Developing a community-led approach to inclusive growth in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

About the Project

This PhD project will examine the challenges and develop solutions for a bottom-up, community-led approach to inclusive economic growth in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Conventional local and regional development strategies have not considered who benefits from economic growth, who is able to access new jobs and the impact of growth on social and geographical inequalities. Inclusive growth is being explored by policymakers as an alternative model which focuses on ensuring that a growing economy also benefits marginalised local communities, and the need to create 'good jobs' and 'good work'.

Nottingham City Council and, the newly established East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) and Mayor have committed to a vision of inclusive growth. This commitment has the potential to break the cycle of inequality that has afflicted local communities by creating better jobs and more equitable opportunities. The city and region have struggled with the long-term impacts of deindustrialisation, which has contributed to high levels of low skill/ low pay jobs, low levels of household income, high levels of personal debt, and high levels of deprivation amongst local communities.

While the commitment to inclusive growth is welcome, research from other localities shows that a failure to avoid "business as usual" and understand the reality for people "on the ground" is a significant risk for inclusive growth approaches. Working with marginalised communities in Nottingham, EMCCA and other economic development stakeholders, this project will explore participatory and co-production approaches to policy change to develop solutions for a community-led, inclusive growth strategy.

This project has been co-created and is supported by researchers from Nottingham Trent University (NTU), the University of Nottingham (UoN) and partners at East Midlands Combined County Authority. The successful candidate for this project will be enrolled at the University of Nottingham.

Project Aims

The overall aims of the project are:

1. Provide a critical analysis of 'inclusive growth' as a local and regional development approach in the UK.
2. Critically examine the idea of 'good work' and its role in inclusive growth strategies.
3. Identify the challenges and barriers to the realisation of inclusive growth in general, and in Nottingham in particular.
4. Understand and define 'inclusive growth' and 'good work' from the perspective of marginalised communities and groups in Nottingham.
5. Identify mechanisms and pathways to enable marginalised communities and groups to shape and co-produce local and regional inclusive growth development pathways.
6. Identify policy frameworks that can ensure the consideration of marginalised community's interest in policy change, and support the changes need to make inclusive growth successful.

Supervisory Team

1. Lead Academic Supervisor: Dr Shaun French (UoN)
2. Academic Co-Supervisor: Prof Will Rossiter (NTU)
3. Community Supervisor: Will Morlidge (East Midlands Combined County Authority)

Key Details

Host University:	University of Nottingham
School / department:	Social Sciences
Start date:	01 April 2025
Financial offer:	Tuition fees covered in full (worth approx. £15k across full PhD programme). Monthly stipend based on £19,237 per annum, pro rata, tax free.
Working hours	Full-time (minimum 37.5 hrs per week)

Key Details

Working Style:	Primarily in-person at host university. Flexible working supported. Working pattern to be agreed between successful candidate and lead supervisor.

Competencies

Co(l)laboratory Core Competencies		
Category	**Competency**	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**
Comprehension and evaluation	Strong understanding of the project and its subject matter.	A / I
	Analytical, researcher mindset with keen attention to detail.	A / I
	Communicate complex concepts with clarity and precision.	A / I
	Able to identify connections, patterns, gaps, and irregularities in information/data.	I
	Able to interpret data/information confidently with logic and empathy to derive meaning.	I
Social and emotional	Demonstrable experience of responding effectively changing contexts, information and demands.	A
	Ability to persevere in the face of challenges/failures and to remain constructive in developing solutions.	A
	Demonstrable passion for learning with clear drive and curiosity to undertake this specific research project.	A / I
	Willingness to immerse oneself in the research subject matter and make a contribute to new knowledge through a PhD.	A / I
	Strong desire to make a positive community impact through the research.	A / I
	Willingness to think deeply about complex concepts and engage with academic ideas and theory.	A / I

Competencies

Co(I)laboratory Core Competencies		
Category	**Competency**	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**
Preparedness and potential for success	Experience of working, collaborating and communicating effectively with different stakeholders.	A
	High level of self-motivation and ability to work with minimal guidance.	A / I
	Strong organisational and time-management skills with the ability to balance and prioritise multiple tasks.	A / I
	Ability to identify potential challenges and complexities and thoughtfully consider possible solutions.	A / I
	Able to identify the technical, personal, or professional skills required for a task and take action to develop these.	A / I
Community Context	Genuine desire to undertake community-engaged research over more traditional approaches to research.	A
	Understand the impact of and need for the inclusion of diverse experiences and points of view in research.	A / I
	Appreciation/understanding of the importance of community insight and experience in the generation of new knowledge.	A / I
	Awareness/understanding of the broader societal context related to the subject matter of the project.	A / I

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**	**Desirable**	**Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)**
Professional, academic or equivalent background in a relevant area (e.g., local authority, policy, economics, etc.).	A / I	Strong negotiation and influencing skills.	A / I
Appreciation of the devolution agenda in the UK, and of Nottinghamshire's regional economic development.	A / I	Demonstrable connections to or experience with diverse communities and networks in the local region.	A / I

Competencies

Project Specific Competencies			
Essential	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)	Desirable	Assessed: Application (A), Interview (I)
Understanding of the current landscape of socioeconomic challenges facing Nottinghamshire communities.	A / I	Understanding of the key issues relating to working with and conduction research with communities.	A / I

References for Further Reading

- Crisp, R. et al. (2024) 'Beyond GDP in cities: Assessing alternative approaches to urban economic development', Urban Studies, 61(7): 1209-1229 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00420980231187884

- Leyshon, A. (2021) 'Economic geography I: Uneven development, 'left behind places' and 'levelling up' in a time of crisis', Progress in Human Geography, 45(6): 1678-1691 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351440577_Economic_geography_I_Uneven_development_'left_behind_places'and 'levelling_up'_in_a_time_of_crisis

- Lupton, R. et al. (2019) Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester 2020 and beyond: Taking Stock and Looking Forward, Report, University of Manchester and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK. https://policyatmanchester.shorthandstories.com/inclusive-growth-GM-2020/?utm_source=SR%20newsletter&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=GI%20Beacon%20IGAU

- MacKinnon, D. et al. (2022) 'Reframing urban and regional 'development' for 'left behind' places', Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 15(1): 39-56. https://academic.oup.com/cjres/article/15/1/39/6427773

- Nottingham City Council (2024) Nottingham's Economic Plan for Growth: 2024-2030, Nottingham, NCC https://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/information-for-business/business-information-and-support/nottingham-economic-growth-plan/

- Pike, A. et al. (2024) 'Left behind places': A geographical etymology, Regional Studies, 58(6): 1167-1179 https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10165854/1/Left%20behind%20places%20a%20geographical%20etymology.pdf

- RSA (2017a) Inclusive growth commission: Making our economy work for everyone, Report, RSA, UK. https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/pdfs/reports/rsa_inclusive-growth-commission-final-report-march-2017.pdf

- RSA (2017b) Inclusive growth: Putting Principles into Practice, Report, RSA, UK. https://www.thersa.org/reports/inclusive-growth-putting-principles-into-practice

- YATES, E., CLARK, I. and ROSSITER, W., 2021. Local economic governance strategies in the UK's post-industrial cities and the challenges of improving local work and employment conditions. Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit. ISSN 0269-0942 https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/02690942211032507