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Administrative Sciences

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Suggested Citation: Kalogiannidis, Stavros; Loizou, Efstratios; Kalfas, Dimitrios; Chatzitheodoridis, Fotios (2022) : Local and regional management approaches for the redesign of local development: A case study of Greece, Administrative Sciences, ISSN 2076-3387, MDPI, Basel, Vol. 12, Iss. 2, pp. 1-17,
<https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12020069>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/275340>

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Article

Local and Regional Management Approaches for the Redesign of Local Development: A Case Study of Greece

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Abstract: The efforts of different local and regional administrations are increasingly seen as very important drivers of the economic vitality and well-being of territories in a world where subnational government levels continue to gain levels of authority. This study sought to investigate the efficacy of revamping local and regional development through local and regional management practices with a key focus on Greece. A mixed-methods research design was utilized; data were collected using a questionnaire from 200 entrepreneurs and investors from the local community in Kozani and through interviews with six local government leaders in Kozani city, Greece. The study shows that effective local–regional management practices normally function within the constraints provided by local contextual circumstances and traits as well as the possibilities offered by them. In this case, localized techniques may be used in areas with varying degrees of ex ante favorability, economic structures, and different resource endowments, as well as capacities that are essential for regional and local development. Any barriers that may affect the effectiveness of local–regional management practices can be eliminated through proper decision making, the proper allocation of resources, and participatory leadership at the local government level.

Keywords: local government; regional development; local development; redesign; Greece



Citation: Kalogiannidis, Stavros, Efstratios Loizou, Dimitrios Kalfas, and Fotios Chatzitheodoridis. 2022. Local and Regional Management Approaches for the Redesign of Local Development: A Case Study of Greece. *Administrative Sciences* 12: 69. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci12020069>

Received: 7 May 2022

Accepted: 6 June 2022

Published: 9 June 2022

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1. Introduction

1.1. Study Background

Regional and local analyses have centered their objectives on increasingly complicated frameworks in recent decades, with a major focus on regional and local development strategies. The attention of researchers dedicated to regional studies is turned to the impact that local actors' cooperation and interactions have on local welfare in relational economic geographic studies (Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2014). Pike et al. (2016b) showed that intraregional cognitive networks are linked to increased local and regional levels of economic development. The emergence of a knowledge-intensive and largely competitive global economy, as well as a leveled territorial scale for economic growth, clearly shows that globalization is gradually increasing the general roles of different regional initiatives and of local actors in shaping the drivers of development (Pike et al. 2016b; Gavriilidis and Metaxas 2017).

Jovovic et al. (2017) indicated that despite significant differences in the capacity and resources available to governments globally, the entire global trend toward devolution has helped several governments with a mix of the most needed powers to help to plan, design, or implement effective development strategies. Governments always focus on many aspects, such as national policies for economic growth and the attraction of local or foreign investors, among others (Böttcher et al. 2006). This means that subnational governments are more directly responsible for fostering economic development and dynamism as well

as for increasing the well-being of local inhabitants than ever before. This is a significant change from how governments thought about growth in the economic sector just a few decades ago (Keune 2001).

The empowerment of subnational governments provides a unique chance for communities to take control of their development paths by customizing spending, policies, and strategic approaches to local contexts, as opposed to the different top-down policies that have prevailed until recently (Martin 2015). This process has effectively opened the door for the implementation of place-based territorial strategies for development (Ioannidis 2016). This has further enabled localities to use their unrivaled knowledge of local characteristics and preferences to tailor spending, the provision of public services, and strategic decision making (Pike et al. 2007). While this approach offers significant potential to establish more efficient development plans and achieve long-term, equitable economic growth, it is not without danger (Mountford 2009). Despite the many studies that have been conducted on the economic growth and development of different economies in the past, such as Ioannidis (2016), Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017), Leick and Lang (2018), more research is still needed on how strategies at different governance levels can help enhance local and regional development. Therefore, this study focuses on assessing the efficacy of revamping local and regional development through local–regional management practices, with key a focus on Greece.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to investigate the efficacy of revamping local and regional development through local–regional management practices, with a focus on Greece. The study is based on the following specific objectives:

- To explore the role of local–regional management practices in enhancing the capacity building and technical abilities of local communities;
- To identify or diagnose barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices;
- To establish solutions to overcome barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is essential in the field of education, as it provides evidence on revamping local as well as regional development through local–regional management practices. The study findings can further act as a point of reference for future research in the area of revamping local as well as regional development through local–regional management practices. The study findings could also be very essential in enhancing policy learning and adaptation.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role of Local–Regional Management Practices in Development

Pike et al. (2016b) indicated that before the twentieth century, the world comprised several strong or strategic national governments and regional governments that were relatively weak or non-existent, with regional governments being either weak or non-existent in many cases as compared to local ones. Before 1970, the number of truly devolved countries was so small that it could almost be counted on the fingers of a single hand. Following this initial wave of empowerment at the local level, primarily through devolution, the concept has spread rapidly throughout the world, explaining the importance of delegating or dividing government roles at different levels of governance. Consequently, different subnational governments have gradually been entrusted with a variety of governance powers. This has resulted in the responsibility of the government of taking better decisions or utilizing the most effective mechanisms to achieve the desired level of development for local communities. When compared to the manner in which socio-economic development was undertaken and achieved in the past, it represents a very significant shift in its paradigm. Place-based

strategies for economic development, which take into account the different preferences as well as needs of local agents and make use of local characteristics, are utilized to replace centrally driven approaches to economic development (Metaxas 2010; Ioannidis 2016).

Blair and Olpadwala (1988) indicated that the fact that subnational authorities now have the ability to utilize different territorially oriented approaches or mechanisms all aimed at enhancing development is undeniable. This also represents an important opportunity for most localities or regions across the world to fully realize their economic potential. Although this is a promising prospect, realizing it in practice is frequently fraught with difficulties, and solutions are not guaranteed. First and foremost, there are questions about the most effective manner in which strategies for development should be implemented in a given setting. It is undeniable that the federal level of a country, such as the United States, is usually not enough to deal with the different local development problems (Kalogiannidis et al. 2021).

Local empowerment successfully offers local authorities the autonomy, capabilities, and resources that were before unavailable to them, allowing them to mobilize and act on the information that they have acquired. Policymakers can use their understanding of the needs of local communities to effectively design and implement the different types of contextually tailored policies that are unlikely to be implemented otherwise. Policymakers also have the ability to undertake different decisions that may be very hard to make under a centralized system but that appear to be completely necessary given the recognized uniqueness of each jurisdiction. One of the most significant benefits of local empowerment is the ability to modify governmental policies to meet the requirements of individual communities (Krasniqi 2019). Regions and municipalities, on the other hand, often find themselves in a difficult situation. The fact that they have been granted this empowerment and, more specifically, the option to adopt methods that in theory represent the different needs of local communities that may have been overlooked in a top-down framework is one of the benefits they stand to obtain (Bachtler et al. 2014; Ioannidis 2016).

In southern Europe, the economic downturn of the last decade, but also the high unemployment rates observed combined with the low-investment activity, continues to characterize growth based on the global financial crisis and austerity policies (Leick and Lang 2018; Hadjimichalis 2011; Ballas et al. 2017; Papadopoulos 2016). This situation was inevitably exacerbated by COVID-19 and continues to be exacerbated by the war in Ukraine (Mbah and Wasum 2022; Liadze et al. 2022).

Hadjimichalis and Hudson (2014) argued that these problems date back to the 1990s and that the national systems of the euro-area countries failed to detect the onset of the crisis due to a wider maladaptation and neglect of the capitalist crisis, a failure that can also be ascribed to formerly successful regions. Furthermore, Hadjimichalis and Hudson (2014) estimated that approaches driven by neoclassical geographical and regional development theories have failed to develop a systemic view of capitalism. Thus, because periodic capitalist crises have been neglected, problems have escalated and manifested as a global financial crisis (Hadjimichalis and Hudson 2014; Harvey 2011).

As Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie (2017) argued, local and regional governments are constantly gaining power and are de facto protagonists of economic dynamism and prosperity. This empowerment is a consequence of globalization—not entirely, but certainly in part (Rodríguez-Pose 2011; Barca et al. 2012; Smoke 2003; Pike et al. 2016a). At the regional level, the pressures imposed by increasingly competitive global economy ends, but also the more specific national pressures, are specialized for the regions, thus shaping the growth trajectory (Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017).

It is understood that the institutional framework is a key factor in the effectiveness of local development strategies. The policymakers behind the development strategies need to know and understand the potential of these regions or, better, locations, in order to make the most of human capital, infrastructure, or innovation interventions (Rodríguez-Pose and Palavicini-Corona 2013; Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017; Mura and Hajduová 2021). Therefore, a comprehensive institutional and, at the same time, explanatory framework

should be based on the interactions among the economic and political factors (Martin 2015). After all, deficiencies in the socio-economic context jeopardize the institutional, social, and environmental factors (viability of local businesses and derailment of the effectiveness of any policy action designed to make them viable).

One point that is mentioned simply because it is an important element of local and national development is the relevance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Small and medium-sized enterprises are the backbone of a good economy, the basis of employment, added value, and prerequisite for sustainable economic growth. Furthermore, small and medium-sized enterprises, when properly functioning, create entrepreneurship, contributing to innovation and healthy competition (Mura and Hajduová 2021; Dvorský et al. 2020; Hudáková and Masár 2018; Chreneková et al. 2016; Zaušková and Rezníčková 2020; Bărbulescu and Constantin 2019). Sustainable development strategies are very essential in the mitigation and overcoming of a territory's limitations. Bachtler et al. (2014) indicated that a localized strategy for development that is implemented in one area may consist of completely unique programs as compared with a strategy implemented in another context, and the two approaches may ultimately appear to be diametrically opposed to each other. Among other types of policies, localized approaches and strategies may also focus on enhancing education and skill development programs among the locals, which is important for the growth of a local community (Figure 1). The way different initiatives or policies are integrated into a localized strategy or approach for economic growth varies from one context to the next, depending on how specific the broader strategic goals are, as well as the context in which they are to be pursued (Pugalis and Tan 2017).

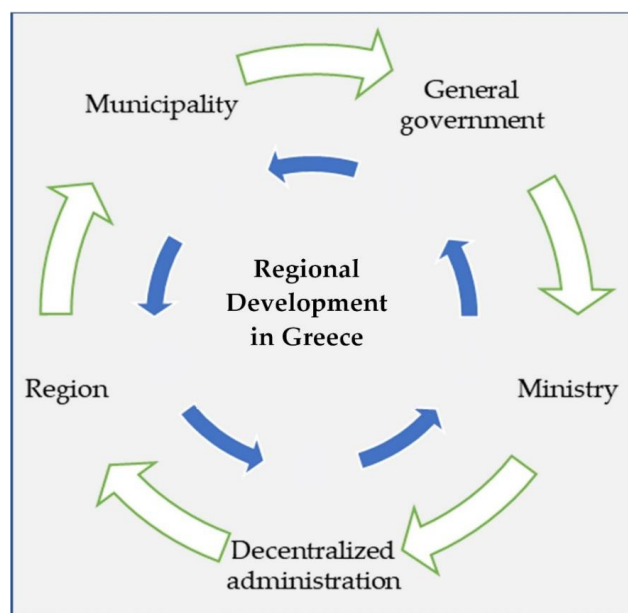


Figure 1. Greek administrative structure of rural and local development. Source: Authors' scheme.

The concept of sustainability has occupied the scientific community in relation to its integration into university management practices, teaching, and research and, more generally, for the adoption of the terms “sustainable university” and “entrepreneurial university” (Velázquez et al. 2006; Adomssent and Michelsen 2006; Waas et al. 2010; Lozano 2006; Brătucu et al. 2020). Universities in the field of regional development have attracted attention since the 1950s in central European countries. For example, economics considers universities to be soft local agents of knowledge and know-how that enhance innovation. Educational sciences emphasize the reduction in spatial and social inequalities, the access to educational opportunities, and the strengthening of the local labor market. Geographical sciences study the spaces required by the university to operate, as well as the mobility of students, graduates, and teaching staff to include the spatial dimension in research. In

general, what universities look at when they think about how to help their communities to grow, excluding aspects such as production and social capital, is how human and intellectual capital can help (Peer and Stoeglehner 2013; Moulaert and Sekia 2003; Lehmann et al. 2009; Gensch 1980).

2.2. Multilevel Governance

Multilevel governance plays a key role in enhancing the level of local and regional development. The different coordination as well as collaboration activities associated with local governments help ensure the proper allocation of resources or the allocation of resources to the most essential areas that support development. Research has indicated that the most common barrier to the desired development under multilevel governance is when there is a mismatch that may exist between the resources and authorities transmitted downward to the local government (Bachtler et al. 2014). Local governments may become overloaded as a result of their duties in relation to the authorities and resources assigned to them. Makowska (2021) indicated that addressing vertical coordination shortcomings seems to be critical to ensuring that communities receive the advantages of increased decision-making ability at the local level. One way to address vertical coordination failures is to promote multilevel governance by mostly undertaking decisions that help in the implementation of public policies. Most policies under multilevel governance are effective when formulated through collaborative relationships between vertical and horizontal levels of governance. Multilevel governance structures, especially territorial networks, help people to talk to each other and share information, which is important for cross-territorial coordination and, eventually, better devolutionary processes (UCLGA 2016; Ioannidis 2016).

According to Pugalis and Tan (2017), most local leaders can become actively involved in political processes leading to economic growth and may be better able to communicate and push central governments on their behalf. As a result, these concerns of influence may be more severe in smaller locales and communities, but they are by no means confined to them (Pugalis and Tan 2017). While vertical coordination failures offer different obstacles to economic growth, the failures of horizontally based coordination, such as that among subnational agencies, do occur and must be addressed. Promoting interconnection, conversation, and territorial networks but, this time, among subnational players, can help mitigate these horizontal coordination problems (Makowska 2021).

Horizontally based collaboration may help promote conversation and cooperation between subnational authorities to a greater extent, resulting in an effective alignment of both the territorially oriented policies adopted by local governments and the subnational authorities' aims. This might reduce the prevalence of wasteful inter-territorial investments as well as economic activity, among other things. Makowska (2021) explained that coordination at the horizontal level can help disclose and enable the general realization of different synergies among smaller subnational authorities. This always leads to resource utilization and contributes to improved coherence between planning procedures and the goals of the different subnational territorial collectives. The overall impact would be to boost their influence on higher-level government decisions, all of which would help mitigate the capacity and other restrictions that these territories regularly face (Herrmann and Kritikos 2013).

2.3. Capacity Building to Overcome Barriers to Local and Regional Development

Local governments are frequently confronted with a slew of technical capacity issues. Absolute shortages of technical knowledge, skills, or experience may be the source of these constraints. Mismatches between the available and required capacities are the most common causes of these problems. Krasniqi (2019) stated that there are times when policymakers or people in charge of making decisions in a certain territory are capable in a broad sense, but they lack the experience, skills, and technical knowledge to perform a certain set of tasks.

Local capacity constraints have a variety of effects on the level of economic growth. In the current era of globalization, it is very important to look at the discussed issue in terms of economic growth (Mura and Hajduová 2021). Deficits in technical capacity at the local level, for example, may make it impossible to design and monitor efficient fiscal systems (Makowska 2021). Local and regional governments' ability to raise revenue through taxes may jeopardize their ability to implement viable development plans. Capacity constraints can greatly limit the ability to effectively communicate with different stakeholders at the local level and to articulate the needs and demands to central governments. Inadequate skills, technical knowledge, and experience limit local governments' ability to mobilize resources and powers and thus achieve development goals. Krasniqi (2019) indicated that capacity-building initiatives are also very essential with regard to ensuring that different localities are able to achieve the desired economic growth and development, as well as improvements in the well-being of the people who live there.

Boyce and Brown (2019) indicated that efforts to improve local technical capacities can take a variety of different shapes. Capacity development is associated with the different processes in which individuals and institutions, as well as societies, develop abilities in order to perform functions, set achievable goals, and solve different governance problems. Krasniqi (2019) indicated that capacity building for localities should include efforts at both the individual and institutional levels. Upskilling, training, sharing knowledge, and learning from other people's experiences all fit into this category. Capacity-building projects of all kinds are necessary to help local governments deal with the frequent shortages of people with the right skills (Mura and Hajduová 2021; Nordic Working Group 2006).

3. Methodology

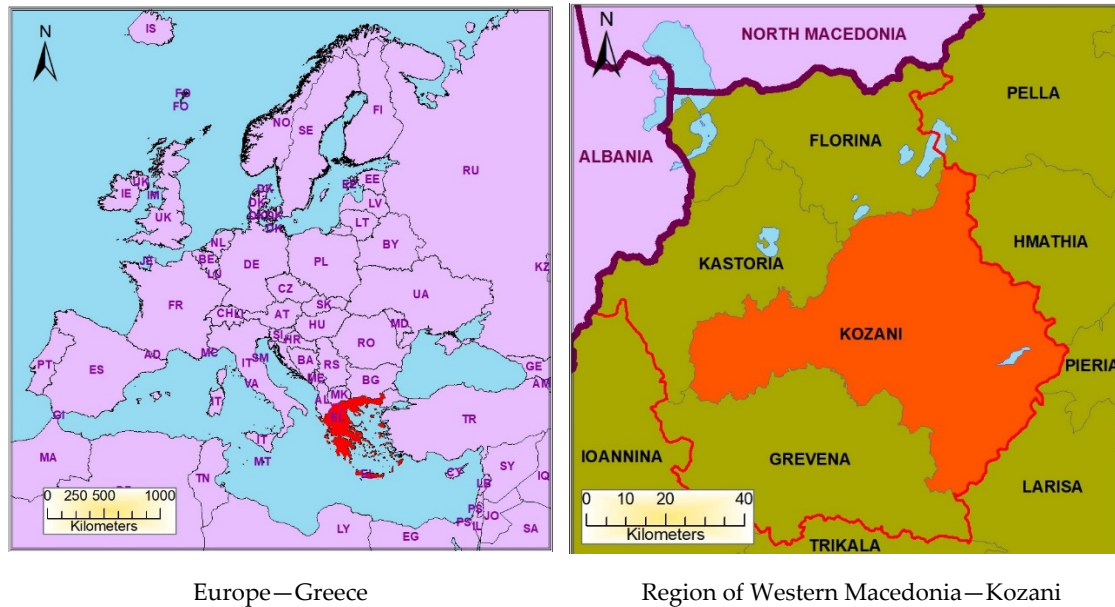
3.1. Research Design, Study Area, Target Population, and Data Collection

The study applied a mixed-methods research method whereby both qualitative and quantitative tools were used to collect data associated with how local–regional management practices can ensure the successful revamping of local and regional development. This research design is an inquiry into which quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered and evaluated to characterize a particular phenomenon in terms of current trends, current occurrences, and current connections among various variables. The mixed-methods research design helped to effectively generalize the different findings concerning the revamping of local and regional development through local–regional management practices.

The mixed-methods research approach was adopted, since it allowed the researchers to generalize the findings to a larger group of entrepreneurs and investors from the local community of Kozani city. Kozani, in particular, is a small city in northern Greece and one of the four regional units of the Western Macedonia region (Figure 2) (Kalfas et al. 2022). Florina, Kastoria, and Grevena are the other three cities. According to 2011 census data, the Municipality of Kozani covers 366,018 square kilometers in the West Macedonia area of northern Greece and has a population of 71,388 people (ELSTAT 2022). Kozani is around 470 km from Greece's capital, Athens, and 120 km from Thessaloniki, the country's second largest city. Kozani has been subjected to natural hazards and calamities as a result of unusual weather occurrences and earthquakes, such as the 6.6 event on the Richter scale reported on 13 May 1995. Furthermore, there is a local susceptibility in the form of industrial and technological mishaps as a result of the city's dominating position of having Greece's largest lignite power plant and installations in terms of possible risk exposure (Kalogiannidis et al. 2022a).

Kozani is a university city in terms of educational activity and facilities, as it is the home to University of Western Macedonia. University of Western Macedonia was formed in 2003 and operates in five cities: Kozani, Florina, Kastoria, Ptolemaida, and Grevena, with a total of 8.661 current students and 193 academic staff (data from August 2021). In particular, the city of Kozani is home to the School of Economic Sciences, which has seven departments, as well as two of the five departments of the Polytechnic-Engineering School. Furthermore, the main campus is in Kozani, where the university's facilities such as

administrative services, teaching staff offices, classrooms, labs, the library, students' home and restaurant, and the university gymnasium are located (www.uowm.gr, accessed on 1 May 2022).



Europe—Greece

Region of Western Macedonia—Kozani

Figure 2. Maps of Europe and region of Western Macedonia—City of Kozani. Source: Authors' scheme.

Finally, despite income cutbacks caused by Greece's economic crisis (Chatzitheodoridis et al. 2017), Kozani remains a potential growth pole, since it is a competitive destination for tourism, investment, and cultural heritage exploitation (Kalogiannidis et al. 2022c; Chatzitheodoridis and Kontogeorgos 2020). According to Chatzitheodoridis et al. (2013), even during periods of severe economic crisis, the only path to the endogenous socio-economic growth of rural areas in Greece is achieved through the adoption of policy measures that stimulate the advantages of local factors, such as local resources, as well as the specificities of the social and human behavior of the local population.

The research study was directed at the many readily available investors and local government authorities in Kozani, Greece, according to the findings. On the basis of this demographic, the most relevant sample for the research study was selected.

In terms of data collecting, the research study made use of an online questionnaire, which is one of the simplest and most often used data collection strategies. As a result of the enormous number of respondents who can be reached in a short amount of time, it is less costly, and it enables respondents to openly address difficult themes without fear of being judged or rejected by the researcher.

In this study, the research team used stratified and simple random sampling approaches, both of which are designated as probability sampling methodologies by the Statistical Information Processing Society. In this particular instance, a stratified sampling methodology was used to arrive at the target sample; nevertheless, a basic random sampling method was used to extract the final sample from the strata. Simple random sampling has the benefit of yielding samples that are highly representative of the population, which is a desirable attribute in a sampling procedure. It may, however, be time consuming and labor intensive, especially when dealing with enormous quantities of data. The research study included the main sample of 200 study participants who were entrepreneurs and investors from Kozani, Greece, as well as a secondary sample of 6 participants who were local government officials in Kozani, Greece. The findings were presented in a report.

At the end of the study, the researchers ensured that informed permission was gained from the entrepreneurs and investors of the local community and from the local government

leaders in Kozani, Greece, in accordance with ethical concerns. This was performed to validate the desire of investors and local government officials to engage in the study. On top of that, dealing with research participants' data required a high level of secrecy and privacy. Before concluding their responses, respondents were given the option of giving their opinion depending on their interpretations of the various questions. In order to gain broad responses to some inquiries, this was beneficial.

3.1.1. Questionnaire

The study utilized an online questionnaire to collect data from the selected entrepreneurs and investors based in Kozani city, Greece. A survey questionnaire is one of the easiest and often used data gathering techniques. This is because it is less costly, since it covers a huge number of respondents in a short period of time, and it enables respondents to freely answer sensitive topics without fear of the researcher's judgment or rejection. An online survey questionnaire was used to gain insight into the revamping of local and regional development through local–regional management practices.

3.1.2. Interview Guide

An interview guide was used to collect data from the selected local government leaders in Kozani, Greece. A total of six interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which contained open-ended questions about revamping local and regional development through local–regional management practices.

3.2. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the selected entrepreneurs and investors in Kozani, Greece, were coded and then transferred to SPSS to be analyzed. Tables were used to display the findings, and frequencies and percentages were used to interpret them. Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data collected from the local government leaders in Kozani, Greece.

The research study used a primary sample of 200 study participants who were entrepreneurs and investors from Kozani, Greece, and a secondary sample of 6 secondary participants who were local government officials in Kozani, Greece. In 2021, the total number of entrepreneurs and investors from the local community in the Kozani regional unit was 10,198. The sample size was determined after assessing the survey's accuracy ($km \pm 114.71$) and reliability ($P = 99.7$ percent). A preliminary sample (or pilot sampling) of 50 people was used to assess the variance in the distance they traveled by car weekly exclusively for work and business, $S^2 = 74,698.98$, and the standard deviation, $s = 273.31$. The value of z was determined by the necessary level of reliability (P); when using the sample size determination, a value of $z = 3$ is usually used, which corresponds to a level of dependability $P = 99.7$ percent. Using our values $N = 10,198$, $s = 273.31$, $z = 3$, and $d = 57.35$ (the required accuracy d is subjectively set and expresses half the confidence interval), it was calculated (Equation (1)) that the minimum sample size should be 200.36, which is 200 persons (Kalfas et al. 2013, 2020, 2022; Kalogiannidis et al. 2022b).

$$n = \frac{N(zs)^2}{Nd^2 + (zs)^2} \quad (1)$$

Calculation of the minimum sample of respondents.

$$n = \frac{10,198(3 * 273.31)^2}{10,198 * 57.35^2 + (3 * 273.31)^2} \Leftrightarrow n = 200.36$$

4. Results

This section presents the interpretation of the different results obtained after analyzing the data collected from selected entrepreneurs and investors in Kozani, Greece.

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

Results of the demographic characteristics of the selected entrepreneurs and investors in Kozani, Greece, who participated in the study, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	143	71.5
Female	57	28.5
Age bracket		
Below 20 years	9	4.5
21–30 years	53	26.5
31–40 years	101	50.5
Above 40 years	37	18.5
Years spent in business in Kozani		
Below 5 years	21	10.5
6–10	92	46.0
11–15	63	31.5
Above 15 years	24	12.0
Total	200	100

Key: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, U = undecided, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Source: Survey (2022).

More than half of the participating entrepreneurs and investors (71.5%) were male, and only 28.5% were female. The majority of participating entrepreneurs and investors (50.5%) were 31–40 years old, and only 4.5% were younger than 20 years old. The majority of the participants (45.3%) had spent 11–15 years in business, and only 6% had spent less than 5 years in business in Kozani.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis

The study sought to establish the opinions of selected entrepreneurs and investors about the role of local–regional management practices in enhancing the capacity building and technical abilities of local communities in Kozani, Greece; the findings on this variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results on the role of local–regional management practices in enhancing the capacity building and technical abilities of local communities.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
	%	%	%	%	%
Local–regional management practices boost business sustainability in Kozani	7.0	11.3	2.6	23.7	55.4
Proper decision making enhances the capacity building of city operations	3.0	2.7	5.8	62.8	25.6
Technical abilities of local communities are influenced by local government decisions	11.8	60.2	4.4	13.9	1.6
Sustainable development strategies are key to the empowerment of local communities	10.3	4.7	11.5	28.2	45.3
We gain much from economic policies suggested by local government	11.6	5.4	9.6	48.1	25.3
We are involved in economic decision making in this city operated by the local government	18.7	52.4	11.5	4.1	7.9

Key: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, U = undecided, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Source: Primary Data (2022).

The results in Table 2 indicate that 55.4% of respondents strongly agreed that local–regional management practices boost business sustainability in Kozani, and only 7% strongly disagreed. In total, 62.8% of respondents also agreed that proper decision making enhances the capacity building of city operations, and only 2.7% disagreed. A total of 60.2% of respondents disagreed that the technical abilities of local communities are influenced by local government decisions. In addition, 45.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that sustainable development strategies are key to the empowerment of local communities. Furthermore, 48.1% agreed that they gained much from economic policies suggested by the local government. Finally, 52.4% disagreed with regard to becoming involved in economic decision making in this city operated by the local government.

The responses of the secondary participants also showed that local–regional management practices play a very strategic and important role in enhancing the capacity building and technical abilities of local communities. Most local leaders explained that the mode of policy formulation, the level of involvement of the public in making development decisions, and the level of support from the government all contribute to local and regional development.

“I think that municipalities in Greece that have utilized proper policies and decisions on local development in the last two decades have witnessed significant improvements in human development, relative to those, which have overlooked local economic development strategies (Local leader)”.

The study also sought to assess the barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development; the results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results on barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
	%	%	%	%	%
Unfavorable climatic factors can disrupt local government plans to boost community development	36.8	26.5	24.8	9.4	2.6
Less participation of the local communities in decision making hinders local and regional development	7.9	1.5	9.4	12.6	68.5
Poor multilevel governance can affect desired local development	5.9	7.7	23.2	40.2	23.1
Unfavorable government policies on investment are a hindrance to local and regional development	3.8	4.3	20.2	47.9	23.9
The business class is ignorant about the importance of abiding by local government policies	12.3	6.9	8.7	56.8	15.3

Key: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, U = undecided, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Source: Primary Data (2022).

The results in Table 3 reveal that 36.8% of respondents strongly disagreed that unfavorable climatic factors could disrupt local government plans to boost community development, and only 2.6% strongly agreed. A total of 68.5% of respondents strongly agreed that less participation of the local communities in decision making hinders local and regional development. In total, 40.2% of respondents agreed that poor multilevel governance can affect the desired local development. In addition, 47.9% of the respondents agreed that unfavorable government policies on investment are a hindrance to local and regional development. Finally, 56.8% of the respondents agreed that the business class is ignorant about the importance of abiding by local government policies.

From the interactions with the local leaders, it emerged that limited capacity building can greatly affect the effectiveness of local–regional management strategies toward enhancing development at different levels. One leader stated the below.

“One barrier to regional and local development can be due to lack of capacity building at the local level, most especially when the leaders are disunited or disintegrated from the business community (Leader in Kozani city)”.

This quote is a clear indication that capacity building and equipping the general public with different technical abilities can help enhance the effectiveness of local management strategies toward revamping development at both the local and regional levels.

The study also sought to establish solutions to overcome barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development; the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Solutions to overcome barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development.

	SD	D	U	A	SA
	%	%	%	%	%
Strategic planning is key to enhanced regional and local development	10.1	3.4	6.8	23.3	56.4
Participatory leadership practices help eliminate barriers to development	2.6	6.8	17.1	47.0	26.5
Supporting local investments can help boost regional and local development	4.0	6.0	7.7	30.8	51.5
Proper and people-centered policy formulation is ideal for smooth local and regional transformation	15.3	11.5	16.5	44.9	21.9
Proper budgeting decisions are impactful on local and regional business investments	5.6	1.5	6.6	54.7	31.7

Key: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, U = undecided, A = agree, SA = strongly agree. Source: Primary Data (2022).

The results in Table 4 indicate that 56.4% of respondents strongly agreed that strategic planning is key to enhanced regional and local development. In total, 47.0% of respondents agreed that participatory leadership practices help eliminate barriers to development, while 51.5% strongly agreed that supporting local investments can help boost regional and local development, and 44.9% agreed that proper and people-centered policy formulation is ideal for smooth local and regional transformation. A total of 54.7% agreed that proper budgeting decisions are impactful on local and regional business investments.

These quantitative results are in line with the qualitative responses from the local leaders who majorly focused on people-centered laws, participatory leadership, and proper budgeting decisions as effective strategies to eliminate barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development. One local leader explained that the best strategy to eliminate any barriers to local and regional development is through embedding the different locally based economic development strategies into different available local government initiatives.

“The best elimination method of the existing barriers to local and regional development can be through embedding the different Kozani city local economic development initiatives within the available local government structures in Kozani, Greece (City Leader in Kozani)”.

Another leader in Kozani city noted that proper budgeting and allocation of resources at the local government level helps put in place proper systems that can support growth at the local and regional levels.

“I think the best tool to ensuring smooth transformation of different systems toward sustainable local and regional development is proper budgeting and allocation of resources to the most appropriate areas in Greece (Leader in Kozani)”.

Budgeting is one of the most critical tasks of local government. In budgeting, limited financial resources are allocated to support the delivery of critical public services—from public safety to roads and public transportation, to parks and libraries. Budgeting is an ongoing process. The yearly operational budget of a local government helps achieve the local and regional objectives of the government.

5. Discussion

This research project investigates the efficacy of revamping local and regional development through local–regional management practices, with a focus on Greece. Local–regional management practices are very important in enhancing the capacity building and technical abilities of local communities. The study reveals that municipalities or local governments that utilize well-designed sustainable development strategies have been able to achieve a significant level of economic growth both at local and regional levels.

The approach taken with the present work can be considered as following an evolutionary orientation. The alternation between the preservation of old and new developmental forms reduces the revolving tension between geographical concentration and the dispersion of capital within the national entity. The surrounding intensity is what creates the uneven regional development. The evolutionary perspective we adopt has a number of advantages. Firstly, it makes no assumptions about local development; on the contrary, it emphasizes its dynamics, which pushes us to investigate the uneven regional development and the causes behind it (Martin 2015, 2010).

Specific approaches to regions or specific areas aimed at local development should have an appropriate balance of structural, socio-economic, and institutional-oriented policies and reforms. It is not enough to focus on small and medium-sized enterprises and implement policies aimed at increasing their competitiveness. The viability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises is not only the result of the quality of local human and environmental capital but also of a number of other conditions (Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017; Hudáková and Masár 2018). The study also reveals that sustainable development strategies play a significant role in the economic and social transformation of communities at local levels. Simply thinking about using localized techniques might lead to positive economic development effects (Ioannidis 2016; Pike et al. 2016b). This would indicate that just reflecting on the different local socio-economic situations and investigating how a territory's assets may be used to improve the welfare and livelihoods of the citizens can yield positive results (Pike et al. 2016b). The study also confirms that capacity building helps boost local economic development in most economies, such as that of Greece. Capacity building is always associated with the creation of different development ties as well as networks that involve public, private, and third-sector players. Institutional factors, local capacity restrictions, and policy coordination failures, on the other hand, remain significant hurdles to the general effectiveness of sustainable development measures or strategies (Pugalis and Tan 2017).

In recent years, most development strategies have become associated with different environmental and economic, as well as social, benefits. Sustainable development strategies have several advantages, the first of which is their ability to improve a territory's ability to compete favorably on the global market (Neil and Neil 2005). It is likely that utilizing the most effective sustainable development strategies can help improve the local productive context instead of degrading it (Bastian 2015). The study shows that the involvement of different decision makers in the general design and implementation as well as monitoring of different development strategies helps achieve quick returns with regard to development (Boyce and Brown 2019; Herrmann and Kritikos 2013). Local–regional management practices also offer a novel and exciting way to rethink development initiatives around the world. They are encouraging people in communities to think strategically rather than wait for solutions. As a result, they have a lot to contribute, but local capacity restrictions, coordination issues, and insufficient local institutions may jeopardize their effectiveness. As a result, dealing with capacity and institutional barriers as well as designing solid development plans should be prioritized in order to maximize the development potential of locales around the world.

In addition, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the UN support perceptions that alternate between local and global levels (Salvia et al. 2019; Liverman 2018; Grindsted and Nielsen 2022), and more holistic approaches are being developed in various areas (Grindsted and Nielsen 2022; Yli-Panula et al. 2020; Nightingale 2018). The prin-

principles of sustainable university development and the need to play an important role in regional development require universities to have a close relationship with the economic and business environment to be able to fulfill their role in local–regional development.

Region-based policies are more likely to achieve the desired results when the intervention targets specific areas of development where there are gaps, provided that the other factors shaping local development processes are in situations that facilitate integrated and balanced development strategies. The desired upgrade and reorganization of local human capital cannot take place unless efforts are made to create new jobs for people with specializations adapted to the conditions of the new market (Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2017). At this point, it should be noted that volunteering is an expression of a sincere effort to help in any field. Volunteering brings benefits but also challenges for businesses in many areas directly or indirectly related to local development (Minárová et al. 2021).

6. Conclusions

The purpose of local development is to boost the potential of a specific region in order to improve its economic future and the quality of life of its citizens. Achieving effective local development can help eliminate inequalities between wealthy and poor areas; increase the stock of locally created employment and businesses; improve information exchanges with entrepreneurs, investors, and developers; and improve the coherence and confidence with which local economic strategies are implemented. This may also result in a more precise diagnostic of local economic assets and differentiating advantages, as well as a more thorough assessment of strategy options for the region. Local–regional management practices may be used in a variety of settings, including different degrees of economic growth. Different modern strategies for economic growth are unique in such a way that they function within the constraints given by local contextual circumstances and traits as well as the possibilities offered by them. Therefore, localized techniques may be used in areas with varying degrees, all aiming at achieving high levels of economic growth or development at both local and regional levels.

The study identifies different barriers to the effectiveness of local–regional management practices in enhancing local and regional development. Some of the barriers include the following: unfavorable climatic factors, which could disrupt local government plans to boost community development; less participation of the local communities in decision making; and unfavorable government policies on investment. The study also shows that limited capacity building can greatly affect the effectiveness of local–regional management strategies toward enhancing development at different levels.

It should be noted that capacity building helps enhance the effectiveness of local management strategies toward revamping development at both the local and regional levels. The other best way to address the existing barriers to local and regional development can be through embedding the different local economic development initiatives in Kozani city within the available local government structures in Kozani. The proper budgeting and allocation of resources at the local government level helps put in place proper systems that can support growth at the local and regional levels. Budgeting also helps eliminate barriers to development. When budgeting, limited financial resources are allocated to support the delivery of important public services, thereby facilitating sustainable development.

Recommendations and Future Research

On the basis of the study's findings, some policy proposals to be implemented by regional and municipal authorities are recommended. Specifically, on the regional level (e.g., for the region of Western Macedonia), we propose the adoption and implementation of a policy to raise the awareness of young people and citizens, which would provide the following:

- Mandatory participation in secondary education courses related to local and regional development;

- Annual lectures addressed to citizens and especially young people with an emphasis on the local development decision-making set-up of a mandatory administrative body for municipalities to manage crucial issues and problems of local–regional management with the participation and enhancement of residents.

The findings also show that some of the common barriers to the effectiveness of local management strategies in enhancing regional or local development are poor leadership and limited involvement of the locals in decision making. It is, therefore, important for local governments to practice participatory leadership and also involve the community or the business class in the different decision-making practices toward ensuring local development.

According to this conclusion, the relationships among local development, participation, and leadership in Greece should be the subject of future research.

7. Limitations

The limitations of this work are mainly related to the problems of research design and implementation. A significant limitation of all the efforts is the COVID-19 pandemic. Issues of prejudice are likely to exist, even if efforts were made to avoid them. Another limitation to be considered is the reluctance of the respondents to complete and deliver the questionnaire on time and completed. A future similar analysis may explore the views of a sample that covers the entire region or the country as a whole. In addition, there could be a close connection among technology, University of Western Macedonia, and local–regional development, especially now, as the region of Western Macedonia is in the phase of delignification.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, S.K. and F.C.; methodology, S.K. and D.K.; software, D.K.; validation, F.C. and E.L.; formal analysis, S.K.; investigation, S.K. and D.K.; resources, S.K., E.L. and D.K.; data curation, F.C. and E.L.; writing—original draft preparation, S.K.; writing—review and editing, D.K.; visualization, E.L. and D.K.; supervision, F.C.; project administration, F.C. and E.L.; funding acquisition, F.C. and E.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: Data available on request.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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