

The Spatial Dynamics of Labour Supply in the New Rural Economy

One of the critical issues brought about by the effects of globalization is the changing role of the labour force in the New Rural Economy (NRE). Jobless growth in the primary sector, new light manufacturing, and small and medium enterprises in various combinations form the labour market opportunities in most rural areas of Canada. The NRE is thus about changing conditions in rural areas and this theme offers the opportunity to examine the dynamics between space (location), employment (activity), and residence. It is generally hypothesized that the NRE continuously affects the relationship between these critical components of the labour market, placing emphasis on the supply (labour force) side of the market.

PROPOSITION

To monitor in several sites across Canada over four years the changing nature of the relationships between employment activity and residence to permit the following sorts of questions to be answered:

- \$ What are the employment structures of different rural areas and how are they changing?
- \$ Who participates in the labour force and in what circumstances does change take place?
- \$ How are livelihoods at the household level maintained, and are these sustainable?
- \$ What are the mobility implications of such rural labour markets?
- \$ What opportunities are there for increasing accessibility, i.e., intervention to improve labour market performance, regional/local labour matching, minimizing exclusion etc?

METHODS

Based on a pilot test in southern Huron County in 1997-98, the following methods were found to be feasible.

Macro: Analysis of secondary sources of data to establish:

1. nature of labour market and labour force in areas under study
2. labour mobility into and out of study area(s)

Meso: identification of location of major employers in the region C rural and small town locations

Micro: household surveys to establish nature, conditions, constraints, and potentials of individual, household and community labour supplyC

1. telephone surveyChorizontal structure of labour supply
2. interview survey of exemplars (ethnography)...in-depth chronology of work/life patterns
3. mail surveyCannual follow-up of selected households

The details of this theme (exact objectives and methods) should be established by the collaborating researchers.

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