The night, starting after dusk and progressing into the dark and early hours, has always and almost universally, across cultures and societies, represented a special, ‘liminal’ or ‘out of the ordinary’ temporal zone with its own meanings, possibilities and dangers, having specific political, cultural, religious and social implications. It is only since the modern era that the night has become increasingly ‘normalised’, disenchanted and colonised, for example in terms of production processes and services extending into the night. In this workshop we want to explore the emergence and proliferation of the ‘night shift’ across political and economic regimes. Although 24/7 industrial production is often seen as a consequence of capitalist expansion (Crary 2013), both spatially and geographically or in terms of temporal reach, we want to extend the analysis by including other political and economic regimes in which night shift work emerged such as in socialism and fascism. Even if initially driven by capitalist expansion, other economic and political regimes adopted and regulated the ‘night shift’, for various political, economic or ideological reasons, hence normalising it as part of an alternative modernity. In this workshop we want to start exploring a field that has been largely ignored in labour history, looking comparatively, and through time, how the different political and economic actors, agencies and stakeholders in these different regimes (such as state officials, politicians, industrialists, experts, workers, trade unions, labour organisations, etc) conceptualised and intervened in the discussions around the ‘night shift’.

Issues we would like contributors to address in the workshop are: How did the temporal organization of labour and the night shift evolve in different places and different times? How has the night shift been perceived and ‘lived’ by workers who have engaged in this activity? Who, are, and were, the workers involved in night work? To what extent has the ‘night shift’ been carried out by specific groups and/or categories (such as unskilled workers, women, migrants, etc). To what extent has the night shift been seen as compatible or clashing with key social, human and labour rights? How has night work been legitimised, contested, and negotiated by different stakeholders at all levels of the economic hierarchy? And, what are the threats to well-being of night workers due to lack of regulations to night work (in global cities)?