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The Fountain of Knowledge: The Role of Universities in Economic Development (Innovation and Technology in the World E)

Shiri Breznitz

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Today, universities around the world find themselves going beyond the traditional roles of research and teaching to drive the development of local economies through collaborations with industry. At a time when regions with universities are seeking best practices among their peers, Shiri M. Breznitz argues against the notion that one university's successful technology transfer model can be easily transported to another. Rather, the impact that a university can have on its local economy must be understood in terms of its idiosyncratic internal mechanisms, as well as the state and regional markets within which it operates.

To illustrate her argument, Breznitz undertakes a comparative analysis of two universities, Yale and Cambridge, and the different outcomes of their attempts at technology commercialization in biotech. By contrasting these two universities—their unique policies, organizational structure, institutional culture, and location within distinct national polities—she makes a powerful case for the idea that technology transfer is dependent on highly variable historical and environmental factors. Breznitz highlights key features to weigh and engage in developing future university and economic development policies that are tailor-made for their contexts.

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