

## Cultural heritage tourism as potential to combat decline in Bourtagne



Source: map from [www.bourtange.nl](http://www.bourtange.nl)

**Bachelor's thesis Human Geography and Urban and Regional Planning  
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## **Abstract**

According to the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands there are four functions that heritage has in declining regions: attracting tourists and potential settlers; attracting economic activities; connecting residents with their living environment; and connecting residents to each other. This paper discusses how cultural heritage can combat the decline by attracting tourists and potential settlers in a case study of Bourtange. The region is suffering from depopulation and economic degradation for years now due to the disappearance of jobs which caused people to move to the cities. Bourtange is a fortress that has been renovated to combat the decline and provide jobs for the people living there. There will be looked at how Bourtange succeeds in attracting tourists and the importance of the tourist sector has for the economy. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with policymakers, the site manager and residents. While Groningen is one of the least visited provinces of the Netherlands, Bourtange is one of the highlights of the province, in terms of the amount of visitors and cultural heritage. However, it became clear that the lack of jobs, which is usually causing decline, is not the only problem the region has been facing. The geographical distance and the negative image of the region are reasons for people not to move as well.

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## Introduction

Rural unemployment has been seen as one of the greatest factors that cause people to move from the countryside to cities (Weekley, 1988). Especially peripheral rural areas are still facing problems, because companies and governments are mostly focused on urban areas where the economic growth is concentrated (Blichfeldt and Halkier, 2014). While their main focus is urban areas, governments and policymakers often try to create tools for development to combat the social and economic problems that peripheral rural areas have been facing. These problems include growing unemployment, out-migration, aging population and the disappearance of local services (Keyim, 2018). To develop these declining regions there are multiple strategies to improve the social and economic wellbeing of the residents.

The strategy this paper focuses on is the creation of a tourist sector in declining regions. Tourism could be an interesting sector in relation to regional development because tourism may stabilise communities in a stage of economic or social degradation by raising the standards of living through economic benefits (McCool and Martin, 1994). Tourism can provide positive developments like creating jobs, start new activities, a growth of services and an increased interest in the local products and traditions (Fonseca and Ramos, 2011). To develop a tourist sector, the place has to make itself attractive for visitors. What a place makes attractive differs among different places. Heritage is an increasingly important aspect that attracts people to a specific place.

Heritage tourism as attraction is a well analysed area of research in fields of marketing and management. However, “the development of heritage tourism in peripheral regions is much less explored and can be seen as under-researched in literature” (Fonseca and Ramos, 2011 p. 468). On the other hand, the research previously done in marketing and promotion was mostly focused on attempts to attract businesses and tourists. “Few studies have explicitly examined marketing and migration in a comprehensive way” (Niedomysl, 2007 p. 698). This research aims to find whether heritage tourism can decrease the decline by attracting tourists and potential settlers, through a case study.

Therefore, the research question discussed in this paper will be: How can cultural heritage combat the decline of Bourtange by attracting tourists and potential settlers? To help answer the research question, this research will try to look at the functions of heritage in declining regions and how Bourtange makes itself attractive. The following secondary questions will be discussed: how does Bourtange use its heritage to attract tourists? How important is the tourist sector for Bourtange? How is heritage tourism used to combat the decline of Bourtange?

Bourtange is an old fortress in the municipality of Westerwolde, within the province of Groningen, that is quite popular for visitors due to its heritage. It has multiple buildings on the national heritage list. The original fortress was built in 1593 and never got occupied in its years of existence. However, after 300 years it started to go downhill since the fortress could not be used for defence again and most of the fortress was demolished. After the region faced depopulation from the 1960s, the fortress was rebuilt and renovated to attract tourists and potential settlers (Knoop, 2013). Nowadays Bourtange is still trying to make itself attractive and it is visited by around 200.000 tourists every year (Looden, 2018). Attracting new tourists is a challenge that the whole province has to face. The province of Groningen is one of the least attractive destinations for tourists (Marketing Groningen, interview). The increase in tourism is the chosen option to extend the tourist industry and fight the decline. The region needs an impulse because it is still suffering from an aging population and depopulation.

The results of this research could lead to new insights and knowledge about the relations between heritage tourism and depopulation. This paper will build on recent research from Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Graaf et al. 2014b) about decline and heritage in Europe, in which they conclude that heritage can have multiple functions in declining regions.

### Structure of the thesis

This thesis follows with a theoretical framework that looks at theories concerning regional development and tourism, and heritage and its functions. These insights are used to make a conceptual model. The next sections describe the methodology used and the results of the multiple interviews held. Lastly, this research is concluded and recommendations are given for further research. In the last section is also a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of this research.

## **Theoretical framework**

### Tourism and regional development

The development of a tourist sector can help rural communities increase their local income and employment, the maintenance of services and facilities, and to conserve heritage (Keyim, 2018). “Especially in parts of Europe, tourism has become synonymous with regional development in rural and peripheral areas and considered as one way in which marginal regions can overcome their continuing stagnation or decline and instead prosper anew as post-productive places” (Rogerson, 2015 p. 280). Governments and policymakers often focus on tourism as a tool for development. While tourism has been seen as a tool to stimulate economic growth and improve the standards of living, there are challenges to achieve local and regional development. Tourism should be more region based which is a ‘development first’ approach, rather than business based which is purely focused on economic gains (Stoffelen and Vanneste, 2017). This ‘development first’ view is also sought in the case of Kim and Kim (2013) where the government should be conducting a strategy for tourism that fits the specific place by considering the public good instead of the business outcome.

### Heritage

Heritage is an aspect that is attractive for tourism development. There are different forms of heritage, like cultural and natural heritage. For this research, when using the term heritage it will be referring to the cultural form only. The World Heritage Convention (1972) considered monuments, groups of buildings and sited as cultural heritage. Although, heritage is often seen as something physical, it can also be seen as the meaning and importance that people attach to a place. All kinds of non-physical aspects, like social habits, rituals and events, are part of cultural heritage. Heritage has adapted a more diverse and inclusive definition, heritage is now for increased importance of people’s sense of belonging and cultural identity (Tweed and Sutherland, 2007). Heritage is something that gives the place its own uniqueness, and can be attractive for tourists.

Heritage can also be used as a tool to combat decline in regions, both depopulation and economic degradation. Research from Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Graaf et al. 2014b) concluded that heritage has the potential to attract and connect people. In the following section, each of the four functions will be discussed.

### Attract tourists and potential settlers

Heritage provides a place its own unique identity that could to be used to brand the place (Graaf et al. 2014a). With the right branding methods the place can convince people to come visit or even move there. According to Tweed and Sutherland (2007) are especially places with architectural and historical value attractive. Walled towns, like the fortress, are naturally heritage tourism assets (Ashworth and Bruce, 2009). Heritage has become one of the fastest growing aspects that attracts people to a place and has become the basis of tourism development (Poria et al. 2003). The case of Harrill (2004) suggests that residents often, while being concerned about unmanaged growth, support additional tourism development. Cooperation and willingness of the local community is essential for the success and

sustainability of long term tourism development, because the residents' views are important for the local government, policymakers and businesses (Stylidis et al. 2014).

With the increase of tourism, heritage management becomes more important. Heritage tourism management should aim to seek balance between preservation of the heritage site and providing economic development opportunities for the local community (Chen and Chen, 2010). According to their research are residents who are highly attached to the community more likely to view tourism as having positive impacts and support the tourism development more. Collaborative governance, which is bottom-up collaboration between state and non-state, is desirable to maximise the socio-economic benefits from tourism for the local community (Keyim, 2016). The case of Fonseca and Ramos (2011) highlights the importance of collaborative governance: the strong fragmentation between public and private entities and the lack of tourism management cause the heritage site to have problems as a destination. Without proper planning and management, or evenly distributed economic benefits from tourism, residents could repel tourists which could contribute to the decline of attractiveness of the destination (Harrill, 2004). As argued by Chen and Chen (2010) are residents who are more involved with tourism most likely to participate in a government policy of tourism development and are more willing to preserve the heritage site.

Place promotion and marketing is one of the key concerns of many authorities. However, most promotion and marketing campaigns have focused on attracting tourists or businesses instead of migration (Niedomysl, 2007). The case of Niedomysl (2007) aimed at finding whether place marketing and promotion can attract people to move to the specific place. While the local government believes in its success, the results seem different. On the one hand it is unlikely that people will move due to marketing campaigns, but on the other hand the promotion could be a potential trigger for people who were already thinking of moving (Niedomysl, 2007).

#### Attract pioneers to start new activities

Positive impacts of heritage tourism include, according to Fonseca and Ramos (2011), new economic opportunities for development, growth of services and activities, diversification, commercialising of local products, and even improvement of the heritage available. The increase in tourism can help the demand of local facilities and provide more consumers. New services are not only in the tourist sector but can also attract small-scale enterprises and help the local facilities (Fernandes, 2009). Providing services and facilities around the heritage site for residents and visitors can improve the economic benefits to residents and the community, and help regional regeneration. But the managers have to be careful with choosing these locations, because the heritage site should not be feeling over-commercialised (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). This could harm the 'sense of place' for residents and tourists.

The case of Kim and Kim (2013) conclude that the government focuses on the development that foster growth of local services and facilities through planning, adjusting, inspecting and engaging in tourism. While the revival of the regional economy seems successful, it requires a concentrated investment. According to Haarmann et al. (2015) is reallocation a possibility for the government to attract businesses and entrepreneurs, since it is less likely for private parties to invest in declining regions due to the lower buying power of the residents. Although, when the reallocation is governed top-down there is mostly not a lot of support by entrepreneurs, residents and businesses (Haarmann et al. 2015). Governments are using adaptive reuse to

combat and prevent the decline of heritage sites (Haarmann et al. 2015). These sites are mostly planned to preserve its cultural value, by creating for example museums. This emphasizes the cultural and historical value of the place or building, it is an emphasis on the 'sense of place'. However, as argued by Haarmann et al. (2015) other economic activities profit less from using the heritage sites, because it does not have added value for their businesses.

Ashworth and Bruce (2009) argue that the economic development options are very limited in walled towns as well. The only space to create new facilities is inside the town walls. To start new activities entrepreneurs have to be creative or use the buildings available. Therefore, tourism is for these places the best option for economic development (Ashworth and Bruce, 2009). Although, the case of Ribeiro and Marques (2002, in Fonseca and Ramos, 2011) concluded that tourism did not have all the economic benefits that the local community had hoped for. Tourism generates low incomes because of the lack of money spend by the tourists and the amount of tourists visiting is very depended on seasonality.

### Connect residents to their living environment

For declining regions are the values that heritage give to the community for great importance, because local heritage can provide the population with identity, pride, foundations and direction (Graaf et al. 2014a). Residents are shaping the physical environment and give meaning to the place because the landscape is providing various kinds of opportunities for personal development (Gustafson, 2001). Architecture, historic buildings and physical heritage can be seen as landmarks. These landmarks will be remembered by the people that have visited the place. The residents attach their identity to these eye-catching buildings, which makes the place unique. The characteristic environment, architecture, history or local products give the place the feeling of home, a 'sense of place' (Graaf et al. 2014b). Heritage sites should also seek to provide the local community with a greater 'sense of place' and work in harmony with the community (Garrod and Fyall, 2000).

However, there could be an impact to the residents 'sense of place' with the increase of tourism. There are two opposing impacts according to Silva (2014), on the one hand the increase of social cohesion and place pride, but on the other hand envy and competition. Residents that live in or near a heritage site could be disturbed by tourists. Tourists could harm the perception of the living environment. In the case discussed by Silva (2014) the negative impacts offset the benefits, these include a loss of privacy and building restrictions. "Visitors should not be afforded use of the heritage asset at the expense of locals" (Garrod and Fyall, 2000 p. 691). Although, according to their research is the local community the least important aspect of heritage sites.

Public connection to the living environment and awareness of heritage could on the other hand help to battle the decline in the region. There are many heritage sites and historic buildings that have been lost due to the lack of awareness of these sites (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). Raising the knowledge of the heritage sites could help to preserve it. The connection between environment and residents is according to Gustafson (2001) a part of 'meaning of place'. The physical buildings and monuments are not only relics of the past, they now carry immaterial values, like stories, memories and emotions (Graaf et al. 2014b). The relation between what Gustafson (2001) calls 'self' and 'environment' is mostly build on knowledge that individuals have about the place. As Nyaupane and Timothy (2010) suggest

that in-depth understanding of heritage and buildings can help to become more concerned with it and increase the willingness to protect it. If residents and other users are more aware of the past of the heritage site, than they would have more positive attitudes toward preservation. Therefore, visitors experiences should be seen as a key element of heritage management by policymakers and site managers (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010).

### Bring residents more together

Decline is causing an increase in geographical and social distance. The social distance is increased due to the disappearance of people that were previously part of the local community (Graaf et al. 2014a). Heritage can provide residents with the feeling of being part of a community, because heritage is an aspect that all the residents have in common and can provide a collective identity. Social cohesion and mutual trust can build shared values that enable the residents to feel empowered. Public empowerment, participation, local interests and benefits are increasingly important for managing heritage sites (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). However, in the case of Fernandes (2009) are residents not concerned or interested about overcoming difficulties in the community and do not feel engaged in the community development process. Communities without clear roles and village meetings for common interests encourage resistance, more social distance and cause residents to feel disempowered (Fernandes, 2009).

Public policies have focused on the concept of community with concerns about regeneration, social inclusion and civil engagement (Waterton and Smith, 2010). The local preservation of cultural heritage is not just physical objects that are being protected, it is more about the social process of the community (Mydland and Grahn, 2012). A possible way that heritage could improve the social cohesion is by 'community driven engagement'. "Listening to local communities is only the beginning of the process of increasing local participation" (Hampton, 2005 p. 753). Possible ways forward proposed by Hampton (2005) are partnerships between host communities and authorities, to make the residents feel more connected to each other and the heritage. Participation adds value to the community in a meaningful way, however to realise 'community driven engagement' an organisation-led or top-down approach is often taken (Perkin, 2010). The case study of Hampton (2005) concluded that the main obstacle towards increasing local participation is the "bigger is better" mindset of governments, which is not focused on local communities and small-scale businesses.

## Conceptual model

The conceptual model in figure 1 shows the functions that heritage has for declining regions. Heritage has four main functions and the ability to attract and connect people. The functions of heritage in declining regions all provide potential to improve the social and economic wellbeing in the region. Attracting people is outward looking and has more economic potential because it brings new tourists, entrepreneurs, activities and facilities. Connecting people is focused on the local community and environment. Improvements of the relations with other residents and the heritage site will result in an increase in social wellbeing. This connection gives the community a common identity and something to be proud of.

While all the four functions can help to combat the depopulation, the main focus of this research is indicated with red; attract tourists and potential settlers to combat the depopulation. This will be discussed with the use of interviews with residents, tourists and experts of Bourtange.

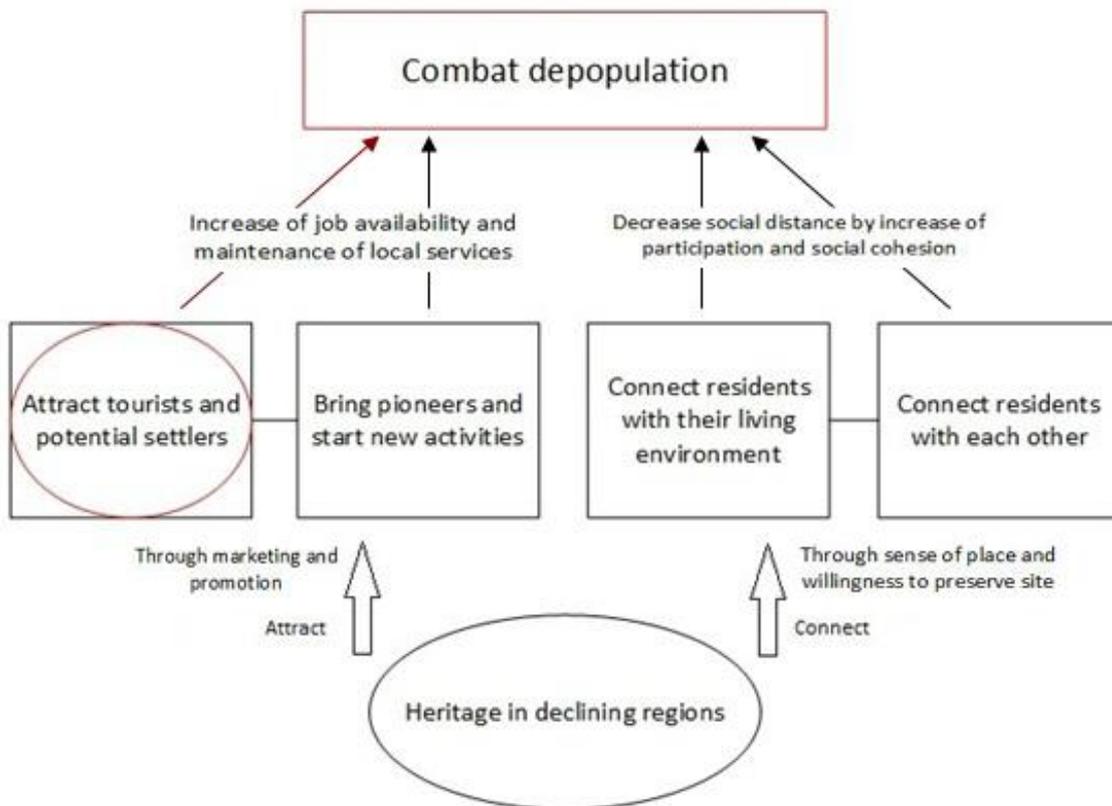


Figure 1: Conceptual model

## **Methodology**

This paper aims at finding rich data with the help of a case study of Bourtange. A case study is used to get more familiar with the specific region of the research. It aims to uncover specific problems and challenges that the area has to deal with and make recommendations and conclusions that can be applied to that region. This research does not have the aim to make generalisations. To get an as complete view as possible, multiple data sources are used. This involves deskwork and collecting primary data by doing fieldwork. First this paper looked at secondary data to see what has already been researched in the field of cultural heritage attracting tourists and potential settlers. Several sources such as scientific literature, policy plans, planning documents and official media from Bourtange are consulted. Secondary data is used to give the case context, use other data as comparison as the basis for the analysis of this research (Clifford et al. 2010). This also helps to get more familiar with the concepts and theories that are applied. For the primary data collecting, qualitative data collection fits the research question the best. It results in more depth answers of the respondents, which creates a better view of the situation of the case.

### Data collection

Qualitative data is collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with people involved in the tourist sector in Bourtange, residents and policymakers (see appendix 1 for the interview guide, list of participants in appendix 2). The semi-structured interviews create flexibility to hold a conversation, while maintaining the main topics used for the research. The policymakers were selected because they are involved with the tourist sector of the municipality and province, and work with promotion to combat the region's decline. The people working in the tourist sector in Bourtange work for 'Stichting Vereniging Bourtange' and the Bed and Breakfast. The interview with residents consisted of a duo-interview with the owners of the Bed and Breakfast and member of the local interest group. These respondents have more knowledge about the local situation in Bourtange. The interviews were taken on appointment when best suited. I contacted these people in advance by e-mail or phone. These interviews take longer since the respondents could be seen as experts of the case and have assumedly more knowledge about the topic. For all the interviews I got invited to their office or workspace to hold the interview.

The most important aspects for an ethically right interview are confidentiality and anonymity (Clifford et al. 2010). The respondents participated on a voluntary basis and could stop the interview anytime if they preferred. The interviews with appointments were located in an informal setting. I asked whether the in-depth interviews could be audio-recorded. The interviewee had the right to stop the audio-recording whenever they preferred. The interviewees can stay anonymous in the paper if they do not want their name to be used. At the beginning of the interview I explained the goal of the research and told that their information will be handled with care. Their information given is only used for this research.

### Analysis

The in-depth interviews are coded according to a code tree. The code tree is split up in three parts: heritage, tourism and the functions that heritage has in declining regions. These are the components to answer the research questions. The code tree is made deductively, on basis of

the theoretical framework and conceptual model. This is a way to test if the views from previous research are applicable on this specific case. However, after the interviews more codes were added. Following the semi-structured nature of these conversations, common themes like accessibility and moving motives emerged (appendix 3).

Marking the quotes in the transcribed interviews according to this code tree, makes it easier to find useful quotes for the research. “Semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions can be coded by hand or using a computer package to identify key themes and explanations of events” (Holloway and Valentine 2001, p. 129). To transcribe the interviews and divide them into codes, the programme ‘Atlas.ti’ was used.

## Results

All the respondents look at the case from a different perspective. Two respondents see Bourtange as a part of the whole province of Groningen, or within the municipality of Westerwolde. The other respondents are more involved with Bourtange on a local level, because they live or work in the fortress. The respondents shared similar views regarding heritage, the importance of tourism and ways to fight decline since different respondents are involved with each other.

### Heritage to attract tourists

The policies of the province of Groningen that are concerned about decline are also focused on tourism as tool to improve the social and economic vitalisation. Although, tourism is a small aspect of this and is used to stimulate a positive impact on the availability of jobs and the maintenance of local services, which positively effect the liveability and attractiveness of the region (Provincie Groningen, 2010). To make fully use of this, the province has the need to attract more tourists. The province does face difficulties in regards to attracting as much people as it would like to:

*“Groningen has been for years one of the least visited provinces, and visited cities. That will not change easily. This is because of its peripheral location and because we do not have big attractions, like theme parks.”* (Marketing Groningen).

While the province does have some unique heritage sites to visit, it is not well-known and promoted enough to get the attention that it might achieve. The new tourist vision of the province aims to have a more active policy to attract more tourists who will visit more often, stay longer and spend more (Provincie Groningen, 2016). The new plans include strengthening the promotion by starting national marketing campaigns to positively influence the image the province has in the rest of the country to attract more tourists (Provincie Groningen, 2016). The heritage found in the province is not only cultural heritage that can be found in the old buildings, but it is also its natural heritage that could attract people from other places in the Netherlands or even from abroad:

*“The landscape is one of the strongest points of Westerwolde and keeps the region attractive. People appreciate it, the landscape. That’s why people want to live here, that’s why they come here as tourist and heritage is a part of the landscape. Landscape and culture go hand in hand (...) it contributes to the perception of the landscape.”*  
(Municipality of Westerwolde).

While on a level of scale the municipality is closer to Bourtange, it looks like the province is more actively promoting Bourtange specific as a tourist site. The municipality does have more to offer than just the cultural heritage that can be seen in the fortress of Bourtange and is focusing on the region as a whole. However, Bourtange is still one of the most important places in the municipality, or even in the province to attract tourists. The fortress is part of the seven highlights of the province. This is because tourists are highly attracted by the province’s culture and heritage, thus the province is more focused on promoting its cultural heritage sites to reach the most potential tourists (Provincie Groningen, 2016). Fortresses and places with historical value are especially attractive for tourists (Ashworth and Bruce, 2009; Tweed and

Sutherland, 2007). Bourtange is a place that can create and tell stories, which is attractive. Tourists can get a specific feeling when going to Bourtange, which is trying to give people the experience of being in an other century:

*“It has the feeling of something that’s old, unique. That’s how we advertise it, how we try to make it visible and how we talk about it.”* (Stichting Vesting Bourtange).

### Importance of the tourist sector

Marketing Groningen is working closely with the different municipalities to strengthen the attractiveness of the province for tourists, potential settlers and businesses (Marketing Groningen, 2018). Tourism gives the region an economic boost, because people can have jobs in that industry. Tourism also helps the local economy, because the people who visit the area will spend their money there. While the province does not have a lot of tourists compared to other provinces in the Netherlands, it is still very important:

*“Tourism in the province is important. Around six percent of all people in Groningen work in the tourist industry. Thus, six percent of all the employment comes directly from the fact that people visit our city and province. This generates a lot of money, I think around 60 million a year or even more.”* (Marketing Groningen).

Although the tourist sector is an important economic driver and employer, it is not enough to keep the whole region attractive for work. It helps to prevent more people from leaving, but the tourist sector is not big enough to provide jobs for everyone:

*“Tourism is a tool against decline, but I don’t think it is enough. It is not possible to keep a region as Westerwolde completely attractive for living and to provide jobs to the residents only caused by tourism. It is too small for that, thus you won’t make that. (...) But I am convinced that it helps with the consequences of decline, like keeping the local supermarkets running.”* (Municipality of Westerwolde).

As described here, tourism does not only improve the local economics, but also the common service level. Like Hampton (2005) describes, the local communities will improve and profit significantly from the increase in tourism, due to the continuation of the small-scale local businesses. This will also improve the social wellbeing. However, survival on tourism makes the local services vulnerable and unstable, since tourism is dependent on the season. The preservation of local services is also one of the aimed results of the tourism policy of the province. It is aimed to further improve the tourist sector to create more jobs, improve the local services and become more attractive for businesses to settle in the region (Provincie Groningen, 2016). It is, however, quite difficult for economic activities to start within the fortress:

*“In the fortress itself are a few entrepreneurs, restaurants and shops. And I think if there would be some space available, or allowed because the development plans are strict in this aspect, than there will be quite a few entrepreneurs that would be interested. (...) In my opinion there could be three or four more now.”* (Stichting Vesting Bourtange).

This is in line with the argument that Ashworth and Bruce (2009) make: while these places are attractive, economic development options are very limited in walled towns due to its planned structure and limited space. It is also stressed during the interview with Stichting Vesting Bourtange that it is important that the fortress should not be over-commercialised, because it has to feel authentic and should not harm the 'sense of place'. Tourism is even more important for economic development in these places, because economic development in an other way is more difficult. It was stressed during all the interviews the tourist sector is greatly important, on the level of province, municipality and local. They are all positive of further development of the tourist sector, since it has not done harm to the community.

### Combat the decline

As McCool and Martin (1994) argue, could tourism be an interesting tool to combat the decline in regions that suffer from this. The importance of tourism in the declining region of Bourtange was also visible during the interviews. First of all was Bourtange rebuilt and renovated to provide work for the people in the region. Most people were moving to other places, because the big employers left. The people had to move to start a new job, thus tourism is a positive development:

*“The main reason for decline in a region is the lack of jobs. People are moving because their jobs are further away. The job availability that comes with tourism is a job well done.”* (Municipality of Westerwolde).

Bourtange did provide the people new jobs and thus reasons to stay:

*“The renovation is started in the 60s when this region needed an impulse. (...) It had as goal to bring new employment. The fortress had to become a pull factor for tourists and that is achieved.”* (Stichting Vesting Bourtange).

Heritage is seen to be an important aspect that deals with the negative impacts of decline by improving the liveability, social cohesion, attractiveness, and for businesses and people to settle in the province (Provincie Groningen, 2010). However, the region is still facing depopulation and will likely face more as seen in figure 2 (next page).

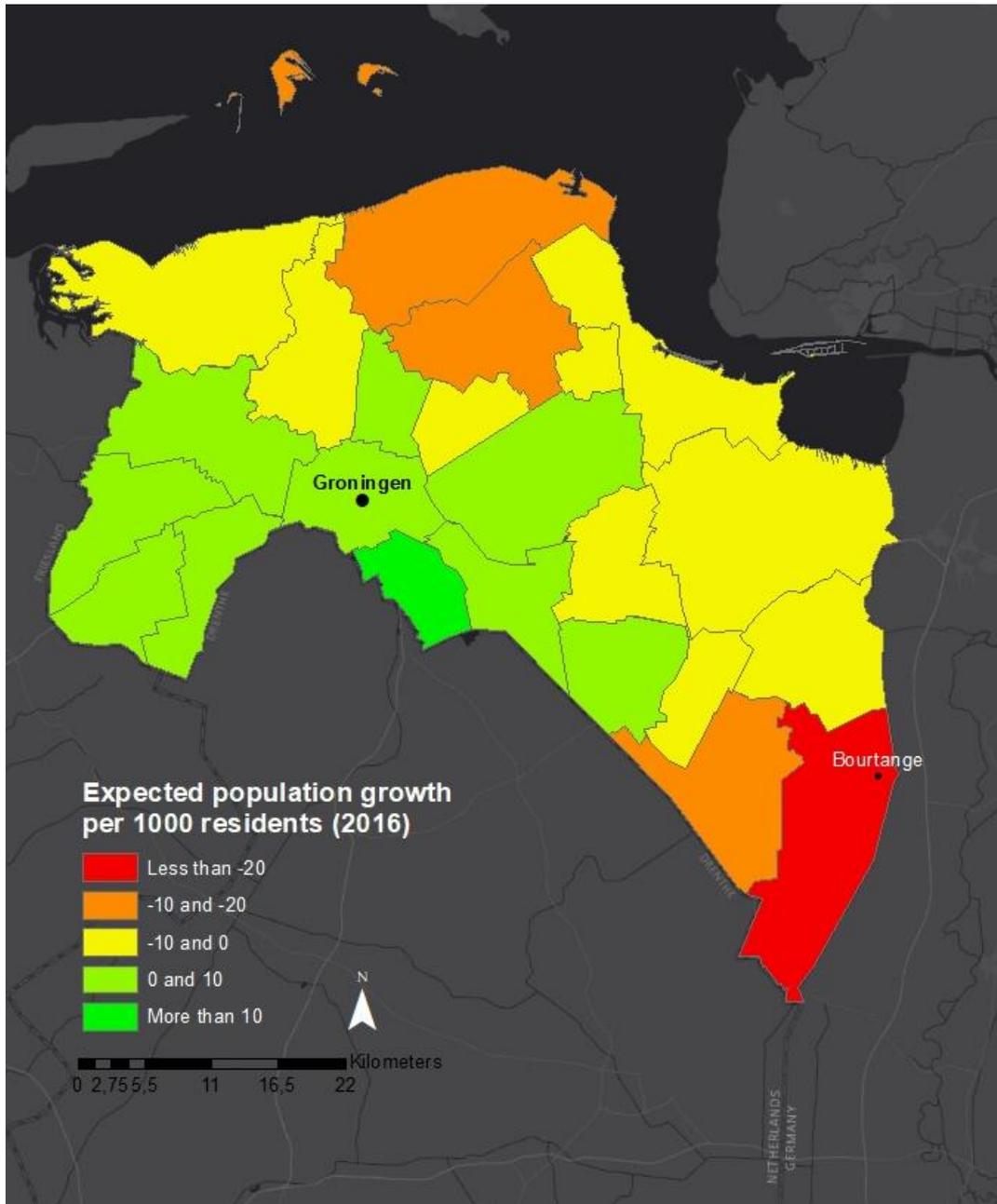


Figure 2: Map of expected population growth in the province of Groningen  
Source: CBS

People and especially the young people are moving away to look for jobs. The region itself does not have a lot of jobs in a variety of sectors available. In the fortress itself are no kids living. All the young families moved away. However, most of them did stay in the region. People have to be willing to travel further to go to their job or move away:

*“That’s what you notice here, the aging population. If you see people working in their gardens, also outside the fortress, they are all older people. The youth is all moving away. (...) The only way to attract them here, is the availability of jobs. The only jobs you have here are in the catering industry. You don’t have anything else or you’ll have to start your own project.” (Duo-interview, Bed and Breakfast).*

All the respondents of all the interviews could not emphasize enough that the lack of jobs is the biggest problem for decline in the region. The jobs moved away and the people moved with them. Distance is an important factor to not move to the region. While tourism has been an effective way to provide jobs in the region and caused people to stay, it is not the solution for decline. It is not enough to sustain the whole region and attract people to settle there. Tourism also mostly generates low incomes and, according to one of the respondents, that mainly attracts people from nearby. On the other hand, there are as well plenty of people living in Westerwolde and working in the city of Groningen. People assume that the city is far, but it will take less than a hour which is feasible. However, the region is also facing an other problem: stereotypes:

*“Groningen of all places. If you said to me that I was going to live in Groningen on my own initiative eight years ago, I would have thought: you are nuts. (...) I had the assumption, it was an assumption, that we could do nothing here.”* (Duo-interview, Bed and Breakfast).

These stereotypes could be a reason why the whole province is not a popular destination for tourists in comparison with the rest of the country. This damage to its reputation is also concluded in the tourist policies of the province: it seems that the whole tourist sector is negatively impacted due to the negative attention the province gets in the media (Provincie Groningen, 2015). The province is actively promoting its heritage to improve this image by showing what the province makes attractive. A lot of people who do visit the region do really enjoy their stay. It is stressed during the interviews that there are enough people that would love to live in Bourtange or in the municipality. Its heritage, cultural and natural, is very attractive especially for people from the West of the country:

*“I think that a lot of people from the West would love to live here. Because here it is still quite, the landscape is beautiful and the houses are cheap.”*  
(Duo-interview, interests of Bourtange).

The quiet municipality with its unique landscape is in contrast with the crowded West. A lot of people from there would like to live in the quite landscape that Westerwolde has to offer. As told by the residents around one quarter of the people living in the fortress are originally from the West. Even when a house is for sale, it is often bought by someone from the West. It is clear that the region is attractive enough for people to want to live there. While the respondents who live in the fortress fell in love with the heritage and the small community, the serene landscape seems a bigger reason for most people to move to the region.

## Conclusions

Decline can be combated by the functions of heritage suggested by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (Graaf et al. 2014b). This paper mostly focused on attracting tourists and potential settlers. Tourism has been often used as a tool for regional development to improve the economic and social degradation of communities (McCool and Martin, 1994). While the province is one of the least popular destinations for tourists, Bourtange is one of the highlights in the region. A lot of people started to visit Bourtange after its renovation, due to its unique historic heritage. Heritage is an important aspect that attracts tourists and has become the basis of tourism development (Poria et al. 2003). Especially walled towns like Bourtange are naturally tourism assets that have a lot of potential for tourism development (Ashworth and Bruce, 2009). However, tourism alone is not enough to make the economy viable, especially not in the small scale that it is in right now.

To conclude, with the increase in tourism the region is able to battle a few of the negative consequences of decline, such as the maintenance of local services and the preservation of heritage. Attracting new settlers is more difficult. Tourism does not provide enough jobs for all people living there, and will certainly not be enough for people to move there. Tourism mostly generates low incomes and is dependent on seasonality (Fonseca and Ramos, 2011). New settlers are mostly retired or have to start their own economic projects. However, starting new projects in the fortress is also quite difficult. There is limited space available due to it being a walled town (Ashworth and Bruce, 2009) and the fortress should not feel too over-commercialised which could harm the 'sense of place' (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). Silva (2014) is also concerned with the harm of the 'sense of place' by the increase in tourism. This is not negatively affected and the increase in tourism is even seen as important by all the respondents. This is in line with that residents who are highly attached to the community are more likely to view tourism as having positive impacts and support the tourism development more (Chen and Chen, 2010). The residents of the duo-interview were members of the local interest group, which can combat the social distance that decline is causing by creating social cohesion. The interest group is important for managing the heritage site, especially in the fortress where people live (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010). However, geographical distance is a factor that most people see as a problem. This does not have to be the case, since there are people that live in the municipality and work in the city. Another problem are the stereotypes and the bad assumptions that people have of the region. People who have never been there think quite negatively about Groningen. They mostly change their minds when they visit the region and actually would like to live there as well.

## Reflection

The literature review was based on the insights of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands. The functions of heritage are more connected to each other than at first sight. This made it difficult to discuss them completely separately. This paper added on the views of previous research where regional development is very dependent on the specific region, which is in this case its heritage. It also added on the views how heritage could play a positive role regarding decline that can help the 'sense of place' and attractiveness. The lack of jobs which is often seen as the main reason is not the only aspect that makes fighting decline difficult. Other reasons include geographical distance and negative assumptions of a region.

My study is very small scaled. Bourtange is a small village/community where a lot of people know each other and work together. This could lead to very one-sided results, since some of the people I interviewed know each other. Their views could be similar, because they are directly involved with each other. This research could have been in a lot of trouble if people were not willing to participate, since there are not a lot of alternatives. However, I am grateful that all the people I would have liked to interview indeed participated. While I did not get a lot of respondents, they are strongly involved with the case. Also my respondents views are from different levels of scale: province, municipality and local levels.

In Bourtange I also held ten short conversations with tourists and residents to see what attracts them to Bourtange and if they think tourism can help to combat the decline. In the end I did not feel it would add anything to this research, so I omitted it.

All the functions that heritage has in declining regions were discussed during the interviews. You can apply them all to the case of Bourtange. However, for this research I mainly tried to focus on the function 'attract tourists and potential settlers'. This was quite difficult, because it is strongly related to the economic side. While this can result in a more focused, in-depth research, it does not discuss all the important factors available.

### Recommendations

The region is facing three main problems: the lack of jobs, distance (both geographical and economical) and stereotypes. Probably, the hardest problem to solve is to get more jobs to the region. There still is potential in attracting more people, whether they will be tourists or settlers. People have stereotypes regarding the province, which do not seem to be true. Before their visit to Groningen they do not think you can do anything in the province. While it is true that the province does not have any big attractions like theme parks, its charm is the unique heritage, cultural and natural. This has to become more known to people. For example, a lot of people from the West are looking for a serene landscape and beautiful nature, and that is what Westerwolde can offer. This promotion does not only have to be focused on tourists, who are only looking for this temporarily, but also on potential settlers. On the other hand is this difficult to achieve, but could positively promote the region and improve its image. There are a lot of people living in the municipality and working in the city. People who would love to live there do often not consider that as an option, while the city which has a wide variety of jobs available is easily accessible. The distance stops people from moving. Further research could be done in the field of promotion in relation with migration.

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## Appendix 1: Interviews

### In-depth interview with Manager Stichting Bourtange

Kunt u wat vertellen over uw werk in de toeristen sector in Bourtange?

- Wat voor werk doet u precies?
- Hoe lang werkt u al in deze sector?

In hoeverre is de toeristen sector belangrijk voor Bourtange?

- Hoe werft Bourtange toeristen?
- Wat zijn de economische belangen van toerisme in Bourtange?
- Wat zijn de sociale belangen van toerisme in Bourtange?

Denkt u dat toerisme de krimp kan tegenhouden?

- Waarom wel/niet?

In hoeverre is erfgoed belangrijk voor Bourtange?

- Wat maakt de plek aantrekkelijk?
- Hoe wordt het erfgoed behouden?
- Zijn de bewoners betrokken bij het erfgoed?
  - o Wat is de persoonlijke/gemeenschappelijke waarde van het erfgoed?
  - o Hoe helpen de bewoners mee aan het behoud?
- In hoeverre krijgen bezoekers een authentiek gevoel in Bourtange?
  - o In hoeverre denkt u dat het voor belang is dat Bourtange een authentiek gevoel geeft bij bezoekers?
- Hoe heeft de reconstructie geholpen met het werven van toeristen en bewoners?

Denkt u dat erfgoed de krimp kan tegenhouden?

- Waarom wel/niet?

De volgende functies worden gegeven aan erfgoed in krimpgebieden: het aantrekken van toeristen en bewoners; het werven van nieuwe activiteiten en ondernemingen; het verbinden van bewoners met de omgeving en met elkaar.

- Welke van deze functies denkt u dat van toepassing zijn op Bourtange?
- Waarom? Voorbeelden?
  - o Zijn er meer bewoners dan voorheen?
  - o Zijn er meer toeristen dan voorheen?
  - o Zijn er nieuwe activiteiten en ondernemingen? Welke?
  - o Zijn de bewoners meer met het erfgoed verbonden?
  - o Zijn de bewoners meer met elkaar verbonden?

### In-depth interview with policymaker municipality Westerwolde

Kunt u wat vertellen over uw werk als beleidsmaker?

- Wat voor werk doet u precies?
- Hoe lang werkt u al in deze sector?

In hoeverre is de toeristen sector belangrijk voor krimpgebieden?

- Wat zijn strategieën om toeristen te werven in krimpgebieden?
- Wat zijn de economische belangen van toerisme?
- Wat zijn de sociale belangen van toerisme?

Denkt u dat toerisme de krimp kan tegenhouden?

- Waarom wel/niet?

In hoeverre is erfgoed belangrijk voor krimpgebieden?

- Hoe wordt erfgoed ingezet als krimpstrategie?
- Denkt u dat erfgoed de krimp kan tegenhouden?
- Waarom wel/niet?
- Zijn de bewoners betrokken bij erfgoed?
  - o Wat is de persoonlijke/gemeenschappelijke waarde van het erfgoed?

Heeft u geholpen aan de situatie in Bourtange? Of heeft u kennis specifiek over Bourtange?

- Zo ja, volgende vragen

In hoeverre krijgen bezoekers een authentiek gevoel in Bourtange?

- In hoeverre denkt u dat het voor belang is dat Bourtange een authentiek gevoel geeft bij bezoekers?
- Hoe heeft de reconstructie geholpen met het werven van toeristen en bewoners?

De volgende functies worden gegeven aan erfgoed in krimpgebieden: het aantrekken van toeristen en bewoners; het werven van nieuwe activiteiten en ondernemingen; het verbinden van bewoners met de omgeving en met elkaar.

- Welke van deze functies denkt u dat van toepassing zijn op Bourtange?
- Waarom?
  - o Zijn er meer bewoners dan voorheen?
  - o Zijn er meer toeristen dan voorheen?
  - o Zijn er nieuwe activiteiten en ondernemingen?
  - o Zijn de bewoners meer met het erfgoed verbonden?
  - o Zijn de bewoners meer met elkaar verbonden?

### In-depth interview with Marketing Groningen

Kunt u wat vertellen over uw werk?

- Wat voor werk doet u precies?
- Hoe lang werkt u al in deze sector?

In hoeverre is de toeristen sector belangrijk voor de provincie Groningen?

- Hoe werft de provincie toeristen?
- Wat zijn de economische belangen van toerisme?
- Wat zijn de sociale belangen van toerisme?

Denkt u dat toerisme de krimp kan tegenhouden?

- Waarom wel/niet?

In hoeverre is erfgoed belangrijk voor de provincie?

- Wat maakt de plek aantrekkelijk?
- Hoe wordt het erfgoed behouden?
- Zijn de bewoners betrokken bij het erfgoed?

Denkt u dat erfgoed de krimp kan tegenhouden?

- Waarom wel/niet?

Vragen over Bourtange:

In hoeverre is Bourtange belangrijk voor de provincie?

- In hoeverre krijgen bezoekers een authentiek gevoel in Bourtange?
  - o In hoeverre is het belangrijk dat Bourtange een authentiek gevoel geeft bij bezoekers?
- Hoe heeft de reconstructie geholpen met het werven van toeristen en bewoners?

Deze lijsten van vragen voor de diepte interviews zijn de vragen die ik van de voren heb bedacht om de onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden. Bij de interviews zal ik deze vragenlijst niet meenemen, maar aan bod laten komen door middel van hoofdthema's. De vragen zijn dus vooral bedacht om van te voren te bedenken wat ik zou willen weten. De volgorde van de vragen kan dus verschillen per interview, afhankelijk van hoe het gesprek loopt. Om een meer vloeiend en flexibel gesprek te creëren, en nog steeds alles aan bod te laten komen, zal ik de volgende hoofd en subthema's als aantekening mee nemen:

#### Werk

##### Toerisme

- Werven
- Belang (sociaal/economisch)
- Middel tegen krimp
  - o Strategieën

##### Erfgoed

- Aantrekkelijkheid
- Behouden
- Waarden (gemeenschappelijk/individueel)
- Authentiek
- Resultaat reconstructie
- Middel tegen krimp

##### Toepassing functies erfgoed krimpgebieden

- Aantrekken toeristen
- Aantrekken activiteiten
- Bewoners verbinden met omgeving
- Bewoners verbinden met elkaar

#### In-depth duo interview (residents)

Hoe lang wonen jullie al in Bourtange?

Waarom zijn jullie in Bourtange gaan wonen?

- Zijn jullie speciaal om een reden naar Bourtange verhuisd?
- Wat zijn redenen om naar Bourtange te verhuizen?

Hebben jullie het idee dat er last is van krimp in Bourtange?

- Wat zijn redenen om weg te gaan uit Bourtange?
- Hoe kan dit verbeterd worden?

Op wat voor manier denken jullie dat de krimp tegen gegaan kan worden?

- Hoe kunnen nieuwe bewoners geworven worden?
- In hoeverre zijn afstanden een probleem?

Hoe ervaren jullie het toerisme in Bourtange?

- In hoeverre is toerisme belangrijk in Bourtange?
- Hebben jullie als bewoners ook belang bij het toerisme?
- In hoeverre hebben jullie te maken met de toeristen?
- Hebben jullie het idee dat toeristen ook in Bourtange willen wonen?

Kan het toerisme de krimp tegengaan?

- Waarom wel/niet?

In hoeverre is erfgoed belangrijk voor Bourtange?

- Wat maakt de plek aantrekkelijk?
- Hoe wordt het erfgoed behouden?
- Is het erfgoed een grote motivatie geweest om hier te komen wonen?

In hoeverre zijn jullie betrokken bij het erfgoed en de omgeving?  
 In hoeverre zijn jullie met elkaar betrokken?  
 Zouden jullie liever dichtbij jullie werk wonen of op een bijzondere plek, zoals Bourtange?

Short interviews on the go with tourists and residents (mostly in Dutch):

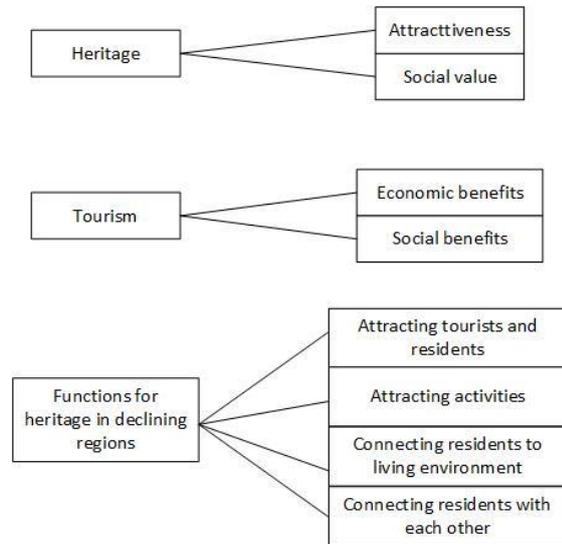
Woont u in Boutange of bent u een toerist?  
 Wat vindt u aantrekkelijk aan deze plek? Waarom?  
 Denkt u dat toerisme belangrijk is voor Bourtange of krimpregio's?  
 Wat denkt u dat de voordelen van toerisme hier zijn?  
 Denkt u dat toerisme de krimp kan tegenhouden?

**Appendix 2: List of participants**

<i>Naam</i>	<i>Functie</i>	<i>Inwoner Bourtange?</i>
Hendri Meendring	Manager Stichting Vesting Bourtange	Nee
Jarne Heuff	Programmamanager gemeente Westerwolde	Nee
Wouter Steenhuisen	Projectmanager Marketing Groningen	Nee
Jan Schoonmaker	Belangenvereniging Bourtange	Ja, 7 jaar
Yvonne Schoonmaker	(Mede)eigenaar Bed & Breakfast Bourtange	Ja, 7 jaar

### Appendix 3: Code tree

Code tree before interviews:



Code tree after interviews:

