

From boundary line to boundary space: The creation of hybrid organizations as a Triple Helix micro-foundation

Claire Champenois and Henry Etzkowitz

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Highlights

- We compare hybrid autonomous organizations (“HAOs”) that address innovation blockages.
- HAOs draw elements from different but overlapping institutional spheres.
- They are not incorporated into one particular institutional sphere.
- We conceptualize the HAO creation and the HAOs themselves as a “boundary space”.
- We identify the individual catalyst role of a boundary spanner in this dynamics.

Abstract

In a Triple Helix framework, independent hybrid organizations can be created at the intersection of overlapping yet separate institutional spheres to address innovation blockages. However, the formation process of these organizations, which incorporate and combine elements from the Triple Helix spheres, has seldom been investigated. We address this gap by proposing a model that conceptualizes the creation process of these organizations. We argue that their creation opens up a “boundary space” that differs from a boundary line. By comparing empirical results of three cases, we identify a three-step creation process (recognizing a gap; bringing Triple Helix representatives together and creating a consensus; and designing an ad hoc contingent solution). We highlight the individual role of a boundary spanner in these dynamics. The results provide new insights on the micro-foundations of the Triple Helix. They also suggest an extension of the “boundary spanner” concept.

Keywords: Boundary spanner, Triple Helix, New venture, Entrepreneurship, Innovation organizer, Venture creation