

# Beyond Boundaries Summer Report

## Building Relations of Cooperation

### Tamera, Healing Biotope

#### May & June 2013



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In May this year Beyond Boundaries (BB) travelled again to Tamera, a community in Portugal dedicated to creating a comprehensive model for peaceful culture. Over the years since the 2009 Beyond Boundaries pilgrimage, we have deepened our collaboration with Tamera. Our work has been as a “response team” in service, support, and witness to the best efforts, projects and communities we know of that are effecting positive change. This journey was in response to an invitation for Gigi to teach and for the BB team to both participate in and give support to the Global Love School, the Science of Transformation course, the evolution of Testfield I, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Water Symposium.

These offerings represent part of Tamera’s long-term focus on ecology, energy, political activism, and social relations. For Tamerans, working in these areas is an essential part of healing personal and global conflict, and co-creating a new story for our times. For us, it’s a poignant time to be supporting Tamera as they are now at a crossroads, looking to the future of the project, and in many new ways welcoming cooperation. While being called to share their expertise and knowledge and to replicate aspects of their model around the world, they are addressing real questions of sustainability, and how to maintain the true essence of their 30 years of research. The Portuguese government has taken more of an interest, both in the solutions Tamera exemplifies as well as, on a legal level, now requiring a master plan for the community that halts any new development and construction until it is completed and approved.

## **Global Love School**

### **The Call**

The Global Love School (GLS), meeting for ten days, for the second year, to study love and sexuality.... gathered some 80 people, roughly half from Tamera, along with participants from around the world. This is a growing global community dedicated to the study of the embodied knowledge and wisdom of a global culture of peace, rooted in healthy, whole relations between men and women, lovers, partners and community bodies. Gigi, along with a few others, was invited to co-lead different parts of the course in partnership with course leader, Tamera co-founder Sabine Lichtenfels. Siri and Shay were asked to co-facilitate a number of sessions and worked in a number of ways to support the next generation leaders. We explored the parallels between our inner issues and the global issues of our time, focusing on water as an example of how we have separated from natural cycles. As Sabine said in her opening speech, “We are looking for answers on a global level, not only a private level ... Is there something that is the same, that needs healing, everywhere on the planet?”

We heard from the teachers at Tamera, offering expertise in the areas of love, spirituality, community knowledge, political work, ecology, and ‘geistig’ (mental-spiritual) theory. This year’s event was a step towards co-creative leadership, a space for leaders to share their best practices, perspectives and new ways of working. Gigi wove with Sabine, leading council in various forms, and sharing global community experience, other networks and related efforts. A new level of cross-pollination could be witnessed—and experienced. Presenters included Alexandra Schilling (Germany), co-founder of Living Gaia (a now-forming ecovillage in Brazil), Dolores Richter (Germany) a leader from the Zegg Community, both women with strong teachings and process focused on the areas of love relationship and healing; and Geoff O’Donoghue (UK), International director for CAFOD, the largest Catholic British aid organization in the world, working in community development in the global south. He offered progressive ideas on how the Church needs to be engaged in this healing path.

Following morning presentations, the afternoons were spent in smaller groups where we worked through these topics amongst ourselves, followed by physical service on the land. Late in the day we gathered again for forum and council: deeper inquiry into what it truly takes to change, heal, love and live in truth, in justice, in good relations with all beings.

### **The Ripple**

It is hard to describe the impact of such a gathering in a few words. Many individuals were deeply touched, opened, and even healed, including participants from crisis areas such as the Middle East. It seems the ripple effect will be palpable as each of these people returns to their homeland communities. Coming together in such a way brings information of hope, information of a global network in collaboration, information that people are living together in new, honest, loving, ecologically aware ways, in support of all life. As healthy cells multiply in the Earth body and gain strength, a new culture is possible.

It was a special gift to be there together, an intergenerational group of four, and we were all well used in different ways. Each of us as individuals was asked to deepen our own research and inquiry into the field of love and sexuality, and the connection between this and peace knowledge, which was simply impossible not to see. Collectively, we participated in actions and meetings on finances and the gift economy, youth rites of passage, the Global Campus project, and the development of the Global Love School. Many community members and other participants approached us, individually and collectively. As Beyond Boundarians, we listened, asked questions, and bore witness. And we offered what we were asked to.

Gigi, with the BB team, led an overview of Rites of Passage (ROP) for youth to those in the community who were interested and young people as well as parents and teachers showed up. We feel passionately that ROP are essential for a village to be healthy, and we continue to

communicate this message to many. We also gave feedback on Tamera's development of the Global Campus, a platform for experiential education focused on building regional models for regenerative and peaceful living. Siri has been engaged in the work of the Global Campus for the past few years, and Beyond Boundaries will continue to inform and support this network of biospherians to research and develop unique glocal (local *and* global) community projects for a peaceful future.

## **Walking Water**

In the days following the Global Love School, we met with several Tamerans to share the vision of Walking Water (WW), the water pilgrimage now being planned by Shay and our newest BB ally and long-time Tamera resident, Kate Bunney. The intention of WW is to convene and catalyze regional and global partners towards healing the watershed between the Owens Valley and Los Angeles, both the environmental and human systems.

We envision Tamera to be a core cooperation partner in WW, and this meeting was, in many ways, a confirmation that there is already a shared vision for the pilgrimage. Bernd Mueller, Sabine Lichtenfels, Benjamin von Mendelssohn, Vera Kleinhammes—core community and ecological leaders at Tamera—were all present. The pilgrimage will most likely take place in the fall of 2015. We explored the role these key Tamerans and others from the community might play and formed a common ground for collaboration.

## **Science of Transformation**

### **The Call**

In the fall of 2012, BB received an invitation to participate in a month (or more) of an experiment in which Tamera's next generation leaders would live together in their solar village to implement in a concentrated way their accumulated best practices—ecological, social, political and otherwise. (See below). As part of the movement towards this vision, we were invited along with others to participate in an intensive time of political theory focused on global healing, a course entitled The Science of Transformation.

After Gigi and Win left Tamera, Shay and Siri joined this 'Thinking School,' going deeply into the study of how change happens and participating in the launch of the Terra Nova School, the next iteration of Tamera's expanding study network, which combines theory, knowledge and best practices. They entered as full participants—a daily flow of small study groups in the morning, then a movement practice 'bringing the geist into the body,' afternoon lectures, and forum in the evening.

During the course, several key threads emerged on the question of what healthy human community looks like in these times. Shay, born into an intentional community that would fracture after 25 years of coherence, shared stories from her life experience. Sierra Silverstone, BB ally and Biospherian, arrived in Tamera during this time and shared her experience of living inside Biosphere 2 (B2). B2 was a closed-system bio-dome designed to research the intimate interconnection of all the elements of our biosphere, and how humans can co-exist with and support this life-support system. The role that human communities played in the challenge and collapse of such experiments led beautifully to and informed the exploration of Tamera's Testfield I, which followed the course (more below).

### **The Ripple**

Again, the full impact of such immersion in community and study is hard to measure—and it is an essential part of the ongoing education of our team of BB youngsters in their movement towards leadership in the new paradigm. The opportunity and benefits of participation in both intellectual, technical, practical and social-skills development is rarely so well combined. Tamera's core beliefs include the idea that healing done on a personal level takes on a global significance and

vice-versa; the individual is embedded in a collective whole. During our time studying, we felt ever more strongly the necessity that this ‘personal work’ is included in the work of our times and profoundly grateful to deepen our understanding of this approach to transformation.

## **Testfield I, Solar Village**

### **The Call**

In the days before the Water Symposium, Siri and Shay were invited to join a small Testfield I ‘think tank,’ which included members from Tamera’s Solar Village, Tamera’s next-generation leaders—Benjamin Von Mendelssohn and Vera Kleinhammes—Sierra Silverstone, agriculture specialist from Biosphere 2 and long-time Three Creeks steward, Joss Brooks founder of Pitchandikulam Forest and an influential regional landscape-healing specialist from Auroville (India), and Horst Wagner, a solar inventor and educator.

The Solar Village, or Testfield I, the hub for ecology and technology, is a buzzing center where co-workers meet and eat food cooked through their self-made biogas cookers. This center is an important part of their research, a place where, for example, Scheffler mirror technologies and other low-tech solar solutions are being researched and developed for replication in money-poor/resource-rich areas like sub-Saharan Africa.

As a next step, Testfield I will become a living ‘model within the model.’ A core group of Tamerans and global partners will live together demonstrating the best social, ecological, and technological practices, thus combining the outer with the deep inner and interpersonal work of community. This is in part inspired and informed by the work of Biosphere 2 and their radical two-year closed-system living experiment. Sierra’s visit during this time was an important part of the possibility that Testfield I will be, in many ways, a continuation of this line of research, now in an open system.

### **The Ripple**

This time was an important weaving of ideas and inspirations, where a common ground of longing for and working toward a holistic human existence, integrated in connection with nature, was established. Together, we entered a space of inspiration, hearing about the local and global impact of the projects and work represented by the people gathered. We found common ground in the call to ‘protect the sanctuary,’ the center of the project, which provides the seed for radical research, and the necessity to work widely in the world, bio-regionally and globally, largely inspired by the story of Auroville and the Indian Government, which now looks to this intentional community for solutions needed for the country’s future.

For Beyond Boundaries, it was a confirmation that we are already a part of this circle, to hear named again many of the ‘centers of light’ that we visited on our pilgrimage in 2009: Auroville, Damanhur, Findhorn, Tamera and the Biosphere Foundation (Indonesian projects) among them. And Beyond Boundaries was recognized and honored as a cross-pollinator, witness, weaver and important player in this shared dream.

As Gigi often says, “Any good vision fortunately appears in more than one place at a time.” As a ‘think tank,’ we began to trace an arc of evolution that is bigger than the individual community or project, something connected to our evolution as human beings on planet Earth. BB continues to fulfill its dream of supporting and interconnecting the best projects and practices guiding us into an inspiring and life-sustaining planetary future that just may be possible.

## **Water Symposium**

### **The Call**

BB’s scheduled time at Tamera concluded with participation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Water Symposium. Here, key leaders assembled to address the question: “How can we best care for the

waters and all the lives dependent on them for survival?" The weekend opened with a global water perspective, facing the crisis we are already living and its impact on humanity and our planet. In a time of mass desertification, when aquifer levels are going down worldwide, the Water Symposium provides a timely and fertile ground for collaboration, highlighting water-retention solutions that everyday citizens and small communities can implement.

Vera spoke of Tamera and the importance of cross pollination, and Bernd Mueller, landscape healer and ecology team leader, spoke of retention landscapes, methods for restoring the large water cycle, exemplifying one possible solution at the local and regional level. John D. Liu, filmmaker and ecology educator, showed the example of the Loess Plateau in China, and shared his work of 'awakening the dream that large scale environmental restoration is possible.' Dr. Milan from Spain shared his research on Mediterranean climate change and the role of coastal trees and vegetation on rain cycles and ocean temperature. We heard about holistic planned grazing, wastewater solutions, and saw a touching video from a remote village in Africa, a very real call for help. Sierra inspired us with her stories of coming into cooperation with the biosphere through her experience in the Biosphere 2 project, and Joss Brooks spoke of growing 'watershed consciousness.' There was a focus on the regional network with Portuguese speakers from the largest organic farm in Portugal and representatives of Transition Towns. The need for new forms of education was woven throughout the time.

### **The Ripple**

Tamera asked for feedback from the speakers on what they experienced at the Symposium. Overall, there was a lot of gratitude for how open Tamera is becoming to other methods and ideas, while at the same time strengthening the work in their own region and land. The importance of bioregional networks and education was highlighted. As Joss Brooks said, "The challenges of your environment become your curriculum.... Keep your sanctuary." In other words, don't try to do so much in the world that you cannot maintain center.

As Beyond Boundarians, we worked with a team of Tamerans and friends of the project to host the international speakers' lounge and co-create spaces throughout the conference for participants to have key conversations. Shay helped facilitate a unique 'Global Café, and represented her work with the World Wilderness Congress and Walking Water, and Siri expanded her responsibility and work with the Global Campus. The ripples continue .....

### **Financial Report**

We had a projected budget of \$9300 and our total expenses were \$10921.42. We under budgeted travel and lodging costs. Fortunately we have some additional funds raised for our BB project that can cover this. A detailed budget is available upon request.

### **Futures**

The collaboration between Beyond Boundaries and Tamera is in perhaps the strongest phase so far and this interconnection feels very much part of a larger weave that is calling projects and communities like Auroville, Biosphere 2 and Findhorn together. There is a growing sense of friendship and mutual trust. We look forward to two more years of our commitment to the Global Love School. Gigi has been asked to return as a teacher next year, and will continue to work with Win, Siri and Shay as the through line. Other BB team members have also been asked to join. We will continue to be a part of the unfolding experiment of Testfield I and will join as is possible.

Siri continues to play a significant role in establishing the Global Campus and is weaving our BB work in Kenya with International Peace Initiatives more fully into that web. There is a plan for the earth-bag construction team trained by BB to lead a building project during the Global Campus with OTEPIC, an emerging peace and permaculture model in Kitale, Kenya. Siri will return to IPI this winter to witness the project again and offer more council, as well as support the

Global Ecovillage Network Africa gathering in Nairobi in December with Leila Dregger from Tamera, Phillip Munyasia from OTEPIC and Dr. Karambu Ringera of IPI.

Three Creeks continues to be a watering hole and base for BB, and some key players from this growing global community. Naila von Mendelssohn (daughter of Benjamin) came this summer for a youth quest and ceremonial initiation into adulthood. Also this summer, Benjamin, with help from several BB members, is co-creating events in the Bay Area in support of a establishing a Terra Nova study group, which is intended to deepen the (re)integration process for many who have been profoundly impacted through cooperation with Tamera. Walking Water is gaining steady momentum and our combined best practices of council, forum, quest, bearing witness and pilgrimage are finding common ground and respect.

We look forward to more work next year at Tamera and Findhorn, and with those at other centers focused on regenerative culture, inter-generational collaboration, deep listening, rites of passage and a weaving of the healthiest ancient teachings and the emerging new story of our times.



**We could not do this work without your support and participation.**

**Thanks again to all those who contributed to make this possible.**