Deconstructing the Crystal Ball: the State of the Art in Predictive Modelling for Archaeological Heritage Management in the Netherlands

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See the CD for the Paper   Abstract

This paper presents the first results of a three-year study into the application of predictive modelling techniques in archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands. Predictive maps play an increasingly important role in the decision making process for planning schemes on a municipal, provincial and national level but at the same time the validity and reliability of the models that form the basis of predictive modelling have been questioned internationally. In the Netherlands a national research team recently started a project called "Strategic research into, and development of best practice for, predictive modelling on behalf of Dutch Cultural Resource Management".

The goal of the project, which runs until the beginning of 2005, is a thorough analysis of the various models and methods used in current predictive modelling practice, the exploration of possibilities for methodological improvement and greater efficiency, and the formulation of recommendations for the Dutch Handbook of Archaeological Quality Norms (http://www.cvak.org/).

The first phase of the project is now completed. This paper presents a review of the current practice of both commercial and governmental predictive modelling in the Netherlands. In some ways the conclusions are remarkable.