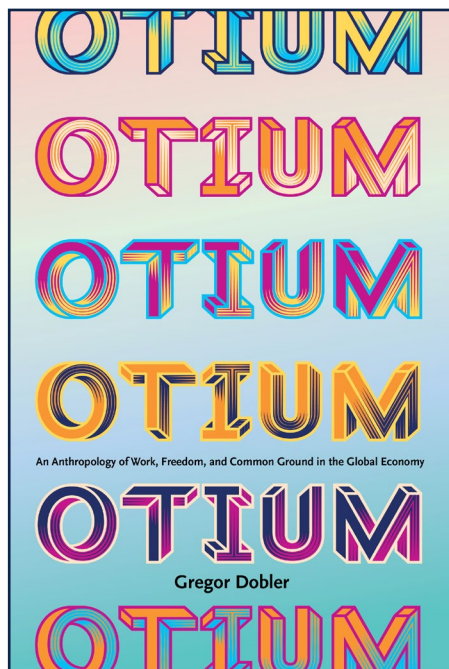




Otium

An Anthropology of Work, Freedom, and Common Ground in the Global Economy

Gregor Dobler

A fresh, global critique of work and productivity, and free time under contemporary capitalism

By constantly seeking higher yields of capital, today's global economy changes how people around the world relate to time and productivity. Labor demands within the bounds of wage work accelerate, while people outside of wage work often remain marginalized and with too much unproductive time on their hands. In this ethnography of global labor, Gregor Dobler accompanies different groups of people in their attempts to find time autonomy and meaning in their everyday lives. He shows how moments of *otium*—moments when we feel free from the external constraints of work and capitalist definitions of productivity—can become productive in new ways. *Otium* leads individuals to new ideas and dreams, and becomes a source for critique and political renewal. Chapters focus on peasant work and unemployment in Northern Namibia; the pitfalls of free time on a Breton island shaped by early retirement; the gendered effects of combining care work and wage work in Swiss middle-class families; and the elasticity of the academic labor of writing and research in the US. Weaving together these ethnographies of work, leisure, and care, *Otium* presents a political anthropology of the possibilities for human freedom under capitalism, and advances post-work debates from a global perspective.

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