

INTEGRATING GEOSPATIAL TECHNOLOGIES IN LAND SURVEYING TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Received: 07/03/2026 | Accepted: 01/05/2026 | Published: 26/05/2026

Abstract: The rapid advancement of geospatial technologies has transformed land surveying, providing innovative solutions to environmental, engineering, and developmental challenges. This study explores the integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Global Positioning System (GPS), and Remote Sensing in contemporary surveying practices. It examines the ways these technologies enhance accuracy, efficiency, and decision-making in engineering surveying, renewable energy planning, and climate change mitigation. Employing a conceptual and analytical methodology, the study reviews current literature, technical reports, and practical applications to assess the contribution of geospatial tools toward sustainable development. Findings indicate that the integration of GIS, GPS, and remote sensing significantly improves spatial data management, facilitates infrastructure planning, and strengthens environmental monitoring. Nevertheless, challenges such as high costs, limited technical expertise, and inadequate infrastructure hinder their optimal utilization, especially in developing regions. The study concludes that strategic investment in training, policy frameworks, and technological infrastructure is crucial to fully leverage geospatial technologies for sustainable development.

Keywords: Land Surveying, GIS, GPS, Remote Sensing, Renewable Energy, Climate Change, Sustainable Development.

1. Introduction

Land surveying is a foundational discipline within engineering, urban planning, and environmental management. It encompasses the measurement, mapping, and analysis of the Earth's surface to identify spatial relationships, define property boundaries, and inform decision-making processes (Wolf & Ghilani, 2012). Historically, surveying relied heavily on manual techniques using chains, compasses, levels, and theodolites. While these methods provided baseline accuracy, they were labor-intensive, time-consuming, and susceptible to human error (Burrough & McDonnell, 1998).

The advent of geospatial technologies—including GIS, GPS, and remote sensing—has significantly transformed land surveying practices. These tools enable precise, efficient, and scalable collection, storage, and analysis of spatial data, extending the role of surveyors beyond boundary delineation to encompass environmental monitoring, disaster management, urban planning, and sustainable development assessment (Longley et al., 2015).

The need for these technologies is particularly acute in developing countries, where rapid urban expansion, environmental degradation, and climate-related risks necessitate advanced spatial tools for planning and resource management. The integration of GIS, GPS, and remote sensing not only increases surveying accuracy but also enhances the capacity of policymakers, engineers, and urban planners to make informed decisions (Jensen, 2007).

This study investigates the current applications of geospatial technologies in land surveying, emphasizing their role in engineering surveying, renewable energy deployment, climate change adaptation, and sustainable development. The study aims to provide a comprehensive review of practical applications, technical benefits, and the socio-economic implications of these technologies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Evolution of Land Surveying

Land surveying has evolved from rudimentary geometric measurements to advanced satellite-based systems. Early surveying practices relied on chains, compasses, and manual triangulation to measure land parcels. The introduction of optical instruments such as theodolites and levels in the 17th and 18th centuries enhanced angular measurements and vertical accuracy (Wolf & Ghilani, 2012).

In the late 20th century, electronic distance measurement (EDM) devices and total stations improved accuracy and reduced manual labor. Total stations integrate angular and distance measurements electronically, enabling rapid data collection and analysis (Lillesand et al., 2015).

Satellite-based technologies, particularly GPS, revolutionized surveying by providing real-time, high-precision positional data. GIS emerged as a tool for managing, analyzing, and visualizing spatial information, while remote sensing offered the ability to collect data over large areas, facilitating environmental monitoring

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and resource management (Longley *et al.*, 2015). These technologies collectively expanded surveying from simple boundary measurement to multi-dimensional spatial analysis, crucial for sustainable development initiatives.

2.2 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

GIS is a digital platform for capturing, storing, manipulating, analyzing, and visualizing geographic data (Burrough & McDonnell, 1998). It enables decision-makers to integrate spatial and non-spatial data to support complex planning tasks, including land-use allocation, environmental impact assessment, and urban infrastructure development (Longley *et al.*, 2015).

Key functionalities of GIS include:

Spatial analysis: Enables pattern detection, proximity assessment, and suitability modeling (Jensen, 2007).

Data visualization: Supports the generation of maps, 3D models, and interactive dashboards.

Decision support: Assists policymakers in evaluating alternatives and predicting outcomes of spatial interventions (Burrough & McDonnell, 1998).

For example, GIS has been employed in urban flood management by overlaying topographic data, drainage networks, and rainfall projections to identify flood-prone zones (Kumar *et al.*, 2020).

2.3 Global Positioning System (GPS)

GPS is a satellite-based navigation system that provides accurate positioning, timing, and velocity data globally. In land surveying, GPS is utilized for:

Boundary determination: Establishing property lines with high precision.

Topographic mapping: Producing digital terrain models for engineering and environmental applications.

Engineering measurements: Supporting construction layout and structural design (Wolf & Ghilani, 2012).

GPS improves fieldwork efficiency by reducing time-intensive manual measurements and increasing positional accuracy. Its integration with GIS allows for real-time data collection and mapping, which is critical for disaster response and urban planning (El-Rabbany, 2006).

2.4 Remote Sensing

Remote sensing involves acquiring data about the Earth's surface without direct contact, typically through satellite or aerial sensors. Remote sensing is instrumental in:

Land use and land cover analysis: Monitoring deforestation, urban sprawl, and agricultural patterns.

Environmental monitoring: Tracking pollution, water quality, and ecosystem health.

Climate change studies: Assessing temperature trends, ice cover, and sea-level rise (Lillesand *et al.*, 2015).

The integration of remote sensing with GIS allows for multi-temporal analysis, enabling decision-makers to observe changes over time and plan interventions accordingly.



Fig 1: Handheld GPS land meter

2.5 Geospatial Technologies and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development requires balancing economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. Geospatial technologies contribute by:

Resource management: Mapping water resources, forests, and energy potential.

Environmental protection: Identifying vulnerable ecosystems and monitoring degradation.

Infrastructure planning: Optimizing road networks, energy distribution, and urban expansion (Longley *et al.*, 2015).

For example, GIS-based site selection models for solar farms consider solar irradiance, land availability, proximity to transmission lines, and environmental constraints, ensuring minimal ecological disruption while maximizing energy efficiency (Chandel *et al.*, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative, analytical, and conceptual research design. It incorporates:

A systematic review of peer-reviewed literature on GIS, GPS, and remote sensing applications in land surveying.

Case analyses of geospatial technology implementation in sustainable development projects.

Conceptual modeling to demonstrate the integration of geospatial tools in environmental and infrastructural planning.

3.2 Data Sources

Data were obtained from:

Academic journals, including Journal of Geospatial Engineering and International Journal of Remote Sensing.

Technical reports from international agencies such as the United Nations, FAO, and NASA.

Books on GIS, GPS, and remote sensing (*Burrough & McDonnell, 1998; Lillesand et al., 2015*).

3.3 Analytical Approach

The study analyzes:

Surveying accuracy: Comparison of traditional versus geospatial methods.

Environmental monitoring: Use of remote sensing and GIS to track land degradation and climate trends.

Infrastructure development: Optimization of renewable energy site selection, urban planning, and road networks.

4. Applications of Geospatial Technologies in Land Surveying

4.1 GIS Applications

GIS applications in land surveying include:

Application	Description	Example
Urban Planning	Mapping and zoning	Identifying suitable residential and commercial zones (<i>Kumar et al., 2020</i>)
Environmental Monitoring	Tracking land cover changes	Deforestation monitoring using multi-temporal satellite images (<i>Singh et al., 2020</i>)
Infrastructure Planning	Road and utility design	Optimizing road networks and power grid layouts (<i>Longley et al., 2015</i>)

GIS is particularly useful in urban flood modeling, disaster preparedness, and land suitability analysis for sustainable agriculture.

4.2 GPS Applications

GPS enhances surveying through:

Measurement accuracy: Reducing errors in field data collection.

Fieldwork efficiency: Allowing rapid mapping of large terrains.

Data reliability: Facilitating real-time updates integrated with GIS (*El-Rabbany, 2006*).

For example, GPS-based cadastral surveys reduce disputes over land boundaries by providing precise

4.3 Remote Sensing Applications

Remote sensing is widely used in surveying and sustainable development for:

Application	Description	Example
Land Cover Analysis	Classifying vegetation, urban, and water bodies	Mapping forest cover change using Landsat imagery (<i>Singh et al., 2020</i>)
Disaster Management	Monitoring hazards like floods, landslides	Satellite monitoring of flood-prone areas in Bangladesh (<i>Rahman et al., 2021</i>)
Climate Monitoring	Tracking temperature, precipitation, and sea-level rise	Monitoring Arctic ice melt using MODIS and Sentinel satellites (<i>Jain et al., 2021</i>)

Remote sensing provides spatial and temporal data that is difficult to obtain via traditional methods. By integrating these datasets with GIS, decision-makers can visualize trends, forecast changes, and implement mitigation strategies efficiently.

5. Case Studies of Geospatial Technologies in Sustainable Development

5.1 Urban Planning in Nairobi, Kenya

In Nairobi, rapid urban expansion led to unplanned settlements and infrastructural challenges. GIS was employed to map land-use patterns, identify high-risk flood zones, and develop zoning regulations. GPS surveys provided accurate positional data for infrastructure projects, while remote sensing helped monitor vegetation loss and urban sprawl over time. The integration of these tools resulted in optimized land use, reduced flooding risks, and improved urban planning efficiency (*Mumo et al., 2020*).

5.2 Renewable Energy Site Selection in India

The Indian government used GIS and remote sensing to identify suitable sites for solar and wind energy farms. GIS layers included solar irradiance, land ownership, distance to the power grid, and environmental sensitivity. Remote sensing data provided land cover and slope information, while GPS enabled accurate field verification. This approach minimized environmental impact, optimized energy yield, and reduced site selection time from months to weeks (*Chandel et al., 2015*).

5.3 Coastal Monitoring in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, prone to cyclones and rising sea levels, utilized remote sensing combined with GIS to monitor coastal erosion and

predict areas of potential inundation. Landsat and Sentinel satellite images were analyzed to detect changes in shoreline and mangrove forest coverage. GPS surveys validated high-risk zones for relocation and disaster mitigation planning. This project demonstrated how geospatial technologies support climate change adaptation and disaster resilience (Rahman et al., 2021).

5.4 Deforestation Monitoring in the Amazon

Remote sensing and GIS are extensively applied in the Amazon rainforest for monitoring deforestation. MODIS and Landsat imagery detect deforestation hotspots, while GIS integrates socio-economic and environmental data to prioritize areas for conservation. GPS-enabled field surveys validate satellite observations. The integrated system informs policy interventions, supports sustainable forestry management, and mitigates biodiversity loss (Barber et al., 2014).

5.5 Urban Flood Management in Lagos, Nigeria

Lagos, Nigeria's largest city, faces severe flooding due to rapid urbanization, poor drainage, and climate change-induced heavy rainfall. The integration of geospatial technologies has become critical in mitigating flood risks and planning sustainable urban infrastructure.

Application of GIS: GIS has been used to map flood-prone areas by overlaying topographical data, land-use patterns, drainage

networks, and population density. This analysis identifies high-risk zones and supports urban planning decisions such as zoning restrictions, relocation strategies, and emergency response planning (Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

Application of Remote Sensing: Satellite imagery from Landsat and Sentinel-2 has been used to monitor water bodies, detect seasonal changes, and assess the impact of urban expansion on flood susceptibility. Remote sensing enables multi-temporal analysis, allowing authorities to track changes over time and predict potential flooding events (Adelekan & Asiyambi, 2016).

Application of GPS: Field surveys using GPS devices validate GIS and remote sensing data, ensuring accurate mapping of drainage channels, water catchments, and residential settlements. GPS supports precision in flood risk modeling and infrastructure planning.

Impact: The integration of GIS, GPS, and remote sensing has allowed the Lagos State Government to implement flood mitigation strategies such as improved drainage networks, flood early warning systems, and urban development guidelines. This geospatial approach has reduced flood-related damages and enhanced resilience in vulnerable communities (Olanrewaju et al., 2021).

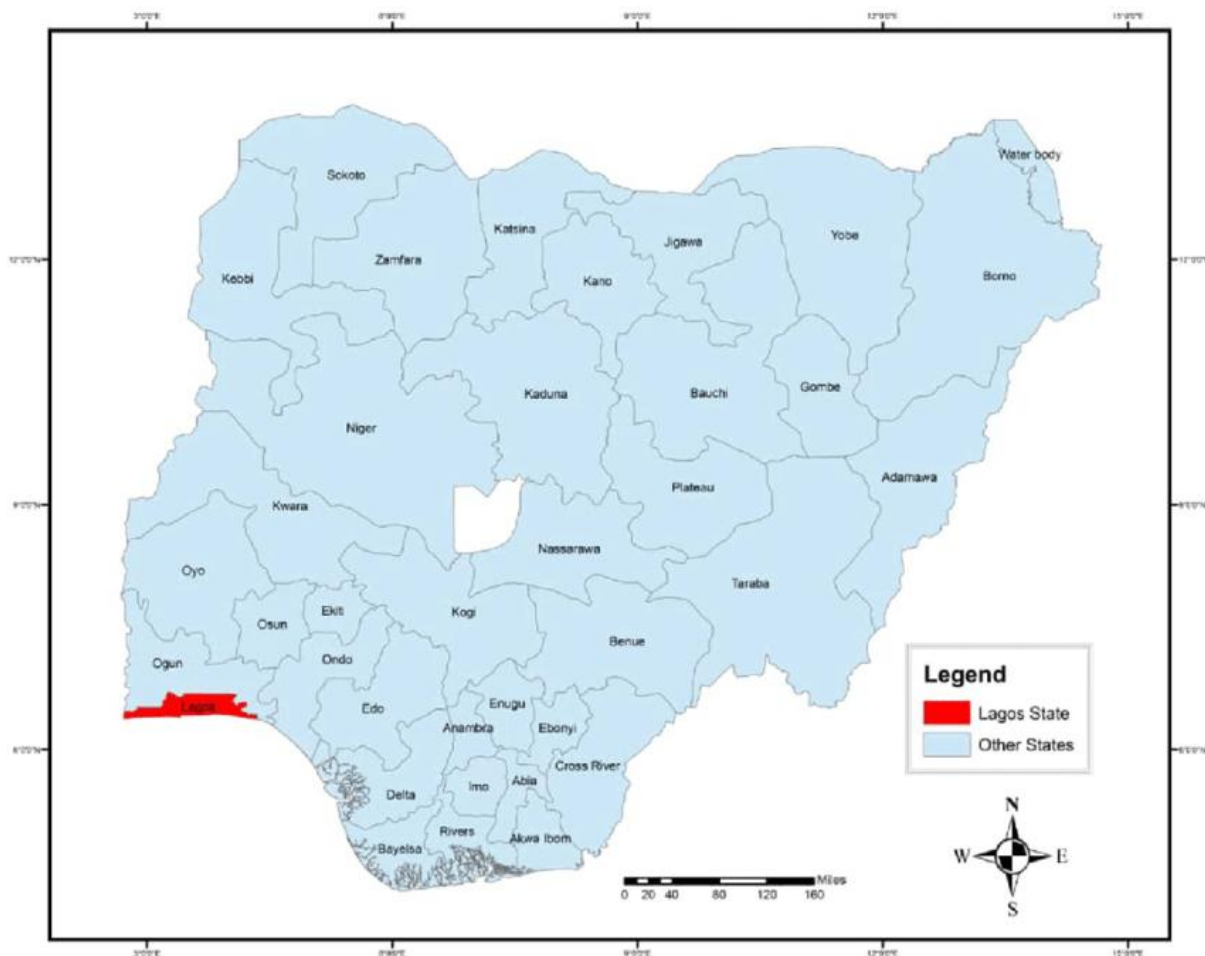


Fig 2: Map of Nigeria showing Lagos state

6. Challenges in Integrating Geospatial Technologies

Despite their potential, geospatial technologies face several challenges, especially in developing countries:

High Equipment Costs: Advanced GPS units, remote sensing software, and GIS platforms can be prohibitively expensive for small institutions (*El-Rabbany, 2006*).

Limited Technical Expertise: Skilled personnel are required for data collection, analysis, and modeling. Lack of training limits effective use (*Longley et al., 2015*).

Inadequate Infrastructure: Poor internet connectivity, unreliable power supply, and lack of hardware hinder data processing and real-time applications (*Mumo et al., 2020*).

Policy and Regulatory Gaps: Absence of supportive government policies can delay technology adoption in urban planning and environmental management (*Chandel et al., 2015*).

Data Availability and Accessibility: High-resolution satellite imagery may be restricted, costly, or unavailable for certain regions (*Jain et al., 2021*).

7. Discussion

The integration of GIS, GPS, and remote sensing has transformed land surveying from a linear measurement task to a multi-dimensional, data-driven discipline. The synergy of these technologies improves surveying accuracy, enhances fieldwork efficiency, and supports evidence-based decision-making in urban planning, renewable energy, and climate adaptation.

Case studies from Nairobi, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria and the Amazon illustrate tangible benefits. For example, GIS-based urban planning in Nairobi improved flood risk management, while renewable energy site selection in India minimized environmental disruption. Coastal monitoring in Bangladesh demonstrated real-time climate adaptation strategies, and deforestation tracking in the Amazon supported sustainable forest management.

The inclusion of the Lagos case study highlights the practical application of geospatial technologies in a developing country context. Across Nairobi, India, Bangladesh, the Amazon, and Lagos, GIS, GPS, and remote sensing have proven indispensable for sustainable development. Specifically, in Lagos, Nigeria, these technologies enabled precise urban flood risk mapping, early warning, and strategic infrastructure planning.

Challenges remain, particularly in resource-limited settings where technical expertise, funding, and policy support are limited. However, case studies indicate that with targeted investment in human capacity, technology, and data infrastructure, geospatial technologies can significantly enhance urban resilience, environmental management, and sustainable development outcomes.

Despite these advantages, widespread adoption is limited by economic, technical, and institutional barriers. Addressing these challenges requires multi-faceted approaches, including capacity building, technology transfer, policy development, and international collaboration.

8. Recommendations

To maximize the potential of geospatial technologies in sustainable development:

Invest in Education and Training: Establish university programs, workshops, and certifications to enhance technical capacity in GIS, GPS, and remote sensing (*Longley et al., 2015*).

Government Support and Policy Frameworks: Governments should provide subsidies, regulatory support, and strategic plans for geospatial technology adoption in urban planning and environmental monitoring (*Chandel et al., 2015*).

International Collaboration: Partnerships with international organizations can facilitate knowledge transfer, data access, and funding support for technology implementation (*Jain et al., 2021*).

Adopt Modern Technologies: Encourage the use of cloud-based GIS, UAV (drone) surveys, and open-source platforms to reduce costs and enhance data accessibility (*Kumar et al., 2020*).

Promote Data Integration and Sharing: Develop national spatial data infrastructures (NSDI) to centralize geospatial datasets for government agencies, private sectors, and researchers (*Longley et al., 2015*).

9. Conclusion

Geospatial technologies—GIS, GPS, and remote sensing—have redefined land surveying as a dynamic, multi-functional discipline that supports sustainable development. Their integration improves spatial data management, enhances infrastructure planning, and strengthens environmental monitoring. Case studies demonstrate practical applications in urban planning, renewable energy, climate adaptation, and biodiversity conservation.

However, challenges such as high costs, limited technical skills, inadequate infrastructure, and policy gaps continue to restrict their widespread adoption, especially in developing countries. Addressing these challenges through investment in education, supportive policies, international collaboration, and modern technology adoption is essential to unlock the full potential of geospatial tools.

Ultimately, integrating geospatial technologies in land surveying is indispensable for promoting sustainable development, improving resource management, and fostering resilient communities.

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