



In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics

By Sarah Sharma

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The world is getting faster. This sentiment is proclaimed so often that it is taken for granted, rarely questioned or examined by those who celebrate the notion of an accelerated culture or by those who decry it. Sarah Sharma engages with that assumption in this sophisticated critical inquiry into the temporalities of everyday life. Sharma conducted ethnographic research among individuals whose jobs or avocations involve a persistent focus on time: taxi drivers, frequent-flyer business travelers, corporate yoga instructors, devotees of the slow-food and slow-living movements. Based on that research, she develops the concept of "power-chronography" to make visible the entangled and uneven politics of temporality. Focusing on how people's different relationships to labor configures their experience of time, she argues that both "speed-up" and "slow-down" often function as a form of biopolitical social control necessary to contemporary global capitalism.

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Editorial Review

Review

"In these dispatches from the frontlines of global capitalism, Sarah Sharma shows the unequal distribution of what Lewis Mumford decades ago called shock absorbers. Harold Innis meets Marx and postcolonial theory: time turns out to have both a price and color. The tale that life is getting faster will never look the same once you've read the vivid slices of life portrayed in this book."

(John Durham Peters, author of *Speaking into the Air: A History of the Idea of Communication*)

"A thoughtful book on an important topic, *In the Meantime* is filled with rich ethnographic detail. I loved the chapter on taxi drivers and appreciate the integrity and intelligence that Sarah Sharma brings to bear in her analyses of middle-class and wealthy subjects, groups that can and should be studied with care and attention."

(Caren Kaplan, author of *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*)

"*In The Meantime* reads like a novel. Sharma's sharp attack on speedup believers is accentuated with detailed portraits of the lives at the core and at the margins of global capital. It is this vivid composite of detailed narratives that describe the social fabric of time which drives you through the pages.... Sharma has found a very convincing perspective in which the human body becomes the nexus of the shift from spatial to temporal power relations. Her image of the social fabric of time is great in its vividness and physicality."

(Hartmut Wilkening *Institute of Network Cultures blog*)

"*In the Meantime* persuasively argues a provocative thesis about temporality in society. The thesis is bold, compelling, and would be widely interesting to scholars in cultural studies and media studies.... Sharma achieves a sophisticated balance of cultural theory, ethnographic research, and personal prose."

(Timothy Ballingall *itineration.org*)

"Any scholars interested in the work of those theorists or who are engaging with issues of temporality, globalization, neoliberalism, governmentality, labor, and/or embodiment will find valuable insights and discussions in this book."

(Josh Smicker *International Journal of Communication*)

"There are hugely enjoyable moments in this book. Many will recognise the 'public display of busyness' of people on their laptops in cafes and transport hubs (p. 53).... Sharma's portraits and vignettes are required reading for academics and non-academics alike."

(Ben O'Loughlin *Media, Culture, & Society*)

"Sharma's call for a collective sharing of time, a reimagining of the temporal that would free it from our individual fixations on having too little time, and thus incorporate those who live in the shadows or margins of our global, temporal, capital world, is an ambitious and laudable project. *In the Meantime*, then, provides, through a mix of personal anecdotes and interviews, an engaging account from both the margins and heart of global capitalism."

(Johannes Grow *Spectra: The Aspect Journal*)

"In providing rich insight into temporal inequalities and interdependencies, this book surely deserves a place in the canon of eye-opening, empirically rich but theoretically sweeping forays into the social, cultural, political, and market structures that dictate the terms of everyday life."

(Melissa Mazmanian *ILR Review* 2016-03-01)

About the Author

Sarah Sharma is Associate Professor of Media and Cultural Studies in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

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