

## Chapter 8

# Organizational Culture in the Greek Science and Technology Parks

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter contributes to an understanding of the organizational culture of the industrial spin-off knowledge-based enterprises, which operate within the Science and Technology Parks in Greece. In this context, a critical number of questionnaires have been distributed to the spin-offs to examine whether firms born within the parks have developed a functional, innovative organizational culture, one that provides a solid foundation for organizational effectiveness and business excellence. The chapter presents the results of a quantitative analysis of the data collected in a fieldwork study. It also includes the necessary policies for the spin-offs to overcome organizational culture problems and adopt the culture of innovation and business excellence.*

### INTRODUCTION

After the Bretton Woods system collapsed in the early 70's and as, at the same time, the rigid fordist mass production-mass consumption model was reaching its limits, a new mode of business organisation began gradually to make its appearance based on flexibility in production and distribution (Piore & Sabel, 1984). The most distinctive characteristic of the so-called "flexible production" or "flexible business" systems was

the encouragement, if not necessity, for close links between enterprises and research institutes and Universities. That was a critical break up with the "fordist" past where industries and Universities were quite separate fields of activities, representing organisations with quite different and separate roles within the socio-economic system. However, the new "flexible paradigm", encouraging team working and polyvalence in skills, needed highly educated workers, ready to execute diversified and high quality tasks, often changing rapidly working positions. With the appearance of the

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so-call “new economy” and the new generation of “flexible technologies”, the co-operation of firms and industries with research institutes and Universities became a necessary prerequisite to adopt the culture of continuing innovation and succeed in an increasing globalized market. In the context of globalization, developing innovative products and services are critical matters. Innovation is the keyword meaning the efficiency of transferring technology from academic and research institutions into commerce and industry (British Council, 1999). Thus, the initial aim of the co-operation between scientific parks, research centres/ Universities and newly established modern firms is to commercialise the results of scientific research.

Henceforth, in the ‘80s and ‘90s, governments initiated the implementation of policies to encourage tighter links between research and production, through financing relevant infrastructure as well by promoting, through specific policies, the development of “*Science and Technology Parks*”, in an effort to have regions of high rates of productivity and growth. The development of flexible, knowledge-based companies within the parks, the so-called “spin-offs” based in a location linked to a centre of technology and innovation excellence became the primary target of national industrial and public policies, especially in the EU member-states. That is so, as *Science and Technology Parks* are said to facilitate,

- flexibility in production, new industrial activities, modernisation, and internationalisation of enterprises through technology transfer,
- accumulation of technologies and of core activities in a region,
- close links between universities and industries or small enterprises, in order for the construction of co-operation and communication networks, and last but not least,
- culture of excellence in organisation and innovation, as well as selectivity and competition.

However, *Science and Technology Parks* were originally an American phenomenon dating back to the 1960’s, devised to meet the needs of entrepreneurial-minded academics. In Europe, the Science Park “movement” made its appearance first in the UK in 1971 with the formation of Parks at the Heriot-Watt University and at Cambridge University (British Council, 1999).

Research and technological poles have been also set up in Greek regions but only in the late ‘80s, introducing local economy into the modern international competitive environment. These infant cores of innovation have already inspired both academics and entrepreneurs to construct new models of investment planning and production. Although not yet fully developed, some of them, they have already created complex links between universities and industries, giving birth to many spin-off knowledge-based enterprises.

Firm’s organisation quality and culture is one of the pillars of success in international competition. This paper focuses on examining the quality of organisational culture of the spin-off knowledge-based enterprises, within the Greek *Science and Technology Parks*, as we consider organisation culture as the cornerstone of business excellence, innovation and international competitiveness. The study also includes firms that have lately exited the parks but still have a close co-operation with them. In the following section 2 the paper focuses on the fieldwork and analyses its results. In this context, a critical number of questionnaires have been distributed to the spin-offs and the data collected was analysed quantitatively to examine whether firms born within the parks have developed a functional organizational culture, one that provides a solid foundation for organizational effectiveness and business excellence. Results are analysed in the same section. The section 3 of the paper proposes the necessary policies for the Greek Science and Technology Parks to overcome organizational culture problems and approach innovation excellence and international competitiveness.

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