



Nottingham
Business School
Nottingham Trent University

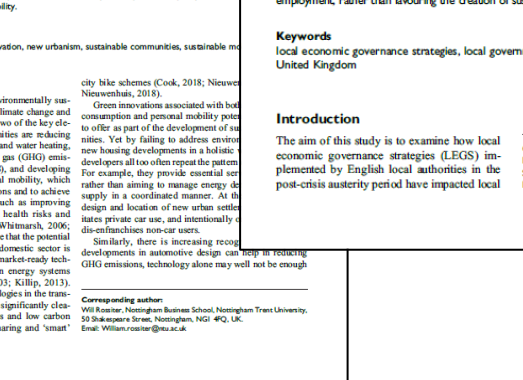
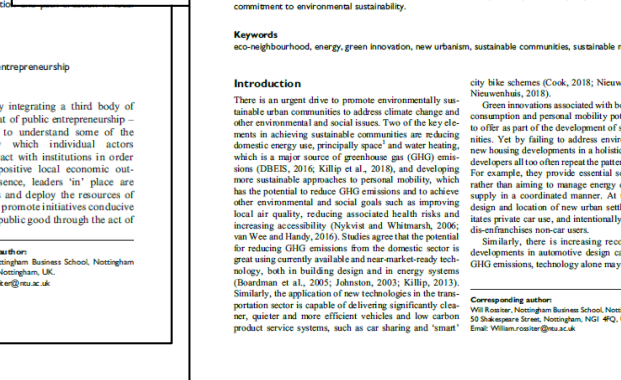
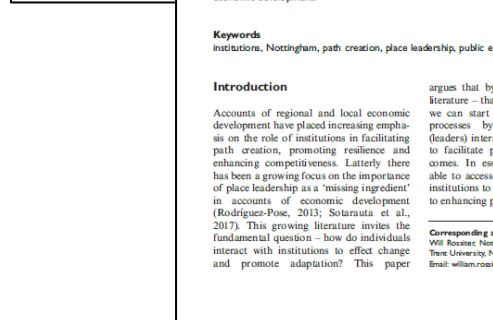
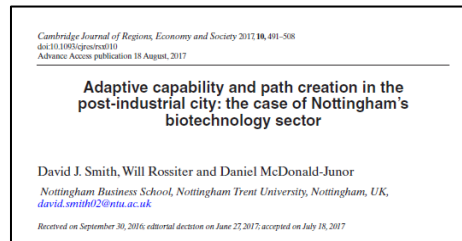
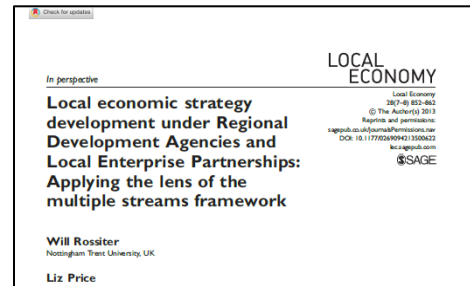
The making, unmaking and remaking of an English Region: Unexpected journeys in regional development

Professor Will Rossiter

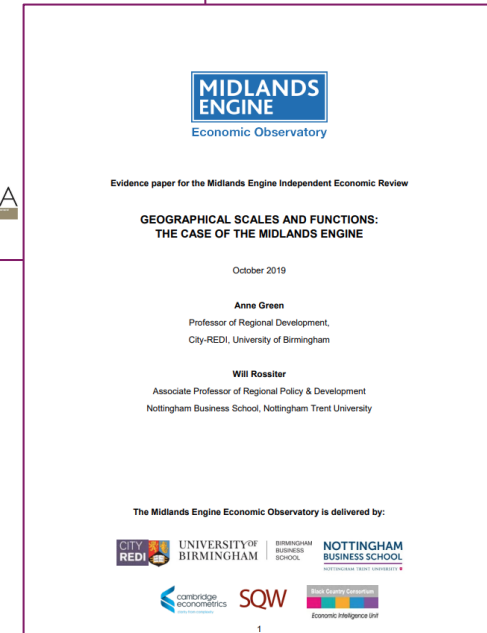
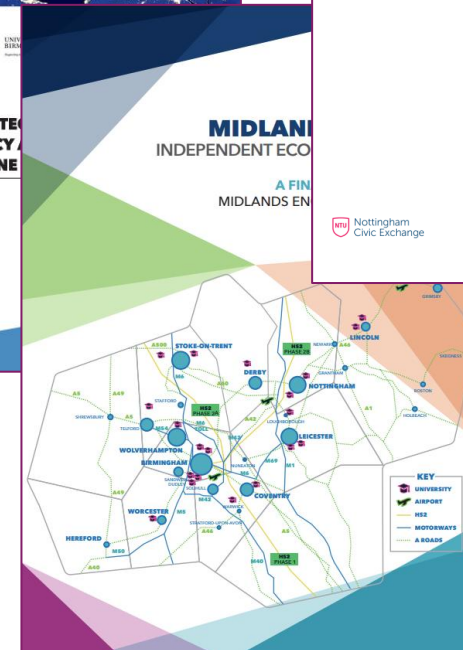
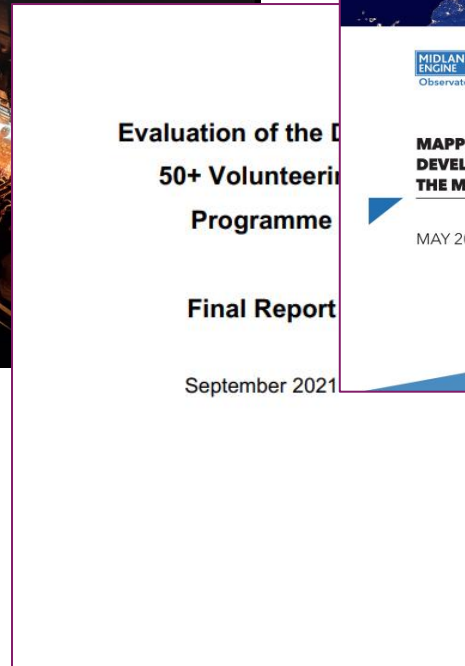
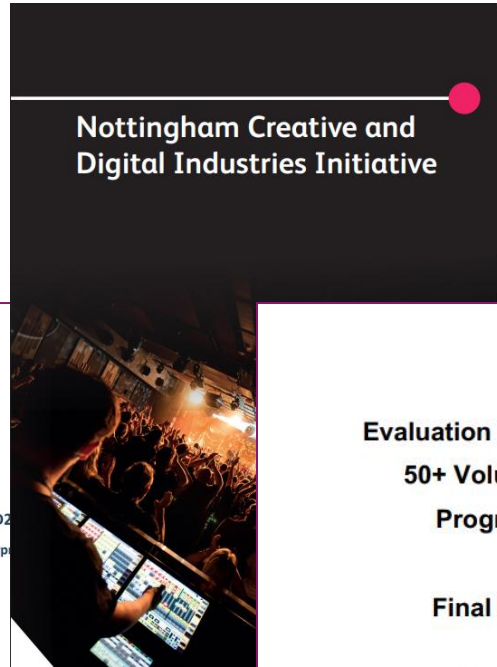
29th April 2025



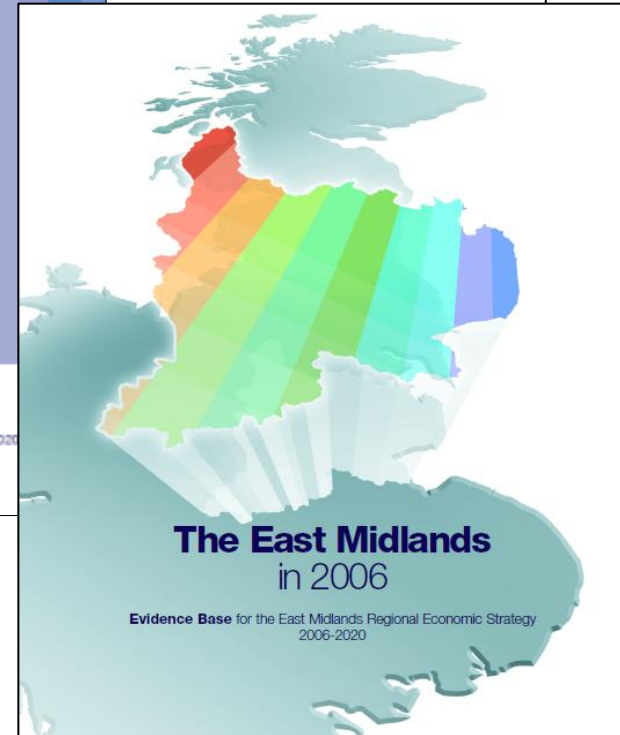
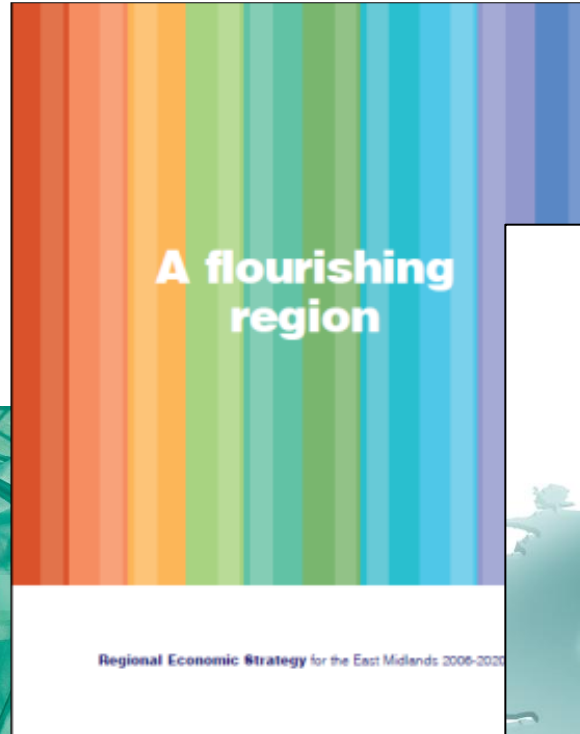
10 years, 8 papers, 1 PhD...



And contract research...



But researching the economies of the East Midlands for longer...



Thinking About Regional Competitiveness: Critical Issues

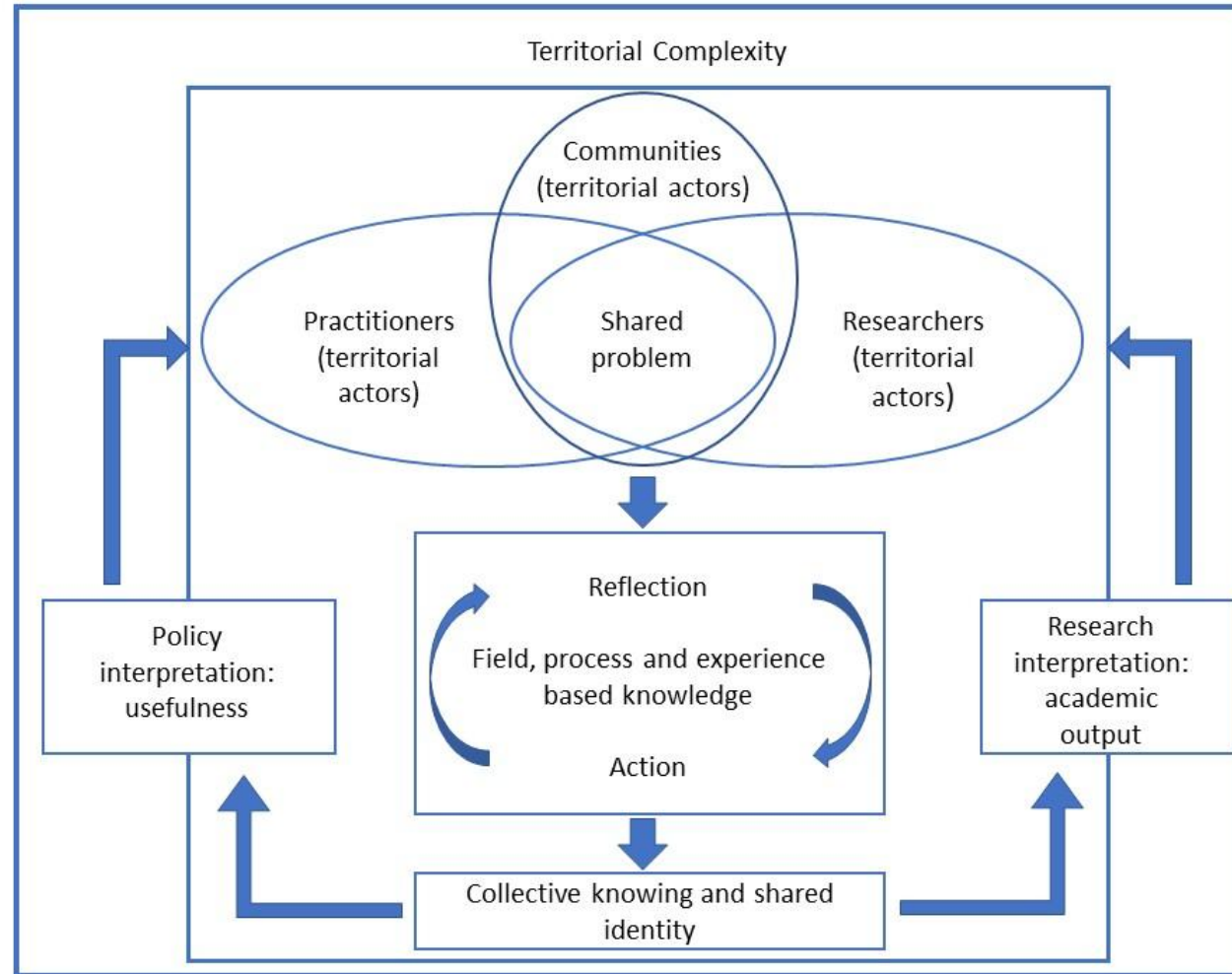
Background 'Think-Piece' Paper Commissioned by the East Midlands
Development Agency

Ron Martin
Professor of Economic Geography
and Fellow of the Cambridge-MIT Institute
University of Cambridge
Email: rml1@cam.ac.uk

26 October 2005

Disclaimer
The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author, and do not
necessarily reflect the views or policy of the East Midlands Regional Development
Agency

Practice informed research/research informed practice



Disciplinary basis?

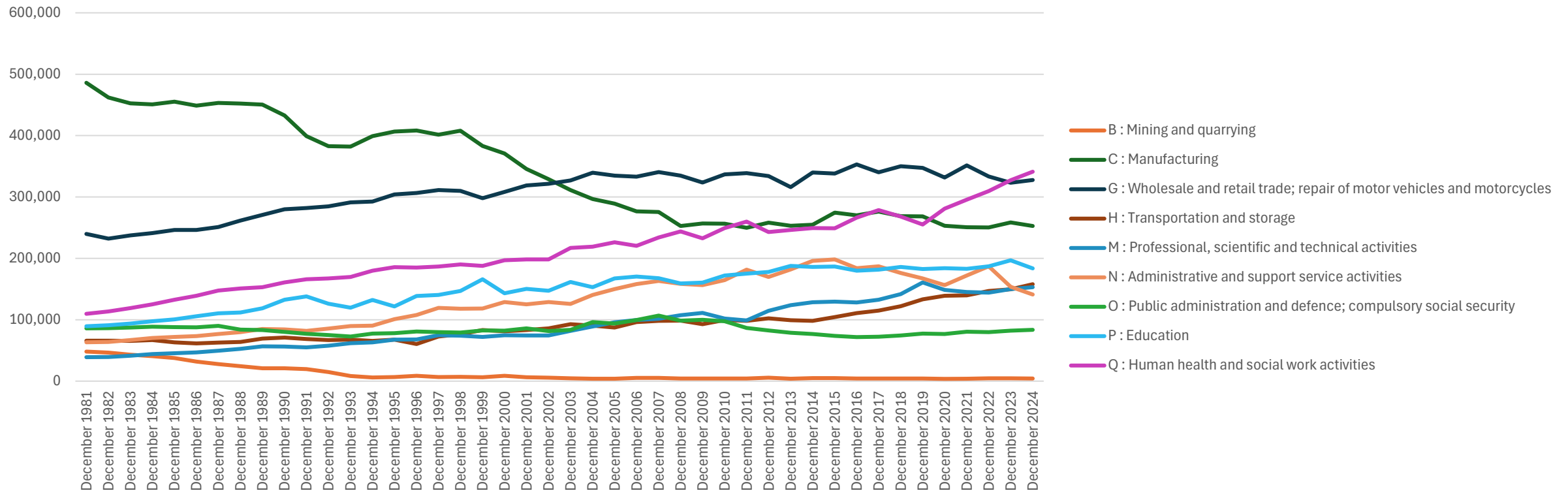
- Sociology (via Industrial Relations/HR) to Economic Geography...
- Practice informed – 15 years in economic development
- Theoretical borrowings from:
 - Political Science (Kingdon)
 - (Evolutionary) Economic Geography (Amin & Thrift, Boschma, Martin...)
 - Place Leadership/Public Entrepreneurship (Collinge et al...)

Research Questions

- 1. How can new paths of local and regional economic development be created?*
- 2. What is the scope for state and individual actors and policy intervention to influence **the path creation process**?*
- 3. How do these factors relate to contingencies specific to places at particular times?*

Nowhere more acute than in the context of de-industrialisation...

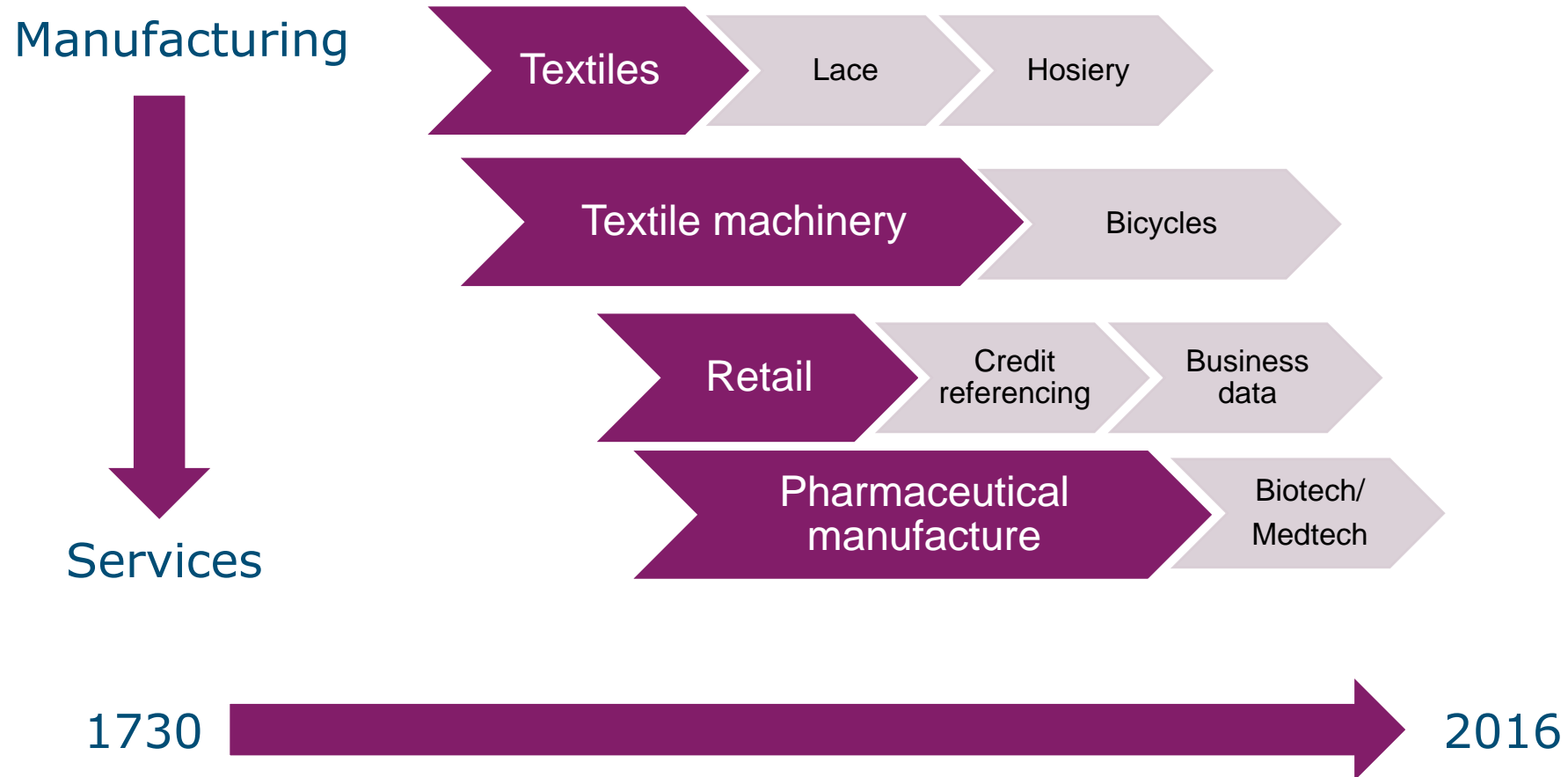
East Midlands Employee Jobs 1981-2023, selected sectors (SIC 2007)



Employee jobs by industry (SIC 2007) - seasonally adjusted

ONS Crown Copyright Reserved [from Nomis on 14 April 2025]

Nottingham's economic evolutions



Transitions written on the cityscape



© Copyright [Oxymoron](#) and licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#)

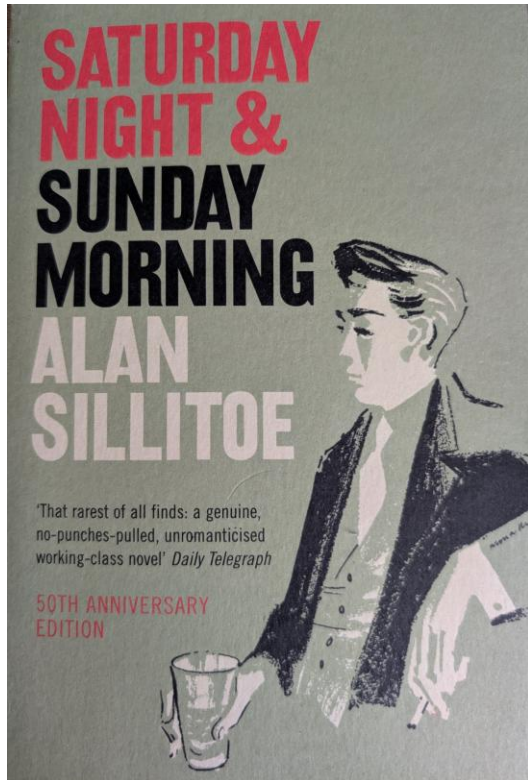


©emda. Photography by Alan Fletcher.



A section of this huge factory is devoted to the designing and production of Sunray-Archer gears, brakes and Dynohubs.

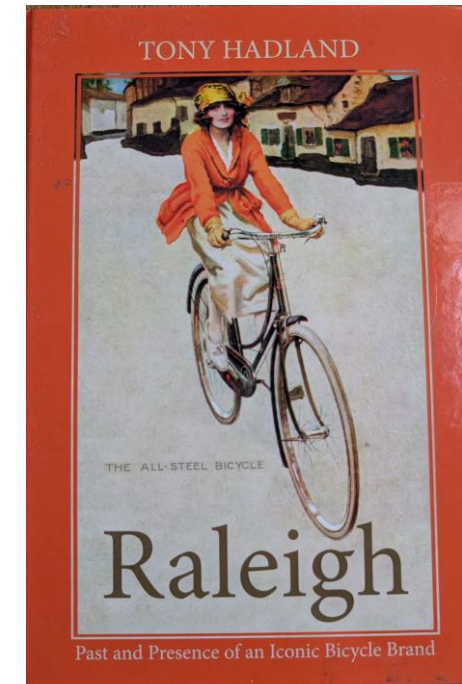
Employment & Social Infrastructure



"The thousands that worked there took home good wages.... if the gaffer got on to you now you could always tell him where to put the job and go somewhere else." (Sillitoe 1958:27)

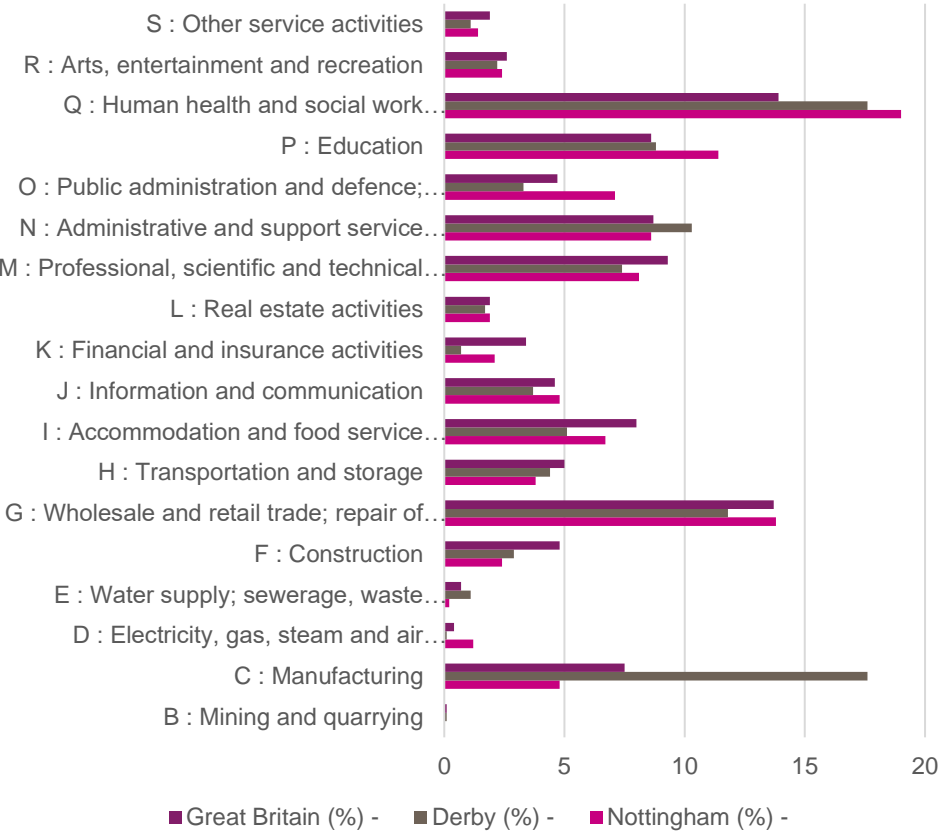
"Nottingham is an outstanding example of a local community with a well-balanced employment structure..."

(British Association, Nottingham and Its Region, 1966)



Socio-economic outcomes

Employee Jobs (2023 ONS BRES)



Occupation

2021

■ Nottingham (England)

1. Managers, directors and senior officials
8.0% (12.9%)

2. Professional occupations 19.0% (20.3%)

3. Associate professional and technical
occupations 11.1% (13.3%)

4. Administrative and secretarial
occupations 7.8% (9.3%)

5. Skilled trades occupations 8.3% (10.2%)

6. Caring, leisure and other service
occupations 11.1% (9.3%)

7. Sales and customer service
occupations 9.4% (7.5%)

8. Process, plant and machine operatives
8.7% (6.9%)

9. Elementary occupations 16.6% (10.5%)

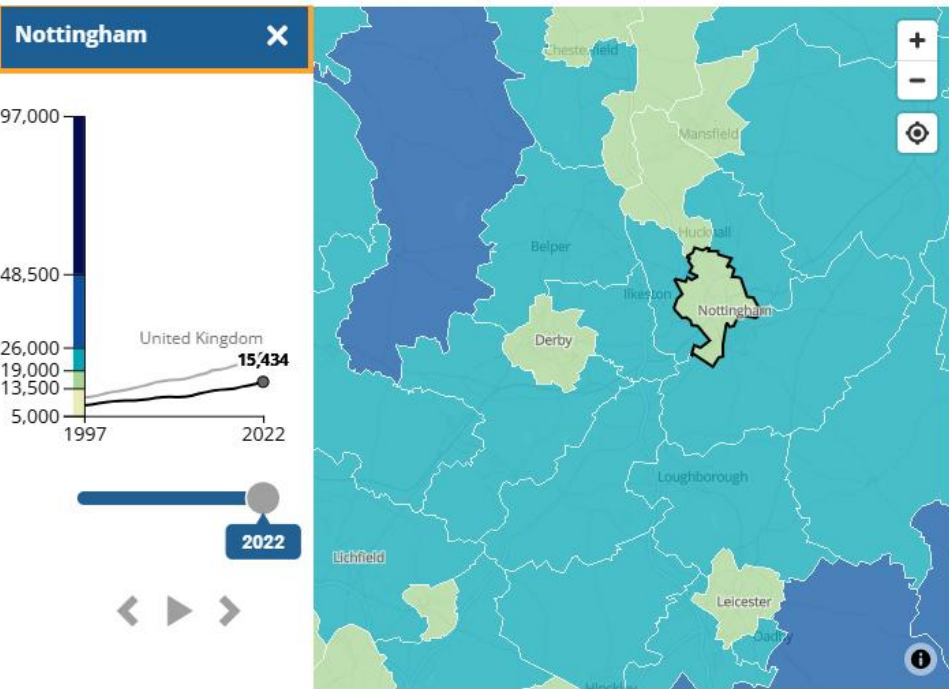
% of people aged 16 years and over in
employment

Source: Office for National Statistics - Census
2021

Earnings by place of work (ONS ASHE 2024)

	Nottingham	Derby	Great Britain
	(pounds)	(pounds)	(pounds)
Gross weekly pay			
Full-time workers	632.9	769.3	729.6

Gross disposable household income per head for UK local authorities, 1997 to 2022



Source: Regional gross disposable household income (GDHI) from the Office for National Statistics

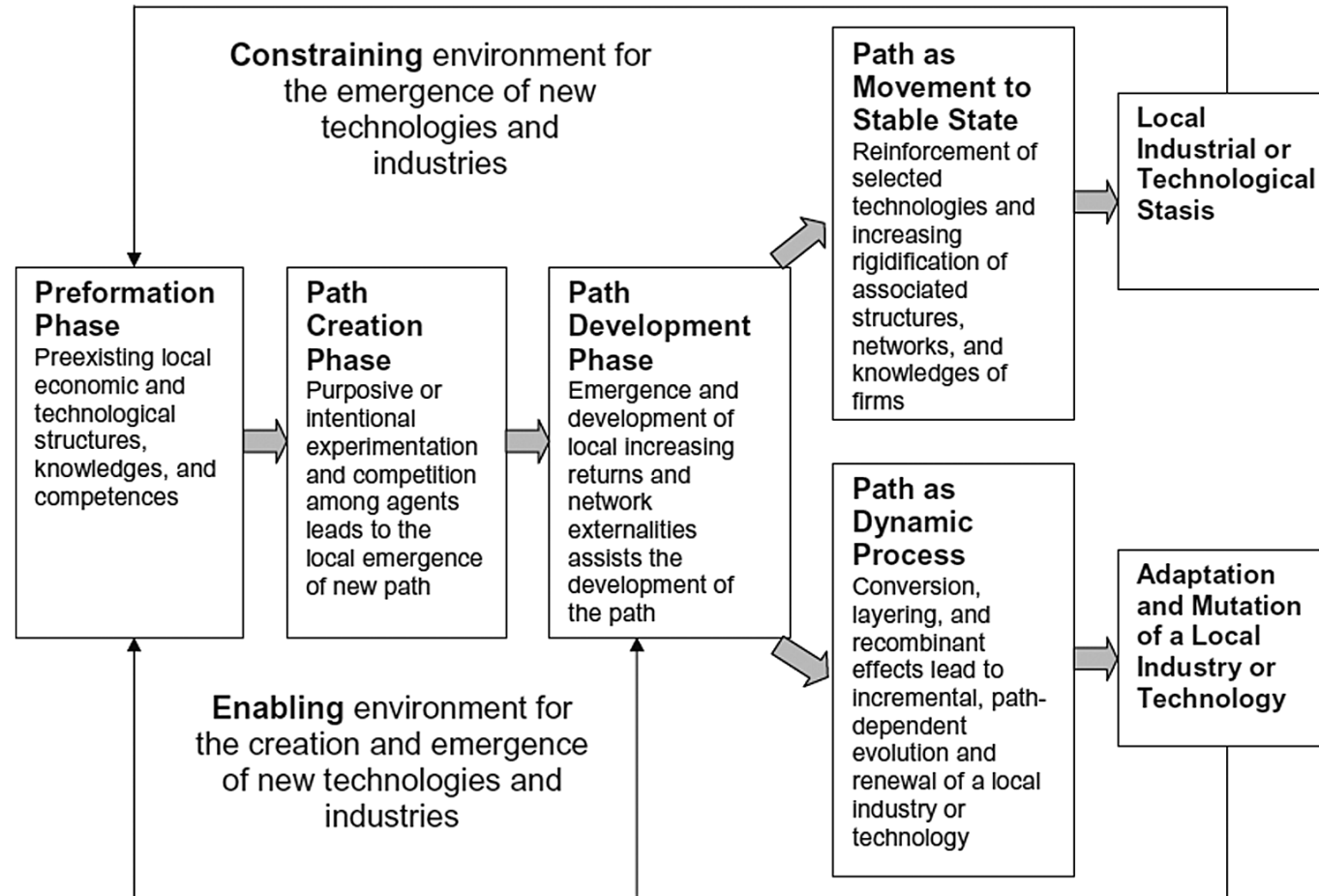
Evolutionary Economic Geography

*“...it is believed that experiences and competencies acquired over time by individuals and entities in particular localities to a large degree determine present configurations as well as future **regional trajectories**.” (Kogler 2015: 705)*

Key concepts:

- Path dependency
- Lock-in
- Adaptive capability
- Institutional thickness

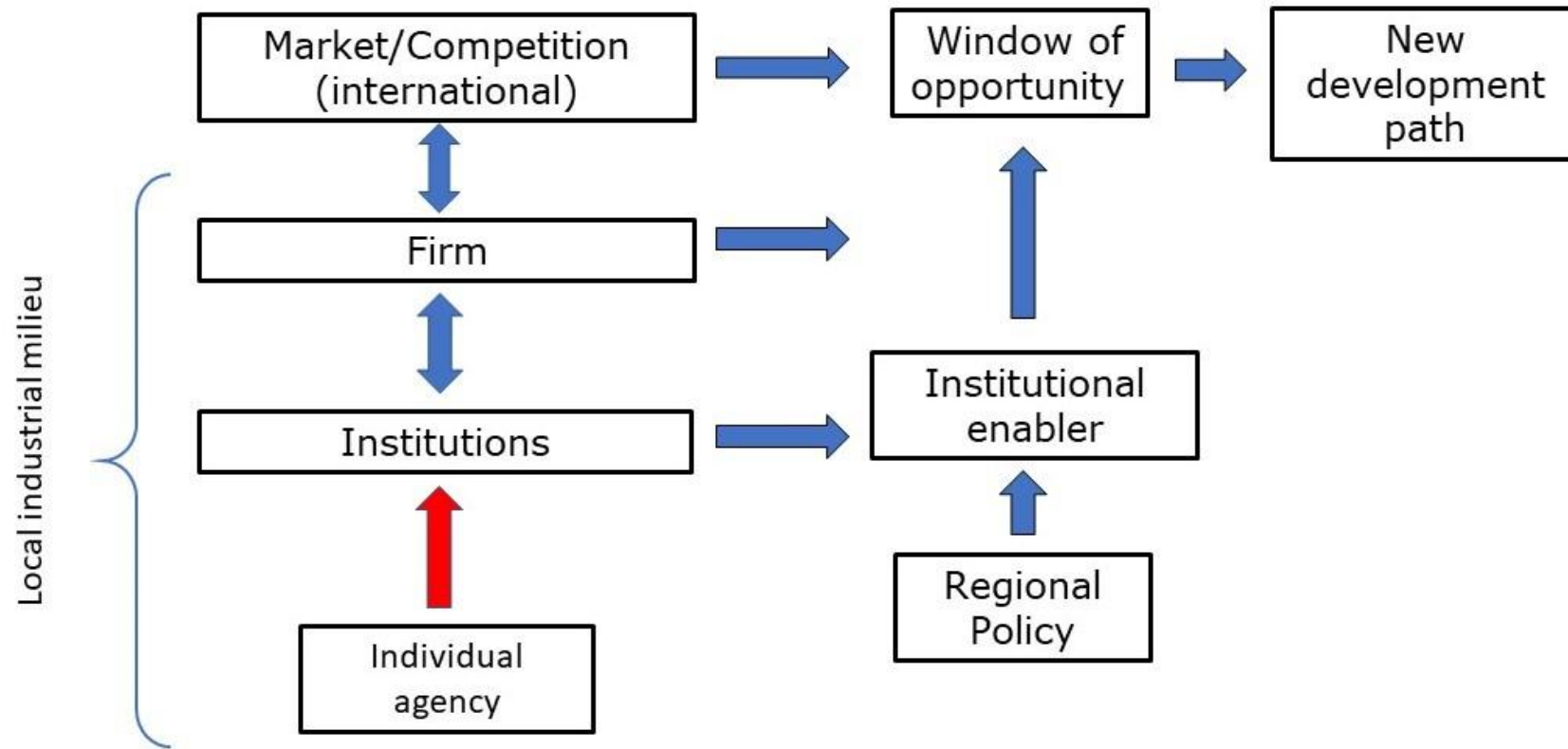
A path dependence model of local industrial evolution (Martin 2010)



Path creation in evolutionary economic geography

- Martin (Roepke lecture 2010) critique of ‘path dependency’ as too frequently emphasising continuity over change – calls for a more evolutionary and institutionalist account;
- Doussard & Schrock (2015) the importance of firm, technological, place and market level contingencies in structuring uneven spatial development;
- Dawley et al (2015) regional policy and the multi-scalar state roles in new path creation; and
- Bristow & Healy (2015) use complex adaptive systems approach to explore the role of agency in regional development “***agents are co-evolving, constantly adapting to each other and their environment***”

A new model of path creation: Global, institutions, policy & agency



Historical Perspectives on the (East) Midlands

“...***an area of debatable land*** frequently subject to competing powers, especially between English and Dane in the tenth century...” (Rowlands, 1987; 5)

“...***the most unknown and neglected part of England*** – the east midlands, the stretch of country from the Chilterns to the Trent.” (W.G. Hoskins 1949)

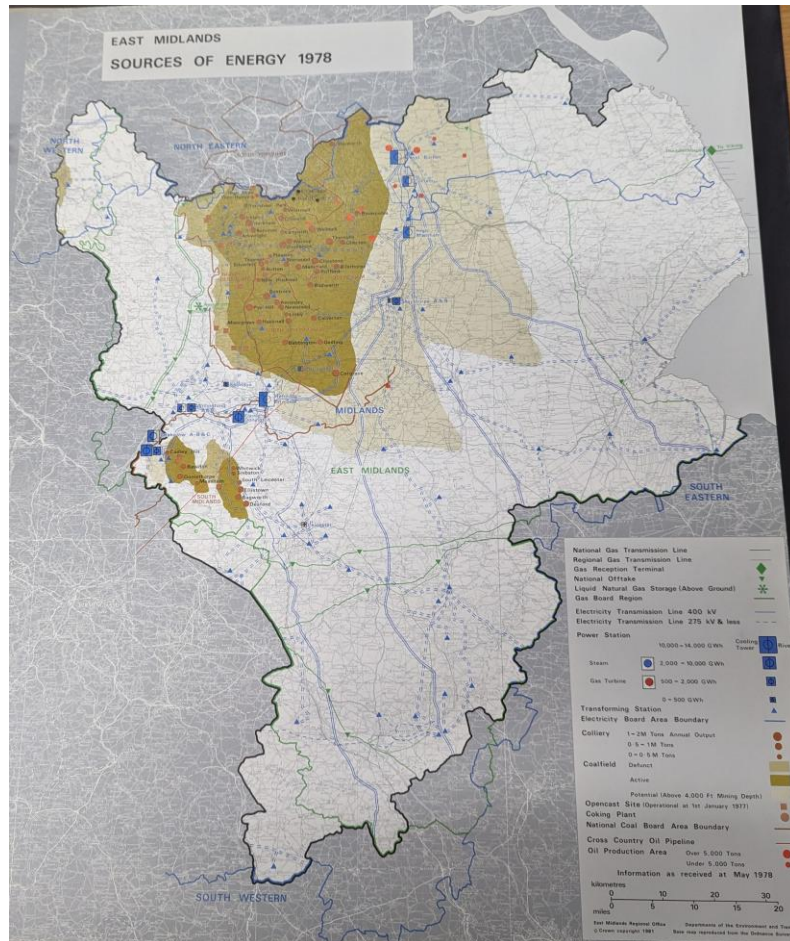
“.. ***the “portion” of Britain left over*** when other, more recognisable, regions – Yorkshire, Wales, South-East England and so on – were filled in.” (Dury 1963, quoted in Hardill et al 2006)

“Within this area ***the present economic character and nature of past development have created a definite regional identity***, which distinguishes the East Midlands from adjoining parts of the country.” (D.M. Smith 1965)

“The East Midlands was significantly affected by industrialisation, but unlike ‘classic industrial regions’ such as the North-west or West Midlands, it ***did not experience a concomitant growth in regional integration and identity***.” (Townsend 2006; 291)

“through organisation, which is ***an expression of policy rather than by any inherent qualities of the region***, the East Midlands... may be regarded as a ‘functionally coherent’ unit” (Edwards 1954;12)

K.C. Edwards' 'functionally coherent region'



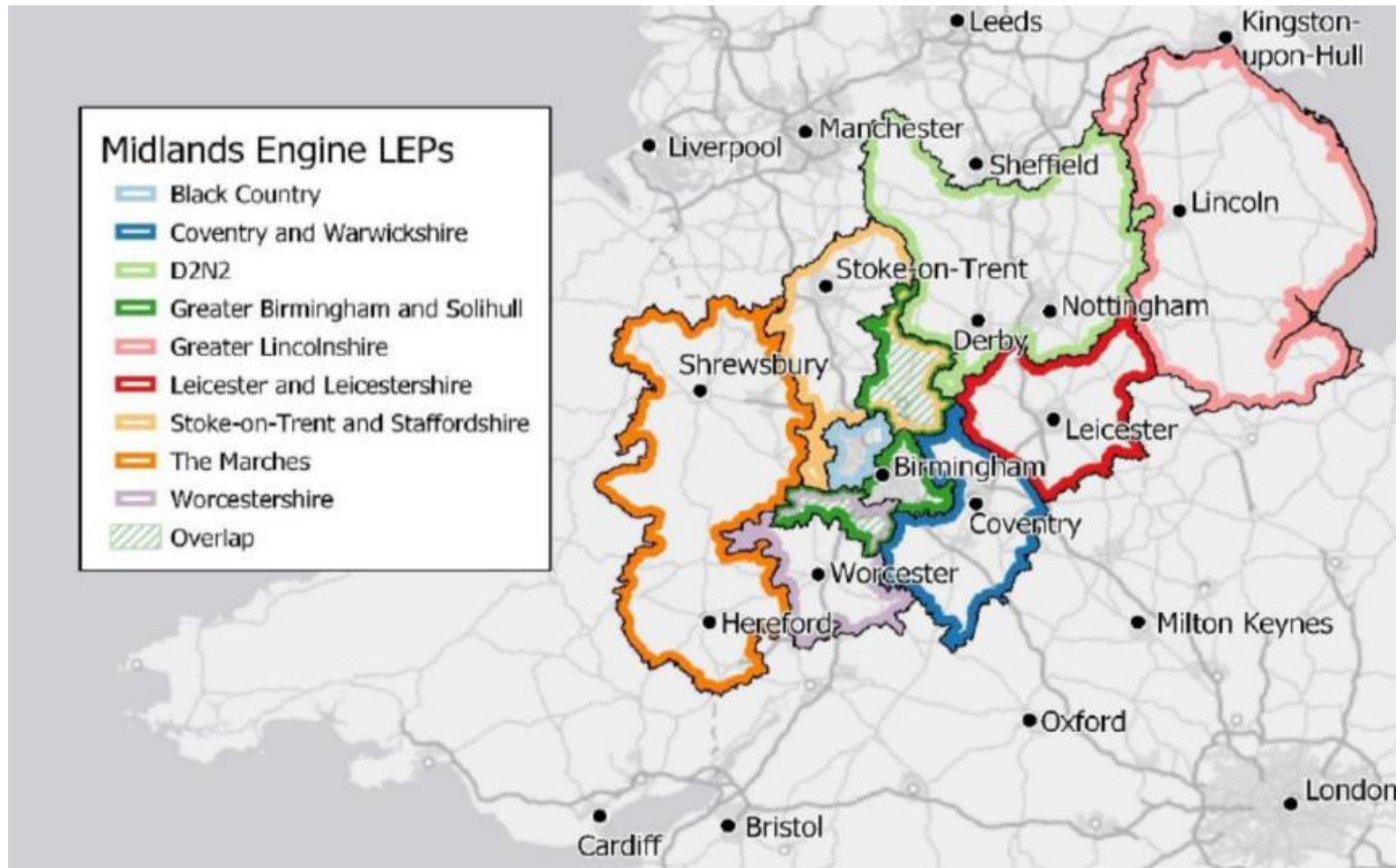
Map source: East Midlands Regional Office, Department for the Environment and Transport, 1981, UoN Geography Dept. Collection.
Photo: University of Nottingham, Department of Geography.

The East Midlands Combined County Authority area

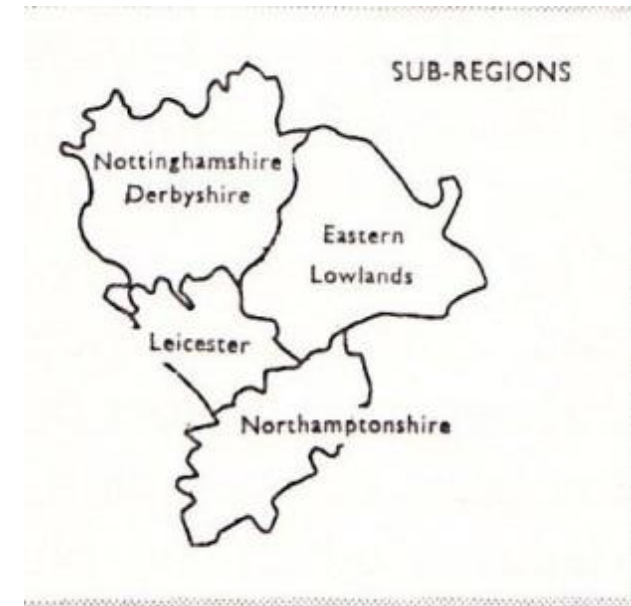
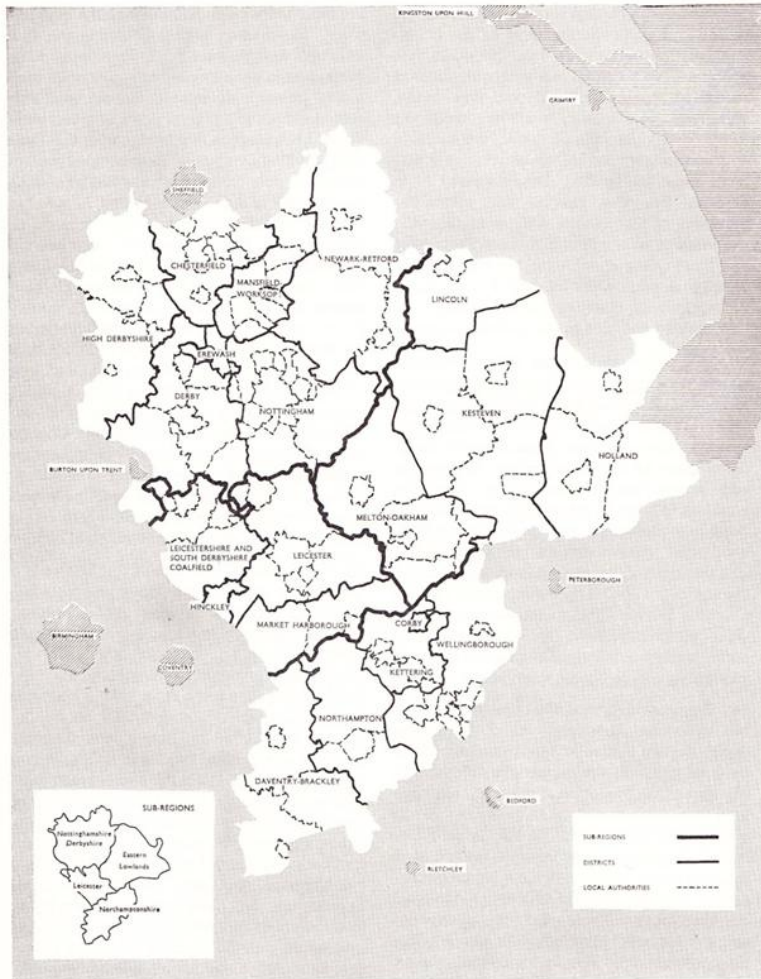


- The East Midlands Combined Country Authority (EMCCA) was formed in March 2024 to act as the **strategic authority for the East Midlands area**
- The authority is led by the **new East Midlands Mayor, Claire Ward** and has taken on powers over transport, housing, skills and education – alongside leading the economic strategy of the region
- The mayor has pledged to **use the new powers and extra funds for EMCCA to build on the region's strengths** and tackle its challenges to make the East Midlands more prosperous and fair, by supporting **inclusive growth**.

Midlands Local Enterprise Partnerships 2011-24

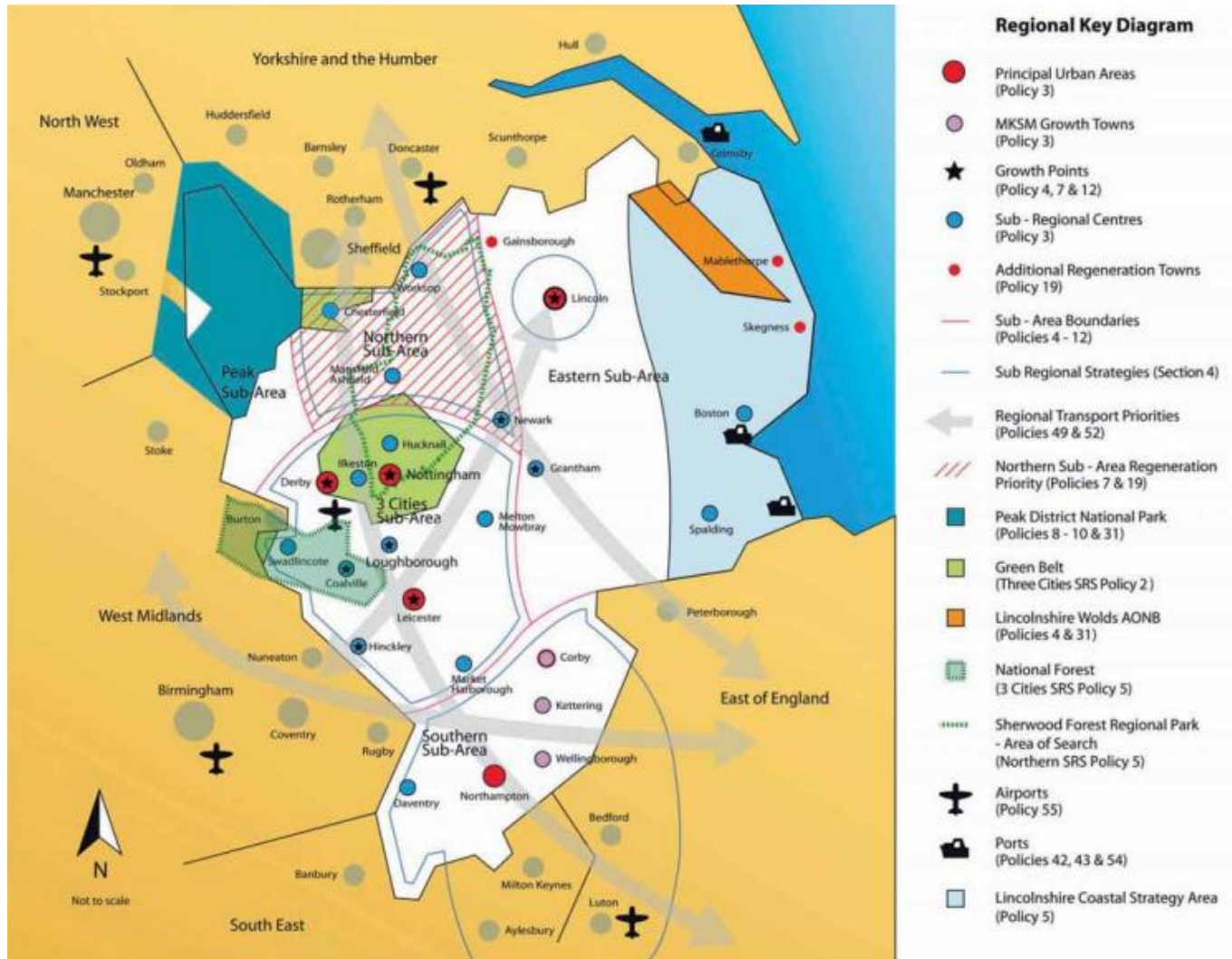


The East Midlands and sub-regions 1966



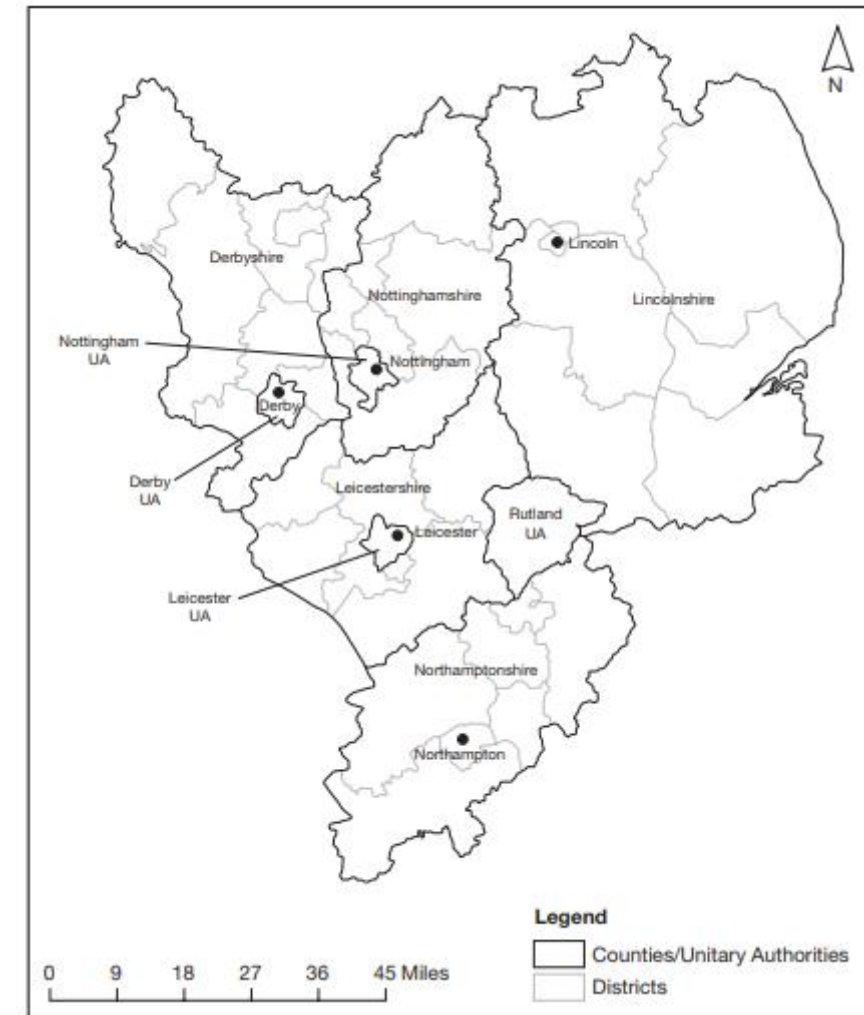
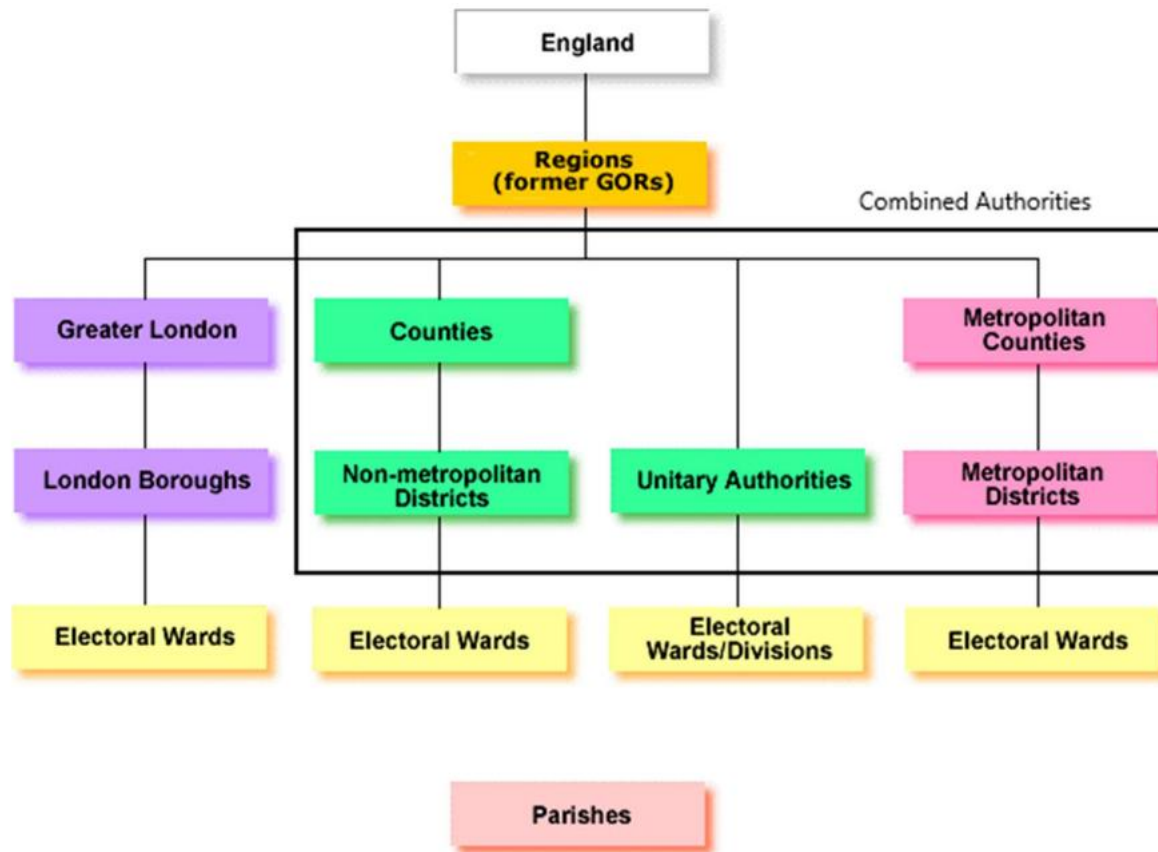
Source: The East Midlands Study, East Midlands Economic Planning Council, HMSO 1966

The functionally 'polycentric' region (Parr)



East Midlands Spatial Strategy, RPPG8 2009

Political complexity



Implications (for the East Midlands...)

- The importance of local/regional ***institutional capacity***
- Delivering on the promise of '***functional polycentricity***'
- This requires a ***spatial imagination***
- A structurally diverse region needs a ***growth and opportunities plan*** based on exploiting place-based synergies
- The mission is ***adaptive capability and inclusive growth***
- *The measure of success will be quality, accessible jobs at scale*
- A product will be ***collective knowing and shared (regional) identity...***



Nottingham
Business School
Nottingham Trent University

Thank you

