

In this coursework I aim to see how the town of Blaina in South Wales has responded to change in its economic geography. In order for me to do this I have used a variety of methods such as questionnaires, surveys, maps and simple observations.

Through my research I have discovered how old mining villages such as Blaina and six bells in the Ebbw Fach Valley have been affected through coal mine closures. Job losses where on a mass scale and affected small communities, this also affected their quality of life.

My Hypothesis

- 1) Most of the housing was developed in the 19th century

This was during the period of rapid economic growth. At this time this area of Great Britain was one of the main industrial regions, as jobs became available people moved to the area so houses were built to accommodate them. This affected an increased economy all around the growing communities

- 2) The quality of housing declined since the loss of the coal industry in these particular towns.

The closure of local coal mines affected the de-industrialization of the area. The doom and gloom spiral suggests that poor quality housing is a result from the decline of industry and economic structure of a town. Although many houses have shown signs of decay, there have been recent attempts to improve the housing stock, this includes things such as:

- Windows
- Roof tiles
- Brickwork
- Doors
- Toilets
- Fencing
- General appearance

This was all much needed as the houses were ageing and were beginning to deteriorate. When the houses were first built they met the owners need, but nowadays people have built extensions such as gardens, conservatories and new toilets.

- 3) Declining economic opportunities resulting in out migration

The industry's which were once thriving were beginning to lose value and so they moved to other countries where land and labour was cheaper. This left the local people in the lurch; they decided to move into bigger cities in Wales such as Cardiff and Swansea in the hope of finding jobs and better opportunities.

- 4) The number of shops and services has declined since de-industrialisation

As the population has declined so has the provision of shops and services. When people started to move from the area there wasn't any need for the specialist shops, people just needed everyday goods from the convenience shops so a lot of shop owners sold up and moved on.

- 5) The deterioration of the quality of life and the environment

Overall, there has been a decline in the quality of the environment; there aren't a lot of things to do for the local people, no job opportunities, services or much investment in the local area. The once booming area isn't much of a place to live in now.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

To answer the question how has Blaina responded to changes to its economic geography, I need to come up with a series of questions to ask the local people, I also need to conduct surveys to evaluate the quality of housing. The methods of data collection are as follows:

1) Housing survey

I need to find out about the age of the housing. To do this, I need to observe the architecture of the houses, analysing whether they are a product of modern or the 19th century construction. It is likely that it will be due to the industrial revolution which enhanced Blaina's economy so well.

2) Survey- Quality of housing

I need to find out whether the quality of housing has declined. Again I need to observe the houses, but this time look for modern features or improvements such as new roofing, double glazed windows, modern brick work etc.

3) Questionnaire survey

This is to determine migration and to find out if the quality of the environment has been affected. This can be found by asking the local people of Blaina

4) Land use maps

I need to see if outward migration has increased as a result of loss of industry. This can also be found in conjunction with my questionnaire where local people are asked if they knew of anyone who moved to find work.

5) Environmental quality survey

This will show how modern, clean, green, peaceful and quiet the local area is, and this will help in answering hypothesis number five.

This data will help to back up my answers to each of my hypothesis and show how Blaina has responded to changes in its economic geography.

The doom and gloom spiral which describes the decline in economic structure and facilities of a town or city suggests that once the loss of a strong industry (like the coal industry) usually that a town or cities development decreases gradually by spiralling out of control. It is a negative knock on effect with one result leading to another, this repeats itself. It all affects society; from home life, to community life, modernisation, economy, job losses, reduction of services, health care, crime, and then migration occurs.

I will try to prove this geographical theory using my case study of Blaina.

Another geographical theory which I could use is the Multiplier effect which states that:

Industries provide more jobs which in affect brings more capital for investment. Investments are needed for shops and services, education and health, and job opportunities.

When the local economy grows, it attracts many people to migrate. Industries are more inclined to set up in the cities where the population is growing.

NEW INDUSTRY

MIGRATION

JOBS

LOCAL ECONOMY

MORE MONEY FOR SHOPS
& SERVICES

5. For each of the following score whether it has...:

Got worse – 1

stayed the same 0

Improved slightly 1

Improved greatly 2

Quality of housing

General appearance of town

Job opportunities

Shopping facilities

I chose to do this question to encourage the local people to tell me what they really thought about the area and what their individual opinion was about their environment was.

If I didn't ask the inhabitants views about the local area I would have had to make my own assumptions which may have been biased, but by asking them I am ensuring there is no bias in my investigation.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This shows the migration pattern of Blaina

People who have migrated away from Blaina after the decline of industry

We noticed that some migrated to nearby towns such as Pontypool. However the majority left to the large southern port and trade cities of coastal Wales such as Cardiff and Newport. Like it says in my pie chart approximately 68% of the local population have migrated to find work. All the local people commute out of town to go to work; this shows the lack of job opportunities available locally.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This section is to show what conclusions I have drawn from the results of my data and how I can relate it to my original question; how has Blaina responded to changes in its economic geography.

Each of my graphs or tables relate to either one or more of my five hypothesis, and I have shown how for each.

The age of housing graph relates to hypothesis one and two because both of these hypothesis are to do with the development and changes in residential areas and the age of housing shows when the houses were built and to what extent is repair needed now. I have shown the evidence that shows signs of renewal.

The style of housing graph answers hypothesis two because seeing the different styles of housing and the difference in the number of each style of housing could indicate what kind of housing was built to cater for the needs of the town at the time they were constructed.

All the houses were built during the same time this shows the era in which industry developed the local area.

The condition of housing answers hypothesis two and five because the condition of housing would indicate how much money has been invested into housing development and improving the quality of the environment(hypothesis five) in the town.

Evidence of renewal answers hypothesis two it shows how the quality of housing has been maintained by the government and community since the loss of heavy industry.

The environmental quality survey will prove hypothesis five because it gives an indication on a small scale of how I feel the town has changed due to the loss of heavy industry such as coal mining. I think this is a kind of bias, because I am used to the standard of living in London. I would inevitably compare this standard to that of Blaina in South Wales. My view of the town may be different to others.

The map of the Migration Distribution shows the dependency ratio in the community. There opinion of the local people on their own community since the loss of industry will help answer hypothesis five.