



In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics. By Sarah Sharma. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014. 196 pp. ISBN: 9780822354772.

The spatial turn in studies of communication and culture opened up new methodologies for critical scholars eager to reveal the inner workings of late capitalism and globalization. Everyday spaces have been explored by scholars such as Morris (1998), Dickinson (2009), and Blair (1999), inspired by the works of Lefebvre (1991), Certeau (1984), Bourdieu (1977), and Benjamin (2002). Sarah Sharma's book, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics*, brings forth the notion that for all the work done by spatial rhetorics and imagined geographies, now is the time to redress the balance in our inquiries towards temporality. Where there is much talk of the subject being located in culture and space/place, Sharma encourages readers to think in terms of subjects being calibrated to temporalities, or, in other words, "how individuals and groups synchronize their body clocks, their senses of the future or the present, to an exterior relation" (p. 18). In a Foucauldian tradition, Sharma uses the notion of biopolitics to examine which bodies receive investment and which receive disinvestment in the biopolitical economy of time. In so doing, Sharma continues the project started by Marx (1992) to examine how time structures our abilities to participate in society and democracy.

According to Sharma, experiences of time, although individualized, intersect with others' experiences of time to create a grid of temporalities or relations of power upon which discourses are framed. To demonstrate the multitude of different experiences of time, Sharma introduces us to a series of individuals, each occupying different positions of power within a series of enmeshed temporalities. The frequent business traveller, also referred to as *Liquid Man*, is served by a temporal architecture encapsulated within the contemporary airport.

A temporal architecture is comprised of "technologies, commodities, policies, plans, programs, and the labour of others" (Sharma, p. 139), and these elements combine to keep these valued members of the political economy of time either productive and awake or blissfully asleep so that productivity can resume on awaking. Labour is organized around the liquid to make their movements as smooth and time-saving as possible. Shoe shiners, food and beverage staff, taxi drivers, hotel workers, security screeners, all have very different experiences of time at the airport. Their days are long and their travel to the airport begins very early indeed; their time-labour is directed toward the goal of convenience for the liquid.

Meanwhile, the frequent business travellers utilize a narrative of *sped-up time* to valorize their own positions in the biopolitical economy of time. This discourse includes being able to keep up-to-speed, maximizing one's time, and maintaining work-life balance. Sharma accesses these recurring themes through situated ethnographic interviews with a series of frequent flyers. Crucially, she explains how sped-up time is

the experience only of those privileged by architectures of temporality such as frequent business flyers, those working in corporate settings, or even the academic staff and faculty of higher education institutions.

Sharma turns her attention to taxi drivers as individuals subjected to disinvestments by the biopolitical economy of time. In contrast to the liquid travellers who move seamlessly from home to airport to hotel, taxi drivers are constantly recalibrating their bodies to the time needs of others. Day fares demand to be taken across town at top speed when they are running late for meetings, interviews, or flights. In order to re-calibrate to others' time needs, thereby maximizing meager earnings, drivers will keep unsociable hours, often working twelve-hour shifts in order to take in two rush hours, or one rush hour and the throngs of late night revellers. Consequently, taxi drivers subject themselves to a series of physical discomforts: where frequent business flyers are presented with coffee and immaculate bathrooms at every corner, the taxi drivers of Toronto have difficulty parking their cabs just to stop at a café to serve those same bodily functions. Theirs is "an experience of time that is constantly oriented to the temporal needs of other populations and individuals—the experience of the subordinate subject, a piece of the machine" (Sharma, p. 66). Furthermore, their temporalities, or experiences of lived time, are slower: business only gets slower, shifts longer, and waiting more the norm.

Sharma moves to consider the sedentary time of the office worker and the accompanying infrastructures of time maintenance that serve to normalize the eight-hour working day. Corporate yoga is analyzed using textual criticism for its functioning as a means to assuage the sedentary body. The central point here is that time spent at work is a site of political struggle, and pursuits such as yoga help to mask the fact that if resources were assigned according to different logics, workers could be enjoying a six-hour day and greater vacation or parental leave.

When writing about the *slow lifers* eating slow food, vacationing on technology-free islands, and finding refuge in the Caretta Shiodome in Tokyo, Sharma is relentless in her rejection of a binary mode of thinking that would have us replace a seemingly fast-paced existence with a regime of slow living: "slowness is not outside the normalizing temporal order. Slowness encompasses its own particular ideological time claims and beholds its own exclusive temporal practices" (p. 111). By putting space between themselves and multiple temporalities, *slow lifers* are escaping "the complex multiplicity of time" (p. 111) and retreating from a temporal public.

To imagine democracy as gradual, reflective, and withdrawn from temporal politics is to wilfully ignore chronologies of power—an excluding act in itself. In other words, cities could have the grandest of public squares and shared spaces for the promotion of democracy and social life, but without attention to multiple temporalities, they may only be frequented by certain valued workers in the biopolitical economy of time. *If we build it, only some of them will come.*

Time then is a material structuring force arranged in a mesh of intersecting temporalities that bring sense-making and valorizing discourses along with them. These temporalities are not polarized in the sense of oppressor and oppressed but they are

multiple, uneven, and interactive with others' temporalities. But in spite of their plurality, these temporalities are observable, real, and structured.

Sharma's concepts of power-chronographies and architectures of time maintenance can be woven in to spatial analyses with application, notably, in organizational communication, globalization studies, and discourses of neoliberalism. Multiple temporalities also provide an important new series of dimensions for work on difference, identity and intercultural communication. Yet cultures do not have singular attitudes to time; they possess their own sets of power-chronographies and architectures of time maintenance. In a more general sense, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* helps communication scholars interpret time with a genuinely critical lens that takes notions of power seriously. Consequently, ideas such as convenience, time-management, and work-life balance are forever problematized. Communication scholars already knew that the use of time can communicate a variety of values and that time can act as a constraint on participation in public life, but Sharma's concepts of power-chronology and temporal publics bring time safely into the toolbox of critical communication scholars investigating discourses of late-capitalism, and public(s).

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