



Pickering, L. (2018) Time-rich: 1960s counterculture and time as affluence in a dropout community in Hawai‘i. *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 8(3), pp. 625-639. (doi:[10.1086/701025](https://doi.org/10.1086/701025)).

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Deposited on: 05 October 2018

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Time-rich

1960s counterculture and time as affluence in a dropout community in Hawai‘i

Lucy PICKERING, *University of Glasgow*

What does it mean to be rich? This paper explores affluence from the perspective not of material affluence but of temporal affluence. Drawing on ethnographic material from an American counterculture dropout community in Hawai‘i, I examine ways in which material lack and temporal plenty can be bound together and understood not as privation but as affluence. Bringing Sahlins’s (1972) work on the “Zen solution to scarcity and want” and the seminal countercultural text *Be here now* (Ram Dass 1971) into dialogue with anthropological, economic, and philosophical analyses of the present moment, this paper offers a framework for examining “having” and “taking” time as forms of affluence beyond the framework set by the study of slow movements. It offers an ethnographic example of an “expanded present” as a conceptual space from which to envision and enact forms of modernity that escape the anxieties of acceleration that tend to dominate discussions of time and modernity.

Keywords: Time; affluence; Hawai‘i; counterculture; cannabis

Dominic announced he was rich. I wondered how he measured that and whether others would agree. After a high-school experience characterized by long hair and other forms of insubordination, he left the U.S. mainland in 1969 to attend the University of Hawaii. Six months later he dropped out and moved to a rural backwater of the archipelago “to grow

really great ‘*erb* (cannabis)’; forty years later he was still living there and still growing ‘*erb*. Earning money by growing cannabis and doing menial jobs, he bought a five-acre lot for \$5,000 in the 1970s. To this he later added a second five-acre lot for \$20,000, paid for the same way. Today Dominic is in his sixties, owns his land outright, still grows ‘*erb*, and makes just about enough cash to get by through selling his cannabis and occasionally renting out the dwellings on his land—which comprise a house, a tree house, and what he calls the “Happiness Hut.” None have access to power or potable water, although the house has solar panels sufficient to occasionally play his stereo, and the tree house a flush toilet (although it can only be flushed after a heavy rain). He owns no car, few clothes, books, or CDs, he receives no government benefits, and, as a result of shifting cannabis trends, has a diminishing market for his 1960s-style cannabis.

In 2005, as we sat listening to the ocean on the small *lanai* (porch) outside the Happiness Hut—an eight-square-foot room containing only a bed, a mosquito net, and candles—he elaborated on his original remark:

It’s a rich man who has an empty room. There are lots of people who have lots of rooms full of stuff, but how many people can afford to have a room with nothing in it?

Dominic understood himself to be affluent not because owned land worth \$500,000 at the time of writing,¹ but because he could afford to have an empty room. He was rich because he

1. Since then, on May 3, 2018, a huge eruption of Kilauea volcano began and was still going on as of September 2018. Although Dominic’s land was out of the path of the lava flow, nonetheless the current eruption has had and will continue to have significant impacts on the shape of the island, roads, accessibility, and the monetary value of land in the region.

could resist the urge to “fill” his space; he was rich because all his wants were met by what he already had or what he was confident would come.

In this article, I wish to think with Dominic’s empty room as a signifier of affluence, to dwell on affluence as measurable not by possessions but by space—by absence rather than presence. For Dominic, his affluence lay not in the plenitude of his possessions but in their limitation. But it also lay in the particular quality of unfilledness—of having space that he did not need or want to fill, mirrored in his approach to time, characterized by celebrating having time that he did not want or need to fill. Experiences of time and of space are intimately linked (Harvey 1989); so, too, I will argue, are time and plenitude. As we sat on that *lanai*, listening to and occasionally feeling the spray of the ocean, we simply sat as we had done so often before: looking, listening, feeling, and talking. The time we “spent” there, like the space we were in, did not need to be filled. For Dominic, it was enough to simply “be here now.”

Be Here Now was a commonly heard phrase, especially among older dropouts, which referred to Baba Ram Dass’s seminal 1971 countercultural text of the same name. In the following pages, I wish to bring *Be here now* into dialogue with another concept of the same period—Sahlins’s idea of the “Zen solution to scarcity and want.” In drawing these texts together, I explore their contrast to current sociological work on time to offer a framework for thinking about temporal affluence as an embodied critique of an imagined American mainstream. Drawing in voices from anthropology, economics, and philosophy, this paper explores such a critique as articulated through a collective refusal to “fill” time—to experience it as a finite, limited resource—just as Dominic refused to fill his room.

The Zen solution to scarcity and want

In 1968, Marshall Sahlins published a short but seminal piece on affluence and scarcity among hunter-gatherers, using it to both explore these issues within hunter-gatherer societies

themselves and to raise questions about the experience of affluence within the United States, later developed and extended in *Stone age economics* (1972). He begins with dominant notions of hunter-gatherers as living perpetually on the brink of starvation. To argue against this, he sets up a binary opposition between what he calls Galbraithian and Zen conceptions of affluence: in the former, desires are “easily satisfied” by producing much, while in the latter, they are satisfied by desiring little. However, of the two, only the latter produces true affluence, he argues, through the diminution of the gap between what one desires and what one possesses.

In its Galbraithian manifestation, endeavors toward affluence fail, because, as he puts it,

Modern capitalist societies, however richly endowed, dedicate themselves to the propensity of scarcity. Inadequacies of economic means is the first principle of the world’s wealthiest peoples . . . every acquisition [is] simultaneously a deprivation, for every purchase of something is a foregoing of something else. (1972: 3)

Thus, the very existence of material affluence, at least within capitalistic systems, brings in its wake scarcity through an excess of opportunity. As outlined in “Notes on the original affluent society,”

The market makes freely available a dazzling array of products, all these “good things” within a man’s reach—but never his grasp, for one never has enough to buy everything. (1968: 86)

The resources within one's possession will not allow one to meet every desire, and so every gain is simultaneously a loss; choices—and thus reminders of what one does not have—must be made, meaning affluence can never be achieved.

Yet despite growing up and living in a “modern capitalist society,” Dominic was able to maintain an empty room. He felt contentment with just a handful of clothes, books and CDs, a toilet that only flushed when it rained, and hitchhiking rather than driving. He was also able to take the time to connect with friends and acquaintances, new and old, as he traversed the landscape, to jam with friends when he wanted music, and to hitchhike to and from the library when he wished to read a book, not to mention spending time eating and smoking *'erb* with friends, listening to the ocean from his Happiness Hut, and simply being.

According to Sahlins, in a Galbraithian vision of affluence, “All economic activity starts from a position of shortage: whether as producer, consumer, or seller of labor, one's resources are insufficient to the possible uses and satisfactions” (1968: 86). However, for Dominic, his labor did appear to be sufficient to meet his possible uses and satisfactions. And he appeared to have a lot of time to spare. He was, perhaps, affluent in a manner not dissimilar to that described by Sahlins for hunter-gatherers: he too had found the “Zen solution to scarcity and want” (1968: 85). Like them, he had become affluent by virtue of diminishing the gap between desires and possessions. However, perhaps unlike the many different peoples who make up Sahlins's “original affluent society,” he and the other members of this community of U.S. dropouts who were living semisubsistence lives in a rural backwater of Hawai'i were highly conscious that they were operating from assumptions that contrasted with mainstream Americans. Dominic's community believed that

human material ends are few and finite and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate. Adopting the Zen strategy, a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty, though perhaps only a low standard of living. (Sahlins 1968: 85)

Zen solutions, choice, and poverty

While Dominic and others may have adopted a “Zen strategy” or a “Zen solution” and rejected Galbrathian visions of the good life, seemingly consistent with Sahlins’s opposition, *choice* was central to their experience. Forty years after the first community members had arrived, almost everyone I met had chosen to relocate here, to give up potable running water, consistent electricity, and mobile phone service. The meaning of this choice was brought out particularly clearly by Dean, a dropout in his mid-twenties, in a discussion on the striking differences between living conditions and material aspirations of this dropout community and their Native Hawaiian neighbours. He reminded me that “Running around with no shoes on, eating rice and avocados is great when you’ve chosen to do that, but not so great when you grew up like that.” In fact, many people in the area had grown up like that. Despite the rapidly escalating land values up to the volcano eruption of 1983 and then again through the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s (of limited value to Native Hawaiians who have accessed land through the Hawaiian Homelands scheme), the region where this community lives is a deprived one. Formal employment opportunities are few. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 18.3% of the population of Hawai‘i Island live below the U.S. poverty line, compared to 11.2% for the state of Hawaii and 14.3% for the U.S. as a whole. However, the poverty figure reached closer to one in three people in the region where this community lived.

Critical to the discussion of affluence is the concept of choice. As Day et al. (1998) point out, there can be a certain seduction to romantic accounts of hunter-gatherer societies that foreground attitudes to abundance, discuss temporal orientations, and point out the

pleasures of life in these societies but perhaps inadequately account for the hardships as well. Although hardship was central to many dropouts' experiences, particularly after the market crash of 2008, how my informants account for and made sense of this hardship strongly resembled the accounts by groups at the margins discussed by Day et al. (1998). Both groups stressed that they were freed from the constraints that conventional American society imposed on others. Yet unlike many (although not all) of the participants that Day et al. discuss, my informants *chose* to "run around with no shoes on eating avocados." Thus, while they may have been living below the poverty line, there were not necessarily "poor."

The notion of the U.S. poverty line was first developed in 1955, conceptualized at its inception as the minimum income required to live safely in ways "consistent with the standards of living prevailing in this country" (Orshansky 1969, quoted in Schwarz 2005: 49). Native Hawaiians, Filipino farmers, and others have not necessarily *chosen* to live below "the standards of living prevailing in [the U.S.]." By contrast, the dropouts with whom I worked comprised people who chose to dig pit toilets as Dean did, or only have access to a flush toilet after a heavy rain, as Dominic did. Ella described her decision to relocate to this region by explaining that "I was living in a trailer park in in Minnesota and I bought this one-fifth-acre lot so I could build my own house and be poor somewhere warm!" When her friend Hugh, a maker of exquisite tongue drums in California, arrived to hand-deliver one to her, Marie, another friend, opened the box containing the drum in front of me. She began tapping the tongues before pressing the drum to her stomach. "This is a wonderful gift" she told me. "I left my medicines on the mainland, my drugs, my feathers, my crystals. This is wonderful. I need to feel it with my shoes off," before kicking her flip-flops off her feet and wrapping her body around the drum as she continued to play. Both women had moved to Hawai'i from the mainland in search of a different life, leaving with little or nothing; when I met them after they had lived there several years, they still had few material possessions.

This is a group of people who have a catchment tank to store water and who must filter or boil it before consumption. This is a group of people who, if they have electricity at all in their hand-built shacks, they have it only during and after a sunny day, as the batteries attached to their solar panels are generally small. This is a group of people who hand-built their homes, after arriving on the island with few possessions and limited money. They clearly do not live at standards currently considered acceptable in most of the U.S., yet, critically, they had made a *choice* to live with these privations.

According to the developer of the U.S. poverty line, Mollie Orshansky, “to be poor is to be deprived of those goods and services and pleasures which others around us take for granted” (Orshansky, quoted in Schwarz 2005: 49). Without cars, telephones, televisions, and, for many, a secure roof over their heads, and lacking sufficient employment in the area to furnish them with even a minimal wage, many of these dropouts lived below the poverty line. But they were not necessarily “poor” (as defined by Orshansky), because in having made a positive choice to live with such levels of privation—to have space on their half-, one-, or five-acre lots but few goods to fill it—they were not being “*deprived* of those . . . pleasures which others around us take for granted” (emphasis added) that Orshansky stressed (Schwarz 2005: 49). They had a low standard of living, yes, but if we accept Sahlins’s concept of a “Zen strategy,” unparalleled affluence as well.

that affluence is, in Sahlins’s analysis, intimately bound to time. One consequence of wanting or needing so little was the relatively little time dedicated to “work” in the “original affluent societies.” “Work” was done intermittently and at a leisurely pace, which “left them plenty of time to spare” (1972: 17). Life moved largely at a sedate pace with plenty of time engaged in what we might consider to be unproductive activities, such as chatting, sleeping, and visiting others. There is thus a temporal dimension to Sahlins’s analysis in that he seeks to demonstrate just how much “leisure” time hunter-gatherers had in comparison to that

available to members of capitalist societies or even subsistence agriculturalists. Although they are resource-poor, they are time-rich.

By contrast, in much contemporary writing on time and affluence, an abundance of time is read as a marker of poverty. People with “too much” time, with not enough to “fill” their time, people whose time is not “valuable” are viewed as poor; they are rarely considered to be wealthy, nor is their bounty of time usually seen as an articulation of affluence (see, for example, Rosa 2009; Löfgren and Ehns 2010). Again, the question of choice is critical. For many people going through asylum processes, those who are in prisons, unable to find employment, or living with disability or chronic illness, for example, this excess of “spare” time is not necessarily a bounty, a luxury, a marker of affluence. It is not invited and not necessarily welcome; it is not chosen but, rather, enforced. Within the context of Sahlins’s binarism, it is not clear whether hunter-gatherers *choose* temporal plenitude and limited material wants. What is clear, however, is that when placed in juxtaposition with the material excess (and consequent lack of contentment) and temporal scarcity of capitalist societies, having “plenty of time to spare” (1972: 17) is something that Sahlins views as a social good.

This sense of “plenty of time to spare” in the present is linked for Sahlins to a particular attitude toward the future. He argues that nomadic hunters can afford to travel lightly, to react to moments of plenty by feasting, to think only of the present because they have supreme confidence in the future, believing that tomorrow will deliver as today does and yesterday did. This lies in contrast to the Galbraithian visions of affluence, according to which hunter-gatherers look poor and far from affluent precisely *because* they have no provisions for tomorrow: they are not sufficiently oriented toward scarcity in their conceptions of the future. The same temporal attitude is read as affluence in one approach, poverty in the other.

In a remote, largely neglected corner of Hawai‘i, where the soil, although rarely deep, is nonetheless rich and well drained, and is coupled with plentiful rain and average summer and winter temperatures of around 25°C, there is something of a natural abundance. This was certainly the view of many early European explorers, who marveled at the ease of fishing and wide array of large and exotic fruit hanging from trees in Hawai‘i and across the Pacific (Howe 2000; Smith 1960). It is a view that has ebbed and flowed in popularity over the centuries; in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has become informed by concerns with colonialism and postcolonialism, globalization and climate change, but it nonetheless still holds sway, particularly within filmic, touristic, and popular culture discourses (Brawley and Dixon 2012, Lutz and Collins 1993). It was a view shared by many of my research participants, particularly when they first arrived. As I write this, I am reminded of my mum’s visit to the island during my first period of fieldwork. Left unsupervised for half an hour, she pointed with pride upon my return at the pile of “giant avocados, just look at the size of them!” she had gathered by repeatedly throwing a stick into a tree. Too young to be harvested, they would never ripen, but she could not resist such bounty. I am also reminded of Nigel, the parent of two teenagers, who complained that he didn’t even bother to pick up fallen mangos during their ripe season any more, “Because there are so many the kids just let them go rotten in the fruit bowl.” Or of twenty-year-old Buenos, the youngest son of Erin (a San Francisco beatnik-turned-hippie-turned-Hawai‘i-dropout), who vehemently rejected all forms of counterculture and who, in one of his many discourses on the problem of hippies on the island, explained, “The problem with hippies is that they see your fruit trees and they take your fruit. They don’t see that *I* planted that tree, *I* fertilized it, *I* weeded it, and they just come along and take it and tell you about the natural bounty of Hawai‘i.”

In many ways, what this group needed *was* abundant. Not necessarily in the ways it appeared to new arrivals, bedazzled by apparent natural bounty and as yet unaware that a lack

of fences did not necessarily mean a lack of private property (and their attendant rights). But if someone knew where to look, there were places where wild coconuts and wild fruit grew, free to be harvested by anyone. Many of these foods deemed essential but which could not be grown did circulate, often according to need. For example, when I moved into Dominic's shack (the one without a toilet), we dug a pit latrine together. I wanted to build a shelter over it but needed supplies, which I told people about as I socialized. Feliz (who gathered wild coconuts and sold them on the street in the village) had been given some surplus two-by-fours and corrugated steel sheets by someone building a house; after he finished his shack, he gave me what was left over. Another example was when Edward, needing a place to stay, was offered one by Erin (the mother of Buenos) and brought with him a rusty but valuable Wolf cooking range. As Buenos, Edward, and Adam installed it, Tommy (Erin's partner), removed the old stove and took it to his friend Toby (with whom Adam was staying), who was then able to pass on his stove to a friend who, in turn, was in need.

While the concrete floor necessary to balance Erin's new Wolf range in her open-air kitchen was being laid, Erin, myself, and the three men laying the floor (Edward, Buenos and Adam) *talked story*. Edward told a tale of how both the high quality digital cameras he had owned in the past on the mainland had been taken and pawned for "dope" by girlfriends. He thought this happened because he had left them too obviously on display too close to the bed, concluding that he just shouldn't have expensive things like that. Erin suggested that he shouldn't have girlfriends like that. After another story about past girlfriends, Erin interrupted the flow of anecdotes from Edward and requested that stories be happy stories. She further reminded Edward and all of us that "We are in the present moment, so can we please focus on the present, on the now?" before shifting the conversation to how to rearrange the kitchen around the new stove. Erin's call to reorient the temporal focus of our conversation from the past to the present and immediate future in order to "focus on the present" and to be "in the

present moment” articulated, albeit in unusually explicit terms for instructional purposes, a temporal orientation toward the present moment that was widely held in the community.

Be Here Now

The year before Sahlins published *Stone age economics*, Baba Ram Dass published the seminal hippie text *Remember, be here now* (1971). Then known as Richard Alpert, Ram Dass had become famous in the early 1960s for his high-profile self-experimentation with psychedelic drugs along with Timothy Leary while teaching at Harvard University, leading them to coauthor *The psychedelic experience* with Richard Metzner in 1964. After their dismissal from Harvard in 1963, each went their separate ways, with Alpert traveling to India in 1967, where he met his guru Neem Karoli Baba, who gave him the name Ram Dass. In 1969 he returned to the U.S., where he created *Be here now* (as it is commonly called).

My first encounter with a copy of *Be here now* was during my first visit to Nick’s home. A friend of Dominic (who knew I was interested in meeting “old hippies”), Nick had invited me over to his house. On my arrival, he cleansed the space for me by burning white sage, showed me his shrine (comprised primarily of found objects such as stones and shells and a small statue of Buddha) and, above the shrine in a glass-fronted cabinet, his first-edition copy of *Be here now*. As he introduced me to the pleasures of smoking finely ground organic, “grown-with-love” cacao, he took me through the book, explaining the multileveled significance of its plates, where illustrations, mandala-like patterns, and text competed for space. He showed me how it could be read sequentially but, more powerfully, as a succession of moments. He taught me the significance of opening it at random and absorbing the teaching that chance had placed in the reader’s path.

The text comprises three main sections: a short introductory section called “Journey,” tracing the author’s transformation from Dr. Richard Alpert to Baba Ram Dass; a “Cookbook

for a sacred life” at the end, and between, comprising the bulk of the text, a succession of numbered plates. In their different ways, these sections all articulate a vision of the good life centered loosely on Buddha’s four noble truths, aimed at understanding and thus reducing suffering. It is thus noteworthy that both Sahlins and Dass, in their very different ways, hold up forms of Buddhism as the foil to life in “modern capitalistic societies.” For Ram Dass, these noble truths and the quest for a good life as mediated through them are often framed in terms of a focus on the present moment, of being here now.

Time is precious in *Be here now*—not as a finite resource to “spend” as efficiently as possible but through what you *miss* through efficiency. To illustrate, Ram Dass describes a scene in Plate 24 in which the half a dozen or so adult members of a commune have gone to the store with their babies. One baby, Coby, starts crying, so Coby’s dad, Steve, is getting stressed out. Over the page, on Plate 25, the text states,

Steve says: what’s the use of going to the store. It’s like what price efficiency. What happened to the vibrations? What happened to the human beings in that shuffle? So we’d all do this absurd thing. We’d all stop and gather. We’d all sit down and join hands around this little kid. We’d cool ourselves out. Coby would stop crying. Then we’d go to the store. And Steve taught me that: if you get so efficient . . . if you’ve got to turn off all the vibrations of the scene . . . because you’re so busy about the future or the past or time has caught you . . . it costs too much!! (Ram Dass 1971: Plate 25; ellipses in the original).

It costs too much. Stepping out of the present moment, being so “efficient” that one has to either carry a crying baby around a shop or lose an adult shopper to childcare has, for Ram Dass, too high a price. But in stopping, embracing the moment, and rejecting efficiency, the

narrators calmed the baby down, calmed the adults down, and all were able to go to the store more happily. By rejecting “efficiency,” the members of this commune were able to live with more contentment. By being here now, by focusing on the present moment, they were able to live happier lives.

In the how-to section “Cookbook for a sacred life,” Ram Dass advocates the following exercises:

1. Ask yourself: Where am I?

Answer: Here.

Ask yourself: What time is it?

Answer: Now.

Say it until you can hear it.

2. . . . Begin to notice that wherever you go or whatever time it is by the clock . . . it is ALWAYS HERE AND NOW. In fact you will begin to see that you can’t get away from the HERE and NOW. Let the clock and the earth do their “thing” . . . let the comings and goings of life continue. . . . But YOU stay HERE and NOW. This is an exercise to bring you to the ETERNAL PRESENT . . . where it all is. (1971: 90; ellipses in the original)

The eternal present may be where it all is, but as the exercises indicate, attunement to the present moment requires effort to achieve; it is skilled practice. This can be particularly challenging—but particularly rewarding—in stressful situations. According to Ram Dass, the good life remains open to those willing to adopt a new orientation toward the present moment.

This was an oft-cited text in the community, particularly among older members who remembered when it was first published. It was they who established this space as a countercultural one, as one where it was easy to disappear from the purview of the state, to live off the grid, to be left alone to grow papayas, 'erb, and pineapples, to establish communes linked by common values around food, yoga, or simply a desire to live collectively as "conscious" people. Rosa and Scheuerman (2009) discuss how, in the high-speed (and rapidly changing) society in which they claim "we" now all live, the status of older generations is declining because the present looks so radically different from the past. The future will likely look so radically different from the present that what in previous epochs may have been considered the wisdom or insight of older generations is today viewed as irrelevant knowledge, of limited usefulness for navigating the present, let alone the future. Yet in this community in Hawaii, the foundational members belong to an older generation; they remember LSD when it was new, they socialized with now-famous figures of the counterculture, they moved to this place when it was uncleared jungle. They have wisdom, they have insight, they possess an authenticity not necessarily greater than but qualitatively different from that of those who followed after them.² In returning to a simpler, more originally affluent way of life, these hippies and their younger counterparts have embodied

2. As with any community, intergenerational differences exist. Yet this is a relatively new community, having been founded only in the 1960s and containing a curious lack of teenagers. Many parents relocate to the mainland when their children reach adolescence; if they do not, these young adults often move away independently. Thus, generational differences emerge most explicitly through waves of migration into the community. The most striking intergenerational difference between, on the one hand, those whom I met who had become hippies in the 1960s and moved to the area in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and, on the other, later arrivals (even if of the same age) related to substance use: none of this first group drank alcohol; almost everyone else did. By contrast, "new age" ideas flowed freely, crossing the Pacific with new arrivals and welcomed to varying extents by this generation but rarely outright rejected by any.

and sought to be, as much as possible, in the present moment. As Erin gently coached Edward in his transition from a highly chaotic, urban lifestyle filled with expensive electronic items and unkind partners to a new life in a low-cash economy, sleeping on a couch, owning little more than a handful of dollars and a dufflebag full of clothes, she encouraged him to let go of the past and to focus on the present—to be here now.

Life “in the flow”

This community, then, is one that had its origins in the countercultural urban-to-rural migration of the early 1970s. A mixture of young hippies—often looking for a place to grow their ‘*erb* in peace—wound up here, bought then-worthless cheap land, invited or allowed friends and sympathetic strangers to join them on it, and sought to varying degrees to return to a subsistence lifestyle, growing much of what they ate. Many made their living in the early days, and some still do so, by cultivating and selling cannabis. Buildings have often been made from reclaimed materials, and labor is commonly exchanged for labor, a share of a hunted pig, or ‘*erb*—very rarely for cash. However, cash is required for items such as certain foods, building equipment, and gasoline, which cannot be generated locally. Most of this cash is generated from cannabis sales, gardening and carpentry for wealthy mainland retirees, employment in the supermarket-sized health-food store in the village, various forms of body work (such as massage, acupuncture, chiropractory, and different therapies such as color, water, and sound therapy), as well as state benefits, including, in recent years, pensions.

The community is located in an area that attracts a near-continuous stream of people, often single and in their twenties, who stay for a few months, a few years, or longer to live in ecologically sustainable, low-impact, countercultural ways. Although almost everyone works (as back-street mechanics, gardeners, body workers, cannabis growers, or small-scale farmers cultivating food for sale at local markets, etc.), few people have jobs. Many new arrivals offer

their labor to work-trade farms, where they work a few hours a day growing vegetable crops in exchange for food, accommodation, and perhaps a small amount of cash. They travel by hitchhiking, socialize around potluck dinners, drum circles, and bonfires in the communes. Although many return to the mainland after this sojourn, some settle down and make the area their home.

And the present moment holds sway. Outside of formal interview contexts with recording devices and topic guides, I learned little of my participants' backgrounds, their childhoods, or their families; I was shown no photographs of "home"; I heard few tales of life on the mainland. Similarly, except for parents explaining that once their children reached adolescence they would leave the area and return to an urban setting on the mainland, "because there's nothing for young people to do here but surf and smoke *ice* [crystal methamphetamine],"³ there was little talk of future plans. It was difficult for them to predict where they would be living in six months' time or what they would be doing. After new arrivals spent time at their first work-trade farm, they often shifted to different work-trade farms or found other ways to earn money, and moved into a commune or friend's house, found a housesitting opportunity, or returned to the mainland. As a result, almost all conversations started with the question, "Where are you living at the moment?" Before greetings turned to inquiring *how* someone was, they focused on *where* they were staying. These greetings revealed a discernible orientation toward the present, being oriented both toward place (where you are living?) and the present (where you are living *now*?).

Questions about why people moved and what events in the past led to their current location were not asked. The *why*, the *past*, were not what mattered: what mattered was

3. As well as being a center for illicit (and increasingly licit) cannabis cultivation since the early 1960s, this rural area with limited state surveillance has also been the center of crystal methamphetamine production on the island since the 1980s.

where you were now. Greetings could be lengthy—indeed, all aspects of chance encounters could be lengthy. I could give examples of spending twenty minutes buying homemade incense from Sandy who sold it on the street, detailing the process of unwrapping each foil-wrapped bundle, sniffing it, commenting on it, moving on to the next before finally selecting one, accompanied by the interruptions of his saying hello to people passing by, relaying messages, and starting again because a new prospective buyer had arrived. I could also describe the slow movement of check-out lines at the health-food store, when conversations between staff and patrons would extend beyond the time required to process and pay for items bought (see Pickering 2016). Or the greetings that turned into chance encounters that turned into adventures. On one occasion,

I was sitting outside the health food store when a German woman came by. We got talking about where we lived... Two women came and sat with us.... After talking about this and the cost of living—and dying—in the U.S.A., the three of them went to the warm ponds, the German woman having been hitchhiking with them, and accepting a ride to the ponds. They invited me to join them. (fieldnotes, March 3, 2005)

As with this trio, it was common for hitchhikers, when traveling to get to a particular place, to end up going to another, having been invited by drivers to join them for a swim. a beer, or a smoke somewhere scenic. It was not only hitchhikers to whom spontaneous offers were made: opportunities arose sitting at tables in front of the health food store, sitting on the wall with Feliz as he sold his coconuts, or standing around with Sandy as he pedalled his incense. Invitations to plays were extended, parties and drum circles coming up in the next few days were scheduled, but so were invitations to spontaneously go for a swim, or to someone's land

to play with a trampoline, basketball hoop, or other entertainment to be found there or simply to find somewhere to get high together.

Lots of events seemingly happened “in the flow.” The right time for a given event to occur was the time at which it was occurring. As a result, things rarely began at their stated start time. Indeed the stated start time for parties was always 4:20. This did not refer to the hour on a clock, since people did not wear watches but, rather, to a mood or tone. The number 420 is linked to cannabis smoking culture in the U.S. The origins of this figure are unclear: my participants speculated it was police code or the time the English took their afternoon tea, or simply told me they did not know, but they all knew that it stood for getting stoned. Thus a party invitation with a 4:20 start time referred not to an hour on the clock but to an affective intention. It articulated that the party would be cannabis-friendly and would start when it started.

The German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer has reflected on the nature of time in relation to the experience of art. Through this he categorized two forms (or perhaps textures) of time: “empty” and “fulfilled” time. Empty time is time that stretches from the past, through the present, into the future. It is the time of planning and reckoning. It is conceptually “empty” because it is viewed in relation to how it might be “filled.” When Dominic declared himself a rich man because “It’s a rich man who . . . can afford to have a room with nothing in it,” he can be read as resisting the urge to “fill” an “empty” room, just as, in telling me this while we sat on the *lanai*, he was helping me resist the urge to “fill” my “empty” time. Within such a framework, the present is experienced in a particular sort of way—because it belongs on a past–present–future continuum, the present is always situated in anticipation of the future and thus in a way that is open to measurement—specifically “time for” and “time until.” This, for Gadamer, is “our” normal experience of time, or what Risser, in his analysis of Gadamer, calls “the normal pragmatic experience of time” (1997: 202). Without making

any claims to universality, I suggest that this local theory of time as empty and in need of being filled exists in opposition to what Gadamer calls “fulfilled” time. While he articulates this time opposition to examine the experience of consuming art, he illustrates it most succinctly in terms of festivals:

We all know the festival fulfills every moment of its duration. Its fulfillment does not come about because someone has empty time to fill up. On the contrary, the time only becomes festive with the arrival of the festival.

(Gadamer 1986: 42)

So, too, do parties become parties when they become parties. They do not start at 4:20 when 4:20 is understood as a time on a clock; they start at 4:20 because those who want to can get high.

Fulfilled time is redolent of the notion of “be here now” or “being in the moment,” a hippie-generation temporal orientation that rejected time planning, being oriented toward the future, and measuring of time in ever-diminishing units. These dropouts reject a form of time-reckoning that rests on the division of time into weeks, days, hours, and minutes. Instead, the distinctions between the seasons, between the phases of the moon, and between day and night were more salient in terms of agriculture and socializing (it being considerably harder, for example, to hitchhike in the pitch black of a Hawai‘i new-moon night). The ideal time for things to happen was “in the flow”: when a thing happened was the right time for that thing to be happening and, critically, when it was framed afterward as being the right time for it to have happened.

While “in the flow” was the ideal, it was not always the reality. People with welfare appointments, doctor’s appointments, shifts at the health food store, or flights to catch had to

be in the right place at the right time as measured on a clock. Although the doctor used by the community, who had his surgery and the welfare office in the nearby city, accommodated their rural landscape, lack of public transport, and low levels of car ownership by offering broad morning or afternoon appointments rather than appointments at fixed times, body workers had only limited flexibility with their appointments, and flights did not did not depart “in the flow” at all.

This was a group of people, then, who were familiar with clock time, who had all grown up on the U.S. mainland, almost all in urban settings; but who sought as adults to reject such time-reckoning in favor of other ways of measuring time: holding the monthly rave at the full moon, starting parties at 4:20, or harvesting crops when ready to harvest. Dominic’s empty room was mirrored in his empty diary: however, they were not empty and waiting to be filled (with objects, with time until) as per Gadamer’s understanding of “our” normal experience of time but, rather, in the sense of being an embodiment of a countercultural way of being in the world, of “being the change you want to see” (as Ghandi was often misquoted to me), of living an alternative to clock-bound, future-oriented timeways. Being time-rich was not an accidental by-product of countercultural living but central to it.

This binarism can be brought into dialogue with John Urry’s distinction between chronological and kairological time. For Urry, kairological time is “the sense of time in which it is said that *now* is the time to do something irrespective of what any clock indicates” (2009: 184, emphasis in the original). By contrast, chronological time is one in which time is measured and counted in abstraction from human activity. In this case, the clock becomes the means for orientating human activity rather than human activity being the means of measuring time. Central to both Gadamer (1986) and Urry (2009) is the measurement of time; both argue that clocked-based means of measuring time produces a particular affect that

can perhaps be escaped temporarily (such as through the experience of art or in engaging with slow-movement activities), but it remains an exception to the norm of time measured through standard units.

Among several recent publications on time and speed is a volume edited by Rosa and Sheuerman entitled *High-Speed Society*. This book articulates a particular set of anxieties about time and modernity, a sense that “society” is speeding up, a result of the rise and dominance of chronological time, technological innovation, the collapsing of time and space, and so on. Although these works may initially appear to be about human experiences of time, anthropological research into time (exemplified, for example, by Day et al. 1998; Gell 1992; James and Mills (2005) challenges the apparent universalism of societal acceleration by attending to the details of local experiences and understandings of time. Thus Day et al.’s edited volume *Lilies of the field: Marginal people who live for the moment* (1998) explores ethnographically how individuals, stages of the lifecycle, and “cultures” emphasize the present moment, and do so in highly diverse ways. Day et al. highlight how these orientations toward the short- over the long-term stand in opposition to “durational time” and argue that what they call “the present” is more than just prioritizing the short- over long-term; it is itself a form of ritual time, in which durational time can be “transcended.”

As the volume’s title suggests, though, what all these individuals and groups have in common beyond their orientation toward the present is a shared marginality: be they Japanese day laborers or Amazonian hunter-gatherers, the people explored in that volume experience their social position as marginal to more powerful neighbors and often live in material poverty relative to those neighbors. However, they understand themselves not only as poor and marginalized but freed of other burdens: of pressures to accumulate material goods, find a spouse, or invest heavily in care for senior family members, and freed from constraints of

past or future and be actively present in the present moment. Such identities require work to cultivate and maintain; being in the present is an ideal not always easy to consistently enact.

Stewart (1998) argues that, although the Roma in Hungary build collective identities around their skills in the market, they also sometimes need to work in factories, similar to the dropouts in Hawai‘i who try to live “in the flow” but also arrive on time for their shifts in the health-food store. It is these pragmatic constraints that expose the present as a form of ritual time—actively cultivated, rich in symbolism and transcendent (Day et al. 1998). In celebrating the present, even in the face of pressures to attend to the past or the future, the dropouts enacted particular visions of the good life: a good life often rich in time but poor in material goods, replete in understandings of the self as freed from the constraints of others, even when viewed as poor and marginal by those others. This community might appear to be comparable to other marginal, poor, groups that are oriented toward the present but, like the prostitutes discussed by Day or the Japanese day laborers discussed by Gill, they made a choice to forego a path toward security or material plenty. In parallel with the prostitutes with whom Day worked, they live in active opposition to an encompassing mainstream. But like Gill’s day laborers, once this choice was made, it often proved difficult to unmake. For instance, one older participant, who arrived only in the 2000s, became injured and unable to work and thus could not pay his rent. After he recovered, his car broke down, and he was unable to travel to any work that might become available. He was eventually reduced to sleeping in a broken-down car, counting down the months until he became eligible for his state pension. The last time I saw him, he asked me for money, uncertain that he would survive until he became of pensionable age. While he made a choice to live in a community that celebrated the present moment, when the time came he found himself unable to choose to leave it.

The members of this group have thus worked individually and collectively to live time differently than before: all grew up on the U.S. mainland, and all grew up familiar with clock time. In relocating to Hawai‘i, they sought to live—from a few months to forever—in the present moment. They did so not only prioritize the present over past or future, not only to prioritize short-term planning over long-term planning but to transcend durational time, reject empty time, and embrace their correlation between temporal plenitude and “poverty.”

In 1970, Swedish economist Staffan Linder attempted to build an economic model to explain this relationship between temporal plenty and material lack. Drawing on anthropological material, Linder chose not to celebrate the diversity of timeways, as did anthropologists such as Day et al. (1998), Gell (1992) or James and Mills (2005); rather, he used classic ethnographic accounts to argue for a single, universal trajectory from “time surplus” (exemplified for him by Evans-Pritchard’s work on the Nuer) to “time famine.” For him, no binary oppositions rub up against each other within a single society; rather, all societies are inescapably caught up in a singular inevitable trajectory toward time famine. They begin as “cultures with a time surplus” (what I might call being “time-rich”), which, for Linder, is a result of their being resource-poor. Linder argues that the causal link he posits between material poverty and an abundance of time is epitomized in Mead’s description of contemporary Greek social life:

Greeks “pass” the time; they do not save or accumulate or use it. And they are intent on passing the time, not on budgeting it. . . . The clock is not the master of the Greek: it does not tell him to get up, to go to the field. . . . It is distasteful to the Greeks to organize their activities according to external limits; they are therefore either early or late, if a time is set at all. (Mead 1995, 90, quoted in Linder 1970: 22)

Yet this is necessarily a transitional state, she argued: although it might be distasteful, it nonetheless becomes increasingly necessary for Greeks to organize their activities in relation to the clock:

Wherever there is no law to the contrary, a man opens his store in due course, not by the clock; however, in the cities he now functions under clocked time, because he comes under government and union regulation. (Mead 1955: 90–92, quoted in Linder 1970: 22).

The final, seemingly inevitable stage of the process in Linder's model is the emergence of societies characterized by "time famine." Here, the link between time and material possessions remains strong but inverted. For time, like other resources, is subject to the twin forces of supply and demand, albeit with the critical caveat that the supply of time is constant—it can be neither reduced nor hoarded. Demand, by contrast, is elastic: ever greater demands can be placed on an individual's time without the capacity to increase available time. For Linder, this is what produces the sense of temporal scarcity.

This is a wholly different approach to more contemporary debates about temporal scarcity, which tend to focus on the questions of whether and how societies are speeding up and the consequences of this (see, for example, the contributors to Hassan and Purser 2007 or Rosa and Scheuerman 2009). For Linder, a society cannot speed up because time is a fixed resource—in itself, it cannot speed up—but the number of demands placed on a finite amount of time can intensify the sense of time shortage.

In asking not whether advanced capitalist societies are speeding up but how individuals in such societies achieve equilibrium, Linder draws out the significance of consumer capitalism in his understanding of time scarcity. Equilibrium refers to the process

whereby people seek to achieve balance between their supply of and demands on their time. If time is experienced as finite and something that needs to be actively managed and distributed, changes in one aspect of time use will affect others. Linder argues that, as productivity in work time increases (when some innovation enables more output from the same input), this process is necessarily counterbalanced by uses of nonwork time in order to maintain a sense of equilibrium. This involves a feeling that one is getting maximal outputs out of one's inputs across all spheres of one's life. For this, capital is essential, since "Just as working time becomes more productive when combined with more capital, so consumption time can give a higher yield when combined with more consumption goods" (1970: 4). In other words, as improvements in productivity increase outputs relative to input in the sphere of work, people in societies characterized by time famine come to want similarly high yields in nonwork time.

For Linder, this is achieved through commodity consumption, which comprises two elements: having possession of a commodity and having time to use it. To increase output in an investment, for instance, in listening to music, a person may choose to improve the quality of their stereo speakers to achieve the maximum value of that purchase, since they do not feel they have sufficient surplus time available for listening to it. This leads to regularly replacing speakers with only marginally improved sound quality, requiring further input into work time to generate sufficient revenue to maximize the experience of listening to music, thereby reducing potential available time in which to increase value through listening. Linder sees something of a bind in commodity consumption as a response to temporal famine (even if it has its roots in a universally human desire for economic equilibrium). As people respond to increased demands on their time, they seek to maximize value out of time, pushing cultural pursuits aside (reading, walking in the park, watching a sunset, etc.) in favor of pursuits that require a higher input of capital to yield a proportionately greater output relative to that input

(and therefore significantly greater than the output on a low- or no-cost input, such as a sunset). The bind, of course, lies in the temporal consequences of needing to secure sufficient income to expend on consumer goods necessary to maximize output in leisure time. The more people in time-famine societies earn, the more they expend on high-cost consumer goods in pursuit of well-being. However, being deprived of the necessary time to enjoy those goods (since consumer goods are “the definite end products that are combined with time in an attempt to create material or spiritual well-being” (1970: 5), people further expend on material goods as a route to maximizing utility.

By contrast, the people in the community I researched had use time in abundance but limited consumer goods to expend it on. In Dominic’s shack (the one with the toilet we built together), he had a stereo and some CDs. The stereo required electricity and so use was determined by the weather, which was mediated by his solar panel batteries. The stereo had not been upgraded in years, possibly decades, but remained of sufficient quality to enjoy the experience of listening to music. In contrast to the picture painted by Linder, the driver for Dominic’s “attempt to create material or spiritual well-being” (Linder 1970: 5) came not from expansion in material resources but in his use of time. I would argue that time *could* be “spent” listening to music, but it is perhaps more useful to think instead of time passing as people engage in listening to music, watching for whales on the beach, or taking up a driver’s suggestion to go for a swim while hitchhiking precisely because time was *not* something that was most usefully framed as a resource that could be “saved,” “spent,” or “wasted.”

When contrasted with the representations of speeded-up and time-starved societies, this enclave of hippies and dropouts emerges as a site of marginality, a place where “being here now” is not merely a temporal orientation toward the short-term over the long-term; rather, it carries the rich weight and ritual significance imputed to “the present” by Day et al. (1998). Being here now is actively cultivated, transmitted between generations of migrants

through implicit and explicit teaching. The ways in which durational time impacts social life are played down in favor of celebrations of the present.

This stands in contrast to the ways in which time abundance is described and made sense of within the body of work that claims to describe “our” universal experience of time as characterized by scarcity and acceleration. The underlying assumption in such work is that “time abundance (if [it] can be found at all) is a phenomenon characteristic of socially excluded groups like the old, the unemployed, or the poor. . . . Deceleration is a sign of deprivation and exclusion” (Rosa 2009: 103, see also Beesley 2017; Turnbull 2016). Choice, then, becomes central. As Dean notes (mentioned earlier), running around with no shoes on is a pleasure only if you have—or choose to forego having—an alternative, an attitude that can change over the life course. This members of this group are marginal but not (generally) socially excluded. They are not be forced to wait for release from prison, for social benefits, or for political asylum. Instead they have relocated to a setting where they can more easily live in and celebrate “the present.”

Nevertheless, absence remains central to this process. Most of the people lived in the rural interior serviced by one village located an hour’s drive from the nearest town. This rurality brought with it its own temporal flows, ones that were strikingly at odds with Shaw’s (2015) characterization of what he called the “incessant city.” Shaw takes as his starting point Lefebvre’s claim that “society has been urbanized” (Shaw 2015). What Lefebvre means by this is not only that an ever-increasing proportion of the world’s population lives in cities, but that the city has become the norm against which rural life is measured and shapes how “we” think about societies. The incessant city is the city that doesn’t stop. Domestic and street lights enable city dwellers to see their immediate locale at any time of day or night. Supermarkets opened twenty-four hours a day make it possible to shop at any time in the daily and weekly cycle. Shift work in factories, hospitals, and other spaces mean these

facilities are required and thus available and used. Shaw does not argue that all urban dwellers feel the relentless pace of the city at all time; they may sleep fewer hours a night than did their historical rural counterparts (Crary 2014), but they still sleep. City dwellers may still stroll, enjoy leisurely meals, and engage in other forms of slow living, but what is significant is that the incessant city is always there: *it* doesn't stop even if an individual inhabitant does. This is what makes the city incessant—not the life of individuals but the city itself.

By contrast, rural communities are not necessarily incessant. In the area where I did fieldwork, there were no street lights to illuminate the rural roads at night (thus precluding hitchhiking as a form of transport after dark), and domestic light comprised hurricane lamps and candles. Once the shops in the village closed, there was nowhere within twenty miles to purchase goods. Beyond a couple of bars, there was no formal “night-time economy” where people could spend time (and money) at night.

One time, a famous raw food advocate came to speak in one of the communes. When I asked residents where he had stayed and what it had been like to hang out with him, they enthused about the new ways to eat avocado he had introduced them to and laughed as they told me that, by eight or nine o'clock in the evening, he asked where everyone had gone and what was going to happen now, to which the owner of the land explained that everyone had simply gone to bed. For this new (and explicitly temporary) arrival, the village—and even more so its environs—was significantly cessant. He did not realize that, within an hour or two of nightfall, there were no public places to go to, no means of transportation to get there if one lacked a car, no television to watch or radio to listen to, and limited light to use while engaging in other activities. Unlike the incessant Los Angeles from which he hailed, the village and its environs followed a collective diurnal tempo, picking up from dawn, getting busier during the daylight hours, and winding down again after nightfall.

Unlike the multiple work–leisure patterns of city dwellers discussed by Shaw (2015), the cessant village is characterized by a largely shared tempo. Most people rose around dawn and went to bed within a few hours of sundown. This pattern oscillated with the lunar calendar, which ranged from pitch-black moonless to bright full-moon nights. Equally, bright, sunny days opened up spaces such as the beach, while heavy rains trapped hitchhikers wherever they were and closed down hubs such as the various walls where people sat in the village or on the beach. Whether day or night, new or full moon, sunny or rainy, these natural phenomena served to set a tempo that was shared and collective. Unlike the incessant city, the cessant village did not keep going even when individuals chose to slow down or opt out. The tempo of the village and the tempo of individual lives were far more in sync.

Time, space, emptiness, now

Urry described kairological time as “the sense of time in which it is said that *now* is the time to do something irrespective of what any clock indicates” (2009: 184). But what is “now”? In what Sahlins calls the Zen approach to affluence, the now—defined by dictionaries as the present time or moment—is a vast, expansive terrain. For Ram Dass, as for the members of Sahlins’s “original affluent society,” it is a space of bounty and opportunity but one which dropouts brought up in the mid–twentieth-century U.S. must work to reorient themselves toward. As Ram Dass advised, “Ask yourself: What time is it? Answer: Now. Say it until you can hear it” (Ram Dass 1971: 90).

Philosopher Hermann Lübbe suggests that the present moment—the now—is contracting in an era of exponential rates of technological innovation. He argues that, as the number of innovations per year increase, “The number of years decreases over which we can look back without seeing a world alien to our trusted present-day lifeworld” (2009: 159). Extrapolating from this, he says, “The future can no longer be compared in its essential

respects to our present living conditions” (ibid.). Where the present is understood as “the space of time for which we can calculate our living conditions with a degree of constancy,” this present contracts into a shorter and shorter moment as rates of innovation and social change increase (2009: 160). In Sahlins’s vision of Zen affluence, the present is not one of exponential innovation but, rather, one in which the future is imagined to be much like both past and present. Here, the present is vast and is not contracting. In and around a village once described in a travel guidebook as “a wrinkle in time,” it is possible to see a collective rejection of a contracting present. As Erin coached Edward on how to live in the present moment, her authority to do so emerged from, not in spite of, her years and experience. This was not a space of an ever-contracting present but one in which the ‘now’ extended both backwards and forwards.

This is not to say that this community has remained unchanged since the first countercultural arrivals appeared in the late 1960s. There is now a portacabin police station and set of traffic lights in the village and some paved roads in the area. The health food store has expanded to a supermarket-sized affair. There is now a drive-through drug store, a 7–11 store, and a large internet cafe. Businesses have opened and others have folded. The local elementary school is no longer the only educational choice available, as a plethora of alternative educational establishments have emerged. Cannabis cultivation brought a significant amount of cash into the local economy, bringing county and state surveillance in its wake, but the twin forces of the state- and national-level medical marijuana movements and the post-2008 recession led to a decline in both surveillance and profitability.

Despite these changes, the community of dropouts and hippies remains oriented toward the present, to “being here now,” and to actively resisting the temptations of chronological, durational, and empty time. The analyses presented by Linder, Lübbe, and others apply to technologically-driven societies, so the lack of haste in this particular

community to embrace technological innovation goes some way toward explaining its apparent success in maintaining an expanded present in the face of the supposed inevitability of change toward the time famine of modernity. The slow pace of travel over unpaved roads makes it easier to stop to pick up hitchhikers; difficult telecommunications increase the emphasis placed on face-to-face communication; and the lack of easy access to electronic media increases reliance on local sources of knowledge.

But a technologically-driven analysis can only go so far. An expanded present is one replete with opportunity—but opportunity of a different sort than that offered by the pursuit of material goods. In Linder’s framework, goods embody a potential for future enjoyment; consuming them can occur only when they are coupled with time. As he and many others have argued, a sense of having (sufficient) time is in increasingly short supply in technologically-innovative, temporally-accelerating societies, such as mainstream U.S. society. Yet Dominic is content with an old stereo, and many others in his community do not even own a stereo at all, relying instead on playing instruments to create the experience of listening to music. An expanded present offers the opportunity to take up an invitation to “jam,” to take a detour to the drum circle on the beach, or to sing songs while weeding. An expanded present offers an opportunity to say “Yes” to invitations since such invitations do not clash with inflexible prior commitments. An expanded present offers the opportunity to live in the present, to be here now, to “Let the clock and the earth do their ‘thing’ [while] YOU stay HERE and NOW” (Ram Dass 1971: 90).

An expanded present is an unfilled present, linked to a future that does not require work to ensure that it is filled, precisely because an expanded present always already contains that which is required for ongoing well-being. The acquisition of things as insurance against the future is unnecessary in the context of an expanded present. Like Dominic’s empty room, the expanded present is a celebration of emptiness, of freedom from want, a celebration of

letting go of the future-oriented, object-oriented upbringing that the adult community members experienced before relocating to Hawai‘i. And, like Dominic’s room, it is both expansive and pragmatic. The room may be empty, but Dominic can still occasionally make money renting it to acquaintances from the mainland looking for respite from stuff-filled rooms.

Thus, for this community, to be time-rich is to be affluent. To be in an expansive present is to be liberated from (at least some of) the anxieties of (post)modernity. However, while this expansive present is bounteous, it also lacks a safety net. It is not yet known how younger generations will care for their oldest community members in the future. Not all will succeed in supporting themselves at that point. For now, as they age, the older hippies and dropouts are choosing to access a safety net from state entities they had hitherto sought to avoid.

But for those who are still young or fit and still making money through cannabis cultivation, gardening, or carpentry and still enjoying “running around with no shoes on,” the present is viewed in almost unequivocally positive terms. It is not an articulation of the emerging movements that emphasize slow living or decluttering. Rather, to make our morning coffee while staying on Brad’s libertarian commune in 2011, I and my codwellers did not chop wood, build and light a fire, and then finally brew coffee with the intention of being slow. Rather, we did it because there was no stove, and the acquisition of such an item would have required particular forms of work to secure the cash to purchase it and ensure an ongoing supply of gas to maintain its functionality—forms of work the community members chose to avoid. The particular way in which they conducted the daily action of making coffee in the morning did not represent a slow moment in an otherwise fast-paced life; it was a pragmatic balancing of various desires—to have coffee while living in a way that allowed them to spend an hour chatting, sitting around a fire, and enjoying the entire process of

preparing and savoring their beverage. Their choice to live this way is what makes this a site of affluence. In a community of dropouts who all grew up seeing coffee made and consumed almost instantly, their ability to choose to spend an hour building a fire to brew it, to choose to take a trip to the beach because someone invites you while hitchhiking, to choose to enjoy an empty room—this is affluence indeed.

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