

Tamera's Path to Peace

Challenges and Learnings from Cooperation with the
Peace Community of San José de Apartadó

El camino de Tamera hacia la paz

Retos y aprendizajes de la cooperación con la
Comunidad de Paz de San José de Apartadó

Author

Lisa Hervieux

Directors

Prof. Dr. Martin Kirschner

Prof. Uriel Alberto Cardenas Aguirre

Master of Arts (M.A.)

Faculty of History and Social Science

Conflict, Memory, and Peace

Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt

Universidad del Rosario

Berlin - Germany

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Abstract

Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre has been investigating approaches to sustainable and regenerative peace through practice for 50 years, from which 30 were spent in Portugal, in the Alentejo region, living as a peace community. This thesis analyses how this community defines and understands peace under a decolonial framework, identifying potential gaps that arise from being situated and/or growing up in a European context shaped by historical privilege and epistemic dominance. Through participant observation and interviews the author looks at how these limitations are addressed and collects the voices of community members that share their reflections on their colonial legacies and their efforts towards taking accountability, particularly in the light of their cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó. This case study allows a deeper understanding of the dynamics of their relationships towards the world and focuses on how their mutual visits and collaboration have informed and challenged their vision of peace. By asking the participants what they have learned personally from the partnership, the emphasis is put on decolonizing existing frameworks of research that favour Western theoretical findings over local practices of peacebuilding.

Key words: peace community, peace research, case study, decolonial approach, Tamera.

Resumen

El Centro de Investigación y Educación para la Paz de Tamera lleva 50 años investigando enfoques de paz sostenible y regenerativa a través de la práctica, de los cuales 30 los ha pasado en Portugal, en la región del Alentejo, viviendo como una comunidad de paz. Esta tesis analiza cómo esta comunidad define y entiende la paz desde un marco decolonial, identificando las posibles lagunas que surgen de estar situada y/o haber crecido en un contexto europeo marcado por privilegios históricos y dominación epistémica. A través de la observación participante y de entrevistas, el autor examina cómo se abordan estas limitaciones y recoge las voces de los miembros de la comunidad que comparten sus reflexiones sobre sus legados coloniales y sus esfuerzos por asumir responsabilidades, en particular a la luz de su cooperación con la comunidad de paz de San José de Apartadó. Este estudio de caso permite una comprensión más profunda de la dinámica de sus relaciones con el mundo y se centra en cómo sus visitas mutuas y su colaboración han informado y desafiado su visión de la paz. Al preguntar a los participantes qué han aprendido personalmente de la colaboración, se hace hincapié en descolonizar los marcos de investigación existentes que favorecen los hallazgos teóricos occidentales sobre las prácticas locales de construcción de la paz.

Palabras clave: comunidad de paz, investigación sobre la paz, estudio de caso, enfoque decolonial, Tamera.

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Author's Note

Lisa Hervieux, Double Master in Social Sciences, Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and Universidad del Rosario.

This work was deeply inspired by the peace research led in Tamera and only possible with their cooperation. It was revised by community members and by Professor Doctor Martin Kirschner and Professor Uriel Alberto Cardenas Aguirre, the supervisors of this thesis.

Any questions or further information about this work can be obtained by contacting this email address: lisa.hervieux@outlook.fr.

Declaration of Authorship

I affirm that I wrote this Master's thesis without any unauthorized third-party support. I indicated all used references and resources. I referenced all quotes and citations properly. I have not previously presented this work to another examination board and I have not yet published it.

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Berlin, 25th of March 2025,



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Glossary of Tamera specific terms

Subjective and simplified interpretation of commonly used terms in Tamera that are new or potentially used differently outside Tamera.

Arc. Amount of time for a volunteer visit, there are 4 Arcs, one can attend 1 to 4.

Bodega temple. Sacred space for sexuality and exploration reserved for community members.

Defend the Sacred Alliance. Network between community leaders and sacred activists.

Deva. Spirit of a being, whether human, animal, vegetal or more conceptual.

Eros. Sexual energy as a source of life in its purest form.

Forum. Tool of expression, revelation, healing and conflict resolution.

Gaia. Often used to refer to the earth.

Geistig. German word mixing mental and spiritual within one.

God's point. Gathering held 3 or 4 mornings a week to reflect upon texts.

Healing Biotope. Holistic place of healing and regeneration for living beings and land.

Life Energy. Energy to live and sometimes referred to as sexual desire as a source of life.

Love messengers. Person transferring an invitation, giving the person time to consider.

Love spaces. Often small huts, or domes in nature fostering intimate exploration.

Marisis. Network of physical monuments that help to connect to metaphysical dimensions.

Matinee. Weekly Sunday morning community gathering to listen to inspiring talks.

Middle. Space in the circle dedicated to performance of inner desires, needs and impulses.

Mirror. Short perception of what was seen in the middle during Forum performance.

Oracle Spring. Monument at the origin of Tamera's creation, place for prayers.

Power Places. Monuments dedicated to different elements, spirits, and energies.

Power Walks. Dedicated paths through sacred spaces or meditative and intentional walks.

Ring of Power. Monday morning global prayer at the Stone Circle for peace workers.

Sacred Matrix. Alternative reality of love and trust.

Stone Circle. Central spiral monument made of big stones representing a peace community.

Terra Deva. Earth liberated from domestication and oppression.

World Stage. Reference to what is shown in the middle in Forum as relevant for the world.

Yin Place. Monument dedicated to feminine energy.

TAMERA'S PATH TO PEACE

Preface

Around thirty people are sitting in a circle outside, near the 'Oracle Spring' in 2022. One by one each guest stands and speaks their intention into the wind — what they hope to bring into the world after spending ten days in Tamera's peace community. Some want to write a book, others aim to engage more in activism or deepen their relationships to nature and other living beings. In my case I decided to write this master's thesis about a community that fascinates me for its holistic and unique approach to peace. I find their work relevant for the field of Peace Studies but also for institutions and any citizen of the world. By bringing peacebuilding to the centre of their daily life, they show how every little choice matters for the world of today and tomorrow, from the work you do, the way you love, to the way you eat. This research is about Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre, a peace community that set their vision on fostering peace within themselves, between themselves and within the world. It is not an easy goal to pursue, but through this vision they have found connection with other communities, one of which is the peace community of San José de Apartadó, located in Colombia. The objective of this thesis is to dive deep into Tamera's approach to peace while also observing how that worldview interacts with other realities, such as the violent context surrounding the peace community of San José de Apartadó. Through participant observation and interviews I study how the partnership between these two communities came to life and take interest in the learnings and challenges members from Tamera have gone through by visiting and exchanging with members of the peace community in San José de Apartadó. I adopt a decolonial approach in analysing their relationship, but also by studying how the community in Portugal has been informed in its understanding of peace through its contact with the community in Colombia. I acknowledge that my social background and privileges as a white, middle-class French person do not make me the best candidate to take a decolonial approach, but I see these approaches as too relevant to be pushed aside and hope to open a new door to decolonial investigations on peacebuilding from the perspective of local grassroots peace communities. I am deeply grateful for the community members I had the chance to meet, exchange with and learn from and want to share some of my learnings with them and the world.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research Relevance

In times of rising geopolitical tension and violence in Western countries such as the United States, Italy, Portugal, France and Germany, only to cite a few, it is particularly relevant to learn about alternative approaches to peacebuilding (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024). As shown by multiple examples, the rise of the right-wing ideologies and increasing violence primarily target marginalised communities, threatening to revoke human rights and reduce opportunities after centuries of struggle (World Economic Forum, 2024; Cibod, 2024; Europol, 2024). For example, anti-immigration rhetoric in Germany threatens the livelihoods of German citizens as well as immigrants (Gołębiowska, 2023), political instability in Portugal causes distrust towards the government (Alves & Wilson, 2025), and recent executive orders from Trump's administration in the United States threaten a broad range of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2025). Recently, information was released about research funding being threatened by a list of flagged words in the National Science Foundation grant reviewing process including 'women', 'diversity', 'racism', 'marginalized' (Miller & Rabin, 2025). Given these developments, it is fundamental to think of new ways to foster peace non-violently within society in a way that addresses and includes the fears of everyone involved, transforming them into resilience and self-respect like Gandhi or Martin Luther King have done in the past (Sharp, 1973, p. 457).

Local peace communities engage in nonviolent action and offer concrete solutions towards system change by taking new initiatives towards trauma healing to prevent violence from repeating (Esteves, 2018, p. 2). Tamera in particular has been recognised for its long-lasting efforts to create a distinctive regenerative and holistic model of living (Esteves, 2018, p. 7). They call it the Healing Biotope Plan, including a wide range of aspects such as cooperative governance, interpersonal dynamics, ecological sustainability, and healing (Esteves, 2018, p. 9). Their goal is to create a vision of peace that extends beyond the community's borders by fostering healing in all areas of life, from the 'healing of love' to the 'healing of the earth', both recognised by Fox (2019) and Nascimento and Pólvora (2013). Fox (2019) describes Tamera's idea of "love without fear" as a unique way to show how personal relationships can help build broader societal harmony. Similarly, Nascimento and Pólvora (2013) see the SolarVillage project as a strong example of Tamera's innovative work in merging ecological practices with peacebuilding efforts. This, among other research projects makes Tamera an important subject for academic inquiry into alternative peace frameworks.

Tamera's vision for a global peacebuilding project through Healing Biotores is underexplored in peace research and has not been analysed as a potential solution for other contexts or through a decolonial lens. This study aims to address this gap by examining how Tamera's experimental model for regenerative peace can inform global peacebuilding frameworks. Mouly (2022) and Lockyer and Veteto (2013) show how peace communities and eco-villages are movements that have been developing alternative strategies that focus on the importance of promoting justice and sustainability to deal with the complexity of power inequalities and structural violence (Mouly, 2022, p. 1169; Lockyer & Veteto, 2013, p. 6). Additionally, they aim to build global networks that connect diverse contexts while prioritizing sustainable local livelihoods (Lockyer & Veteto, 2013, p. 6). In that line, Tamera has several partnerships with other eco-villages, peace communities and sustainable projects around the world, among which peace community of San José de Apartadó (Esteves, 2018, p. 9).

In order to investigate how Tamera acts in relation with other communities in the world that live in stark different circumstances, this thesis takes its cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó as a case study. Researchers like Courtheyn (2022) and Alther (2006) highlight how the community's peacebuilding efforts are grounded in territorial autonomy and collective resistance. By focusing on self-determined, local practices, the community demonstrates how essential autonomy and land are for sustaining peace, especially when outside interventions fall short of addressing local complexities (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 28). Moreover, their approach to nonviolent resistance is particularly relevant to examine in relation to other peace communities since research shows that nonviolent approaches to peace are generally more effective than violent ones (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008, p. 42).

Moreover, collected data showed that the cooperation between Tamera and San José de Apartadó since 2005, involves mutual support, knowledge exchange, and shared commitments to nonviolence, showing how communities with contrasting methods and contexts can mutually enrich each other's practices. Their collaborative projects, like educational programs, training exchanges, and mutual visits, show the potential of intercultural partnerships to bring about meaningful change in peacebuilding efforts. By studying the cooperation between Tamera and San José de Apartadó, this research seeks to understand how diverse approaches can lead to more inclusive, context-sensitive, and sustainable ways of building peace.

1.2. Research Problem

The main challenges to this investigation are the dominance of Western discourses in peace research, the potential disconnect between peace theories and lived realities, and the underrepresentation of peace communities.

According to Cruz (2021, p. 274), Western hegemony tends to crowd out non-Western views in academic and policy-oriented peace studies. It constrains the inclusivity and diversity that may be needed for deeper understanding. This research is critical of this hegemony and questions the applicability and relevance of Western frameworks and discourses outside European and North American cultural contexts.

Moreover, by taking into account local practices of peace, this study also addresses how theoretical approaches to peace can be limited or not adapted when implemented into local contexts. While peacebuilding theories offer helpful frameworks, they are often designed within a Western reality and frequently lack foundation in the lived realities of peace communities that directly put peace work into practice in their daily life (Goetze, 2019, p. 340). As a result, many of the lessons learned from grassroots peace projects are often either undervalued or unanalysed in scholar discourse (Goetze, 2019, p. 340).

Furthermore, the lack of academic representation and visibility for peace communities such as Tamera and San José de Apartadó is concerning, since these communities themselves are examples of peace research through experimentation and daily practices. Their views challenge dominant models rooted in Western, patriarchal and capitalist systems and give critical insights into other forms of peacebuilding that might include new holistic dimensions. This research intends to close that gap by considering in more depth how practical experience contributes to and challenges established peace research frameworks.

1.3. Research Question

How does Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre conceptualize and practice peace, and in what ways has their collaboration with the peace community of San José de Apartadó challenged and enriched this understanding within a decolonial framework?

Sub-questions:

- How do they individually and collectively conceptualize and practice peace in Tamera?
- What are possible gaps or limitations in their research on peace due to their European context and/or upbringing?
- How do they address potential Eurocentric biases and take accountability for colonial legacies?
- How has the cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó exposed gaps in Tamera's approach to peace and in what ways has it contributed to its evolution?
- What concrete lessons have members from Tamera learned from their collaboration and visits in terms of addressing injustice, violence, insecurity and failure?
- How does decolonial theory contribute to interpreting these learnings and experiences?

1.4. Thesis Structure

This thesis explores the relationship between the peace communities of San José de Apartadó and Tamera and the *introduction* contextualizes the project, the communities' origins and partnership while including the relevance of the research topic for the field of peace studies. It also includes the primary research question and the connected objectives for the study.

The *literature review* presents previous studies on eurocentrism in peacebuilding and the importance of intercultural cooperation in peace work. It also sheds light on the socio-cultural context of each community in relation to their peace research. The next chapter presents the *theoretical framework* that guides this thesis. A decolonial approach is applied to the understanding of peace in Tamera as well as to the partnership both communities have developed. In the next part, the different research methods used for data collection are explained in detail, including literature and media review, participant observation, interviews, and linked ethical considerations. The *methodology* justifies the techniques used as well as the choice to focus on San José de Apartadó as a case study. The main first part of the results presents the *peace practices and philosophy in Tamera*, based on participant observation and interviews, showing their unique approach to peace work. The second main chapter focuses on the challenges Tamera's community members face in their research and integrates *critical reflections on Tamera's research*. The third section focuses on the case study, from understanding the relationship between both communities to presenting the *key learnings from the intercultural exchange with San José de Apartadó* perceived by Tamera's members after visiting them.

Finally, the thesis results and potential impacts are *discussed and analysed*, their *limitations* are presented, before reaching a *conclusion* that summarizes the findings and opens new doors for further investigation.

1.5. Tamera

Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre was created in 1995 in the Alentejo region in Portugal with initially 30 members, mostly Germans (Fox, 2019, p. 361). This inauguration was the result of many years of experimentation in Germany around the topic of sexual liberation and peaceful community living. People started gathering during the rise of the 'New Left' because of Dieter Duhm's writings such as *Angst im Kapitalismus* and soon a group formed around Dieter Duhm, an influential anti-capitalistic, leftist activist during the 68' movement and Sabine Lichtenfels, whose dream and vision had been to create a peace village since she was 15 years old (Duhm, 1974). Together they became the leading figures and spiritual guides of this group set on researching peace from a new angle (Fox, 2019, p. 361).

Most of the members who joined were researchers, thinkers and social activists who together made the observation that most social movements and political parties ended up destroying themselves because of internal conflicts and suppressed life energy (Marcuse & Martin, 1979, pp. 5,6). For them, it seemed necessary to learn to live together and to understand the conflicts that arise in a group in order to understand the source of bigger conflicts in the world.

Thus, in 1983, 50 of them committed to live together for three years in the Black Forest and dived deep into inter-relational research and experimentation, occasionally organizing bigger groups and open talks, or protests around a freed sexuality (TAMERA, 2020a). Indeed, this focus on sexuality came as a result to their first observations on the strong connection between sexual oppression and the eruption of violence (TAMERA, 2020a). This perspective however was very controversial, and the press frowned upon its potential risks and pictured the project as a cult, which of course made it very challenging for the members to overcome and move forward. However, by continuing to open their research to others and letting members go in and out of the project freely and slowly reforming a new project in 1991 called the ZEGG community (Zentrum für Experimentelle Gemeinschafts Gestaltung) they started to gain legitimacy and recognition as a “research and seminar place for a nonviolent earth” (ZEGG Education Centre, n.d; Fox, 2019, p, 361). This place is close to Berlin and there they continued their research, using specific tools like the ‘Forum’, but also integrating new aspects into peace research that appeared necessary after years of focusing on community building and on love and sexuality (ZEGG Education Centre, n.d.). This community still exists to this day and evolved around the values of love, spiritual consciousness, responsibility for the future of life, community, experimentation, effectiveness, and wealth (ZEGG Education Centre, n.d. However, some of their members and the leaders of the group felt the need to start a peace village on a barren land and moved to the Monte do Cerro, a 140-hectare site of undeveloped land from a farmer that was on sale (TAMERA, 2020a). This place was chosen by Sabine Lichtenfels with spiritual guidance and by discovering what they now call the ‘Oracle Spring’ where she received a vision from the land of how it could look like with care and respect in the future and decided through this resonance that it would be the right place (fieldnotes, 2024). This was in 1995, and by then 30 people started living in this land with very little means and a lot of motivation to turn the arid landscape into a lush environment, to build infrastructure and to continue their intensive community experimentation and living towards a new culture of peace. (TAMERA, 2020a) At the time, Dieter Duhm, Sabine Lichtenfels and Charly Rainer Ehrenpreis were the three leading figures of the group, all three very spiritually connected and following a similar vision for peace (TAMERA, 2020a). Because of personal spiritual

experiences and following their belief in a love freed from fear, they shared the common call to create a peace village (TAMERA, 2020a). In the first year, the first summer university is held, inviting 100 people from all over the world to visit and learn together and in the following years more people start joining the community (TAMERA, 2020a). A few important events are also worth mentioning, the inauguration of the Institute for Global Peacework in 2000 that marked the beginning of the cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó, the first international peace camp in 2002, the tour of a theatre piece called 'We Refuse to be enemies' in 2003 in Germany and Switzerland, the building of a 'Stone Circle' in 2004, the first 'Grace Pilgrimage' in 2005, the building of more infrastructures and the water retention lakes in the following years, as well as the publication of many more books (TAMERA, 2020a; TAMERA, 2020b, fieldnotes, 2024).

1.6. San José de Apartadó

The peace community of San José de Apartadó has been in close cooperation with Tamera since 2005 (TAMERA, 2020o). It is located in the region of Urabá in Colombia and was established a few years later than Tamera, in 1997, with initially around 1500 farmers in the region of Urabá in the North-West of Colombia during times of extremely violent internal armed conflict (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 19). They chose to live collectively and be neutral in the midst of the Colombian conflict to contest their involvement with the different armed actors and attempt to protect themselves from them (Burnyeat, 2017, p, 19). The Colombian conflict is a complex and long-lasting armed conflict that has afflicted Colombia for several decades. Various actors, including guerrilla groups, paramilitary organisations, drug cartels and public forces "have been fighting for economic and political control over resource-rich areas of the country and land critical to drug trafficking rings" (Summers, 2012, p. 219). San José de Apartadó counts as one of the resource-rich areas that was also victim to the immense suffering, displacement, human rights violations and loss of human life caused by this conflict (Chavarría, 2010, p. 639).

To maintain their neutrality and commitment for peace, members of the peace community of San José de Apartadó declared that they will not participate directly or indirectly in the conflict, will not carry or store weapons, will not provide logistical support or information to the conflict actors nor resort to their support, and stand up against impunity and injustice (Burnyeat, 2017, p, 19). Moreover, they implement specific elements into their everyday life to ensure their own protection: for instance, they gather in a group to travel, have whistles to inform others of an armed intrusion, meet twice a day to plan and verify that nobody went missing, forbid the use or business of alcohol, take part in community work, do not leave

someone behind, commit to maximum transparency, inform leaders of someone's absence, always keep Non-Governmental Organizations close to raise awareness and for protection, and organise committees for food and security (Alther, 2006, p. 283). Nevertheless, their neutrality has been and still is contested by the different armed actors, especially the paramilitary groups who often blame them for their own losses (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 32). Over the years more than 400 of their members have been killed, have suffered massacres and constant threats (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 19). One of the well-known massacres happened on the 21st of February 2005, during which three children and five adults were assassinated by state forces accompanied by AUC (United Self Defence Forces of Colombia) paramilitary actors (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 20). To hinder this violence, the community has been welcoming international support and accompaniment, first from the International Red Cross and later to this day by For Peace Presence (FORPP) and Peace Brigades International (PBI) (FOR Peace Presence, 2020; PBI, n.d.). Moreover, they always prefer to move in bigger groups, always accompanied by some international members because it dissuades armed actors from attacking.

Tamera's members have been visiting yearly, in part for that protective purpose during longer time periods since 2005 when their direct cooperation officially started. They also organized several solidarity campaigns to give them direct support and visibility and have participated together in different educational programs such as the "Farmers' University of Resistance" co-initiated in 2004 with other campesino, Indigenous and Afro-Colombian peace communities to foster alternative ways of education. Nowadays, the peace community of San José de Apartadó is still at risk due to armed forces that are still contesting their presence on the territory due to its geostrategic position and natural resources (Burnyeat, 2017, pp. 22, 24). This situation is described in their regular public reports posted on their website to keep track of all the events and make them visible (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 27; CDP San José, n.d.).

2. Literature Review

Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre offers a rich body of resources that explore their innovative approaches to peacebuilding and community living. Their media includes documentaries such as *Water is Life: Ripples of Regeneration* (Schramm et al., 2025) describing the importance of water as a source of life and different communities' approaches to regenerating this resource for a more peaceful future, alongside key publications written by community members such as *Temple of Love: A Journey into the Age of Sensual Fulfilment* (Lichtenfels, 2011), *Grace pilgrimage for a future without war* (Lichtenfels, 2007), and *The Sacred Matrix: From the Matrix of Violence to the Matrix of Life* (Duhm, 2007). Their website

also serves as a support for preliminary data as it is very detailed and describes all the different dimensions of Tamera's research as well as its history and future goals (TAMERA, 2020c). Furthermore, from the website or elsewhere it is also easy to access related media, videos and podcasts, such as the *Terra Nova Podcast* (Dregger, 2024) which provides interviews with community members, and one describes a visit to the peace community of San José de Apartadó. The community has also caught the interest of several researchers who describe the way it functions and the research areas they find the most relevant in their respective fields (Kunze & Avelino, 2015; L. Dregger, 2016; Esteves, 2017; Esteves, 2018; Fox, 2019).

As for the peace community of San José de Apartadó, although subjective, the more up-to-date source for the peace community is their website on which they very regularly post updates of the situation and describe any encounter with armed forces within their territory and ask for conventional restorative justice (CDP San José, n.d.). Nevertheless, a very interesting documentary named *Chocolate of Peace* shares directly the voices of community members and shows how the cacao production is the matrix of their collective story (Burnyeat & Trujillo, 2016). It was filmed within the scope of Burnyeat's research (2018) during which she dived deep into the community's daily life and practice for peace. Other academic contributions provide critical analyses of the community's strategies for peacebuilding in the face of ongoing violence and show how this peace community's engagement for peace is relevant outside their borders (Burnyeat, 2017; Courtheyn, 2018; Courtheyn, 2022; Mouly, 2022; Valencia & Courtheyn, 2023). Through his field research Courtheyn (2022), came to the conclusion that peace in the peace community of San José de Apartadó is "transrelational", describing peace as a "spatial process in which auto determination is created and in which one lives with dignity respecting the dignity of other persons, places, and beings" (p. 139).

This perception of peace is innovative and locally relevant adding to the existing literature within the field of Peace Studies. Often the most cited definition for peace comes from Galtung (1969) and his concept of negative and positive peace (p. 171). Negative peace is seen as the absence of personal violence while positive peace describes the absence of structural violence, meaning the absence of direct violence and indirect violence which could be referred to as social injustice (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). However, more recent scholars have highlighted other dimensions of peace, such as Mac Ginty (2014) and the concept of "everyday peace" (p. 553). He defines it as "the practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intragroup levels" (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 553). This strategy can be found in every society and can be divided into five types of behaviour: avoidance, ambiguity, ritualized politeness, telling, and

blame deferring (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 553). But according to Firchow (2020) “everyday peace” can also be monitored by studying certain indicators of peace in communities and by letting them choose what these indicators would look like for them (having easy access to goods, having trusting relationships to neighbours, having animals around, feeling safe to go on a walk alone, etc) one can get a better understanding on their perception of peace and the needs they have to foster peacebuilding. Her findings suggest that international peacebuilding initiatives are not very effective in achieving peace by local standards because disproportionate attention is paid to reconstruction, governance, and development assistance while too little attention is paid to community ties and healing (Firchow, 2020).

Moreover, territory and ecology can greatly impact peacebuilding (Lederach, 2017, p. 590). The book from Baquero Melo et al. (2022), confirms that idea by presenting different notions of peace, among which they explain the concept of “environmental peace” and “peace through territorial presence” (p. 100). Environmental peace links together the territory with the actors that are involved within it and around it with the perspective of making them act for the common good. With that term one understands the implications of shared territorial resources and environmental problems are best solved in joint effort, through a conscient work on building better social relations (Baquero Melo et al., 2022, p. 102). Peace through territorial presence involves the dynamic of producing coffee, cacao, or other goods on a specific territory which beyond being an economic activity, builds identity, life projects and relationships with the territory. That, with a strong focus on self-management and collectivity, allows them to reappropriate their land and demand political rights (Baquero Melo et al., 2022, pp. 108-109). Finally, “ecological dignity”, refers to the possibility of reaching dignity for individuals and the earth through community building. That dignity translates into meeting basic needs, non-participation to conflict, commitment to truth and to self-growth (Courtheyn, 2022).

Peace communities help to enrich the field of Peace Studies by highlighting new dimensions of peace, such as community and interconnectedness with the environment but according to Mouly (2002) they also contribute directly to positive peace (p.1169) by:

- Exercising autonomy,
 - Using nonviolent strategies to reduce direct violence
 - Tackling structural and cultural violence
 - Supporting the development of positive peace in their localities.
- (Mouly, 2022, p. 1169)

Indeed, “these communities have sought to overcome structural violence by establishing their own institutions, empowering their members, building more democratic and inclusive processes of decision-making, engaging in alternative income-generating activities in their locality, and gaining support from external actors” (Mouly, 2022, p. 1169). In Tamera, they exercise autonomy over their territory by adopting and researching regenerative sources of energy (Nascimento & Pólvara, 2013) and foster positive peace by creating global and local networks of exchange and support to foster positive peace (Esteves, 2018, pp. 9,13). In the peace community of San José de Apartadó, they maintain autonomy and neutrality in the conflict by voicing their nonviolent commitment and they follow specific rules to abide by it and they tackle structural and direct violence by giving visibility to every altercation happening in their territory through regular communiqués (Burnyeat, 2017, p. 27). They became independent by looking for alternative incomes, mainly offering seminars and donations for Tamera (TAMERA, 2020q) and mainly with cacao production for San José de Apartadó (Burnyeat, 2018). With education, peace research, daily practices, remembrance rituals, community activities and local and global gatherings, these peace communities already have and still promote a “culture of peace, based on nonviolence, tolerance, and the development of peaceful relationships in their locality through practice, awareness raising, training, and education” (Mouly, 2022, p. 1169). According to Mouly (2022), three key attributes have been observed by most researchers in peace communities: “(i) impartiality, (ii) participation and cohesion, and (iii) the use of nonviolent action (also termed “civil resistance”)” (p. 1171).

Examining the work of peace communities is therefore extremely relevant for peace research as it contributes to developing new definitions of peace and fostering positive peace. Through its local and practical lens, this research takes a decolonial approach, valorising the voices of community members rather than institutions. Decolonial research recognises how the “legacy of colonial ways of thinking affects not only the Indigenous peoples of the countries that were once colonized” but that it also “persists in the countries that instigated the process of colonization and that it now forms part of a world-view that systematically favours those who are White, wealthy, cis-male, heterosexual and able-bodied” (Denscombe, 2024, p. 2). So decolonial research happens within a constructivist paradigm that integrates the worldview of indigenous people and takes an intersectional approach to analysis and investigation (Denscombe, 2024, pp. 2, 5, 6). Such research also calls for reflexivity and self-awareness on the part of the researchers and the influence of their social identity and background on their findings (Denscombe, 2024, p. 5).

3. Theoretical Framework

Aligned with the research question and objectives of this study, the main theory applied for this research is based on decolonial thought. Within that scope, decolonial theory is introduced, as well as the concepts of decolonial peace(s), decolonial justice, decolonial praxis, decolonial feminism, and postcolonial theology.

Early on, Habermas et al. (1974) brings an idea of pluralism through his advocacy for a public sphere that truly represents its citizens by applying new norms and principles such as general accessibility, the elimination of privileges, and the discovery of general norms and rational legitimations (pp. 1, 2). On the other hand, in 1987, Bourdieu explains why it is so difficult to go against social conditioning, as it is intricately tied to each individual's social environment and influences behaviours and interactions (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 5). He calls this ingrained socialization the "habitus" of humans (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 5). Bourdieu (1987) argues that individuals' practices, interests, and dispositions are shaped by their "habitus" (p. 5). This concept is relevant for this research because it tries to question socially constructed behaviours and habits that reflect potential colonial biases and helps to understand why it is so challenging for individuals to detach themselves from their ingrained perspectives. It looks at how these can be deconstructed socially and individually, especially in Western contexts by taking the example of Tamera's Peace and Education Centre.

The term "decolonial" and the development of decolonial theory emerged in the wake of the postcolonial theories introduced by Frantz Fanon (1952). It arose as a critique of postcolonial thought and brought forward important concepts like the coloniality of power (Quijano & Ennis, 2000), which explores how colonial structures continue to shape modern societies, and epistemic decolonisation (Mignolo, 2010), which challenges the dominance of Western knowledge systems. Moreover, Césaire (2000) emphasized the need to reclaim cultural and personal identities from the legacy of colonial oppression.

Decolonial theory helps to frame to what extent community members from Tamera are willing to take the same approach towards "decolonising" their perceptions as they are when it comes to patriarchy or capitalism. Through this research, their attempts to reshape their "habitus" towards a more pluralistic understanding of peace is contextualized and analysed under the lens of the colonial legacy that most of them carry. The framework of decolonial theory and pluralism, therefore, is essential to this analysis, as it allows both the researcher and the community to critically engage with these limitations, acknowledging the ways in which their Eurocentric perspectives may persist despite their attempts to overcome them.

3.1. Decolonial Theory in Peace Studies

Boaventura de Sousa Santos' book *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* helps to gain a deeper understanding into decolonial theory. Santos (2016) argues for a “*teoria povera*” that distances itself from Eurocentric hegemony (Acha, 2018) and instead bases itself on the “experiences of large, marginalized minorities and majorities that struggle against unjustly imposed marginality and inferiority, with the purpose of strengthening their resistance” (Santos, 2016, p. 9; Acha, 2018). Also in that direction, Laó-Montes (2016), describes decoloniality as a “justice-focused politics that links patriarchal oppression to capitalist, racial, and imperial domination within a modern/colonial matrix conceptualized as the coloniality of power” (p. 7). Overall, there is a consensus around the main idea that decolonial theory seeks to challenge and transform the dominant narratives and power structures that have historically oppressed various groups (Barreto, 2021, p. 14; Córdova-Quero et al., 2019, p. 1; Maldonado-Torres, 2021, p. 193; Ortega et al., 2016, p. 20).

3.2. Decolonial Peace(s)

Similarly, the discourse and structures on peace are still mainly Western and although Galtung's contributions on negative and positive peace can be used as tools, a decolonial peace implies a deconstruction and questioning of those (Cruz, 2021, p.274; Galtung, 1969, p. 183).

In the Colombian context, for example, decolonial peace “appeals to the denaturalization of colonial peace in its two versions: the colonial one brought by the Spanish, French, English and North American empires” and the one “promoted by the Criollo people in power for more than 200 years, aligned with the idea of colonial peace in the republic” (Vásquez-Arenas, 2018, p. 164). Vásquez-Arenas (2018) distinguishes this perspective on peace from a more pluralistic one: decolonial peace(s) that do(es) not follow grammatical rules in an attempt to catch attention to new approaches to peace that are built on social relationships that challenge “the colonial matrix supported by the geo-politic, geo-economic and geo-cultural construction of differences established by racism, capitalism, patriarchy, eurocentrism and anthropocentrism” (p. 164). For example, Day et al. (2023) examined how a collective of women created spaces that fostered solidarity and decolonial imaginary through actions in everyday life (p. 1). For Valencia and Courtheyn (2023), decolonial peace implies the consideration of the relationship between the land and its inhabitants, their sustainable relations and the capacity for the marginalised to break free from oppressions tied to the rule of armed groups and capitalist markets (p. 1077). Thus, although there is no definitive definition for decolonial peace as it needs to adapt to the communities' definition of peace locally, a decolonial framework still implies an approach to peace that challenges the colonial matrix.

3.3. Decolonial Justice

It is similar for decolonial justice, as the definition of justice will change depending on people's beliefs, culture and suffering. However, from a more classic approach, the idea of justice roots itself in the condition of a state law or human rights being violated and addresses the impact of this violation on the victim and the way the perpetrator is impacted by his infraction (whether it is punishment, or reparation depends on the system of justice in place).

However, justice is a word that also applies to treating people equally disregarding their gender, race, socio-economic background or disabilities by providing everyone with fair treatment. But despite this ideal idea of justice, decolonial justice shows how structural violence targets certain marginalised groups such as the afro-indigenous communities in Colombia and that this reality stems from colonial history and shapes the way justice and reparations should be approached and redefined (Ortega et al., 2016, p. 5; Samset, 2020). This structural violence is easily identifiable when discourses from the state have encouraged targeted violence, as in land-exploitation, displacement, threats, murders, towards specific groups of individuals (Burnyeat, 2017, pp. 20, 28).

3.4. Decolonial feminism

Nogueira-Godsey (2019), shows more specifically how social justice and environmental justice are interdependent through the example of ecofeminism and links it to decolonial theory under the name of "decolonial praxis" (pp. 76-89). Decolonial praxis (decolonial ecological pedagogy) "brings into light the need to investigate the effects of coloniality in our own, temporal and local, lived experiences and to do so via a process of deliberate self-reflexivity" to be able to learn from each other's experience and propose an intersectional theological approach to teaching. (Nogueira-Godsey, 2019, p.73).

Decolonial feminism can be added to this scope of study as it seeks to move beyond heterosexist frameworks that are otherwise often overlooked in decolonial proposals (Córdova-Quero et al., 2019, p. 8). Laó-Montes (2016) defends that decolonial feminism is needed a world-political-foundation for rigorous intersectional and communitarian theory (p. 7). Following that line, critical feminism can also provide a good impulse for a decolonial or postcolonial approach to theology, because it shows how institutions sometimes still limit the criticism in discourse against theology, addresses the intersections of oppression and advocates for the empowerment of marginalised communities (Carlos J. Beltrán A., 2016, pp. 11, 12).

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

Considering the socio-cultural context, I chose to focus on a qualitative study involving ethnographic methods and an explorative case study approach to investigate the cooperation between both communities to gain deeper insights on their peace work initiatives and vision. Nevertheless, due to the strong focus on Tamera, direct data collection will only be pursued in that community. Overall, a mixed methodological approach is employed, consisting of four stages: first, a review of secondary literature and media analysis; second, field observation; third, semi-structured in-depth interviews; and finally, analysis of the data collected. The combination of these various findings will help to triangulate the data, enhancing the reliability of the research.

4.2. Literature and Media Analysis

The literature review is essential for any research work to assess the status quo of the topic investigated. In this case, several scholars have investigated both communities. Namely Esteves, (2018), Fox (2019), for Tamera and mainly Courtheyn (2018; 2022), Alther (2006), Burnyeat (2017) and Mouly (2022) for the peace community of San José de Apartadó. Moreover, for both communities, their websites provide extensive information that is public and self-actualised, several videos of interviews, statements that are available online, as well as documentaries. Lastly, in the case of Tamera, several books were written by the leaders and display their ideas and development directly from their perspective. All these sources are taken into account in the extent of their relevance for the study and considering that they are not all peer-reviewed and therefore, need to be analysed and quoted with precaution.

4.3. Participant Observation

Additionally, participant observation is a key source for the research. Indeed, by staying directly around one month and a half in Tamera, it was possible to make direct observation and note taking of the individual behaviours, community rituals and other significant activities implemented towards peacebuilding in the daily life of community members. Directly staying with the community allowed a more authentic understanding of their practical implementation of peace. Although observation was conducted in a partial immersion, discussion with other researchers and volunteers helped to validate and nuance observations. One of the key experiences included participation in community rituals such as the Monday morning stone circle ceremony, a special event where community members gather to start the week and greet the sun to connect in prayer with other peace workers, within the community and all around the world, choosing a theme to focus on for the week to come. In addition, I volunteered to prepare food for community guests, attended talks given by community members on different themes important for Tamera, and participated in group dynamics with other volunteers to

practice conflict resolution and self-expression techniques. I could observe many community dynamics by participating in community activities such as the twice-weekly open café, visiting the 'God's Point' to reflect on mind and body, and attending the Sunday matinee, where a speaker is invited to talk about the community's vision and peace issues. Besides, spontaneous events such as bar parties, youth group performances and olive harvesting were relevant, as well as protests and community-related events. Although there was no access to large community meetings, participation in self-organised workshops run by volunteers was encouraged, allowing for the exchange of skills and experiences among participants. I also learned a lot about the land and the community by attending several guided tours, with focus points on alternative energies, water management, structures, animals. By staying during an extended period, I had access to places not available on a first visit that give more insight into the daily life of the community members such as the clothes second hand shop, the kitchens, cellars, some offices et cetera. Overall, these opportunities and activities, together with seminars and group meetings where community members act as facilitators, enriched the understanding of how the community lives and promotes peace.

4.4. Interviews

Finally, the in-depth interviews also play an important role as they permit to transparently discuss directly with members of the community about the mentioned research question. In-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. The interview guide included the 4 main questions:

- What is your background and the reason you came to Tamera?
- What is Tamera's approach to peace and how is it related to your personal understanding of peace?
- How was that understanding challenged by possible Eurocentric biases?
- How did you get to know the peace community of San José de Apartadó and how has your relationship evolved?
- What did you learn from that relationship and from your visits?

These questions allowed for a qualitative approach that favoured detailed and in-depth responses, essential to capture the complexity of the participants' perspectives.

The selection of participants was very specific, focusing on people from Tamera who have a direct connection to San José de Apartadó, as this relationship is key to my research. My local contact, responsible for the cooperation with the community of San José de Apartadó, helped me to identify people willing to participate. My group facilitators and other participants also supported the selection with a snowball effect. In the end it was possible to interview 4 people,

established members of more than 50 years who have a link or experience with the Colombian community from the beginning, but also, two younger people, one who was involved with San José de Apartadó before meeting Tamera and one who got to know Tamera at a very young age and later took part in their cooperation. More people were interested but due to time constrictions on their side, they were not able to participate in the study.

I introduced the research briefly before they decided whether they were interested in participating, and if they had agreed, the date and location were chosen by them to feel safe and comfortable. To ensure free choice, emotional and physical safety, as well as the confidentiality and identity of the participants, they were also provided with an informed consent form. This document details the study objectives, procedures, risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, voluntariness of participation, the right to withdraw at any time and my personal contact details. All elements were clearly explained to ensure that participants fully understand their content before verbally giving consent to the use of the data collected. Interviewers were free to leave any question unanswered and to ask for any information to be changed or retrieved at a later stage, or to change their mind at any time if they prefer not to continue participating. In the process, any questions about the research were answered and, if necessary, clarifications were given.

The interviews were recorded to facilitate a more accurate and thorough analysis of the responses, allowing for better categorisation and understanding of the data. This methodology also allowed me to listen to the responses in their entirety and conduct a detailed review to identify patterns, recurring themes and important nuances that might be missed in a more limited approach. To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the research findings, participants received transcripts of their interviews, accompanied by possible highlighted quotes for validation.

4.5. Data Analysis

The sub-questions are answered by collecting data from existing literature, interviews, and observations, giving depth and authenticity to the results. These results were reached by taking a thematic analysis approach on the collected data. For that, the data was analysed shortly after the stay and the first notes and observations around the data were added. The whole process was carried out using Microsoft Word and MAXQDA 24. First, the interviews were transcribed into word documents, translated to English if necessary and revised carefully, then sent to the participants for revision with the first comments and relevant quotes. Once reviewed, the transcripts were uploaded to MAXQDA for further analysis, starting with the identification of relevant mentions that can be linked to the main themes of interest. Then the most significant

segments were highlighted, and comments were added in the margins of the texts to label and describe these categories and add concurring fieldnotes, identify recurrent patterns, topics, and noteworthy elements. The main categories include definitions of peace (inner and outer peace, cooperation with all living beings, peace community), challenges (assumptions, colonial, accountability) and learnings (personal reflections, replicable strategies and ways of living). As the analysis progressed, the categories and subcategories were organised into a table within Word, which allowed me to identify overarching themes (See Table 1).

Table 1

Themes	Sub-Category	Codes
Tamera's Peace Practices and Philosophy	Peace as a Holistic System	Holistic, System Change, Capitalism and Patriarchy, Sacred Matrix, Healing Biotope, Stone Circle
	Community as a Laboratory for Peace	Community, Everyday Life, Practice, Forum, Inner Conflicts
	The Political Dimension of Peace	Structural Nonviolence, Sacred Activism, Political Act, Defend the Sacred Alliance
	Spiritual Foundations of Peace	Sacred Matrix, Spirituality, Stone Circle, Geistig
	Relational Peace: Trust, Love, and Sexuality	Free Love & Sexuality, Trust, Expression, Inner Conflicts, Forum
	Peace through Healing and Transformation	Healing Biotope, Mourning, Inner and Outer, Life Energy, Forum, Trauma
	Gaian-Peace: Living in Harmony with Nature and its Beings	Cooperation with All Beings, Sacred Matrix, Holistic, Healing Biotope
	Peace as an Ongoing Process of Research and Inquiry	Research Questions, Introspection
Critical Reflections on Tamera's Research	Privilege and Systemic Change	Privilege, Western, White, Middle-class, Global North, Cis-hetero, Man, Diversity
	Colonial Legacies in Peacebuilding	Colonial, Appropriation, Saviourism, Tokenization, Global North, Exceptionalism
	Responsibilities of Peacebuilding	Responsibility, Consumer Choices, Building Coalitions, Visibility, Solidarity
	Accountability and Power Dynamics	Initiative, Accountability, Assumptions

	Unlearning and Transforming Assumptions	Unlearn, Assumptions, Education, Youth
Key Learnings from the cooperation with San José de Apartadó	Core Values in Peacebuilding	Nonviolence, Justice, Resistance, Community, Commitment
	The Power of Forgiveness	Compassion, Forgiveness, Humility
	Resilience to Live	Commitment, Joy of Life, Singing, Jokes
	Cultural and Colonial Awareness	Injustice, Trust, Rules, Colonial, Saviourism, Privilege, Impacts, Responsibility, Accountability, Introspection, Culture

Note. This table shows the different themes, categories, and codes that emerged during the data analysis.

Once identified, the themes were aligned to the existing study objectives and research question to analyse how the collected data directly influence the first findings of the research. Overall, this coding process was both deductive, informed by existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and inductive, allowing emerging themes to surface naturally. This allowed me to adjust or redefine categories based on emerging data and helped me to capture the complexities and nuances of the narratives shared by participants. With this method I could address some key dimensions for the community and integrate the findings within their socio-cultural contexts.

4.6. Ethical Considerations

To ensure ethical rigor, all data was anonymized, strict confidentiality was upheld, and I adhered to international data protection regulations, including GDPR and Colombian Law 1581. This involved secure data storage, explicit participant consent, and sharing interview transcripts and drafts of findings with participants to ensure their lived experiences are accurately represented. I also received consent from both Tamera's Peace Research & Education Centre and San José de Apartadó's peace community to directly cite their community names as such in my thesis.

Additionally, during my stay, I followed the guidelines set by Tamera's peace community, respecting their rules, traditions and rituals during my time. Moreover, I ensured voluntary participation, without remuneration or cost. While my personal interest for Tamera motivates this project, I am committed to providing an honest and balanced exploration. I aim to highlight both the strengths and challenges of Tamera's research and intercultural partnerships, while being transparent about the ways my positionality may shape my findings.

4.7. Limitations

This research is rooted in my personal connection to Tamera, a community I admire for its vision of peace. My interest was sparked during my visit in 2022 and because of Tamera's cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó in Colombia. It encouraged me to come back for two volunteering 'Arcs' of a month and a half in 2023 and 2024. I also participated in a 12-day course to learn and practice more with the tool of 'Forum' in 2023. These experiences have given me valuable personal and academic insights and helped me to create connections and trust to make the interviews. They also offered me insights into the community's dynamics and challenges that might be harder to notice on a single visit. But my proximity to the community also possibly created biases that need to be acknowledged.

My analysis reflects my personal interpretation and does not represent the full reality of life in Tamera. Participant 3, for instance, emphasized the diversity within Tamera, noting how individuals have vastly different beliefs, experiences, and roles, and advising against generalising conclusions for the community members (Interview 3, Pos. 55). My findings are limited to a specific context, shaped by my interviews with just four individuals, each offering very different perspectives. As Aull Davies (2012) reminds us, anthropological research often involves mediating between differing constructions of reality (p. 6). For me, this has meant balancing my role as an outsider conducting research with the sense of connection I feel to Tamera's ideals. I acknowledge that this duality shapes my findings and that they remain situational and reflect my own positionality within this process.

5. Tamera's Peace Practices and Philosophy

Tamera's intention to take a holistic and practical approach to peacebuilding is clear from the topics and short descriptions they present on their website and I will use that overview to outline the most important themes of Tamera's investigation. (TAMERA, 2020d).

Table 2

Healing of Love	Freeing love and sexuality from fear
Community Building	Building social structures that help us move from fear to trust
Children & Youth	Learning & growing up in trust
Spirituality, Art & Healing	Connecting with the original source of all beings
Ecology	A new relation to nature, from exploitation to cooperation
Cooperation With All Beings	Healing our relation to nature with conscious communication
Energy Technology	Decentralized energy autonomy for a regenerative future

Note. Information taken from Tamera's website, presenting their main areas of research. (TAMERA, 2020d)

These themes emerged in the collected data, in two interviews participants describe their initial wish for a freer sexuality, liberated from societal rules and taboos and finding an answer in Tamera's early project (Interview 2, Pos. 22; Interview 3, Pos. 2). In a time of post-war instability, several leftist movements grew and brought with them ideas of system change and sexual liberation (Marcuse & Martin, 1979, pp. 5,6). But many of them failed due to internal conflicts, and from there came the understanding that to uphold these ideas, a solid base is needed on a human level, hence the importance of community building (Interview 3; Pos. 4; Marcuse & Martin, 1979, pp. 5,6). A special factor common to both healing of love and community building is the focus of transforming fear into trust (Interview 4; Pos. 12, 22, 55). Indeed, according to them, human history has been based on fear during times of patriarchy and many structures have been built around this fear in the way humans love, express themselves, relate to one another to a point that they almost forgot how to function differently (Interview 4; Pos. 16). But a different reality can be remembered, unlearned and relearned, and the younger, the better (Interview 3; Pos. 14, 18). This brings us to their next objective, raising free children; letting children grow surrounded by love and trust (TAMERA, 2020d). To give them this opportunity, a school was built, from the nursery to the end of primary school with the goal of offering children and youth the possibility to become responsible co-creators of the world by providing them with open and creative learning spaces and relevant social, spiritual and ecological knowledge to awake their global consciousness (TAMERA, 2020e). It is as important for children to express themselves freely and in trust than it is for adults and many practices in Tamera revolve around making this possible (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). One example is 'Forum', a tool of community and trust building through self-expression, but expression can also find its vessel in different arts, from painting, to drawing, to singing, dancing, building, writing, etc (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). These art forms also have their dedicated times, as well as special times to meditate, reflect, think and connect with a higher self, with a bigger source of energy, with oneself, outside or within all beings (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). Tamera makes a point of welcoming any religion, belief system that aligns with an idea of peacebuilding and healing (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). Many people came to Tamera, and still do, with different interests and believing in something bigger is far from being a requirement (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). Yet, many of their practices and rituals exist to celebrate life and death, and to connect with "god", "the whole", or whatever one wants to call "the original source of all beings" (TAMERA, 2020d). There, the mention of "all beings" is of importance since there is special

acknowledgement of how human history has been and still is based on a system of exploitation of natural resources and other living beings, whether insects, animals, or trees, even water in a certain way, a source of life, change and healing (TAMERA, 2020i). With that in mind, community members want to create cooperation with nature and other beings, based on conscious communication with the land and its inhabitants (TAMERA, 2020i). Finally, they stress a conscious relation to nature rhymes with “decentralized energy autonomy for a regenerative future” (TAMERA, 2020d). Indeed, with the mainstream existing energy sources, based on extraction and destruction, all hope for a conscious cooperation with nature seems lost, but with innovative systems based on solar energy, biogas and water retention lakes, a new relationship with nature paired with energy autonomy seems possible (TAMERA, 2020i).

In the interviews, most of these themes were touched upon and were illustrated with personal stories and experiences. Some themes also emerged that are linked to the cited ones but with a different focus or just to different degrees of importance. The goal of this chapter is to answer the sub-question: How do they individually and collectively conceptualize and practice peace in Tamera?

The first hints towards the answers are the themes previously mentioned but also the ones that came up by analysing the data. Namely: Peace as a Holistic System, Community as a Laboratory for Peace, the Political Dimension of Peace, Spiritual Foundations of Peace, Relational Peace: Trust, Love and Sexuality, Peace through Healing and Transformation, Gaian-Peace: Living in Harmony with Nature and its Beings, Peace as an Ongoing Process of Research and Inquiry.

5.1. Peace as a Holistic System

This chapter explores Tamera's approach to peace as an interconnected whole, emphasizing systemic change and the integration of spiritual, social, and ecological dimensions.

- **Codes:** *Holistic, System Change, Capitalism and Patriarchy, Sacred Matrix, Healing Biotope, Stone Circle*

Illustrating this holistic aspect, Participant 3 often mentions how much she appreciates that Tamera has always and still takes interest in everything and tries to understand from a practical approach which elements of our society are truly beneficial and which elements of the human being still have to be understood, discovered, and revealed. According to her, this is possible only by stepping out of the current capitalist and patriarchal system (Interview 3, Pos. 4). She says, for example: “I wasn't looking for a community. But then I learned if you want to really change something, you have to build a new society. And this you can do in a community. With your own rules, you can change it all the time when you find out you're wrong or it doesn't

work, how can it be different, better.” (Interview 3, Pos. 4) and “we step out of the normal life” (Interview 3, Pos. 49). That desire to change the system, to create a new space, new rules, is shared by the other participants and many of the community members (field notes 2024). For example, Participant 2 said: “I was always looking for something where I could change the system” (Interview 2, Pos. 9) and Participant 4 said: “[T]he founders of Tamera recognised that we need to deeply transform the way we live together and to create ways of living that can take us out of this patriarchal conditioning” (Interview 4, Pos. 22).

Many of them expressed the realisation that in order to radically change or transform one aspect of society, it is difficult to stay within society, because that aspect is most likely interconnected and interdependent with other existing rules and structures. For example, in interviews they refer to free love and sexuality as elements that are closely connected to community building (Interview 3, Pos. 4) and to a political act (Interview 2, Pos. 22). To liberate sexuality from patriarchy and capitalism, it was necessary to try and step out of it. Participant 4 talks about a consensus in the community around patriarchy being a system of violence, injustice, and suffering (Interview 4, Pos. 26). Participant 2 underlines the connection between different areas and how they were affected by patriarchy by stating that “the biggest wounds we carry as human beings are in the area of love, sexuality and religion, spirituality. This is what was destroyed from patriarchy, completely.” (Interview 2, Pos. 26). There are several mentions of patriarchy and capitalism in the interviews but also in their books, for example, *The Sacred Matrix* (Duhm, 2007). Dieter Duhm shows how patriarchy has been deeply ingrained in “recent” human history and generally highlights the importance of understanding this history as a matrix of violence, that has not always existed, to be able to reconnect with an alternative reality, a forgotten past, a Sacred Matrix (Duhm, 2007, pp. 22, 80). Many of the participants have mentioned human history on several occasions, referring to beliefs based on fear (Interview 4, Pos. 18; Interview 1, Pos. 5), past and present colonial theft (Interview 4, Pos. 26), structures (Interview 3, Pos. 6), history of war (Interview 3, Pos. 10), wounds (Interview 2, Pos. 22), a 7000 years of culture of violence (Interview 1, Pos. 7; Duhm, 2007, p. 80). Yet, these are the elements that can be deconstructed towards a Sacred Matrix, a matrix of life. What that means is explained in great detail in Dieter Duhm’s book and cannot be summarized to a few sentences, but the following paragraph captures its essence:

The Sacred Matrix is the matrix of life itself. It is present in the blossoming of a tree, in the scent of a flower, in the chirping of a bird, in the wallowing of a pig, and in the blowing of the wind. It is present in the depths of the oceans, in the folds of the mountains, in the river valleys, and on the mountaintops of eternal silence. It creates

the structure of a crystal, a shell, or a dripstone cave. It brings forth the germination of grain, the division of cells, and the play of the galaxies. It sometimes peers out, pure and clear, through the eyes of a baby. Sometimes - in the most beautiful moments of love - it reaches our heart. It is then that we are transformed for a brief eternity and we know the goal of our journey.

(Duhm, 2007, p. 23)

A matrix is something within or from which something else originates, develops, or takes form and in that sense, the Sacred Matrix finds its origin in the very creation of life. The idea here is that it stems from a true respect for any form of life, a true loving of the other, the bird, the tree that then fosters trust and protects life (Duhm, 2007, p. 23). Within that vision, that may seem hard to reach, a poetic utopia, there is a need for concrete action: the creation of Healing Biotopes. Dieter Duhm (2007) exposes each theme and aspect that will foster life and peace. Then, he moves on to the importance of really seeing the violence on earth as it is now, recognising the impact of history, yet believing we have lived in peace before (Duhm, 2007). He also puts the issue of sexuality forth (reflecting on how it's been instrumentalized and how it can be liberated) and presents a holistic concept of healing (Duhm, 2007). Moreover, he talks about the importance of peace work, of redefining ourselves, of cooperating with nature and reconnecting to spirituality (Duhm, 2007). Finally, he underlines the need of creating communities and taking political action, and explains how all these matters can be integrated into places and systems of healing (Duhm, 2007). Namely, Healing Biotopes which spread "the code of trust, cooperation, and solidarity with all living beings" by finding a new way to live together in cooperation with the land and all its inhabitants (Duhm, 2007, p. 380). That means, not only trying to be sustainable but also regenerative. For example, when they bought the land it was very dry and there was little vegetation, but after building several retention lakes and studying where the water flows and how it can be absorbed better by the earth, the land started to flourish with lavish vegetation, as showed by published before/after pictures and by the documentary film (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024, tour of the community; Schramm et al., 2025). Of course, this was only possible because there are also teams responsible specifically for the cooperation with the environment, whether for tree management, compost toilet, garden, herbs or water management (fieldnotes, 2023). Thus, a Healing Biotope is a complex regenerative system and place for living in community, sustainably and consciously, that fosters local and global peace and healing (Duhm, 2007). Ideally, several Healing Biotopes can root themselves all over the world, stay interconnected and amplify the positive impacts of their existence, and in that way let humanity come one step closer to the Sacred Matrix, according to Dieter Duhm

(2007, p. 380). Tamera's creation was meant to become the first prototype of a Healing Biotope that can be used as a potential model for future Healing Biotopes (Duhm, 2007, p. 380). Participant 4 mentions this intention when talking about how he first joined Tamera: "Tamera invited for this three-year educational experiment in Montecerro, where they wanted to invite young people and peace workers from different parts of the world to establish the knowledge base of a healing biotope in three years" (Interview 4, Pos. 10). This was a bit ambitious, but after a few more years of experience they were able to extend their goal to "creating a network of healing biotopes as these kinds of holistic research centers for a nonviolent regenerative society" (Interview 4, Pos. 37). Esteves (2018) presents her research on Tamera's partnerships and involvement in various countries, showing that the 'Global Campus' initiative is a concrete representation of Tamera's efforts to diffuse knowledge on regenerative peacebuilding strategies and technologies (pp. 9, 13). She also makes the distinction between regenerative approaches to peacebuilding and the usual regeneration peacebuilding efforts and highlights how regenerative objectives aim at directly changing the nature of the power relations at the origin of the conflict while promoting a peace that is self-sustaining, instead of 'going back' to pre-war structures and conditions (Esteves, 2018, p. 3).

Overall, Tamera's approach to peace is complex and holistic as it tries to integrate all the aspects that foster life, while acknowledging the current state of the world, its history and potential future. The following codes: Holistic, System Change, Capitalism, Patriarchy, Sacred Matrix, and Healing Biotope, help to understand some of Tamera's key visions as well as their origins.

5.2. Community as a Laboratory for Peace

Already in the introduction, the aim was to present peace as a practice, as daily habits, as actions rather than theories, as everyday peace, although that also is a theory. Everyday Peace is a theory that underlines how day to day, certain people will develop certain behaviours, build strategies that foster peace locally, often community based (Firchow, 2020; Mac Ginty, 2014). Here the theory might not fully support the peace practice of Tamera, yet it offers a foundation for the following analysis of a peace that translates into a way of living, being, and thinking rather than just the latter.

- **Codes:** *Community, Everyday Life, Practice, Forum, Inner Conflicts*

As mentioned with the Healing Biotope, the goal is to create a "model settlement" with the idea that, in order to create a new system and change the outside it is necessary to change inside, and that community fosters inner understanding and transformation (fieldnotes, 2024 talk with group facilitator). The project started on the premise that if 30 people live together, express

their needs and desires, go to the roots of the conflicts that come up, then it becomes possible to gain a deeper understanding of human beings and of being human (fieldnotes, 2024; Interview 2, Pos. 56). Participant 2 explains this in more detail:

When [Name] started to found this project, he went before in a time of hermitage. And then [...] he received a message and it said, if you want to know [...] how peace from community functions, you have to bring people together to stay really together, this was the three-year social experience project, and then you will know, then you will meet all the conflicts that you have to go through to build peace. (Interview 2, Pos. 56)

This sentence of “putting together 20 or 30 people together for a longer period as a necessary step to understand what type of conflicts a community needs to confront before building peace” although formulated in various ways is often quoted when community members talk about the creation of Tamera, teach guests about the importance of community building (fieldnotes, 2024). It shows the experimental vision to build an intentional vessel for peacebuilding from the start, beginning with a small group that can later be expanded. This first stage lasted a bit more than 3 years but was preceded by other experimental living projects that highlighted the need for a long-term community project and for the focus on a more holistic approach to peace rather than choosing a strong focus on love and sexuality. This interconnection between “holistic” and “community” can be found in the structure of the ‘Stone Circle’ (TAMERA, 2020f). The ‘Stone Circle’ is a spiral of very big stones, placed on top of the hill in the centre of the village (TAMERA, 2020f). It is composed of 96 archetypes, represented with hand carved symbols in the stones and connected stories and qualities for each stone (Lichtenfels, 2023). These are organized within the space into different interconnected areas: networks and professions, plants, animals, love school and art, heart’s politics, knowledge and healing, priest(esses) and ancestors, cultures and countries (Lichtenfels, 2023). These are meant to be areas also present within the community and the 96 archetypes represent a functioning peace community that involves all these aspects, growth and different generations (Lichtenfels, 2023). So that, if there was a group of 96 people, ideally “each person would represent a certain quality, very deeply, to build a stable community” (Interview 2, Pos. 56). The need for people of very different qualities was also mentioned by Participant 3, when talking about some that are very good at dancing, singing or healing through humour, as examples (Interview 3, Pos. 55).

According to her and other participants, community building helps to understand inner conflicts, to shed light on hidden truths and to reveal the authentic self, detached from identification and past trauma (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024; Interview 3, Interview 1, Pos. 13;

Interview 2, Pos. 58). If we acknowledge that community building is a peacebuilding practice, then it is an everyday practical application of their peace understanding. That translates itself in the plenary meetings they hold, in their daily interactions, but also through their work towards building a 'Healing Biotope'. Each action and choice become part of a bigger picture, what to consume, what type of toilets are used, how to react when feeling triggered, how the things are communicated inside and outside the community, how money is distributed, and so many other elements that come up in daily life. These activities, habits and interactions are (daily) practice, they are not peace negotiations between states that have conflicting interests, they are not written discussions between scholars but: talking to a kid, preparing food, talking to a neighbour, managing frustrations, dealing with own strength, energies (Interview 1, Pos. 13).

This quote is from Participant 1 who tells us about coming to Tamera's peace community because of the focus put on shedding light onto internal conflicts, the ones happening inside of each of us. According to her, we need to look for deeper inner conflicts that reveal themselves in everyday life (Interview 1, Pos. 13). Then, what is done through acts and words could be used, not for violence but to reconnect with hidden parts of ourselves, such as the fear of others and the need to defend ourselves from nature, humans, overwhelming feelings, impulses of energy and desires or even from ourselves (Interview 1, Pos. 9). In fact, Tamera's goal is to reveal these fears and impulses, using for example, 'Forum', but also dance, creation, and different forms of expressions, shared by the whole group (Interview 1, Pos. 9, 11). As these tools for expression are also relevant for relational peace, they will be explained in more detail with examples in that part. For now, I will illustrate what a "typical" day might look like for a community member to show how inner issues reveal themselves in everyday life and how daily actions may pave the way to a more peaceful future.

So, a typical (summer) day in Tamera could start by waking up early in your caravan, having breakfast with the organic and local food bought in bulk by a group in the community, some tomatoes from your garden and salad from the community garden. Then, taking your kid to school on your bikes, saying hi to the people you all know very well on your way there and at the school. Some of them might have been your lovers, many are your friends, but you have spoken with all of them before. Then you stop by a nearby compost toilet, taken care of by another member of the community who recycles everything into compost for the trees and some plants. Then you make your way to the Campus to give an hour talk about one of your focus areas with guests: for example, death in community, love and sexuality, trauma responses, consent, cooperation with animals, community building, water management, and so many

more. Let's say, you will talk about love free of fear and your experience with it, then you might have a 'Forum' meeting with your team, where you might stand up and express frustration or appreciation for something that happened earlier. Afterwards, you decide to eat at the solar kitchen where the food (mostly from the garden) was cooked using solar ovens and you sit down with other community members, maybe with one of the volunteers who helped with cooking. Later, you have a meeting with your work team to discuss the next steps, the needs, and worries present in the space, you will discuss your progress on your research process in that area of work. Some examples for different individuals could be: How can we make sure that the plants get enough water without taking too much from the retention lake (fieldnotes, 2024, conversation with someone working in the garden)? How can we communicate with the wild boars so that they don't destroy our efforts in our gardens (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024, conversations and tours of the community)? How can we find more funds while maintaining our autonomy and without trying to make profit to distance ourselves from a capitalist system (fieldnotes, 2024, Q&A with facilitator)? These are just a few examples, and of course some hours would be used to work in the day, whether outside or in the office, in one of the smaller constructions built with renewable materials. At the end of the day, your partner might pick up your kid, and if you still have energy after cooking dinner, you might meet up with one of your lovers in a 'love space' to share a moment of intimacy before going back to your caravan to sleep for the night and rest for the next day to come, witnessing on your way the beautiful stars above.

This example is completely invented, inspired by some personal experiences and by the realities that were observed during field research and of course it does not represent the typical day of most members of the community. However, it attempts to show how every aspect of their lives is infused with research questions around peacebuilding. It showcases how peace research can become daily practice, how being a peace worker can be understood from a different perspective, not as a job lasting some hours during the day, with colleagues you only see at work, before driving home using fuel, not saying hi to your neighbour you don't know and cooking with gas from a controversial origin, before planning your next trip to meet up with state officials. Again, this example is far from representing the reality of peace workers, it only intends to show how modern life has been compartmentalized into work and private life, making it easy to forget how all our actions and interactions are connected (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2022). Tamera's goal is to reconnect all the different parts of our lives, turning every person into a potential peace worker and every peace worker into a community member. This brings us to the next part: The Political Dimension of Peace.

5.3. The Political Dimension of Peace

While living differently, more sustainably and consciously creates change, how does it become a political act?

Political Theory according to Duhm (2007) involves the creation of a new field of information through daily actions in line with that field (p. 363). It stems from the idea that there is “one existence, one consciousness” that will be globally informed by new information entering the field, such as love and trust as an alternative to fear and violence (Duhm, 2007, p. 364). This approach is similar to a constructivist perspective, only that it is not only social relations that “*make or construct* people — *ourselves* — into the kind of beings that we are” as a society and as human beings but all the other types of relations that exist shape the reality as it is, whole and interconnected (Onuf, 2013, p. 4). The relations are not formed through language and social practice but through actions, prayers, inner reflections, sometimes they turn into personal encounters but sometimes they might be much more subtle. Another dimension brought by Dieter Duhm (2007) is the idea that the information is already available in each of us, “we have it deep in our ‘memory’” (p. 362). This memory would be both individual and collective, breaking the barriers between the concepts of individual memory and social, political and cultural memory from Assmann (2006) and proposing instead an entelechial cellular memory (Duhm, 2007, pp. 362, 364). In the interviews, while the idea of “one body, one consciousness” was brought up on the topic of cooperation between organisms, other codes came through (Interview 2, Pos. 44) to form the theme of the political dimension of peace.

- **Codes:** *Structural Nonviolence, Sacred Activism, Political Act, Defend the Sacred Alliance*

When asked about his understanding of peace, Participant 4 stated: “obviously, there is an understanding that peace is more than the absence of war” (Interview 4, Pos. 14). While in the past “peace” might have been often associated with the absence of war or conflict and in that sense of direct violence, Galtung’s idea of positive peace has been widely recognised for its progressive take (Galtung, 1969, p. 171; Standish et al., 2022, p. 7). According to him, positive peace describes the absence of structural violence, meaning the absence of direct violence and indirect violence which could be referred to as social injustice (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). While the concepts of negative peace and positive peace have been very useful to question our approach to peace-making, they still rely on peace based on the absence of something, whereas nonviolent action takes an action-based approach and aims at the dismantling of unjust and oppressive systems of power (Sharp 1973, p. 64). According to Sharp (1973) it seeks to actively

challenge and transform the systems that sustain oppression, making the need for violence obsolete (Sharp 1973, p. 64; Galtung, 1969, p. 183; fieldnotes, 2024). By actively choosing not to use the same weapons, by refusing to play by the opponent's rules, by actively persisting in solidary disobedience, nonviolent actionists deny the "basic human assistance and cooperation which any government or hierarchal system requires" (Sharp 1973, p. 64).

In that sense, members from both peace communities in Portugal and Colombia rely on methods of nonviolent action, whether it is by organizing pilgrimages for peace or by planting new trees on a land disputed by armed actors. Participant 4 talks of structural nonviolence as an end goal to their political nonviolent action (Interview 4, Pos. 16). He explains it in more detail by saying that the idea of structural nonviolence is to:

remove the root causes, economic root causes but also social and psychological root causes that result from thousands of years of patriarchal colonial 'power over' conditioning that have been so deeply ingrained that now we believe that many of these thoughts, impulses, the ways of behaviour and ideas about the world, seem to have become second nature in a way.

(Interview 4, Pos. 16)

According to his definition, this concept is highly political since it tries to address the root cause of conflicts and the systemic and institutionalized forms of violence that are embedded in social, political, and economic structures. Instead, it pushes in the direction of more inclusive political systems that prevent oppression and exploitation and promote justice and equality. According to Stephan and Chenoweth (2008), if nonviolent resistance succeeds, it has a higher chance than violent resistance to foster sustainable peace because it involves more diverse participation, attracts solidarity and legitimacy, and reduces the chances of backlash by inducing loyalty shifts (p. 9).

For Tamera's community members, the solution to more social justice and less eruption of violence is to create a system in which "humans and any life could develop freely its sensorial, spiritual, emotional and sexual capacities and [...] could openly express [their] needs and tend to them together, then they wouldn't be need for violence" (Interview 4, Pos. 16). Although this idea comes from William Reich, Dieter Duhm is often quoted for adapting it to this sentence "violence is the eruption of blocked life energies" (Interview 4, Pos. 16; Duhm, 2007, p. 247; Reich, 1970). This sentence and many other ideas described by Dieter Duhm are very influenced by Wilhelm Reich, a psychoanalyst who defends that the constant clash between instinctual demands for intimacy and an outer world which frustrates these demands lead

humans to create a character armour and fosters anger that ends up projected against minorities, often resulting in violence and oppression (Duhm, 2007, p. 247; Reich, 1970).

This line of thought is also followed when people in Tamera engage in activism, an important dimension of their political work (fieldnotes, 2024). Although they live in a remote place, it is important for them to stand for life and to organize support actions from Tamera but also to travel directly to places of conflict or to join certain protests to give strength and protection to people who similarly stand for peace (fieldnotes, 2024). This activism is meant to be nonviolent and to overcome the usual dynamics of 'Us vs. Them' often present in activism (Interview 4, Pos. 24). They call it 'Sacred Activism' to let us reconnect with the idea of the 'Sacred Matrix', a dimension in which all life is connected, and in which separation and killing or exclusion is disserving of the whole (Winiecki, 2018). This term is also used in other contexts or by other communities, but usually with a similar meaning. Participant 4 reaffirms how nonviolence has something to do with "with abandoning this mentality of us versus them or facility of defining political success as a form of defeating the other" (Interview 4, Pos. 24). He also says it is necessary "to overcome this worldview that is rooted in war and competition as a necessary mode of survival and success" (Interview 4, Pos. 24). Instead we should move "to a place where we need to address injustices and where life gets hurt, but we do it from a place that actually invites and speaks to the dignity of the of the one who is now executing a role of violence" (Interview 4, Pos. 24). This is connected to the belief that we can all play different roles of victims and perpetrators and that it is necessary in times of strong separation to see from a place of empathy what fears play out in the other that might be known to us as well (Interview 2, Pos. 88). This can be done in preparation before a support action, a protest, a pilgrimage, a trip to a war zone but also in daily life through inner reflection and 'Forum'.

One example of nonviolent and sacred activism was this protest for life in the context of bullfights in a city close to Tamera (fieldnotes, 2024). During the preparation for the activist action, the first step was to gain a deeper understanding and empathy for the life that is suffering in the situation but also for all the parties involved (fieldnotes, 2024). Volunteers and community members organised themselves to paint and write messages for life, to prepare to stand in compassion, not in opposition and to sing and pray close to the place where the fight took place (fieldnotes, 2024). Another group stayed in Tamera supporting them with prayers, songs and meditation to give them strength and protection (fieldnotes, 2024). Many other examples of sacred activism can be found in books written by community members such as *GRACE: Pilgrimage for a Future Without War* (Lichtenfels, 2007), online on their website

(TAMERA, 2020g), in videos on YouTube or also in a documentary (Schramm et al., 2025), where they repeatedly organize pilgrimages, prayers, join protests and stand with and for life.

Many of them have been involved directly with movements of resistance before joining Tamera, during its foundation and still nowadays as a community or individually (Interview 4, Pos. 87). For example, during the protests against the construction of a pipeline in Standing Rock many community leaders and activists joined forces in prayer and supportive actions, sparking a worldwide cooperation and network, now called the 'Defend the Sacred Alliance' (Interview 4, Pos. 37; Defend the Sacred Alliance, n.d.). This movement was created by meeting up several times in Tamera, in August 2017, 2018 and 2019 to discuss solutions towards system change and organize joint actions such as aerial art actions on the Odeceixe (2017) and Cova do Vapor (2018) beaches displaying messages to stop plans for offshore oil drilling in Portugal – a campaign that proved successful (TAMERA, 2020g). As mentioned, spirituality often plays an important role in these actions, through prayers and songs, a dimension that is generally very present in Tamera and described in further detail in this next part.

5.4. Spiritual Foundations of Peace

This section explores the spiritual dimension of Peace in Tamera, by first showing with which practices it may be connected and then from there explaining the philosophy around it. While spirituality was already mentioned as a source of inspiration for the creation of the peace community but also as a part of a holistic approach towards peace and community, it has not been addressed on its own yet. However, the following codes show that there were repetitive references to spirituality both in the context of Tamera and the peace community of San José de Apartadó.

- **Codes:** *Sacred Matrix, Spirituality, Stone Circle, Geistig*

In practice, it is easy to find visual portrayals of spiritual representations around the land, in the form of statues or small constructions in stone standing for certain elements or serving as energetical portals to certain channels. This interconnected system of 'Power Places' is called 'Marisis' and gives community members and guests the chance to reconnect with the sacred in nature through meditation and 'Power Walks'. The 'Stone Circle' is part of this overarching emerging natural temple and all together they play an important role in the daily life of the inhabitants, offering natural spaces for prayer, rituals, and connection. These spaces find their origin in much older monuments, such as the 7000-year-old Almendres Stone Circle, near Évora, who according to Sabine Lichtenfels, was built by a tribal culture and hosts timeless information from a pre-patriarchal matrix of nonviolence (Interview 2, Pos. 56). She tells the

story behind this discovery in her book *Temple of Love: Journey into the Age of Sensual Fulfilment* (Lichtenfels, 2011), in which she also retraces each step of the construction of the 'Stone Circle' in Tamera. People in Tamera go to the 'Stone Circle' on their own sometimes, with a specific intention or question, to reflect on something in their life, connect with a different dimension or a special quality, often by coming in direct contact with a stone and trying to perceive what answers might come (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). However, they also meet there as a group, to celebrate a birth, mourn a death, make a common prayer for peace or for example, for those who want, there is always the possibility to join on Monday mornings for the 'Ring of Power', a weekly meditation at sunrise that allows sacred activists and peace workers from Tamera and from around the world to connect in shared intention and prayer (Interview 2, Pos. 30; fieldnotes, 2023, 2024; TAMERA, 2020h). As a visitor, it is also possible to access these spaces after receiving an introduction and many guests share their own experiences of connectedness and guidance after meditating close to a stone and in different 'Power Places' (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). Such places can be, for example, the 'Oracle Spring', 'Terra Deva', and the 'Yin Place'. Another opportunity to connect body and spirit, is to attend the 'God's Point', usually held in German but with possible simultaneous translation, twice or three times a week, early in the morning. There, usually one elder of the community together with another member exchange their thoughts with questions and answers around a pre-defined text, written by the community or by other inspiring thinkers, allowing deeper understanding and contemplation on the presented ideas (fieldnotes, 2024). Generally, the topics discussed relate to the connectedness of the universe and the general idea of the 'Sacred Matrix'. On Sunday mornings, during the 'Matinee', there is also the opportunity to gather and reflect on these topics or to attend guest talks from leaders of other communities, activities or special events (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). During this ceremony, people often sing, listen and take notes, mostly sitting on wooden chairs and benches around the stage, surrounded by a big aula structure built with renewable materials (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024).

Overall, Tamera promotes a philosophy of connectedness, between the inner and the outer, all living beings, material and spiritual, but there is not one specific god or one type of religion that is chosen over others. For example, Participant 2 says that to connect with spirituality "some need cathedrals, some need a river, some need a forest, whatever" (Interview 2, Pos. 32). This is important because it shows that all these practices and rituals are meant to be inclusive and as a matter of fact, ceremonies from many different cultures were held in the 'Stone Circle' and guests from many different beliefs and cultures were invited to collaborate or to present their projects during the 'Matinee'. Participant 1 also shared how spirituality was

not of much personal interest before coming to Tamera, which was completely accepted, but that at some point, it made sense for her to see it as a part of the holistic picture of peace (Interview 1, Pos. 133). In Tamera, they often use the German word 'Geistig' to refer to the field of spirituality, mixing mental and spiritual, underlining the interconnectedness of knowledge and belief. Participant 2 describes this term as training consciousness, "waking up" by "going through your shadows and [...] realising [...] where you were [thanks to] cellular wisdom or knowledge", really getting to know about oneself and others, knowledge and truth (Interview 2, Pos. 70). This refers again to the overarching vision of the 'Sacred Matrix' and to the 'Healing Biotope', which provide a basis for the way they picture spirituality. Within that perception people within the community might follow specific gods or religions or be agnostic (Interview 1, Pos. 27, 29). One additional dimension of spirituality is described as 'Eros', a 'Life Energy' of sexuality and reproduction that can be found in nature and all around, in the blossoming of a rose, in the birth of a piglet, in the purring sounds of a cat (fieldnotes, 2024). This energy can be found in 'Power Places', in the details of surrounding nature but also in human connection, the main theme of the next section (fieldnotes, 2024).

5.5. Relational Peace: Trust, Love, and Sexuality

Love and sexuality play a central role in Tamera's innovative approach to peace, it could be the first element many people will mention when talking about this community and few other places share their vision to such a radical perspective of liberation from fear in relationships, intimacy, and community. For this section the main codes that emerged showed a general intention to challenge societal norms by creating more authentic ways of connecting and by building deep mutual trust through honest communication and expression of needs, desires, impulses, and feelings, using 'Forum' and other means that foster social transparency.

- **Codes:** *Free Love & Sexuality, Trust, Expression, Forum, Inner Conflicts*

In Tamera love and sexuality are part of the political realm, central to questioning the systems of domination in place and central to a new culture based on system change (fieldnotes, 2024). One community member explained during a talk on love and sexuality how for 10 000 years humans have lived in a paradigm of 'power over' (fieldnotes, 2024). Power over women's bodies, nature, and queerness has been a tool of domination over and over again and has been normalised (fieldnotes, 2024). For example, rape was and is still used as tactic of war and rivers are shaped into straight lines (fieldnotes, 2024). 'Power over' functions because it is internalized, for example, in the form of self-doubt, feeling "too much" or "not enough", or both at the same time (fieldnotes, 2024). This comes from internalized competition, from a

system of either or, ownership and domination (fieldnotes, 2024). She quotes Resmaa Menakem who said in a podcast and other sources:

Many times trauma in a person decontextualized over time can look like personality. Trauma in a family decontextualized over time can look like family traits, trauma decontextualized in a people over time can look like culture and it takes time to slow it down so you can begin to discern what's what.

(Tippett, 2020; fieldnotes, 2024).

This quote does not necessarily represent the community's general approach to trauma's role in love and sexuality, but it goes together with their common goal to question the system and understand its origin by trying to create a culture in which we accept the erotic nature of our being and foster a paradigm of 'power to' rather than 'power over' that gave birth to a culture capitalizing on hyper-sexualization, over-stimulation, and under-nourishment (in the sense of quality nutrients or time and affection) (fieldnotes, 2024).

What unites community members is their constant commitment to revealing inner truth, through 'Forum' or social transparency, with the overarching goal of "building a culture in which lying has no more evolutionary and social advantage" (fieldnotes, 2024). To build this culture, infrastructures and tools were put in place to foster trust and space for truth, love and sexuality, such as the 'Forum', 'love spaces', 'the Bodega love temple', 'love messengers' (fieldnotes, 2024). All these elements contribute to a culture of 'free love' that follows the principles of a love free of fear according to which it should be possible to follow and own our impulses of connection without fear of repression. Otherwise, if the admiration for the brother of my lover, the attraction for another person than my partner, the wish to cuddle with several people cannot be expressed without fear of repercussion, then this energy will be blocked, feeding resentment towards the surrounding system and eventually push towards anger and violence. Again, it is connected to the sentence: "violence is the eruption of blocked life energies" (Duhm, 2007, p. 140). In that sense, expressing the impulses and desires around love and sexuality freely becomes a "political act" towards a different system that liberates people rather than oppressing them. Whether these desires, impulses and wishes should be followed or not, is not the most important, they can of course, if they are shared by the involved persons, but they do not need to be fulfilled. This becomes very clear when using 'Forum'. As one notices that, only through the authentic expression of the desire in a space of trust within a community, already its urgency, or the shame and fear connected to it transforms into knowledge about oneself and about humans in general. At this stage, it becomes necessary to introduce the tool of 'Forum' before describing its benefits for the community any further.

'Forum' as a tool for expression has been mentioned throughout the thesis but at this stage it might still be a fuzzy conceptual practice for the reader. It is impossible to gain full understanding about 'Forum' by only reading about it because it is fundamentally experimental, performed and shared. However, by integrating my own subjective understanding of it and blending in notes from my field trips I hope to shine some light on this practice. Many people in Tamera explain how this tool has been central to community building and conflict resolution, and that the community might not have survived without. For me, the meaning truly sunk in when we all sat in a circle of about 30 people, leaving the middle as an open space, as a facilitator started to explain:

The biggest fear we have is to reveal oneself to others and the 'Forum's objective is to create a space in which it is clear that what is brought in the middle is part of the whole. The idea is to go in the middle (literally, stand and step into the middle) to reveal something on a 'World Stage' as a 'matter of humankind'. This helps to create a new culture with a new form of consciousness. This goes hand in hand with the idea of a 'Sacred Matrix' in which everything is connected, forming one consciousness. Thus, by choosing to take a step in with trust, it in turn creates trust in a field that invites de-identification, self-acceptance and a sphere of common acceptance and healing. 'Forum' is about contemplation of private matters that are in fact world matters. One can step in the middle and in a form of prayer, of speaking to the universe, of opening oneself to the spiritual, share from within what is vibrating, whether it is anger, excitement, sadness, jealousy or love. Every feeling, every emotion is connected to a primal being who eats, drinks, moves, senses and shares intimacy and deserves to be seen. From there starts a cycle of prayer, expression and contemplation, intertwined and never ending.

(Paraphrase, fieldnotes, 2024)

In practice, one person from the community with many years of experience leads the 'Forum', ready to step in, if necessary, to nudge gently in one direction, to ask deepening questions. Once the 'middle is open' one person spontaneously steps in, following an impulse, expresses an inner truth, with words, or only movement, maybe just sounds or a song, anything that flows out from within. It is a difficult exercise, yet the group holds the space together to create and express, silently listening and also feeling seen in what is revealed. When a performance reaches a point of transformation, or when it is straight to the point, it generally reaches an end. If wished for, relevant 'mirrors' are invited to step in and witness what they have seen. For example, someone being brave to show darkness, someone who has a thirst for

learning, someone who is scared of failing, someone who is trying, someone who is torn, and so on. Whether for a mirror or a performance it is strongly advised to:

- Look into the space, not directly at the person you mention, use he/she/they to talk about them to avoid shifting the attention to them or them feeling overwhelmed by the one-sided interaction
- Avoid giving your own judgment or solution for the person's inner issues
- Keep it confidential/anonymous within the group of people who attended
- Wait around 24h before discussing about someone's performance to let it sink and give them a chance to find their own answers

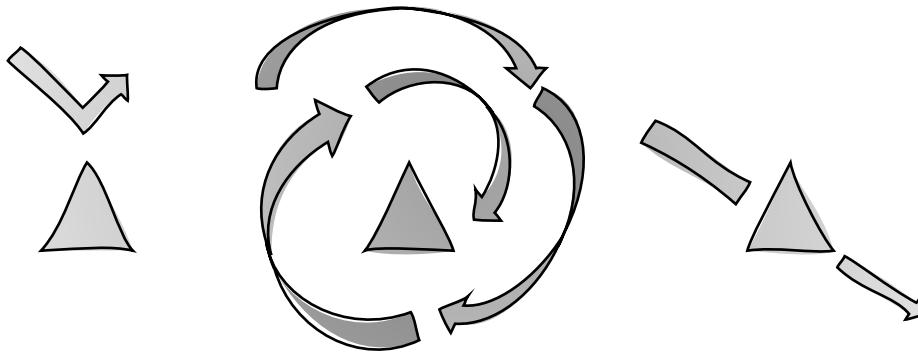
A few 'mirrors' will step in, everyone claps after a person steps out and eventually the 'middle will be free' again. To cite some examples, one can express: a fear of abandonment, an invitation to explore intimacy, an attraction to someone else, the mourning of a loss, the anger that comes with frustration, a deep gratitude for nature, love for an animal, etc. There is no limit to the subjects of self-revelation, whether it is connected to the past, to a facilitator or to a person in the group, authentic expression serves the whole. As 'Forum' helps to train self-revelation, authentic expression, it is at the core of Tamera's intention to foster healing by revealing inner issues and conflicts in the community.

5.6. Peace through Healing and Transformation

This section explores how individual and collective healing processes are essential to Tamera's peace practices. Although, many practices of healing were already described in previous sections, such as the vision of 'Healing Biotopes', the tool of expression 'Forum', the focus on healing the outer from the inner and the importance of letting 'Life Energy' flow freely, one topic came up in Interview 1 that is worth mentioning: the practice of mourning. Moreover, although not directly mentioned in the interview, trauma was recurrently referred to in fieldnotes, around the topic of healing, life in community, and love and sexuality.

- **Codes:** *Healing Biotope, Forum, Inner and Outer, Life Energy, Trauma, Mourning*

The idea of 'Healing Biotopes' is to create a space of regenerative healing for all species, for the water and the soil. At the human level, an elder from the community argued during field observation that loving ground has been lost to historical and personal trauma, and that community helps to discover trauma and hopefully to heal it (fieldnotes, 2024). Often trauma is just ignored, or one spirals around it without getting out, resulting in war or conflict, while what is needed is to "go through the trauma without re-identifying" (fieldnotes, 2024).

Figure 1

Note. This figure illustrates different reactions to trauma, ignoring or rejecting, spiralling around it, and going through it.

Life in community together with ‘Forum’ helps to perform the trauma rather than identifying with it, giving space to an inner witness, allowing to approach it with curiosity rather than fear. The next step is to “replace it with positive experience, letting go of our masks, understanding its origins, recognising trauma reactions, and finally accepting it” (fieldnotes, 2024). Taking time to reach this acceptance is essential to healing and can also be seen as mourning the state of something that will undergo a transformation.

This is how Participant 1 describes it, when talking about one of her focus research areas, the practice of mourning. While often associated with the passing of a person, she insists that it is present in all aspects of life and transformation, it is about feeling the loss of what no longer exists (Interview 1, Pos. 85, 88). She explains how coming from a “culture that is very afraid of death and loss, and of less, and all that emptiness” there is a tendency “to get over that, to jump between the moment you feel the loss and the moment you move on to something else” (Interview 1, Pos. 95). This jump between these two states has been shortened to less than a second at times, stopping the energetic and spiritual organic process and “cutting off part of yourself and a part of the cycle of life which is essential” (Interview 1, Pos. 95). This, in turn creates problems, since the “rebirth that's going to come from a process that hasn't been mourned will inevitably be truncated, will be aborted, won't have the energy it needs, will even go in the wrong direction” (Interview 1, Pos. 95). Thus, her goal is to integrate mourning practices, giving time to fully feel the loss before moving on, whether it is the “loss of a relationship, the loss of a physical person, the loss of a belief” or the “loss of biodiversity, of self-esteem” (Interview 1, Pos. 93, 95). With that in mind, she looks for techniques and cultural rituals that allow mourning on a deeper level, on a day-to-day basis, in meetings, during 3-day rituals and within different spaces, so that the rebirth resulting from this process turns into a

healing transformation. She also recognises that Tamera as a whole is currently in a mourning process since it is going through a deep generational transformation (Interview 1, Pos. 97). This poses the question of how the community will tackle this process, if its vision will stay the same once the leadership fully shifts to the new generation, if it will survive or adapt in a different way or continue to evolve as it has done in the past when facing challenges. Will it be able to keep such a holistic approach to peace? Will it still support the idea of 'Healing Biotope 1' as a model settlement for future intentional communities?

5.7. Gaian-Peace: Living in Harmony with Nature and its Beings

Gaian-Peace is a term I use to refer to the concept of peace based on the cooperation with the earth, often called 'Gaia' in Tamera, the land, the water, the plants and all their inhabitants, from insects to bigger animals. In the documentary *Water is Life: Ripples of Regeneration* they explain that the problem is that the current worldview looks at the earth like a machine, and a machine needs fuel, but if there is no fuel, humans are the ones who need to fix the problem and that puts us in the position of the manufacturer (Schramm et al., 2025). That creates a system based on domination in which the earth becomes an object rather than a living being. Whereas if we look at the earth as a living being we would understand that water is like blood, key for its survival and understanding its movement is the condition for regenerative solutions to climate change (Schramm et al., 2025). Ideally, we would ask the land what it wants, because it already knows what it needs to heal and regenerate (Interview 2, Pos. 44). During the interviews there were several mentions of listening to the land, cooperating and communicating with animals, and the following codes emerged as a result.

- **Codes:** *Cooperation with All Beings, Sacred Matrix, Holistic, Healing Biotope*

Overall, people in Tamera try to fully integrate the earth and its living beings within their approach to peace, from water regeneration based on water retention and a strategy of "slow, spread, and sink", to land regeneration thanks to the water and plants (forest trees, fruit trees and shrubs), seed storing and more sustainable sources of energy, such as solar energy used to cook and heat water (Schramm et al., 2025). This land and water regeneration also attracts many species of insects and animals and provides a living atmosphere for them, such as boars, badgers, foxes, genets, forest owls and many other birds (TAMERA, 2020i). To facilitate cooperation, they have tried to put direct communication in place, experimenting with "contracts" with rats and boars for them to respect boundaries to certain places while providing special spaces for them such as the 'Rat Temple' or a 'Power Place' for boars in the 'Terra Deva' where very few humans go to let the wildlife develop freely (fieldnotes, 2024). One participant also shares her research with chickens and her attempt to let them return to their

wild nature, sharing that she believes that “we can cooperate and speak with an animal, so to say, or listen to [what we call] the deva of a plant or the spirit of a plant or an animal because they all have this, they all carry consciousness” (Interview 2, Pos. 44). She confirms that Tamera shares the worldview that she carries (Interview 2, Pos. 44). According to her, it is urgent to step out of mass industry and question the domestication of animals, because their immense suffering is connected to the ongoing wars (Interview 2, Pos. 44). Quoting her:

We sometimes say: as long as there are slaughterhouses there will be battlefields. You know, the way we treat animals, it's a very thin line to the human being. If we treat them that badly, we are very close to treating humans the same way.

(Interview 2, Pos. 44)

Tamera's community members share a similar understanding when it comes to the way they perceive water as a sacred source of life, change and healing. Illustrating this perspective, they often sing a song written by Mafalda Carinha with the following lyrics “A água é um ser, Tem alma, Tem memoria, Tem saber” which translates into “Water is a being, It has soul, It has memory, It has wisdom” (Boudica, 2024). In their documentary they encourage every individual to give importance to water and to think of ways to slow it down in cities, gardens, balconies, spreading it over the land and letting it sink into deeper layers of the earth. That way, the water can nourish the plants above the soil that are storing and letting the water evaporate again, through a process of transpiration, continuing the cycle of water (Schramm et al., 2025). By offering seminars and providing educational media, Tamera hopes to push for local and global regenerative actions.

5.8. Peace as an Ongoing Process of Research and Inquiry

Tamera's intention to share knowledge comes from long years of self-inquiry, experimentation, and cooperation with other community leaders and environment specialists. For them, peace research is a process of constant learning and questioning, present in every aspect of life. All the participants showed interest in specific areas of research and shared their introspective thoughts as well as their research questions.

- **Codes:** *Research Questions, Introspection*

I want to list the main questions that came up in the interviews because they can serve as an inspiration for other communities, individuals, and institutions, and they reflect their approach to research and introspection. They summarize the previous sections around the different dimensions of holistic peace but also introduce the next chapters on critical reflection around colonialism and their relationship to the world and specifically to the peace community of San José de Apartadó.

- “What can I do for peace?” (Interview 1, Pos. 53)
- “What does peace research mean? On all levels, between people, between human beings and animals and plants, the earth, everything, the universe, who are we and do we know more than we think?” (Interview 3, Pos. 14)
- “Who are we? Why are we like this at the moment? Who could, can we be? [...] [W]hat do we have to let go of or what do we have to learn? What is the human being, where does it come from?” (Interview 3, Pos. 49)
- “How can men and women come together?” (Interview 3, Pos. 12)
- “Can we take [chickens’ predators] in as cooperation partners?” (Interview 2, Pos. 44)
- “Community needs trust, how are you doing this, being transparent and what does this really mean?” (Interview 3, Pos. 71)
- “How do you manage your strength or your energy?” (Interview 1, Pos. 13)
- “What are the cultural rituals that we propose to ourselves? What do we create for ourselves to make room for this energy of mourning when it emerges?” (Interview 1, Pos. 85)
- “How does coloniality show up among us? In which ways might we be repeating it?” (Interview 4, Pos. 26)
- “[A]lso for myself, how do I live, what systems of violence are my consumer choices based on, and [concerning] coalition building, how do we support each other internationally?” (Interview 4, Pos. 87)
- “To feel and see these people, why are they living under these conditions? Why do they search for peace in a situation in which one can never really think about what peace would really look like [or] when it seems like [it’s] one of the craziest things to think about peace when you are there?” (Interview 3, Pos. 61)
- “How to react with compassion instead of anger, how to choose life instead of revenge when you lose persons that are most near to you?” (Interview 2, Pos. 82)

In general, there is a lot of reflection on how system change can look like for a community but also for each person individually while recognising their own privileges and position within the old system. This is the focus of the next chapter, looking critically at their research but also analysing how they approach their own potential biases.

A very simplified summary of Tamera’s definition of peace, according to these emerging themes could be: An ongoing holistic process of research and (self-)inquiry, practiced by a group of people living together who want to create a new system rooted in the true cooperation

of all life spheres, creating healing and trust between humans and the spiritual dimension, nature, and other living beings but also among humans and within oneself by striving to accept and understand our history, our needs, and our impulses by creating the space to express them. This perspective is relevant for environmental studies, peacebuilding, but also community building and even for the field of psychology in terms of trauma healing and authentic expression.

6. Critical Reflections on Tamera's Research

Tamera's research is very innovative and holistic on more than one level, yet at the same time it attempts to create a new system, and most systems have gaps or limitations. It can be because they still include things from an old system that haven't been completely deconstructed yet, for example, aspects of sexuality and gender, Global South and Global North, white privilege, colonialism or maybe through their context and history some systems might include more perspectives from certain people than others, work only in similar contexts and conditions, or they could be limited by their very structure, the way they function, and what they depend on. These potential gaps are all hypothetical and through the analysis of the fieldnotes and the interviews, I attempt to understand the members' perspectives on their own personal research gaps and limitations, but also the ones faced as a community and I ask how these gaps are addressed, reflected upon, and taken into account. Critical engagement is necessary with any data because it helps to verify or invalidate assumptions, it helps to deepen the research and offers the opportunity to fill in those gaps and counter certain limitations if they are deemed relevant (Aull Davies, 2012, p. 4).

6.1. Privilege and Systemic Change

The first gap addressed is the topic of privilege and how it affects Tamera's vision of peace. Participants were asked if they see research gaps in their understanding of peace, notably on themes around diversity or colonialism, but usually leaving the question open to see which topics come up first. Two persons acknowledged very early on the position they have in society, together with their social background and dimensions of privilege they profit from and showed deep awareness of the impacts of that privilege on their upbringing and perception of peace. The two other persons also shared sensitivity towards their "Whiteness" but for one person it was less reflected upon, maybe also because the question around potential biases was not clear enough. In general, the people from the younger generation showed more reflexivity towards privilege than the ones from the older generation, but 4 interviews are not representative enough to draw conclusions for the whole community. Nevertheless, the participants argue that

the community generally recognises the privilege of its members as a predominantly Western, white, middle-class group (Interview 4, Pos. 26). These are also most of the codes that came through during data analysis.

- **Codes:** *Privilege, Western, White, Middle-class, Global North, Cis-hetero, Man, Diversity*

Overall, most of the participants and the people met in Tamera showed strong awareness of their own privilege. In fact, three of the four participants directly cited their position of privilege by mentioning that they recognise their “Whiteness”, “Middle-class” background, located in the “Global North”, with one mention of “Man” and “somewhat Cis-Hetero” (Interview 1, Pos. 11; Interview 3, pos. 145; Interview 4, Pos. 37). Although it is not an approach taken by every facilitator, I have been accompanied by people who repeatedly reflected on their own position of privilege during seminars and talks (fieldnotes, 2024). In one case, a facilitator took the time to explain how the songs that they sing from other places are gifts from members of these communities and that they are aware of the risk of appropriating the legacy of other cultures (fieldnotes, 2024). This awareness around privilege is progressing, and community members have also shared that it was not as present in the beginning (fieldnotes, 2024). Participant 4 recognises how Tamera’s objectives to create “living environments, economic, social, ecological structures that incentivize the growth of trust” is also the result of privilege because they are not subjected to threats and violence from armed groups, subsidized by multinational corporations and governments, but that they have the freedom and peace on an outer level that allows them to do this work among themselves (Interview 4, Pos. 22). This quote highlights the socio-cultural context they live in and informs their answers on the topics of peacebuilding, community building and privilege.

Participant 4 says that within patriarchal colonial ‘power over’ conditioning there is still the belief that humans need to compete over the same land and that the security of one group will create insecurity for the other group’s needs, to the point where they feel genocidal erasure might be necessary (Interview 4, Pos. 18). This as a result creates the need to control one another to feel safe, however, according to him, if we (individuals and state) let go of that control “we will actually have a state, a Humane Society in which people experience that it is not just morally superior but also practically better to collaborate with one another” (Interview 4, Pos. 16, 18). Hence, he defends a need for collaboration towards system change, and even further than that, the need for the Global North to step aside, take responsibility for ongoing capitalist inputs, recognise that the change will come from the leadership of resisting communities in the Global South, and invest into studying these examples of living to truly

understand the depths of their contexts and cultural relational underpinnings both epistemologically and culturally (Interview 4, Pos. 45).

Despite this growing awareness many guests still criticize how the prices to go there still maintain a certain access to privileged people, and the presence of mostly Western middle and upper-class people also attracts more people sharing similar traits and background (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). Although they have a solidarity fund for people who cannot afford such a price, this might still perpetuate a certain system of inequality (TAMERA, 2020j). They also have a sliding scale based on trust encouraging people who have more means to invest a bit more while others can choose to pay the minimum price (TAMERA, 2020k). This however still does not solve the lack of diversity in the community and cannot bridge the blind spots created by privilege in terms of understanding the systemic oppression that they criticize. How is it possible to tackle a system of oppression and domination, and create one of trust and support when the people at its origin have mostly profited from colonial legacy?

6.2. Colonial Legacies in Peacebuilding

Arguably, colonial legacy has not only impacted “the Indigenous peoples of the countries that were once colonized” but it also “persists in the countries that instigated the process of colonization and [...] it now forms part of a world-view that systematically favours those who are White, wealthy, cis-male, heterosexual and able-bodied” (Denscombe, 2024, p. 2). This worldview has a direct impact on minorities, also in Western countries, which also explains the intersectionality of the decolonial approach, showing overlapping interests between movements such as Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+, feminist and Marxist groups (Denscombe, 2024, p. 2). Nevertheless, in his paper, similar to a manifesto, “Discourse on Colonialism”, Césaire et al. (2000) show how under the justification of civilization, colonialism and the tools and complacency that allowed it, in fact, only ever accelerated the decivilization of the “Western” world (p. 35). It is clear here that under “Western” he includes the countries that held discourses trying to justify and explain the barbarism undertaken in their name. This mainly designates Europe, but also the United States that may have easily caught up to Europe’s actions or surpassed them in terms of violence. In his discourse, “Western” has no connection to “developed countries” but rather countries that have digressed, poisoned by capitalism, who now find themselves accountable for their own difficulties, that they tried and still continue to export and externalize (Césaire et al., 2000, p. 36; Interview 4, Pos. 83). He particularly sheds light on the thinkers, academics and politicians of the time, quoting them on their dehumanizing discourses and holds the crowds as accountable for their complacency, their silent participation in a system that normalized the exclusion of certain people over others

(Césaire et al., 2000). The codes that came up varied between the interviews, but they showed an overall recognition of the impacts of colonial legacy.

- **Codes:** *Colonial, Appropriation, Saviourism, Tokenization, Global North, Exceptionalism*

Participant 1 explains that the origin of this colonisation might be the result of a suppressed “fear of not having enough” that led Europeans to look for more resources in other countries. She shares that questioning these European roots and realising the origins and impacts of ancestors’ actions can be very painful (Interview 1, Pos. 11). Nevertheless, according to Participant 4 everyone in Tamera has gone through such a process and when asked about coloniality they

will agree that the wealth of the Western world is based on historical and ongoing colonial theft and that the key for the global collective liberation is in a global system change that frees the Global South from the shackles of ongoing economic exploitation and that enables decentralised autonomy of communities.

(Interview 4, Pos. 26)

This awareness, however, was not always present and Participant 1 shares how during a trip to Colombia in 2013 she had this realization, of feeling like she was reproducing a kind of colonisation, on a very subtle (but still present) level and she mentions that when she brought it up once back in Tamera there was no resonance (Interview 1, Pos. 55). This impression goes hand in hand with her perception of Tamera acting a bit like a well-intentioned NGO in the beginning, although never to the point of imposing (Interview 1, Pos. 33). However, she describes a new trend in the last 5 years towards reappropriating their colonialist past and white supremacist baggage, enabling them to see how they can relate to others “in a way that's no longer based on the schemas: dominant/dominated, superior/inferior, having/not having, knowing/not knowing, that are in us and that we don't even realise anymore” (Interview 1, Pos. 33). While reflection on these colonial aspects was not the focus until 5 years ago, because it laid elsewhere for the first 40 years of the group, mainly on freeing many other things, it has now become an important subject for the “new generation” (Interview 1, Pos. 47).

The younger generation seems to generally take a more intersectional approach when analysing systems of oppression, in a way that is more informed by critical theory and is more critical of white modernity and coloniality (Interview 4, Pos. 35). According to Participant 4, there might be “critique within the community” pointing towards “a bit of a saviourism trope” behind the motivations of going for example to Latin America (Interview 4, Pos. 35). The idea of white saviourism or white saviour complex is present in decolonial studies and “refers to a

white person who engages in actions to help non-white people, that are self-serving rather than doing good for the community in which they are attempting to assist” (Anny, 2021, p. 46). But it also refers to an “overarching structure in the field of international development”, representing “simultaneously a state of mind and a concrete unequal power structure between the Global North and the Global South” (Kanakulya et al., 2023, p. 4).

While these definitions paint a strong picture of self-interested actions, there might be a “nuance in this question of saviourism”, maybe a mix sometimes between real collaborative support and left-over conditioning impacting people’s actions (Interview 4, Pos. 43). Participant 4 shares how these reflections can evolve and still come in contradiction over time:

Coming back to what I said before, with all of my work and recognising my social location as a white, cisgendered predominantly heterosexual, middle-class guy from the Global North: there was this realisation I guess like five years ago of me accepting OK, race has played a significant part in my way through life. [But still there was the tendency of creating the] exceptional self-image of a good white person working for this organisation that is kind of bringing all the good into the world [but over time I realised] that this exceptionalism leads to an identification with an image of white goodness, that is still kind of centring me as a white person, as the primary agent of transformation and I think in that sense, I could see kind of coloniality repeating where I'm not quite on an eye level. Even though I would also say that when I compare, I don't know how meaningful that is because again it kind of comes into this exceptionalism thing, [still] when I look at kind of mainstream NGOs, [at] how they would collaborate with communities in the Global South, [for Tamera] there has been a much more collaborative partnership approach with this community on different levels of collaboration in terms of designing programmes together but also in terms of intellectual range and all of this. And still, I would say that I want to speak for myself. I think others can [speak for] themselves, but I could recognise where this then sometimes also leads to tokenization. Like wanting to [use] the images and even the partnerships with activists from the Global South, indigenous activists as a way of embellishing my own self-image.

(Interview 4, Pos. 43)

In this discourse, one can observe a constant back and forth between questioning and justifying individual and collective actions, a constant negotiation between realities that shows reflexivity on the topic of colonial legacies in peacebuilding (Interview 4, Pos. 43). There is this very interesting contrast between criticizing potential risk of saviourism, exceptionalism,

and tokenisation while also perceiving Tamera as “one of the most political, say intentional communities” in terms of decolonial thinking, much more collaborative in its initiatives than mainstream NGOs (Interview 4, Pos. 26, 43). He also mentions reflecting upon this past image of a ‘good white person bringing all the good in the world’, that clearly resembles colonial justifications, a white supremacy-oriented thinking that Participant 1 underlined by sharing that she was getting social recognition for her work in Colombia and even before although she felt like she was only “putting band-aids on wounds” (Interview 1, Pos. 53). While Participant 1 also recognises the impact of colonial legacies and patriarchal conditioning over her way of thinking in terms of superior/inferior paradigms (Interview 1, Pos. 115) and identifies dynamics implying saviourism in past behaviours or in the cooperation with other communities (notably with San José de Apartadó), Participant 2 showed less direct awareness on the topic, while Participant 3 thought a lot about it but came to different conclusions. Thus, it is not possible to generalize how community members in Tamera approach this topic, but it is still interesting to look at some of their valuable individual voices.

6.3. Responsibilities of Peacebuilding

Which responsibilities come with advocating systemic change? How does Tamera take responsibility? This section is about the concrete actions that can be taken individually and collectively to take responsibility for colonial legacies when engaging in peacebuilding but also generally when reflecting on colonial past.

- **Codes:** *Responsibility, Consumer Choices, Building Coalitions, Visibility, Solidarity*

Rather than thinking “it is so crucial that we support them and that they need our help” and “that the revolution depends on white people standing up in mass and awakening and rallying to their government, it is more to step aside, for us to take responsibility for the ongoing colonial inputs that we’re having and pulling the plug” because “if we don’t as white people now [...] go all the way into understanding the cultural relational underpinnings, we again run the risk of wanting to appropriate elements, put them into our cultural box and or use them to upgrade the House of modernity.” (Interview 4, Pos. 45)

Participant 4 shares that in order to take individual and collective responsibility for colonial legacy, people with this background need to shift and question their way of thinking, learn from other cultures and existing systems of resistance in the Global South, take accountability for their own actions such as their consumer choices and look at how these might align with collective systemic goals, but also boycott trade arrangements made with Western interests in mind that affect peoples’ lives in the Global South (Interview 4, Pos. 87). Moreover, they need to collectively find ways to build coalitions to create a network of international multilateral

support, act in solidarity and give visibility to struggles of people living in high intensity struggles (Interview 4, Pos. 87). According to him, it is important to recognise that choosing to act non-violently is a chance and that persons living in a low intensity struggle “don't have the right to make any kind of moral recommendations, to oppress people for how they should seek their liberation” but that they have the responsibility to do everything possible “to increase the likelihood for them to actually be able to act non-violently” (Interview 4, Pos. 87). After all, making the choice to act non-violently “might get you killed in other parts of the world with no witness to tell the story” (Interview 4, Pos. 87).

This raises the following question: Are community members in Tamera aware of this chance? And if yes, do they act accordingly, meaning educating themselves, questioning their consumer choices, showing solidarity, building coalitions, and giving visibility? From my field research, I would say that the short answer is ‘yes’. Overall, the community members chose a simple lifestyle, living with relatively little things, mostly in caravans, often vegan, trying to make conscious choices concerning what they consume whether it is food or electricity (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024; Interview 3, Pos. 18). Of course, there are exceptions, for example, some people eat meat, they still use cars or even airplanes to travel to other countries. This can be criticized as it contradicts with some of the values they preach and the vision they pursue of cooperation with nature, but at the same time it might be a good sign that people can still make individual choices and not abide by common rules, each approaching system change from their own perspectives. In the end it is about stepping out from capitalism and patriarchy, meaning mass industry, paradigms of domination and exploitation. From that angle, my observations of their daily lives, behaviours and rituals corroborated this intention (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024). During gatherings of community leaders in Tamera, global networks such as the ‘The Global Campus network’ and ‘Defend the Sacred Alliance’ came to life to foster on the one hand educational centres for autonomous, decentralised communities of trust, and on the other hand cooperation between community leaders and peace activists for common actions towards system change (TAMERA, 2020l; TAMERA, 2020m). They also regularly participate and create campaigns to give visibility to struggles, to stand in solidarity with life, encouraging ceasefire in prayers, dances, pilgrimages, art or other means of expression (fieldnotes, 2023, 2024; TAMERA 2020m). If anything, education in the sense of reading is one dimension that I could not verify, while I know there is a strong focus on reading in general and self-education, I do not know how many members choose to inform themselves on decolonial theory and racial justice. Nevertheless, by questioning their fears and deconstructing past traumas and repressed needs through authentic expression, they might also uncover some aspects of exceptionalism,

saviourism or tokenization. Whether this effort is sufficient or not, would probably best be answered by people that tend to be subjected to these types of behaviours and thinking. However, I would suspect that it is practically never enough, since it takes a long time, sometimes generations to deconstruct such deep conditioning. Nevertheless, based on the collected data, Tamera seems to go in that direction, recognising and learning about the risks of exceptionalism, saviourism or tokenization.

6.4. Accountability and Power Dynamics

This section focuses on how Tamera shows accountability with their own structures of power, within the dynamics of their relationships with other communities or with individuals from Global South countries. The codes that shaped these themes are the following:

- **Codes:** *Initiative, Accountability, Assumptions*

One example of how Tamera addresses internal power structures and legacies of colonial past, is the creation of a study group called 'Racial Justice Study Group' meeting weekly for two hours since 5 years to deconstruct inner patterns and social dynamics still present in the community that still support an oppressive system (Interview 1, Pos. 49). According to Participant 1, this study group started with two or three people reading a book on Racial Justice and deciding to apply this scope to Tamera, for example, to the way they receive guests, and as they shared their findings so the wider community could benefit from them, more and more people developed interest on the topic (Interview 1, Pos. 49). One critical example shared by Participant 1 is about Tamera giving 'pocket money' to people invited from Colombia and Brazil, so they can buy something at the bar. This example suggests that the community directly jumped to the assumption that these guests need this money or don't have the means to pay and shows that they took a decision for them rather than co-deciding in advance how the expenses will be covered during the stay (Interview 1, Pos. 33). Indeed, handing out 'pocket money' could be perceived as being patronizing and could reproduce paradigms of 'power over', especially to the extent that a decision is taken for them without consultation (Interview 1, Pos. 33). Another example was more recent, displaying a facilitator who pointed someone out in the guest group and the fact that they do not need to pay anything for a certain service, talking for them in their presence which creates a certain unbalance in perception, leading to potential assumptions within the group (Interview 1, Pos. 42, fieldnotes, 2024). During that specific event, the person in question was not addressed directly, maintaining this image of a person in power talking for a marginalised person (Interview 1, Pos. 42, fieldnotes, 2024). Participant 1 addresses this issue stating that there is a way to approach this matter with the person being a co-creator of the decision (Interview 1, pos. 45). She also alerts us on the "abuse of power that

exists in [...] the power to manage a group”, stating that it comes with responsibility, since whatever is said undergoes “an enormous multiplier effect, a stronger effect of truth than if just one participant says something” highlighting the need to take “time to realise these more or less conscious dynamics” (Interview 1, Pos. 47). Overall, the first steps have been taken towards this reflection, but the path is still long to fully avoid reinforcing oppressive dynamics, create efficient mechanisms for accountability, and fully reflect upon their impact on guests from other communities such as the peace community of San José de Apartadó.

6.5. Unlearning and Transforming Assumptions

In the first Chapter, peace was already described as an ongoing process of research and (self)inquiry and thus, it implies that a similar approach should be taken towards deconstructing, unlearning and transforming assumptions. This section tackles this topic and highlights the importance of unlearning ingrained patterns of oppression and privilege as part of Tamera's peacebuilding research.

- **Codes:** *Unlearn, Assumptions, Education, Youth*

Although there were already mentions of education, learning and study groups, one aspect that has not been mentioned yet is the education from a younger age, under the umbrella of ‘Raising Free Children’. According to Kanakulya et al. (2023), what needs to be done is to “[d]ecolonize minds so young people can actually become good allies” to a common deconstruction of colonial realities (p. 40). These teachings should largely be in the hands of Indigenous cultures that prevailed in time and have shown their capacity “to keep the wisdom of our species alive and feel empowered to create a new social order” (Kanakulya et al., 2023, p. 40).

Following this line of thought, Tamera offers ‘Youth Camps’ during which young people can meet among them and with adults to think of solutions for the future. The documentary shows a special ‘Youth Camp’ during which they invited community leaders and specialists from the Global South and Global North and gave them the opportunity to exchange and directly learn from them (Schramm et al., 2025). The ‘Youth Camp’ was also referred to as the point of entry to the community by Participant 4 (Interview 4, Pos. 6) who wanted to discover a different way of living (Interview 4, Pos. 4). In practice, during approximately 10 days, young people from within the community and from outside build community and together with some facilitators conduct research on a specific theme through different approaches. For example, when I was invited to watch their concluding show, their theme was self-love (fieldnotes, 2024). Some presented love letters they wrote to themselves mixed with self-portraits, others offered some volunteers to go inside a tent blind-folded to receive a long hug from a male-

bodied person after realizing how little affection young men tend to receive from other men, some read poems about the expectations connected to being girls, mentioning the contradictions in those expectations and the need to join forces as women, to love and support one another (TAMERA, 2020n). Another group explained how they redirected used water from the kitchen into a self-built garden and a natural swamp, some young men fought above water artistically, and finally they all went on stage together to present different musical and circus performances (fieldnotes, 2024, TAMERA, 2020n). This show illustrated some of Tamera's values around trust, love and growth, around system change and a better cooperation with nature, but also around the topic of healing among and between men and women. This last element illustrates Tamera's binary mindset when it comes to gender identity. Indeed, while some people in Tamera might focus on the anarchistic queerness of 'Eros' others see sexual energy as truly bound to the archetypal polarity of 'feminine' and 'masculine' powers (TAMERA, 2020o; Interview 4, Pos. 26; fieldnotes, 2024). This is also reflected in the website, in their early books and their usual approach to love and sexuality that often focuses on the importance of 'healing between the two sexes' (Interview 2, Pos. 22; Duhm, 2007, p. 133; TAMERA, 2020o). While binary approaches can be useful to explain and support feminist theory, by focusing on 'the two sexes' Tamera makes more space for normative identities. A certain choice has been made in the extent of the system change they want to bring about. Why stop at deconstructing patriarchy when many other existing theories around system change expose how existing systems repeatedly marginalise and exclude those who do not conform to Western and normative identities? Why not decide to integrate more non-Western, non-normative, and inclusive theories such as Queer Theory, Gender Studies, Disability Studies, Critical Race Theory, Age Studies, Critical Pedagogy, Decolonial Theory?

Although it is difficult to take every marginalised group into consideration when thinking of system change, Tamera makes efforts to continually learn and unlearn, individually and as a community. On that note, Participant 3 questions if anyone could ever say they do not need to learn new things (Interview 3, Pos. 49). She mentions Tamera's intention to focus on teaching children social skills and becoming better humans, aside from mathematics and everything else (Interview 3, Pos. 14). This can be relevant for Critical Pedagogy for example. She also talks about her position as an elder in the community and what it entails and remembers how together with other members, they constantly needed to unlearn everything when they started the project (Interview 3, Pos. 18). As an elder she still takes part in different councils and community activities, her responsibilities are just less fixed giving her a bit more time to rest and organise how she spends her days (Interview 3, Pos. 33, 39). This approach to

getting older also values elders and brings new perspectives to Age Studies. Overall, even if Tamera has attempted to question many of the ways society seems to work, they have pushed some areas forward potentially missing out on the intersectionality of the challenges faced by between different marginalised groups (DeSon & Andover, 2024; Denscombe, 2024, p. 2). For example, gender and sexualities still represent a contested field in Tamera, although there have been recent efforts are made towards more inclusivity (for example by offering a 'Queer Love School' seminar in 2025) (Interview 4, Pos. 26; TAMERA, 2020p).

Possible ways to deepen their efforts could be to hold internal forums for addressing privilege, partake in workshops or programs aimed at unlearning colonial and heteronormative assumptions, and create a feedback system for guests to address if they felt uncomfortable or discriminated against. More efforts could also be observed in making the space more accessible for persons with disabilities with direct mentions to the services available and the infrastructure in place. Also in general, they could think even more about ways of making the community more interesting to visit for people who do not fit the usual template of the Western, white, middle or upper class, person in their 30s or 40s to feel more comfortable in the space. These are only a few suggestions, but setting up a feedback system that allows for more ideas to emerge could give the opportunity to marginalised people to present more direct, relevant, and efficient solutions.

All in all, the collected data shows that there is no general answer representing the whole community and that deep colonial awareness might depend on every person individually and might be stronger in the 'new generation'. Nevertheless, within their shared research towards system change, most Western members acknowledge their colonial legacy and recognise their position of privilege. This chapter showed relevant insights on the intricacy of navigating responsibility and accountability without falling into exceptionalism, saviourism or tokenisation. There might be a fine line between 'helping', 'supporting', and 'showing solidarity' although they all imply slightly different power dynamics. Overall, there was a clear evolution in their way to approach that question since the beginning of the cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó and although the relationship started with a dynamic of support giver and receiver, a friendship has evolved. In the end, the most important insights might be the importance of learning and unlearning from existing movements of resistance in the Global South (Magalhães Teixeira, 2024).

7. Key Learnings from the cooperation with San José de Apartadó

In the light of questioning colonial legacy within their relationships and partnerships with other communities in the Global South, this research takes the case study of their cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó and explores their relationship from a decolonial lens. As mentioned, members from Tamera visited the community after receiving an invitation from the mayor of San José de Apartadó, who got to know them during a visit in Colombia (Interview 2, Pos. 80, Interview 3, Pos. 57). From there a few members decided to go travel to the peace community to “feel and see the people”, understand what is really needed and how they chose nonviolence, but also see for themselves if they personally feel resilient enough to withstand the violence they are faced with, enough to be self-accountable to avoid adding responsibilities to the members of the peace community of San José de Apartadó (Interview 3, Pos. 61, 67). Very soon a cooperation between the two communities started in 2005, with Andrea Phoebe Regelmann at the head of the communication on Tamera's side within the framework of the ‘Global Campus’ pursuing the goal of creating global education towards system change and liberation (TAMERA, 2020q). This also set the framework for a collaborative partnership and many participants in the interviews highlight the amount of collaboration involved in their relationship, including advocacy work, mutual visits, education programmes, and joining forces in the ‘Defend the Sacred Alliance’ (Interview 4, Pos. 41). Some people also referred to them as friends, as people they love which shows a strong connection and affection (Interview 3, Pos. 167). Nevertheless, some formulations or some worries also showed that there might still be unconscious actions and ways of thinking that keep certain unbalanced dynamics, for example, giving pocket money (Interview 1, Pos. 33), potential tokenization (Interview 4, Pos. 43) or exceptionalism with the idea of ‘white goodness’ (Interview 4, Pos. 43) or getting social recognition (Interview 1, Pos. 53). Nevertheless, most participants showed that they reflected upon these topics, coming to different simplified conclusions:

- If I am white and this helps, then I can put myself in service and learn from their resilience and joy of life.
- I recognised certain patterns that perpetuate dynamics of ‘power over’ paradigms on a subtle level.
- I have questioned myself on the topic of white saviourism but do not recognise such intention in my motivation to support a community I love, putting myself at risk.

- I see how factors of my identity have put me in advantage and decide to step aside to take accountability for colonial legacy and act in solidarity with resisting communities in the Global South, learning about their context and cultural underpinnings, giving them visibility and creating networks of collaboration.

Overall, what comes across the narratives is a lot of mutual respect, all the community members who I have met that visited the peace community in Colombia shared that they have gained many valuable insights, including other community leaders I talked to during field observation, and one participant even said that it was completely life changing (field notes 2024, Interview 4, Pos. 10). Some of the examples of these learnings are surrounding core values in peacebuilding, the power of forgiveness, the resilience to live, colonial and cultural awareness, the realities of living in a violent context.

7.1. Core Values in Peacebuilding

- **Codes:** *Nonviolence, Justice, Resistance, Community, Commitment*

One important learning was to recognise that without the State as an agent of protection, the community becomes an agent of survival (Interview 4, Pos. 53; Interview 3, Pos. 89). This fosters strong connections and commitment towards collaboration and explains “the depths of community that they've been able to develop” (Interview 4, Pos. 55). This resolve is described as “one of the strongest examples of spiritual activism” referring to their choice to embody this culture of peace and nonviolence, of trust and coherence, despite living in a constant danger and uncertainty (Interview 4, Pos. 55). In his words resistance for them meant becoming the “embodiment of ethics of truth, of solidarity, very strong collaboration, of building community, of prioritising the common good over the interests of every people, and also of reconciliation” (Interview 4, Pos. 57). They are choosing to form an absolutely, radically nonviolent body of farmers even when this directly puts their lives in danger (Interview 3, Pos. 155; Interview 2, Pos. 82). Participant 3 shared that what she learned there is that choosing peace takes as much commitment and engagement as going for a war (Interview 3, Pos. 169).

Another dimension, essential to San José de Apartadó's core is their approach to justice. This peace community takes a radical compassionate approach to justice that can be relevant for other communities as well. For example, “for them, it's completely normal that if a body, if someone dies in a fight, whoever it is, and whatever side it's on, they have the right to a funeral.” (Interview 1, Pos. 113). According to Participant 1, they applied this belief by taking care of people that have died on their territory, proving that they think that every human being is valid and respectable, a powerful behaviour, especially in the context where the people they treat with respect might have killed members or a child from the community (Interview 1, Pos. 115).

This aligns with the importance of respecting others' dignity described by Courtheyn (2022, p. 139) and goes further than punitive or transformative models of justice, creating a shift towards forgiveness, even if the peace community also continues to demand conventional restorative justice for all the violations, they were subjected to (Interview 1, Pos. 115; Burnyeat, 2018, p. 12).

7.2. The Power of Forgiveness

- **Codes:** *Compassion, Forgiveness, Humility, Justice*

The power of forgiving in spite of the context was respected and looked up to by all the participants interviewed but also by other members that visited the community (Interview 1, 2, 3, 4; fieldnotes, 2024). Surprisingly, I found little references to this aspect in articles and books written about the peace community, although it was very apparent from my data collection. Participant 4 explains how he found it very impressive to directly hear from a collective of people and not from scholars that "it's not individual perpetrators that are to be held responsible because they too have grown up in that context" (Interview 4, Pos. 57). It is about understanding that by falling for hatred, one takes part in a system that perpetuates violence (Interview 4, Pos. 57). This applied example of peace work was very orienting for him, but also for the other participants who shared that they see a link between forgiveness and the Christian influence of the 'Padre' ('Father') who has been closely working with and within the peace community (Interview 1, Pos. 115; Interview 2, Pos. 94; Interview 3, Pos. 173).

According to Participant 3, forgiving is "their big medicine", they decide to forgive for their own sake, to have a clean soul, recognising that by harvesting hatred, they would want to kill or act in violence against the perpetrators, making them no better than the perpetrators (Interview 3, Pos. 173). This does not mean that they agree with what was done, on the contrary, they make constant efforts to give crimes visibility and to ask for reparation (Interview 3, Pos. 175). Participant 3 shared that this has been the path she has been on after visiting them, learning to really forgive (Interview 3, Pos. 175). This is still challenging for Participant 2, to opt for "no revenge, no weapons but going for life as they say" when losing persons that are nearest to you (Interview 2, Pos. 82). Nevertheless, it is a source of inspiration and Participant 1 stated that this belief in something else reigning on this earth, is something she could relate to as an anchor to hold onto in times of constant violations of life, something she can find strength in and carry on as a witness, making her humbler (Interview 1, Pos. 115).

7.3. Resilience to Live

- **Codes:** *Commitment, Joy of Life, Singing, Jokes*

Another unexpected aspect that frequently emerged during the interviews was the willingness of the members of the peace community of San José de Apartadó to sing, dance, make jokes, and generally make the most of the present moment despite threatening circumstances (Interview 3, Pos. 177). The participants share that they can learn from them, having so much joy (Interview 2, Pos. 108) and show great respect for their “joy of living and strength of living that is rooted in this loss of human life, that is rooted in this experience of daily violence, of denial and denigration” (Interview 1, Pos. 113). According to Participant 2, this shared experience of singing and praying together as a community is a source of strength and allows them to withstand things that “you couldn't carry alone at all” (Interview 2, Pos. 106). The importance of art and expression is also described in great detail by Courtheyn (2022) in the context of commemoration for the people that were assassinated (p. 275). He describes the art of painting as a big part of their commemorative process, for example, painting names of deceased persons on stones, or offering paintings to people all over the world that recreate the history of the community to inform them and create visibility for their struggles (Courtheyn, 2022, p. 275).

In fact, close to the ‘Stone Circle’ in Tamera, a monument made of colourful stones laying on the ground was built to commemorate the victims of assassinations in San José de Apartadó (fieldnotes, 2024). One of the paintings is also displayed in the ‘Aula’, the central structure in which the community organizes bigger gatherings, together with descriptions of the community, their cooperation, and ways of showing solidarity (fieldnotes, 2024).

7.4. Colonial and cultural awareness

- **Codes:** *Injustice, Trust, Rules, Colonial, Saviourism, Privilege, Impacts, Responsibility, Accountability, Introspection*

Even if people from Tamera and San José de Apartadó share many values and commitments for peace, the contrast of their realities raised awareness on matters of deeply rooted injustice (Interview 3, Pos. 167). One striking example comes from the experience of Participant 3 who was collaboratively giving training on first aid action with a local member because of her profession as a nurse. When she asked what their first reaction would be upon seeing a motionless body, they said they would run away quickly because it could be a trap (Interview 3, Pos. 135). This was eye-opening for her and showed her how different their way of thinking is after being influenced by such big amounts of betrayal and distrust (Interview 3, Pos. 135). She also shares that many people during the conflict in Colombia could not trust their own family, because one could be a ‘guerrillero’ and another a ‘paramilitary’ (Interview 3, Pos. 73). This adds value to the community’s intention to build trust amidst the insecurity and explains

why they decided to agree on certain rules such as not having weapons, not consuming drugs, participating to communal work and not cooperating with any of the armed sectors and not sharing information (Interview 4, Pos. 69; Interview 3, Pos. 73).

When Tamera's community members visited them at first, they had no idea that a wrong word could kill other people because of some information given away without being aware of it (Interview 3, Pos. 73). They had to learn and ask about the things that should not be shared (Interview 3, Pos. 75). They also learned that sometimes they might not understand their decisions or motivations but that they should respect them nonetheless, for example, when they decide that they prefer to die on their land than to be displaced again, even if it is for protection (Interview 3, Pos. 167). At the beginning, they asked them how they could bring their children in such dangerous situations, offered to find a better place for them, but Participant 3 shares that their answer to the question was that on this matter "a European can never understand a Colombian. Never. [W]e want to have a better world for our children, but if this is not possible and they will kill us because we are not obedient, then they should do this [...] we never leave, this is our land, and this is what the government, the former government and the paramilitaries have done, they displaced us" (Interview 3, Pos. 167).

This is especially relevant because their land is also their autonomy (Burnyeat, 2018). As farmers they work mainly with cacao and provide to their needs through production (Interview 4, Pos. 75). They are proud of being 'Campesinos' and this is part of their identity and of their peace work (Burnyeat, 2018; Interview 4, Pos. 75). This connection to the environment and to their territory makes the externalisation of consumed comforts goods in Europe even more obvious. Participant 4 describes how their land is surrounded by banana plantations, armed forces, and poverty (Interview 4, Pos. 65). This made him realise that what is described as peace in the West like in Europe or North America, is in fact "a state of privilege that is bought through externalising violence" (Interview 4, Pos. 83). He gives the example of gas, bananas, and coffee that are "bought with the blood of the indigenous people that are being [...] erased or displaced from those lands, people that are fighting for their simple right of inhabiting these lands peacefully and autonomously with self-determination" (Interview 4, Pos. 83). He calls for the "recognition that peace can never be based on a system of security or [...] economics that requires violence, erasure, and oppression of others" (Interview 4, Pos. 83).

Interview participants expressed a lot of respect for their strength of staying nonviolent and of forgiving in the face of such violent situations. Several mentioned learning from their joy of life, the focus they put on still singing and making jokes around the fire. One person mentioned their singular approach to justice, their compassion pushing them to treat the dead all the same,

with respect. Finally, for many, it made them realise just how privileged they are and for one participant this experience was life-changing and made him realise how that privilege is a direct consequence of the violence that is externalized by living in comfort in the Western world. He defends that as a person who bears almost all the markers of privilege, he has “the moral obligation to resist communally and spiritually to systems of oppression by transforming the mentality of fear and violence” (Interview 4, Pos. 12).

8. Discussion and Analysis

The findings of this research show that Tamera's approach to peace is holistic and complex but also informed by a privileged background that is recognised by the community but not necessarily seen as a limitation to their Healing Biotope Plan. Although community members' understanding of peace has been variably shaped by their visits in the peace community of San José de Apartadó, nothing suggests that their global approach to peace work as a community has radically changed through this intercultural cooperation. However, some elements that were reflected upon by the study participants, were also represented within the community by the creation of research groups or recent attempts to integrate more critical reflexion and inclusion, such as a potential Erasmus project for people located in the Global South, a summer university focused on Tamera's evolution and potential for improvement (fieldnotes, 2024; TAMERA, 2020r). Despite these findings, some questions that came up during the analysis remain partially or fully unanswered:

Key questions include:

- How transferable is Tamera's model to other contexts?
- How does cooperation with a conflict-affected community reshape understandings of peace?
- What mechanisms are in place to avoid reproducing power imbalances?
- How are positive and negative peace, environmental peace, decolonial and feminist theories intersecting with peacebuilding in practice?

With its Healing Biotope Plan, Tamera presents an intentional model of peace rooted in communal living, ecological restoration, and inner transformation. Nevertheless, whether this Plan can be introduced and function in other contexts successfully, is yet to be proven. While it is often referred to as a shift in the information field, rather than a precise replica in other places, their areas of focus are mostly rooted in a privileged worldview. Their research has also been shaped by a post war society in Germany and the 68' movement aimed at sexual liberation and alternative living (Marcuse & Martin, 1979, pp. 5, 6). This influenced their strong focus

on free love and sexuality during the creation of the group. However, its applicability to other contexts raises questions. While this subject is central to Tamera's vision, it may be less relevant in conflict zones like San José de Apartadó, where survival and nonviolence are prioritized. This was mentioned in informal conversations with community members from both communities (fieldnotes 2023, 2024). Moreover, Tamera's model currently functions mainly on donation base and fees for educational and volunteer programmes (TAMERA, 2020s). This makes them rely on external income that is not necessarily applicable to other contexts or communities that have only recently been in existence. In the case of San José de Apartadó, their income also comes partially from donations but mainly from cacao production, an activity that also shapes their everyday life differently than in Tamera. The idea of extending a concept that has been implemented in a privileged context and designed by a majority of middle-class white European people to other places could sound like a colonial endeavour. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight that this wish for the creation of more Healing Biotores in the world does not come with an active dissemination of the information, similar to cults or other controversial techniques but rather by making it available to the reality field. In practice, this simply means, living it, following the vision of a regenerative ecosystem and explaining how it works to people who are interested. This is what makes cooperation possible with communities situated in very different contexts. This is also what makes its applicability possible in other contexts. It is about asking ourselves in our contexts of living, how can I/we turn my/our environment of living into a regenerative ecosystem?

Tamera and San José de Apartadó are relevant because they show us to which extent this endeavour is possible. Their cooperation shows that through consistent contact, visits and exchange, Tamera was able to show solidarity with them by giving visibility to their struggles while learning from their reality and broadening their perspectives on peace. Their friendship exposed new dimensions of their privileged position and made them reflect on their accountability towards their colonial legacies. Tamera members learned that Western peace relies on outsourcing violence, while San José's peace is about forgiveness, resistance, resilience and joy of living. However, through their cooperation they also found out that they share a common vision and common community practices and commitments involving trust, mourning, singing, working, sacred activism, and spirituality. Despite the risk of power asymmetry due to differences in resources, safety, and freedom, both communities benefit from mutual exchange.

In order to move beyond Western peace narratives, peace research should focus on co-creating knowledge with communities, rather than helping or observing (Denscombe, 2024,

pp. 7, 8). According to Quijano's concept of coloniality of power, this type of research is conducted within the frame of peace narratives that are often shaped by Western ideals that externalize violence to the Global South (Quijano & Ennis, 2000, p. 540). For researchers, taking part in university programs offered by these communities could be a starting point towards knowledge co-creation and away from Western peace narratives, ideally going there in the interest of a local community rather than visiting with the intention of conducting a personal research project. Bottom-up peacebuilding approaches challenge top-down, institutionalized models and studying them comes with the hope of informing institutions and individuals of their existence and relevance to create more opportunities for lasting peace to emerge from local to global (Firchow, 2020).

This study attempts to focus on the teachings from marginalised people that have been victims of colonization and the new ways in which it operates. This research tries to expose how white privilege continues to be perpetuated by its mechanisms and looks at how they may translate in subtle practices, behaviours, and assumptions. Instead of drawing conclusions through critical discourse analysis or pushing participants' answers towards certain results, participants are given the chance to reflect directly on the decolonial framework and to offer their reflections on the subject. Overall, it appeared as if there was a tendency towards the younger generation showing more acknowledgement of the risks of saviourism, tokenization, and exceptionalism, but the recognition of the influence of colonial legacies seems to be shared by most (if not all) members of the community. A key aspect of their critical approach towards their own research lies in the creation of a study group meant to explore the dimension of racial justice and injustices within their community and cooperations. Nevertheless, even if this group makes critical observations and shares them with the community, this study fails to identify specific mechanisms of accountability in cases of power unbalances or power misuses. Two examples were cited and maybe it could be beneficial to set up a group (Racial Justice Study Group or a new one) responsible for receiving (anonymous) feedback or testimonies from community members and guests that may experience discriminatory treatment or uncomfortable situations due to lack of awareness or education. This group could be indicated in the course presentation and in public spaces with an easy way to contact them. Moreover, there could be monthly workshops/talks/sharing circles around the topics of privilege, consent, gender and sexual identities to offer more opportunities for improvement and inclusion. Arguably, these topics, reflections and perspectives can all be brought up during 'Forum' performances. However, acknowledging the importance of these topics upfront could alleviate some of the pressure of feeling like the one who must bring up the issue.

This was described as “ecological dignity” and “transrelational peace” by Courtheyn (2022), relevant also for Tamera (p. 139). While the concept of “environmental peace” is not that present for Tamera it definitely plays a major role for San José de Apartadó since for them, cacao production represents community, resistance, and autonomy, while in Tamera the focus lays on cooperation with local farmers to promote interdependence and better social relations (Baquero Melo et al., 2022, pp. 102, 108).

Overall, the theories of decolonial peace(s), decolonial justice, postcolonial theology, environmental peace, along with concepts like transrelational peace and ecological dignity, proved useful to identify patterns and connections in the data. Nevertheless, other mentioned theories were less present throughout the analysis, for example, feminist perspectives. While gender was explored and recognised as a contested topic in Tamera, there were no specific mentions of the role of women in the community. During participant observation, their role has been highlighted by often revealing them in positions of power, having a group of women in white, and being generally recognised through the importance of healing between the two sexes and liberation from societal sexual repression (fieldnotes 2023, 2024). Moreover, Tamera's intention of stepping away from patriarchy was often mentioned. Nevertheless, Lugones (2007) theory on coloniality of gender questions whose perspectives on sexuality and gender liberation are centred: in this case, mainly cis-hetero women (p. 186).

All in all, this research bridges peacebuilding theory and practical, community-level work, emphasizing the need for a holistic regenerative approach towards a positive peace (Galtung, 1969, p. 71). It reflects upon the future challenges of peace research: addressing structural inequalities and privilege within peace narratives, avoiding the reinforcement of Western dominance, and finding cooperative ways of conducting research such as taking part in educational programmes.

9. Limitations

A very strong limitation to my research is my focus on Tamera when pretending to take a decolonial approach. While I make clear my intent to use decolonial theory to frame my analysis of Tamera's understanding of peace and its partnership with the peace community of San José de Apartadó, this still raises an important question: Why not go directly to San José de Apartadó to learn from their experience and their perception of this relationship? While it was the original intention of this research to visit both communities, several obstacles emerged early on and shaped the research question into a new direction. Even if this shift allowed for a

deeper examination of Tamera's peace practices, it also highlighted a tension in applying a decolonial lens to a primarily Eurocentric context.

Part of this shift was driven by my own belief that decolonial work should start by unlearning our own conditioning. Academic research has a long history of being extractive and sometimes harmful, especially when researchers from the 'Global North' study communities in the 'Global South' (Magalhães Teixeira, 2024, p. 11). I was worried that as a master's student with limited experience, a very western upbringing and privileged background I might unintentionally replicate those colonial dynamics. Without adequate experience or reflexivity, I might have misrepresented the realities of the peace community of San José de Apartadó or inadvertently caused harm. As Denscombe (2024) stresses decolonial participatory research in communities at risk calls for total commitment, one that is long-term and fully committed to advancing the interests of the community (pp. 7,8). While I full-heartedly wish for the community's interests to be met and protected, the scope of this project would not allow me to spend enough time with the community in Colombia to fully immerse myself in its context. However, I still wish to visit them without time pressure, for research purposes or as a volunteer to understand the complexity of their situation and their commitment to live non-violently. This research serves as a first step toward self-education in decolonial theory and practice. By examining Tamera's understanding of peace and its cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó critically, I would like to contribute to the broader decolonial discourse from within a European context. While it might not fully justify this limitation, I hope this research will be a stepping stone towards more awareness around colonialism and hopefully more informed future research with communities. Nevertheless, I realise that a lot of what I criticize also applies to my own research: the personal interest to conduct research, the lack of a more cooperative project, a privileged background that also subjects me to colonial biases.

In my research I learned that for both communities, art is a powerful tool for expression, self-introspection and political action. In the case of Tamera one can observe it through their practice of 'Forum', similar to theatre in some ways, but also through their painting rituals and other types of art. As for the peace community of San José de Apartadó, I was surprised by how all the participants expressed how inspired they were by their capacity to still really enjoy the present moment and to sing and to laugh and make jokes and still have many art rituals. For that reason, I thought of integrating two poems and a song in the appendix, to acknowledge my own privilege, express some of my perspectives, and integrate some of the learnings I received that were deeply informed by this research (see Appendix).

10. Conclusion

Results show that while Tamera's holistic approach to peace is relevant for different academic fields it is still influenced by Western frameworks, although it has also been shaped by its partnership with the peace community of San José de Apartadó, deeply informing them in their understanding of structural violence, nonviolent resistance and decolonial accountability.

Tamera's simplified vision of peace relies on an ongoing holistic process of research and (self-)inquiry, practiced by a group of people living together who want to create a new system rooted in the true cooperation of all life spheres, creating healing and trust between humans and the spiritual dimension, nature, and other living beings but also among humans and within oneself by striving to accept and understand our history, our needs, and our impulses by creating the space to express them.

Nevertheless, these perspectives and beliefs are mostly relevant in the context of their background, mostly privileged and European. Yet, they are for the most part conscious of that privilege and try to deconstruct what remnants there are of colonial legacy in their behaviours and actions. Tamera as a model for a future utopia is still far from representing a unified awareness and commitment towards decolonization and still lacks accessibility and diversity. However, it is still probably one of the most political intentional communities in terms of global awareness of the political, historical, collective, and cultural context that frames endeavours of alternative living in privileged areas (Interview 4, Pos. 26). Overall, there has been a clear evolution in their way to approach that colonization since the beginning of the cooperation with the peace community of San José de Apartadó and although the relationship started with a dynamic of support giver and receiver, a friendship has evolved, and the research participants recognise having deeply learned from the members of San José de Apartadó's peace community.

Participants expressed a lot of respect for their strength of staying nonviolent and forgiving in the face of such extreme situations. One person mentioned their singular approach to justice, their compassion pushing them to treat the dead all the same, with respect, whether they have been good to them or killed some of them. Several mentioned learning from their joy of life, resilience and resistance. Finally, for many, it made them realise just how privileged they are. For one participant this experience was life changing and showed him how that privilege is a direct consequence of the violence that is externalized by living in comfort in the Western world.

Decolonial theory gives a framework to these learnings and highlights the need for privileged communities to hold themselves accountable to unlearn and deconstruct their patriarchal and capitalist conditioning still based on domination over the earth and its inhabitants, taking root in colonial history. It also helps to bridge lived experiences with theoretical approaches to peace and calls for context-sensitive peacebuilding measures and research that address structural inequalities and privilege within peace narratives and integrate cooperative ways of conducting research such as taking part in educational programmes.

In the future, more could be examined in Tamera to look at the potentials and risks of stepping out of the system, see in what ways they might still be part of the system they criticize and what general frameworks they might have in place to process and integrate feedback. Future research could also take place in San José de Apartadó with the commitment to stay for a long time period and to commit to a collaborative process of research. Some interesting guiding questions might include: How to take a decolonial approach in practice? How have they perceived their relationship with Tamera? How have they perceived researchers coming there and asking questions? What is their approach to peace and justice? What project or joint research would they be interested in starting? What are they asking from the state?

Through this thesis I hope to show how relevant such communities are for the field of peace research, proving that the understanding of peace cannot be based on the absence of violence. But rather that it takes root in daily practical action and inner transformation and that it already exists in each of us, but depends on the fulfilment and expression of our truest desires and needs in respect with the earth, its nature, animals and humans.

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12. Appendix

12.1. Poems and song

Poems and song written by Lisa Hervieux inspired by the thesis and participants 2025

RISING

(rising) the cake they baked in the oven and the smoke from the chimney
 (rising) excitement as the door opens showing the figure of a promised future
 (rising) from the chair to their feet
 (rising) to the colour in their cheeks when they finally meet
 (rising) hope to feel alive through the night
 (rising) until finally the sun from the skyline starts
 (rising) into a giant orb of gold searing through the sky
 (rising) burning, drenching, heating
 (rising) temperature on earth
 (rising) water level after a natural disaster
 (rising) the wind as the tornado approaches
 (rising) number of people stuck with surviving
 (rising) the consequences of externalizing violence
 (rising) as they slowly come back to their perpetrators
 (rising) fear turning into violence against victims
 (rising) together against oppressors
 (rising) the profits of the rich
 (rising) the costs of living
 (rising) people in the streets
 (rising) their voices as one
 (rising) against oppression

RISING

THE WIND IS RISING

As the wind rises, the trees bend and yet their core is strong
 Through their roots they communicate and fetch vital energy
 In the bowels of the earth, water enriched by minerals, gold and years of decomposition
 They store it and drop by drop they sweat and let it evaporate
 Spreading knowledge all over the world and playing their part
 In a much bigger system of life and reparation
 Now what happens when the trees are cut?
 When the water is forced out of rivers?
 When the earth is hurt?
 It bleeds, its breath turns into tornados, its blood rushes in tsunamis, its immune system is
 suddenly taken over by cold shivers, its temperature rising way over its regular level, burning
 up and so it sweats, shakes, melts and calls for help.
 But the only ones who can hear are the ones that have always listened,
 the ones that knew of the importance of sinking water, of diverse nature, of hidden treasures
 deep within the earth.
 They are the ones who teach us the meaning of living together
 within an organism way bigger than us.
 But they were silenced by those who do not hear because they stopped listening to
 themselves. Got stuck in their fear of ever lacking the earth's offerings. Stopped witnessing
 its way of breathing and started harnessing its wind. Or so they think, not realizing that by
 cutting trees, they only make the wind stronger, they dry the land and fetch water from rivers
 for their plants and create a system that suddenly makes them dependent. As the crops rot, the
 water poisoned by canalisations, the corpses pile up and fear rises. Suddenly they realise,
 they are not in control, but rather than accepting destiny, they prefer to maintain the illusion
 of being masters of the wind.
 And so, they try to harness something else, women, children, and all the ones who still try to
 listen. What if they were right, that would wrong their previous actions, shake their power
 position. It would prove their fears of lacking love and compassion, of being undeserving,
 were right from the beginning.
 And so, they try to bend women and children into loving them.
 But love cannot be forced, it can't be taken only given.
 Like the water and the wind.

And as their attempts keep failing, the resources keep lacking,
so they build machines, weapons and boats. So, they can set forth, try harnessing the wind
further down the river, across the oceans, at the other end of the earth.

And when the book is used as a cover to invade the land of others,
bystanders will watch in silence.

As all over again, the earth is bleeding, its inhabitants coerced into
believing, working, and fearing.

Until the ones who could always hear are forced into shouting,
into ears that have long stopped listening.

But when the wind blows the trees bend, they don't break, they keep living.

And despite everything, they keep hearing, listening and shouting.

And a few more have started tuning in to what they have been saying.

A few have understood the importance of letting water sink in
or listening to the earth singing.

Together they stand strong and try warning the ones who don't hear that
the earth is bleeding.

But they are not listening.

And when the tornado is coming, the water is rising, the fire approaching, they ignore its
origins. Not realizing that they are the symptoms of a sickness they have been causing. Not
realizing that is the consequence of externalizing violence. Not realizing that the comfort they
live in has been bought with the blood of the earth, the blood of the animals living on its
surface, the blood of the ones who have been living within its forests, listening to the wind.

Can you hear the melody in the wind?

As the trees start singing?

Their roots interconnecting,
their heart vibrating on a common frequency,
tuning in with the wind.

Until they too start rising.

Singing in unison:

Years pass by one by one
it is time to stop laying down
cause we can sit we can stand on our own

so come along dance with me
around all we've got left to live and to give
to this world we call home
come along dance with me
around all we've got left to give and to live
for ourselves for our souls for our love

for this misery we call life
is a journey worth living
full of peace full of grief
it is what makes it so deep
time to take a step one at a time
don't let the years pass you by
without being there or you're regret all these lies

time to move on, get along, so dance with me
around all we've got left to live and to give
to our mother that brought us here,
to this earth, to this sphere
so come along dance with me
in this world we call home

life is a gift we can't deny
let's not waste it all on our greed
so come as one, find a peace
we can rely on
so we can move on and finally dance along