

Abstract of paper to be presented at the 11-th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management, June 16-19 2005, Östersund, Sweden

Mapping the attractiveness of the Dutch landscape nation-wide

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The main objective of Dutch nature policy is to make an essential contribution to a liveable and sustainable society through the conservation, restoration, development, and sustainable use of nature and landscape. An explicit motives behind this objective is that the Dutch government feels that ‘we want a beautiful country to live and work in (liveability)’. To accommodate this desire, it is necessary to know where people like the landscape in their environment and where they do not. It is also important to know which physical characteristics of the landscape contribute to this attractiveness. To provide such information in a cost-efficient way, a GIS-based model was developed to map, monitor, and simulate the attractiveness of the landscape in one’s living environment. The model predicts this attractiveness solely based on nationally available GIS-data on the landscape. The most recent version of the model was developed in interaction with the outcomes of a national survey among almost 3000 Dutch residents. It distinguishes three positive GIS-indicators: Naturalness, Historical distinctiveness, Relief, and three negative ones: Skyline pollution, Urbanisation, Noise level. Each indicator has five levels signifying how positive (or negative) the physical state of the landscape is thought to be evaluated by the average Dutch resident with regard to this aspect. These six indicators explain 36% of the variance in attractiveness scores (averaged over three or more respondents rating the same landscape). The survey data also allowed us to validate some of the GIS-indicators separately. In the discussion attention is paid to the further development and validation of the model and its usefulness as a tool for policy makers and spatial planners.