ABSTRACT

The quality of life and spatial development that meets public needs play an increasingly important role in an era of globalization and rapid urbanization. Social participation can be defined as the citizens' active involvement in decision-making processes concerning public issues that influence their lives and the surrounding environment. Social participation is a key element of spatial planning. The digital transformation and the development of e-administration create new opportunities for engaging communities in participatory processes. Public Participation Geographic Information Systems (PPGIS) play an important role in this context. These systems have been designed to involve citizens in the process of gathering spatial data and knowledge that is essential in spatial development, and they can also enhance social participation. This dissertation focuses on geosurveys as PPGIS tools that constitute both a data source and a research instrument.

This dissertation has two main goals. The first goal was to design and implement a universal procedural model by developing and testing the research tool (geosurvey questionnaire) in several stages. The second goal was to determine the role, significance, and perceptions of social participation and PPGIS in spatial development. This goal was achieved through seven specific objectives.

The study was conducted on one of the key stakeholder groups, namely residents and users of space. A number of statistical and cartographic methods were used for analytical purposes. The applicability of PPGIS as sources of information about space was evaluated, and the strengths and weaknesses of these tools in participatory processes were identified. The quality of spatial data acquired with the use of a geosurvey was also assessed. In addition, perceptions of social participation and PPGIS were evaluated; the factors that motivate or discourage community members from social participation were identified, and methods for improving public participation were described. The results were used to formulate recommendations for organizing participatory processes, including with the use of PPGIS. Recommendations for specific research areas were also made.

The results of this study constitute a valuable source of knowledge for public authorities, spatial planning experts, and other stakeholders who are involved in spatial development processes not only at the local or domestic level, but also in the international arena. The resulting knowledge can be applied to develop new solutions that increase public participation in decision-making processes, enhance social participation, and facilitate participatory processes. These findings can also promote the use of PPGIS tools in social participation.