

Posters

**The Multi-Stakeholder Organization as a Locus of Environmentally
Conscious Innovation*
Ways of Knowing - Poster Session**

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Abstract

This poster session will present work-in-progress on a study of the development of new, environmentally conscious products and processes. The research seeks to describe and ground, both theoretically and empirically, a new organizational form, the multi-stakeholder organization, and its function as a locus of innovation of environmentally sensitive products and processes.

The research is built on the hypothesis that the significance of the multi-stakeholder organization is that its boundaries are defined by an environmental problem, rather than by the strategic interests of a firm or the requirements of a particular developing technology. The multi-stakeholder organization evolves its own identity, determined by a particular environmental problem, e.g. medical waste or airport pollution.

The poster will present examples drawn from an on-going field study of the development of environmentally sensitive products. Cases include a nontoxic deicer for airplanes, medical products designed to not emit dioxin when incinerated, and an alternative fuel for cars and trucks. In each case the multi-stakeholder organization is conceived differently as a standard-setting group, as a way to keep in touch with the customers, or as a source of venture capital and publicity. In each case the multi-stakeholder organization takes a different form, e.g. an on-going organization that meets annually, a temporary organization that takes the form of conference, and a joining of an entrepreneurial firm with an urban transportation system to test and showcase a new alternative fuel.

The multi-stakeholder organizations of the study represent different stages of development. In the most highly evolved, second generation innovation is being spawned. The organization has moved on from its original mandate to implement nontoxic airplane deicer to tackle other aspects of the problem of airport pollution with

other innovations. Herein lies great potential for innovative solutions to environmental problems, because the problem defines the organization not vice versa.