

Working all Night: modernity, night shifts and the temporal organization of labour across political and economical regimes

Veranstalter: Charles University; University of Regensburg; Central European University

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Bericht von: Lucie Duskova / Martina Pacha, Institute of Social and Economic History, Faculty of Arts of Charles University in Prague

The aim of the workshop was to interconnect scholars dealing with the issue of night work, and to examine diverse aspects of this important, but often omitted, phenomenon of the world of work. The papers covered the period of modern society, from 19th to 21st century, and political and economic regimes from colonial India and modernizing Portugal through interwar and socialist Czechoslovakia, post-war western Germany to contemporary Russia, Great Britain or Kenya.

The keynote by HANNAH AHLHEIM (University of Giessen) started the workshop. In her speech professor Ahlheim focused on the history of working and waking in the 20th century in the western liberal democracies. She mentioned in which ways the technical development and the availability of electric light altered the everyday life in these societies. Through examples, she focused on the issue of how the idea of staying awake and working around the clock influenced the understanding of labor, of time, of the human body and of society as a whole.

The following day, the first session of the workshop, dedicated to the night work and working class entering the modernity, started with a presentation by ROSA FINA (University of Lisbon). Her paper focused on the first factory night-shifters in Lisbon (1890–1915). Fina introduced her research on how the urban society responded to these new workers and how the workers themselves managed to maintain their bare minimum of life conditions. For her analyze, she used sources from municipal archives and other administrative institutions, but also some literary works, as well as diaries and press articles.

The second presentation in this session by ARUN KUMAR (University of Nottingham) examined the nights of Bombay workers in

the textile industry (1870–1920), with focus on night schools and on the night life of the workers. He argued that night was the time that allowed the male workers to unfold their emancipatory dreams about the social promotion. On the other hand, the situation of female workers was different, because of their double labor as a wife or a mother at home, and as a factory worker.

Last presentation in this session by JAKUB RÁKOŠNÍK (Charles University Prague) was dealing with the issue of night labor and of overtime employment in the interwar Czechoslovakia (1918–1938). His paper was considering different reactions at the prohibition of the overtime employment in 1918 by the Act of the Eight-hour work. He analyzed the different reactions of male and female workers, as of the employers. He used materials produced by the trade inspections and materials from Ministry of Social Welfare, and he also addressed the question of the attitudes towards the night shift as a tool to explore what society considered normal, and what (gender) stereotypes it shared.

The second session of the workshop was dedicated to the experts' view of the night shifts. It started with a presentation of MALTE MÜLLER (Institut für Zeitgeschichte München). He focused on the issue of the continuous-shift workers in societal and sociological debates of western Germany in 1960s – 1980s, and especially on the double stress that these workers faced. He concluded with the statement that even though the living conditions of the shift workers were addressed and discussed, in fact just a little changed. And despite these workers knew about the impacts of the night work on their individual health, their social lives and their families, they still opted for the continuous shift system, as they were dependent on the increased income the shift-system provided.

The second paper in this session by VÍTĚZSLAV SOMMER (Charles University Prague) was focused on management, expertise and female labor in Czechoslovakia in 1960s – 1980s. He presented his research on Czechoslovak management studies and research on industrial labor in the reformist 1960s and during the „consolidation regime“ after 1968. He showed how female labor

was a blind spot in the concept of reform of the „socialist entrepreneurship“, focused only on men. In the second part of the paper he showed that even the Communist Party elites enounced the plan of „homogenous“ society, female workers in Czechoslovak industry usually received lower wages and worked as unskilled labor force.

Representation in the culture was a topic covered by the third session. ANTOINE PARIS (Paris-Sorbonne/ Université de Montréal) approached the topic from a metaphorical perspective through the Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians. According to him this biblical metaphor describes a world where working at night is not abnormal, however it remains impossible or difficult without the appropriate technical infrastructure. Paris concluded with a provocative question if this biblical text prepared the ground – on the anthropological level – for the homogenization of time by capitalism.

Second presentation, by ANJA PETERS (Neubrandenburg), focused on the perception of the night nurse in popular fiction, and specifically in the comics of 20th century. She showed how night nurses are showed as a mixture of a genie in the bottle and an object of desire. On the one hand, nurses are showed as autonomous, skillful, omnipresent and omnipotent beings while at the same time sexually available, subservient and obedient object of desire. She concluded that the context of the night reinforces the gender-based stereotype of nurses as a sex object and at the same time as a provider of love and protection.

Third presentation of this session was by LUCIE DUŠKOVÁ (Charles University Prague). Applying the method of contextual analysis of the mass production movies, she showed how the night shifts gained symbolic attributes in the socialist public space. She focused especially on the period of the establishment of the first five-year economic plan, and afterwards, until the institutionalization of the extra-pay for the night shift (1949–1961). In her paper she showed how the film representations suggested to the public the arguments for entering the night shifts. She concluded with the notion that despite the fact that most of the workers were initially enthusiastic about the (night) work mobi-

lization, this enthusiasm progressively disappeared because of the poor living and working conditions. After 1953, the mobilization for the night shifts disappeared from the film media.

The fourth session focused on precarity and 24-hour economy. In the first paper, BRIDGET KENNY (University of the Witwatersrand) presented her research concerning with the late working time in Johannesburg (1907–1970), focusing on shop hours and women retail workers. She showed how the question of the opening working hours and the issue of the social and family life functioned as a terrain of struggle. This sector obtained a regularization of the shift work long after other sectors of economy. Despite the regulations, women workers in retailing continued to have evening hours threatened and extended in ways which raise questions about ideologies of race and work across settler colonial economies. Research was based on archival sources and interviews.

The second paper, by HANNA LENA REICH (Bayreuth International Graduate School), summarized by JULIUS-CEZAR MACQUARIE (Central European University Budapest), addressed a question if the city of Nairobi can be considered as a center of the sub-Saharan 24-hour urban economy. Her research is concerned with current trends of transforming Nairobi into one of the first African 24-hour city economies. Through the method of interviews and a field work the paper showed, who are the late workers – not only the class nightshift workers but also people who for example participate in illegal trash dumping, etc. –, why they chose to engage in night work and what consequences their jobs have on their health and their private life.

The topic of the third paper by ASYA KARASEVA (European University at St. Petersburg) and MARIA MOMSIKOVA (University of Tartu – European University at St. Petersburg), presented by Karaseva, addressed the issue of the implications that have the central Moscovite time on the workers, and more generally on the inhabitants of the far-Eastern Russian cities. They illustrated their research by interviews with the inhabitants of two far Eastern cities Magadan and

Vladivostok. They concentrated on the strategies and tactics of people dealing with the time-centralization for their work and other activities. The paper claimed that night work should be analyzed in the broader context of reasons of being awake at night, which shapes life of not only employees, but of the most part of the educated citizens who communicate with their professors, colleagues, relatives, friends or follow the major national events streaming. The authors consider these types of night wake to be product of spatiotemporal inequality.

The last paper of this workshop by JULIUS-CEZAR MACQUAIRE (Central European University) was focused on threats to well-being through bodily exhaustion of the migrant night workers. His research was based on a nocturnal ethnography of transnational migrant workforce in highly precarious working environment in today's London fruit and vegetable market Spitalfields. With an extensive field research, he showed how night workers experience hardships and precariousness in their everyday life and how they deal with them.

The workshop showed that regardless the economic or political regime in the respective state, the night work obeys many common principles. Common points in many papers also indicated a live circulation of ideas in regard to the night shift issues. Beyond the transnational dimension, the papers showed there exists the time and the regional specificities connected with the specific political and economic regime. The workshop also showed that the topic of the night work is a living theme with an interdisciplinary range, and therefore, it can be also seen as an opening to this field of research.

Conference overview:

Keynote

HANNAH AHLHEIM (University of Giessen): Expanding the limits. Towards a history of working and waking in the 20th century.

Session 1: Night work and working class entering the modernity

ROSA FINA (University of Lisbon): The first factory night-shifters, how Lisbon tried to

start living 24/7 (1890–1915).

ARUN KUMAR (University of Nottingham): Nights of the Bombay Worker: Neighborhood Night Schools and Emancipatory Dreams (1870–1920)

JAKUB RÁKOSNÍK (Charles University): Night Labour, Overtime Employment, and the New Methods of Scientific Management in Interwar Czechoslovakia (1918–1938)

Session 2: Experts' view on the night shifts

MALTE MÜLLER (Institut für Zeitgeschichte München): Shift-Workers in Societal and Sociological Debates of Western Germany (1960s–1980s).

VÍTĚZSLAV SOMMER (Charles University): Management, Expertise and Female Labor in Socialism, Czechoslovakia 1960s–1980s.

Session 3: Representation in the (mass) culture

ANTOINE PARIS (Paris / Université de Montreal): "...because we worked day and night". Working at night as a metaphor in Paul's First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

ANJA PATERS (Neubrandenburg): „Enter the world of danger, drama and death!“ The perception of the night nurse in popular fiction.

LUCIE DUŠKOVÁ (Charles University): Image of the night shift in the socialist cinema: the case of Czechoslovakia 1945–1961.

Session 4: Precarity and the 24h economy

BRIDGET KENNY (University of the Witwatersrand): „The swords of Damocles of later trading“: Shop hours and women retail workers' struggles around late working time in Johannesburg (1907–1970).

HANNA LENA REICH (Bayreuth International Graduate School): Nairobi – a sub-Saharan 24-hour urban economy?

ASYA KARASEVA (European University at St. Petersburg) – MARIA MOMSIKOVA (University of Tartu – European University at St. Petersburg): Not only night work: Night wake, time difference, and the spatiotemporal inequality in the Far-Eastern Russia.

JULIUS-CEZAR MACQUARIE (Central European University): Invisible Migrants: Threats to Well-Being through Bodily Exhaustion in Migrant Night Workers.

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