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EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES AND MULTI-DISCIPLINARY APPROACHES FOR THE ANALYSIS OF A TERRITORY AND THE FOSTERING OF DURABLE AND SUSTAINABLE SELF-MANAGED STRATEGIC PLANNING: THE MA.SA.MA. PROJECT, A RURAL CASE STUDY IN EL SALVADOR

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This contribution presents a participatory and multi-disciplinary approach to the development issues of a deprived area of El Salvador. Here, the various dimensions of sustainability are not taken for granted, and the area is characterized by an unproductive and undiversified rural economy, scarce access to resources and funding, as well as increasing environmental plights.

Thus, appropriate planning and technological actions were drawn up for designing strategies, projects and practices aimed at promoting social development and achieving basic, essential conditions for granting durable acceptable living conditions in a healthy environment.

Participatory, co-planning and co-design processes were tailored and put into action together with the local communities. This helped supporting people's empowerment by increasing their awareness, knowledge, skills, and self-organization capabilities. It also defined an innovative model aimed at overcoming unbalanced decision-making processes and supporting the collaborative work of the population towards the creation of shared development strategies, thought to be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

Beside participative territorial analysis, and the subsequent development of guidelines and strategic lines of action, some value-added results have been achieved, such as the strengthening of the relations among local groups, and the creation of a system to share problems and potentials, and respectively solve and enhance them through the formulation of common goals and strategies.

The contribution focuses on the difficulties the project run through, and reflects on the effectiveness of participatory design processes to promote sustainable, innovative models of development within complex environments.

Keywords: community engagement, empowerment, co-planning, sustainability