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Mediated Organizational Identity Work: Future-Making in Family Firms

Silvia Sanasi and Emanuela Rondi

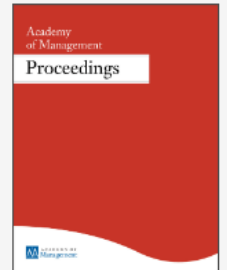
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Abstract

This study aims to understand how long-established family firms can innovate by imagining their future while being trapped in their past and current identity. The study presents an in-depth case study on a long-established family firm that is collaborating with a science and technology park to develop innovation projects with a distant future orientation. Our findings illustrate that family firm members and the science and technology park's advisors, acting as mediators, collectively construct narratives of the future through mediated identity work that enables them to make sense of innovation considering the family firm's past, present, and future organizational identity. The study extends the emerging literature on future-making to long-established family firms, and contributes to the existing understanding of the tension between tradition and innovation in family firms with a perspective on the role of mediators in conducting organizational identity work to solve temporal tensions. The study also draws managerial implications for innovation practitioners.

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