Space, Ethnicity and Citizenship at Work in the Israeli Periphery

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1. Citizenship Literature

- **Industrial Citizenship**: employees’ rights to form trade unions, negotiate collectively with employers and strike when failing to achieve improved conditions at the work place.
- Neoliberalizing and globalizing economies eroded **SER** - and industrial citizenship in particular (Fudge & Vosko, 2001).
- **Market Citizenship**: low degree of security, control over labor processes and regulatory mechanisms (Vosko, 2010).
Theoretical Notes

- Citizenship at work

- ‘labor is not a commodity...it is invested of human agency’ (Coutu & Murray, 2005:618)

- Transcends ‘employment’ to identify a range of non-market, work-based practices (e.g., socially necessary labor) (Fudge, 2005)

- The binary pitfall - a process, not a product (have/not)
2. Labor Geography Literature

- **Local Context**
  - The power of ‘place’ – how specific settings feature in the battles of labor to secure/sustain citizenship at work (Herod, 2001; Lier, 2007)

- **The ‘Agency’ of workers**
  - ‘Make space for labor’ (Coe, 2013)
  - Examine workers’ subject positions against specific structural limitations so they are seen as ‘complex beings, with multiple identities that go far beyond the workplace’ (Coe & Jurdhus—Lier, 2011: 229)
Local Context

- Israeli periphery: instrumental to nation-building
- 1950’s – (mostly minority) population dispersion through the formation of ‘development towns’
- 1960’s – (traditional) industrial dispersion
- Emergence of ‘company towns’ – dependence upon a single industrial factory (private or state-owned)
- Until 1980’s - ‘Shady Deal’ (state support keeps failing factories alive) – Industrial Citizenship
- 1990’s – neo-liberalization, many factories are privatized, state support is scaled back
P’ri Ha’galil

- Canned food factory
- Based in Hatzor (DT in the Upper Galilee)
- 250-350 workers (permanent + temp)
- Most all are of minority backgrounds - discriminated in the local labor market
  - Mizrahi Jews
  - ‘Russian’ Jews (1990’s immigrants)
  - Bedouin Arabs
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- Originally state-owned, sold to private investors in the 1990’s
- Merges, unsuccessful investments
- 2009 – 2012 – series of crises
- New owners’ threats – massive layoffs, closure
- Demand state support
- State’s initial refusal lead to labor struggle
- Subsidized loans and grants were eventually provided
Methodology & RQ’s

- Semi-ethnography
- Interviews w/workers, union and state officials, participant observations
- Documenting the struggle, asking questions about the role of:
  1. The peripheral location of the town/plant
  2. Workers’ marginal ethno-class position (blue-collar ethnic minorities)
‘They don’t hear us, we’re too far off’: Peripheralizing the struggle

State of the Periphery
District of the Galilee
Ethno-class: ‘Authenticating’ the Struggle
Some Concluding Thoughts

- ‘Place’ and ‘Identity’ are strategic features in the struggle over Citizenship at Work
- Periphery as a double-edge sword - (dis)empowering
- Ethnicity and Class - ‘otherness’ of workers
- ‘Use with Caution’ (or they backfire)
- In neo-liberal(izing) contexts, Citizenship at Work becomes the Work of Citizenship