

Global Perspectives on Mayoral Leadership: Supporting Regional Dialogue

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The East Midlands Branch of the Regional Studies Association was pleased to support Professor Will Rossiter and the Centre for Economy, Policy and Place at Nottingham Business School in hosting an excellent event on mayoral leadership recently.

The event brought together Claire Ward, mayor of the East Midlands Combined County Authority, and Aki Takehisa, former mayor of Setouchi City in Japan, for a fascinating comparative discussion on regional leadership.

The contrast between the two systems was revealing. Aki described how Japanese mayors operate with broad powers supported by a mix of local taxes, non-tax income and central funding. Crucially, most grants are not ring-fenced, allowing mayors considerable freedom in resource allocation. He also highlighted the close relationships between local authorities, landowners and residents in smaller cities, and the strong accountability mechanisms within Japan's vertical and horizontal governance systems.

Claire Ward emphasised that mayoral leadership in England is as much about diplomacy as politics – listening, translating local needs, and managing complex relationships across diverse regions. She argued that place-based leadership is essential for tackling wider determinants of health and that achieving inclusive growth relies on improving skills, access to stable jobs, housing and transport. Both mayors,

despite their different contexts, stressed the importance of consensus-building around place to unite politicians, institutions and residents.

The event also featured valuable contributions from RSA's colleagues Professor Anne Green and Dr Abigail Taylor from City-REDI at the University of Birmingham who highlighted the importance of a 'place-first vision' built through strong formal and informal relationships across multiple geographical scales, creating "the glue that connects institutions and infrastructure."

The Regional Studies Association is proud to support events like these that bring international perspectives to bear on regional policy challenges. Our thanks go to Professor Rossiter and his team at NBS for organising such a valuable exchange.

For more on the event: [here](#)