



Organisational Identity Work in the Non-Profit Context: How Changes in Organisational Practice Get Integrated Into Organisational Identity

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This article explores how organisational members work to integrate changed organisational practice into organisational identity, by asking: how do organisational members construct organisational identity following changes in organisational practice?

The article focuses on a non-profit organisation that implemented changes in its organisational practice in response to a context of multiple crises, including Greece's economic and migration crises. Based on organisational documents and 25 semi-structured interviews with organisational members, the authors show how members worked to integrate two dimensions of organisational change into their identity: (1) the consistency of changed organisational practice, as part of a continuous organisational identity, and (2) the appropriateness of changed organisational practice as essential to organisational identity.

[#Nonprofitorganisations](#) [#Organisationalidentity](#) [#Organisationalpractice](#)

Background & Context



- This article examines how I4D (pseudonym), a long-established Athens-based non-profit focused on international development, **adapted its practices in response to overlapping crises**.
- Heavily reliant on individual donations, I4D was hit hard by the economic downturn, losing a large portion of its income and donor base. As the crisis shifted public attention towards local needs, **support for international causes declined**. Recognising this shift, I4D reassessed the relevance of its existing programmes and began **adapting its activities to remain viable and responsive to changing societal needs**.
- In 2015, I4D launched an emergency aid programme, **shifting from a fundraising role to direct service provision** – a major change in its organisational practice. This led to structural adjustments, including a new field unit outside the head office and rapid staff expansion. During this period, many staff members shifted their focus towards **developing and implementing the new programme**.
- In 2017, I4D further expanded its local programme work by opening a community centre in a poor district of Athens. This programme aimed to help unemployed individuals, provide psychological support, legal services and education.
- Simultaneously, I4D **diversified its funding base** by expanding into institutional fundraising to support its local programmes through institutional donors.

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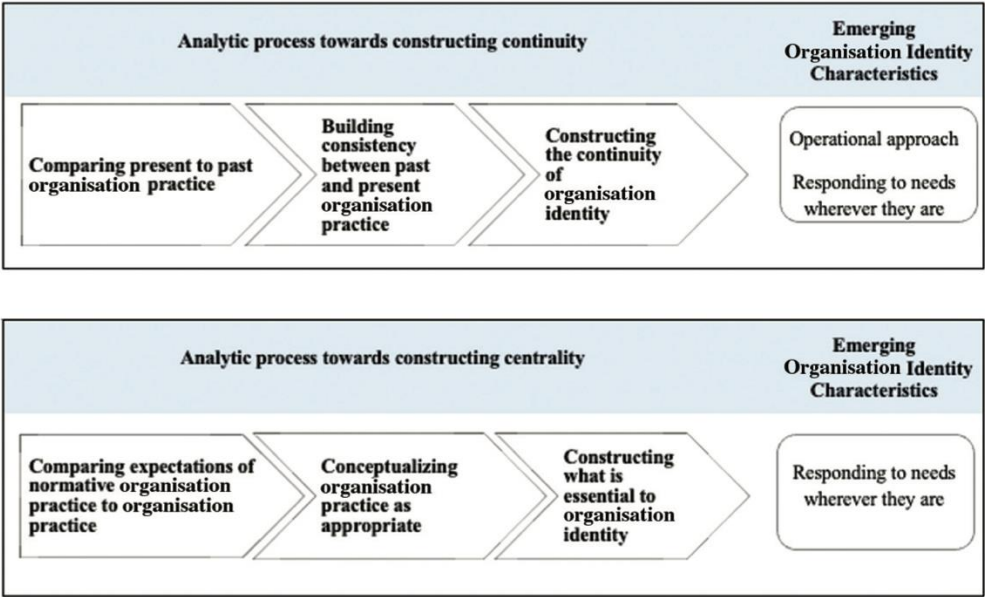
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Take aways & Learnings



- This research contributes to an understanding of the **relationship between organisational processes, such as organisational identity work, and organisational outcomes, such as organisational practice integration into identity.**
- The findings show that, to integrate changed organisational practice into organisational identity, members construct **(1) the continuity of organisational identity by employing past organisational practice** and **(2) the centrality of organisational identity by employing their expectations of normative organisational practice.**
- The findings show that establishing changes in practice as appropriate forms part of the **process of integrating them, and, hence, legitimising them.**
- The successful implementation of changed organisational practice depends not only on the organisation’s ability to adopt the new practices, but **also on the ability to transfer the new priorities and the need for change to its organisational members.**
- Non-profit managers can facilitate organisational identity by **creating more inclusive decision-making processes that allow members to reconcile the organisation’s established identity with emerging societal needs.**

Figure 1: The analytic process of organisational identity work



Source: Authors' own.

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