

Cultural Product and Cultural Communication as a Dynamic Bipolar Interaction and Creative Contribution to the Structural Recompiled of the Local Cultural Units

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Abstract The conditions of the contemporary cultural environment make the reinforcement and adaptation of the cultural structures mandatory, depending on the corresponding emerging demands and expectations, which designates the effective application of each state's cultural policy as a priority of paramount importance. This way, what is aimed at is that the produced cultural products are of high quality and competitive character, able to attract the public's interest. In the same framework unavoidably belongs the action of the individual cultural enterprises, which are asked to safeguard their sustainability, to renew their operational practices and to respond both productively and communicatively to the high cultural demands of the era. A characteristic case is the basic cultural body of the Municipality of Karditsa, the Municipal Cultural and Public Benefit Enterprise of Karditsa (DI.K.E.K)-Greece, where an outlining of its environment is attempted, so that the factors responsible for its functional weaknesses are defined, while a vigorous organizational redesign is suggested, which is estimated to secure conditions for its more effective operation, high levels of production of cultural products, an upgraded communicative process and ensure that the cultural needs of its audience on a local level are sufficiently met.

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Keywords Cultural units • Re-organization • Cultural product • Cultural communication • Local cultural development • Case Study

JEL Classification L15 • L82 • M14 • M30 • R23

1 Introduction

The global and especially the European cultural developments that took place over the past three decades influenced significantly the spatial reality of the various states, leading them to the adoption of “creative productive” policies for the re-design of the public and private space on a local level, with an emphasis on the cultural development of the cities and the surrounding areas, thus aiming at a more efficient regulation of their residents’ socio-economic life (Scott, 2001).

This change functioned as a factor that triggered in the cities and their surrounding areas a continuously growing need for the creation of a recognizable and totally competitive cultural “brand name” (Ashworth, 2009; Karavatzis, 2005), since, given that nowadays the democratization of culture and arts, which represent the increased individual and group participation in the production and consumption, dominates, the main concern is the attraction of the audience’s interest and the claim to its restricted time, energy and support as well as the transmission of the produced cultural ideas to wider social groups, since the disengagement from a restricted, sophisticated, elitist view of the offer and indulgence in cultural products seems indispensable, without social discrimination as far as their accessibility and consumption are concerned (Kakkou, 2009; Pratt, 2004).

Within this framework the local government takes on a leading role in the encouragement and promotion of a significant cultural initiative and in the promotion of the local cultural economy, acting either independently, or in cooperation with specialized state and private bodies, thus supporting a new scheme of a corporate cultural relationship (Bitsani, 2004). In Greek reality though, it is observed that the existent layout of the cultural structures necessitates a generalized structural redesign of the current cultural institutions, assisted by a cooperative perception of all the creative and managerial bodies, for the best promotion of the aspects of culture in all geographical levels possible (Chambouri-Ioannidou, 2003).

Besides, particularly problematic has recently appeared to be the situation on a local level, with the direct consequence of downgrading not only the importance but also the quality of the produced cultural goods. Although several Local Government Organizations, as significant partners on the cultural stage, have created important cultural centers, their majority displays a managerial gap, so that the produced and offered cultural product is qualitatively downgraded and appears unable to attract the audience’s interest (Chambouri-Ioannidou, 2002). The situation undoubtedly becomes even worse due to the weakness of the local cultural action to suggest alternative competitive forms of cultural activity, or its making decisions which in most cases lack a complete and long term consideration.

Without being an exception to the rule, in a similar condition has recently been one of the once leading enterprises of cultural and social profile, the Municipal Cultural and Public Benefit Enterprise of Karditsa¹ (*hence DI.K.E.K.*).

This enterprise constitutes the major cultural body of the Municipality of Karditsa. However the highly competitive conditions of the cultural environment in which it activates, the absence of satisfying and regular financial support by the state and local bodies of jurisdiction, as well as its close dependence upon the given municipal authority which makes various decisions by the preference of the occasional principal, compose an organizational and productive background with bureaucratic features, unable to set achievable goals, suffering from the of dynamic strategic decisions and plans for action, action failure and deviations from the consumer audience's expectations, resulting in DI.K.E.K displaying a deficit in quality cultural products and significant cultural contribution and in effect a lack in cultural communication with the consumer audience (Kakkos, Aspridis, Sdrolias, & Belias, 2014; Sdrolias, Binioris, Aspridis, & Kakkos, 2014).

Given the above references, the aim of this paper is—through a theoretical and research approach—, to find out and estimate the value of the provided cultural product of this cultural unit along with the process and degree of mutual cultural communication with the consumer cultural audience. Special emphasis was placed on both these levels since they constitute the main defining factors expressing DI.K.E.K's cultural dimension, and the results-conclusions from these two dominant factors can contribute to the development of a vigorous structural redesign so that the specification and emergence of its role is made possible.

Through these efforts it is expected that its profile will be clarified, providing a sense of unity and a targeted direction of cultural action, that will allow it to overcome the existent organizational and production difficulties and be guided towards a continuous flow and rendering of high quality cultural work. Thus, the satisfaction of the local cultural needs is made possible, dialogue and audience trust is reinforced, along with its consequent participation in the cultural events (Economou, 2003; Kakkos et al., 2014; Paschalidis, 2002).

2 Literature Review

The field of study of the “cultural product” and “cultural communication” includes a traditionally interdependent productive relationship between these two pillars which finally results in an essential analytical connection with the subject of cultural organization and cultural economy (Kakkos et al., 2014; Pratt, 2004; Sdrolias et al., 2014) (Fig. 1). Yet, a holistic approach and prospect for “culture production”,

¹ The town of Karditsa, with a population of about 45,000 citizens, is the capital of the Prefecture of Karditsa, which is a Prefecture of sheer agriculturally and public sector employed people, located in the center of Greece, and belongs in the District of Thessaly.

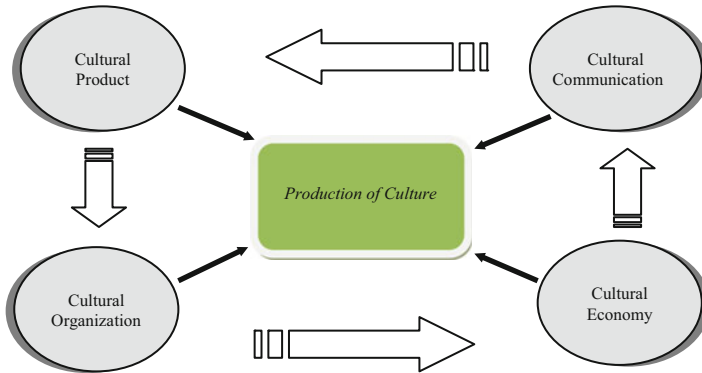


Fig. 1 Main factors and their inter-connections for the production of culture. *Source:* Own depiction

which from various aspects constitutes the joint conclusion of the diverse interactions of the previously mentioned relationships, hasn't been researched in detail (Blaug, 2001; Kakkos et al., 2014; Scott, 2008; Sdrolias et al., 2014).

The value of this approach is that it aims at presenting cultural outcomes as a result of collective effort and innovative mood from several participants that are interconnected with the organization of production and the economy of culture (O'Connor, 2010; Pratt, 2004). That draws our attention to the creation of various flexible and mainly middle-class cultural units (Březinová, 2013; Holátová & Březinová, 2013), in which, the mere production of creative and innovative ideas will not be enough, without their transformation into high added value cultural products, which will be available for "consumption" by their cultural audience² (O'Connor, 2010; Scott, 2008).

The response to these consumerist needs require faster and more detailed information flow and bilateral communication between the cultural units and the cultural audience—primarily the local one—as well as their ability to respond entrepreneurially more effectively to the constantly increasing demand, through a more flexible production and social networking process. For the development of mutual trust though, both the production process and the social networking of these units ought to be carried out within limited geographical boundaries that will be determined by the culture and the regulatory interventions of the local ecosystem (Kong, 2005). Additionally, they should be adapted to the individual features and the established social and cultural traditions of each place, rejecting any kind of commercial external influences, which could spoil the character and profile of the local cultural mentality (Markusen, 1996, 2006; Wolfe & Gertler, 2004).

² Since the end of the 1980s, several specialists and scientists started to talk about a significant turn from the massive production of culture to more flexible specializations, a result of the increasing volatility of the consumer markets. Predictable motifs of massive cultural consumption have been replaced by smaller specialized markets and by the transmission of those cultural products that had a higher "symbolic" rather than financial content and were able to attract new ways of building a social identity away from the up to then directive (O'Connor, 2010).

Otherwise, we will have to deal with a massive production of cultural products, through which the citizens' cultural needs and particularities will in most cases be crushed (Bitsani, 2004), which could signify a general decrease in their symbolic function concerning output (Scott, 2008). The main feature of such a process is standardization that is the limitless recurrence of the same issues and motifs. This standardization doesn't concern only the products themselves, but the audience's response as well. It addresses the masses, but collectivity isn't promoted, since the individual acts as a passive recipient of the various messages therefore undervaluing the process of thinking and of creative reaction (feedback)³ (Adorno, 2003).

The cultural products are mirrored through a "usage value" that has actually to do with the degree and duration of satisfaction of the cultural needs. Since their production is costly, there is a strong need for new and different cultural products, in which the final recipients will recognize an authenticity of meaning, content and total enjoyment. That is why these products tend to have a limited life span, and are overcast by an intense effort for maximizing their profits.

The administration and management of the cultural units is undoubtedly a very interesting field which allows people to combine entrepreneurship and organizational skills with artistic concerns, expressed through cultural activities that usually manage to make a difference in the lives of people and their communities (Throsby, 2010). Over the past few years however, the administration and management of these units is confronted with particular distrust, given that they require increased state funding, at the cost of other social needs, for a series of non-successive production functions, where it is often the case that the artistic vision outweighs the consumer audience's demands and in general the conditions of the cultural market (Colbert, 2009; De Monthoux, 2004).

3 Theoretical Approach

The need for the survival of the cultural units within an intensely competitive setting, the lack of sufficient financial support, as well as the constantly increasing administrative conservatism and the uncontrollable managerial gap, triggered a generalized sense of cultural insecurity and fluidity in Greece (Tzivakou, 2008).

³ According to Adorno (2003), those holding leading roles of power and the powerful economic lobbies, took absolute advantage of the technological developments and invented the mass production of cultural products (also known as mass culture) in order to control human consciousness. These goods are promoted and offered systematically and purposefully standardized, while aiming at imposing new aesthetic models which have nothing to do with beauty and aesthetics but simply serve the at times financial and political purposes. Mass culture doesn't aim at questioning the status quo, but reproduces and empowers the dominant system. Although it was invented to fill the individual's free time by offering entertainment and amusement, it also distracts him/her from the real problems by inactivating his/her thought, spontaneity and imagination.

Traditionally, the administration and management of cultural units includes duties that lead to the planning, design, organization, production, control, distribution, trading as well as the financing of the cultural products (Koutouzis, 1999; Sdrolias et al., 2014). Yet, in the case of the cultural units of reference, these organizational and managerial activities ought to aim at the development of autonomous structures of cultural production, without however excluding the occasional use and utilization of specialized means of production and communication networks of supplementary cultural groups or even of cultural groups of limited local range, whose work will necessarily be coordinated by the leading central local cultural unit (Evans, 2009; Scott, 2004).

The crucial issue is at this point in what ways will the various local bodies planning cultural policy be able to benefit from these complicated tendencies, for purposes of local cultural and therefore, to a certain extent, financial development. The response of most specialists in the field of culture seems to provide a series of clear and concrete directions. The first and relatively simple direction is the restart of the cultural unit with the means and resources it already has and the gradual building up of its future with the “latent” chances it can take advantage of. The various local competitive advantages could be chances of this kind, such as the various local symbolisms established on their cultural goods which are instilled with authenticity and folklore (Molotch, 2002), the local cultural creativity, the diverse “non-negotiable external factors” and the established beliefs, as well as the developed bonds of trust and of common goals resulting from the common knowledge of the local conditions, of the institutions and perceptions (Grabher, 2001; Scott, 2004).

Another direction follows, that of the production and utilization of the local “silent” knowledge and wisdom, which cannot be easily transmitted or reproduced outside these local conditions and which is therefore a strong competitive capital (Gertler, 2003; Malmberg & Maskell, 2006; Simmie, 2003), as well as the existence of a notable local “creative class”, with unexploited talented individuals with higher cultural skills and inherited cultural experiences, who can intervene in crucial financial and social circumstances as far as the production process is concerned, so as to liberate those co-operations that lead to higher levels of cultural production, innovation and competitiveness (Florida, 2002; Scott, 2004).

Additionally, a further clear direction is the designation of the rich local “ethical economy”, which can eliminate the deviations and possible abuse of the complexity of the various networks by infamy and other social repercussions and which could become a persistent emotional investment during an attempt to attract and approach communicatively the cultural audience (Banks, 2007). Finally, it is suggested that people realize that the units producing cultural goods, on the level of their production and commercial transactions and of the job market too, function almost always more effectively when their premises and the people from which they are made up display a relative degree of geographical integration (Scott, 2001). All these reveal that a close connection between the place and the system of production can lead to more productive results and to stronger communicative and cooperative combinations (Scott, 2001, 2004).

It is therefore necessary that each local cultural unit operating in conditions of intense insecurity and social doubt, try to oppose and promote consciously a partial or whole scale restructuring so that it finally manages to form an undivided and sound organizational entity which will contribute to the improvement of the quality of the produced product and of its consumer audience's preferences, reinforcing thus the image and the status of the area in which it activates culturally (Lloyd & Clark, 2001).

3.1 DI.K.E.K and Its Developmental Course

DI.K.E.K is managed by a 9/member Board of Directors, characterized by close dependence upon each municipal authority, since the majority of its members is determined or influenced by the latter. This fact creates a totally problematic organizational environment with the result of a continuous surge of the managerial and administrative deficits, outlining a particularly problematic prospect (Sdrolias et al., 2014; Tegos, 2009).

Of course, if a review of the actions over the years of its function is attempted, despite the deficits and omissions, it can be found out that it offered notable cultural work, since it constituted the main supporter of the foundation, renovation and re-operation of several significant cultural centers in the town of Karditsa and the surrounding area, while it also initiated a number of cultural activities. In alignment with its institutional concept, it has never adopted a rationale of competition towards the corresponding bodies of the Prefecture. On the contrary, it often cooperated with them successfully, thus highlighting its leading profile in the area's cultural events (Vouzas, 2012).

However, in order for someone to have an overall view of the current situation, it should be admitted that DI.K.E.K didn't manage to adapt on time to the changes of the domestic and international cultural setting, while it displayed a high degree of communicative introversion resulting from the lack of information exchange with its audience, concerning their cultural needs and preferences. Thus, it has proven relatively inefficient in the creation and offer of products of high cultural value that could secure an added value within its area of action, focusing mostly on the amenities, both common and conventional ones.

3.2 DI.K.E.K's Wider Environment

The cultural units are subject to a process of interaction with their wider environment and as constituent parts of it, they are forced to adapt their function to its complicated processes. This environment consists of those forces that influence their goals, their structural design, planning, operation and management and formulate to a certain extend their developmental course. Therefore an elaborate

“environmental inquisition” is required, so that these factors that affect and determine the course of each cultural unit is defined (Brownline, 1998). This environmental inquisition, as an “open” system (Miettinen, 2006; Montana & Charnov, 1993), recognizes and records a total of concrete elements that coexist in this environment and determines the factors and the relationship among them (Mullins, 2007). On the basis of the process of environmental inquisition, the research of the parts of DI.K.E.K’s wider environment is important, so that its current contribution to the local cultural development is made clearer and if a production gap is revealed, a structural re-design is suggested, so that the continuous and maximum cultural contribution and social benefit is secured.

3.2.1 DI.K.E.’s Outer Environment

Like every cultural unit, DI.K.E.K, ought to research and fully understand all of the external factors of the wider cultural environment that influence it and determine to a certain extend its developmental course. Therefore, through this process of inquisition and of drawing additional qualitative and quantitative information, its provided work is made more understood, while its organizational needs are also more efficiently evaluated. Besides, its year-long operation has revealed a diverse series of factors of the external environment that affect directly its structural and production profile. Among these factors, the most dynamic and diachronically lasting seem to be the following:

- *Domestic and international competition:* Some countries’ or even cities’ aspirations about the creation of cultural units that would signify their uniqueness and distinguish themselves within a busy market of domestic and international tourism, in combination with the needs of the up-coming cultural industry for the creation of the most exciting cultural destinations, formulated a dynamic and complex competitive setting (Lord, 2008; Richards, 2014). Its partial understanding and analysis isn’t sufficient for the existential substance of a cultural unit, if not accompanied by the ability to define its strategy, goals, actions and ways of its competitors’ response (Frey, 2003; Jeffcutt & Pratt, 2002).

In the biggest part of its year—long course, DI.K.E.K didn’t face particularly competitive problems. Pointing out disposition of cooperation mainly with the local cultural bodies and foundations, it managed to overcome this obstacle with the fewer losses possible, while at the same time it maintains its leading profile. Over the last few years, the globalization of the cultural market, the technological development, the provision of activities of mass entertainment, the ongoing financial crisis, as well as the saturation of the consumer audience by a series of platitudinous and ordinary cultural products, created a negative atmosphere for it, resulting in the felt reduction of its cultural activity today.

- *The at times applied supportive cultural state policy:* The Greek State undoubtedly plays a dominant role in the development of the cultural units, especially those of the local government, following a decentralized logic, with diverse

cultural products of local and domestic origin. Yet, regardless of the degree of their organizational connection with the state, these units cannot offer notable cultural products except when they have sufficient and mainly consistent financial resources (Kotler, Kotler, & Kotler, 2008; Sdrolias et al., 2014). Thus, among the various developmental laws, the state tries to support though the responsible for this aim services it has, the local cultural productive and entrepreneurial initiative, mostly on the level of the responsible bodies of Local Government.

The Ministry of Culture is the body that primarily applies funding policies and has the ability to proceed to a series of program contracts of cultural character. Consequently, DI.K.E.K depends directly on its will, planning and financial support. From 2002 and onwards DI.K.E.K itself proposes every year to the Ministry a concrete plan for the financing of a series of its cultural events. Yet, up to the present it managed to draw only small amounts because the Ministry of Culture follows a fragmentary policy of selective support towards specific cultural bodies, which happen to display the same ideological identity, having as a result that the evaluation of the various proposals and in effect their potential implementation is promoted or not respectively, without ignoring the possibility of some suspicious financial transaction between them (Tegos, 2008; Vouzas, 2012). Given the necessity for its financial support, state inability to respond to DI.K.E.K's reasonable requests, causes a clear degradation of the offered cultural product and in effect discourages the audience's participation in it.

- *The socio-cultural characteristics of the local area:* These characteristics are defined by the local culture and local community taking part in the cultural events. What is perceived as local culture is the cultural makeup of an area, consequence of the special geographical and climate conditions that the residents of this area experience over time, as well as of the unique mores and traditions that have gradually been developed. It also represents a special aesthetic cultivation, attributing to each region an individual profile (Paschalidis, 2002).

As far as the local community is concerned, the intensity of the Greek financial crisis signifies a strong disposition towards its transition from the real economy to the so-called "economy of symbols", which presents various cultural "signs" as its main product and which allows the community to acquire a specific brand name, and in effect economic benefits from not necessarily financial activities, such as the area's symbolic qualities, the material and immaterial elements of its fame, its legends and in general its cultural traditions (Abankina, 2013: 4). The given brand name guarantees the cultural authenticity of the provided cultural product and becomes a symbol of the "consumer" audience's trust in the quality and attractiveness of the area's cultural contribution.

In an effort to outline the cultural profile of the Prefecture of Karditsa, someone can realize that the area displays unique cultural interest, with diverse cultural associations and consequently a wide range of cultural activities, thus formulating for DI.K.E.K itself favorable conditions of action towards a cultural

audience qualitatively upgraded, quite experienced but also demanding, and possibly with increased disposition for a more fruitful participation, cooperation and communication with the previously mentioned cultural unit (Kakkou, 2009).

3.2.2 DI.K.E.K's Inner Environment

The cultural units are required to play a responsible role that will contribute to the maintenance and promotion of the cultural heritage, making their cultural products perceivable and widely accepted in such a way that they stimulate human thought and enrich the contemporary way of life. A basic prerequisite for the formulation of the appropriate atmosphere for the achievement of these goals is the inquisition of the main factors of the cultural unit's inner environment that act and are influenced by it. More specifically (Chambouri-Ioannidou, 2003):

- The specification and function of its structural characteristics: DI.K.E.K operates on the basis of a traditionally linear structure, where a strict hierarchical and functional track of thought dominates (Koutouzis, 1999; Mullins, 2007), with absolute unity of management and command, and a quite heavy administrative task, shouldered by its Management Director (Statutes Foundation of DI.K.E.K, 1990: 9) and in which—often without jurisdiction—the President of the Board of Directors intervenes, a fact that often causes organizational confusion. The close dependence upon the given Municipal Authority, whose representatives take the responsibility for the cultural events, their frequent lack of sufficient cultural education, along with the absence of cultural specialization of its middle and lower level officers, compose an organizational environment with bureaucratic features and waste of time concerning the final decision making and the realization of the given assigned cultural work.
- *The specification of the factors that constitute its organizational environment:* The way that the individuals act within an organization, is defined partly by human nature itself and partly by the dominant organizational atmosphere. The basic constituent parts of its atmosphere are the structure of the organization itself under the scope of the rules, functions, commands and controls, the style of management, that is the type of the formal and informal relationship which the manager adopts towards his/her personnel, the concentration or decentralization of the work and the various powers, the distribution of responsibilities, tolerance and conflict, the degree of communication among the personnel and its interest in their job, motives and rewards, as well as the working conditions that the employee experiences daily (Staehle, 2013; Zavlanos, 1991).

Since a significant relationship between the mood of the organization and its efficiency is often observed (Zavlanos, 1991: 104), the research of the above factors is considered to be necessary within the organizational setting of DI.K.E.K itself. This effort was confronted with the ab initio unwillingness of the human resources or even their denial to participate, mainly due to the fear of losing their jobs, in the prospect of completing questionnaires concerning the organizational

climate and agreed to provide only some informal references. This attitude is directly related to the fact that the cultural unit itself displays a closed organizational climate characterized by the adoption, primarily by the President of the Supervisory Board, of a stance of “expertise”, which forms a management style characterized by the maintenance of distance and formality, while on no occasion does the management express will to decentralize powers and its heavy overall work.

4 Research Approach

The aim of this research is to estimate the value of the total offered cultural work of DI.K.E.K, an estimation made by the audience itself. That is why special emphasis is given on the evaluation of the provided cultural product, of the form, process and level of cultural communication with this audience, given that these two fields constitute the main defining factors expressing its cultural dimension and cultural achievements in the town of Karditsa and its wider region. The final total research results-conclusions of the above two factors—can contribute to the development of a dynamic structural redesign so that the continuation of DI.K.E.K’s cultural work is enabled, yet on more innovative and efficient organizational functional and production foundation.

The methodological approach is made on the basis of an *Exploratory Study* and aims at the promotion of knowledge in issues of analytical and synthetic process of the structural design of Organizations (Kosiol, 1962), like DI.K.E.K, since the size and width of the fields under research create a situation for which—in terms of research—an empirical approach isn’t suggested, with hypotheses testing and in general with the strict features of a *Positivist Approach* (Welch, Piekari, Plakoyiannaki, & Paavilainen-Mäntymäki, 2011; Wildemuth, 1993). In these cases, for the detailed research and effective approach of the DI.K.E.K’s situation in total, the immediate specification of the various issues is recommended, as they are expressed by the results of the questionnaires and by the local references in general with the simultaneous support by data from the domestic and international bibliography.

4.1 Research Methodology

For the research, a questionnaire was used, which consists in essence of two parts. The first part refers to DI.K.E.K’s provided cultural product, while the second one refers to the extent of its cultural communication with its cultural audience. The questions were mainly scaled questions (the 7/grade Likert scale was used), while some of them were dichotomic and some others were multiple choice questions.

The distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires took place from 14 to 22 March 2009.⁴ 180 questionnaires were distributed in different times and places in Karditsa city and they were filled in by 142 persons, from whom nine questionnaires were incomplete. Therefore, the final sample of the fully completed questionnaires was 131. It was also found out that **Cronbach's α** reliability coefficient of the scales used to measure the multifaceted notion of cultural product and cultural communication, was 0.958 and 0.879 respectively, higher than 0.700, which is the normal questionnaire reliability limit (Bishop, Finberg, & Holland, 2007; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010).

The process of data processing was carried out with the help of the statistic package SPSS20 (Howitt & Cramer, 2010) and particularly with the method of *descriptive statistics*, where its main tools were primarily used, namely Mean (**mean**), Standard Deviation (**Std. Devt.**), Frequencies (**Freq.**) and Cumulative Frequencies (**Cuml. Freq.**).

4.2 Research Results

4.2.1 Research Results Concerning DI.K.E.K's Cultural Communication

Cultural communication acts an organized activity that refers to a bipolar framework of a communicative relationship between the cultural unit on the one side and the cultural audience on the other, aiming not exclusively at promoting the cultural products to the audience, but mainly at creating a network of essential contact with it, including as many of its groups as possible (Athanasopoulou, 2003: 116). This kind of relationship is mutual and clearly interactive and refers to human wish to confront the individual cultural unit so as to find out its readiness and efficiency in producing and providing cultural products as well as the frequency and the means of providing them, which acts as a way to satisfy its cultural needs (Hein, 2006), while the unit itself seen as a "cultural agent" is expected to build a network of communication and message and information exchange with the audience, to search for the audience's cultural needs, for its awareness and willingness for a creative intervention through its ideas and suggestions on the designing, managerial and informative process of the cultural product (Athanasopoulou, 2003; Kastoras, 2002).

The process of cultural communication has to do with the fundamentally well known communicative model. The adaptation of such a model on the features of the communicative environment of DI.K.E.K and its detailed analysis was considered necessary for the specification of the relationship and the degree of its cultural

⁴Data acquisition was carried out in the context of the dissertation thanks to a grant from GAJU 79/2013/S.

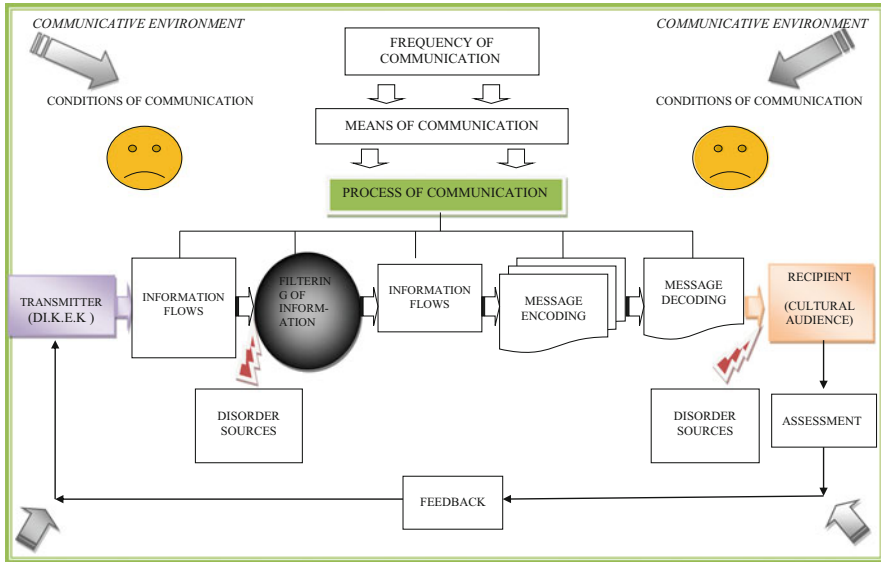


Fig. 2 DI.K.E.K.'s communicative model. Source: Own depiction

communication with its consumer audience. Based on the form of the fore mentioned model, someone can—through the analysis of the research results as well, draw the following conclusions (Fig. 2):

- The cultural communication of DI.K.E.K takes place in a framework mainly characterized by the quality of the involved parties, by the size, the quality and the value of the provided cultural product. The cultural environment, under the given at times predominant conditions, sustains and affects significantly this process. For the on the whole assessment of the level of the provided cultural communication, the most valid judge is the “consumer” audience itself, which takes parts in the process as the second agent of the communicative relationship. In the question to the audience “How do you evaluate, in total, the communication of DI.K.E.K with the consumer audience of the area in which it acts;”, the audience (n = 131) presented with its answers a “not so good communicative relationship”(mean = 3.15 and Std. Dev. = 1.389). Moreover, a significant percentage of the persons asked (Cuml. percent: 62.3 %) fluctuated in the span from “very bad” to “not so good communicative relationship”.
- In this communicative environment one of the basic agents, the transmitter, is DI.K.E.K itself as a cultural unit responsible for the specification not only of the current but also of the future ways of action on a cultural and social level, as well as of the communicative techniques for the transmission of its cultural products. What is researched however is from the one hand the extent to which during its effort, DI.K.E.K manages to measure the needs of the audience it addresses and from the other what is the final degree of satisfaction. Data collection is

discouraging and concordant with our personal initial presuppositions about DI.K.E.K as a communicatively introvert enterprise, since for the first part of the question concerning the frequency of collection of the audience's opinion about the kind of the cultural and social activities, the answer is "seldom" (mean = 1.69 and Std. Dev. = 1.215). Besides, a percentage of 64 % of the people asked, answered "never". For the second part of the question concerning the extent to which their cultural and social needs are met, the participants answered "partly" (mean = 3.16 and Std. Dev. = 1.429) with a significant Cuml. Freq. of 63.4 % spanning from "not at all" to "partly".

- Within the dominant communicative environmental conditions of the existing communicative model, it is necessary to determine both the communicative frequency and the communicative means. Of special interest is the degree of direct communication between DI.K.E.K and the cultural audience, the frequency of which actually appears very rare (usually every 2 years) and has the form of debriefing reports. Hence, the phenomenon of partial or total citizen disinterest in the administration's debriefing invitation is commonly observed.

Concerning the kind of the most usual communicative means used by DI.K.E.K for the promotion of the provided cultural and social products, the public, in a percentage of 83, 2 % answered, as expected, that the main communicative means are the local mass media and Internet (mostly the mass media with 55.7 %), and only a small part (16.8 %) attributed its getting informed to friends or other random incidents. What needs special attention, is the assessment, on the part of the audience, of DI.K.E.K's basic communicative means, as it was depicted by the 7/grade Likert scale. Its results were placed on low evaluation standards [the mean was 3.05 (in the case of internet), 3.62 (in the case of advertising posts in the local mass media), and slightly more positive 3.67 (brochures and posters)], while it revealed serious weakness as far as the level of a direct and personal approach is concerned [2.04 (phone call contact), 2.14 (open discussion) and 2.37 (questionnaire distribution)].

- In the process of promoting its information and messages, DI.K.E.K appears to have a relative quantity of flow concerning the current and future aims and actions. On the question about whether this cultural enterprise takes care of the promotion of its cultural and social activities, the result of the questions answered gave mean = 3.57, which presents an almost neutral estimation on the part of the audience. Even if we accept that the wide consumer audience doesn't always receive such messages, deliberately or not, this information becomes widely known and naturally causes reactions towards specific centers—receivers of those messages which act as disorder sources (e.g. minorities in the Municipal Council, local mass media, public placement of the Politicians etc.). As a result, in the cases of negative or hesitant attitude, some interferences arise which make its administration carry out a process of filtering the flowing messages, so that their volume is eliminated and focused on the most achievable and viable actions.
- The limited—reduced by filtering—information and message flows go through an encoding process, that is processing of their format and content so that DI.K.

E.K's messages alter the cultural audience's behavior (Fiske, 1992; Kastoras, 2002). At this point, a problem that is spotted concerns the processing of the messages addressed to the cultural audience which gave the choice "often" a higher percentage (26 %) compared to the other choices (mean = 4.89 namely, "not so rare" which moves towards the same direction), when asked to answer the question about how often it lacks information about cultural and social actions, not on its own fault, but due to mistakes and omissions of DI.K.E.K itself.

- The more or less successful message encoding affects through a chain reaction the decoding process, the level and quality of which is directly linked to a wide range of personal social and psychological factors (educational level, social status, favorable or not attitude towards the principal's political placement, financial status, professional activity, cultural refinement, culture, which as has already been stated, has deep roots, thus raising great expectations, etc.) which either predispose the audience positively towards the incoming messages, or contribute to its distancing itself from them, constituting another form of disorders source.
- In direct contrast to the communicative dipole is DI.K.E.K's cultural audience as a receiver of the former's cultural information and messages, which is also partly responsible for the communicative dimension concerning DI.K.E.K and mainly for the way it operates. The correct decoding of the received messages, the audience's positive or not response to them, along with the active participation in planning cultural actions, contributes both to information flow from the part of the receiver to the transmitter and the gentle function of the communicative process, which is disrupted and finally cancelled, when facing the cultural audience's unwillingness to participate and its distancing itself from the planning and the final creation of the cultural product. A relevant question to the public about the frequency of making recommendations concerning the cultural and social action they suggest, 57.3 % was answered negatively ("never") and only approximately 25 % of the persons asked showed a somehow active participation ("sometimes" 19.8 % and "often" 3.8 %).

A further obligation of DI.K.E.K's cultural audience is the reasoned assessment both of the various parts (e.g. message content, means and frequency of communication etc.) and the whole communicative process, so that it supplies the necessary informative material for the process of feedback, which will assist the adoption of remedial actions. This process is meaningful only if DI.K.E.K takes into consideration the cultural and social suggestions of its audience, and encourages the latter's participation, a factor contributing to the establishment of a participatory process. Through the two relevant questions, it was revealed that as far as the utilization of the suggestions is concerned, the audience gave answers between "disagree" and "rather disagree" (mean = 2.50 and Std. Dev. = 1.489), with high percentages (76.7 %) extending in the span from "strongly disagree" to "rather disagree", while with regard to the encouragement of suggestion making, the audience responded "rather disagree" (mean = 2.92 and Std. Dev. = 1.485) with an also high percentage (67.9 %) extending in the same span.

When completing the process of providing feedback, it is essential that DI.K.E.K. itself inform the audience about the possibility and the degree to which the suggestions made are utilized, so that a basis for an ongoing brainstorming process is built, which if used—even partially—will benefit both parts, establishing an effective communicative relationship. In the relevant question however, the cultural audience stresses with a high percentage (61.8 %) the absence of a process of providing information, concerning the outcome of the recommended on its part cultural and social action.

4.2.2 Research Results Concerning DI.K.E.K’s Production Planning and Implementation

Like every cultural organization, when formulating its production circuit (Montana & Chamov, 1993), DI.K.E.K has to carry out a regular planning, which contributes effectively to drawing up plans concerning the finally produced cultural product (Fig. 3). The main parts of this planning include what will be produced and how it will be produced and how this product will be distributed. Later, the transformation of this planning into reality takes place on the basis of the production process, which consists of three individual phases:

- *Input Phase.* During this first phase, a series of immaterial and material elements enter the production process. In the particular case as immaterial elements are regarded the cultural experience, the cultural background, the audience’s

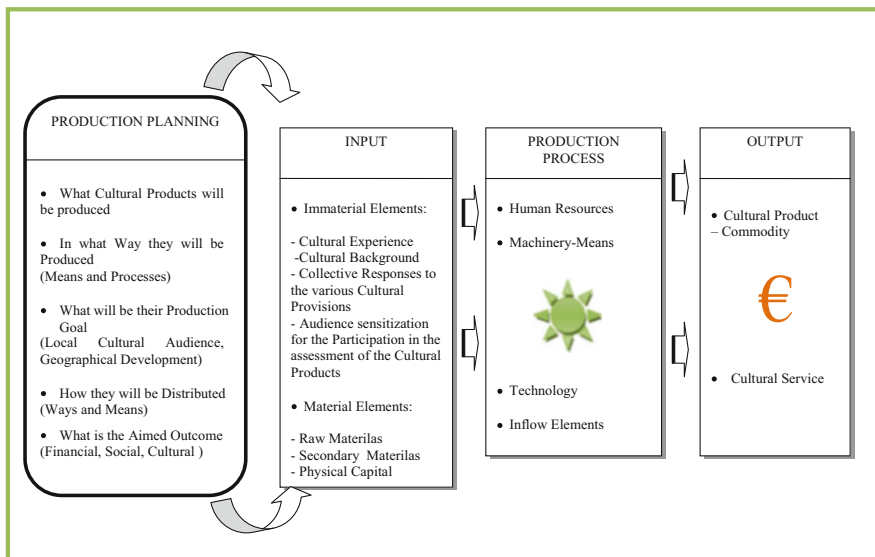


Fig. 3 DI.K.E.K’s production approach. Source: Own depiction

response to DI.K.E.K's cultural contribution up to now, and the degree of awareness of the consumer audience for its participation as the final evaluator (Makri, 2003: 58–61), whereas the material elements refer to the primary and secondary raw material necessary for the creation of the cultural goods. Possible inadequate input of such elements caused serious problems in the development of production. Nevertheless, through the research done on DI.K.E.K's consumer audience, a significant deficit was found out, concerning the utilization of some immaterial elements, the utilization of the significant cultural background of the area and the awareness for the participation of the consumer audience in the final formulation of the cultural product.

Concerning the first dimension, through the question "To what extent does DI.K.E.K make use of the local cultural heritage in its provided cultural goods", the consumer audience presented a degree of utilization which spans from 'a little' and 'relatively' (mean = 3.60 and Std. Dev. = 1.379). A significant percentage of the people asked (Cuml. percent: 77.1 %) was located in the span from 'not at all' to 'relatively'. As far as the second dimension is concerned, with regard to the supply on the part of DI.K.E.K of opportunities to the audience for assessing the former's cultural and social product, and the 'means for this assessment', the great majority of the audience (76.3 %) gave a negative response and only 23.7 % responded positively (from this percentage, 64.5 % was through leaflets, 25.8 % through the internet and 9.7 % through phone calls), which verifies the organization's inability to use important input for the formulation of the final cultural product.

- *Production Processing Phase.* During this phase, the input factors enter the place of production, where the available human resources, the equipment, the means and the technology interrelate in a production process aiming at producing the final product.
- *Output Phase.* In this final stage, the complete cultural product is available for use by the consumer public. With regard to the finally produced cultural product what is aimed at is the specification of the main factors which shape its quality on the one hand and determine its cultural value on the other. Mostly responsible for shaping the quality of the cultural product are the factors of the organization's inner and outer environment. Beyond a particular personal opinion expressed repeatedly about the problems observed during the research both in the inner and outer environment of DI.K.E.K and which have serious repercussions on the quality of its produced cultural and social product, the findings coming from the analysis of the relevant question clearly present a similar public opinion. Thus, when the people asked were invited to spot, through a wide factor listing 'the most important problems in providing products of high cultural and social value', they presented as main reasons the insufficient state and municipal funding (62.6 %), the close politically oriented dependence on the State and Local Government (59.5 %), the administration's weaknesses (56.5 %), the absence of strategy and goals on the part of the administration (55 %) and the administration's knowledge deficit (43.5 %)

According to these estimations particularly problematic seems to be the profile of the administration's qualitative features, which should be taken into serious consideration.

The main factors which determine the cultural value of the produced product were defined as follows:

- *Total assessment of the provided cultural work.* With the aim of gauging the total sense that the audience gets from DI.K.E.K's provided work, a specific Question was asked, in which the consumer audience presented through its answer a level of assessment spanning from 'not good' and 'neither good nor bad' (mean = 3.69 and Std. Dev. = 1.398), with the greater percentage (30.5 %) considering the provided work 'neither good nor bad'.
- *Individual evaluative characterizations of the provided cultural work.* It was considered essential that the level of the audience's approval or disapproval of the characterizations of DI.K.E.K's provided cultural work is researched, so that it can be realized how the public's reduced interest for DI.K.E.K's cultural actions is explained. So, in the relevant question the choices 'interesting', 'creative' and 'trivial' presented a "neutral" attitude, since the mean was about 4 (4.05–3.88–3.75 correspondingly), while the choices "subversive", "innovative" and "pointless" were about 3 (2.76–2.85–3.14 correspondingly), presenting an attitude of "rather disagree", thus confirming and explaining the existing problematic situation.
- *Assessment of the cultural and social contribution of DI.K.E.K's individual units and actions.* In order to be found out which of its actions has had a deep impact on the public's conscience as the most and least important for the cultural and social development of the area, the audience was asked to evaluate, through a question, a series of actions and designated as "important" by order of merit the Municipal Library (mean = 4.92 and Std. Dev. = 1.723), the two Municipal Cinemas (mean = 4.89 and Std. Dev. = 1.471), and the cultural events (mean = 4.82 and Std. deviation = 1.872). The lowest average of assessment was given to the Municipal Radio Station (mean = 3.23 and Std. Dev. = 1.906), the contribution of which ranged from "insignificant" and 'neither insignificant nor "significant"'.
- *Its cultural contribution as a whole.* Given the contribution of the cultural organizations to the reinforcement of social bonds, to urban revival, to upgrading the cultural level and to the formulation of a recognizable identity of their area, as well as to the area's touristic and financial development (Grodach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Lord, 2008: 6–7), it was considered necessary to research the extent to which the audience estimates that DI.K.E.K, during its long existence, offers similar services to an area in great need of such competitive advantages, so that it can confront the special emphasis given by the State on the financial and business development of important neighboring urban centers, like Larissa and Volos, at least as it is noted down by the local printed media. Therefore, when the participants were asked to pinpoint the degree of their approval or disapproval of the various categories of contribution to the

town and its region, their estimations were designated by the response “neutrally” with a slightly bigger preference given to “stressing cultural significance” (mean = 3.95 and Std. Dev. = 1.762), as well as to the touristic development of the town and the surrounding area (mean = 3.92 and Std. Dev. = 1.897).

- *Assessment of DI.K.E.K's future contribution.* This particular point was considered indispensable, since the possible estimation that DI.K.E.K, under its current organizational status, can offer in the future products of high cultural and social value, from the one hand contributes to management complacency, and from the other, encourages it to continue its work properly and to make plans for future action. The opposite estimation—which of course matches our personal, often stated opinion—, would lead DI.K.E.K, to skepticism, self-criticism, initiative taking, aiming at the necessary corrective movements. On the basis of the question relevant to the issue of DI.K.E.K's future direction of its cultural and social work, the audience advocated in favor of the second estimation, displaying a reserved attitude (mean = 3.24 and Std. Dev. = 1.533), oriented towards “rather disagree”. Moreover, the fact that a percentage near 80 % spanned from “totally disagree” to “neither agree nor disagree” is noteworthy.

5 Suggestions and Process of DI.K.E.K's Restructuring, Through the Achievement of a New Dynamic Organizational Structure

According to the up to now theoretical and research approaches, DI.K.E.K should proceed to a structural redesign displaying the following features (Fig. 4):

5.1 *Organizational and Functional Independence*

To avoid a problematic developmental course it is suggested that DI.K.E.K function as an **Institution of Urban Cultural Collectivity**. The institutions of this kind are neither exclusively corporate, nor purely governmental, but their actions are directly subjected to the various social networks' judgment. Their main features are (Rentschler & Reussner, 2002; Lord, 2008: 4–5):

- The institution's management doesn't come from a central governmental scheme or municipal authority, but consists of independent or semi-independent Supervisory Boards. This deters its dependence upon each state or municipal authority, while allowing its management to determine its schemes and future orientations itself.
- The benefits from an upgraded role of the General Director, shouldn't be restricted to his/her ability to draw capital and align with the established cultural policies, but should develop activities that will serve the social responsibility and

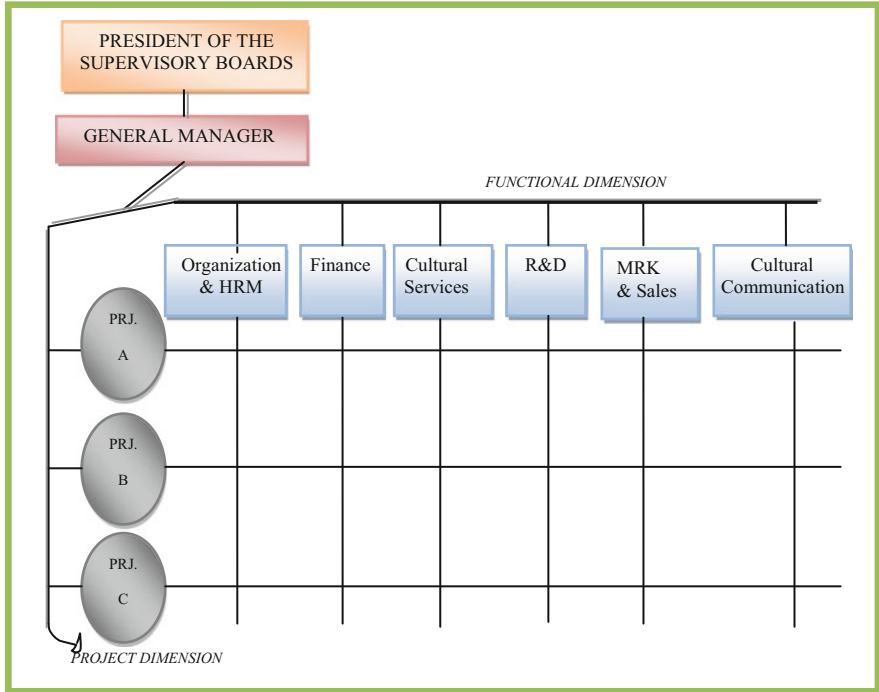


Fig. 4 DI.K.E.K's structural redesign on the basis of the matrix organization. *Source:* Own depiction

accountability of the cultural institution he is in charge of, increasing access to it, not only through an increase in the number of visitors, but also through its audience's communicative inquisition.

- Is able to resort to multiple financing sources, including the state, the municipalities, the visitors, donors and sponsors, etc., thus ensuring an upgraded quality for its cultural goods.
- Is subject to constant financial controls, either from the state or from independent Greek control mechanisms, demanded by the involved bodies, social networks and the consumer cultural audience.
- Displays a significant degree of extroversion, since it has strong bonds with the local and wider community, while pursuing their cultural cooperation too.

5.2 *Limitation of the Organizational and Operational Work*

As already mentioned, the content and complexity of DI.K.E.K's tasks, triggered from the beginning a need for a new structural re-approach and for its restriction to

clearly cultural actions. The management's work will be thus significantly mitigated, which will contribute to a more focused design and planning of the cultural actions. Discharged from the confusion caused by the given plethora of these uneven activities and the dispersion of its powers towards different directions, a greater uniformity in policies, practices and processes will automatically emerge, while there will also be a narrower spectrum of dispersion of its limited funds and therefore less anxiety for the management, caused by the consistent threat of insufficient funding.

Moreover, decision-making will be more rapid and indeed in issues satisfying more sufficiently the local cultural conditions and needs. Finally, a greater specialization of the functional parts and their employed staff will be achieved, resulting in the expected maximization of their efficiency. In general, it is estimated that a greater prospect for the development of DI.K.E.K's cultural actions will come out as well as production of products with higher cultural value.

5.3 *Appearance of an Innovative Organizational Scheme*

To this direction contributed DI.K.E.K's operation based on Matrix Organization (Burke, 2013). This organization is characterized by two main dimensions. The *Functional Dimension* (namely the dimension including the main new-formulated Management—Functions and represents their responsibility and power), and the *Project Dimension*, which as an executive process emphasizes particular each time cultural activities and represents the projects' responsibility and power. The main advantage of the Matrix Organization is the abbreviation of the communication routes between the Project Teams and the Functional Management, which overcomes time-consuming hierarchical report processes, and creates a constant flow of support to the various projects from the specific functional actions they need (Burke, 2013).

As far as the *Project Teams* are concerned, they will consist of the head of the project and of specialized members coming from its various functional parts, or of members belonging to the *project teams* permanently. Necessarily though, some external members-counselors on art and culture will also take part, who will provide the needed knowledge and experience, while they should also be able to often revive their ingenuity and search for solutions that will bring DI.K.E.K to a closer contact with those requiring cultural goods of high quality and value.

The linking device between the two dimensions is the President and the General Director, both of whom should have (Economou, 2003; Kotler et al., 2008; Kotter, 1996; Lysgard, 2012; Varbanova, 2013; Tzivakou, 2008):

- Multifaceted social skills so that they are interested not only in DI.K.E.K's issues, but also in the wider social audience's social values.
- A communicative gift able to encourage others, beyond its consistent audience, to participate and develop as teams or communities around its cultural work.

- Leading intuition, analytical and synthetic ability and financial management experience so as to do “what is correct” and also “do it correctly”.
- Experience in designing, planning, and creating innovative cultural works and activities.
- Developed ability to perceive imminent environmental changes and to transmit the vision of a change to its available staff.
- Will for developing co-operations with the corresponding cultural local or regional organizations and diffusion of the acquired knowledge.
- Ability to develop cultural tourism as a prominent strategy for the promotion of the cultural value and contribution of the local areas, through the consistent attraction of foreign visitors.
- Mentality that advocates the development of cultural creativity by attracting and utilizing “creative” people who are able to contribute significantly to the revival or even the development of new cultural products.

5.4 Improvement of the Organizational Atmosphere

An appropriately structured Directorate of Organization and Personnel combined with the President’s and DI.K.E.K’s General Director’s disposition for a complete change in the organization’s atmosphere, are the main factors for the improvement of the working conditions and in effect of the employees’ efficiency. The new organizational atmosphere should be characterized from (Kotter, 1996; Tzivakou, 2008):

- Change in the management’s attitude and implementation of the “open-gate” policy, towards a potential wish of an employee to express directly to the Senior Management complaints and concerns about the behavior of his immediate superiors.
- Achievement of more concrete working relationships and introduction of processes of staff motivation, characterized by working satisfaction, recognition, initiative, and participation.
- Improvement of interpersonal relationships and support of the intra-communication process.
- Ongoing training and personnel evolution on merit-based criteria of efficiency.
- Frequent job rotation to avoid routine and work overburdening, and finally
- Ongoing personnel information update about the course of the organizational change.

5.5 Development of Appropriate Mechanisms for Collection of Information

DI.K.E.K needs continuous information flow about the audience's changing desires, the competitors' new initiatives, and the challenges of the cultural market in general, which renders necessary the need for the creation and management of an effective information system. It is a net of factors, consisting of individuals, technological equipment and processes that gather, classify, assess and distribute valid and precise information to the members of this cultural unit (Bozinis, 2007; Priporas, 2004).

The particular information system should detect, organize and make good use of the various information sources (e.g. available files concerning the competitors' course, short-term and long-term predictions about the political setting, indicators of analysis of the market's share, various information sheet, brochures, handouts) on a diachronic and synchronic level, so that the continuous informing about the most interesting developments and demands of DI.K.E.K.'s cultural surroundings is ensured.

6 Conclusion

In order for DI.K.E.K to manage to meet the demands of the contemporary cultural environment, it is essential that its unique local profile be promoted along with the adoption of focused directions of political action that will support it decisively in overcoming the organizational and production difficulties, and in securing a continuous flow and production of cultural work of high level. This way, it is able to apply an effective process of meeting the local—and not alone—cultural needs, while through the maintenance of an atmosphere of harmonious cooperation with the corresponding local cultural bodies, the audience's trust and accordingly its participation in the various cultural events will be reinforced.

The present paper, for the best research approach possible towards DI.K.E.K, was based on domestic and international bibliographic sources, with an emphasis on dominant factors such as that of the cultural product and cultural communication, aiming at the greatest contribution and prospect for its restructuring possible, on the use of questionnaires to its consumer cultural audience, on the minimum informal interviews with its personnel, and on the views of various parts involved in its function, as expressed through the local media and the internet.

Based on the final conclusions, the whole reorganization process ought to include a new dynamic structural redesign according to Matrix Organization, which will contribute to its organizational independence, so that it functions as a **Cultural Organization of Urban Collectivity**, able to restrict the range of its generative work to actions clearly cultural. It will thus improve its organizational atmosphere, the working conditions will be purged and the employees'

performance level will be raised. It will also manage to introduce a new strategy of a communicative approach to its cultural audience, while the promotion of a productive and competitive strategy will become feasible, through appropriate mechanisms for information collection.

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