



New Gestalt Voices application towards JRCT Sustainable Future priority (in partnership with Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services, and C2NN the National Network of Connected Communities)

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 2019¹. 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.

NGV is applying in partnership with two organisations – *Peterborough Council for Voluntary Organisations*, and the *National Network for Connected Communities* (C2NN) with whom we have close connections. Their networks and relationships will support our capacity to conduct “on the ground” practical work in two places in the UK, and will help replicate our work via links to senior stakeholders in government and business.

Our understanding of the Issue. 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 Latour², and Harmut Rosa³.

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 lead to 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 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 - <http://www.relationalchange.org/working-relationally.html>). It is for this reason that statutory agencies fail to elicit the interest, mobilisation and leadership required from

¹ As a new organisation we have not yet submitted accounts for audit, so we are submitting latest management accounts.

² *On some of the affects of Capitalism* <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/136-AFFECTS-OF-K-COPENHAGUE.pdf>

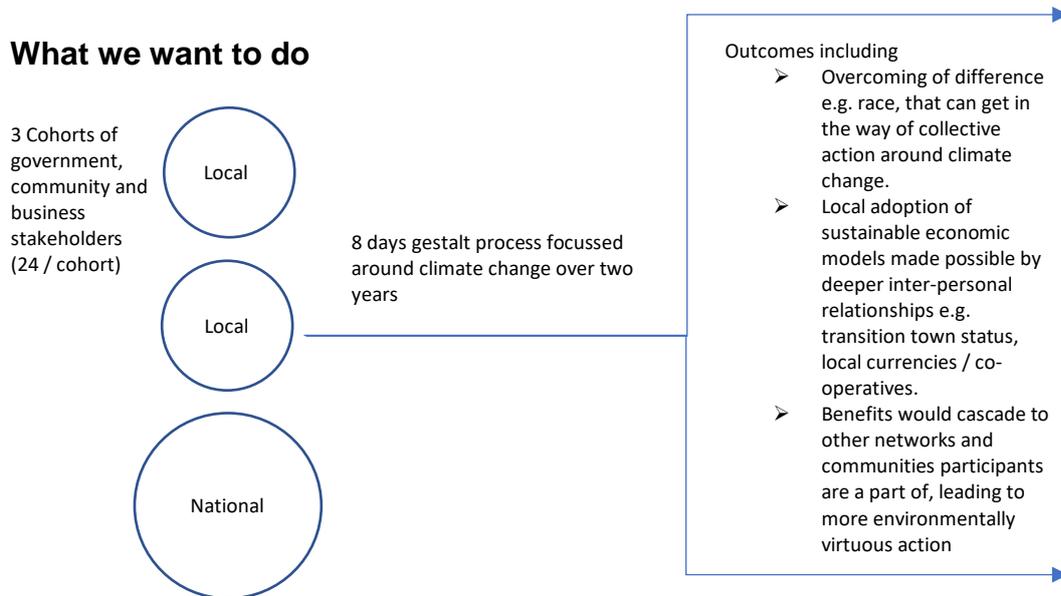
³ Rosa, H. (2019) *Resonance: A Sociology of our Relationship with the World*. Polity Press.

local people in delivering the outcomes required to effect adequate impact on the environment.

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, 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 (550 individuals on our mailing list / 2000 facebook followers), action that originates in the UK via a JRCT supported project will ‘cross-pollinate’ and spur initiatives happening elsewhere in the world.

What we want to do



Building on existing networks in Peterborough, a location that corresponds to a C2NN local site (probably either South Devon, Stoke on Trent, or Margate), and a third group located in London made up of ‘national’ stakeholders, we will bring gestalt facilitation over a period of two years to locally-co-ordinated groups spanning representation from all three domains of civil society – community, commerce/business, and state/public sector.

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 will bring a gestalt approach to the facilitation of these meetings. The “frame” will be to understand our sense of belonging and impact at a neighbourhood, environmental and planetary level.

We have budgeted for 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 two year period we will additionally run 4 half-day zoom-seminars bringing participants from across the three cohorts together and sharing ideas and learning.

The project addresses priorities within all four funding priorities. Particularly the project will facilitate exploration of:

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 – contributing to cross-cutting JRCT priorities, particularly around “*Power and Accountability*”, and “*Rights and Justice*”.

Who/ Delivery

NGV draws on a network of professionally trained gestalt practitioners with long-term (3 years +) training and vast experience of living and practicing gestalt. In addition to fully qualified gestaltists, we will also draw on individuals who are in the process of training (this provides opportunities for these individuals to gain skills and experience). We have put together a core team, and will bring in additional people on a consultancy basis as our project requires it:

John Gillespie: Founder and CEO of NGV, 6 years gestalt training (2013-2019), MA in Gestalt Psychotherapy Theory, BA (Oxon) in Politics, Philosophy and Economics, Fellow of the Centre of Welfare Reform. A background including CEO and Director level roles in in health transformation, community development, welfare reform, and voluntary sector capacity building.

Toni Clarkson: Toni has a background in OD for multinational organisations and has worked as a coach and leadership consultant for over 20 years. Clients have ranged from local and central government, social housing, social support, scientific research and the NHS. She has an MSc in Coaching Psychology and 4 years gestalt training.



Leonie McCarthy MBE: Leonie is the CEO of Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services and Communities East. In 2006 she was appointed to the Department of Communities and Local Government's Commission on Integration and Cohesion. It was for this work that she was recognized and received her MBE. Leonie is studying Gestalt Psychotherapy at The Gestalt Centre London.

Line management will be provided by John Gillespie, CEO of NGV, with external supervision also budgeted for.

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 project, 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. We have budgeted for a modest external evaluation of the project.

Risks

Risk	Response/ Mitigation
We don't have enough of the right people (particularly statutory/business/government) coming forward to participate	We have connections through our networks with organisations like NCVO, Office of Civil Society, DECC, DCMS. And via organisations such as City of London Corporation/East London Business Alliance into the business community.
In depth gestalt process doesn't lead to tangible actions/changes on an environmental level	We think it unlikely that this project will not lead to changes that impact the environment. However we recognise we may have difficulties evidencing these, and also that much change will fall outside the 2 year project window. We will bring in evaluators to support us to capture the change made, and seek to create a "Theory of Change".
Despite positive results we fail to gain wider attention from national thought leaders and policy makers	Our original intent was to have 3 local groups. We changed the project to include a third group made up of national stakeholders, in order to directly involve people working at a national level.
National regulation gets in the way of local stakeholders having authority to make positive environmental change	This is likely. We will document this on an ongoing basis, and this will hopefully provide support to raise with UK governments.
Individuals are reluctant to try a new process based on gestalt "Social Therapy"	We have already shared our learning from successful process group facilitation with local community groups and organisations, we have received interest from at least 30 individuals from a range of backgrounds in Peterborough who would like to attend our first session.