Usability of Planning Support Systems: An Evaluation Framework

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Abstract

Previous research on Planning Support Systems (PSS) showed that low usability of these computer-based tools is one of the reasons why they are not widely used by planning professionals. Few studies for evaluating PSS usability are performed, possibly because developers do not regard it as their task, do not have enough skills to conduct them, and have not been stimulated so far to appreciate their value. In this chapter, a framework is described that aims at guiding usability evaluation of PSS; it is developed on the basis of a more general usability evaluation framework. The current version of the framework has been applied to evaluate three PSS by performing a test with a small group of land use planners. Results of this user test are discussed, also providing some recommendations for the design of PSS, specifically those addressing Land Suitability Analysis (LSA), capable to generate a positive user experience.

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