



Why do some coastal communities rise while others decline?

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ABSTRACT

Coastal areas have been hard hit by the recent economic crisis. In addition, due to the introduction and popularity of cheaper foreign holidays they have seen a general decline since the booming years of the 1970s. Clacton-On-Sea, which was a booming and prosperous tourist economy in the mid-20th Century, has seen a reduction in its economic prosperity. The area is not helped by its peripheral location; limited transport links to London; and lack of diversification in the local economy. Despite this, some areas have weathered the storm better than others. Brighton & Hove and Southend-On-Sea are examples of coastal areas that have not witnessed the same magnitude of short and longer term economic decline as areas like Clacton. This paper seeks to understand what explains the differences in economic trends between coastal areas that have done well and areas that have not done as well. The following factors are important: House prices; Recreational facilities; Shopping facilities; and Universities.

The following policies are proposed to help Clacton-On-Sea improve its condition:

- Increase the percentage of people qualified to degree level to 28.5%. This will help the area see a higher rate of jobs growth.
- Double to percentage of people employed in the knowledge industry
- Reduce the proportion of people employed in the public sector by establishing other industries.
- Implement policies favourable to entrepreneurs to increase the percentage of VAT registrations to at least 10%

Implementing such policies will help to regenerate the area; thereby attracting skilled individuals and improving prospects for current residents.

1. The plight of coastal communities

This section addresses the current state of affairs in Clacton-On-Sea, the case-study for this paper. The investigation looks at the housing market; labour market; and product market in Clacton-On-Sea and in other coastal communities. This paper asks what went wrong and tries to take lessons from other coastal and non-coastal communities that have managed to regenerate despite experiencing decline(s). This paper looks at different types of coastal communities and offers policy proposals; and looks at prospects for housing, labour and product markets.

Regeneration can encompass a wide range of government strategies; one definition of regeneration is the holistic process of reversing environmental, social and economic decline in places where market forces alone are not sufficient to do so (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004). The recent United Kingdom Coalition Government seemed to be in favour of regeneration by saying it can help make the best of Great Britain's assets and people; help to better distribute wealth and opportunities; restore social justice; and reduce social unrest (Ministerial Statement at the National Regeneration Summit, 2010).

Regeneration requires the creation and delivery of an environment in which people and companies can survive and grow. Such growth helps an area to be recognised by companies, investors and visitors as a good environment. Regeneration in Clacton should capitalise on its history as a leisure and tourism resort; and the nearby international port of Harwich. Being located 70 miles from London is another positive point about its location. The wider area also contains a range of housing facilities in urban and rural settings. Close to the area are the high quality further and higher education institutions of the University of Essex, University College of Suffolk and Colchester Institute. The convenient proximity of Clacton to these institutions can help it to produce a pool of highly skilled individuals for the local labour market. In addition, marine projects can also be a way to regenerate the economy of coastal areas through job creation (Vazquez and Iglesias, 2015; Thilanka et al., 2015).

Despite this, the 2014 by-election in the constituency of Clacton-On-Sea and the subsequent election of the first UKIP MP has highlighted the relatively fast decline that the area has gone through in the past two decades. Commentators have brought up the idea that the plight of

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Clacton is not isolated but is shared by many coastal economies that relied on the tourism industry which was hit by a negative and permanent demand shock during the last decade of the twentieth century. Common drivers of the decline of coastal communities include: the peripheral location and poor transport system; the lack of diversification in the local economy; the low educational attainment making it difficult to regenerate the economy.

Despite the negative commentary surrounding the plight of coastal towns, there is a group of coastal areas that are performing relatively well. This group is characterised by rates of change in the business stock that are higher than the average for coastal towns; and the national average. Characteristics within these areas that support economic activity include: closeness to a major town or large centralised population; access to business opportunities; and an awareness of trends in the wider environment. Despite the tendency to consider the decline of coastal communities irreversible, this report aims to better understand what happened in Clacton and compare its economic fortunes with two coastal communities that went through a similar decline but managed to revert their fortunes. This report considers the respective stories of Brighton & Hove and Southend-On-Sea; both of these areas are coastal communities located on the South-East coast of the England.

The motivation for this study comes from the relatively fast decline in coastal areas from the middle of the last decade of the twentieth century to the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Towards the end of the twentieth century a number of coastal areas relied quite heavily on tourism which received a negative and permanent demand shock in the 1990s due to the provision of cheap foreign holidays. Many commentators have emphasised the fact the plight of these respective coastal areas are not isolated in themselves. In reality the plight of tourism is shared by many coastal communities who depended on the tourist industry in order to promote their economic growth. Common drivers in the decline of coastal communities include:

- Peripheral location and poor transport system/provision
- Lack of diversification in the local economy
- Low educational attainment by the populace in some coastal communities which makes it very difficult to regenerate the economy

These three bullet points represent the three main things that will be seen in this study. The deprived coastal communities are quite isolated compared to other communities that have risen from their decline; there is a lack of diversification in the local economy due to a history/legacy of being heavily reliant on tourism; and the erstwhile educated workforce in these areas migrated away from the area and were replaced by a more elderly workforce/older population which makes it very difficult to regenerate the economy.

2. Regeneration

This study defines regeneration as the holistic process of reversing environmental, social and economic decline in places where market forces are insufficient to do so (ODPM, 2006). In simpler terms regeneration is about making something that was great that is no longer as great, better. This study focuses on the environmental, social and economic status of (declined) coastal areas. Some of the best examples of coastal regeneration are found in Dubai and coastal areas of Australia which have changed their specialisations from jobs in the traditional fishery industries to product processing industries to revitalise their economy. This usually takes a lot of time and commitment from the government and the people and this is something that will be discussed later in this paper.

Despite the decline of tourism in areas like Clacton-On-Sea and other coastal areas in the United Kingdom it is important to note that tourism is not necessarily in decline globally. Rather, there are areas that thrive and prosper from tourism. There are examples of areas in South America, The United States and Asia that are doing quite well and

benefit a lot from tourism. These include Bali in Indonesia and Pattaya in Thailand. Such places manage to attract lots of tourists and usually have booming conference trades.

3. The current state of affairs in the UK

There is a tendency to consider the decline of coastal communities irreversible. A report from the Centre for Social Justice indicated that Clacton-On-Sea is in a vicious circle; poverty and deprivation will only attract more poverty and deprivation; and the area will be unable to climb out of poverty and deprivation. The current study challenges this viewpoint and asks if such a state of affairs is permanent or if it is possible for coastal communities to rise out of their relative poverty and deprivation. This study aims to better understand what happens in coastal communities that manage to rise out of poverty and deprivation and see if some of the solutions that such areas use can be applied to Clacton-On-Sea. Although this study admits that each story of economic decline and success is unique with its own idiosyncracies it argues that there are common features that can be provided as lessons for those communities that aren't doing as well as the others. This study compares regenerative efforts of areas in the United Kingdom. Sometimes comparisons are made between areas with higher population sizes and sometimes comparisons are made based on the level of urbanisation in an area.

Beyond their coastal positioning, the geographic location of such areas tells a lot about their plight/success. By taking a look at maps of the areas one can immediately get a view why some areas have not developed as well as others. Transport links have a very important role to play in development. National and international airports; rail links to urban and other areas; and road links to urban and other areas are very important for an area to spur and sustain regeneration. Isolation is not good for regeneration and is a major reason why some areas have fared worse than other areas.

Fig. 1 shows the areas of Tendring and Southend-on-Sea in the country of Essex. The top section of the figure shows Tendring; the bottom section of the figure shows Southend-on-Sea. Upon looking at the image one can immediately see one of the reasons for the relatively worse performance of Clacton-On-Sea compared to Southend-On-Sea. Clacton-On-Sea has one major road connecting it to the rest of Essex and no major airports whereas Southend-On-Sea is connected to the rest of Essex through the A127 and A13, which are major roads. Southend-on-Sea also benefits from Southend Airport which is used for passenger and freight purposes. Fig. 2 shows the city of Brighton and Hove. Brighton and Hove benefits from the A27 major road which connects it to Newhaven and Seaford to its east and Worthing to its west. The city also benefits from the A23 which is a major road that leads to the M23 motorway which gives a connection to London. Finally, the city has easy access to Gatwick airport which provides passenger and freight transport.

Figs. 3–5 show information on deprivation in education skills and training for the respective coastal communities of Brighton and Hove; Southend-on-Sea and Tendring district. Data concerning multiple deprivation about education, skills and training also tell a meaningful story about the plight of coastal communities. The range of education, skills and training is much greater for deprived areas compared to non-deprived areas. The richest areas in deprived areas are much less affluent than the richest areas nationally; whilst the poorest areas in deprived regions are similar in level of affluence to the poorest areas nationally. The average level of affluence in regenerated areas is similar to the national average level of affluence while the average level of affluence in deprived coastal areas is much lower than the national average.

For many coastal areas the decline in standards of wellbeing occurred in the penultimate decade of the twentieth century. In most cases this decline occurred because the only industry which supported the local economy was hit by a permanent and negative demand shock

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