

# Knowledge as mobilising strategy

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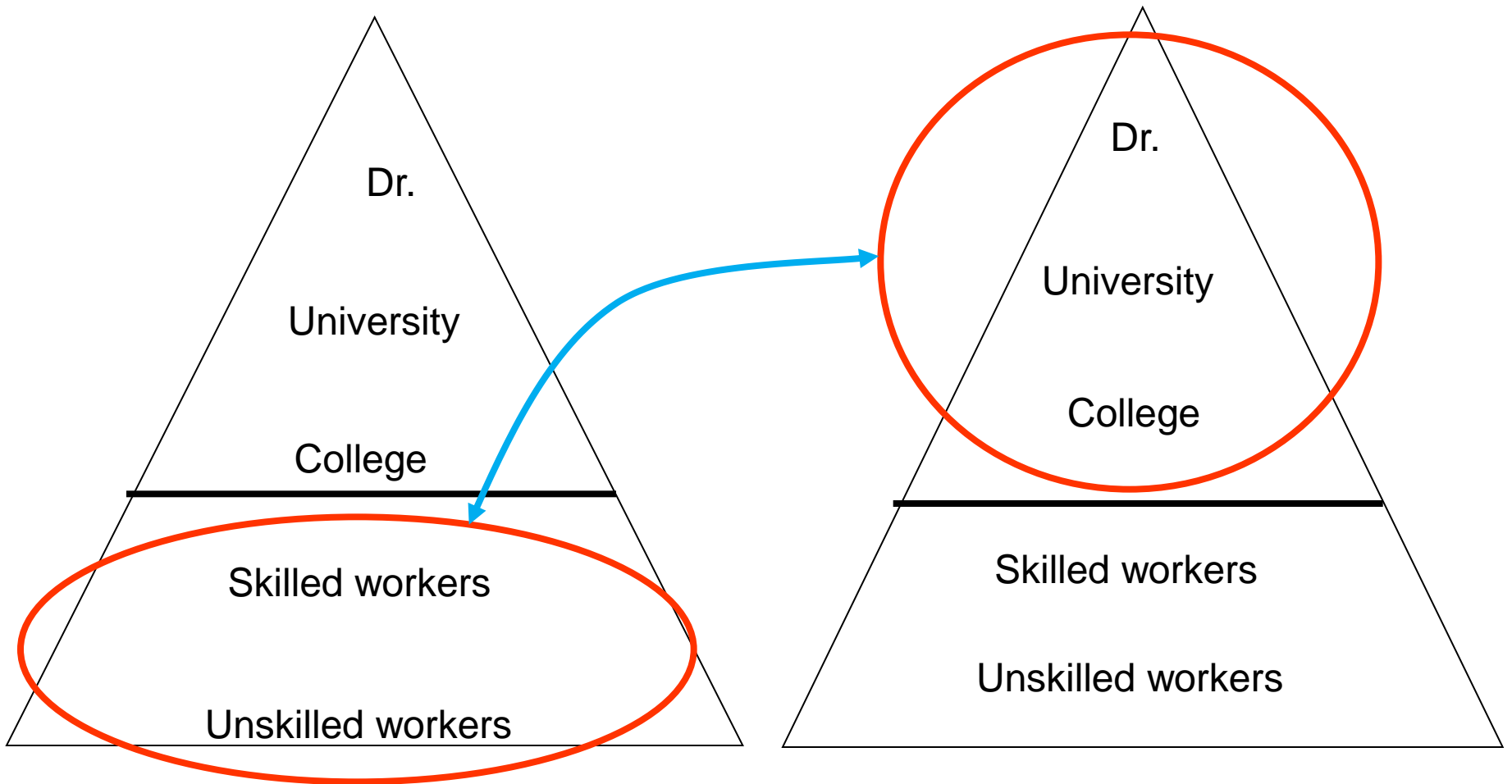
- Regional development depends on the firms innovative capacity
- 98% of norwegian firms are SME´s
- Business development is increasingly carried out through private public partnerships
- These partnerships are often territorally embedded
- Access to knowledge is crucial to innovate
- Research and development are however located in central areas.
- Peripheral SME´s are naturally important for their local markets, but they might lack access to knowledge.



These are typical norwegian industrial places, peripheral and dispersed



# How do we get the academical expert and the practical expert to meet?



Workforce in peripheral areas

Work force in central areas

- This paper raises questions concerning the connections between peripheral SME's and R&D institutions.
- And how we might deal with it.

# Method and the study

- Qualitative: observation, literature, interviews, meetings all what an action researcher prefer.
- The study is based on 6 cases of cooperation between R&D and more or less peripheral regions and their SMEs

# Let's get 9 years back in time (The spark?)

- 2004
- 3 local majors, 1 hours flight (600km) from Trondheim meet with SINTEF and said:
- “We have hundreds of top of the notch High tech companies in our region. How do we serve them?”
- “ We believe that knowledge and research is the key to success in the future, how can we cooperate?”

# A Partnership was founded

## The Business Model

- Three counties – Sund, Fjell and Øygarden : “Region West” - created a R&D – enterprise; **Gode Sirklar AS**
- SINTEF is contracted to manage and develop the activities in Gode Sirklar AS
- The enterprise is supported by public money to match “external” financing of activities
- All personnel working for the enterprise is for hire, from SINTEF and other R&D-enterprises and universities.

## Gode Sirklar AS (Positive Circles) Main objective:

1. Supplying the industries with knowledge and competence contributing to internationally competitiveness



# The region

- 30.000 inhabitants
- West Coast of Norway
- Oil and Gas
- Fishery
- 10 minutes outside Bergen the second largest city in Norway



# Challenges

The lack of proximity both:

Geographical 600 km .... 1 hour flight.....10 hours by car (I guess)

cognitive and social, these were a society built on fisheries and small farms that has been transformed into a “selfmade” oil and gas and modern fishery region. Knowledge and education was not valued.

cultural, a practical approach and “selfmade”

organisational, there has never been any research organisation established in the region before

# What happend

The company was aware of these challenges and tried to compensate for them by:

Being present

Being humble, respectful and constructive

Being focused on those who was positive and wanted to cooperate and had the energy and will to achieve something extra.

It has all been about reducing the lack of proximity in all ways. Trying to facilitate proximity.

# Did Gode Sirklar succeed?

## **Gode Sirklar AS (Positive Circles) Main objective:**

1. Supplying the industries with knowledge and competence contributing to internationally competitiveness

## Partly...

The process took much longer time than expected

The establishment of Gode Sirklar AS was an innovation in itself, but also extremely demanding

The company had to go extra rounds with the public sector, meaning increased research is done in the public sector

The process of establishing trust and confidence in the partnership has been very demanding but important.

# Knowledge as a mobilising strategy?

We see an increased capacity to adapt to research and different knowledge bases  
A new town is being built, in close cooperation with R&D to ensure solutions for tomorrow.

There is an increased awareness of research in the SMEs today, They have started to invite R&D

There are today big research programs in the region

Research and educational organisations has established themselves there

The climate towards research and education is definitively improving

Knowledge has contributed to mobilising the region definitively, both concerning SMEs and the public sector.