

# Neglected Spaces in Peripheral Places : Homeworkers and the Creation of a New Economic Centre

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## NEGLECTED SPACES IN PERIPHERAL PLACES: HOMEWORERS AND THE CREATION OF A NEW ECONOMIC CENTRE

by

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### ABSTRACT

This paper suggests that the current recession and restructuring may be creating new centres of economic and social innovation, the analytically and politically neglected homes and communities in the "peripheral" regions of Canada. Using data from the West Kootenay area of British Columbia, it is argued that people are responding to declining employment opportunities by utilizing the resources remaining to them in their homes and communities to develop new survival strategies. The paper focusses on home based businesses and cooperative networks in two fields — childcare and craft manufacture — which have been established primarily by women. These businesses and networks are assessed in terms of their mobilization of local resources and their impact on the economic and social life of the region. It is argued that, despite serious shortcomings, these may provide indications of new gender relations, based on family or household partnerships, and new economic relations, based on meeting local needs rather than the profitability requirements of corporations.

**KEY WORDS:** Employment restructuring, homeworkers, regional theory, community networks, women, British Columbia.

### RÉSUMÉ

**Une approche originale de développement alternatif dans une région périphérique du Canada:  
l'exemple de Nelson en Colombie britannique**

L'auteure analyse comment la récession économique peut entraîner l'émergence de nouvelles pratiques économiques et sociales dans une région périphérique du Canada. Des données recueillies dans la région de West Kootenay en Colombie britannique démontrent qu'un affaissement du marché de l'emploi provoque l'apparition de stratégies de développement alternatives. L'auteure s'intéresse particulièrement ici aux garderies et à l'artisanat, deux créneaux occupés par les femmes, de même qu'à l'impact de ces activités sur la vie économique et sociale de la région. Cet article regroupe certains éléments qui laissent croire à la fois à l'émergence de nouveaux rapports de sexes basés sur le « partenariat » familial et à l'établissement de nouvelles relations économiques visant prioritairement la satisfaction des besoins des communautés.

**MOTS-CLÉS:** Emploi, restructuration économique, travailleuses domestiques, théorie régionale, réseau communautaire, Colombie britannique.

"I don't think we have an economic recession...what we're looking at "in forestry" is them managing higher levels of productivity...with 70 percent of the previous work force...We're being told that it's just a recession and the jobs will come back. That isn't happening. It's a new kind of economy." (College instructor recently cut back to half time work, living near Nelson, British Columbia).<sup>1</sup>

Sometime in the late 1970's and early 1980's, discussion of the "recession" metamorphosed into discussion of "economic restructuring". This was not just a change of rhetoric. It was, rather, a shorthand for some enduring changes in our way of life in Canada. Recession had implied that we were living through a temporary hiccup in an otherwise sound economy. Restructuring implies something more fundamental: a change in people's relationship to wage work and the concomitant alteration of a pattern of life centred on full employment of men in permanent jobs supported by women's dual roles.<sup>2</sup>

In the first world, restructuring has been analyzed primarily at the systemic level, in terms of changes in employment patterns, themselves outcomes of alterations in the way we produce goods and services and reproduce ourselves. But this is only one aspect of the process. The other aspect is the response to these changes, the ways people have reacted to "a new kind of economy" by creating new patterns of life and work.<sup>3</sup> Restructuring is a dialectic process of change, a synthesis of global processes with local human responses.

This dialectic process is affecting all areas of the global economy and within this, all areas of Canadian society. But its implications have been most evident in the resource extracting and primary processing regions commonly defined as the periphery: the North; the interior of British Columbia; the prairies; eastern and northern Ontario; northern Québec; the Atlantic provinces (McCann, 1982). As sawmills close, corporate based mechanized farming expands, mines and smelters close, freezer-factory trawlers take over commercial fishing, and as the public political sphere curtails its activities,<sup>4</sup> it becomes evident to people in formerly industrially-based areas of the periphery that it is not the recession which is going away, but the institutions within which they have gained a livelihood. Restructuring, in the "deindustrializing" areas of the periphery, is experienced both as decreasing availability and reliability of wage employment and as a search for compensating survival strategies.

While there has been some recent discussion of these strategies (Nicholls and Dyson, 1983; Ross and Usher, 1986) we still know relatively little about how people in peripheral areas, especially those which were formerly heavily industrialized, are responding to restructuring. In part, geographers' investigation of the dialectic relation between systemic change and human responses has been deflected, or even hindered by two models which underlie a good deal of regional research: the core-periphery model of regional development and the model of the relation between the economy and the home and community.

The core-periphery model implies that innovation is centred in the core. This is the point of connection with the global economy and the area where new ideas, new technology, new kinds of economic relations are developed and diffused to the periphery. The periphery is dependent on the core, not only in economic terms, but in terms of culture, technology and social innovation.<sup>5</sup>

The second model, often less explicit but possibly more pervasive, is a model of the relation between the economic sector on one hand and the home and community on

the other. Resources — wages, products, ideas, transfer payments, legislation and regulations for the guidance of private life — are seen to flow from this public sector to the private home and community, where labour-power, the raw material of a wage labour force, is reproduced. Implicit in this model is the idea that the home and community sector is dependent upon the public sector, not only for economic survival, but for its social and cultural ideas.

Most analysis infers from these models that the homes and communities of peripheral areas must be the most dependent and least innovative places of all. Thus, in pre-feminist geography, these areas and their "private" spaces have suffered a two-fold analytic neglect and devaluation.

This paper suggests that it is exactly these places which may be the sites where survival strategies are centred. It argues that as the formal economy withdraws from the formerly industrialized areas of the periphery, the relations of dominance implied in these models may be reversing. Human activity and innovation are becoming focussed around what is left — the homes and communities and the skills of those who live in them. It is here, increasingly, that we may find the new centres of social and economic innovation.

This paper documents some of the experiences and responses of people who have stayed in one such region, the Nelson area of the West Kootenays in the south-eastern interior of British Columbia.<sup>6</sup> It assesses the effects of their strategies on local social and economic life and suggests some implications for geographic analysis. The discussion is based upon extensive interviews — carried out in the winter of 1984-1985 and the winter of 1986 — with official and unofficial community spokespeople, statutory and voluntary agency workers and people working in small businesses, especially those based in the home.

#### CLOSING DOWN THE FORMAL ECONOMY IN NELSON

The formal economy in Nelson was a relatively diverse one for a resource based area. Settled in the 1890's, largely as a mining area, the Nelson-centred region became increasingly dominated by forestry related industries as well as a range of tertiary activities servicing these industries and their labour force. In addition to its plywood and saw mills, Nelson was a regional administrative, transportation, communication, marketing and education centre.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1980's, the formal economy gradually withdrew from the area. Jobs in the mills and logging operations as well as the service sector had been declining for some time (Bail, 1982; Bannert and Haake, 1984; Bell, 1982). In 1984, the University Centre closed as part of a provincial government cost-cutting measure (*Images*, June/July, 1984). The same year, the sawmill and plywood plant closed (Bannert and Haake, 1984). The plant was dismantled, parts of it sold and the rest was gutted. The CPR freight yards cut back their workforce and prepared to close; the regional headquarters of B.C. Telephone curtailed its workforce and prepared to close. Government employment was incrementally cut back. Services, especially in adult education and preapprenticeship training were cut (Interviews). By the middle of the decade, the formal economy in Nelson was most conspicuous by its absence.

In response, the remaining "official" public bodies, whose power derives from their geographic base — the unions, the Regional District, the Chambers of Commerce —

developed strategies for "recovery". Some of these were innovative, but most were based on encouraging renewed or new investment in their traditional economic base, on the short-term expedient of job-creation grants or the elusive and overworked panacea of the tourist trade. While the formal political sector planned a recovery based on wishful thinking about the golden past, for those people who remained in Nelson, survival was an immediate necessity. Largely unrecognized by the official media or the formal planning institutions, people were actively creating survival strategies. These were based not on the possible enticement of outside investment but upon utilizing what remained to them.

### EXPANDING THE "HIDDEN" ECONOMY IN NELSON

There were two primary sets of resources which survived the withdrawal of the formal economy. The first was a set of material resources: the land, some of which was agriculturally viable, most of which was forested; and the built environment, the houses, the commercial buildings, the University Centre. The second was the skills of those people who stayed, and the community networks these people had established. The survival strategies of households affected by the withdrawal of the formal economy had to depend, at least in the short term, upon combining these two sets of resources, material and human.

One of the ways this took place was through extending the existing community networks to develop innovative ways of using the remaining material resources. Despite the fact that Nelson had been economically reliant on large and — from the perspective of local people — unstable corporations and government, the area had maintained a strong alternative economy. Dependence on the external resources of the formal economy, and its promise of prosperity and security, came late to this region. As recently as the 1950's, the area had retained strong elements of self-sufficiency, largely based on relative isolation. These were weakened throughout the 1960's and 1970's, as small logging operations were absorbed into large corporation, independent sawmills and farming operations closed and the manufacturing labour force centralized in the larger centres.<sup>8</sup> Yet elements of self-sufficiency and resistance to the "external" dominance of the locality outlived the formal economy. The industrial labour force was highly unionized and active in local politics and in formulating community policy. The area also had a large number of members of the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC), more commonly known as the Doukhobors. From their settlement in the area in 1908 until the 1930's, they operated a successful farming and food processing cooperative, and even after the government foreclosed on their communal property in 1939, they retained their spiritual and social community, despite internal divisions (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1977). Resistance to many elements of industrial life also bound together the large group of "back to the landers" or "neo-peasants" attracted to the area since the 1960's. These largely well educated, formerly urban people moved to this area to live a relatively self sufficient rural lifestyle. An increasingly important segment of this alternative community consists of independent women, who are active in a wide-ranging and politically articulate feminist movement throughout the region. In fact, these four, often overlapping groups — the unions, the USCC, the alternative community and the women's movement — form the primary community networks in the Nelson area.

As the formal economy withdrew, these networks became increasingly active, extending their activities to provide information and resources for the establishment of

small cooperative enterprises. All of these networks altered in the process. The original functions of the unions, bargaining for employed workers' rights in the workplace, declined in importance as the number of employed workers declined. But many union members remained behind when the institutions which had provided their jobs disappeared, becoming involved in developing small businesses based on their skills and remaining local resources — woodworking, home renovation and machinery maintenance ventures (Bell and Gies, 1982; Interviews).

The USCC extended its spiritual and cultural functions to draw upon its past of farming and food processing, largely dormant since the 1940's. The Community provided advice, assistance and resources for members to set up small co-ops, not only in food production and processing, but also in manufacture (Interviews). The alternative community, like the USCC, had a working model based on non-industrial subsistence, and they too extended their activities as their members lost jobs and became increasingly reliant on small enterprises based in the use of local resources and skills (*Ibid.*). The women's community also extended its activities to providing support and resources for small enterprises: holding seminars on business management and grant applications; sharing buildings, computers and sewing machines; sponsoring employment grants and establishing "Kootenay Women Works", a project employing workers to research women's employment needs and to hold skill development and retraining seminars (*Images*, August/September and November/December, 1985; Interviews).<sup>9</sup>

Most of these cooperative enterprises were new businesses. But at the same time, another less visible set of networks, which had grown up around existing home-based businesses, also extended. Home-based businesses were already utilizing resources and skills which were largely outside the formal economy. These businesses relied on the use value of the city's physical fabric — homes and communities — and upon a set of skills which have traditionally been marginal to the market, skills associated with domestic work. Most of these home-based businesses were run by women, providing services associated with "women's work" and with "women's place of work", the home and community.<sup>10</sup> While the range of home based businesses appears to be growing, the home based sector is still dominated by two activities; childcare and artisanal manufacture.<sup>11</sup> The structure of these businesses and the changes they are undergoing, indicate some new patterns in mobilization of local resources and some possible directions in the organization of an altered social economy in Nelson.

### **Childcare**

Non-family childcare in Nelson, as elsewhere in Canada, is dominated by the home-based sector (National Day Care Information Centre, 1985).<sup>12</sup> Home caregivers in the area ranged from people who looked after neighbours' children along with their own for a few hours a day to people who cared for up to 15 children in purpose-renovated areas of their homes, often with the help of paid assistants.<sup>13</sup> The former considered themselves to be doing a "paid favour" for friends, the latter considered themselves business people and professionals.

Many statutory workers and home caregivers themselves said that they had expected that demand for their services would decline with rising unemployment, yet the changing economic climate has increased the significance of this sector. As male employment became increasingly irregular, or disappeared, a growing number of

women who had formerly worked full time as domestic workers, took on some form of money earning work, and these newly created "two job" families required childcare. As men leave the area, either temporarily in search of work, or permanently, there are also a growing number of female-headed single parent families in Nelson and, if the mothers in these families take on some form of money-earning work, they too require childcare.

Not only has the demand increased, but the type of care required has led more parents to utilize the home care sector rather than the two local group centres. A growing number of parents are working irregular, part-time hours, while many are employed on short-term contracts or as casual workers and may be called out at short notice. These parents require flexible hours, care at short notice or care on evenings or weekends. These are needs that group centres — limited to "standard" working hours and requirements for regular attendance — cannot meet. Furthermore, as parents' hours become more irregular, so do their incomes. Many parents have less disposable income, and find the home care sector cheaper, especially as they pay only for the hours the child actually attends. Moreover, parents can often arrange credit or barter services or goods with caregivers instead of or as a supplement to paying cash.

While the changing economic climate has thus increased demand for home caregivers' services, the nature of this demand has made them more financially vulnerable, and made it more difficult to plan day to day operations. One day a caregiver will have no children in attendance, the next day she may have an "overload" or have children under her care for 24 hours. This means that caregivers' facilities can be strained, and their incomes unpredictable, a factor exacerbated by the fact that parents often cannot pay regularly.

In response to these problems, caregivers are increasingly relying upon and concomitantly extending the networks which have developed around their working conditions. These networks take a variety of forms, ranging from provincial or regional educational networks and pressure groups to informal mutual support networks and contact with statutory agencies.<sup>14</sup> However, the major networks, with whom all the caregivers had contact, and which most said were of growing importance in their work, were the Nelson Family Day Care and the local playgroups.

Since 1971, Nelson Family Day Care staff have provided inspection and approval of family day care homes in the area, assisting caregivers in setting up their businesses, providing regular visits and training seminars as well as publishing a newsletter and sponsoring events for caregivers and children and maintaining an office with a toy library and a collection of books and pamphlets. Within recent years however, the centre has been utilized by a growing number of parents who require referrals. It is also called upon more and more by caregivers who are "overloaded" or have too few referrals, and its networks are increasingly a means of stabilizing attendance rates and thus incomes.

Almost all caregivers also used the local playgroups, not only as places for social contact, but to assist in "evening out" incomes and numbers of children in their care. Some playgroups are informal drop-in centres running in church basements, community centres and local schools for a few hours two to three days a week, and rely on voluntary staff and parent or caregiver attendance. Others are more formal playschools run by caregivers in their homes on a regular basis, and attended both by the children they care for and by others. Not only have the numbers of caregivers utilizing these expanded, but for the caregivers who operate these groups, the weekly attendance fees provide a relatively reliable supplement to their incomes. In addition,

through these two sets of networks, some women — caregivers and former teachers — have arranged new teaching jobs, spending a few hours a week teaching Russian or craft skills to children in the playgroups or at caregivers' homes.

Home caregivers have been utilizing their homes and communities as economic bases for the provision of services for some time. However, the economic restructuring of Nelson has increased both the amount and the number of services offered by home caregivers, and has strengthened and extended the functions of the preexisting professional networks. These now act to help stabilize caregivers' business conditions as well as providing social resources and contacts. To a large extent, caregivers are not just utilizing existing resources, but extending these resources, and creating new ones, mobilizing and combining the skills of long-term caregivers, new caregivers, former teachers, centre and playgroup staff in new ways (Mackenzie, 1987). A similar process, and a generally higher profile one, is going on within the artisanal manufacturing sector.

### **Artisanal Manufacture**

The home based artisan community in the Nelson area is large and highly visible, calling upon the traditions both of the USCC and the alternative community. Active artisans varied from women who knit in their "spare time" for local sales, to internationally renowned artists with extensive home based studios and sales in shops and galleries in Vancouver and the United States. The former considered their artisanal work as an enjoyable supplement to income and a part of other household activities, while the latter saw themselves as full time professional crafts people.<sup>15</sup>

Artisans said that the effect of economic restructuring on their incomes and work processes was ambiguous. On the one hand, people in the immediate area had less disposable income to spend upon locally produced arts and crafts. On the other hand, the long term education and publicity efforts of local artisanal networks were increasing appreciation of their work and to some extent maintaining demand. Many said that the feeling of community solidarity created by the "desertion" of Nelson by the official economy meant that local people would go out of their way to purchase local products.

A number of artisans also said that economic restructuring had caused a strengthening and extension of their preexisting networks. For many, the resources obtained from self-provisioning and self-servicing and the networks established around these activities were becoming increasingly important to their survival. The relatively high survival rate of local artisans was in fact attributed to the fact that many lived in self-built or self-renovated housing, grew some of their own food, and belonged to extensive barter networks which exchanged both services and material resources — including food and machinery. The possibility of supplementing cash incomes with such resources was attributed to the critical mass of participants, not only the artisans but the rural alternative community as a whole, some members of the USCC community and urban members of the women's community.

Artisans also belonged to a wide variety of professionally-based networks. These included regional and provincial associations which self-monitored quality and price standards and distributed local products. Artisans were active in attempts to maintain the facilities of the University Centre. Following the 1984 closure of the Centre, they assisted in establishing the Kootenay Lake Summer School of the Arts, which runs



annual workshops and courses in the applied and lively arts, women's studies, peace studies and literature. Many are also involved in the Kootenay School of Applied Art, offering year-round courses by local artisans (*Images*, August/September, 1984; Interviews). These activities have not only extended the numbers and skills of local artisans but have also provided an income supplement for artisans who teach in these new venues. A growing number of local artisans also teach adhoc classes coordinated by local craft shops, cooperate in the wholesale purchase of materials for their work, and run a successful cooperative shop in Nelson's shopping mall which displays and sells their work. Artisanal groups have also provided support for and coordinated a growing range of short-term grants for training and upgrading facilities for craft workers (Zubkoff, 1982; Interviews).

Both child-caregivers and artisans have utilized preexisting local material resources and their own skills to help maintain household subsistence. And the effects of economic restructuring on both sectors have in fact caused them to become increasingly reliant on local networks and to extend these networks in efforts to stabilize and supplement declining or erratic cash resources.<sup>16</sup> In extending their networks, homeworkers have created new centres of political and economic focus in the community, in the Nelson Family Day Care, the playgroups, the artisans' workshops, classes and shows.

Despite the energy and occasional optimism of the people in the cooperative and home-based sectors, their ventures do not provide a viable economic base. These sectors still involve relatively few people, most of whom work long hours for low remuneration. Such work is still generally seen as a temporary strategy, and participants see themselves responding to mutations in an external economy. Yet the emerging patterns in this sector do form part of an increasingly interconnected, locally based survival strategy, and do indicate some tendencies which may alter the social as well as the economic life of the area.

#### IMPLICATIONS OF THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY IN NELSON

Perhaps the most immediately evident of these tendencies is the strengthening of links among those community organizations which were traditionally structured around the non-wage earning facets of people's lives and the extension of these networks to more and more "economic" activities. The Nelson Family Day Care and many members of the artisanal community have ties to the Women's Centre which itself offers seminars on independent businesses and advice on grant applications. The Women's Centre in turn cooperates with the Unemployed Action Centre, the unions and occasionally with the Regional District or Chamber of Commerce to extend community resources for small businesses. These groups also have growing connections to members of the USCC.<sup>17</sup>

The area therefore has a set of networks which have implications for all aspects of people's lives — cultural, spiritual, social and economic. The emerging pattern of networks which uses local skills to mobilize local resources, actively merges people's work activities with other aspects of their life. One important effect of these linkages is to erode both the conditions for and the experience of gender role differentiation. As the jobs which men used to do disappear, and the possibility of having one primary breadwinner recedes, the strategies that women have always used to gain resources for households — strategies of stretching cash incomes through home production, home based businesses and casual wage work — become increasingly central to

household survival. For a growing proportion of the population, conditions for a traditional industrial gender division of labour have virtually disappeared. Women are increasingly active in the small business sector, in the networks around this and thus in community affairs as a whole. It is not that women "invade" the traditional preserves of middle-class male power, but that these preserves become less relevant to people's daily lives and incrementally less powerful, while the previously invisible and devalued networks women have developed become more central.

At the same time, the gender typed distinction between what is unskilled and private, and what is marketable and public begins to break down. A growing number of families rely on the extension and marketing of traditional "female skills". The formerly naturalized skills of nurture, home manufacture, collective support and cooperative work become increasingly central to and valued within the social and economic life of the community.

The merging of social and economic aspects of life and the blurring of distinctions between domestic skills and marketable skills is a function of new kinds of work processes and also extends these. These are not the work processes of the mills, carefully regulated, union protected and socially defined. Nor are they the work processes of the domestic sphere, invisible, private and devalued. They combine elements of both, often the long and irregular hours of domestic work with the sociability and social context of formal wage work processes. They incorporate the self-regulation and self-motivation of much domestic work with the monetary or material rewards of wage work.

The emerging networks of the Nelson community are characterized by the problems which confound and disorient people living through any period of social and economic change. These networks are not only changeful and vulnerable, they are bedeviled by internal conflicts, such as those between workers in the formal group daycares and the home care sector, between those union members who still have jobs, and feel the need to protect them, and those who are unemployed. Home based businesses and the structures of the related networks sometimes clash with organizations such as unions, set up to protect workers in large industrial plants. The work processes of the former sector are largely incomprehensible to the logic of the traditional wage structure, or antithetical to it, and do not lend themselves to careful quality control or safety regulation, although the fact that most businesses are dependent on a closely knit local network ensures some measure of control (Mackenzie, forthcoming). Furthermore, these strategies are vulnerable to market swings,<sup>18</sup> and are potentially open to becoming "cheap" alternatives to socially regulated work and socially financed services.

But these characteristics — smallness, dependence on local markets and skills — also give these businesses their potential strength. Their work processes are not alienated, although people may work long hours at exhausting tasks for relatively low compensation. To the extent that they are oriented to local markets and needs, they not only have the capacity to influence and communicate with their market, but also to participate, directly or inadvertently, in the development of a community survival strategy in Nelson. This strategy is unsettled, insecure and oriented to human survival, not to profit maximization. It is this last quality which at once makes Nelson's emerging economic base vulnerable, and gives it its resilience. It is, unlike the formal economy, something that remains.

## THE ALTERNATIVE ECONOMY IN GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

This article has attempted to provide some insight on the dual nature of restructuring in Canada, a process being actively created by the interrelation of systemic change with household and community response and creativity. It has focussed on one particular community whose wage work economy has been dependent upon primary processing activity and from which large scale producers and state services have withdrawn in recent years. It examines the coping strategies of those who remained, strategies focussed around the home and community and around the extension of "women's work", documenting that this form of domestic-based production, long devalued, is once again of major importance in the economic survival both of individual households and the community.

It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the example of Nelson can be generalized either as a model for collective, cooperative and locality based survival strategies, or as a basis for analytic conclusions. Some evidence in the "new regional geography" suggests that different settings produce very different responses; patterns of atomisation and isolation within and between communities.<sup>19</sup>

Yet the discussion above may indicate some of the conditions which influence the patterns strategies take. The domestic-community economy, while it may have been analytically invisible for some decades, continued as a central, though devalued part of household and regional survival. The ways in which it was articulated to the formal economy varied in different localities, and the patterns of survival strategy which are emerging appear to vary as a function of the potential the locality provides for articulating declining formal institutions to the newly visible and expanding "informal" economy of the household and community. The Nelson area differs from many other peripheral areas of Canada where the informal economy has been studied in that it was heavily industrialized. And yet, even here, it is evident that an informal, alternative economy remained, partly — as in the case of the "back to the landers" and some sections of the USCC — in resistance to industrial life. As the industrial economy receded, this alternative not only extended, but managed to articulate with some industrial based networks, primarily the unions. The conditions of this, the specific nature and potential for links between the new and old networks, may be essential determinants of the strategies employed in a community, and of their resilience and strength.

An important aspect of this is the nature of gender relations in the locality. Understanding this relation requires a fresh look at the home and community, and the incorporation of the concepts developed by feminist geographers into pre-feminist geography, perhaps most especially at the level of regional analysis where they have been most evident by their absence. The industries which dominated the Nelson area employed few women and this encouraged a relatively rigid gender-typed division of labour. Women "nourished" the informal sector out of necessity, maintaining home and community based skills and networks to help support their households. As the conditions for the old gender division of labour disappear, "women's sphere" expands from a basis of relative strength and may be providing the conditions for new forms of gender relations.

The strategies discussed above may appear, in some respects, to be a return to preindustrial self-sufficiency and the development of more localized economies. Inasmuch as many resource based areas have never wholly lost their preindustrial character, "traditional" modes of survival are integrated into postindustrial strategies.

But the emerging "mixture" is not a retreat into the past. It is an alteration of the conditions of life and work, one which may prove more responsive and resilient than the volatile and apparently transient prosperity based on resource extraction by profit motivated corporations. Whatever their futures, these strategies place a new emphasis upon locality, and perhaps most especially upon the formerly neglected spaces of peripheral places. One former sawmill worker, now involved in a small woodworking cooperative said:

"What these people in the headquarters, in the corporations in Vancouver and New York don't realize you see, is that when the mills close, the towns just don't blow away. Maybe they don't care. I think they probably don't. But we're still here. Our houses are still here, all our family and friends we worked with. That's what's important, really, it's people who are left, the people and the land and the town" (Interview).

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This quote is from an interview which took place as part of a study of homeworkers and economic restructuring in British Columbia and Eastern Ontario, funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada and carried out between 1984 and 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Restructuring at the systemic level has meant that in the primary and secondary sectors, capital investment directed toward increasing labour productivity is leading to increased output concomitant with long-term decline in employment growth (Canada, Ministry of State for Science and Technology, 1985; Royal Commission on the Economic Union, 1985). This relation is difficult to document accurately (Royal Commission on the Economic Union, 1985), but there are indications that employment in manufacturing declined between 1979 and 1982 in almost all regions of Canada (Statistics Canada *Manufacturing Industries of Canada: National and Provincial Areas*). There are also indications of increased productivity of labour concomitant with this decline in employment. For example, in Canada between 1972 and 1982, there was a decrease of .07% in the number of production and related workers while productivity increased by 184%. (Calculated from Statistics Canada *Manufacturing Industries of Canada: National and Provincial Areas* (Cat.31 203), Tables 5, 25, 29, 33, 49.) Levels of unemployment are also rising in service sector industries, and there is a general decline in full-time work in all sectors (Armstrong, 1984; Ruggeri, 1986). In contrast, a growing number of people are self-employed (Levesque, 1985), and small businesses are increasingly important in providing jobs (Ray and Brennan, 1986). Similar trends are evident in Britain. On decline in employment in the tertiary sector, see Gershuny, 1978 and 1985; Gill, 1985; Huws, 1982. On decline in full time work in all sectors and rising numbers of self-employed workers, see Urry, 1985.

<sup>3</sup> In recent years, a body of international, interdisciplinary literature has attempted to come to terms with the nature and implications of restructuring. Much of this literature has analyzed survival strategies as an "informal economy" (Mattera, 1985; Redclift and Mingione, 1985). A major Canadian discussion is Ross and Usher, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> There is a growing literature on restructuring of Canadian primary and secondary industries in the regions. For some general documentation of the processes noted see, for example Clement, 1983 and 1985; Marchak, 1983; Patton, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> This analysis is often associated with staple theory. See, for example, Easterbrook and Watkins, 1967; Innis, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> The 1981 Census figures indicate a population for the Nelson-centred region (defined here as Central Kootenay Regional District excluding Castlegar and Creston) of 40 879, a 6.6% increase since 1976. For the city of Nelson, the 1981 population was 9 143, a decline of 1 % since

1976 (1981 Census, Cat. 93 946). Until 1986 census data is available, it will be impossible to determine how many people may have left the area in the crucial period discussed below, 1981-1986. Local people agree however, that there has been considerable out-migration from the area. Estimates vary, but in 1986, a town clerk estimated an out-migration of about 700 to 800 people from the city, and an in-migration of about 100. Real estate agents estimated that the city had lost about 300 families and gained between 50 and 75, many of the latter retirees (Interviews).

<sup>7</sup> The dominance of tertiary sector jobs in the Nelson economy in 1981 is illustrated in the table below. Nelson not only had a lower percentage of its labour force in the primary and secondary sectors than the B.C. average, but contrasts strongly with the closest large centre, the smelter based city of Trail.

**Percentage of Labour Force by Industrial Division:  
British Columbia, Nelson, Trail, 1981**

	<i>British Columbia</i>	<i>Nelson</i>	<i>Trail</i>
Primary industry	7.2	4.7	17.9
Manufacturing industry	14.8	11.5	28.8
Tertiary industry	78.0	83.9	53.3
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from 1981 Census Catalogue 93 × 946.

Despite this, the Nelson area had many other characteristics of a resource based economy: relatively low incomes outside the extractive and industrial sector, especially for women; and relatively old housing, much of it in need of repair. In 1980, female labour force participation in the Nelson-centred area was 44.5% as compared to a provincial average of 52.7%. The regions employment in forestry related industries was 20% of the total labour force while the provincial average for forestry is 14% (1981 Census, Catalogue 93 × 946).

<sup>8</sup> This history reflects the nature of British Columbia's economy as a whole, based largely on extractive and primary processing in forestry and mining, and dependent on exports. Within British Columbia, Greater Vancouver acts as a primate city, with nearly 50% of the population and manufacturing located there, while the interior of the province has been susceptible to the "boom and bust" cycles characteristic of export oriented "hinterlands" (Bradbury, 1982; Marchak, 1983).

<sup>9</sup> The largest of the enterprises, Emma's Jam Factory, was established by the women's community. Emma's, which made pure honey-sweetened jam was an all-woman co-op based upon egalitarian feminist principles. The tasks of production, administration, marketing, planning, maintenance and cleaning were, as far as possible, shared and rotated (*Images*, November/December, 1985; Ruvinsky and Mackenzie, 1982).

<sup>10</sup> Homework has been historically associated with women, and its growth in recent years in Canada, the U.S. and Britain has been especially high among women (Dennis, 1984; Johnson, 1984; Lévesque, 1985; Pahl, 1984).

<sup>11</sup> In 1984-1985, I interviewed 62 women running 8 different kinds of home-based businesses, ranging from independent word processing to catering and massage. About 45% of these had been doing homework for less than 5 years, and most stated that the sector appeared to be growing. Of the 62 women interviewed, 14 (23%) were home caregivers and 40 (65%) were artisans working at home. Eight were in other fields.

<sup>12</sup> Nelson has two group centres, which between 1982 and 1985 provided an average of 50-55 places for children. The home care sector over the same period had an average of 20 registered homes, providing places for 90-100 children (Interviews).

<sup>13</sup> I interviewed 14 home caregivers as well as workers in related statutory and informal networks. All home caregivers were contacted through the Nelson Family Day Care. Nelson Family Day Care claims to register all people doing regular home care in the area, and had 18 active caregivers registered in February, 1985. Caregiver here is defined as a person who cares for children other than her own in her own home and receives payment in return. It does not include irregular babysitting, nor does it include childminding or babysitting exchange services, nor regular childminding done without pay.

<sup>14</sup> Regional and provincial groups included the Kootenay Child Care Society, primarily for special needs children, the B. C. Child Care Association, an educational group, the B. C. Daycare Action Coalition, a pressure group, and the B. C. Teachers Federation. All Nelson caregivers would have had contact with the health inspectors and building and fire inspectors in the course of licencing applications. In addition, most had initiated contact with community

health nurses, social workers, and some with child psychologists and the local speech therapist (Interviews).

<sup>15</sup> I interviewed 40 artisans working at home. Contacts were initiated through the Kootenay-Boundary Artisans Alliance — a professional network — and through the Kootenay Society of Applied Arts — which runs training workshops — as well as through the local National Exhibition Centre. All the people I spoke to had been engaged in artisanal work for at least two years.

<sup>16</sup> Homework generally provides relatively low remuneration. Of the 62 homeworkers interviewed only 15 earned cash incomes above the 1985 poverty line (as defined by Statistics Canada) from their homework. Yet homework can be an important part of family cash income. For the caregivers interviewed, 57% earned more than half of household income from their homework, while artisanal homework provided more than half of household income in 45% of cases. In almost all cases, these earnings were supplemented by barter, payment in kind, casual wage work and/or contributions from other household members (Interviews).

<sup>17</sup> The unions have also remained as an organizational structure. Union members who had lost their jobs, together with those still in employment, became involved in the Solidarity coalition, opposing the policies of the provincial government, and especially in Solidarity's People's Commission for Policy Alternatives, as well as in the establishment of the local Unemployed Action Centre, which provides counselling, advocacy and food distribution services (Interviews).

<sup>18</sup> For example, Emma's Jam Factory has recently closed. Its failure, in economic terms, is an indication of the difficulties of competing with mass based multi-national corporations, in this case, the supermarket chains. Emma's initial success was also an indication of potential for linkages opened up by the establishment of small processing plants. It was, for example, initiating contact with local fruit farmers, aspiring fruit farmers, printers, and renovation and carpentry contractors, primarily within the USCC and the women's community. Its failure not only underscores the vulnerability of small scale processors, but the fact that such local linkages were not sufficiently well established or reliable (*Images*, November/December, 1985; Interviews).

<sup>19</sup> See articles in Murgatroyd *et al* (1985) and the work being produced as part of the British Localities Studies.

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