

## Free love and save the world

An anthropological analysis of how a free love culture is defined, maintained and communicated in the polyamorous community, Tamera, Portugal

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the social structures and discourse behind a culture of free love in a rural community in Portugal called Tamera. It describes how emotions and communication regarding personal romantic and sexual relationship are dealt with, as well as the incentives behind creating such a culture. Throughout the analysis I describe the political theory and vision behind the project Tamera and how these ideas are, or are not, manifested in reality. Based upon participatory observation and empirical examples I explain the history and development of the project; the space, organizational structure and demography of Tamera; and the tools and institutions applied to communicate around issues of love, sexuality and relations. I provide ethnographic descriptions of the social institutions: social transparency, the forum, studying and teaching, the texts of Dieter Duhm, and the language, followed by discussions of their use. Additionally, I include my personal reflections, criticism and feedback to Tamera.

Findings show that the vision of free love is ideologically contextualized in the writings of Dieter Duhm based on the belief that there cannot be peace on Earth as long as there is war in love, and that there is war in love as long as we do not deal with our inner violent structures, Tamera underlines the importance of personal development. Through encouraging intimate physical contact, practicing social transparency and the forum, Tamera creates a culture in which polyamory thrives. Members maintain their commitment to the community by studying and teaching the basic ideas of the project and also through using a language and discourse which affirms the worldview and political theory behind the project – for better and for worse. Tamera provides practical tools for honest communication which can serve as inspiration for the current feminist movement that tries to rethink gender roles. Tamera provides tools for creating a culture that supports individual choices of lifestyle activism, and thus moves these lifestyle choices from belonging predominantly to the private sphere to belonging to the public and political sphere. Drawing upon the theory of Foucault, the worldview on which the project is founded has to a large extent created the discourse we see in Tamera today, while simultaneously the discourse of today continues to change and thus to recreate the worldview.

**Key words:** *polyamory, intentional community, free love, commune, communication, sexuality, lifestyle activism, Tamera.*

## Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Research objectives and purpose</i>	6
<i>Previous studies</i>	7
<i>Theoretical and conceptual framework</i>	8
<i>Methods</i>	9
<i>Disposition</i>	12
<b>2. Vision, mission and cosmology</b>	<b>13</b>
<i>Tamera's political task</i>	13
<i>Tamera's political theory</i>	13
<i>Free love and sexuality</i>	16
<b>3. Tamera as a Healing Biotope</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>The history of Tamera</i>	20
<i>Space, organizational structure and demography</i>	22
<i>Free love and sexuality in practice</i>	24
<b>4. Communication</b>	<b>26</b>
<i>Social transparency</i>	26
<i>The forum</i>	27
<i>Studying and teaching</i>	30
<i>Discourse</i>	32
<b>5. Reflections</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>Empowerment and disempowerment</i>	36
<b>6. Conclusion</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>40</b>

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# 1. Introduction

This thesis will deal with the intentional community Tamera and its culture of free love. An intentional community is a communal living group with a common vision, and today more people live in intentional communities than in traditional indigenous communities (Conway, 1995). Many communities serve as a counterculture to the dominant society which many seek to escape while practically working to create a utopian alternative. In my analysis I dive into Tamera's ideas behind free love as well as the practical tools the community applies to communicate and maintain a culture of free love.

An important task of social anthropology is to contest social norms that we take for granted. Love and sexuality has conventionally been viewed as private, un-political and un-academic issues, however both research and social movements argue that these are issues of highly political importance. One social movement drawing on the notion that the societal discourse of sexuality is nothing but a tool for enacting power over people, is the free love movement that took off in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Free love advocated for women's rights especially regarding marriage, birth control and adultery and sought to separate the state from such matters in order to liberate women from being owned, so that both men and women would be freed from the hierarchical relations which dominated their most private sphere. The first famous commune growing out of this movement, the Oneida community, was founded in the United States by Christian socialist John Humphrey Noyes, and existed from 1848-1881 (Kanter: 1972). During the second wave feminism, anarchist and free love activist Emma Goldman condemned marriage and monogamy as tools of capitalism, patriarchy and the state, and out of this many new community projects developed (Portwood-Stacer: 2013). In Germany the free love movement was influenced by psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich who argued that suppressed sexual desires are the ultimate origins of and triggers for violence (Reich, 1971). From the 1960's and 70's countercultures of the political left several communal projects emerged based on Reich's and Goldman's ideas - one of them later formed into the community, Tamera, that still exists today.

There has been a shift in sexual research from a predominant medical perspective to a rights based perspective, where feminist scholars (Rubin: 1998, and Butler, 2006) question constructions of norms around sexuality, gender and romantic relationships. Contemporary feminist debates continuously

interrogate social norms such as monogamy and the sex negative discourse that dominates both public and the private spheres. Current tendencies promote lifestyle activism in the form of a sex positive discourse, and polyamory, defined as consensual non-monogamy (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). The authors of the book ‘The Ethical Slut’, which has become a bestseller within polyamorous circles take back the offensive term slut and redefine it as; “*a person of any gender who has the courage to lead life according to the radical proposition that sex is nice and pleasure is good for you*” (Easton, 2009:4). This positive view on sexuality is significant for Tamera and other polyamorous communities (Aguilar, 2013).

Tamera is an intentional community in the region of Alentejo in the South of Portugal. It was founded in 1995 and today around 170 people live in a rural area of 134 ha. The project was originally founded in Germany in 1978, but moved to Portugal in 1995. Tamera attempts to build a holistic culture of ecological and social sustainability as an alternative to our current world system of exploitation of people and natural resources. While the community started as a social experiment focusing mainly on creating a peaceful culture of free love, Tamera is now a complex project that incorporates ecological, technological, political and social innovation. Dieter Duhm, one of the founders of Tamera and author of several books, is clearly influenced by Reich’s (1971) ideas and argues that suppression of feelings regarding love and sexuality is the main cause of fear and suffering, as well as the main cause of violence. Based on this assumption, the goal of Tamera is to create a culture of free love i.e. love free of fear, where violence and war is no longer possible. In Tamera the sexual discourse can be seen as sex positive, and the polyamorous lifestyle adopted by most people in the community is viewed as highly political – thus the sexual discourse does not just represent outdated ideologies of free love, but a trend in current feminist counterculture.

### ***Research objectives and purpose***

I write this thesis with a personal purpose as well as academic. For the last three years Tamera has become an essential part in supporting and reshaping my values. The personal process of trying to study Tamera from an academic and objective standpoint is a tool for me to reach a more complete understanding of the project. Additionally, for Tamera this thesis is meant as “an outsider’s”/guests perspective. I hope that especially if co-workers of Tamera read this paper, they will see my motivation for writing this as an expression of engagement and care. I hope that the criticisms which I provide, will not be seen as attacks, but as possible contributions for further development.

The objective of this thesis is to examine the created culture of free love in Tamera. After some investigation it becomes apparent that free love is merely a consequence of radically honest, transparent and self-reflective communication between every party involved - which in Tamera means an elimination of the boundary between the private and the public spheres. Consequently, I have chosen to focus my analysis on the ways in which community members communicate about what we normally call private issues; issues such as partnership, love, sexuality, and our general personal well-being. In order to get to an understanding of this, I provide ethnographic descriptions of three main institutions for communication in Tamera; a social tool called the Forum, the ideas of Dieter Duhm (which are widely studied and taught in Tamera), and the general discourse and language used.

The central research question is:

- How does Tamera define, maintain and communicate a culture of free love?

Questions to guide the research:

- What does free love mean in Tamera?
- What is Tamera's ideological incentive behind creating a culture of free love?
- Which tools and institutions for communication are created to support and deal with issues around free love, and how do they function?

### ***Previous studies***

In 2015, Kunze and Avelino published a report on two communities; Tamera and Schloss Tempelhof, called "*Social Innovation and the Global Ecovillage Network.*" It includes a 35 pages' analysis of Tamera from a transformative social innovation perspective that looks at ecovillages as catalysers of change. It is based upon a short-term field work done in 2014 by Avelino and includes several comprehensive interviews. Since Avelino stayed in Tamera for a short time and didn't have access or time to do thorough participatory observations, I rely mostly upon own empirical observations and informal conversations. However, I use Avelino's interviews in order to provide a thorough

background information on the development of Tamera, which is the focus of her report.

I have found no other literature specifically on Tamera, but several studies on intentional communities practicing some form of free love. There exist numerous studies of the Oneida commune, and many of the practices of Oneida such as mutual criticism and complex marriage can be compared to the practices of Tamera, although the Oneida community seems to be stricter and more dogmatic in practice (Kanter, 1972). Modern communities practicing polyamory seem to be more comparable with Tamera when it comes to the culture of love and sexuality. Aguilar describes in his article; “*Situational Sexual Behaviours: The Ideological Work of Moving Toward Polyamory in Communal Living Groups*” how sexuality in two polyamorous U.S communities is largely constructed by the environment – something I believe to be true in Tamera as well. Aguilar explains how members who did not practice polyamory before they moved to the communities are encouraged in different way to participate in polyamory both due to structural and ideological reasons, and in this sense the environment shapes sexual identities (Aguilar, 2013:125). Studies of intentional communities stress that communities are unique micro-societies of alternative lifestyles and structures and therefore provide great opportunities of investigation as they encompass all aspects of a normal society on a micro scale (Aguilar, 2013 and Kanter, 1972). Where Aguilar focuses on why and how polyamorous identity is constructed from a social constructionist perspective, I focus my analysis on how Tamera communicates and maintains a culture of free love. Nevertheless, I draw comparisons to his study throughout my analysis as I believe there to be several relevant similarities between the communities.

### ***Theoretical and conceptual framework***

To understand the role and vision of Tamera I draw on Graeber (2004) and Kanter (1972). Graeber understands anarchist organizations - such as utopian communities - as expressions of a commitment to optimism, which, according to him, should be a moral imperative. Additionally, Graeber argues that transitions to anarchist forms of organization will not happen overnight, but be gradual transitions towards new forms of communication and societal structures that “*make currently existing forms of power seem stupid and beside the point*” (David Graeber, 2004:40). Kanter (1972) provides a sociological comparative study of several communities from before 1840 to the present day. The sociological perspective she takes tries to find out how these communities were structurally build and maintained and what characterized the longest standing communities from the different times. I will



use her findings to place the societal structure of Tamera within a larger understanding of intentional communities. Additionally, in order to make sense of the lifestyle choice of living polyamorous in a community setting, I use the theory of Portwood-Stacer (2013) who understands lifestyle activism practices, such as polyamory, as representations of a utopian vision.

As a tool for analysing the discourse in Tamera, I draw on Foucault's theory of subjectivity and discourse. Foucault stresses how the subject - which in this case is both the individuals staying in Tamera (guests and members) but also Tamera as a subject in itself – to a large extent is shaped by the surrounding discourse, and simultaneously active in shaping itself. (Nilsson, 2008:179). According to Foucault, people as subjects are made up by a variety of changing qualities, values and perspectives. The subjects that we are in different situations is a product of the rules, norms, discourses, relations etc. that surrounds us at that given moment (Nilsson, 2008:181). This theory of changeability of the subject is interesting in Tamera, because people upon arrival experience a profound difference between the Tamerian culture and the culture they come from.

In this thesis, I define an intentional community as: a group of people who live together with a common purpose (Aguilar:2013:106). The community has boundaries and a territory, they share resources and constitute of a primary group. In the case of Tamera, the community simultaneously functions as a domestic unit, a business, a political order and a social and ideological institution (Kanter, 1972:3). I define polyamory as: consensual non-monogamy - a relationship lifestyle in which people openly engage with different partners romantically and/or sexually.

## ***Methods***

The methods I use are based upon traditional anthropological participatory observation during fieldwork and complimented with a review of most of the existing Tamerian literature. The field in this study is limited to the geographical territorial land that Tamera is, owns and exists on. The field is the culture that exists in Tamera - a culture which some people live in their whole lives while many choose to live in it for a while before they move elsewhere.

I went to Tamera twice before actually deciding to write my thesis about the community. Both times I visited Tamera out of personal interest. The first time I came for 7 weeks, June-August 2014, where I worked in the garden and participated in the different courses; Love School and Summer University. Upon arrival I knew nothing about the community or its ideas of free love. I was deeply fascinated

by the people I met there who seemed very happy, empathic and critical towards many norms of the dominant culture. I experienced honest communication on a whole other level than what I had before. I had discussions about social norms that I find interesting – and there were people who shared my interest. This experience was for me a peek into another reality, that ever since has been part of shaping my own understanding of the world.

The second time I came to Tamera was for 6 weeks from September-November 2015, volunteering in the guest kitchen. This time the experience of finding paradise was gone and I especially started to question the way people often referred to the political theory of Dieter Duhm and the extreme idealism of the place. I guess I got a more realistic picture of Tamera in 2015 when it was not coloured by the first time Tamera-encounter-high. A Tamera co-worker told me that my experience was usual; that the first time people come they have this utopian image of the place, but after staying longer they realize that far from everything is perfect. Exactly because I did not then have the intention to write a thesis about Tamera, I believe my findings are valuable as representations of any other guest. My personal diary, notes, as well as countless informal conversations and observations from my visits in Tamera are used to inform this thesis.

In May 2016 I came for the third time to do fieldwork and participate in a 4-week intensive community course. Through participatory observation, I researched how the tools and institutions of communication around free love functions. I have collected uncountable informal interviews, notes on participatory observations and several public speeches which were part of the ‘community course’, as well as my own diary. I support my ethnographic fieldwork with looking into; both the ideological background and worldview expressed in Tamera’s most popular books written by Dieter Duhm and Sabine Lichtenfels, as well as some texts found on Tamera’s homepage. Additionally, I attended a 7-week online course provided by Tamera called “Global Revolution and the Healing of Love” which provides both videos, text and online discussion on the issues of love and sexuality.

### *Reflexivity*

Since a completely objective account is impossible (Davies, 2008), I have tried to inform the reader as much as possible of my own interest in Tamera. As already mentioned, this study is not only

motivated by scientific interest, but also by personal interest in the community. I have been considering to go live there, create a home, have children and to invest my energy in the project. Throughout the text it might be possible to detect some underlying feelings of respect, admiration, curiosity, frustration and anger - which are all indications that I personally care.

I am aware that my role in researching the community has continuously, throughout both the field work and the process of writing, moved between taking the view of an insider and an outsider. I have noticed how my perspective has changed from feeling at home and as an insider during the fieldwork, while in the process of writing I have viewed myself more as an outsider. I am aware that research by anthropologists whose home *is* the field has been dismissed due to what Fergusson et al (1997) refer to as the hierarchy of field sites (Fergusson et al, 1997:13). However, I believe that this constant change of perspective has been beneficial for my study as it has highlighted both negative and positive aspects of Tamera. After being in the field I was able to step back from the Tamerian culture, which in many ways feels like a vacuum that sucks you in, and see things from a more objective and outside perspective. Although this objectivity is always only partial, I think that being very self-conscious about the balance and constant change of my own role and perspective has been helpful in reaching a deeper understanding of Tamerian culture (Hume et al, 2004:xi). As Davies mentions, the purpose of anthropological research is to mediate between different constructions of reality (2008:6), and this I have done by including my own personal experience of feeling both part of and apart from Tamera.

### *Limitations and ethical considerations*

I want to stress that this analysis is my own and does not represent the views of the co-workers of Tamera or anyone else. I visited Tamera as a guest, but I have never been living there as a community member, hence my findings are limited by this. I am conscious of the fact that the reputation of Tamera is crucial for the further development of the project, and it is my aim only to provide a realistic and as objective an account as possible. I am aware that I generalize a lot, and often refer to 'Tamerians' as a homogeneous group, which of course it is not. There are people from different nationalities and backgrounds, some of whom have lived in Tamera all their lives and some who have only just recently entered the community, or only plan to stay for a limited amount of time. Therefore, my findings are situational and dependent on the specific people I have met who have

influenced my study. My findings represent a specific, or more precisely (due to the dispersion of my field work) several specific situations in time and space. Nevertheless, in this analysis I describe a norm and a culture and in order to do this I need to make some generalizations. I believe that the relatively long fieldwork done in shorter periods during the last two years, supports the reliability of my findings. No real names are used in order to protect people's privacy.

### ***Disposition***

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis is divided into four main chapters.

'Vision, mission and cosmology' does not contain any empirical descriptions or analysis, but purely explains the dream; what Tamera sees as its political task, the political theory behind the project, and the vision of free love and sexuality. 'Tamera as a Healing Biotope' describes the empirical reality of the project i.e. how the ideas are manifested in reality. This chapter explains; the history and development of the project; the space, organizational structure and demography of Tamera; and how free love and sexuality is actually practiced. In 'Communications' I dive one layer deeper into the empirical reality of the projects by examining different institutions of communication. What is meant with institutions of communication is: established practices or ways of organization that operates predominantly with the domain of communication between people. I have chosen some of the most prevalent institutions of communication in Tamera, which I can say something relevant about: social transparency, the forum, studying and teaching, the texts of Dieter Duhm, and the language. I provide ethnographic descriptions of these institutions followed by discussions of their use. The last chapter, 'Reflections', contains personal reflections, criticism and feedback to Tamera, which are relevant in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the project.

## 2. Vision, mission and cosmology

### *Tamera's political task*

The political task of Tamera is to play a role in the system change that is needed in order to steer global development away from a system of violence and exploitation - *the matrix of violence* - towards a system of peace, cooperation and trust between humans, animals and nature. Social exploitation of people in what we call the Third World, the rise of fascism, headless extraction of resources to feed the dominating capitalist hunger for infinite growth and extinction of species is steering humanity into a dead end. Duhm (2008) writes that war is the logic continuation of this worldwide matrix of violence, and that this is not only a result of failing governments, but the outcome of a collective trauma that lives in every individual after years of patriarchal history. The argument goes: when people grow up in a society where they are forced to suppress feelings and thoughts already from childhood they have great chances for developing a violent character. According to Wilhelm Reich (1971) neurotic anxiety of erotic instincts stemming from suppression of these, is the predominant reason for violence. Hence suppression of thoughts and feelings around sexuality, and thus also love, is the reason for violence also on a global scale. This is the reason for the famous quote: "*There can be no peace on earth as long as there is war in love*" (Dregger, 2015: no page nr). Tamera's task is to heal the collective trauma of human kind through healing love.

### *Tamera's political theory*

The work that is being done in Tamera is based upon what is referred to as the 'political theory' of Dieter Duhm. This visionary theory tries to explain why it is possible to create a new culture of peace on earth through establishing Healing Biotopes (Tamera is the first and only until now), and how and why these places despite their smallness can be catalysers for global change in a relatively short time. The political theory is the background theory for 'the plan of the Healing Biotopes.' Dieter Duhm explains in 'The Sacred Matrix' that the political theory contains six parts:

1. The holistic structure of reality and 2. The unified structure of information of life

Under this title Dieter Duhm tries to explain what is meant with a holistic or holographic world view. This world view assumes a unity of all existence, and views the earth as one living organism. It also assumes that the information or genetic code in one single particle contains the information or genetic code of the whole universe. In this sense everything in the world; an atom, a stone, the shell of a snail

or the neurons of our brains, contains the same one existence and consciousness which also exists in the whole – “*The world soul, which operates in the world, also operates in all its parts.*” (Duhm, 2014:226). In theory, therefore, we can communicate with animals and plants as we are all part of the same consciousness.

### 3. The field principle

In a world that functions as one organism where every part contains identical ‘overall information’, Duhm argues that any new information introduced to this organism thus operates in all its individual parts and conversely that any new information introduced into one individual part (for example an individual) operates in the whole (for example one society). He claims that any changes in the world happen through the creation of new information fields, also referred to as morphogenetic fields, a term coined by Rupert Sheldrake (URL 3). All evolutionary change - for example millions of years ago when life only existing in water developed lungs and started living on land - happened through formation of morphogenetic fields. The morphogenetic field principle implies that when a boundary for what was possible was overcome in one organism, new complex structures developed and spread through the spiritual consciousness of the world - referred to as the *noosphere* - to all other organisms. The noosphere can be compared to an internet of consciousness, from where new information can be downloaded. Another example of the power of morphogenetic fields that is given by Duhm is climbing Mount Everest without oxygen. While this was considered absolutely impossible, suddenly one man managed. Not by coincidence, but through creating a field, suddenly many other climbers managed the same thing. The information that had entered the first climber and made him able to do it was spread to the noosphere and thus to the other climbers. This field principle means that even if a new set of information of peace, trust and cooperation is only introduced in one community, all elements of the whole will receive the information, hence the probability of changed behaviour is increased. In this sense every individual can literally be the change they want to see in the world.

### 4. The new information

A new set of information of trust and cooperation in all domains of human life, from ecology and technology to love and sexuality, needs to be introduced to the body of the earth. When work is done in all areas of life, and when this work is “*in resonance with the dream of the world*” then vibrations from all the different domains will start to become congruent with each other, and a coherent frequency emerges (Duhm, 2014: 228). This frequency of thinking and acting enters the noosphere

as overall information, and is thus available for all beings on the planet to ‘download.’ Consequently, Duhm explains that actions taken by a strong community can set a new direction for development and that this is the task of the Healing Biotopes.

#### 5. The reality of concrete utopia

In order to understand the dream of the world (also referred to as the utopian latency or concrete utopia), Duhm argues that we only have to become conscious of it, because it is always present. When we are conscious of the world’s dream, we are able to realize it. The logic that Duhm draws on is that, because there is a dream, its fulfilment is also possible – “*there would be no thirst if there was no water*” (Duhm, 2014:229). Just like the seed is the dream of the plant, and the butterfly is the dream of the caterpillar, concrete utopia is the dream of the Earth. Through working in line with this dream we are “*met from within by a power, which guides us and makes it possible to do things we could otherwise not have done*” (Duhm, 2014:229). Hence, we do not create change through individual strength alone, just like the caterpillar does not become a butterfly by its own power.

#### 6. The healing biotopes project

Healing biotopes are places where the new information is born and transmitted. The goal is that there exist several healing biotopes around the planet where the new information is developed. Healing biotopes should be complex and have many years of experience as well as many committed members. The work done in the healing biotopes should be without contradiction, compatible with the higher system of life – *the sacred matrix*- correspond with the needs of all living beings, and function practically. Duhm stresses that Tamera has not reached this goal yet, but that they are working on it. Once the information in one healing biotope is developed far enough, Duhm predicts that we will most probably see a global chain reaction of emerging biotopes around the world. Based upon the field principle, this will occur all by itself.

This theory is the fundamental motivation for why many people choose to dedicate their time and energy to the project Tamera. The belief of being the first in a global chain reaction is not new to intentional communities, as Kanter (1972) explains, but a common theme. The belief of the Oneida community was that they were living and developing a system which the rest of the world would sooner or later adapt (Kanter, 1972:9). Moreover, after reading several of Dieter Duhm’s texts and listening to speeches, it seems evident that there is a spiritual belief imprinted deeply into the logic

of the political theory. Even though some kind of scientific logic is often used as argumentation, the theory clearly also rests upon the belief in some higher power that is present both beyond and within our material world.

Duhm's idea of the field spreading automatically without force, fits into the framework Graeber (2004) uses to describe how anarchist forms of organizations will emerge. Graeber stresses that these projects would look nothing like a state, but all have different forms, and that perhaps all they would have in common would be that; "*none would involve anyone showing up with weapons and telling everyone else to shut up and do what they were told*" (David Graeber, 2004:40). The only form of power such projects will have is, both according to Graeber and Duhm, that they will serve as a model for a new organization of life which will eventually outdate the currently existing forms of power. In theory, the project of Tamera is more about constructing a new and better society than it is about escaping the one that is rejected. Kanter (1972:1-2) argues that communities tend to either be 'utopias of escape' or 'utopias of reconstruction.' According to Duhm's theory, Tamera can mostly be said to be the latter since their founding idea as well as the work and 'research' they do is based on creating a new culture that makes the old one obsolete.

### ***Free love and sexuality***

Free love in Tamera is different from many other free love cultures in communities coming out of the same movements. Free love in Tamera is defined as love free of fear, and thus expresses a vision more than a concrete practice. According to the vision of free love; weather people chose to live in a monogamous relationship or in polyamory, and regardless of people's sexual orientations, is completely up to themselves – the reality however, as shown in the section 'Free love and sexuality in practice', I argue to be somewhat different. It is often stressed in Tamera that there are no definite rules – there is only 'inner truth.' Inner truth means that every person is responsible for listening deeply to the 'inner voice' which lets you know what is right for you or not. Truth requires self-reflection of one's own behavioural patterns and thought processes, and the capability of communicating the insights honestly both to one self and the people involved. In this sense free love is closely connected to personal growth. For people to grow into 'freely loving beings' Tamera stresses the essential role of a supportive community committed to creating trust. In order for trust to arise Tamera advocates for radical honesty, transparent communication and self-reflexivity, which means an elimination of the boundaries between the private and the public spheres and is primarily



practiced through the forum (see section 'The forum').

While free love is an overarching vision, free sexuality can be seen as one approach for accomplishing free love. According to my findings, the definition of free sexuality is similar to the idea of polyamory as consensual or ethical non-monogamy, with a focus on creating a culture that supports this. In the online course 'Global Revolution and the Healing of Love' free sexuality is defined as: “[a]n *erotic culture based on trust, contact, and solidarity where the sexual relation between people does not depend on relationship or partnership commitments*” (Duhm, 2014:216). This elusive definition emphasizes the ethical guidelines of free sexuality, and importantly also defines free sexuality as a culture, more than just a choice of lifestyle or type of relationship structure. If you live polyamory in a culture where the norm is monogamy - which is the reality in most western societies - basically the whole political structure is working against your favour. Therefore, Tamera predominantly promote societal and cultural change, and therefore love is perceived as a political issue. There are clear lines to be drawn both to other free love scholars of the 60-70's (Goldman in Portwood-Stacer, 2013) but also to current writers in feminist sexuality (Rubin, 1998). Portwood-Stacer and Rubin both argue that love is a political issue, and that rejecting the normative hegemony of monogamy through lifestyle choices represents a wish for a different society.

Free sexuality in Tamera is based upon the assumption that one is honest to oneself and one's partner/partners/lover/lovers when it comes to sexual desire (Duhm, 2010). This is grounded in Reich's (1971) belief that the result of hiding our truths behind masks and suppressing our sexual drive leads to illness and violence. Time and time again it is stressed that partnership and free sexuality are not contradictory, but compatible - it is possible to have one primary partner, while also sharing sexual encounters with other people. One reason mentioned for why monogamous relationships in the 'outside world' do not last is because people tend to put too much pressure on the role of their partner, expecting the partner to fulfil all their needs and live up to all their expectations. By not being fixated on one person alone it is argued that we free both ourselves and our partner from unrealistic expectations, and are thus able to be authentically and genuinely together. Additionally, dealing with difficult emotions when for example your partner is with someone else, requires intense emotional work. This emotional work is generally viewed as progress in personal development, and thus progress in achieving the vision of the political theory.

According to Duhm, free sexuality occurs by itself when we do not prevent the natural impulses of

ourselves or our partner. This argumentation is similar to the one present in the study by Aguilar where people speak of being “wired this way” (2013: 83). Explaining the desire for multiple sexual relations through biology is not surprising given the strong Western discourse that practices are automatically legitimized solely through their biological origin (Aguilar 2013:110 referring to Barker 2005:83). In this line of argumentation social and cultural constructions are secondary while biology is first in the hierarchy. It is interesting that exactly in the same way, free love in Tamera is argued to be the natural form of love.

The book ‘The Ethical Slut’ (Easton et al, 2009), which many people in Tamera know, argues that sex and sexual love are fundamental forces of good that have the potential to enhance our lives and open our spiritual awareness. In Tamera when love, intimacy, eroticism and sex are lived authentically this is not only beautiful – it is a manifestation of God. This discourse of seeing love and sexuality as something positive, healthy and even sacred is an inherent belief in Tamera. According to Sabine Lichtenfels, the other founder of Tamera, we can study love like we can study mathematics. In her book “Grace - Pilgrimage for a Future without War” (2007) she defines some basic rules of the natural functions of love; *“Love is God [...] Love is free. You cannot bind any human being to yourself by means of possessing him or of exercising a right over him. You cannot force anyone to be responsible for the satisfaction of your wants and needs. Love and desire are gifts of life, no legal matter. 4. You can only be faithful if you may love others, too. Love knows neither fences nor jealous restrictions. Love knows compassion and the never ending interest in each other and in the world.* (Lichtenfels, 2007: 252-253). Hence, the belief is that love has its own natural functioning and does not necessarily obey the relational structures we try to place it in. By setting love free and not trying to possess it, we can learn to understand the way love is meant to be (Duhm, 2010: 51-52). Often love is compared to water: all over the world people misunderstand its nature and in fear of scarcity they try to capture it in dams. Because water is not allowed to flow freely and naturally, we experience droughts or floods, and this misunderstanding of the natural order results in human suffering on a global scale.

To take an example of how we can study love, the emotion of jealousy is often used. The commonly held belief of the culture most people in Tamera come from and now reject, is that jealousy is a natural part of love and proof of one’s affection and commitment. This idea reinforces the belief that monogamy is biological. In Tamera however, jealousy is strongly believed to have nothing to do with

how much you love another person, but instead to do with fear of loss. The fear of loss and scarcity produces a need for control and possession. Tamera argues that historically when society shifted from being based on communities of trust to being based on separation, competition and fear, the understanding of love also shifted to become a matter of possession, like a commodity which you have to protect and fight for. The study lies in creating the ideal circumstances for love to grow freely, and the belief is that when these ideal circumstances are achieved one will experience pure joy when her/his beloved enjoys a sexual encounter with another person.

### 3. Tamera as a Healing Biotope

#### *The history of Tamera*

The idea behind Tamera emerged in Germany in 1978. The founders of the project are Sabine Lichtenfels, Charly Rainer Ehrenpreis and Dieter Duhm. In 1983 the social experiment, then called Bauhütte (German for 'building workers' hut'), included 50 adults living on a farm in the village of Schwand in the southern region of the Black Forest, Germany. The initial intention of Bauhütte was to bring specialists, together in order to build a community that could function as a model for what an alternative world could look like. The people involved were mainly activists from the New Left and Ecological Movement in Germany, and the sociologist and psychoanalyst Dieter Duhm functioned as the leader (Dregger, 2001). Coming from the movement of free love the intention was also to deal with the social conflicts arising from living so many people closely together in a culture of free sexuality. Not far into the project, the members realized the importance of dealing with human relations, conflicts and emotions inside the group. They applied a psychoanalytical approach that focused on bringing unconscious repressed fears into the conscious mind so that inner conflicts could be solved in order to solve the outer conflicts.

In a talk for guests at Tamera, Sabine Lichtenfels and Charly Rainer Ehrenpreis explain the history of how the project developed and the challenges they faced in the process. As a tool for communicating personal issues in a group form, the SD forum was invented. SD is an abbreviation for the German word "Selbstdarstellung" which means self-expression. The forum is a form of theatrical and exaggerated dramatization of a person's feelings expressed by that one person in a larger circle of people. The goal is to *disidentify* - understand that you are not what you experience - yourself from your feelings and your ego, and to create transparency through being seen by the larger group in your most private sphere. The idea behind the forum is "seeing is loving", meaning that if you truly see a person, you can only love. Apart from developing the forum, the group also experimented with other forms of theatrical group games, such as the 'Mater and Slave Game' where one dictates what the other one does, or talking and silent meditations for 72 hours on the question, "Who am I?". The social experiments were inspired by, elements such as spirituality and philosophy, telepathy and trance, as well as theatre and painting. As Sabine Lichtenfels explained, they sometimes crossed the border in their experimentation, but learned from their mistakes and kept developing, as their aim was to create a new model for how people can live peacefully together in a culture of free

love.

When asked about the most difficult challenge during the process, Sabine answers that this was when the project was accused by the media of being an abusive sex cult. In 1986 the press published very negative articles about the project under headlines such as “Sex Clinic with Olive Oil,” “Sex with a Hundred Couples” and basically called the project a sect. As their image was worsened by the press, the group lost their permit to hold workshops and eventually were refused to rent the farm any longer (Dregger, 2001). The group split up, however many stayed connected in smaller groups under the larger network name Project Meiga until some were reunited founding the still existing community ZEGG (Centre for Experimental Culture Design) in 1991 near Berlin (URL 3). ZEGG was strongly influenced by the Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich who argued that the suppression of sexuality in childhood can not only lead to personal neuroses, but to social catastrophes, violence and war.

Around ZEGG the rumours of the press, which of course were empty according to everyone I have talked to in Tamera, continued to shed bad light onto the project. In my literature search I have not found any proof confirming the accusations. However, as other scandalous stories of free love communities spread during the period, I can imagine how the fear of sex cults spread in the media causing huge scepticism towards communities. A famous scandal is the Friedrichshof Commune in Austria where the leader Otto Muehl in 1991 was convicted of sexual abuse of minors and sentenced to seven years in prison, after which the commune fell apart (Ladi, 2013). Due to political controversies stemming from the press campaign, ZEGG split in two; one group lead by the three charismatic people; Sabine Lichtenfels, Dieter Duhm and Charly Rainer Ehrenpreis moved to found Tamera in Portugal in 1995, while another group stayed to continue the development of ZEGG in Germany.

Since then Tamera went through many changes. Kunze and Avelino (2015) have found that the most prominent development in Tamera during the last 20 years have been: the creation of lakes and subsequent ‘greening’ of the land, a shift in leadership to include more of the younger generation, internationalization and ‘opening up’ to people from outside, loosening up of strict rules and norms, increasing attention on sustainable ecological practices, and strengthened relation and integration with the Portuguese regional context in which it exists (Kunze et al, 2015:63). Today Tamera has quite a positive reputation in Portugal due to its work in ecology and green technology which has

been developing the last ten years transforming the rural area from a desert-like nature to a water retention landscape with several lakes and ponds, fruit trees and organic agriculture that provides 20 per cent of the community's food consumption. During my time in Tamera, I heard several times that *"the only constant thing we can count on is change"* and this willingness to change may well be a crucial reason for why the community is not only 'surviving', but continues to grow in numbers of residential members.

### ***Space, organizational structure and demography***

The 134 ha area of Tamera is more or less divided into three: the guest campus, the residential area where most Tamerians live and work, and the more common areas such as the café and bar and the natural areas around the lakes. The guest area in Tamera, also referred to as the Campus, looks like a rural eco course centre with large dormitories and small houses for rent, a large kitchen and eating area, seminar rooms, compost toilets, a book shop and a reception. When walking around in the green area of Tamera you encounter several quotes of Dieter Duhm expressing the vision and philosophy of the project. Since all rooms are for public use, except your bed which is either in a large dorm or sometimes a more private place, you do not have much private time alone unless you actively go somewhere and ask for privacy. In Tamera there are so-called 'love spaces', sometimes in a cabin outside, sometimes in a caravan or a room in a larger building. All love spaces have a double-bed, a candle light, some condoms, toilet paper and a bin, and a sign for showing if the space is occupied or not. These spaces are places where people can go and have privacy from the larger public if they want to engage in erotic or sexual contact.

When arriving to Tamera for the first time as a guest, you are specifically told what areas you are welcomed in, and what areas are for residents. The division of Tamerians and guests is something that is criticized by many guests, as they don't get to see how people actually live and have limited time so interact in the common areas. At the same time, it is understandable that people want some privacy from all the people visiting.

The procedure of becoming a co-corker of Tamera is not linear, but different from person to person. Most often someone comes as a guest several times during the guest season running from April to

November, they take part in the community course before they apply to School Miria, which is defined as ‘intense study time’ of the basic thoughts of the project taking place in February every year. After being part of School Miria, where the community have gotten to know you, you can ask to become a co-worker and live in Tamera for a limited or unlimited amount of time. Before people become co-workers they usually pay around 600 euros a month to stay in Tamera, while after becoming members they get a monthly pay or around 200 euros.

Community members are in all ages. Some of them were part of the project from the beginning, some joined later, and some were even born in Tamera. The average Tamerian is German, white and with a middle class background. Most people have an education in some practical area such as engineering, teaching, theatre, accounting, farming etc. Guests are in average a bit younger than the average Tamerian, 20-30-years-old, and from Europe or the U.S, white and middle class. Many are interested in some element of what some people will call New Age, be it yoga, tantra, communicating with animals etc. Most people you meet look into your eyes and speak to you with warmth and presence.

Every Sunday the whole community and the guests gather, many in their finer outfits, for what is known as the matiné at 10am in a large straw-bale building called the aula – which looks similar to many modern African churches. Here there is a speech on one of the topics Tamera deals with: peace-work, love and sexuality, spirituality, communication with animals, water retention etc. After the talk there are announcements of the activities of the coming week, and a couple of times during the matiné people stand up to sing with the Tamera choir. Several guests have described their first matiné experience as some kind of mixture between a live TV-show and going to church. Afterwards there is a bookshop open where all Tamerian literature is available. There are no strong religious aspects of the matiné. Instead the matiné, is similar to contemporary Sunday assemblies which are becoming popular in Western cultures (URL 1). Monday mornings a smaller gathering, ‘the ring of power’, takes place in the stone circle. The stone circle is an area on top of a little hill where several large stones are placed in a circle that serves as a sacred place for prayers and connecting to the divine world.

The rest of the week Tamerians work their assigned jobs; it can be in the gardens, technology department, the school, kitchens, reception, holding seminars and many other things. In addition to

this work everyone takes part in different social-group and working-group meetings and forums. The guests are normally part of a course, and their schedules are busy, just as the Tamerians', from around 8am-8pm. The community course which I took part of started the day with the 'God point': a short speech or reading a passage aloud from a book often written by Sabine Lichtenfels or Dieter Duhm, dedicated to the topic of spirituality and inner work. Then there was breakfast and subsequently 'karma yoga': some practical physical work like weeding the garden or helping with the dishes. Afterwards there was something called 'geistig hour' which included a speech and sometimes discussions. Then lunch, and a longer break. In the afternoons we did different activities, such as theatre, optional workshops, introduction to the 'love school' and forums. In the guest area there are always many activities in the evenings as well, and in general people are always, apart from Sunday, busy. When asked about the most problematic aspect of living in Tamera, every Tamerian I talked to mentions the daily schedule that is way too full of both practical work and meetings and forums on emotional issues.

Kanter (1972) explains in her analysis that what characterize communities of high longevity is some kind of ideology that provides meaning for community life and serves as validation for decisions. Furthermore, communities are also characterized by charismatic leaders who represent the community's values, fixed daily routines and guidelines for personal behaviour, and finally they do not automatically accept all applicants but require some kind of ideological conversion (Kanter, 1972:127). In many ways Tamera fits into Kanter's over-all sociological framework both when it comes to charismatic leaders, a fundamental ideology of free love and the ethical guidelines connected to it, a fixed and busy daily schedule and the control of newcomers. Yet, it is difficult for me to say exactly how the community 'chooses' applicants, as I have never been part of the process. In general, I have the impression that acceptance is more based on personal qualities and connections, sometimes also working abilities, than it is on a persons' 'conversion.' If you are already in Tamera, you don't want war and destruction.

### ***Free love and sexuality in practice***

In Tamera monogamy is only practiced by a minority. I have not experienced monogamy to be something that is proclaimed with pride, but on the contrary, more as something a couple chooses as a short-term-solution. Often times people are advised to start with a closed relationship to build up



trust before they feel comfortable opening up their relationship. The culture which I have experienced in Tamera is clearly a culture where polyamory is the norm. The most usual in Tamera is that people have primary lovers or partners, while also having sexual encounters with others, or have no primary partners, but several lovers. There are partnerships which have lasted many years and partners who have children together and live polyamorously. There are children who have several mother and father figures who are not necessarily the biological parents. A huge topic of discussion is how practically to combine the longing for partnership with the longing for free sexuality. Even though Duhm claims that these are compatible, he also admits that the community has been working on finding a balance for some decades now, and that it is still a work in progress. I have heard of several people who lived monogamously before and after their stay in Tamera, but chose polyamory as their lifestyle in Tamera. I believe this is due to the Tamerian culture which clearly supports polyamory over monogamy, even though in theory people are free to choose.

The discourse I have experienced in Tamera encourages intimate physical contact, be it massage, holding hands, cuddling or more erotic or sexual contact. Physical intimate contact changes from being something you only have with one specific person to something you have with many. This culture of seeing physical contact with many as something positive that should be encouraged is similar to what Aguilar (2013) finds in his study, and he concludes that this definitely strengthens bonds between people. In Tamera I also find this to be true, but also that it creates lots of emotions that afterwards needs to be dealt with in a forum. In general people go through emotional rollercoasters on a daily basis in Tamera, partly because people are engaged in many different relationships that challenges them in different ways, and partly because emotional release either through forum or just a normal conversation is an encouraged thing. Hence people constantly experience many strong feelings, and they constantly express them. People talk about the Tamera time-warp, which means that the events and emotions normally experienced in one week in the 'outside' world is equal to what is experienced during one day in Tamera. Such events and emotions might be: having a deep conversation about your childhood traumas, meeting a new lover and having sex for the first time, handling jealous feelings, talking about yesterday's conflict, talking about yesterday's forum, crying and feeling high from new friendships or love affairs. Many might describe their stay in Tamera, as a guest, as some kind of mixture between therapy, personal development and a sexually focused summer camp.

## 4. Communication

### *Social transparency*

Social transparency is a strategy and principle employed by the community in order to achieve truth in communication. One example of how this transparency functions is that: I am romantically involved with a man who lives in Tamera, one day we have an argument and disagreement and we are not sure how to proceed. Normally I would write in my diary, or talk to a close friend - I would never consider asking a person I do not know well for her/his opinion. In Tamera though that is the norm. We sit and have this argument, and wonder how to solve it, and the guy says: "*how would you feel if I just called a couple of people over here and we hear what they think?*" Five minutes after I sit with four people I have only briefly met discussing my 'private' relationship. This high prominence of transparency was for me, and is for many people, one of the most profound 'culture shocks' to experience in Tamera. It gives people a feeling that they are not alone, even in what they thought were their personal problems – for better or worse.

There are even 'love counsellors' available for giving advice to people, and upon request they might also ask people out for you or suggest possible lovers. Even though people in Tamera have different opinions on different issues, the span of different opinions, especially regarding free love, is limited. This of course is because; that regardless of people's past experiences, they have all chosen to live in a community that aims for free love and where polyamory is the norm. You will not find one person in Tamera who will advise you to threaten your partner, telling her/him that if he doesn't stop seeing other people you will leave him, nor will you find somebody who will tell you that falling in love with two people at the same time is shameful and you have to choose; that if you feel jealous it is just because you love so strongly; or that having sex with someone you don't know is being cheap. Hence, naturally other people's opinions tend towards everything Tamera stands for.

Another example of how transparency works is shown through the ending of a party that was held to celebrate the ending of the course I took part in. Before the party ended everyone gathered for a circle of sharing wishes for the night. Here the ones who wished for it could officially declare who they wished to spend the night with, and the person could give an answer. In this way, everyone knew what was happening when the party was over, and in case more people wished to spend time with the same person this would be visible and the very wanted person could then decide what he/she wanted.

Sometimes people said “yes” to invitations, sometimes “no.” All requests and answers were accepted and welcomed as long as they expressed the people’s truths. The point of the practice was to consciously decide what we wanted for the night, so that nobody had to hide their desires and go out and get drunk in order to ‘accidentally’ end up in someone’s bed, as we know it from mainstream western society. Additionally, this is a way of keeping everyone informed and engaged in everyone’s ‘private’ lives, and the practice of social transparency in this way definitely deletes the broader between private and public spheres.

### ***The forum***

Tamera uses the forum for sharing ‘personal’ issues as a daily practice, sometimes the whole community together and sometimes in different smaller groups. From the early days of Tamera people experienced that emotional problems block objective decision-making, and it is often said that what keeps the community stable even through periods of conflicts or disagreements is the intense forum work. Kunze et al (2015) describes the forum as a method for revealing and exchanging individual perspectives and emotions and helps community members to appreciate different opinions, to be moderate and fair, and at the same time dare to express their own wishes. In short, the forum takes place in a circle gathering with one person in the middle expressing her/his inner state, a forum leader guiding the person in the middle, and the rest of the people in the circle functioning as observers and mirrors.

The following is an example of one forum performance:

Around 30 people sit on chairs that form a circle inside a large seminar room. All are participants in the forum while one is an older woman who has lived in Tamera for a long time and functions as a forum leader. The forum leader declares the middle free, and whoever ‘feels the urge’ stands up and steps into the middle of the circle. One girl quickly stands up and starts to walk slowly around inside the circle. She is supposed to speak about whatever topic she is personally dealing with right now, or what is ‘close to her heart.’ You can see from her face and way of walking that she is nervous - probably about all the people looking at her, or about what she is about to say.

She starts to explain that she is jealous that her partner is good at contacting girls that he is interested in and that she wishes she was better at contacting people that she would like to know better and maybe engage with more intimately. Everyone is sitting quietly in the circle, giving her their full attention, but without reacting strongly to what she says. They are simply observing - ‘witnessing her

in her process.’ The forum leader asks who specifically she is interested in. She blushes and mentions the name of two young men, one of whom is also sitting in the circle. All the time she keeps walking and moving around.

The forum leader asks: *“So, if you had this guy here (saying the name of the young man sitting in the circle) right in front of you, what would you say to him?”* *“You can imagine that I am him, I am right here listening to what you have to say.”*

The forum leader steps into the middle and stands in front of the girl, acting as if she was this man, by imitating digging in the ground (the man works in the garden).

The girl takes a deep breath, looks into the eyes of the forum leader and says: *“hey. I have wanted to talk to you for a while now, but I was too shy to say anything. But I’d like to be better at taking things into my own hands, and not be so afraid of rejections. Would you like to spend some time with me this afternoon?”*

The forum leader says: *“Thank you, yes I would like that.”*

The forum leader steps out of her role, and asks: *“So, what is the best that could happen during this meeting with the guy? What is your dream picture?”*

The girl blushes again and everyone in the circle is smiling and feeling excited - it is like watching a TV show, but in live version. The guy sitting in the circle, whom they are talking about in third person, is also blushing, but sitting quiet in his chair – ‘this has to do with the her, not him.’ The girl says that the best that could happen would be that they really connect during their ‘meeting’, get to know each other a bit more, and that they both feel attracted to each other and kiss. You can see from her face and body language that it is difficult for her to say this, but that she feels relief and pride for daring to speak about it.

The forum leader says, *”thank you very much, you can sit down.”*

Everyone in the circle clap and most of them smile. The forum leader asks for ‘mirrors.’ One person stands up and says, *“wow, it was great to see her getting out of her shell really showing herself, her vulnerability and her longings. She is a very attractive woman when she is in her power, and I think this is a great step for her. But I also think that she should look into her inner struggles with jealousy towards her partner, so that this does not become some kind of competition. If she can act out of joy and pure lust and not out of fear of losing this ‘jealousy game’ with her partner, I think that is the right direction to go.”*

The ‘mirror’ sits down, and another one stands up to say her/his impression/opinion, and so it goes on for a while. Then one round is over, and the forum leader declares the middle free for another round.

I have made up this forum example myself as a compilation of different forum performances that I have observed. I have not taken a specific empirical situation in order to protect the privacy of people. I also do this because it is normally requested not to discuss specific names or detailed episodes from the forum with people who didn’t participate—in order not to gossip, and to keep the discussion situated. After being part of many forum performances, however always in guest groups, I believe this situation to be very representative both regarding the issue dealt with in the middle, the forum leader’s questions and tasks, and the mirrors. It could have been a very typical forum performance during the Love School that I attended in 2014, or for that sake during any other forum in Tamera. However, this is just one example. There are many performances that do not evolve around love or sexuality and many that are not so exiting and intriguingly TV-like, but heavy ‘personal’ issues, or conflicts of whatever you can imagine is going on within a person.

My impression is that the forum helps bring people together in a supportive way, and that it generally makes people feel both seen and supported. It is also a space for people to jump out of their comfort zone and show what they would otherwise keep to themselves as private issues. It makes it possible for everyone in the circle to support a person by giving advise through mirrors, and in this sense I believe it to be a strong tool for personal development, as the whole community can be involved in one person’s process. The significance of the support experienced through the forum work is expressed in one interview by a person who lived in Tamera for one year and later moved away: *“In my personal experience though the most important aspect was the constant support from the entire community. My personal relationship issues were never my own issues, and even though I felt relatively cautious and reserved for most of my time there, as most people would when they first arrive in such an environment, I still had people reaching out to me and offering to listen and support me.”*

It is also a scary thing to be in the middle with so many eyes staring at you, waiting for you to reveal yourself. It is not only scary because you might feel uncomfortable, embarrassed or ashamed to express your inner, but also because you don’t know what is going to happen in the forum. You cannot plan it. The forum leader often asks you to act out your emotion in a hugely exaggerated way. For

example, if you are angry at someone, you might be asked to jump around like an angry giant acting like you are killing the person you are angry at while you use all the worst swearing words you know. You might be asked to sing a song that expresses how you feel, dance or play out your emotions in other ways. It often happens that the person in the middle feels over-challenged with the tasks, stops and says, “no this is too much right now”. Then, often the forum leader gives another task that seems more fitting to the situation, but she/he might also push the person in the middle a little more saying “*come on, I know you can do it*”, or he/she simply might say “*Okay, then this is good enough for now*” and end the performance.

The forum leader holds a strong authority and influence over the one in the middle, and this is why the leading position is only given to community- members with 20-30 years of experience in forum. It is often an older woman who is considered wise and trustworthy. The legitimacy of this can of course be questioned, and one could fear that the forum leader could easily misuse the power she/he has over the performing person in the middle, be it intentionally or unintentionally. In my experience, I have generally been impressed about how the forum leader has used her/his position to intuitively and daringly, but respectfully, support the person in the middle. In some cases, I have witnessed forum leaders who did not have the proper experience to guide the person in the middle and this has resulted in some awkward and unsuccessful forums, however never in any way I thought was harmful or disempowering to the person.

### ***Studying and teaching***

Another huge aspect of how people communicate the basic thoughts of the projects is how they teach it through different courses to guests. There are courses of different duration (between three days up to 6 weeks) from April to November every year in everything from ecology to Love School, as well as online courses. Many co-workers of Tamera are involved either as facilitators for guest groups or hold speeches or other kinds of more interactive workshops. Whatever is taught, if on the topic of green energy or love and relationships, there is always a clear focus on the utopian vision behind.

It makes sense, that a relevant part of doing something is to understanding why we do it. This in Tamera is called the *geistig* framework. The German word Geist can be roughly translated into ‘mind-spirit’ or ‘mental-spiritual’, and the word implies understanding something through combining mind

and spirit. In some cases, it can also be replaced by the words ‘intellectual’ or ‘philosophical.’ Basically, the *geistig* framework means to use our minds and spirit in order to understand something more profoundly. During forum work it is often stressed that, *”forum is not helpful without a geistig framework.”* By saying this, Tamera emphasizes the balance between focus on ‘inner work’ (i.e. personal development) and the larger vision behind (i.e. the ideas of Dieter Duhm). The larger vision is needed as a compass in order not to get stuck in individual dramas and emotional processes, and the inner work of every individual is equally needed in order to reach the vision. Thus the *geistig* framework indicates that self-reflexivity is essential. It is used to reflect upon inner processes and constantly check the reasons for one’s own thoughts and actions in order to stay in line with the ethical guidelines. This movement of going back and forth between working intensely on your own inner processes and then seeing things from a larger more visionary standpoint, is said to be an essential reason why Tamera still exists. Therefore, Tamera emphasizes the importance of studying the basic thoughts of Dieter Duhm in order to see things in a larger perspective. Included in most speeches and meetings are quotes of, and references to, Dieter Duhm’s texts, and people are strongly recommended to read his books, which are available to borrow or buy.

A tendency in the writings of Dieter Duhm are descriptions of general abstract ideas without going into context or detail of how to implement them. The texts usually have dramatic titles such as ‘The Healing Biotopes Plan’ and describe, like the political theory, the overall thoughts and values of the project, but stays in this abstract language. Additionally, there is a tendency of dogmatic argumentation in the texts, where ideas are expressed as general truths and not as the reasoning of human minds; *“The idea of the healing biotopes is not a private invention: it is a mental spiritual blueprint in the spirit of the times. (...) What runs through us as an idea and a will corresponds to a tendency in the universe”* (Duhm, 2008: 229-230). With this Duhm says that his idea and will is not just his, but represents a tendency in the universe. In my perspective it implies that the idea of the healing biotopes as ‘a tendency in the universe’ is something that is ‘meant to be’ by some kind of higher spiritual order.

Duhm uses few references, which makes it difficult to distinguish between his own ideas and ideas already laid out by others. At times he mentions thoughts or concepts laid out by poets, scientists, philosophers or others, and elaborates further on them. Additionally, some ideas are presented as though they are the first of their kind: *“This was, and is, the thought that we brought to the world*

*some years ago under the title “Sexpeace.” Sexpeace – peace between the genders!”* (URL 2). It is clear that Duhm is far from the only one writing about gender equality, sexuality and visions of love free of fear, and to me it is unclear why other authors or projects with similar ideas are not mentioned in his writings. Nevertheless, as part of the online course “Global Revolution and healing of love” there are both references to other scholars and a list of concepts and their original source. In general, there seems to be growing emphasis on this in the most current teachings. When talking to both co-workers and guests about the language used in Duhm’s texts, several people mention that the language can be seen as dogmatic and patronizing. However, almost everyone I have talked to stresses that the important thing is not how things are communicated, but what is communicated. There seems to be a clear prioritization of content over style.

The attitude about what is communicated from Tamera to the ‘outside world’ and to guests through courses and in the form of texts was expressed as: *“we send out what we can fully agree with. We don’t send our doubts or critique”*. The position Tamera seems to take is to teach the ‘outside world’ their knowledge, experience and opinions. Participating in the community course taught me a lot about their work and their views, and particularly how communication was predominantly one-way. Even though it is also stressed that Tamera is in a working process and haven’t reached its goal yet, this kind of ‘we communicate what is working well here’- tendency is to be found both during courses and in the writings of Dieter Duhm. In my research I have heard of several controversies where guests were dissatisfied with Tamera’s attitude which they found to be paternalistic and patronizing. Personally, in order to more realistically see Tamera for what it is, I want to hear what people’s doubts are, what they find problematic and what they want to change. It is a contradiction to hear, *“we don’t have all the answers”* and *“we are not there yet”* when most of what is otherwise communicated to guests are Tamera’s solutions and not their doubts.

### ***Discourse***

Entering Tamera for the first time can seem like entering a foreign tribe where you need to learn the culture, language and history in order to fully understand what is going on. The Tamerian language is a sort of lingo in the sense that you definitely need basic knowledge about Tamera’s social structure and the founding thoughts and theories of Dieter Duhm in order to fully understand it. For newcomers without any previous knowledge, it can seem like a totally different language. The very specific



Tamerian language creates a form of subjectivity, and it is actually very easy to hear only from the language and specific words of use, who has been in Tamera for a long time, and who has not. I myself noticed; that even though I was conscious of it, my language had become very Tamerian after two weeks there. When I was talking with family and friends I noticed that I had to change the language again in order to make myself understood, and in order not to seem too distanced from them.

The discourse in Tamera is clearly influenced by psychoanalysis when people for explain conflict in terms of inner struggles and frustrations stemming from unconscious fears (Kunze et al 2015). People would talk in terms of ‘triggers’, when something annoys or upsets them, and refer to people who trigger them as ‘mirrors’ of their own issues or insecurities. Equally people talk of judging others as ‘projections’ stemming from own inner struggles that have nothing to do with the person being judged. This language is a manifestation of the belief that every individual is responsible for her/his own feelings, and that there are no others to blame for these feelings. With jealousy as an example, the language recreates the perspective that jealousy is an expression of one’s own insecurity, and that no one else is to blame for that feeling. Therefore, within every conflict between people there are inner battles to be fought, and this legitimizes both the theory of Reich (1971) and the strong emphasis on ‘inner work’ and personal growth. To put it into Foucauldian terms: the subject is through this discourse shaped by the belief that every outer movement is a consequence of inner movements (Nilsson, 2008). This discourse highlights the importance of personal development. One guest expressed this clearly in the following terms: *“the only thing you can change is yourself – and that can change the world. This is why I came here, realizing that.”*

Additionally, people talk in terms of ‘resistance’ and ‘resonance’ when describing what they do or do not agree with, like or feel attracted to. Resonance implies that everything vibrates in different frequencies, and that the things that attract us, be it a philosophy or an idea, vibrate in the same frequency as us and create resonance. It is noticeable that people use the word resistance and not dissonance as the opposite of resonance. Resistance does not imply a certain reason for why we don’t like something, it only explains our attitude towards the thing we don’t like. In Tamera resistance clearly has a bad connotation, and often suggests that, due to some inner fear, probably stemming from insecurity, we do not want or do not like something. Fear is defined as: *“[t]he opposite of love. The presumed danger that exists in us and prevents us from acting authentically and that created violence in the world.”* Since fear is seen as our enemy, the opposite of love, and something you

should not base your decisions on, this use of language suggests that resistance is equally something you should not base your decisions on. This discourse of viewing resistance as something negative and resonance as something positive, makes saying yes to something a positive thing, and saying no to something a less honourable thing. It is possible to imagine how this discourse can be used in a manipulative way to make people adapt and accept certain things, and blame them for feeling resistance and fearful when not adapting or accepting something, yet I have not witnessed clear examples of this.

Additionally, this discourse of valuing a 'yes' higher than a 'no' might have an influence in shaping people's negative thoughts about monogamy and hence, be one reason why polyamory is the norm even though monogamy is just as acceptable in theory. The fact that many people turn back to monogamy when leaving Tamera shows just how powerful discourses are in shaping subjectivity. Just as Aguilar (2013) finds, the shift that people make in how they chose to organize their personal relationships before and after living in community, underlines how much influence social structures have in shaping and reshaping personal beliefs and behaviours (Aguilar, 2013:105).

Another interesting topic is the names for the different institutions of working places in Tamera. Some of these are: The Institute for Global Peace Work (IGP), the Institute for Feminine Peace Wisdom and The Political Ashram. The most normal association to these words don't make you think of an office building in rural Portugal where around ten people work. The names suggest that these institutions have some kind of international academic acknowledgement and retell the visionary scale of the project. Furthermore, many Tamerians refer to themselves as peace-workers, and Tamera as; A Peace Research Centre, a Healing Biotope, a School for Realistic Utopia, an acupuncture point of peace, a greenhouse of trust, a prototype for an existence free of fear, and a post-capitalist societal model. It is obvious that a great deal of work has gone into creating an image of Tamera that fits with the magnitude of the vision behind the project. Through this discourse both Tamera as a unity as well as every peace-worker involved constantly create their own subjectivity.

Words mentioned during almost every kind of speech - be it about water retention, the political theory or love and sexuality – are 'human beings', 'planet Earth', 'global' and 'the universe.' Usage of these words constantly remind people to keep a larger perspective on things – it makes people aware through language that there are other living beings than humans, and that we are only living on this

one planet out of many in an infinite and mysterious universe. This language stresses the smallness of humans as well as the infinite opportunities of a spiritual world beyond human imagination. In this sense the language promotes the cosmology and worldview presented in the writings of Dieter Duhm, where everything is connected. These findings fits with Foucault's notion that while our worldview creates the discourse, simultaneously the discourse recreates our worldview (Nilsson, 2008).

## 5. Reflections

### *Empowerment and disempowerment*

In Tamera you constantly encounter idealistic quotes, like for example Margaret Mead's "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*" (URL 4). It seems that just as much energy is put into imagining and believing the possibility of an alternative system, as into the actual definition of what such an alternative should consist of. In my opinion, the daily news-report on war and destruction that dominates the media can almost be seen as some kind of global paralyzer that makes the war between societies and against nature seem inevitable. I imagine that Tamera experiences a need to consistently deconstruct the pessimism that most people carry, in order to be able to focus on the 'realistic utopia.' When talking about this issue one Tamerian expressed her opinion clearly: "*we need to brainwash ourselves anew. I know the word [brainwash] is provocative, but I love it. We need to change the information within.*" The writer Le Guin (URL 5) exemplified the difficulty of imagining a different reality in a speech by stressing that: just as the divine right of kings hundreds of years ago seemed inescapable, so does the present-day powers of our capitalist system. Hence, the difficulty people encounter when imagining utopias doesn't necessarily say more about the possibility of such utopias than it says about the current conditioning of human minds. Because absolute knowledge, of what is possible or not, is unavailable to us, Graeber (2004) sees the commitment to optimism as a moral imperative: "*since one cannot know a radically better world is not possible, are we not betraying everyone by insisting on continuing to justify, and reproduce, the mess we have today? And anyway, even if we're wrong, we might well get a lot closer*" (Graeber, 2004:10). The visionary and positivist discourse in Tamera seems to have a predominantly empowering effect on people.

Most of the practices I have encountered in Tamera I consider to serve and respect the needs of every individual, and to be empowering and beneficial to people's personal development. However, I also believe there is a discourse which gives the 'outside world' as a whole a negative connotation by portraying it as something destructive. This gives people the feeling that they can only be happy in Tamera, and can in that way be disempowering to many. Several people have explained how they have become dependent on Tamera as a community, and not been able to live a fulfilling life in the 'outside world'. In Tamera it is often stressed that we cannot be happy without community, that community cannot function without free love, and that free love cannot function without community.

Several times after visiting Tamera I have wanted to go back there both because I felt at home in some way, because I had deep connections to people, because I felt purposeful and happy - but also because I couldn't imagine living without a community around me, forever missing this feeling of belonging. The feeling of belonging is definitely what drags people to communities (Kanter, 1972), and I believe it to be an expression of a deep psychological human need. I think it would be beneficial if Tamera gave more attention to positive aspects of the 'outside' world so that people who do not choose to spend their whole life in Tamera feel more empowered.

Historically, the need for belonging has also been the cornerstone of many disastrous projects and sects, where people blindly follow one leader (Conway et al, 1995). This topic was addressed in Tamera in a small workshop by one woman who has been a part of the project from the very beginning: *"The power you get here is not power over you, but [it is] gaining power in yourself. The aim of Tamera is to empower people, and this is a process of trust. I really trust Tamera. But I also see that we are too much in the following mode and too little in the self-organizing creative mode. This [self-organizing mode] we see in the younger generation. We have to awaken the people of Tamera again – they are maybe too used to following the leader."* I believe that many people are aware of this aspect and are trying to change it. Nonetheless, in my opinion Tamera should particularly be more careful with dogmatic discourses both regarding their production of text and regarding how they teach in courses and seminars. Since Tamera does not have all the answers, why not communicate with more humbleness and vulnerability towards the outside world? In this way they will attract, not only people looking for finished solutions, but also people looking for a place where they can contribute to further development and improvement. The values of truth and transparency that Tamera promotes could be applied to the communication towards guest and outsiders. If an unrealistic paradise image is used to represent Tamera to the outside, Tamera is basically both going against its own philosophy of transparency as well as being counterproductive.

According to my findings, the forum can be a useful tool for personal development because it invites for mirrors which can be possible solutions. When all resources of a community of 200 people are directed towards supporting one person, situation or problem, the chances for valuable solutions are higher than if the person stands alone. This same thought can be applied to Tamera as a community: when it is communicated to the outside that Tamera has the whole solution for world peace, they of course do not get any help, because they do not ask for it. I believe that there are many already existing

solutions in the world that Tamera might be blind towards because of this attitude. Nevertheless, I equally believe that Tamera has a lot to offer especially in the realm of communication and personal development. For most of the guests I met, the time spent in Tamera has showed them what honest communication can bring forth in a relationship, and has in that way served as an important deepening of their personal relationships outside of Tamera.

## 6. Conclusion

The vision of free love is ideologically contextualized in the writings of Dieter Duhm and serves as the basic motivation behind Tamera's political task. Based on the belief that there cannot be peace on Earth as long as there is war in love, and that there is war in love as long as we do not deal with our inner violent structures, Tamera underlines the importance of personal development.

My findings show that through: encouraging intimate physical contact, practicing social transparency and the forum, and a discourse which promote polyamory, Tamera creates a culture in which polyamory thrives. Due to Tamera's geographical isolation and homogeneity of sexual culture it is easier to protect the created culture from outside stigma, and thus to maintain a positive attitude towards the vision of free love and sexuality as a utopian culture. Members maintain their commitment to the community by studying and teaching the texts and basic ideas of the project and also through using a language and discourse which affirms the worldview and political theory behind the project. The worldview on which the project is founded has to a large extent created the discourse we see in Tamera today, while simultaneously the discourse of today continues to change and thus to recreate the worldview.

Tamera provides practical tools for honest communication and sharing which can serve as inspiration for the current feminist movement that tries to rethink gender roles in general in a way where, women (particularly) learn to take space, where, especially men (particularly) learn to reflect upon and communicate their feelings, and where compulsory guilt over one's sexuality is erased and replaced by a sex positive discourse. Tamera provides tools for creating a culture that supports individual choices of lifestyle activism, and thus moves these lifestyle choices from belonging predominantly to the private sphere to belonging to the public and political sphere.

Word count: 14.335

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