traditional approach misses the complexities and needs of differing communities, times and scenarios, (see for example Relational Change SOS model for a reappraisal of the importance of ‘situational’ context- <http://www.relationalchange.org/working-rationally.html>). It is for this reason that impact on the environment is often not adequately taken into account. A gestalt facilitative approach will balance a ‘being with’ the situation allowing the felt truth of this to emerge, alongside holding the urgency of action - whether this be political, economic, campaigning or community self-organising.

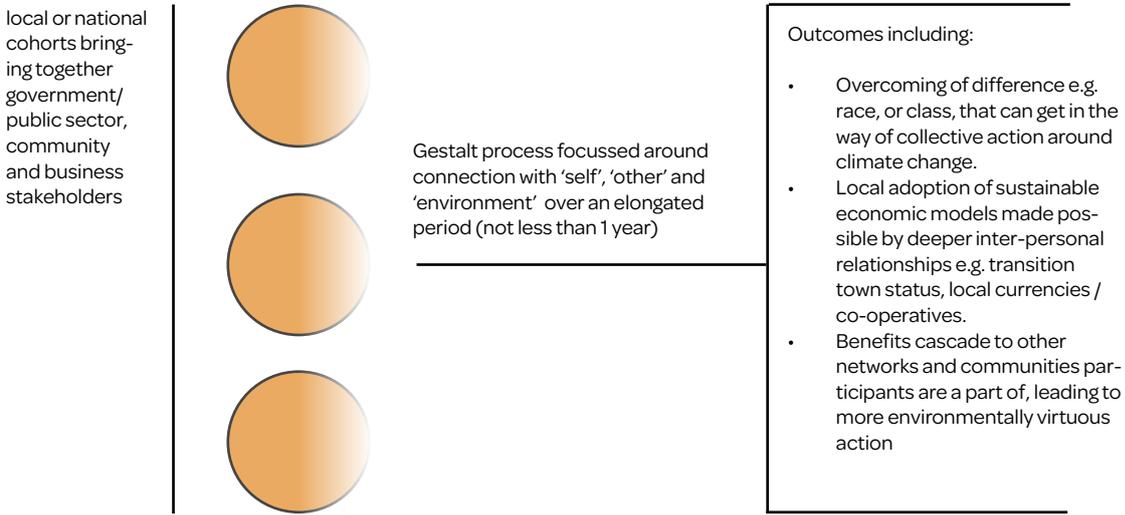
1 On some of the affects of Capitalism <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/136-AFFECTS-OF-K-CO-PENHAGUE.pdf>

2 Rosa, H. (2019) Resonance: A Sociology of our Relationship with the World. Polity Press.

NGV facilitates the creation of skilfully led enabling spaces, in which people begin to discover, and value themselves, often for the first time. We believe this will translate into a love for the world they live in. In realising they matter and belong, people will start to care for themselves and others. Once people have a sense of their uniqueness, awareness is raised of the important part they play in the universe today, and their desire to ensure the sustainability for the human species will increase. As people begin to nurture themselves, so they will touch and care for the environment.

NGV’s innovation model is based on working at the “micro-level” and “macro-level” simultaneously. In relation to the urgency of climate change ‘we don’t have time’ to pilot and then “roll out”. Since our networks are international, action in one place will ‘cross-pollinate’ and spur initiatives happening elsewhere in the world.

The kind of thing we want to do...



Groups of up to 24, and no less than 15, will meet once every three months for a day at a time (a total of 8 facilitated days/site). We bring a gestalt approach to the facilitation of these meetings. The “frame” is to understand our sense of belonging and impact at a neighbourhood, environmental and planetary level.

We work with a 1/6 facilitator/participant ratio in order to ensure an adequate level of support for the group, necessary in our experience for the process to be transformative both individually and collectively.

Over the period of an intervention we could additionally run 4 half-day zoom-seminars bringing participants from across cohorts - and local places - together and sharing ideas and learning.

The project will facilitate exploration of³:

1. Better economics: “explores and promotes ways that well-being and sustainability, rather than traditional forms of economic growth, could be placed at the heart of public policy”.
2. Beyond consumerism: “exploration of initiatives and models which promote positive alternatives to materialism for a more fulfilled life.” / “work which engages people individually and collectively in holistic and value-led approaches to transformed behaviour and lifestyle, as an alternative to consumerism.”
3. New voices: “campaigns and movements that give marginalised or under-represented groups a voice on issues of environmental and economic justice” / “initiatives that encourage organisations from outside the traditional environmental field to get involved in environmental justice.”
4. Responding to the dual harms of Covid-19 and systemic racism: “Helps to build collective power and foster visions for more imaginative, just economies which prioritise the wellbeing of human beings and the natural world.”

As people recognise their individual power and potential, their awareness of the uniqueness and importance of others is also raised. This in turn increases understanding and value of difference. Diversity ceases to be a threat, instead a vital part of the jigsaw of life and growth. This group exploration of ‘self’, ‘other’ and ‘situation’ could/will impact on inequality, justice, cohesion, aspiration, skills development, and resilience.

Impact

One of NGV’s values is an “open source” approach. This means that we aim to share as much IP as is possible, without compromising our commercial interest. In relation to this workstream, this means that we would document the project in an on-going real time process through a mix of blogs, progress reports that we make available on our website (newgestaltvoices.org), and through webcasts and interviews on our fortnightly “NGV Radio”. We commit to running 4 open ‘webinars’/zoom conferences to allow for more in depth discussion between programme participants and an external audience. At the end of the project we will create a “how to guide” for other places wishing to explore something similar.

Contact

To find out more and to explore whether we can work with you please contact John@newgestaltvoices.org

New Gestalt Voices



An international not-for-profit organisation, committed to widening participation and exploring new ways of building community via application of gestalt (and aligned disciplines) across a number of domains – health services, education, therapy, organisational/ business, community, and government/political.

CONTRIBUTION OF GESTALT

We understand gestalt as a socially transformative approach that is concerned with restoring 'aliveness' to human living and activity - and with an orientation towards the wider 'field' - the various social wholes of which our activities form a part. Gestalt's founding text says "it is impossible for anyone to be extremely happy until we are happy more generally (Perls et al. 1951).

EXPERIMENT

NGV offers a test bed for innovation with a view to supporting applications of gestalt in relation to social justice, environmental and political challenges – what Paul Goodman, one of gestalt's founders, called "social-therapy".

CATALYST

We do not see NGV as doing it all ourselves. We act as a network – or convenor of 'worknets' (Bruno Latour) – first phase mover, incubator and ultimately support for others to enter into new areas. We will continue to support anyone who comes to us to innovate – commissioner, organisation, team or individual.

COMMUNITY

The NGV approach esteems development at the group/community/systemic level. We turn our attention to the wider systems, including structures of power, influence and oppression (such as racism), against which much traditional change work proceeds.

