Proposal Information:

Name of the Project: Capacity+
Coordinators: Nenad Maljković and Philipp Grunewald (shared role)

Project Period (the period of time when the grant will support the project)
from 01/11/2019 **to** 28/10/2022
Project started on 1 January 2020 [**£49,400** received 17/12/2019]
- [Capacity+ Open Collective](#)
- [Capacity+ budget](#) and [Capacity+ Budget Narrative](#) [2 pages, make sure to read that too]
- [Permaculture Association (Britain) and CoLab - Collaboration Agreement](#) [2 pages]
- **Capacity+ shared folders**: [G-Drive](#) / [Nextcloud](#)

i. Capacity + (Co-Lab)

i.i. Background

What is / are the problem(s), issue(s) or opportunity(s) that your work is focused on?

Permaculture is operating in at least 140 countries, driven by grassroots educators, organisers and activists. It's largely self-organising and there's a lot of energy in the network. We have a lot of autonomy, but there is a lot of duplication of effort, lack of awareness about resources, achievements, evidence and support. The challenge we are setting out to solve is twofold:

1. How to support the development of a more coherent and effective local to global movement.

2. How to do this online and every day, rather than waiting for expensive and irregular international permaculture convergences, so that we can increase the pace of development.

From 2013-2015 we undertook the **Next Big Step (NBS)** project to [identify the needs, opportunities and challenges in the network](#). From 2016-2019 we have been establishing the CoLab as a response to what we learnt. The Colab uses a sociocratic approach (alongside other influences) and the Vision, Mission, Aims (VMA) gives direction to all the activities, groups and projects within the CoLab. All circles (working groups) and projects are working towards achieving one or more aspects of the VMA.

Vision: We envision a healthy, peaceful and socially just world in which we care for the earth, each other and future generations, in harmony with nature.

Mission: We pledge to work together to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of local to global permaculture networks both formal and informal.

To accelerate the restoration of wholeness (healing the rift between natural and human systems) in our world by creating an online practically focussed platform that creates a collaborative container for permaculture and allied regenerative movements, to manifest its work in the world.

In reviewing the goals the funder is focused on, which ones resonate most for the work you do?

1. Rebalance the drivers of climate (notably greenhouse gases) to within limits [...]
   a. By increasing the effectiveness of the global permaculture network we are seeking to amplify the impact of the whole movement and of specific projects. Many of these projects are taking local action for the climate through regenerative agriculture, soil carbon, reforestation, natural building, village development, lifestyle change, etc.

2. Support change [...] for reviving cultures of interdependence and reverence.
   a. This is at the core of our theory of change (see VMA). The CoLab and NBS have been doing this since early 2014. We have learned much in the process and have co-created processes and structures and are supporting the above in concrete ways. We are increasing our work with leaders across the network.

3. Support the shift to regenerative economies [...]
   a. The permaculture movement is in service to generating and protecting biocultural services. The CoLab is exploring new economic models that can support the wider movement to become more effective, and will also identify and amplify successful regenerative economic strategies already adopted within the network.

What values are driving the work?

As this initiative originated in the permaculture movement we endeavour to embody permaculture's guiding ethics and values of Earth Care, People Care, and Fair Share.

Our community, by design, must embrace and model the wholeness in the world we want to see. We are creating a microcosm that in time grows to be the norm. It is an evolutionary, regenerative process that is self-organizing (self-propagating, self-nourishing, self-educating, self-governing, and self-fulfilling - Thomas Berry) - all this to say that all of us doing Earth work need a space to experiment, strategise, philosophise, design, solve, play, decide, act, learn, grow, engage, influence together.

We are also guided by the CoLab's Vision, Mission and Aims (some of which explicitly address values).

If you are a returning partner, please share what you've learned from your work to date and how it's informing the work described in this proposal.

We realise that the VMA of the CoLab are very ambitious. Not only does it attempt to be a qualitatively different community vis-a-vis the networks and systems it is embedded in but it also attempts to foster effectiveness and coherence in a movement that is strongly influenced by ideas of autonomy and local action. This requires constant attention to our culture, time for sharing understandings, as well as good induction, training and support for contributors.

In the past, we attempted to foster such a process through an approach that mimics conventional project management informed by linear processes. For example, the NBS project was very much an information gathering process where needs, wants and opportunities were identified. From that, the CoLab project as a funded entity came about and contributors decided on measures to be trialled as part of the new Collaborative Laboratory. Since then the approach PAB took in supporting the Co-Lab has gradually shifted from a linear project logic to a more agile and iterative operational mode. This shift was not a linear process but an emergent one with abandoned pathways, plenty of discontinuities, contributor turnover, and significant efforts invested by groups and individuals that believe in the importance of the VMA. We are now embracing a more iterative and social learning based approach informed by network weaving and asset based community development.

The CoLab has become an entity in itself and, for the first time, we can credibly state that the funding we ask for will support some activities in the CoLab but will not represent the CoLab as a whole. The Capacity+ project we seek funding for supports the CoLab, but is not the same as the CoLab. We are leaving space for other organisations to bring in other funds and resources to help increase the CoLab's resilience and reduce dependency on PAB.

Additionally, this proposal is based on a much more diversified and better informed account of CoLab's future than was previously possible. This has become possible due to increased activity, larger participant base, (mainly) volunteer leadership, refined governance and network weaving processes.

This collaborative work (especially with many people volunteering their contributions) requires significant time. We are therefore requesting support over three years, so that we can work at a pace better suited to the mix of contributions that we are working with.

i.ii Project objectives and strategy:

What is/are the overall aim(s) and specific objective(s) of the project?

CoLab Aims (slightly condensed)

1. Provide a collaborative and convivial online space in which to work towards the Co-Lab's vision;
2. Identify opportunities to enhance the effectiveness of local- global permaculture networks;
3. Research the current state and extent of permaculture and its strategic context to enable effective planning, project design and network development;
4. Identify and mobilise resources that support participants to nurture new and existing eco-social enterprises, projects and initiatives that address challenges, or add value to permaculture networks;
5. Communicate with permaculture networks and allies to ensure understanding of the CoLab and active participation from around the world;
6. Make links between permaculture and allied networks to enhance our collective work;
7. Work towards a multilingual platform that enables wide participation;
8. Work towards eliminating racism, patriarchy, the class system and other manifestations of oppression that present blocks to healthy and diverse participation in the Colab and wider permaculture networks;
9. Provide and document resources that enable people to participate and work effectively together;
10. Use the process of CoLab development to actively learn and unlearn organisational development processes suited to complex multi-layered networks.

The overarching aim of the Capacity+ project is to enhance the capacity of the CoLab to meet its aims.

With regards to the project we ask you to support the following sets of objectives:

- *Training and eLearning:* through the delivery of training and the creation and curation of eLearning systems and materials we aim to enhance the capacity of contributors to meet CoLab aims and incentivise participation of unpaid contributors.
- *Circle Incubation and nourishment:* through incubating new circles (working groups) and nourishing existing circles we aim to enhance the capacity of the CoLab to meet its own aims.
- *Prototyping:* through practically supporting the implementation of a range of prototype initiatives, enterprises, and services we aim to enhance the capacity of the CoLab to meet its own aims and to sustainably fund its existence.
- *Network weaving:* through developing the relationships between contributing individuals and organisations, collaborators within and beyond the permaculture movement, and enhancing the collaborative capacity embedded in these relationships and processes (through facilitating social learning) we aim to enhance the capacity of the CoLab to meet its own aims.

What is the strategic approach?

The strategic approach is characterised by some key ideas:

1. Instead of funding the totality of CoLab work, we ask you to fund a specific project that contributes significantly to the CoLab's development, and leaves room and encourages other initiatives to be brought forward by other partners.
2. As outlined in the learnings shared above ('returning partner' section) we are embracing complexity and propose to pursue a diverse range of supported activities that all have the potential to lead to large expected and unexpected outcomes.
3. By focussing on the CoLab's capacity to meet its own aims this project can support the development of a more resilient and self-determining entity, less reliant on the Permaculture Association (informed by Asset Based Community Development).
4. By focussing on prototyping activities the resources requested can make tangible differences not only to the funded organisation but to the network as a whole.

To implement this approach PAB is applying on behalf of the CoLab and partnering with all the networks, organisations, and individuals already involved (see 'Organisational Capacity' for list). The CoLab offers us a framework for collaboration. As part of our collaboration with others in the CoLab, modes of collaborative working will get further enhanced, policies improved, and relationships strengthened. Our distinct role will be to undertake financial management, contract staff and freelance workers, pay trainers, grant reporting and support to help the CoLab take on more of these roles directly in future.

The expected impact of the Capacity+ project directly corresponds to the VMA of the CoLab. The overarching outcome of the Capacity+ project is enhanced capacity of the CoLab to meet its own aims. With that outcome achieved the CoLab will be more effective at achieving its VMA, the ultimate impact of the Capacity+ project. We are confident to deliver this impact since we have been supporting the emergence of the CoLab over 5+ years. We have learned important lessons that are embedded in this new proposal. The CoLab is on the brink of becoming a self-sustaining organism that exists as part of wider ecosocial systems. The Capacity+ project is about making important steps towards that reality and significantly enhancing the capacity of the CoLab.

i.iii Project activities, effectiveness and basis for evaluation:

In relation to the objectives, what are the proposed activities and outcomes or deliverables?

The following CoLab activities and deliverables will be supported by the Capacity+ project.

1. Training and eLearning activities: <u>Increased skills and understanding of participants.</u>
   a. Governance training (1 per year) and creation of eResources for new contributors
   b. Training/interventions on unconscious bias, inclusivity, equality, compassion (and similar) for contributors (1 per year) and creation/curation of eResources
   c. Digital collaboration training (1 per year) for contributors and creation/curation of eResources
   d. Facilitation training (1 per year) for contributors and creation/curation of eResources
   e. Theory of change, outcome mapping and outcome harvesting training (1 per year) for contributors and creation/curation of eResources
   f. CoLab economic practice training (1 per year): sustainable resourcing of CoLab activities, initiatives and enterprises (including development, fundraising, crowdsourcing).

2. Circle Incubation and nourishment: <u>Effective circles delivering value to the wider network.</u>
   a. Set up Translation Circle (Q1-2 of 2020)
   b. Set up Governance Support circle (Q1-2 of 2020)
   c. Set up Mutual Aid/Economics circle (Q1-2 of 2020)
   d. Set up Funding Circle (Q3-4 of 2020)
   e. Broadening stewardship participation (increasing membership)(Q3-4 of 2019)
   f. Continue incubation of International Coalition for the Accreditation of Future Skills (ICAFs), and enhance digital collaboration processes, practices and spaces (ongoing)

3. Prototyping: <u>New approaches to enhancing coherence and effectiveness tested.</u>
   a. Translation service prototype: New translation circle offering its services to CoLab and collaborators to prototype services and enterprise model for itself
   b. eLearning service prototype: Digital Circle to set up (in collaborative fashion) prototype Learning Management System and Service for CoLab, collaborators (IPEN, Ethical Consumer, GaiaU, Permaculture Association), and allied movements.
   c. Weaver integration prototype: Digital Circle to explore, evaluate, and co-develop Weaver platform deployment as support for CoLab aims.
   d. International Permaculture Educators Network (IPEN) prototype: Digital Circle to prototype its collaboration systems services and economic model with IPEN as initial client
   e. ICAFs prototype: ICAFs & digital circle to co-design and deploy the website, ePortfolios & Open Badges platform to prototype its services and enterprise model.
   f. Permaculture International Research Network (PIRN) prototype: Develop (and collate existing) permaculture research outputs (in collaboration with Ecolise Knowledge Commons project) to build PIRN network.
   g. Wordpress Multisite prototype: Digital Circle to offer its website services to CoLab and collaborators to prototype services and enterprise model
   h. Permaculture Online Convergence prototype: Run online event in 2021 to prototype services and enterprise model for itself. This is primed with a blended offering at the international convergence in 2020.

      i.   Mapping prototype: Digital circle (in collaboration with others) to co-design, co-host and iterate online mapping (geographical, social, asset) to offer to CoLab and collaborators (iLAND sites, permaculture projects, networks) to prototype services and enterprise model

      j.   Grants prototype: Stewardship circle (with economic circle and funding circle) to develop prototype for supporting increased impact of existing enterprises / support emergence of new enterprises via seed grants to prototype services and enterprise model. Expected in-kind contributions from Weaver Network and Friends of IPC network.

4. Network weaving (all ongoing activities): <u>Enhanced participation, reflection and connection.</u>
    a. Coordinate and support CoLab learning, accountability and evaluation activities, including capacity enhancement and training
    b. Diversification of CoLab contributors via stipends for people from disadvantaged backgrounds (vis a vis, western, white, (digitally) literate, able bodied, middle aged, men and so on).
    c. Diversification of CoLab via cross-movement network weaving (activist engagement). Activists (mobilisers and network weavers) that are part of and work with disadvantaged groups to spend time weaving these groups into CoLab processes and vice versa.
    d. Digital Circle to share learning with CoLab, collaborators and allied movements on digital technologies and permaculture ethics
    e. Digital Circle to build strategic alliances with ethically aligned actors and networks around the design and use of digital technologies
    f. Iterate external communications and branding of CoLab to increase visibility and engagement across allied networks and within permaculture
    g. Participatory development (and ongoing iteration) of CoLab theory of change or similar. This process, in particular, is to be inspired by Asset Based Community Development.
    h. Enhance collaboration capacity and digital literacy in CoLab.

What is the timeline (onset, milestones and completion) for each component of the project?

The **deliverables** in work stream 1 (Training and eLearning) have indicative timeframes for every activity.

The **deliverables** in work stream 2 (Circle Incubation and Nourishment) have milestones for each activity.

The **activities** in work stream 3 (Prototyping) should not have a predicted timescale, date of completion or similar. In our experience with the CoLab the timing of such complex prototypes would be detrimental to their success. In the past we have experienced relationships deteriorating and activities stagnating due to paid contributors chasing volunteer contributors for their participation. This established hierarchical relationships between people in a network that will only thrive through nurturing mutually dependent relationships. The now adopted strategic approach emphasises agile, participatory, and iterative processes and these can accommodate the emergence that characterises complex networks.

How will you monitor and learn from the project as it proceeds (implementation, impacts, shared perceptions and understanding)?

Valuing complexity is not interpreted as an opportunity to avoid accountability. We are proposing a different approach to learning and evaluation in the CoLab. As equal participants in the CoLab the paid

contributors (funded through this project) do not have the authority to evaluate if the CoLab has increased its capacity to meet its aims (the aim of the Capacity+ project). A different approach is taken.

We propose to build capacity for learning and evaluation across the whole CoLab (aim 10). We are attempting to embed a culture of learning, accountability, and evaluation in line with the social learning approach we take towards governance, facilitation, and digital collaboration skills. We will deliver regular training in this domain for CoLab contributors so that their activities (inside and outside of the CoLab) are grounded in good evaluation practice, that they harvest the expected and unexpected outcomes of their work, and (un-)learn (and share learning) along the way. The Capacity+ funded Learning and Evaluation Coordinator will support this work, support the stewards in developing a CoLab Theory of Change (and enhance the Stewards Circle's capacity to prioritise work that contributes to the CoLab VMA), and will aggregate information and lessons from across the CoLab for external accountability.

i. iv. Organisational capacity

What makes your organisation well positioned to carry out this work effectively? In your response, please briefly describe organisational history and the relevant strengths of core project staff.

PAB has: over 20 part time staff, 100+ volunteers, 6 Trustees; good financial systems, with annual accounts sent to Companies House and the Charities Commission; good IT systems and communications; clear systems for staff management; and a 30 year track record in project delivery. We have many international links and have supported projects in many countries with a good reputation in the international permaculture network. We have a clear mandate to continue this work and a commitment to bring other organisations in to increase the CoLab's resilience.

CoLab paid staff and contractors include: **Philipp Grunwald** (innovative network co-design and facilitation), **Beth Morgan** (volunteer engagement and co-design), **Ewan Findley** (websites, IT, learning environments), **Andy Goldring** (strategy, network understanding and PA CEO), **Nenad Maljković** (agile, sociocracy, social learning).

Stewards Circle: **John Schinnerer** (Sociocracy Consulting Group), **Andrew Langford** (Gaia University), **Suzie Cahn** (Irish Permaculture Network), **Judith Lashbrook** (French Permaculture Network), **Benjamin Vidmar** (Polar Permaculture), **Andy Goldring** (Permaculture Association UK).

Digital Circle: **Mario Yanez** (Miami Pc / web & IT skills), **Steve Charter** (IPEN), **Naomi Joy Smith** (Collaboration Incubator & Conference Weavers), Nenad, Beth, Ewan, Philipp. Secretariat: paid staff plus **Lachlan Mackenzie** (Tropical Pc Guidebook / IPEN), **Les Moore** (Sociocracy, mutual credit), **Fran Burton** (Maya Mountain pc & org dev skills), Sociocracy Circle: **Erin Young** (pc & Sociocracy), John Schinnerer and Andy Goldring.

What changes in personnel do you anticipate during the course of the project, and what are the implications for future work?

A small number of part time staff will join the team, and we will be recruiting for new Circles and to strengthen existing Circles. The team is growing and we anticipate that this could be significant over the next 3 years.

Will the present project lead to improvement in your organisation? If so, how?
Yes. The project continues to hone our ability to work collaboratively across the international

permaculture network. In particular, developing new online collaboration skills and approaches to project delivery. We are able to provide more effective responses and support for the needs of international practitioners and enquirers.

i.v. Sustainability and resilience

Please describe any changes or refinements in your organisation's strategies to:
- *(a) mitigate climate change (i.e. reduce net greenhouse-gas emissions) and ecosystem degradation?*
- *(b) adapt to the challenges of a changing and unpredictable economy and climate?*
- *(c) present these concepts and responses in your communications...?*

This project will support a more concerted international permaculture effort to counter climate change and share solutions widely.

Connecting existing and emerging permaculture networks together within an evolving collaborative framework is intended to enhance network resilience and increase shared strategies to cope with and make use of global changes in a positive way.

In terms of climate and ecosystem degradation, this project has low negative impact (server space, minimal travel and new equipment), and large potential positive impact (increasing effectiveness of permaculture network, adoption of more sustainable digital practices).

PAB has developed a significant new resource (52 Climate Actions), that is available to other permaculture/allied networks to use and the CoLab and its members will be a useful way to disseminate these.

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