



Research Universities and the Knowledge Region

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“We just haven’t been flapping them hard enough.”

Two kinds of knowledge

Tacit knowledge. Carried and transmitted by individuals and organizations. Can be captured within a region.

Explicit or codified knowledge. Written down. Transmitted by communications media. Cannot be captured within a region – instantly global.

Innovation combines tacit and explicit knowledge. Strategy is to build and activate tacit knowledge within regions to leverage locally generated explicit knowledge.

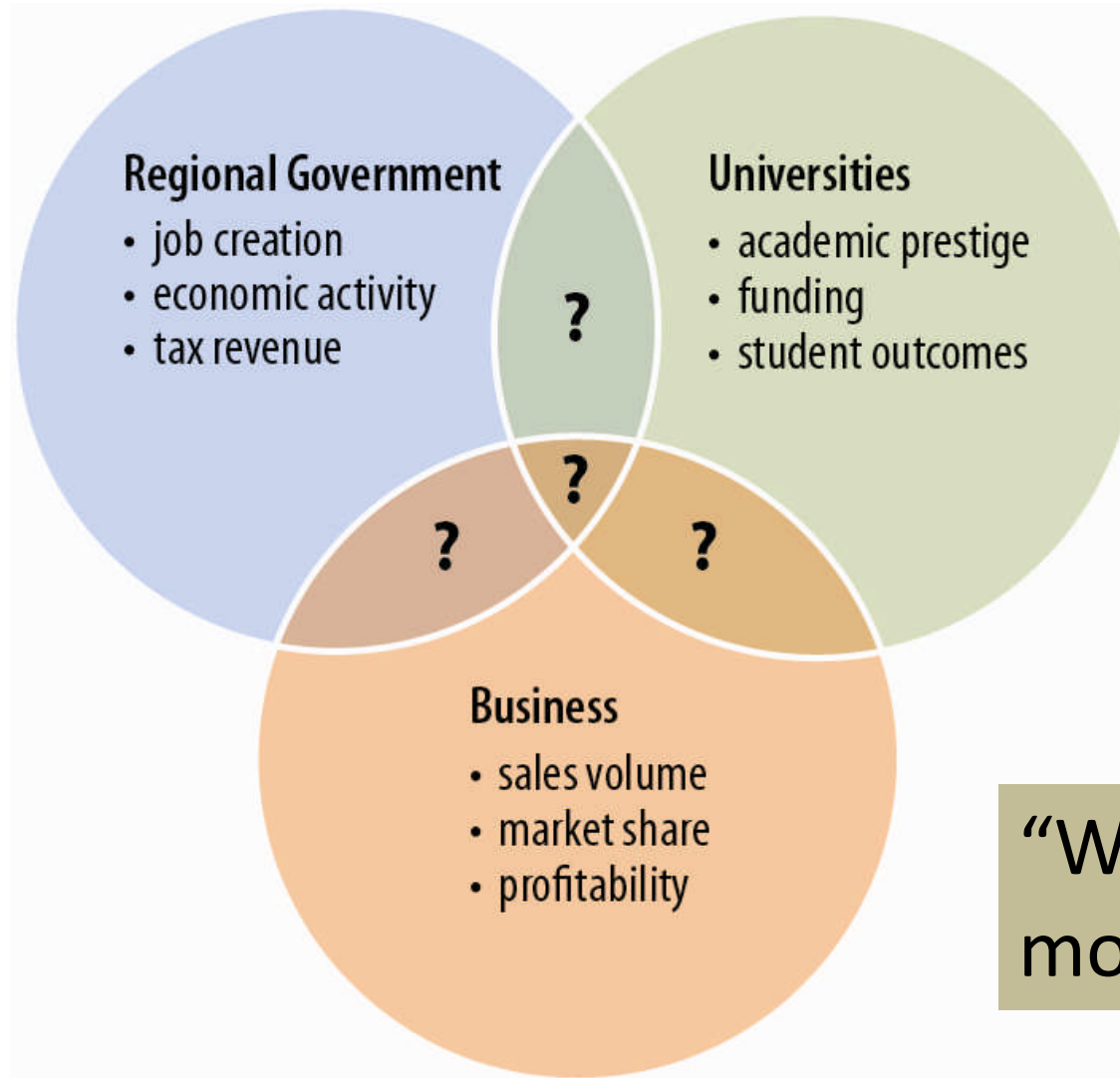
Unmet potential of research universities

Observation:

1. Every knowledge region has at least one strong research university, but
2. Not every region with a strong research university is a true “knowledge region.”

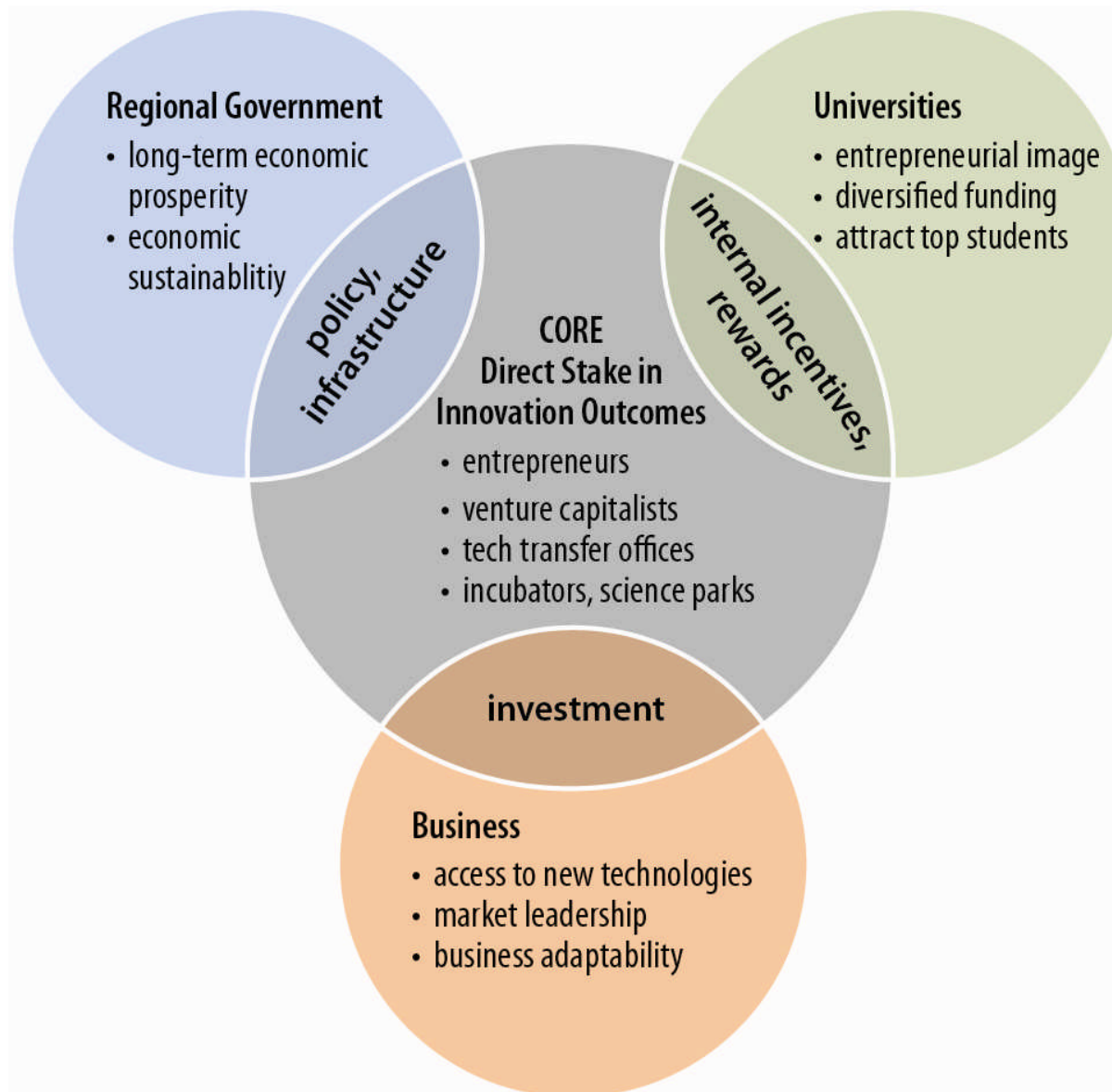
Why is the Triple Helix not working?

Lack of common primary interests



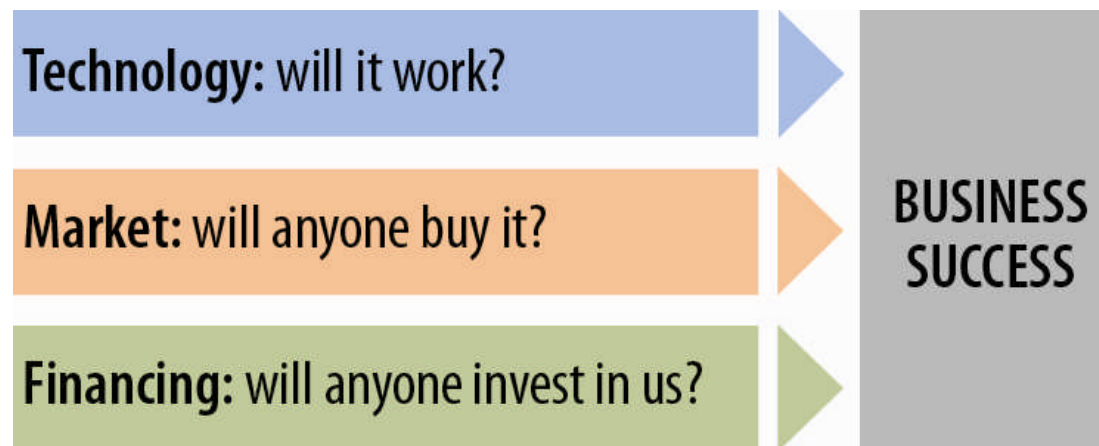
“Wake up in the morning” test

The Core: connecting the strands



Key capacities of the Core

1. Absorb business risk. Operate in a “high risk – high reward” mode that is inappropriate for the members of the Triple Helix.



2. Absorb time risk. Nurture technologies and business ideas through uncertain timeframes.

Spatial questions

Geography is not dead! Tacit knowledge moves with people, and people live, work and collaborate in specific places.

What are the best spatial arrangements at the regional level for ensuring the capture of the benefits of research universities? What can be done to minimize the costs of transporting knowledge?

What spatial patterns at the local level maximize the benefits of universities?

Strategy



Strategy #1: Strengthen the core

- Inventory intermediaries
- Create venues for interaction
- Explore governance models
- Create connections with the Triple Helix

Strategy #2: University culture

Promote commercialization within universities

- Define allowable activities and manage conflicts
- Minimize real or perceived risks to the university
- Create a new reward structure

Strategy #3: Create spaces

The “knowledge region” is a place. Address the spatial needs of the innovation process.

Tacit knowledge moves with people.

- University researchers
- Students
- Intermediaries in the Core

Strategy #4: Create leadership

There is no natural source of leadership.

- Not the primary interest of the Helix members
- Core members are self-interested and fragmented

Leadership must be sustained over time. Creating a knowledge region can take decades. Requires a stable policy environment.

Conclusion

- Every region wants the same thing. Competition for talent and investment is intense. Few places will become fully-realized knowledge regions.
- Status quo is easy to maintain. Members of the Triple Helix do not need to create innovation economies in the short term. Regions most likely to succeed have the least urgency.
- Civic activity tends to focus on problems rather than opportunities. Need to think in terms of capturing opportunities rather than solving problems.

THANK YOU!

