

*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 configure 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.

“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 post-colonial 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.”

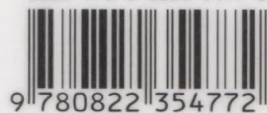
—CAREN KAPLAN, author of *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*

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

Cover image: Nick DeWolf, courtesy of the Nick DeWolf Photo Archive.

Duke University Press  
[www.dukeupress.edu](http://www.dukeupress.edu)

ISBN 978-0-8223-5477-2





## Contents

Acknowledgments ix

### INTRODUCTION. Tempo Tantrums *Speed and the Cultural Politics of Time*

1

### ONE. Jet-Lag Luxury *The Architecture of Time Maintenance*

27

### TWO. Temporal Labor and the Taxicab *Maintaining the Time of Others*

55

### THREE. Dharma at the Desk *Recalibrating the Sedentary Worker*

81

### FOUR. Slow Space *Another Pace and Time*

108

### CONCLUSION. Toward a Temporal Public

137

Notes 151   Bibliography 177   Index 187