

# Shared ownership, decision-making by consensus, and sustainability at Rainbow Valley and Tui Communities

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## Introduction

Rainbow Valley and Tui Communities are located in Golden Bay, in the northwest corner of New Zealand's South Island. Founded in 1974, Rainbow is ten years older than Tui, and owns more land, but Tui is the better known and larger of the two communities. At the time of writing nine members and ten non-members live at Rainbow, while twenty members and twenty-five non-members live at Tui. At Rainbow land is vested in a company. At Tui it is vested in a trust.

Much has been written about overseas intentional communities, not very much about New Zealand's own, though Lucy Sargisson and Lyman Tower Sargent see New Zealand as containing an unusually large number of stable and mature ones, and even speculate that we have more intentional communities per capita than any other country.<sup>1</sup> Seeing New Zealand itself as utopian perhaps inclines them to believe it has the most utopian experiments.<sup>2</sup> Most groups described as communes in the 1970s now see themselves as intentional communities. In this paper, for simplicity and brevity, I use the blanket term community.

Members of Rainbow Valley and Tui are strongly individualistic. However, they agree about non-violence,<sup>3</sup> and I will argue that shared ownership, consensus and sustainability have been and still are common goals. Rainbow and Tui are both stable and mature; in this respect they contradict a lot of what has been written about intentional communities: "Communities based on freedom inevitably fail, usually within a year," wrote one contributor to *Modern Utopian* magazine: "If the intentional community hopes to survive, it must be authoritarian, and if it is authoritarian, it offers no more freedom than conventional society."<sup>4</sup> But Rainbow is thirty-seven now, and Tui twenty-seven. They have not failed. Instead they have managed to combine freedom with their own forms of authority. Appreciating Tui on its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Rebecca Reider wrote: "shared ideals and vision are important to start with, but every community is an organism, and people

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<sup>1</sup> Sargisson, Lucy and Lyman Tower Sargent, *Living in Utopia : New Zealand's intentional communities*, Aldershot, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004, preface, xv.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, "this beautiful and abundant land has been, for many, a place in which to try and create a utopia"

<sup>3</sup> Rainbow Valley Agreements, 2003: 'We aim to follow the path of non-violence (physical and emotional) in conflict resolution.' Tui agreements 2005: 'The use of violence or the threat of physical violence is not acceptable in Tui Community.'

<sup>4</sup> Reider, Rebecca, *Dreaming the Biosphere: The Theater of All Possibilities*, University of New Mexico Press, 2009, p.39

come, go, and evolve.<sup>5</sup> Both Rainbow and Tui began with shared ideals and vision; they had and have some goals that differentiate them from the free market, from adversarial politics, and from consumerism.

First I will describe these communities, explaining where they are, how they were formed, their structures, and the life of each from its inception to the present day. Next I will summarise some of the academic literature relating to intentional communities both here and overseas, review some other books about New Zealand communities, and mention primary and secondary sources that relate to Rainbow and to Tui in particular.

My outlines of these two communities and my discussion and analysis of goals draw on my personal experience, a variety of primary and secondary sources, and twelve interviews conducted in 2010 with resident members of Rainbow and Tui. Those interviewed at Rainbow were Anne, Robyn, Kahu, Carol and Simon. At Tui they were Yana, Frans, Cathy, Surendra, Barry, Cherrie and Robina. I am very grateful to them all for generously helping me in this research. I am also very much indebted to my supervisor Kerry Taylor for his untiring support, and also to Olive Jones for help and advice. Before discussing and analysing my findings, I will describe my methodology and personal involvement with communities, and comment on insider and outsider history.

Writing about communities in 1972, Rosabeth Kanter saw them as utopian experiments whose members had adopted ideals of human perfectibility and saw their lives as an expression of ideals. For Kanter, such impossible ideals could not succeed.<sup>6</sup> Reider has doubts about the relevance of such a view today. “How do we measure the success of a community's ideals?” she asks. “And how do we create lasting community structures that are sustainable over the long term, in a society accustomed to individualistic living?”<sup>7</sup> Commenting on recent changes at Tui, one member, Brook, uses the word emancipation: “The group is emancipating itself away from an ideological picture.”<sup>8</sup> While editing one transcribed interview for this report I hesitated at a misspelled word, which, I reflected, was not so inaccurate. I had typed ‘goals’ as ‘gaols’. Goals can be prisons for communities, unless communities can sometimes change their goals. This paper will

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<sup>5</sup> Reider, Rebecca, *Tui*, unpublished paper, Tui Archive, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Kanter, Rosabeth Moss, *Communes: creating and managing the collective life*, New York: Harper & Row, 1973, pp.32-57

<sup>7</sup> Reider, *Tui*, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

examine the extent to which original goals of shared ownership, decision-making by consensus, and sustainability have changed or been retained in these communities.

## **Rainbow**

Rainbow is situated at Glover's Flat, on the Anatoki River, and borders Kahurangi National Park. The road from Takaka winds through three kilometres of bushy gorge to reach it. By car the journey into town takes twenty minutes. There was a brief gold rush there in 1857. Much later, in the 1940s, the Holmwood family owned the land, and kept it until the 1970s. Farmers and saw-millers, they had ran a saw-mill there. Rainbow's Main-house was later built on the abandoned site. Across the river is a track to nearby Handcock Falls.

In 1973 three couples in the United States planned a back to the land venture in New Zealand, though all but one of them were US citizens. They saw New Zealand as a better place for raising families than Nixon's USA and they agreed to pool resources and to farm there as a group. By US standards they were not particularly rich, but in New Zealand, by their standards, land was cheap.

Peter, the one New Zealander, and partner Mary Jane came to NZ and began the search. At Waitati, a village near Dunedin, they met Bill and Carol, a New Zealand couple who were also interested in living on the land. In June of 1974, Lynn and Jim rendezvoused with Peter and Mary Jane in Golden Bay. A Land Agent then showed them Glovers Flat. Its Holmwood owner, who was moving to Australia, had put it on the market only days before.

They bought 103 hectares for NZ \$25,000. There were few fences and the only pre-existing structure was a barn. About 26 hectares of flat land were accessible by road. Another 37 hectares lay on Roses Flat across the river; much of that was bush and gorse. The other 40-hectare block was steep and forested. Lynn chose the new name Rainbow Valley when they first explored the land, so Rainbow Valley Company Ltd. was formed to be the partners' legal entity, and they were equal shareholders. In midwinter they moved into the barn. The third couple were not allowed to immigrate, which left \$5,000 owing on the land. This was made up by loans from newfound friends. One was Mike Scott, a friend of Bill and Carol, who with others had begun to publish Mushroom

Magazine. Peter and Jim found jobs at Golden Bay Cement. Looking ahead to self-sufficiency, the founding couples put in a half-acre garden at the barn.

Alternative communities were the coming thing. New Zealand's Ohu scheme was underway, and Tim Jones, gathering material for his book *A Hard Won Freedom*, visited twice in 1974 and saw Rainbow's potential as enormous.<sup>9</sup> Son Simon joined in 1976. Bill and Carol, with their new baby Jamie, visited in late 1974, the first of Rainbow's current members to arrive. In that first summer, when a local newspaper announced "substandard accommodation" at the Rainbow barn, it sparked a battle with the local council over housing that would last for years. The council gave the hippies notice to vacate the barn, and Jim made plans for the new house to which they were entitled; only one, since the then district scheme made no provision for communities.

In 1975 Bill, Carol, and another Kiwi couple became Rainbow shareholders. Also that year a group mainly from Christchurch, the Happsam Trucking Company, bought land adjoining Rainbow's to the south and east. Since many locals viewed the rowdy Happsammers, with their drugs and rock and roll, as threatening Golden Bay's respectable community, Rainbow's young families feared for their reputation if the two were seen as one. At first both groups tended to stress their differences, but the relationship has since improved.

When Simon came in 1976 he was with Carol. Robyn arrived with two daughters and soon teamed up with Bill. Other new members came, including Anne and partner Gregor, but 1977 was a year of change. Peter and Mary Jane no longer wanted to be part of the community and so the other members had to buy them out. And Jim and Lynn returned to the United States, leaving their house to the community, it is the Main-house now. They also left their money in the company, enabling Rainbow's second wave of members to retain the land.

By 1983 the council had reluctantly agreed to six more building permits, all sleep-outs to the one permissible Main-house. But those restrictive regulations were about to change. Rainbow was not the only place in Golden Bay where home-made housing had been springing up. A Rural Resettlement Association had formed, calling for change, and by

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<sup>9</sup> Jones, Tim and Ian Baker, *A Hard-won Freedom: Alternative Communities in New Zealand*, Auckland, Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, p.72

1983 the District Scheme was altered. Under new provisions Rainbow was able to apply for recognition as a Rural Commune and was granted it.

Rainbow's farm has never been financially profitable, but it has provided milk, mutton and beef. In 1981, five members started up a sewing business: Rainbow Wares. It manufactured toys and clothing mostly out of possum fur. In 1986 the business closed, and since that time most members have found part time work outside, often in Takaka.

Alongside equal sharing of the land,<sup>10</sup> Rainbow believed in shared decision-making. At first the members thought they could and should agree on everything. At meetings held in the Main-house consensus was at first the norm, although it slowed decisions down. Minutes of meetings were recorded in successive minute books, and the agreements reached were seen as contracts, since in theory every member was on board with them. Not until 1990 did these agreements come together in one document. The only formal meeting was the AGM required by the Companies Act. Until 2003 it was believed the company would soon be superseded by a trust.<sup>11</sup>

A process for new membership evolved that took a minimum of fifteen months. Unanimous approval by existing members was the hurdle would-be members ultimately faced.<sup>12</sup> This process did make joining Rainbow slow and difficult, but once completed it did not ensure new and old members always got along. In order to become a shareholder, new members had to pay a fee, and after doing so were issued equal packets of 100 shares. This fee was set at first at \$3000 and for many years did not increase. Eventually it did, in an attempt to match inflation so that later contributions would equate to earlier ones. But under old agreements shares were never seen as an investment and those who left or died were meant to give them back to the community. For the first thirty years new members could pay incrementally, as building houses needed money too. Such payments

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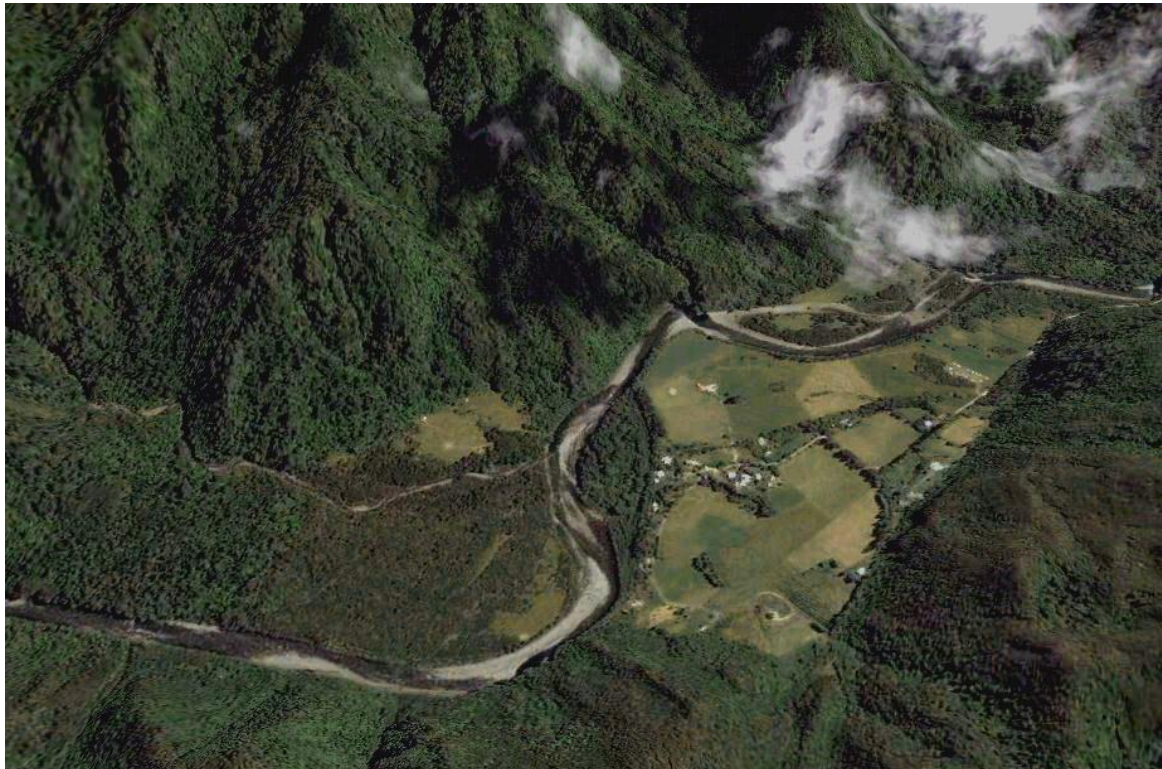
<sup>10</sup> Rainbow Valley Community Agreements, 1992, p. 1: Rainbow Valley land is to remain communally owned, with no individual owning any specific portion of it. It will not be sold.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.4: We have begun and intend to complete the involved process of transferring this legal identity to a Registered Trust, yet to be formed.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p.2: The process of becoming a Member involves the following sequence of events: Staying as a long-term visitor for a minimum of three months, paying the relevant charge. Making formal application for Provisional Membership; the minimum period of provisional membership is one year. Making formal application for full Membership; membership begins when consensus is reached and the decision recorded in the Minutes Book. Members are entitled to 100 shares in the Rainbow Valley Co. Ltd when their Membership fee is fully paid. This is solely to allow Members to feel legally secure. The shares are not an investment. They are to be returned in the event of death.

were negotiable and were designed to be affordable, but shares were never issued until the fee was fully paid.

The number of members has stayed between eight and twelve since the early 1980s. There are nine member residents now, and ten long-term residents who are not members. Seven of the nine members have lived at Rainbow more than twenty years, and five have been there since the 1970s. All but two are New Zealand born and those two are Australia born but have lived in New Zealand all their adult lives. So Rainbow's membership is stable and committed, and culturally it is unusually homogeneous. A lot of Rainbow's adult children still return for holidays, some bringing grandchildren. Though Rainbow has succeeded in creating an extended family, only one member's child lives there now and just one current member-resident is less than fifty-five. Rainbow has now decided to remain a company, to lease out land, and to allow the sale of shares. Member-residents hope these major changes, made in 2010, will help bring in new members, so ensuring a continuing community.



**Rainbow Valley**



## Tui

Wainui Bay lies to the east of Golden Bay, where the Wainui River joins the sea. In 1642 the Dutch explorer Abel Tasman anchored in Wainui Bay. After it passes the Wainui Estuary, the road from Takaka to Totaranui climbs into the hills of Abel Tasman National Park. Before it does a gravel road leads north from it to Tui land.

Following that road, the first Tui building to appear is the Tui Balms plant and office on the left. Behind it are grassy paddocks, Tui's grazing land. Further on a stand of trees largely conceals the Eventspark, which lies between the road and estuary. East of the road are Tui's houses, gardens and orchards. Most Tui houses are on flat land near the road or in a little eastern valley by a stream; a few are perched on hillsides. Trees screen them all, and the community blends into the surrounding land. Tui has fifty hectares. Roughly half is flat and lies between the road and estuary. East of the road most of the property consists of wooded hills.

Takaka is twelve kilometres to the southwest, but twice as far by road. When Abel Tasman National Park was formed in 1942 the hills from Wainui to Separation Point were not a part of it. An English immigrant, John Crockford, farmed those hills for twenty years, then sold them to the National Park. When he retired in 1984 he sold the fifty hectares he had left to Tui, and his house, which has become Tui's Community House.

In January 1983 about 300 people came together at a weeklong gathering called Whetu Marama o Te Ata (bright morning star), in Baton Valley near Motueka. Robina McCurdy, who facilitated Whetu Marama, saw its kaupapa<sup>13</sup> as beginning at Parihaka. In 1870, Parihaka in Taranaki was New Zealand's largest Maori settlement. Te Whiti o Rongomai and Tohu Kākahi, its spiritual and political leaders, forbade war and condemned violence. Robina hoped to form a new non-violent land-based community and school of life also based partly on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner. Zvonne, a Yugoslavian, responded eagerly. Many of Tui's founders would, like him, be recent immigrants seeking a peaceful and holistic way of life. Almost half were German. and the rest mainly New Zealanders. A planning group was formed and nearby Riverside Community provided mentoring. In February 1984 a core group chose to live together in a rented house near Tapawera while

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<sup>13</sup> 'Plan, scheme, proposal': Williams, Herbert W, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Wellington: P.D. Hasselberg. Government Printer, 1985, p.107

they looked for land. This was the Tui Tadmores phase, a trial time in which they sorted out ideals, experimented with sharing money, decided on a legal structure, and co-parented.<sup>14</sup> By October they had decided on the Crockford property and pooled their assets in order to buy it.

The Tui Land Trust, formed for the broad purposes of landcare, holistic education and healing, took possession of the land, and on December 13th a group of 13 adults and their children, in an assortment of mobile homes and other vehicles, made the move to Wainui Bay. Soon afterwards they drew up a broad zoning plan and applied for recognition as a rural community under the now amended District Scheme. They received permission for up to 16 dwellings and five sleep-outs, with an eventual maximum of 60 residents. Conditions were imposed, including the provision of a sewerage scheme and settling pond.

Two of the first communal projects were a large organic garden and a kindergarten. It was a time when anything seemed possible; whatever Tui dreamed it could create. It chose not to create a separate school, joining instead the larger school community of Motupipi, on the way to Takaka. The first new house was designed and built by Reinhardt and Jutta Fuchs, who later moved to Auckland where their 'Bio-Building' has been nationally recognised. More houses sprung up rapidly and there are now fifteen. New members, as at Rainbow, need to be accepted by consensus of existing members. Then, after paying a negotiated fee, they can become trustees, and can own houses but not land. They may sell houses only to other trustees..

Tui hosts many groups and workshops. In 1996 Jim Horton called for a Mens' Gathering to foster male bonding in a tribal way. Although his background was in North America, Jim felt connected to earlier Maori tribes through the karaka groves that they had planted, and the tribe of Tui men became the Karaka Tribe. Mens' Gatherings led to 'Gender Gatherings', held annually and open to outside participants. Now there are also 'Tracks' and 'Tides' events providing "rites of passage" for those teenage boys and girls who wish to be involved. Permaculture, Deep Ecology and a variety of personal growth and creativity workshops are also held at Tui. In 2000 the Tui Land Trust renamed itself the

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<sup>14</sup> McCurdy, Robina. 'Towards a Sacred Society' in *Creating harmony: conflict resolution in community* Hildur Jackson (ed.), Holte: Gaia Trust, 1999. pp. 116-117

Tui Spiritual and Educational Trust, acknowledging a greater focus on such outreach work.

The Tui Balms business began in 1985 when a beekeeper gifted his Tui Bee Balm recipe to the community. In early years some members worked as volunteers to help establish the business. It now employs around ten Tui residents full or part time and contributes five percent of an annual turnover in excess of \$600,000 to charities chosen by its employees. A number of these are Tui charities.

Tui has attracted many new members, but some have come and gone and the number of trustees has stabilised at twenty-five to thirty-five. Trustees living away from the community may rent their houses out to other trustees or non-member residents. Including children, and adults who are not trustees, Tui's current population is closer to fifty. Tui is culturally heterogeneous; of roughly thirty current members, eight are New Zealanders and twenty-two were born elsewhere, mostly in North America or Western Europe.

For many years meals were shared each day in the community house, and adult Tui residents were all expected to maintain a large communal garden. However, many of the trustees now prefer to eat at home and garden for themselves. In an attempt to cater for such changes, separate structures had evolved by 2004. Those trustees who preferred to live communally, along with other residents and visitors, were called the 'family community'. But half the trustees opted for 'extended community', which meant they could live more independently, and while continuing to attend trust meetings, could avoid community meetings.

The extended community phase is now over and there is one community again. Achieving that has meant important changes such as scaling back the Tui garden and employing a fulltime grounds-man. Today the most important goal is to attract young families; the average age of members has been climbing steadily but several grown-up children have come back to live, and Tui has young children once again.



**Tui**

## Academic literature and other sources

After the 1970s academic interest in intentional communities appeared to wane, as did the publication of related works. However the 2004 work *Living in Utopia*, by sociologists Lucy Sargisson (University of Nottingham) and Lyman Tower Sargent (University of Missouri-St Louis) is an exception to this rule. It is a survey of New Zealand communities from the mid nineteenth century until the opening of the twenty-first.<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately their interest in Utopian Studies has led these commentators to a title and perspective that, to a community insider, seem misleading. This paper, an insider view, will offer reasons for rejecting the utopian frame. Sargisson and Sargent also fail to back up their claim that New Zealand is home to more intentional communities per capita than any other country in the world,<sup>16</sup> and two of the three categories they use, ‘cooperative lifestyles’ and ‘environmentalist’, are in the first instance rather vague and in the second largely misleading: by definition most communities belong in the first, and neither Rainbow nor Tui seem to belong in the second, where they have been placed: Rainbow and Tui are geared more to social than environmental goals.<sup>17</sup> But these are quibbles; overall it is the largest and most useful work so far to focus on New Zealand communities.

Bill Metcalf’s work on communities world-wide, viewed in the light of this paper’s research, suggests that there are more similarities than differences between Rainbow and Tui and communities of similar sizes and ages in other countries.<sup>18</sup> Those in Australia, including Frog’s Hollow and Moora Moora, seem quite similar.<sup>19</sup> Two recent unpublished papers by doctoral candidate Olive Jones focus on Tui, Renaissance and Riverside. One examines the influence of foundation structures<sup>20</sup> and the other considers survival and change.<sup>21</sup> Her thoughts in both have helped me in preparing this paper, and

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<sup>15</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, preface, xv.

<sup>17</sup> Rainbow agreements: ‘Community is first and foremost about people, not land’; Cathy: “It’s always been the people thing, so that’s probably the bigger contribution that Tui makes.”

<sup>18</sup> Metcalf, Bill, *Shared visions, shared lives : communal living around the globe*, Forres, England: Findhorn Press, 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Metcalf, Bill (ed.), *From utopian dreaming to communal reality: cooperative lifestyles in Australia*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 1995.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, Olive, ‘Rural Intentional Communities in New Zealand: An examination of the influence of foundation structures’ Seminar Presentation, Department Societies and Cultures, unpublished paper, University of Waikato, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, Olive, ‘Survival and Change in New Zealand’s Intentional Communities’, Seminar Presentation, Department Societies and Cultures, unpublished paper, University of Waikato, 2010.

will be expanded in her forthcoming PHD. Jones has also written an article considering the pros and cons of insider research about New Zealand communities.<sup>22</sup>

Another writer whose recent published and unpublished work has helped this paper is Rebecca Reider. *Dreaming the Biosphere: The Theater of All Possibilities* is mainly an account of Biosphere 2, a futuristic ecostructure constructed in New Mexico, but in it Reider views communities in general through a refreshing lens.<sup>23</sup> In an unpublished paper, *Tui* she also gives a positive and insightful view of that community.<sup>24</sup>

In her 1972 work *Commitment and community* Rosabeth Kanter argues that communities are bound together not just by their shared beliefs but also by strong social structures and intense commitments; there is no separation between their values and their way of life, she thinks. She sees communities as utopian experiments and thinks that they adopt ideals of human perfectibility. This may apply to some 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century communities, and even to more recent ones formed around charismatic or religious leaders, and Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent provide a useful summary of such communities in *The utopia reader*,<sup>25</sup> but were alternative communities of the 1960s and 1970s utopian? In his *The 60s communes: hippies and beyond*, Timothy Miller shows that a lot of them were anarchist experiments where doing your own thing was more acceptable than ideology.<sup>26</sup>

Barry Shenker's *Intentional communities: ideology and alienation in communal societies*, published in 1986, is something of a personal journey through three distinct types of communities, none of them very anarchistic. He visits the Hutterites, the Kibbutz and therapeutic communities such as those run by the Richmond Fellowship. In all of these he examines the tensions between the needs of the community and the individual. While ideology helps form communities, he says, it often leads to alienation, which can break them up.<sup>27</sup> David Pepper does not see counter-cultural ideals as lasting very long. In *Communes and the green vision: counterculture, lifestyle and the New Age* he concludes

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<sup>22</sup> Jones, Olive, 'Tuning In, Turning On and Dropping Out: Revisiting the Commune Years as an Insider Researcher' in *Oral History in New Zealand*, Vol. 18, (2006), pp 18 – 23.

<sup>23</sup> Reider, *Dreaming the Biosphere: The Theater of All Possibilities*, 2009, pp.34-42

<sup>24</sup> Reider, *Tui*, 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Claeys Gregory and Lyman Tower Sargent (eds.), *The utopia reader*, New York: New York University Press, 1999

<sup>26</sup> Miller, Timothy, *The 60s communes: hippies and beyond*, Syracuse, NY : Syracuse University Press, 1999, pp.192-224.

<sup>27</sup> Shenker, Barry, *Intentional communities: ideology and alienation in communal societies*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

that in a three-stage process the English commune movement has been reabsorbed by the mainstream.<sup>28</sup>

Some in communities, inspired by a more egalitarian approach to sexuality, have for a while set aside monogamy. The search for sexual freedom does provide a frequently recurring theme in academic literature about communities. Jon Wagner sets out the egalitarian hypothesis in *Sex roles in contemporary American communes*,<sup>29</sup> a book which brings together many interesting stories about sexuality. Most Rainbow and most Tui members seem to be monogamous. New Zealand's Centrepoint, further discussed below, gives an example of a search for sexual freedom in community.<sup>30</sup>

Most sociologists see human conflict as unavoidable or even necessary. In *The functions of social conflict*, Lewis Coser suggests that in-group internal conflict maintains a balance of power, allows for change, and can provide a safety valve, but he goes on to warn that if resentments accumulate, resulting conflict can become non-realistic and dysfunctional.<sup>31</sup> In *Communes, sociology, and society* Philip Abrams and Andrew McCulloch argue that communities are usually formed by individualists and therefore usually combine egalitarianism and individualism.<sup>32</sup> They also put forward the sobering view that because communities are dependent on and contaminated by a mainstream society from which they differentiate themselves, they cannot evolve institutional relationships, and interpersonal relations tend to dominate.<sup>33</sup> Most commentators see conflict as the main reason intentional communities disband,<sup>34</sup> with conflicts over principles most dangerous.<sup>35</sup>

In ‘‘Social sustainability’: a useful theoretical framework?’ Emma Partridge explains that there are three aspects of sustainability, environmental, economic and social, and goes on

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<sup>28</sup> Pepper, David, *Communes and the green vision: counterculture, lifestyle and the New Age*, London: Green Print, 1991, pp. 204-207

<sup>29</sup> Wagner, Jon (ed.), *Sex roles in contemporary American communes*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, pp.6-7.

<sup>30</sup> Oakes, Len David, *Inside Centrepoint : the story of a New Zealand Community*, Auckland: Benton Ross, 1986.

<sup>31</sup> Coser, Lewis A., *The functions of social conflict*, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1956, p.54.

<sup>32</sup> Abrams, Philip and Andrew McCulloch, *Communes, sociology, and society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976, p.161: ‘‘a commune is a success insofar as its members seem able to negotiate their way towards the creation of a society of equals, and to do so without sacrificing their individuality in the process.’’

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.151.

<sup>34</sup> Jones, Olive, 2009, p.16.

<sup>35</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.147.

to define the social aspect in some detail.<sup>36</sup> In 1973 the Norwegian Arne Naess, concerned about sustainability of the environment, proposed the goals of deep ecology.<sup>37</sup> In his view human interference with the non-human world had become excessive and pursuing quality of life by dwelling in situations of intrinsic value was better than pursuing a higher standard of living. In *Ecology, community, and lifestyle: outline of an ecosophy* he challenged those subscribing to his views to “participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes”.<sup>38</sup> Although the back to the land and voluntary simplicity movements partly sparked by these ideas seem to have waned, there is growing academic interest in green politics and sustainability, as Andrew Dobson’s works *Justice and the Environment*<sup>39</sup> and *Green political thought*<sup>40</sup> attest. Dobson and others see environmental sustainability as an elusive goal.

The ecovillage evolved at Findhorn community in Scotland and has been defined by Jan Bang in *Growing eco-communities : practical ways to create sustainability* as a “human scale full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued”.<sup>41</sup> Some see the ecovillage as a path towards environmental sustainability. Permaculture, first developed by Bill Mollison and described by him in 1988 in *Permaculture : a designers' manual* has been considered useful in creating a sustainable environment.<sup>42</sup>

Jonathan Dawson, author of *Ecovillages: new frontiers for sustainability*, thinks ecovillages combine sharing of resources with spiritual and educational goals. After presenting five case studies of innovative ecovillages from around the world he defines them as “Private citizens’ initiatives in which the communitarian impulse is of central importance, that are seeking to win back some measure of control over community resources, that have a strong shared values base (often referred to as ‘spirituality’) and

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<sup>36</sup> Partridge, Emma, (2005) ‘‘Social sustainability’’: a useful theoretical framework?’ Paper presented at the Australasian Political Science Association Annual Conference 2005, Dunedin, New Zealand, 28-30 September 2005, retrieved 27 Feb. 2011 from

<http://auspsa.anu.edu.au/proceedings/publications/Partridgepaper.pdf>,

<sup>37</sup> Naess, Arne, ‘The shallow and the deep, long ranging ecology movements’ in *Inquiry* 16 (1973), pp. 95-100.

<sup>38</sup> Naess, Arne, *Ecology, community, and lifestyle: outline of an ecosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p.29.

<sup>39</sup> Dobson, Andrew, *Justice and the Environment*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

<sup>40</sup> Dobson, Andrew, *Green political thought, 4th ed.*, London: Routledge, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Bang, Jan Martin, *Growing eco-communities : practical ways to create sustainability*. Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2007, pp.23-25.

<sup>42</sup> Mollison, Bill, *Permaculture : a designers' manual*, Tyalgum, N.S.W., Tagari Publications, 1988.



that act as centres of research, demonstration and (in most cases) training.”<sup>43</sup> Though Rainbow conducts little or no research and training, and does not define its goals as spiritual or educational, Rainbow and Tui both seem closer to this definition of an ecovillage than some modern ecovillages, which seem to differ only marginally from commercial subdivisions. Te Manawa ecovillage in the Motueka Valley, where half a dozen section owners share 58 hectares of surrounding land, has just the following goals: alternative power, regeneration of the bush, creation of a safe and harmonious environment for children, helping each other, democratic decision making and a monthly working bee on common land. Te Manawa could perhaps equally well be described as a cooperative lifestyle block.<sup>44</sup>

According to Sargisson and Sargent, Maori values that relate to sharing may have been influential in what they call ‘environmentalist communities’.<sup>45</sup> Maori held land in common as a tribe, and shared a lot of other things as well. The modern marae is a place where Maori commonality survives. In *Where have all the flower children gone?* Sandra Gurvis observes that in the United States, only a handful of communities such as Twin Oaks still manage to share housing, income and land.<sup>46</sup> Riverside in New Zealand does as well, though it is proving difficult.<sup>47</sup>

I regret that I have so far been unable to locate and read one obviously related work. Larisa Webb has written an MA thesis entitled *Living together: change and continuity of a New Zealand intentional community*.<sup>48</sup> Olive Jones, who has read it, observes that Webb has changed the names and altered the geographical and social details of the communities where she conducted her research, in order to protect informants by disguising their identities.<sup>49</sup>

There will be further reference to academic literature around communities in my discussion and analysis. I define academic literature as that which clearly aims to make a contribution to scholarly debate. Such works engage with other scholars and use detailed

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<sup>43</sup> Dawson, Jonathan, *Ecovillages: new frontiers for sustainability*, Totnes: Green, 2006, pp.22-36.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Te Manawa" Eco village’ retrieved 20 Feb. 2011 from <http://www.temanawa.net.nz/village.htm>

<sup>45</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.114-116.

<sup>46</sup> Gurvis, Sandra, *Where have all the flower children gone?*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006, p.112.

<sup>47</sup> Jones, Olive, (2009), pp.5-6.

<sup>48</sup> Webb, Larisa Ingrid, *Living together: change and continuity of a New Zealand intentional community*, Thesis (MA Anthropology), University of Auckland, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Jones, Olive, 2006

referencing, Since I am equally indebted to non-academic works, it is appropriate to mention some of these.

In 1971 Tim Shadbolt advocated what he saw as better ways of life in *Bullshit and Jellybeans*: Instead of “chemicalised, industrialised, big business agriculture” he called for new “organic farms, agricultural communes, Beevilles, Wilderlands, Riversides”. Alternative communities were springing up like mushrooms, most rejecting the consumerist suburban culture of the cities and seeking more sustainable lifestyles. Inspired by the US *Whole Earth Catalogue*, Alister Taylor soon assembled a New Zealand one. Next came Waitati’s *Mushroom Magazine*, which several Rainbow members helped in getting off the ground. It advocated voluntary simplicity and gave helpful advice on buying land. Scott’s ‘Share purchase a farm’ in *Mushroom 4* is fairly typical.<sup>50</sup> Simon Jones, interviewed for this research, produced an illustrated article about the Rainbow Main-house which appeared in *Mushroom 12*.<sup>51</sup> Grass roots contributors echoed the writings of Arne Naess: Peter Lusk, interviewed in 1975, explained “we’re trying to live in a way that is ecologically sound”,<sup>52</sup> and Stephanie McKee explained in 1978 that “The essence of voluntary simplicity is living in a way that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich”.<sup>53</sup> By the mid seventies many New Zealanders were sympathetic, including Prime Minister Norman Kirk who proposed an ‘Ohu Scheme’ to help young people form intentional communities. As Sargisson and Sargent note, only four countries ever had such policies: Australia, Israel, the US and New Zealand. Of these only New Zealand aimed its scheme at “disaffected youth”.<sup>54</sup> Though open to ideas from overseas, young people like Tim Shadbolt and the Mushroom team were influential in creating a distinctly New Zealand alternative movement. Their contribution should not go unrecognised.

I have found no books dealing specifically with Rainbow Valley or Tui, but books have been written about three other New Zealand alternative communities, Riverside, Centrepoint and Jerusalem, Of these three only Riverside survives, but all were influential and are relevant. In *Community: The Story of Riverside*, Lynn Rain recounts and celebrates the fifty years that followed its emergence as a Christian pacifist rural

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<sup>50</sup> Scott, Dylan, ‘Share purchase a farm’ in *Mushroom 4*, 1976, pp. 5 – 8.

<sup>51</sup> Jones, Simon, ‘Evolution of Community House’ in *Mushroom 12*, 1978, pp. 38 – 39.

<sup>52</sup> Admore, Alan and Peter Lusk, ‘Mushroom interview’ in *Mushroom 2*, 1975, p.12.

<sup>53</sup> McKee, Stephanie, ‘The art of social alchemy’ in *Mushroom 14*, 1978, pp. 2 – 6.

<sup>54</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.xiii

community in 1941.<sup>55</sup> During the 1970s a decision was made to accept non-Christians as members. After this more new members were attracted and the community was revitalised. Another twenty years have passed since Lynn Rain's book appeared, and there are further choices to be made. Having lasted several generations Riverside is now New Zealand's oldest alternative community. Rainbow and Tui have been helped and influenced by it in several ways. Like Riverside, they both, espouse non-violence.

During the 1980s Rainbow members Simon, Carol and Gregor attended personal growth workshops at Centrepoint. In 1986 Len Oakes believed internal dissension and a hostile media had created a distorted view of his community. In *Inside Centrepoint* he tried to set this straight. He emphasised the many things he saw as positive, and wrote of guru Potter sympathetically.<sup>56</sup> However, Centrepoint collapsed soon after in a welter of recriminations, and Potter was imprisoned after being convicted of sex and drug crimes. The modern reader may conclude that Oakes himself had the distorted view. Sargisson and Sargent assert that *Inside Centrepoint* was written from a perspective that he has now largely recanted.<sup>57</sup>

John Newton was not an insider like Rain or Oakes. He did not live with Baxter at Jerusalem and wrote *The double rainbow* decades after that community's demise. Though not in a position to rely on personal experience, Newton has clear ideas on which he builds this history. After describing what took place during the years that Baxter was alive he outlines other groups inspired by Jerusalem and then recounts how youthful Pakeha who stayed on at the pa after the poet's death learned about Maori culture as they helped their hosts. He sees in this the "double rainbow" Baxter prophesied, foreshadowing a future in which Pakeha and Maori values blend.<sup>58</sup> I found no other books that focussed on particular New Zealand communities. If, as McCurdy has suggested, communities have life stages like individuals, only a recent book could give a current picture of an ongoing community.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Rain, Lynn, *Community: The Story of Riverside: 1941 –1991*, Lower Moutere: Riverside Community Trust Board, 1991.

<sup>56</sup> Oakes, 1986.

<sup>57</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.7

<sup>58</sup> Newton, John, *The double rainbow: James K. Baxter, Ngāti Hau and the Jerusalem commune*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> McCurdy, 1999, pp. 115-116

Before *Living in Utopia* the only extensive survey of New Zealand communities I am aware of is *A Hard Won Freedom*. It is not an academic work: while *The Story of Riverside* has a two-page bibliography and *Living in Utopia*'s works cited list runs to fifteen pages, *A Hard Won Freedom* has no bibliography at all. It does have photographs, and photographer Ian Baker appears as co-author alongside writer Tim Jones. The two men set out on respective journeys staying at many of the same communities in the hope of capturing "a moment in time in the development of the alternative community in New Zealand". They succeed very well in doing that.<sup>60</sup>

Lyman Tower Sargent previously published a research guide to New Zealand communities<sup>61</sup> and *Utopianz: a guide to intentional communities & communal living in Aotearoa* is still another useful survey.<sup>62</sup> In addition to secondary sources I have gathered together a good deal of primary material: over a dozen Newspaper articles along with many published and unpublished articles. I also have access to minute books, agreements, constitutions, deeds, resource consents, and other documents too numerous to detail.

## Methodology

Some academic studies of communities have been by sociologists, who look at systems as they function at a single point in time. As a historian I can examine evolutions, stages of development. McCurdy writes: "In my observation a group follows the same life stages as a living being".<sup>63</sup> In this paper I mostly draw on ten interviews approved by Massey University in accordance with its Code of Ethical Conduct. In each case I was the interviewer. I recorded the interviews digitally and later I produced transcriptions of each one. Subjects were given copies of their transcriptions and, if they wanted one, an audio-file of the interview. All have consented to copies of these being placed in an appropriate archive when this project is complete, initially the archives of the two communities.

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<sup>60</sup> Jones, Tim and Ian Baker, 1975.

<sup>61</sup> Sargent, Lyman Tower, *New Zealand Intentional Communities: A Research Guide*, (1997)

<sup>62</sup> Greenaway, Ruth, Leith McMurray and David Colyer, *Utopianz: a guide to intentional communities & communal living in Aotearoa*, Christchurch: Straw Umbrella Trust, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> McCurdy, 1999, pp. 115-116

I see the field of oral history as rich because it offers unique insights<sup>64</sup> and preserves much that would otherwise be lost.<sup>65</sup> Its methodology is cooperative,<sup>66</sup> sympathetic,<sup>67</sup> and leads to a more narrative approach.<sup>68</sup> It is necessarily subjective, with regard to both historian and subject<sup>69</sup>, and this is something to be wary of. However, by transforming objects into subjects it can, Thompson suggests, make history “truer”.<sup>70</sup>

There is a danger in relying too much on memory, as Ludmilla Jordanova notes,<sup>71</sup> but this can very well be overcome by checking oral evidence against other sources. Except where I am able to do that I don’t assume that oral evidence is factual. Sometimes there is a danger too that the subjectivity of the spoken word may result in poorer scholarship.<sup>72</sup> I don’t think that there is excessive subjectivity in what was said in interviews for this research. Through much discussion of the goals in question over many years during consensus-seeking, I and my subjects have had ample opportunity to form objective views.

In 1970 I was nineteen and wrote a longish letter to James K Baxter at Jerusalem, telling him of my plans for living in a mountain valley, and enquiring what he thought constituted a community. I now regret not keeping his reply, which was extremely brief. He said that if the people in a room shared the same fag, that constituted a community; I didn’t smoke. But he went on to say I would be welcome at Jerusalem. At nineteen I did pay a visit, walking up the Whanganui on a moonlit night. Baxter was not at home. There was a place to sleep, but little food for anyone. Like Baxter’s letter, the reality of his community was disappointing. Aged twenty-three I once again went looking for

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<sup>64</sup> Portelli, Alessandro, ‘What makes Oral History Different?’ in Robert Perks and Alastair Thomson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, London: Routledge, 1998, p.71: “it offers access to phenomena that are otherwise close to invisible.”

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*: “Historical work using oral sources is unfinished because of the nature of the sources; historical work excluding oral sources (where available) is incomplete by definition.”

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*, p.70: “the documents of oral history are always the result of a relationship, of a shared project in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are involved together”

<sup>67</sup> Thompson, Paul, *The voice of the past: oral history*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p.12: “the historian comes to the interview to learn”

<sup>68</sup> Portelli, 1998, p.73: “oral history ... reveals historiography as an autonomous act of narration.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*, p.70: “It is the researcher who decides that there will be an interview in the first place. Researchers often introduce specific distortions: informants tell them what they believe they want to be told and thus reveal who they think the researcher is.”

<sup>70</sup> Thompson, 2000, p.117

<sup>71</sup> Jordanova, Ludmilla, *History in Practice*, London: Arnold, 2000, p.52: “Oral history is based on the idea that powerful insights can be derived from people talking about their experiences. It therefore gives a certain status to memory, no matter how complex or uncertain this mental faculty may be.”

<sup>72</sup> *ibid*, p.53: “A person speaking to a historian of their own experience generates an especially direct kind of evidence” and “our romantic sensibilities are readily engaged. This ... may create an emotional aura that affects the resulting scholarship.”

community. From Riverside I was directed to Moonsilver Forest, above Upper Takaka; I was more favourably impressed with this fledgeling community, and joined. Three other members and myself imagined there were drastic changes coming to the world. Famine and war, we thought were imminent. We were survivalists, and we imagined Moonsilver would be our mountain sanctuary. When it broke up as a community I lived and worked for ten more years outside community. Then as the solo father of a two year old I came to Rainbow and have now lived there for twenty years.

Labrum does not believe that history objectively “records” the past. Rather it charts present concerns, and is inflected by contemporary politics.<sup>73</sup> My point of view is clearly a subjective one, and in this paper I cannot detach myself from the contemporary politics of my community. But nonetheless I hope to write a useful history. Clearly this paper is insider history. Through my direct experience as a community insider I have unrivalled access to a lot of evidence. Outsiders are sometimes denied information simply because they are outsiders. Sargisson and Sargent could obtain no information on membership or ownership at Rainbow’s neighbour Happisam when they enquired there, and so recorded membership and ownership of Happisam as “unknown” in their table of environmentalist communities.<sup>74</sup> A Happisammer has explained to me that they decided not to give such information to outsiders.

Controversy erupted over the insider/outsider dichotomy’ in New Zealand when Keri Kaa, reviewing Michael King’s *Maori - A Photographic and Social History* in 1983, lambasted it, and wrote “For years we [Maori] have provided academic ethnic fodder for research and researchers. Perhaps it is time we set things straight ...”<sup>75</sup> According to Kaa’s logic, insiders like myself might be the *only* ones allowed to write about communities. But King’s response was that for differing cultures to understand one another best “we need the benefit of *all* the perspectives we share”.<sup>76</sup> Doug Munro reaches much the same conclusion: “Both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, if these categories have to be used, have contributions to make”.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Labrum, Bronwyn, ‘The changing meanings and practices of welfare, 1940s – 1990s’, in Byrnes, Giselle, (Ed.) *The new Oxford history of New Zealand*, South Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press Australia and New Zealand, 2009, p. 291.

<sup>74</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.120.

<sup>75</sup> King, Michael, *Being Pakeha*, Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985, p.163.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.172.

<sup>77</sup> Munro, Doug, ‘Who ‘Owns’ Pacific History? Reflections on the Insider/Outsider Dichotomy’ in *The Journal of Pacific History*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Dec., 1994), p.237.

In 'Tuning In, Turning On, and Dropping Out: Revisiting the Commune Years as an Insider Researcher' Olive Jones suggests that although being an insider enables rich data to emerge in oral histories conducted by community insiders, this can be problematic owing to the sensitive nature of some of the material.<sup>78</sup> Friendly or intimate relationships need not, in my view adversely affect research. Though personal relationships in Rainbow and in Tui do imply constraint - I do not wish to give offence to friends or make new enemies - in my view such constraint is not a handicap. People in these communities are reasonable and an unbalanced view of them would be most likely to offend. Interview subjects have all had the chance to read my work, and where they've found mistakes have told me so. I think it is of some advantage to receive such scrutiny. I write for members of these two communities as much as for a wider audience.

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<sup>78</sup> Jones, Olive, 2006, pp 18 – 23.

## **Discussion and analysis - Shared ownership, decision-making by consensus, and sustainability at Rainbow Valley and Tui Communities**

### Diggers and Dreamers <sup>79</sup>

To the extent that Sargisson and Sargent believe members of communities like Rainbow and Tui are living in utopia because they want a finished, perfect world, <sup>80</sup> Sargisson and Sargent are out of touch with the reality: few if any believe a perfect world is possible, and most are gritty realists who relish change and want to play a part in it. But the concluding chapter of *Living in Utopia* provides a different definition: utopia, it seems, is “social dreaming”, dreaming of or desiring a better life. “In most cases utopias do not suggest that every problem will be solved.” <sup>81</sup> This is a radical redefinition and most dictionaries do not agree with it. <sup>82</sup> If utopians simply wanted a better way of life, not only members of communities but everybody else as well would be utopians.

In 1971 John Lennon knew he would be called a dreamer, and he knew that many others shared his dreams: “You may say I’m a dreamer / but I’m not the only one”. He dreamed that there could be a world without nations, religions or possessions. <sup>83</sup> People with these extraordinary dreams may still be better thought of as reformers than utopians, reformers who have urged the same reforms for centuries. In 1649 some of them staged a dig in on St George’s Hill: *We come in peace they said, to dig and sow / We come to work the lands in common and to make the waste grounds grow / This earth divided we will make whole / So it may be a common treasury for all.* <sup>84</sup> In a broadsheet entitled *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* these Diggers called for an end of private ownership and a “spirit of community”, <sup>85</sup> they claimed that Mother Earth loved all her children, and could feed them

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<sup>79</sup> Since 1989 *Diggers and Dreamers* magazine has been the primary resource for information, issues, and ideas about intentional communities and communal living in the UK.

<sup>80</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p. xiii: “Utopia is the good place that is no place”

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159

<sup>82</sup> e.g. “*Utopia* An ideally perfect place, especially in its social, political, and moral aspects.” retrieved 9 February 2011 from [www.thefreedictionary.com/utopia](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/utopia)

<sup>83</sup> John Lennon, *Imagine*, 1971

<sup>84</sup> Rosselson, Leon, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 1974. “It’s the story of the Digger Commune of 1649 and their vision of the earth as ‘a common treasury’. It’s become a kind of anthem for various radical groups, particularly since Billy Bragg recorded it, and is not adapted from any other song. The title is taken from Christopher Hill’s book about the English revolution: “Corrections and clarifications”, *The Guardian*, May 16, 2009.

<sup>85</sup> Gerrard Winstanley & 14 others *The True Levellers Standard Advanced*, April, 1649: “Break in pieces quickly the Band of particular Propriety [property], disown this oppressing Murder, Oppression and Thievery of Buying and Selling of Land, owning of landlords and paying of Rents and give thy Free Consent to make the Earth a Common Treasury without grumbling.....that all may enjoy the benefit of their



all if humans were more moderate,<sup>86</sup> and they believed that by doing away with “single interests” they could end violence and war.<sup>87</sup> In short, they tried to institute shared ownership, sustainability and decision making by consensus. These three reforming goals are Western and perennial.

### Shared Ownership

Imagine no possessions, I wonder if you can; during the 1970s some in New Zealand’s hippy generation could.<sup>88</sup> Marx cast a giant shadow that had only just begun to wane, but while his works foresaw a revolution based on violence those in the love generation preferred non-violent reform.<sup>89</sup> Some hoped, like Patsy Sun, that the communities they built might coalesce to form a worldwide commonwealth drawing its strength from true empowerment of individuals.<sup>90</sup> However, those who joined communities were mainly individualists, and in communities few had the energy for larger goals.

*The True Levellers Standard Advanced* reveals that community based on empowerment of individuals is not a new idea and voices from the 1970s clearly re-echo those of 1649: “If people worked in order to satisfy society’s needs rather than to make maximum profit for an elite,” wrote David Bisset for *Mushroom 8*, “society’s relationship with the earth could become one of constructive utilisation instead of destructive exploitation and we could feel at last that the earth is held in trust by all people but possessed by none.”<sup>91</sup>

The St George’s Hill diggers were Christians, and our history is littered with attempts like theirs to put the bible into practice. The goals of sharing and non-violence are Christian goals, as in his gospels Christ opposes violence and greed, instructing followers to love

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Creation. And hereby thou wilt *honour thy Father and thy Mother* : Thy Father, which is the spirit of community, that made all and that dwells in all. ...”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid: “... Thy Mother, which is the Earth, that brought us all forth: That as a true Mother, loves all her children. Therefore do not hinder the Mother Earth from giving all her children suck, by thy Inclosing into particular hands, and holding up that cursed Bondage of Inclosure by thy Power.”

<sup>87</sup> Ibid: " Property and single interest divide the people of a land and the whole world into parties and are the causes of all wars and bloodshed and contention everywhere.”

<sup>88</sup> Admore, Alan and Peter Lusk, ‘Mushroom interview’ in *Mushroom 2*, 1975, p 12: Question: What do you think are some of the obligations and expectations of community life? Response: From my experience I’d say from each according to their ability to each according to their need.

<sup>89</sup> Lennon, John *Revolution*, 1968:

*You say you want a revolution / Well, you know / We all want to change the world / You tell me that it's evolution / Well, you know / We all want to change the world / But when you talk about destruction / Don't you know that you can count me out?*

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, Alister (ed.) *The First New Zealand Whole Earth Catalogue*, Wellington: Alister Taylor, 1972, p.186.

<sup>91</sup> Bisset, David, ‘Working for Change’ in *Mushroom 8*, 1977, p.5

their neighbours as themselves. In 1939 committed Christians founded Riverside Community. Hubert Holdaway wanted a place where people worked and shared the land “from each according to their ability to each according to their need”. “If we believe in it, why don’t we do it?” challenged Hubert’s wife.<sup>92</sup> And Riverside, a pacifist income-sharing alternative community, has so far lasted seventy years.

Since 1649 the power of the owners has not faded, but reforming “social dreamers”, often influenced by Christianity, have nibbled at it; parts of it are gone. The legal ownership of other humans has now largely disappeared. Marx sought to overthrow the capitalist owning class. Instead, in Western countries, capitalism has become ubiquitous. But reformers in New Zealand in the 1930s managed to build a welfare state that still survives. Free speech, democracy and equal rights are now widespread and new mass media such as the Internet are bringing a more planetary consciousness. Reformers are still turning their extraordinary ideas into realities.

It seems remarkable to hear of Mother Earth from 17<sup>th</sup> century Christians. Around three thousand years ago Judaism supplanted the worship of a Mother Goddess with its solitary male God, and Judaism led to Christianity. Apparently the Mother Goddess was remembered though, perhaps by poorer people in the countryside, and references to her in print began again when those people began to read and write.

Colonial powers once again confronted Mother Earth when their approach to land clashed with the attitudes of those they colonised.<sup>93</sup> In the United States, Chief Si’ahl (Seattle) is credited with having said: “How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Earth does not belong to us; we belong to earth. The earth is our mother, and whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.”<sup>94</sup> At Manawapou, in Taranaki, Titokowaru swore to retain his land for his descendants: “My mother is dead but I was nourished by her milk. Let our land be kept by us as milk for our children.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Rain, 1991, pp.8-12

<sup>93</sup> Byrnes, Giselle, *Boundary markers: land surveying and the colonisation of New Zealand*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2001

<sup>94</sup> Though Si’ahl supposedly said this in 1854, no English translation was published until 1887 (*Seattle Sunday Star*, October 29, 1887, p.3).

<sup>95</sup> Belich, James. *I shall not die : Titokowaru's war, New Zealand, 1868-9*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin/Port Nicholson Press, 1989, p.4

In Maori myth the primal parents are Rangi and Papa. Papa is Mother Earth, and reverence for her shapes Maori attitudes to land. While Maori seem to own their land collectively, this really means that they belong to *it*, as Judith Binney writes.<sup>96</sup> Sargisson and Sargent believe that Maori values have been an important background influence on New Zealand's 'environmentalist communities',<sup>97</sup> and at Jerusalem Baxter did probably intend that Pakeha should learn from Maori about land. He saw it as "the mother of the Maori people", whom European governments had turned into "an old prostitute."<sup>98</sup> After he died in 1972 ideas once current in Jerusalem were influential in some subsequent communities.<sup>99</sup>

Perhaps, as Joseph Campbell writes, all humans share such myths as Mother Earth.<sup>100</sup> The idea of possessing, or worse yet dividing up and selling, the body of a universal mother is repugnant, especially in some communities. At Tui the Earth Mother and the land are celebrated. McCurdy writes: "As we live close with the land and choose to deepen our relationship with nature, we come together to celebrate and honour the change of the seasons, at solstice and equinox. ... We customarily begin our gardening working bees with some form of attunement and thanksgiving to the land."<sup>101</sup> Such celebrations have been held at Rainbow too and both communities now often mark the changing seasons at the solstices and equinoxes. Juliet Batten's *Celebrating The Southern Seasons, Rituals for Aotearoa* has been a useful sourcebook for such rituals. It blends traditional Maori and European practices in ways that venerate the Earth. As one example, Matariki the beginning of the Maori year is seen as a more appropriate 'beginning' festival than Christmas, which falls in midsummer in New Zealand, traditionally the middle of the year.<sup>102</sup> It is perhaps too soon to say whether such rituals encourage an enduring love of common land, but Kahu, one of Rainbow's youngest members, does see Rainbow as her place to stand: "I'm here to be care-taking of the land, and part of the community. No, I'm not interested in gaining wealth in any form. I consider this my turangawaewae."<sup>103</sup> Though I'm not Maori, I feel that everyone should have a place where they can always be, and live, and stand."

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<sup>96</sup> Binney, Judith, *Encircled lands: Te Urewera, 1820-1921*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.114-115

<sup>98</sup> Baxter, James K., *The Young Warriors*, Hocken MS 975/126. p.13

<sup>99</sup> Newton.

<sup>100</sup> Campbell, Joseph, *The Hero's Journey*. Harper & Row, 1990.

<sup>101</sup> McCurdy, 1999, p.134

<sup>102</sup> Batten, Juliet, *Celebrating The Southern Seasons, Rituals for Aotearoa*, North Shore City: Tandem Press, 1995, pp-36-38

<sup>103</sup> standing place

Many of those attracted to community rejected capitalism and the profit motive, yet most came from middle class families where parents had hoped they would, as adults, earn good incomes and make wise investments. As they've grown older, sometimes those ideas have re-emerged. Carol, one of Rainbow's first members, reflects that in the early phase of the community she was happy, but she was also working against her deeper nature: "Naturally I was quite possessive, acquisitive, individualistic, so it was a real test to be sharing living space. I enjoyed the garden but liked having my own patch. The ideals I adopted were counter to how I'd been brought up. Now I'm more respectful of that, more integrated."

Sargisson and Sargent believe New Zealand makes shared ownership of land more difficult for Pakeha than Maori. Communities have had to find ingenious ways around what Sargisson and Sargent see as "restrictive laws". Often multiple-occupancy has remained technically illegal, and those sharing land have had to keep a low profile for fear of prosecution.<sup>104</sup> This was the case for Rainbow members until 1983, when 'rural commune status' became available in Golden Bay. Rainbow and Tui were both granted it, but Tui did not have to wait nine years.

The legal structure used by Rainbow is a Limited Liability Company. These can hold land but are designed to manage business risk. In 1993 a new Companies Act made Limited Liability Companies more flexible and clarified the role of directors. At Rainbow all resident members usually are directors. According to Rainbow's original company constitution, decisions over land were subject to a 51% majority, although a recently adopted new constitution changes that to 75%. Shareholders have the right to sell their shares and can't be made to give them up. Until 2010 the land was still disposable by 51%, and shareholders all stood to profit by its sale. But these provisions contradicted key agreements reached consensually. As long as shareholders complied with rules they'd made themselves the legal technicalities could be ignored.

The structure used by Tui is an Educational and Spiritual Trust. All land and other common assets are held in trust for charitable purposes, and one of these is the community itself. At Tui all full members are trustees, but none of them can benefit from sale of land. If Trusts wind up, their assets go to other charitable trusts. A trust would usually be

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<sup>104</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.176 - 77.

wound up voluntarily or in the event of bankruptcy. On rare occasions government might intervene to wind one up, as was the case with Centrepoint.

Simon believes a trust may be the best legal structure for a community: “We have a limited liability company, which is basically to run a business, that’s what they’re for, and that’s really not our primary purpose. A lot of other communities, like Tui, have a trust, and they have two levels: the trust, which holds the land, and then another structure, the community. The trust is more an overarching body, which holds the land for future generations. I think that is probably a better structure for a community.”

For over thirty years agreements ruled at Rainbow, but there were irregularities. Departing shareholders were meant to give back shares to be reissued; some did not. At first it was intended to dissolve the company and form a trust, but that was difficult and was postponed. Then attitudes began to change. Carol: “I used to think the company wasn’t at all reflective of how we managed ourselves, whereas now it’s becoming a more practical tool. I suppose that is since I’ve become more conservative and aligned with the way life is managed outside. I used to think a trust would be more practical, but I knew the story of Beeville: that was a trust, and it didn’t protect it from disintegrating, it just meant that when it inevitably did no-one could benefit from it because nobody owned it.” Beeville, a secular pacifist community near Hamilton began around 1933 and was wound up in 1973.<sup>105</sup> Tim Jones taught at Beeville during the 1960s and Simon lived there as a child. Since trustees cannot receive pecuniary gain from sale of assets, those who created Beeville took nothing away from it. Rainbow has now decided to remain a company.

Houses at Tui and at Rainbow are owned privately. Cathy explains the situation at Tui: “When you join, you actually pay for a right to occupy. You can’t own a house unless you’re a member, and being a member means that you’re a trustee. Then you pay for your house yourself. You can’t sell the right to occupy, that’s not transferable. You can only sell your house, and only to another member. In reality, the houses get sold to someone that’s already there, because we always have people that are in the pipeline.” In both communities house owners have been granted ‘stewardship’ of some surrounding land.

At Rainbow stewardship areas have until now been flexible. That is about to change. The company will now lease land round houses to house owners for 34 years. Shares will now

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<sup>105</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.33-38; Jones, Tim, pp.20-30

be attached to leases; those who join and buy a lease buy membership. This makes the process more like purchasing a unit title. Land around houses will become more private and its boundaries more permanent. Why has there been this change? It is related to investment and inheritance.

There is a wish for those who need to leave to get a realistic price for what they own. There is a wish for children to inherit something even if they don't come back. Carol: "I see myself as an owner who could benefit from the sale of my individual house and the land around it." If parents benefit, their children can as well. And there's a sense that future members won't buy in if it is not a good investment, because times have changed. Robyn: "for us it didn't matter, we didn't even consider security: What are we going to get at the end of it? Never a thought! But I'm aware that that's what other people want. They are looking at it as an investment, and not just of their emotional and physical selves. Not everyone can think like we thought. I've let go of that."

Shared ownership was not entirely a selfless enterprise. When members first came in, one clear advantage was affordability. Cathy: "You put some money in, but it's really miniscule compared with what it would cost to buy your own property." Kahu: "There would be no way I could have had this kind of life if I had tried to buy my own piece of land and start from scratch; it would have been impossible."

For Tui's founding members, purchasing the land involved some sacrifice. They pooled their assets in order to buy the land, then gave that to the trust. In doing so they gave up any chance of profit, willingly, because in their view such a trust pre-empted future arguments. Yana: "We put all our money in here, and we worked really hard for basic comforts. We have done that consciously and willingly, to avoid ownership problems about this beautiful piece of land, which we have seen in other communities." Most Tui members think it was a good idea. Cathy: "As individuals we don't have any legal grip on land at all. There's nothing to argue about, in terms of somebody getting more than the others." Surendra: "I lived in a community for a while in Byron Bay, about 20 years ago. It was founded very similar to this community, but the difference was that they could sell parcels in the community. And I went back there 15 years later, and what I found was a lot of focus on financial gain from selling land. When I came back I realised we don't have that problem."

Cathy is happy not to be an owner; her words reflect those attributed to Si'ahl: "For me the whole concept of land ownership is really bizarre. It's like 'who owns the air? Who owns the water? It's just a planet that we're all living on. It's not land as a commodity. It's land as a home and as part of the whole. I don't have any sense of personal ownership."

At Rainbow though, Robyn and Carol think that owning is okay; Robyn: "We own the land. And we are guardians and caretakers. It is important that people know we own it, take pride in it, and are responsible for it." Carol: "I see individual members as owning the land and taking on the 'ownerish' task of being responsible for it, during their lifetimes, within the system Westerners have. I see them also as caretakers and guardians. I think anyone can be that, even in a subdivision." But Carol only wants to see the land around the houses used as an investment; she sees the other land quite differently: "That's common land, that's sacred. That would be a tragedy." It could be sold, if 75% of shareholders made that decision. However, legal leases for small sections of it could make the sale of the whole more difficult, especially if lease dates overlapped.

Members at Tui are divided over land as an investment. Robina: "We have a real mix here of people who are in the capitalist system and people who are in the socialist system. I think there are people here who would prefer to have their own land, their own freehold title, for more materialistic reasons. We don't have a choice about that, with our legal deed; it's a done deal. But it's a different era we're in now. People have more of a need for security. I work with a lot of different intentional community groups: I think there's a role for all structures, and there's a real place for a unit title." Cherrie: "When I look at somewhere like Earthsong, where you've got a share, I think that you are able to move on more easily. You've got something that you can actually sell." Earthsong is an urban cohousing development in West Auckland incorporating many of the features of an ecovillage. Inheritance has also been discussed; Barry: "We've put some clauses in place where if a building is bequeathed to children, or to somebody else that is not a member, there is a process to go through. They would be given some grace to determine whether they want to come and live here and be a trustee, otherwise the understanding is that the house is sold to somebody who does want that. There is an element that will be interesting to see worked through."

At both communities there is uncertainty regarding how many more houses they will be allowed to build. That number could affect new membership. Barry: “It’s really just hit us smack in the eyes this year, with our withdrawal of our consent application. We’ve been living in a little bubble out here for twenty years thinking that if we want more houses we’ll apply for them. Our occupancy rates have dropped since the kids left home. We’ve needed more houses for the same number of people. So how we house up to 60 people is now an issue. The world has changed out there really significantly, with the consent process, and the environment court. And our land has limited ability to provide new sites.”

At Rainbow three dwellings owned by the community and two by members are now rented out. Reasons for renting are pragmatic ones. Rainbow is glad to have the money coming in to spend on maintenance. As community buildings age more money must be spent on them; as members age they are less able to do the work themselves. Members may also rent to maintain or upgrade a house they cannot sell or choose not to. As Olive Jones observes, one consequence of the decline in membership at Riverside has been that an increasing number of the empty houses have been rented, currently around half. Some tenants interact with the community, but they do not participate in meetings or decision-making. Still, renting often seems less onerous than income sharing.<sup>106</sup> Renting can be divisive in communities.

For most at Rainbow and at Tui the advantages of sharing ownership have outweighed any disadvantages. Kahu: “Endless, endless advantages: with bringing up families, with growing food, everything. There is just so much to be gained from a group of people living together and sharing land.” Carol: “If I go away there will be someone else to milk my goat.” Anne: “The responsibility is shared. Different people have different skills, interests and abilities, and can work in different areas.” She sees that change is coming and accepts that too: “As we’ve got older were trying to deal with making changes. And I think that’s a good thing too.”

Matt Perry sees a “sceptical souring” of revolutionary dreams among the generation who grew up in the late 1960s, the generation that provided most of Rainbow’s members and many of Tui’s.<sup>107</sup> While changing attitudes to shared ownership seem more pragmatic

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<sup>106</sup> Jones, Olive, 2010, p.7

<sup>107</sup> Perry, Matt, *Marxism and history*, New York: Palgrave, 2002, p.148



than sceptical, and there is little sourness, for some who once were certain there is now uncertainty; Robyn: “I still would like the community to continue after we die, but I’ve changed with that. This was my dream, our dream, and it might only be for us. I would like it to be for the future, and I’d love our children to be involved at some point. We’d be here waiting and welcoming them, but ... I don’t actually know...”

### Non-violence and Consensus

In *A Hard Won Freedom* Tim Jones saw communities as trying to form a new society through “journeys beyond violence”. Members had chosen to avoid straight jobs, which in the city would have paid their rents or mortgages.<sup>108</sup> They worked and ate together, made decisions by consensus, and shared land. In all these ways their values seem to match those of the Diggers: *We work and eat together, we need no swords / We will not bow down to the masters, nor pay rent to the lords.*<sup>109</sup> Like the Diggers, and like Riverside, New Zealand’s oldest secular community,<sup>110</sup> Rainbow and Tui have from their beginnings been committed to non-violence. Carol and Simon began the Golden Bay Peace Group in 1982 after seeing a peace display at a Nile River Festival. They staged a public meeting and petitioned for Golden Bay to become a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone, which it did in 1986. Simon: “This was something that we believed in strongly, and fortunately a lot of other people did too.”<sup>111</sup> But after thirty years wars haven’t gone away, and many people doubt they ever will. Not everyone who advocates non-violence is a committed pacifist.

Is conflict good or bad? In a useful analysis, Sargent and Sargisson observe that while Thomas Hobbes saw conflict as primarily dangerous and destructive, most modern sociologists have a more nuanced approach, and some like Lewis Coser see it as “socially desirable”.<sup>112</sup> Members of Rainbow and of Tui often see it that way too; all the ten subjects interviewed agreed that conflict is inevitable, and many said it was desirable. Here are the comments made by some of them: Anne: “It’s part of the process of trying to sort things out”; Carol: “I think it is inevitable in any healthy relationship”; Cherrie “it

<sup>108</sup> Jones, Tim, p.147: “I was encouraged to find among the people I met that the idea of a career was almost entirely absent.”

<sup>109</sup> Rosselson, Leon, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 1974; Rosselson may in fact have been as much inspired in these lines by 1970s communities as by what he knew of Diggers from reading Christopher Hill’s book.

<sup>110</sup> Riverside dropped its requirement that members be Christians around 1971: Rain, 1991, pp.89-92.

<sup>111</sup> Perkins, Jack, ‘Peace Group Golden Bay’, Radio New Zealand National, 20<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2011. retrieved 20 Feb. 2011 from <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/highlights/spectrum>

<sup>112</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.141-144

brings life into a situation”; Robina: “Conflict is invaluable, an opportunity riding on a wild wind, so long as there are skills and tools to manage it”. It is significant that all these comments are so positive. These people know that conflict isn’t always wrong.

Goals of non-violence and consensus-seeking are not identical, but they are intertwined. Gerrard Winstanley and his supporters wrote in 1649 that: “Property and single interest divide the people of a land and of the whole world into parties, and are the causes of all wars and bloodshed and contention everywhere.” At Rainbow and Tui members are often expected to put collective needs above single interests, whereas in outside society single interests usually take precedence.

Winstanley and his diggers hoped their “spirit of community” would end wars, bloodshed and contention. They did not have the chance to test this out, because instead the authorities violently dispersed them. Then, two years later, Hobbes set out a theory of government that has lasted to the present day. He argued that there is a social contract between governments and individuals. In his view humans “in a state of nature” (that is lacking an effective government) would fall back into brutishness and misery. To him the Diggers’ commonwealth, lacking authority, was an absurdity.<sup>113</sup> In Western states the most egalitarian form of government is thought to be democracy, and so we have developed democratic institutions over centuries. Theorists from Aristotle to Hobbes have argued that our selfish human nature means we must be governed from above or else society will be dissolved in anarchy. But Sargisson and Sargent don’t agree. They think in small egalitarian groups consensus rather than democracy is best. In their assessment it has worked in small communities.<sup>114</sup>

One such community is Riverside. Successive wars between contending states had led its founders to reject a social contract that compelled young men to go to war. Seeking an end to warring factions may have led them to decision making by consensus. In 1958 it was decided: “in future, except for routine matters, we don’t take action until the vote is unanimous.”<sup>115</sup> There were exceptions, but by the time it was adopted at Rainbow Valley in the mid 1970s, consensus was already known to work at Riverside. The Tui planning group were also influenced by Riverside; Robina: “they mentored us. We had two of our meetings there”. All three communities now have consensus as a goal.

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<sup>113</sup> Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan, or the Matter, Forme, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, 1651.

<sup>114</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.164 - 166

<sup>115</sup> Rain, 1991, p.145

Decision-making by consensus

Consensus, as a group decision-making process, requires more than the approval of the majority. It tries to resolve or mitigate minority objections. Consensus is defined by Merriam-Webster first as “general agreement”, and second as “group solidarity of belief or sentiment”.<sup>116</sup> The Pocket Oxford defines it simply as “agreement of opinion on the part of all concerned.”<sup>117</sup>

Rainbow is now committed only to general agreement. If voting does take place, a decision can be made by 75%. Robyn: “Consensus hasn’t always worked. If it gets tied up, I’m fully in favour of voting, and to have things move. Everything stuck has a very negative impact on people. Given the age we are people just don’t have the energy anymore to put into consensus if it gets to a stuck place”; Simon: “Our foremost priority is to be consensus-seeking. I don’t think we are committed to taking forever to reach it.”

Tui is still committed to the solidarity of full consensus. Robina: “Everybody moves together. Everybody’s brought on board, everybody’s considered. People aren’t left with animosity. There is no deep-seated unfinished business because someone got overruled by a democratic decision.” Cherrie: “I’m really glad we have it, though it can be incredibly arduous at times.” At Tui it is also tricky to define: Cathy: “There might not be a consensus about consensus. People have different takes on what it means.” Tui does sometimes vote, but only by a great majority. Barry: “We don’t want 10% of very unhappy people who in the end are going to undermine it anyway. That doesn’t work. The idea is to try and find a way where everybody is accommodated.”

Olive Jones believes inability to resolve conflict is the chief reason communities collapse.<sup>118</sup> Rainbow and Tui both see conflict as inevitable. And both have learned consensus-seeking is a way of harnessing it usefully. Together, these two factors could explain why they have lasted for so long. Sargisson and Sargent attribute the success or failure of

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<sup>116</sup> Definition of *consensus* - 1 *a* : general agreement : unanimity <the *consensus* of their opinion, based on reports ... from the border — John Hersey> *b* : the judgment arrived at by most of those concerned <the *consensus* was to go ahead> 2 : group solidarity in sentiment and belief, retrieved 27 Feb. 2011 from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consensus>

<sup>117</sup> Fowler, F.G. & H.W. Fowler, *The Pocket Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961, p.165

<sup>118</sup> Jones, Olive, 2009, p.16

consensus in community to three main factors: commitment to the group, goodwill and trust, and special skills.<sup>119</sup>

Carol thinks that consensus only works “when there’s a shared commitment to reaching a decision that is the best decision at that point in time for the people in that group, the one that most people feel good about.” Commitment to the group at Tui is apparent in the efforts members make not only in attending to internal business and relationships, but in sustaining outreach goals through numerous events and gatherings. Twenty such gatherings are listed at the Tui website for the 2010/2011 year. They include Mens’ and Womens’ Gatherings, Tracks and Tides events, Yoga weekends, a Permaculture Course, a Join in Musical and a ‘Council of All Beings & Deep Ecology Workshop’.<sup>120</sup>

At Rainbow a remarkably cohesive group, six out of nine, have coexisted since the mid 1980s. Within that group, levels of trust are very high. According to Abrams and McCulloch, members at “the core” may feel no tension between their selves and the community.<sup>121</sup> Robyn: “At times I’ve thought differently to what everyone else wants, but I’ve had trust, so I’ll go with it. When everyone else is saying: ‘this is what we want’, I don’t even voice that disagreement, because my trust in the group is so strong. At the end what’s important is the cohesiveness of the group. I would never stand up and say ‘I’m opposing this’ because, for me, it would be a dangerous thing to do.”

But problems can occur when members of a group are too cohesive. One is groupthink, which Randy Fujishin says is “the primary threat to sound decision making and problem solving with a group that experiences extreme cohesiveness”.<sup>122</sup> Groupthink can lead to rash decisions; creativity and balance may be lost. Sargisson and Sargent report another disadvantage of extreme cohesiveness: “Done wrong, consensus can generate an oppressive situation which binds people to decisions they do not support: cabinet responsibility gone wrong.”<sup>123</sup> One Rainbow shareholder, on leaving Rainbow, would not give back her shares as was agreed. Years later she explained she never really went along with that and had felt pressured to agree to it.

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<sup>119</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.165

<sup>120</sup> Retrieved 18 Feb 2011 from <http://www.tuitrust.org.nz/index.php?PageID=15>

<sup>121</sup> Abrams and McCulloch, p.103

<sup>122</sup> Fujishin, Randy, *Creating effective groups : the art of small group communication, 2nd ed.* Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, pp.157-8

<sup>123</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, p.165

Consensus needs a lot of trust, and strong relationships. Tui puts time and energy into achieving these.<sup>124</sup> Surendra: “When the common denominator becomes stronger, then automatically the trust is bigger, and you trust each other more to make a right decision.” Cathy: “The process of working through a difference with someone is a deepening thing. You deepen your understanding and you deepen your trust.” This all requires openness to change. There is such openness at Rainbow too. Carol believes if conflict is worked through: “you reach a point where you respect each other, where there’s interdependence rather than dependency, people alongside each other.” Simon: “Consensus has taught me to be a lot more patient about reaching decisions, about listening to other peoples’ points of view and trying to understand where they are coming from instead of thinking my way is the right way.” But Kahu feels her voice is seldom heard: “there’s always going to be stronger personalities that push their view.” And conflicts have at times caused her to stay away from meetings altogether: “I think its been good for me to step back, and have time out, and not feel pressured to make it all right again. But it’s been really difficult, and at times I’ve even wanted to move away, to just leave it behind.”

Pressure to “make it all right again” might not succeed; Cherrie: “we have interpersonal issues going on all the time. It almost comes down to time and commitment as to how far you might explore that.” Barry: “There are some things that are unresolved that are not ideal.” Cathy: “Definitely a lot of effort goes into it; a lot of time in group meetings and discussion. I find that frustrating, personally, I think it’s too much. From one angle I could look and think, yeah, we do a good job at conflict resolution and being cooperative. And I could also look at it from another angle and see that, just like people everywhere, there are things that we don’t address; things that are gnarly and get left under the corner of the carpet.”

But on the whole the skills and energy and time that Tui puts into relationship building and consensus seeking do seem to ensure that issues don’t get stuck. A lot of innovative tools have been employed in meetings and Cathy is particularly impressed with Coloured Cards: “I think they’re fantastic. They’ve got two uses, one for discussion and one for decision-making.” Sargisson and Sargent describe the way that these work.<sup>125</sup> In ‘Towards a Sacred Society’ Robina lists five more techniques that help in Tui meetings, including hand gauging, role reversal and contemplation.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.151

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.167

Hand Gauging is in some ways similar to the decision-making aspect of the Coloured Cards. The hand is used to indicate, on a scale of one to ten, where a person stands on an issue, with one being near ground level and ten being as high as the arm can reach.<sup>126</sup> In Role Reversal two people come into the centre and reverse roles several times, in order to “stand in the other person's shoes” and have a better understanding of each other.<sup>127</sup> Contemplation is an introspective silence, and is appropriate when an issue is at a deadlock, or when a debate becomes too heated. After a silence, usually of only a few minutes, people will share any insights they have had with the group. “It is not uncommon for a decision to arise clearly and swiftly after a contemplative silence.”<sup>128</sup> One of the techniques used most often at Rainbow is a Round, where everyone will state their view in turn.

Tui and Rainbow both hold ordinary meetings every few weeks. Such meetings take place in their community houses and are generally open to all residents. In ordinary meetings discussion usually continues until a decision is reached unanimously or with one or two abstaining. If full consensus cannot be achieved, an attempt is made to reach a consensus of participating members.<sup>129</sup> Recourse to voting is a last resort. At Rainbow it has hardly ever happened, although it has at AGMs, and more recently at Directors Meetings.

Directors Meetings to make decisions affecting the whole community are a new development. They were used in 2009 to decide ongoing charges for all residents and have since made important decisions concerning leases and shares. Such meetings have usually been held in members' houses, and non-members are not expected to participate. This begs the question: are non-members part of the community? If so, directors meetings are less democratic for the whole community. Though Tui's trustees also meet privately, their legal purpose is to further the interests of a charitable trust, whereas a company's directors have no charitable obligations.

The person managing an ordinary Rainbow meeting is called a chairperson, while at Tui this person is called a facilitator. In many ways the meetings are quite similar. In both

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<sup>126</sup> McCurdy, 1999, p.129

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p.130

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p.130

<sup>129</sup> Rainbow Agreements, 2009.

communities there is a sharing session before ordinary business starts. This seems to help participants connect with one another. Most ordinary meetings finish by an agreed time. Any resident can present a topic for the meeting to address. Cathy describes what happens then: “Something is brought up, discussed and thrown around. Then the person who is facilitating is reading the signs, interpreting how the group responds. Depending on the issue there may or may not be a formal ‘does anybody object?’ and if not that goes ahead.”

Robina: “I want to say the word ‘discipline’. With the consensus process, from the perspective of the facilitators, there’s a real dedication. And there’s a real dedication with people overall, to stick to the topic, to own their own stuff, and to make valuable contributions. I know of some communities whose meetings go on and on.” Both Rainbow and Tui are now fairly efficient at managing meetings in such a way as to get through the necessary business in the available time.

Most topics are decided easily, but there are sometimes problems and the worst are over differences of principal. Like Kanter,<sup>130</sup> Surendra has observed that those attracted to communities often have unrealistic goals: “people come into a community and know exactly what they *don’t* want; they all have very strong ideals, and the thing for *clashing* is just *classic*.” In such cases decisions by consensus can be difficult and people need to talk things through in order to develop empathy. Which only works if people do communicate; Barry: “if they just say no, and don’t want to talk about it, I find that difficult to support.” It all takes time; Cherrie: “If we have something that we’re trying to get to agreement on, we just keep meeting, and meeting, and meeting, and meeting, until such time as we can all either agree or are happy to abstain, to allow it to go on.” Kahu has seen this happening and she gets frustrated by it.

She doesn’t want to simply speed things up. She wants to follow the example of unrushed consensus-seeking set by Maori, and by native Americans: “Ideally they talk things through until they get to a point where everyone is happy with the outcome.” Tim Jones agrees; he too admires Maori protocols, although he knows a hui can take days. From his perspective, Maori speakers speak completely honestly, not holding back. While they are doing so they are not interrupted. After each speech people consider what has just been

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<sup>130</sup> Kanter, 1972, p.54 “[some goals are] idealisations, not truths. They describe the ways in which members of communes wish to conceive of communal life rather than the realities.”

said. Then someone else will take their turn to speak. There is no voting and discussion goes on until the matter is resolved.”<sup>131</sup> This Maori model has been tried in both communities.

A Tuki is an unrushed Tui meeting process based on Maori hui and Native American tribal council. The word Tuki combines ‘Tui’, ‘talk’ and ‘hui’. Tukis explore old patterns that might otherwise prevent members from moving forward in alignment. They usually focus on a problem of some kind. A Tuki generally lasts for two days, and includes the evening in between. It can take longer, but is seldom shorter. When children were small, Tui members brought sleeping bags and all slept in one room. It is important for everyone to be present, as the group will often experience a paradigm shift, and it is difficult for a person left behind to be reintegrated. After one such Tuki, labour and financial structures radically changed.<sup>132</sup> At Rainbow at least one such hui style meeting has been held: a 1990 weekend-long Agreements Hui drafted the first full set of Rainbow Agreements.

Rainbow and Tui have also arranged regular groups for personal growth and to improve relationships. At Rainbow such groups have often involved psychodrama, though other kinds of group have also been held. Psychodrama is a method of psychotherapy developed by Jacob L. Moreno that uses creative theatrical techniques and narrative to help participants rethink their lives. Outside facilitators were usually employed, as this allowed all members to participate on equal terms. Facilitation fees were subsidised by the community. In recent years there have been few such groups, and Robyn thinks this has a lot to do with age: “If it doesn’t happen for another two or three years I wouldn’t be saying we should have another group. Because as I age I just don’t have the same energy.” Another factor could be a belief that groups don’t work. Rainbows last psychodrama weekend, held in 2006, ended with a divided group, unable to reintegrate. There has not been a psychodrama since. However, Simon and Carol have now trained as psychodrama directors and facilitate such groups for other people.

At Tui, groups still help define the values and the personality of the community. For several years Domain Shift was a major focus. Domain Shift is “about quantum leaps rather than incremental change, and aims for nothing less than personal and societal

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<sup>131</sup> Jones, Tim, p.16

<sup>132</sup> McCurdy, 1999, pp.131-132



transformation.”<sup>133</sup> Then came the Mens’ and Womens’ gatherings. Surendra: “The Mens’ Gathering came first and about two or three years later the women went ‘we need to do something as well’. And the community supported it.” A core group of men and a core group of women, host Mens’ and Womens’ Gatherings annually for around thirty-five people for up to a week. McCurdy believes these gatherings have helped create a new paradigm of men and women, and believes the healing is inter-generational.<sup>134</sup> Such Tui gatherings draw many from outside, and a unique facility, Tui’s Eventspark, has developed as a base for some of them.

Groups may help trust and understanding, but Surendra doesn’t think emotions have a place in ordinary meetings: “We’ve created these Mens’ Gatherings and Womens’ Gatherings, and there you speak when you are emoted. When your heart races, you speak. Well, in a meeting, that doesn’t work. In a meeting you need to be logical, down to earth, without emotions. A lot of the time, if the meeting is set in an emotional trend, it becomes chaos.” Outbursts have certainly been destructive at Rainbow. Unchecked emotions all too easily destroy goodwill. When problems arising from a gorse burn-off were being discussed at one meeting there, a member told another angrily: “You think you own the land!” Resentment over that lasted for months, perhaps because it seemed an accusation of subverting common principles.

Largely decision making by consensus is experienced as positive. Anne: “What’s rewarding is working it out, and being part of doing it, and actually seeing the result. Cathy: “if you go into something with a positive attitude, the win/win mentality, you often come up with a new idea that’s even better.” Frans: “Sometimes it’s so slow that it stops initiatives, and that’s unfortunate, but I’m really appreciative of us working with consensus.” For Simon, it’s a way of handling conflict that can keep communities together: “In order to achieve consensus, you’re encouraging conflict, in a way. But to me that’s healthy. It means the decisions we make in the long term are for the good of the community. And hopefully it avoids the very big, escalated conflicts that become a major schism, where the whole community could get split down the middle, or into factions.”

At Rainbow, where one founding group still constitutes the core of the community, there has not yet been any major split. There has at Tui, ending only recently. Robina: “We

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, pp.128-129

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, pp. 134-136

became the extended community and the family community. We had a division. There were two separate groups operating two separate ways. Barry attributes this division to the coming of a second group with different attitudes: “In the early years we were all united in infrastructure building and pretty low-key living. From about 1990 when the first wave of new residents started to arrive, a group of them brought in significant wealth. In many ways that’s a good thing, but it did create a sort of greenies versus the others – there were two camps, if you like. And I don’t think that’s been fully resolved.” Robina hopes it has: “we are now one community, but we had to really go deep down and reinvent ourselves.” A Tuki helped in doing this as well; “it was really complex, because it was like oil and water meeting”. But out of what was once bitterness and discomfort, she now perceives a new and common purpose has emerged, involving making space for new young families: “in the end we came together and said: ‘we will do what it takes to reunite as one community’.” Tui’s ability to grapple with division and change is evidence of a deep commitment to consensus and of the skills to make it work.

Sargent and Sargisson say major change quite often comes as a surprise to a community. It can be difficult, even traumatic, but they believe it is inevitable and survivable. They mention the enormous changes Riverside has made during its seventy-year lifetime. The minute books record the vital role consensus played in those.<sup>135</sup> And Riverside retains the values it has seen as crucial to its own identity, including income sharing and non-violence. Colin, a second generation Riversider, speaks of reluctance to let income-sharing go: “It’s not just *pooling* income... we’ve *created* income together. ...The fear is that if we change our economic structure, things will fritter away ... and we’ll lose our identity, uniqueness, and become just a bunch of people living in a nice place doing our own thing, which has really happened to most other communities.”<sup>136</sup>

Rainbow faced major change in 1983, when everyone could not agree on one development. Until then a diesel generator was the only source of heavy-duty electricity. Rainbow Wares had to have a mains supply for its Fur Workshop and young mothers wanted household electricity for washing clothes. A mains supply was deemed by almost everyone to be most realistic and affordable, but one member would not agree and people saw this as a tyranny of one. Patience ran out: mains power was connected anyway. Carol: “at the beginning we were right into consensus about everything. There came a point

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<sup>135</sup> Sargisson and Sargent, 2004, pp.168-169

<sup>136</sup> Jones, Olive, 2010, p.10.

where we abandoned that. We resorted to company law, where you could make some decisions by majority. We made a decision based on 75%.” Rainbow survived this change, although the member who opposed mains power left the meetings and eventually the community.

At Tui Cathy has some sympathy for the lone voice: “it’s a hard place to be in, if you’re saying no and everybody else is saying yes. If somebody’s doing that from a sincere place, then they deserve some respect and some care. It’s not an easy thing to do. It has been a criticism sometimes that the nos have too much power. But the general expectation is that it doesn’t stop there – you’ve got to keep talking. It’s all about listening to each other.” Surendra thinks that too: “It only works when people truly listen and can truly empathise.”

### Sustainability

Sustainability, the capacity to endure, is commonly conceptualised as having three interlinked aspects, environmental, economic and social.<sup>137</sup> For communities to be economically sustainable, their members need work and incomes, and this will be discussed a little further on. Emma Partridge, of the Institute for Sustainable Futures at Sydney’s University of Technology, believes that socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected and democratic and provide a good quality of life.<sup>138</sup>

The environmental aspect of sustainability is the most familiar. For decades ecologists and social reformers have urged us to limit our consumption of resources in order to be more environmentally sustainable. In 1987 The Brundtland Commission<sup>139</sup> warned that the poor “are forced to overuse environmental resources to survive from day to day, and their impoverishment of the environment further impoverishes them, making their survival ever more difficult and uncertain.” And as Andrew Dobson says, it is primarily the rich who are overusing world resources.<sup>140</sup> Our planetary ecosystem is threatened by global warming, loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation. Unless those who have most resources lead the way to major change, our life on Earth is unsustainable.

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<sup>137</sup> Partridge, 2005, p.5

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, pp.7-11

<sup>139</sup> Formerly the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)

<sup>140</sup> Dobson, 1998, p.16

All these concerns gave rise to the voluntary simplicity movement of the 1960s and 70s and later the Deep Ecology movement of the 70s and 80s. Barry Barrington of Riverside described how would-be members who arrived around 1970 wanted “a rather different set-up and approach – they don’t want our fixed pattern of work, but to work on a subsistence basis ... [and] they want to build their own accommodation (on simpler lines), develop crafts, printing etc.” Today the ecovillage seems to offer hopes of addressing environmental concerns by combining elements of voluntary simplicity with new holistic systems such as Permaculture and new technologies such as solar power. But living standards at Findhorn, an ecovillage in Scotland and research centre for sustainability, would still only become sustainable if the current human population could be halved.<sup>141</sup> Alternative communities have often tried to be sustainable, although not always in mainstream economic terms, and some may later have collapsed because of that. Have Rainbow and have Tui sought to be sustainable? For some at Rainbow, voluntary simplicity was never really voluntary: Anne: “I came here with voluntary simplicity for sure, without the power, but hey, I didn’t want to stay there – bugger that! No! I wanted an automatic washing machine, like everybody else, and I wanted a light. After doing seven years of hard yakka, and candles and Tilley lamps, it was time to move on.”

At Rainbow and at Tui the reformers of the past have made some compromises. Many have now rejoined the old consumption culture that they turned their backs on in the past. Cherrie: “One of the reasons we left Canada was that we were leaving too big a footprint; we were consuming more than I was feeling comfortable with. I didn’t know how to stop that, other than starting afresh.” Then, Tui looked to be a place of voluntary simplicity, but over twenty years Cherrie has seen that change: people who took on outside jobs grew wealthier but had less time, “and when people have less time they start going to more labour saving devices, or foods. People don’t bake breads the way they used to; including myself.” Back in the 1970s Carol was “romantically attached to the whole pioneering era”. Today, while seeing herself as “part of the oil consumption culture and all the evil that involves”, she still enjoys using her car.

Simon recalls when voluntary simplicity was part of Rainbow’s ethos, and acknowledges how that has changed. In order to sustain a family you need a job, and jobs in Golden Bay were hard to find. Not everyone at Rainbow wanted to be on the dole, even supposing that

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<sup>141</sup> Dawson, 2006, p.44: According to Findhorn’s ‘ecological footprint analysis’ it would take two Earths to provide a Findhorn standard of living for the current population.

had been a possibility. Simon and Carol helped to set up Rainbow Wares, and began making coats and other garments out of possum fur. That business closed, partly because environmentalists had turned against fur coats. The couple and their children then began to live in cities, starting out in Wellington, where Simon worked in real estate while Carol finished her degree. Since 1986 careers have been important to them both and they have lived in cities for eleven years.

A business helps sustainability in mainstream economic terms. Rainbow Wares failed; Tui Balms succeeds. For some at Tui, work at Tui Balms makes living there a possibility. As Barry says, without that business, “it would be very difficult for people to live out here and earn the money they need.” And Tui Balms is also heavily dependent on the outside world, as are some other things that Tui wants; Barry: “People at Tui are quite outward looking. There’s a lot of interaction with the outside world, a lot of travel, and it’s pretty hard to have that and be self-sufficient. You’ve got to go into peasant-mode, so to speak, and do everything yourself.” Travel is likely to be more important when a lot of friends and family live overseas, so Tui’s attitude to travel may be partly shaped by its ethnicity.

For Cathy voluntary simplicity is still a goal, and she thinks quite a lot of other Tui people share it, although not everyone. She also feels Tui is becoming more mainstream: “Especially in terms of that consumer thing. And more separate households. There’s less to distinguish us from ordinary suburbia. Kahu is still enthusiastic about voluntary simplicity: “Definitely! Living as lightly on the earth as we can. Not being huge consumers. And not having power. I’ve never had power in my house. If we do as much as we can to grow our own food, and don’t sell out to the big corporations that are trying to control us and sell us food, then we are more sustainable.” It’s tempting to conclude that Kahu’s youth explains her strong ideals, but there are older people who still have them too.

Robina’s life is geared towards sustainability, her strong ideals concerning that have not changed “one iota” since she was a child. For her the Tui journey has meant modelling it and teaching it: “socially sustainable, sustainable with the land, as much food sustainability as possible, and above all a school of life, a school of natural living based on Steiner principles.” She advocates and teaches Permaculture, which to her means “going for regenerative systems.” Although she strongly believes in such environmental sustainability, she knows, “it’s not a priority of this community.” Cathy sees that as well:

“The whole land and food thing has never been the forte here. It’s always been the people thing, so that’s the bigger contribution Tui makes.”

At nearly forty years of age, Rainbow has some of its regenerative systems working well, as Anne observes: “We’re at the stage where we’ve put in trees from many years ago and now we’re reaping the benefits for firewood and building purposes. There’s sort of like this cycle, in a way.” Carol *loves* Permaculture and defines it as “a minimalist effort way of utilising the fruits of nature while still nurturing the planet.” She thinks Rainbow could usefully do more: “We could be fencing off swamps and re-vegetating with natives.” And money might assist. Simon agrees: “Permaculture is quite expensive to set up. At Te Manawa ecovillage in the Motueka Valley they are putting in all the infrastructure before people even get there.” Not everyone at Rainbow wants more money though: Kahu still likes to live on less. At Rainbow as at Tui it is possible for those with different goals to coexist.

Robina sees Permaculture as combining social and environmental sustainability by “marrying the needs of the people and the needs of the environment.” But Barry sees that not how Tui operates: “You’ve really got to have a grand design to run your property that way, and it becomes a way of life. Which doesn’t really suit the independent natures of everyone at Tui. It’s pretty hard to get anything agreed to, let alone some grand design.” Robina knows this and she doesn’t want conformity: “Tui has always been a bunch of strong individuals. Every single person will express the ideology with a different emphasis, and live it differently too.” Strong individuals, when they cooperate, create a strong community.

At Rainbow, for the life of the community, a major focus for collective energy has been the farm. It has run sheep, beef cattle, milking cows, some goats and pigs. A strong concern is animal welfare, although there aren’t any vegetarians. Members enjoy a fair amount of home-grown meat. At least one cow is generally milked. Those members who grow vegetables most often garden privately.

At Tui the large focus until recently was the big garden everybody shared. It provided a lot of what was once eaten at vegetarian community meals almost every day. Reider tells of this garden at its largest and most highly organised: “two garden coordinators took the lead, organising beds in straight lines and instituting a crop rotation. All residents were

expected to work in the garden on one of three designated days, and anyone could harvest food according to a red flag system adopted from Riverside.”<sup>142</sup> However, members now more often garden privately, as at Rainbow; Cherrie: “There were never enough greens for me. I would have had to take more than my share.” And nowadays she seldom eats with the community. “As I’ve grown older a lot of my eating habits have changed.”

Cathy says Tui now has other forms of self sufficiency: “we don’t have the big community garden, but we are probably producing more vegetables.” Although, she says, some people buy them all. Values to do with animals have changed: “Possum control was always really controversial here. Every time somebody wanted a concerted effort, there’d always be people that would object. But about seven years ago DOC did this big possum control operation. It was amazing. It was the first time we’d had fruit in abundance. And we’ve got chooks on stream and home grown meat as well. So we are probably as self-sufficient as we ever were.” A lot of Tui members are no longer vegetarians.

Even if both communities have a degree of self-sufficiency, does this contribute to a worldwide movement for sustainability? In Carol’s view what Rainbow does could help the planet in some ways, especially through the use of permaculture. But she acknowledges it won’t “unless we let the planet in on it.” Simon agrees: “At Tui, they put out quite a big profile. We try to be as sustainable as we can, but it is difficult for us to make much impact, as we are so isolated and remote.” One form of contact with the outside world is hosting Wwoofers, Willing Workers on Organic Farms. Wwoofers are mostly young and come from round the world. They are a source of new ideas and energy. Another antidote to isolation is the Internet. Rainbow is currently cooperating with neighbour Happisam to set up ‘Valleynet’, a wireless broadband network for them both.

Achieving a sustainable society will need new social skills as well as new technologies. Robina: “There are enough technological solutions: we know how to repair the environment, we’ve got complementary money systems and formal and informal economies, we can choose where we go with that, but it’s the people stuff that we stuff up on every time. Social skills and social systems that really enhance who we are as human beings.” Cherrie believes a shared “ability and desire to personally change” is one of

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<sup>142</sup> Reider, *Tui*, 2009, p.1

Tui's greatest strengths.<sup>143</sup> Kahu: "The more people that see communities are surviving and are viable, the better."

Most people in these two communities are open to the view that adversarial systems, in particular the use of arms, should and could change, and conflicts be resolved in other ways; Cherrie: "One of the prime contributions to the planet is the energy of conflict resolution. Living at peace is about having conflict and being able to resolve it. If you can't work it out on this level what hope do you have on a national level? And I believe in the collective unconscious, that any energy we can put out on conflict resolution is going to be helpful. Be the peace that you seek in the world."

New Zealand has a strong Pakeha pacifist tradition dating from the 1930s, and reflected at Beeville and Riverside. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Maori pacifism emerged in the King Country and Taranaki. Long before that the Moriori of the Chathams Islands lived at peace. For many generations they had rejected lethal weaponry and war. In 1835 Taranaki Maori invaded and enslaved them. Between 1835 and 1863 three quarters of their population of around two thousand died. Survivors did not fight, but made a list of those who died, placing a cross beside the names of those who died by violence. Victors write history: by 1870 those Taranaki tribes were pacifists as well. The Hokotehi Moriori Trust, set up in 2001, still advocates non-violence. Peace making may be terrible; it also may be possible.

There is another question to be asked about sustainability: can these communities sustain themselves? Can they attract enough new members to replace the ones who either leave or die? At Riverside a second generation did emerge. There was an influx of new members in the 1970s, and children of existing members did return. But membership has shrunk in recent years to twenty-one and half the houses are now rented out. One member, Sandra, summed it up like this: "In the 1970s, our generation - the alternative life-stylers - flooded in. A lot of the houses were built in that era. They all filled up with people. Then slowly that movement drifted away, as it did in most communities, and we were left with houses with not enough members to fill them, and we've drifted into tenancy. ... It totally changes the dynamics of the community. ... less people to work the place, less people who are a cohesive group..."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Jones, Olive, 2009, p.9

<sup>144</sup> Jones, Olive, 2009, p.4



Rainbow and Tui have had differing experiences in terms of numbers and new membership. At Tui there is usually a waiting list. Perhaps the vibrant character of Tui and its sunny coastal setting help. Starting with thirteen adults and nine kids, within ten years the Tui population swelled to forty-five. Since then it has gone up and down, but mostly stayed between thirty-five and fifty-five. Not all adults who live there are trustees; that number is currently around twenty. One or two children who grew up there have returned and there is still a group of founding members from the early years.

At Rainbow there has never been much of a waiting list. Sandflies and loss of sun in winter may discourage some. The number of resident members has fluctuated between seven and twelve for over thirty years. A few have left, and in their place a few more have arrived. Simon and Carol left and have come back. Of nine members who live at Rainbow now, five came in the 1970s, two in the 1980s, one in 1997 and one in 2003. Foundation members Jim and Lynn are shareholders and members, though they live in the US, and other members in good standing still have shares. Though only nine members are residents, there are at least as many non-members. At present seven of these rent five houses, either from members or from the community.

At Rainbow, members see themselves as an extended family. Most are in their fifties or sixties. Twenty years ago there were as many as thirteen children and now there is only one. For new members to come in there need to be house sites to build on or houses to buy from existing members. In Rainbow's younger days new members quickly snapped up any vacant ones, as they still do at Tui. This can only happen if such houses aren't all rented out.

Sadness about losing children has affected both communities and was felt very keenly at Tui, perhaps because so many left at once; Robina: "When our first generation of children grew up and left home, it was like the empty-nest syndrome multiplied by about twelve, and there was this search for meaning. We could see ourselves, like most communities in Europe and the States and Australia, just becoming an old age village. And we wanted more children to be raised in our community; that was really important to us. We made a decision to only have young people coming in, with families." This policy of only accepting younger members was also adopted briefly at Riverside in the 1970s<sup>145</sup> and it was loosely adopted at Rainbow in the 1990s. Though Robyn once supported it, she

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<sup>145</sup> Rain, 1991, p.92

doesn't now: "There was a period when I thought 'We need some young people to take over the reins'. But I've become a bit disillusioned with younger people. I have not seen anyone able to commit in a way that would carry us into the future."

Today's young people might be less attracted to communities, or might prefer communities made up of younger people like themselves. Simon, who wants to bring new members in, believes an ecovillage that allows some private ownership might be a more attractive option for the young: "It seems to me there has been quite a shift over the last ten or twenty years. That old-fashioned back to the land commune movement has metamorphosed into more of an ecovillage movement. It's got that blend of private ownership, and the community aspect, and that attracts more people." The hope is that new people will bring youth and energy.

As young reformers, Rainbow's and Tui's individualists once turned their backs on the mainstream; Simon: "We were saying 'there are other ways of living that are better'. And part of that was living in community." But he is older now and takes a broader view: "That whole thing about living in community has become a lot wider for me. People are creating community wherever they are. Some people identify very strongly with being part of the Golden Bay community." Rainbow is feeling the affects of age. Carol reflects on some of those affects: "increased wisdom, less energy, and more discernment about where the energy goes. I was vitally interested in other people when I was getting to know myself as a person, but there comes a time when the journey is a more inward journey." Anne: "I think that what you want when you're twenty and thirty is different from what you want when you're fifty and sixty." Kahu: "As young people we come here with all these ideals and energy and we're all gung ho, but as we get older we burn out." Will younger members want to share a piece of land with burnt out elderly? Will burnt out elderly still want to share their piece of land?

Although at Rainbow and at Tui many members are becoming elderly, not all of their ideals have faded yet. Communal goals and values are as much a part of Western culture as its individualism. Diggers voiced some of them in 1649. They have not lost all their appeal yet, which may be a good thing; Cathy: "That's how society grows and changes, by people doing something a bit different on the edge. It doesn't mean society is all going to turn into communities like us. But it has got that opportunity, because somebody's pioneering that edge."

## **Conclusions**

### Shared Ownership

The impulse to share land and live cooperatively has been perennial in the Christian west. Those who act out that impulse have been seen either as dreamers and utopians, or as reformers. Rejecting private ownership, inequity and exploitation, they have set out to live without these in their own communities. They have attempted to reform the world by practical experiment. In 1649 the Diggers wanted land to be a common treasury and offered reverence to Mother Earth. Rainbow and Tui both began with similar ideals. Both are still reverent to Mother Earth and both have members who do not want private ownership. Most members value common land; some feel they belong to land, not it to them. Most members interviewed have a strong sense of being caretakers and guardians of common land.

Houses are seen at both communities as private property. Experience has shown that when such houses sell they are less valuable because they are not built on private land. At Rainbow members are now partly privatising common land, hoping that houses will become more valuable. There is a sense in both communities that times have changed and people now are more attracted by investments and security. But whereas many Rainbow members now want these themselves, a lot of Tui members still say that they don't.

Ideals that relate to sharing land rather than owning privately may change as members age. Investment and inheritance are more important to the elderly. For one thing working lives are coming to an end, and for another aging parents often hope to leave their children an inheritance. The average age of Rainbow members is a little older than at Tui. As a community Rainbow is ten years older and the average age of children is older too. Because of this, changes relating to succession and inheritance may be a little more advanced.

Ideals that relate to sharing land appear to be affected by the legal structures of communities. At Tui members have a strong commitment to retaining all their land and passing it to a continuing community. Their legal structure means they may have little choice. At Rainbow there is also a commitment to retaining land for a continuing community. But Rainbow will now lease some of its land to members and shares will be

attached to leases. Further subdivision or even outright sale of all Rainbow land is possible.

### Decision-making by Consensus

Consensus-seeking is a way of handling conflict which allows communities to manage change constructively. Members of both communities know conflict can be healthy and creative. Rainbow and Tui now have different definitions of consensus. Rainbow will now act on a decision by a 75% majority, but Rainbow is a small community; currently 75% means seven out of nine. Tui still puts a lot of time and effort into total solidarity, and if a vote is taken it requires a huge majority.

Decision-making by consensus needs some special skills. Rainbow has some; Tui has even more. Two vital attributes that need developing are empathy and clear communication. Decision-making by consensus needs cohesiveness. However, extreme cohesiveness can lead to groupthink, or cause people to agree unwillingly. Decision-making by consensus takes a lot of time. Tui holds two-day Tukis based on tribal protocols. Though Rainbow has held hui in the past, it hasn't recently. Tui holds far more groups than Rainbow does.

New members may affect consensus in community. At Tui wealthier members who joined later on brought different values in, causing a split. Low numbers can affect consensus in community. At Rainbow there has been a tyranny of one. Consensus-seeking, when it is done right, helps a community evolve and change without losing its special character.

### Sustainability

Environmental, economic and social sustainability all have implications for communities. Though some members of both communities continue to believe in voluntary simplicity, increasing wealth has undermined that goal. In terms of self-sufficiency Rainbow has focussed more on farming, Tui more on gardening. In mainstream economic terms the Tui Balms business makes Tui more sustainable. Both oppose violence, but Tui puts more effort into developing the skills of social sustainability.

A tentative conclusion I have reached about sustainability in these communities is that there is now a tension between environmental sustainability as understood in deep ecology, and economic sustainability as understood in the prevailing capitalist economy. This mainstream understanding of economics wants ever increasing gross national products and encourages consumerism. It does not ask what is survivable in the long term. Deep ecology does, and urges us to live within our means. Rainbow and Tui have both been influenced by deep ecology, but seem now to be moving back into the mainstream. David Pepper says he has seen the English commune movement do the same. It is, he says, a three-stage process: first there is an intention to “bypass the system”, second an attempt to “use the system”, and finally the alternative life-stylers again became “part of the system”.<sup>146</sup>

This paper has explored the extent to which the original goals of shared ownership, decision-making by consensus, and sustainability have changed in these communities. All three goals do survive, but they are all under threat. Rainbow is closer than Tui to privatisation and less committed to consensus-seeking. Though both are still quite equitable, diverse, connected and democratic, and both provide a good quality of life, increasing separation of shareholders and non-shareholders could make Rainbow as a whole less equitable, connected and democratic. Tui is more economically sustainable in mainstream terms, and more committed to outreach and education. Neither community is self sufficient in food, but both are partly so. Both love and protect their beautiful, unique environments.

#### Implications of ethnicity on community character

It could be helpful, in a further study, to explore the implications of ethnicity on the characters of these communities. Tui is culturally more diverse than Rainbow, where all resident members are New Zealanders. This might explain why Rainbow is laid back and flexible while Tui is confrontational, highly structured and dynamic. Surendra: “I find that the New Zealanders are very open and friendly, but they don’t really show the back of the tongue. They show themselves till maybe a third in, and then they stop. Dutch are straight forward, and more to the point when they feel things and express things.” Robina: “you know, the Kiwi-Pacific attitude of ‘she’ll be right’, more flowing and easy, and the German very precise, very methodical and outcomes based – well we rubbed off on each

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<sup>146</sup> Pepper, David, *Communes and the green vision: counterculture, lifestyle and the New Age*, (1991)

other in a clashing kind of way. And I think as we rubbed off on each other and rubbed into each other we learned to appreciate the best in both cultures and work very well together.” Kahu: “I definitely felt Tui was more intimidating, the way that people were confronted, in a group situation. I was terrified of their meetings. And they’d have two day group sessions four times a year, which was way too much for me; I couldn’t handle it.”<sup>147</sup>

### Ageing Communities

McCurdy has described the life stages of a community from conception to adulthood. She has not gone on to describe old age or death, although these have already claimed large numbers of alternative communities. Developing her metaphor, I have these thoughts: Communities like Rainbow and Tui are based on reforming ideals, not notions of perfectibility. People who build alternative communities are generally individualists. This can create a strong dichotomy between the individual and the group. However, if a group of individuals can coexist for many years as a community on a beloved piece of land, then that community acquires character, and is in certain ways connected to that land. Rainbows’ reforming values still include egalitarianism, cooperation, extended family and a wish not to profit by the sale of common land. Tui’s reforming values still include commitment to consensus, modelling a sustainable community and helping to develop social aspects of sustainability.

If a community is multigenerational its younger members can and do inherit power, over time. However, the most influential groups at Rainbow and at Tui are of roughly the same age. Accordingly they are nearing old age at the same time. Since ageing affects values, the collective values of both communities have been undergoing change. Unless a younger generation does take over soon, values that gave to these communities their special character may fade. At Rainbow this could lead to something like a subdivision, or to sale of the land, with profits shared by the remaining shareholders. At Tui deep divisions among trustees could arise and make the trust dysfunctional. This was the case at Beeville and at Centrepont. If Tui’s trust became dysfunctional it would wind up.

Children of members, as increasingly they care for aging parents and control those parents’ assets, have a part to play and so do younger members, if such younger members

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<sup>147</sup> Kahu has lived at both communities.

do arrive. Rainbow's and Tui's children have a lot of love for their communities. At both communities regeneration is still possible.

Will Rainbow prove sustainable as a community? Anne: "yes, as a collective piece of land with various houses dotted around. How will it work? Goodness only knows. It will probably carry on much as it is. But it will probably change too. And that's alright."

Will Tui prove sustainable as a community? Cherrie: "I'm somebody that worries a lot, but I don't worry about this. I've got a lot of trust. It will work out."

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**Interviewees**

Anne of Rainbow

Barry of Tui

Carol of Rainbow

Cathy of Tui

Cherrie of Tui

Frans of Tui

Kahu of Rainbow

Robina of Tui

Robyn of Rainbow

Simon of Rainbow

Surendra of Tui

Yana of Tui