Integrated Enhancement and Creation of Tourism Functions in the Dutch Dollart Coastal Zone

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Handed in Date: 01-07-2011
Word Count: 17968
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been my, Mitchell Dröge, first thesis, and it has been a real challenge. There are many things that I would have done differently (wrong) if it wasn’t for some people. I would like to thank these people dearly.

I would like to say thank you to Hans Revier, who trusted in me and gave me the opportunity to conduct this research. Hopefully, we will work together in the future as well.

To Andries Rodenboog I would also like to express my gratitude for his nitpicking efforts and discussing the progress of the report with me.

To my co-marker I wish the best, even though our ways have not met yet.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, Frits and Berdien Dröge, who have always been great, and my girlfriend who has staid patient with me even in the bad times.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

‘Integrated Enhancements and Creations of Tourism Functions in the Dutch Dollart Coastal Zone’ is a graduation project for the study International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) at the International Business School (IBS) of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen.

The Climate (Ex)Change project, which is a two-year long project which is focused on exploring how the coastal defense areas of the Dollart can be used for ecological and touristic purposes. Adjustments to the coastal defense structures, as proposed by Public Works and Management to prepare for expected rises in sea levels, are the underlying inspirational factors for this project. This report was written to accommodate to the field of research of this project.

The Dollart is a bay between the North-east of the Netherlands and north-western Germany where estuaries of the Ems and the ‘Westerwoldse Aa’ enter the Wadden Sea (an intertidal zone in the south-eastern part of the North Sea). The report that lies before you is the end documentation of an extensive research that was conducted with the focus on enhancing and creating integrated tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, i.e. the sea dikes, mainland salt marshes, and the Dollart itself.

The main research question that needed to be answered was:

What tourism function enhancements and creations are possible in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which suit(s) the region’s tourist profile and the integrated approach?

In order to answer this question five additional research questions were formulated. Each research question will now be introduced, answered, and with the methods used provided.

1. What are the current tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?

Before the tourism functions could be described the researched area was delineated. The Dutch Dollart coastal zone stretches from Punt van Reide, on the north-west corner of the Dollart, all the way to Nieuwe Statenzijl, on the Dollart’s south-east corner. Along this coast the elements it is comprised of include the dike, the salt marshes, and the Dollart itself.

A familiarization trip was held to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone in which the entire coast was visited by bike. To present the existing tourism functions in a clear manner the experiences model by Pine II and Gilmore was used. The tourism functions could be either labeled as an entertainment – passive participation combined with absorption –, educational – active participation combined with absorption –, escapist – active participation combined with immersion –, or esthetic experience – passive participation combined with immersion.

Entertainment was not an experience that could be gained in the Dutch Dollart coast. The other experiences could be established as tourism functions were found that supplied them.

The information board, commemoration point, and Reidehoeve were all deemed tourism functions that yielded an educational experience.
Escapist experiences were indicated as possible due to the existence of hiking on and alongside the dike, and to a limited extent in the salt marshes. Next to the tourism functions, biking alongside the dike was also one that was deemed escapist.

Completing the spectrum of experiences, bird-watching from the sea-dike or one of the bird watching cabins and watching the seals at the screen on the dike where, together with the artwork on the dike in Statenzijl (de Waaijboei), were tourism functions that offered esthetic experiences that could be gained.

A questionnaire in which 30 people who had visited the Dutch Dollart coast were asked what experiences they sought pointed out that indeed the above mentioned experiences were the ones they sought, with 10% indicating that they sought entertainment as an experience, and more than 60% mentioning that they were seeking each of the other experiences.

2. What can be learnt from the German Dollart coastal zone in terms of tourism functions?

The findings of a comparative study between the Dutch and the German side of the Dollart’s coastal zone, revealed a number of important ideas for the enhancement and creation of tourism functions. In order to answer this research question, a familiarization trip was held by car, in which the coastal zones of the towns of Dyksterhusen, Pogum, and Ditzum were visited. The relevant findings, which were taken as ideas for visitor analysis, were that the German side had a lot more resting places (benches) on the dike. There were paths and gates on the dike, as well. Furthermore, at Dyksterhusen there was a big information sign that pointed out that the area was a National Park. Finally, there were nodal points – parking spots with picnic tables and benches – at each little town at the dike and information boards as well.

3. What effects does the tourist profile of potential visitors of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone have on the need for adding tourism functions?

A policy document of the municipality of Oldambt indicated that the area is suitable for short-stay, day, and/or cultural tourists. Furthermore, from the key experiences expounded previously it could be concluded that the tourist profile includes people who seek escapist, esthetic, and educational experiences. There is also reason to believe that the people above 30 are mostly represented in the tourist profile of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. This conclusion was drawn because of the 150 people that were approached, only 30 had been to the Dollart, and of these 30 people the youngest person was 27, and the average respondent around fifty years old. Considering the fact that the great majority of approached people were students, it can at least be assumed that visitors of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are somewhere above 30, in general.

Concerning the actual tourism function enhancements and creations, the respondents were offered a number of options they could choose from, which indicated certain features they might have missed during their stay. This part of the research revealed that that visitors of the area want a biking path on the dike, gates in the fences on the dike, nodal points on the landward toe, and resting places on the dike, but did not need more direction signs. No conclusive answers were given concerning the off-dike lodging possibilities and information boards on the dike. Relevant
ideas that were revealed during this research were also the possibility to venture into the salt marshes, coin or non-coin operated binoculars, and more works of art.

**What can be learnt from stakeholders of the Dutch Dollart coastal region in terms of tourism function enhancement and creation?**

The findings concerning the plans and ideas for the tourism function enhancements and creations were extracted from a visit to a symposium on dike-tourism. Stakeholder analysis introduced the stakeholders for flood protection and ecology in relation to possible limitations; Hunze en Aa’s Waterboard and Public Works and Management, and Natuurmonumenten, VOG, and Het Groninger Lanschap. Furthermore, the Kiek over Diek project was revealed, which is an initiative by the province of Groningen and the four main Wadden Sea municipalities, including Delfzijl and Oldambt. The initiative is aimed at improving the landward biking route along the dike from Punt van Reide till Dollart Sud and constructing a synthetic grid on the dike from Dollart Sud till Nieuwe Statenzijl for biking purposes. Also the project plans create nodal points at Het Ambonezenbosje (a small forest at the Dollart Sud point) and Nieuwe Statenzijl.

**What factors need to be considered in terms of an integrated approach?**

This approach means for tourism function enhancements and creations to not compromise the flood protection and ecological functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. The information pertaining to the integrated approach limitations was mainly based on a graduation report, Climate (Ex)Change: NT. The research pointed out that the flood protection function limits in the way that the dike cannot be altered and in the near future changes must be made to the dike to accommodate to the rises in sea-level, so any additions to the dike must be removable. In terms of limitations coming from the ecological function, the salt marshes of Natuurmonumenten cannot be entered by the public because of their choice to abide the nature protection laws as stipulated in the Nature Conservation Act. For the salt marshes of the VOG these limitations do not apply as they have been allowed to open their salt marshes to the public.

Not grouped under a specific research question, but the side-effect of a combination of brainstorming, discussions with the company supervisor, and presentations at the Op ‘n Diek symposium three more ideas were decided to at least weigh against the set criteria:

- **Artificial beach creation.**
- **Webcams on dike (dikecams).**
- **A dike stand where visitors can look at the Dollart from the dike from a special wooden cabin.**

**What tourism function enhancements and creations are possible in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which suit(s) the region’s tourist profile and the integrated approach?**

Assessing all the ideas was done by means of three tiers of compliance.

The 1st tier covered ideas that complied with the set criteria (fitting the tourist profile, and not compromising the flood protection and ecological functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone). This tier included the biking path on the dike, gates in the fences on the dike, nodal points, and resting places on the dike.
The 2nd tier covered ideas that only complied with the integrated approach which are recommended to be implemented. This included information boards on the dike (including signs in general and the UNESCO World Heritage sign), landward toe lodging possibilities, binoculars, dikecams, and more works of art. For these ideas visitor demand research is advised before implementation.

The 3rd tier included all the ideas that did not comply with the tourist profile or the integrated approach. These included opening up the salt marshes of Natuurmonumenten for the public and salt marsh lodging possibilities. For these two, visitor demand research and investigating the possibilities for the owners of the salt marshes to bend the rules is advised before thinking about implementation. Furthermore, the idea of adding the dike stand is interesting, but before implementing it, the demand for it and the attitudes of the owners of the dikes must be gauged first. The artificial beach should not be created as it will disturb the ecosystems of the area too much. Concerning direction signs hardly any respondent of the visitor research responded positive, so this should not be considered as an option either.

In terms of recommendations for future research, these conclusions mean that a number of things must be researched in order to come up with truly integrated tourism function enhancements and creations that fit the tourist profile of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

In order to find out if the ideas that are in the 2nd and the 3rd tier of compliance fit the tourist profile, a survey should be conducted. The best place for this would be the Dollart Bezoekerscentrum de Reidehoeve, from where the employees of this centre could hand out surveys questioning people’s attitudes towards these ideas. This would make sure that the respondents have indeed been to the area in question and yield reliable results.

Furthermore, interviews can be held with people from Natuurmonumenten, VOG, and Het Groninger Landschap, to discuss possible options for using the salt marshes for recreation.

A final recommendation for future research is aimed at the exact location of the proposed tourism function enhancements and creations. This could be included in the survey that would be conducted in Reidehoeve.
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TERMS OF REFERENCE

‘Integrated Enhancements and Creations of Tourism Functions in the Dutch Dollart Costal Zone’ is a graduation project for the study International Business and Management Studies (IBMS) at the International Business School (IBS) of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen.

It has been written for this project’s school supervisor and co-marker, respectively Andries Rodenboog and Johan Boosman. Next to this, it was also created for the principle of this project: Hans Revier.

The report that lies before you is the end documentation of an extensive research that was conducted by Mitchell Dröge, with the focus on enhancing and creating integrated tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, i.e. the sea dikes, mainland salt marshes, and the Dollart itself.

Its research was conducted within the context of the Climate (Ex)Change project, which is a two-year long project which is focused on exploring how coastal defense areas can be used for ecological and touristic purposes. Adjustments to the coastal defense structures, as proposed by Public Works and Management to prepare for expected rises in sea levels, are the underlying inspirational factors for this project. Climate (ex)Change is a cooperative project mainly between the Centre for Applied Research and Innovation for Area Development NoorderRuimte (KCGON) of the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, Van Hall Larenstein, Jade Hochschule Oldenburg, and Water Boards in the North of the Netherlands.

Mandated by KCGON, to make a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the current tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone and the limitations for its further development caused by the area’s ecological and flood protection status, the ultimate goal was to formulate integrated (meaning that the ecological and flood protection status were kept in mind) tourism function enhancements and creations.

The project was carried out within seven weeks (the maximum duration of graduation projects at IBS), officially starting on the 16th of May and finishing on the 1st of July 2011. The maximum amount of words for the report – excluding the appendices – was 18,000 words.

In a broader sense, the project entered the set up stage during the acquisition phase of this graduation project; thereby technically the project duration was longer than the abovementioned period. All the phases of this project – so the acquisition, research, analytical, and report writing staged – were executed for the greater part in the Netherlands and to a very small extent in Germany.
1. INTRODUCTION

Estimations have been made of a decrease of around ten percent in inhabitants in the upcoming fourteen years in the Dutch Dollart municipalities (www.cbs.nl/en-GB (Beeckman & Poelman, 2008). A force that causes this is urbanization, which is a natural power that is known throughout the entire world. Does this mean nothing has to be done to uphold a future for shrinking areas? No, it does not. A careful step is taken towards off-setting the current trend, in this report. The main question that was researched here was: “What tourism function enhancements and creations are possible in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which suit(s) the region’s tourist profile and the integrated approach?”

More important is the fact that in the light of the Climate (Ex)Change project, which is a two-year long project that is focused on exploring how coastal defense areas can be used for ecological and touristic purposes, such research can be used as a benchmark for other comparable areas. This report is written as a part of this project.

The Dutch Dollart is, clearly, located in the Netherlands. Concerning this country, like other wealthy nations worldwide, the society is graying. This was not so much the case for the Netherlands in recent years, as compared to its neighboring countries. Nevertheless this is now changing rapidly, and also the Netherlands will have European standard age distributions of its population (Garsen, 2011). Could this have implications on Dutch Dollart bound tourism? Absolutely, because this area is interesting for older people because there is a lot of Dutch cultural history and the Dollart itself is on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

The structure of the report will be as follows:

- Chapter 2: Methodology
- Chapter 3: The Dutch Dollart Background
- Chapter 4: Tourism Functions in the Dutch Dollart Coastal Zone
- Chapter 5: Comparative Study – The German Dollart Coastal Zone
- Chapter 6: Tourist Profile
- Chapter 7: Stakeholder Analysis
- Chapter 8: Integrated Approach Limitations
- Chapter 9: Integrated Tourism Function Enhancements and Creations
- Chapter 10: Conclusions
- Chapter 11: Recommendations
To make sure the methodology and research framework behind this research project are clearly explained, the following matters are discussed in this chapter:

- Research Questions.
- Research Framework (Secondary Research, Literature Review, Primary Research).
- Research Limitations.

As the research questions represent the fundamental structure of this project – and many other projects for that matter – this component of the methodology will be discussed first. Within this section a distinction has been made between questions employed to answer the main research question – further on referred to as principal research questions – and a set of issues that needed to be investigated in order to set the scene for this report – in the designated section termed as background research questions.

Following the aforementioned, the research framework section will go into detail in regard to essential aspects of methodology such as the research approach and primary & secondary methods of research. Herein, efforts have been made to link these aspects to the earlier mentioned research questions; thereby equipping the overall chapter – and thus the reader – with a clear idea of how the execution of this project was approached.

Reviewing literature is necessary as the sources that were used constitute the theoretical framework upon which this report is based. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007, p.57) propound that “the purpose of your literature review is not to provide a summary of everything that has been written on your research topic, but to review the most relevant and significant research on your topic”. Therefore, only sources that have substantially contributed – meaning the literature that was consulted and has yielded theories, approaches, or crucial information that has been integrated in the report – to the completion of this project are reviewed.

The ensuing, final, section – research limitations – aims to explain the foreseen and gradually uncovered obstacles and their effects on the success of this project. To make sure that no misunderstandings exist over whether or not this report is based upon solid research, please keep in mind that certain limiting forces are inevitable and/or unforeseeable.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

During the acquisition phase of this graduation project, research questions were established in cooperation with the company supervisor. These initial research questions have been subject to much change throughout the duration of the research.

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1. Please refer to the GPJ Agreement for an overview of the initial research questions
Gradually, the realization came that the investigation of trends that affect Dutch Dollart bound tourism would serve as a background research rather than one that works towards answering the main research question. As a result, the decision was made to demote this fairly irrelevant question and thus limit its importance; accordingly it has only been used for the introduction.

Moreover, a research question was formulated that was aimed at investigating the tourism functions of the German Dollart coastal zone. This came forth out of sub-research questions that were initially placed under the principle research question that was described in the previous paragraph.

Furthermore, a research question pertaining to tourist profiles of Dutch Dollart coastal zone visitors proved to be an essential addition, as the tourism functions enhancement and creation recommendations would be empty without considering what the users of this area want.

Also, a different goal was formulated in respect to the research question concerning the stakeholders. Adjustments in wording and thus approach made this question’s main purpose to expose the stakeholders existing concrete plans and more ideas in regarding tourism function enhancements and creations.

Finally, certain terminology changes were made throughout several primary and sub research questions.

PRINCIPAL RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to approach the research in the most structured way possible, a main research question has been formulated that is answered by solving the principle research questions\(^2\). This main research question – which is aimed at answering what enhancements and creations of tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are possible that fit both the tourist profile of the area and the integrated approach – is put last in the series of research questions (research question 6). In the light of working towards answering this main question, the other principal questions lead up to this.

Furthermore, each principal research question’s purpose has been assessed. Research question 1 is aimed at clearly formulating what the current tourism functions and key experiences of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are – to know where to go one first needs to know where he or she is.

Using, partly, the information coming from the previous research question, the tourist profile, which was used to identify who visits the region and what they want in terms of tourism functions/experiences, research question 2 was employed.

As indicated by Hans Revier, it was also necessary to investigate what tourism functions and key experiences could be attributed to the German Dollart coastal zone. Due to this request, and by considering the fact that comparative research could provide this project’s conclusions with a more solid base, research question 3 was drawn up.

\(^2\) Please refer to Figure 1 for a visual representation of the research questions build-up
In order to find out what plans concerning the researched region stakeholders have that in any way affect the (development of) tourism functions research question 4 was created. The additional function of this question was to find out what ideas these stakeholders had concerning tourism function and key experience enhancement and creation in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

Research question 5 was posed as to answer what limitations enhancement and creation of tourism functions and key experiences faces in terms of the flood protective and ecological nature of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. Taking the findings, which stem from this research question, into account in the answering of the main research question supplies the ultimate outcome of this report with the desired integrative character.

The abovementioned considerations culminated into the following set of main/sub research question:

1. **What are the current tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?**
   1.1. What are the natural attractions in this region?
   1.2. What man-made attractions exist in this region?
   1.3. Looking at the man-made and natural attractions, what are the key experiences that can be attributed to this region?

2. **What effects does the tourist profile of potential visitors of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone have on the need for adding tourism functions?**
   2.1. What types of tourists are likely to visit the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?
   2.2. What are the attitudes of visitors of The Dutch Dollart coastal zone?
      2.2.1. What are their motives for choosing this region as a destination?
      2.2.2. What are their opinions on enhancing and creating tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?

3. **What can be learnt from the German Dollart coastal zone in terms of tourism functions?**
   3.1. What natural attractions exist there?
   3.2. What man-made attractions exist there?
   3.3. Looking at the man-made and natural attractions, what are the key experiences that can be attributed to this region?

4. **What can be learnt from stakeholders of the Dutch Dollart coastal region in terms of tourism function enhancement and creation?**
4.1. What stake do governmental entities have in the development of the tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?

4.1.1. What are their existing policies (plans) concerning the development of tourism functions in this region?

4.1.2. What ideas do they have concerning the development of tourism functions in this region?

4.2. What stake do non-governmental organizations have in the development of tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal region?

4.2.1. What are their existing policies (plans) concerning the development of tourism functions in this region?

4.2.2. What ideas do they have concerning the development of tourism functions in this region?

5. What factors need to be considered in terms of an integrated approach?

5.1. What is meant by ‘integrated approach’?

5.2. What limitations on the tourism function enhancement and creation are in place in regard to the flood protection role of the Dollart coastal zone?

5.3. What limitations on the tourism function enhancement and creation are in place in regard to the ecological importance of the Dollart coastal zone?

6. What tourism function enhancements and creations are possible in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which suit(s) the region’s tourist profile and the integrated approach?
BACKGROUND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Having expounded the principle research questions, here you will find the matters that needed to be investigated in order to set the scene of the report.

In order to set the scene for the report, it was necessary to find data on trends that could be used in the introduction. This resulted in the establishment of the following research questions:

What is the influence of possible trends on Dutch Dollart bound tourism?

- What are the main trends in the Netherlands that affect Dutch Dollart bound tourism?
  - What has the effect of the financial downturn been on Dutch Dollart bound tourism?
  - What is the effect of aging of the population on Dutch Dollart bound tourism?
  - What is the effect of urbanization on Dutch Dollart bound tourism?

Both the terms of reference and the introduction are chapters that can be used to set the scene. Whereas the terms of reference is limited to explaining the boundaries of the research, the introduction is partly used to grab the reader’s attention. Therefore, trends that support the need this research to be conducted were chosen to be researched of which some are included in the introductory chapter. All three abovementioned sub-research questions fitted the aforementioned requirements best. First of all, the financial downturn has caused people to go on shorter trips closer to home, which can be in the best of interest for the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. Secondly, the fact that the population of the Netherlands is rapidly ageing means that the amount of people that fit the tourist profile of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone is most likely to increase. Finally,
urbanization has caused a situation in increasing numbers of many people live in cities, which could mean that the need for trips to peaceful places, such as the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, might get bigger.

**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

To begin with the actual research approach, it is paramount to mention that this project has been executed by means of inductive (or bottom-up) reasoning. As opposed to the deductive approach, induction means research based on identifying a pattern which results in the formulation of a theory. In other words, the conclusions were drawn from the primary and secondary data that was collected.

In essence this research project is both descriptive and exploratory as it both aims at portraying an accurate profile of a region, its stakeholders, and its users (descriptive), and seeking new insights (exploratory) in the form of possibilities pertaining to the enhancement and creation of tourism functions and key experiences in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone (Saunders et al., 2007).

The holistic nature of the research required, furthermore, an approach that takes several factors into account. Therefore, the use of the multi-criteria approach was opted for.

As to what research strategies were used the following sections will go into more detail.

**SECONDARY RESEARCH**

During the week prior to the start of the research period, an exploratory start was made by getting acquainted with the region in question. Due to the lack of experiences with this particular coastal area, web-based research was conducted, of which the findings have been utilized to construct Chapter 4.

Furthermore, in order to prepare for the planned familiarization trips to the Dutch and German Dollart coastal regions, preparatory research was carried out in the form of identifying the exact areas and sights that needed to be visited along with the preferred routes. This was of paramount need for the maximization of available time for actual research during these visits. Therefore, this desk research can be seen as a first step towards answering research question 1 & 3.

Moreover, a first attempt to map the existing stakeholders was made by means of extensive desk research. Various websites of stakeholders were investigated, which served as a first identification of who they are and role they exactly play in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

In addition, various digital sources were consulted to answer the background research questions, of which reports from the municipality of Groningen and Marketing Groningen were most prevalent.

Naturally, certain books and digital documents have been assessed as well for a multitude of reasons. ‘Tourism; principles and practice’ by Cooper et al., ‘Welcome to the Experience Economy’ by Pine II and Gilmore, and ‘Climate (Ex)Change: Normative Tide’ by van de Dijk
and Geerling are, of these books and digital documents, unchallenged in their importance to the conducted research and its outcomes. First of all, the first-mentioned has been used as a point of reference for many tourism related terms and theories. Secondly, the work by Pine II and Gilmore has equipped the research with a useful model that has been essential in the answering of research question 1 & 2. Finally, the last-mentioned source, with its clear observations of especially the flood protective and ecological nature of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, was of significant importance for the answering of research question 5. Further justification of the usage of these sources can be found in the Literature Review section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is an important part of the research phase. Gall et al. (2002) mention that this aspect of research should be considered as it can help in “gaining insights into aspects of your research question(s) and objectives that are considered newsworthy” (as cited by Saunders et al., 2007).

The first work of literature that will be reviewed is Tourism: principles and practices’ (4th edition) by Cooper et al., which has been of utmost importance for the theoretical framework of this report. This standard work on the supply and demand side of the tourism industry offers its readers a holistic view; suggesting a certain mindset and providing a set of guiding principles with which to approach the study of this subject area. Furthermore, with the fourth edition having been released in 2008, it is still quite up to date. Cooper et al. have foremost, with the publishing of this book, supplied the research on enhancements and creations of tourism functions and key experiences in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone with invaluable reference material on the subject destination characteristics. Moreover, substantial amounts of tourism-related terminology have been derived from this book.

Secondly, ‘Welcome to the Experience Economy’ by Pine II and Gilmore has played such an integral role in this research that it must be reviewed in detail. Although this article on the progression of economic value is not very recent – it was published in Harvard Business Review in 1998 –, it propounds ideas pertaining to the shift from selling services to selling experiences that have been widely adopted by the global business world. The writers’ claim that companies’ survival depends on their ability to adjust their business models to the experience economy have not proven to be in vain (www.bloomgroup.com (Anon., n.d.). Therefore, the decision was made to use their model – the Four Realms of an Experience – for the purpose of identifying the Dutch Dollart coastal zone’s key tourist experiences.

Finally, ‘Climate (Ex)Change: Normative Tide’ by van de Dijk and Geerling, a Bachelore Thesis for the study Civil Engineering at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen, that was completed in 2010, is to be assessed. The writers of this report have succeeded in identifying the different economic, ecological, and flood protective forces that are at play in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, in a concise and clear way. Their work has been reviewed in the process of this project and their findings have been used to answer questions related to the region’s stakeholders and the integrated approach factors.
Answering the set research questions required a strategy that went beyond secondary research. The strategies required can be grouped into: familiarization trips, a survey, telephone interviews, and the attendance of a symposium on dike-tourism.

Familiarization trips (Famtrip) were essential to getting to know the Dutch Dollart (primarily) and the German Dollart (secondarily) coastal zones. The latter was undertaken on the 17th of May, 2011, by means of car. This visit entailed a stop at Dyksterhusen and Ditzum, where the tourism functions were investigated. Accordingly upon return the accompanying key experiences were derived; this trip was the main source for the findings displayed in Chapter 5. The primary Famtrip involved more time and analysis. By bike the entire Dutch Dollart coastal zone was visited, stopping every kilometer or so to take pictures and foray into different parts of the area. Also, Dollart Bezoekerscentrum de Reidehoeve was visited and an employee of the centre was spoken to. This trip has provided this research project with invaluable information and forms the main source for answering research question 1. The findings coming from the efforts made can be viewed in Chapter 4.

Primary data collection proved to be especially necessary for the establishment of a tourist profile. Merely basing the tourist profile on expectations derived from the findings in Chapter 4 would be too speculative, thus a survey was necessary. To make this primary research strategy reliable the choice was made to conduct the research under individuals who had already visited the area. Furthermore, the actual questionnaire was constructed in such a way that it would gauge both the experiences at the region in question and their attitudes towards possible enhancements and creations of tourism functions and key experiences in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. Moreover, the terms of the key experiences were altered in order to make them better to understand, i.e. esthetic and escapist were changed into relaxation and adventure. To truly make sure the respondents understood what was meant by all the key experiences they were informed beforehand what they entail.

Initially these questionnaires were planned to be handed out at a symposium on dike-tourism, but the fact that the results might not represent the true attitudes of possible Dutch Dollart coastal zone visitors – there were too many biased people among the conference participants – ultimately was a reason not to. Instead the survey was held in the city centre of Groningen, which took an entire day, as the bulk of people that were approached had never been to the region. A small sample of 30 respondents was questioned. Upon completion of this, the gathered data was processed in excel. The findings helped answer research question 1 & 2 and can be found in the designated chapters, i.e. Chapter 4 & 6.

Additional primary data collection was needed to find out what certain stakeholders had to offer in terms of the area’s tourist profile and ideas for improvements of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. Therefore, municipalities of Oldambt and Delfzijl and their Tourist Information Centers (TIC) were contacted by means of telephone. Unfortunately, the employees of the municipality of Delfzijl were never available for comments, and the website of Delfzijl does not offer any.

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3 Please refer to Appendix 4 for the questionnaire
documents related to tourism policies, so this source has not been used. The information gathered has been used to answer research question 4 and the findings can be read in Chapter 7.

In order to be sure that the plans of stakeholders concerning the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are clear, and to gain ideas, a two-day symposium on dike-tourism was visited. Here information concerning the aforementioned attendance goals was acquired through lectures, a workshop, and networking. The knowledge that was brought home from the symposium was used to answer research question 4 & 5, which is recorded in Chapter 7 & 8.

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RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Due to the short duration of this project certain aspects of this report might have been based on research that deserves more attention. When looking at the fact that only thirty people were questioned during the survey – which was done in two days –, one must draw the conclusion that the findings derived from that part of the research are possibly unreliable. For that to be proven, indeed, the research would have to be conducted in the same manner again, but with a greater population.

Next to this, the author’s lack of mobility has prevented the German Dollart coastal zone to be assessed as intensively as the Dutch side. This limitation is, luckily, limited in itself, as the secondary research that was conducted supports the claim that the main (representative) parts of the coast have been taken into account.

A final constraint on the feasibility of this report lies in the premise that increased tourism functions and key experiences will attract more visitors, and that this increase in tourists to the region will ultimately minimize the effects of the shrinking local economy. Naturally, the only way this increase in visitors will have a positive economic impact is if this also leads to increased expenditure. Especially, when looking at the very low amount of hospitality and food & beverage (F&B) establishments in the region, this is questionable. So, in conclusion, the findings as to what enhancements and creations of tourism functions and key experiences in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are possible in respect to the tourist profile and the integrated approach factors should not be embraced too blindly as improvements with direct economic deliverance for the region.
3. THE DUTCH DOLLART BACKGROUND

In this chapter the background of the Dutch Dollart region is described. The Dollart is a bay between the North-east of the Netherlands and north-western Germany where estuaries of the Ems and the ‘Westerwoldse Aa’ enter the Wadden Sea (an intertidal zone in the south-eastern part of the North Sea) (www.groningerlandschap.nl (Anon., n.d.). As is the case with most low land territories, people have always fought a battle against the water in the Dollart region.

14\textsuperscript{th} Century

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{1362_dollart.png}
  \caption{The Dollart, 1\textsuperscript{4}th Century (Wikipedia)}
\end{figure}

21\textsuperscript{st} Century

\begin{figure}[h]
  \centering
  \includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{21st century_dollart.png}
  \caption{The Dollart, 21\textsuperscript{st} Century (Wikipedia)}
\end{figure}

In 1362 an extreme flood of the Ems estuary created the Dollart bay. The left map in the illustration above shows the situation in this Dutch-German region as it was before the flood. As a result of the extreme overflow of the Ems, the area between the yellow and green lines was completely submerged by the water. Although it was a great catastrophe in which many villages were wiped of the map, it did not stop the inhabitants of this region to start reclaiming in the years to come (www.historischcentrumoldambt.nl (Anon., n.d.). As you can see on the right map of the illustration above, an area of around the size of today’s Dollart has been reclaimed since the surge occurred. With the use of dikes that create polders slowly more and more land has been taken back from the sea, creating a flat, green farming landscape behind high protective dikes at its wetland frontiers. Agricultural fields are shut off from the bay by straight dikes with their tidal marshes beyond them that form the last piece of land before the soil is completely indulged in the brackish water. They are the reminder of what this area used to look like before people started reclaiming the land lost to the Dollart.

Clearly this is a region that has been subject to one of the most destructive floods in Dutch (and German) history and in the centuries that followed the flood has witnessed a most impressive reclamation of a great part of the lost land. Characterized by endless stretches of agricultural fields – particularly prosperous due to the alluvial soil of these tracts of Groningen land – and pastures, punctuated by tiny villages and the odd town, lies the hinterland of the Dollart region. This cultural landscape ends at its coastal frontier where the sea-dike forms a hard barrier between what is considered the civilized world and the wilderness. Although the sea-dike can also
be seen as a connecting phenomenon – adjoining the three Wadden Sea countries (the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark) – this flood protection structure marks the transition from culture to nature. As this natural zone is a more (ecologically) diverse, significant counterpart of this region, the sea-dike all of a sudden can be seen as more than just a wall to keep the water out, but also as a stand from where both the cultural and the natural realm of this region can be admired. The realization of the beauty of the nature is also apparent when considering the fact that in recent years the use of reclaimed land is slowly shifting from agriculture to nature conservation.
4. TOURISM FUNCTIONS AND KEY EXPERIENCES IN THE DUTCH DOLLART COASTAL ZONE

This chapter covers the existing tourism functions and key experiences of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. What is exactly considered to be this zone – what area has been under investigation throughout the duration of the research – will be delineated first.

4.1 DUTCH DOLLART COASTAL ZONE DELINEATION

In the previous chapter a general introduction of the Dollart region has been given, but the area depicted on the pictures there are not an accurate image of what is subject to analysis in this report. Contrary to the former description, the Dutch Dollart coastal zone in the context of this thesis comprises only the area which is exhibited on the map below, which falls under the jurisdiction of the municipalities Oldambt and Delfzijl. From the most north-western – Punt van Reide – till the most south-eastern point – Nieuwe Statenzijl – of the map, the mainland salt marshes – the green areas – and the sea dike – bordering the mainland salt marshes to the west and the south – form the solid ground component of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. What does not directly become clear when looking at the image, but is definitely part of the researched area, is that the sea dike includes a landward and seaward toe. The blue area (the actual Dollart) completes the number of areas that together make up the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. The map below, furthermore, indicates the main components of this region, which can be used for reference when reading about the tourism functions.

FIGURE 3: THE DUTCH DOLLART COASTAL ZONE (GRONINGER LANDSCHAP)
4.2 TOURISM FUNCTIONS

Before the results of the analysis, concerning what the existing tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are, can be displayed, the term ‘tourism function’ is described.

Cooper et al. (2008, p.309) state that “attractions provide the single most important reason for leisure tourism to a destination”. The distinct difference between attractions and tourism functions lies within the fact that the first-mentioned are tangible objects or spaces that attract visitors to a region – like the Eifel Tower or a stretch of pristine beach on the North-coast of Australia – while the latter captures what exact purposes these attractions serve for tourists. Unfortunately, any clear definition of tourism functions from reliable sources does not exist. Nevertheless, for lack of a proper definition it can be said that the tourism function(s) of an area, building, or object, refers to its possible recreational, educational, cultural, and/or hospitality purpose. Whether or not this function is intentional, or is its primary reason of being, is non-pertinent.

What tourism functions the coastal area of the Dutch Dollart region is comprised of can be answered most accurately by, first, looking at the existing attractions – further on referred to as elements. Any destination has one or more attractions that emanate a certain appeal to consumers and, thus, form a substantial pull-factor. “Early attempts at classification were according to type, distinguishing between natural resources and ‘man-made’ features or products” (Cooper et al., 2008, p.310). Following this traditional approach the analyst of the Dutch Dollart coastal area is left with the challenge of separating the natural resources from the artificial. The categorization of these attractive components proves to be especially tedious for the region in question. Centuries-long manipulation of the natural environment by local stakeholders has blurred the line between manmade and pure nature.

As this report is limited to what goes on in the area from the seawater to the sea-dike, there are three main elements to be expounded when assessing tourism functions; the dike itself, the tidal marshes, and the sea.

4.2.1 MAN-MADE ELEMENTS

Although the Dutch Dollart coastal zone does not attract hordes of tourists, it can still be categorized as an attraction as it does appeal too such an extent to certain people that they are enticed to visit. This subchapter discusses the man-made elements of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which include the sea-dike and the mainland salt marshes, and introduces its tourism functions.

4.2.1.1 THE SEA-DIKE

Beginning with one of the two most easily categorized components; the dikes are clearly a man-made attraction. Although they are grassed over, which means they can be and actually are intensively used by farmers for grazing their flocks of sheep – who strengthen the surface with compacting the surface soil and whose dung serves as a natural fertilizer for the grass (a natural reinforcer) on the dike –, the sea-dike was created by Public Works and Management
(Rijkswaterstaat) and, therefore, should be typified as being manmade\(^4\). These dikes are nothing else than elevated strips of land with stairs that are arched over their surface from the hinterland towards the sea approximately every two-hundred meters in a fairly equidistant manner.

These stairs – from here on out referred to as ‘staircase points’ – connect an uninterrupted biking / hiking path that runs along the landward toe of the dike to a path on the seaward toe, which is restricted by gates. It must be noted that these roads cannot be accessed by car. These gates on the seaward toe are open or locked – depending on whether or not the farmer has opened them for herding purposes. Recreation in the form of biking and hiking along the landside of the dike and making forays onto it, and to a limited extent, if you do not mind climbing fences, hiking on the dike and the seaside track is hereby possible. Conveniently enough, the landside biking path is a part of the ‘International Dollart Route’ that runs along the entire Dollart bay – running through Germany and the Netherlands. Concerning this route Ost-Friesland-Tourism, a regional German Destination Management Organization (DMO) mentions on its website that, “The stark charm of the coast landscape around the Dollart characterizes that route” (www.ostfriesland-tourism.com (Anon., n.d.). From this road tourists can venture into the surrounding lands, guided to some interesting villages by direction signs that can be found along the entire route. If biking and hiking is too much of an exercise or there is need for some resting, the sea-dike adjacent to the bay is a formidable place to let the wind go through your hair and are a good vantage point to look out over the tidal marshes and the sea.

Furthermore, on top of the sea-dike at Nieuwe Statenzijl (which is the only village\(^5\) directly at the Dutch Dollart coast) there is a piece of modern art that catches the eye. This long pointed object, called ‘De Waaiboei’, rests on a bowl shaped base in which it can move around in. Nieuwe Statenzijl can be reached by car and there are parking spaces as well as a sluice. Moreover, alongside the sea-dike there is an information board\(^6\) that offers some details about the water management history and some fun facts about the polder. Furthermore, on the landward toe of the sea-dike there is an artificial forest – Het Ambonezenbosje – that is named after the groups of Indonesian people that were housed there in the 1950s, which is accessible by car as a road leads towards the dike from the south. The tiny forest is, officially, not accessible for the public. Something that is accessible is a set of benches on the dike opposite to the little forest\(^7\). These

\(^4\) Please refer to Appendix XI for a picture of the Dutch Dollart sea-dike
\(^5\) Nieuwe Statenzijl has a population of 15 people (www.inhetoldambt.nl (Blaauw, n.d.)
\(^6\) Please refer to Appendix XI for a picture of the information board
\(^7\) Please refer to Appendix XI of the benches on the dike
benches are placed on a fenced plateau, with a small square wall with a plaque on it that commemorates the enhancements of the sea-dike between 1983 and 1986.

4.2.1.2 MAINLAND SALT MARSHES

Positioned on the dike the tourist is rewarded an incredible view of the tidal marshes. Actually, these marshes are the first step towards complete land reclamation. By driving wooden structures into the ground that is submerged by the sea at high tide, slowly mud builds up that in time forms land where grasses and other growth can develop. Due to the rich soil and remote location, these areas are replete with many different birds throughout the year (such as Avocets, Common Teals, and Spotted Redshanks) (www.wadvogel.avifaunagroningen.nl (Anon., 2011). Some for especially ornithologists interesting winged creatures have chosen this land as one of their destinations during their yearly migrations (e.g. Barnacle Geese). This part artificial part natural stretch of land is thus not easily categorized as one or the other. As this component was created by man it is classified as being a man-made element. With categorization efforts out of the way, it must be noted that the main touristic appeal of this part of the coastal zone mainly revolves around its ornithological wealth. This strength is most effectively exploited on both extremes of the region, namely, with bird-watching cabins in the ‘Breebaart Polder’ in the north-west corner of the Dollart and near Nieuwe Statenzijl (the ‘Kiekkaaste’; as exhibited on the next page) in the south-east outskirt. To a lesser extent hiking complements the aforementioned tourism function as trekking into the marshes is also limitedly possible. The tidal marshes adjoined to the Dutch Dollart dikes are accessible at the numerous staircase points. Here, wearing sturdy boots is advisable.

THE BREEBAART POLDER

Briefly mentioned in the previous section, the Breebaart Polder – a polder is the term used for the reclaimed land that is situated in between a sea-dike and a redundant dike – deserves special attention as it is the world’s only polder that is used solely for ecological purposes. Where all the other polders in the Dutch Dollart region are reserved for agricultural use, this unique patch of reclaimed land is made into a haven for birds and is a transitional hub for fish to migrate from salty to fresh water. Even though strictly speaking it is not a tidal marsh, it fits this category the best as in theory it actually is a tidal marsh only in a further stage and it is also an initially manmade natural resource of ecological significance. Being an inland marsh (surrounded by dikes) the possibility of walking around this area – as opposed to the tidal marshes – rich in biodiversity exists. Collecting information about this polder and the chance to gaze over the

FIGURE 6: SALT MARSHES (KWELDERHERSTEL)
scenery is available at the regions only Tourist Information Centre (TIC): ‘Dollart Bezoekerscentrum de Reidehoeve’. Short guided excursions into one of the only restricted areas in this region, the so-called ‘Punt van Reide’ – the tiny peninsular strip of land that marks the point where the Dollart bay becomes known as the Ems estuary –, to observe a wide variety of birds can be arranged via this visitor information centre. Together with Het Ambonezenbosje and Nieuwe Satetenzijl, this area is the place that can be accessed by car.

4.2.2 NATURAL ELEMENTS

Next to artificial attractions certain regions appeal to the greater public due to their natural resources. In this sub-chapter you will find a description of the natural components of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone and the along coming tourism functions.

4.2.2.1 THE DOLLART

Countless metaphors refer to the sea and one of them, ‘untamable as the sea’, alludes to someone or something that cannot be mastered. Although a company like Boskalis might somewhat disagree with this saying, the abovementioned allegory certainly indicates that the Dollart can be typified as a natural resource. One might think that Dutch people despise the sea as it is such a constant threat, but thanks to centuries of investments in water management fear of floods is a remote sentiment. Au contraire even, as soon as the sun casts its first spring-rays on the country people from all over the nation go to the seaside to have a nice day at the beach. In addition to the recreational boating possibilities the sea brings forth, the beach is quite likely the biggest pull-factor of the sea for tourists. Given this educated assumption, it is unfortunate that the Dollart coast has no such thing to offer, unless tourists would not mind to sunbathe on the tidal marshes. As this is very unlikely, it is important to look at the alternative existing tourism functions.

The Dollart is a shallow estuary of sand/mudflats (intertidal zone) with a sea-lane and several smaller streams that cut through it at ebb tide that turns into a salty lake patched with mud banks during flood tide. When it is low tide these flats grow and otherwise submerged mud banks are formed. Being a part of the greater Wadden Sea – which spans the coasts of the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark – the Dollart is on the World Heritage List of UNESCO (www.unesco.org (Anon., n.d.).

From the sea-dike at the Breebaart Polder colonies of seals can be observed during the warmer periods,
FIGURE 9: ‘DE KIEKKAASTE’ (GOOGLE PICTURES)

FIGURE 10: THE ‘BREEBAART POLDER’ (WADDENZEE.NL)
as they congregate near the Dollart coast to reproduce on these mud banks. These breeding grounds can be seen perfectly from the nearby sea-dike. In order not to disturb these semi-aquatic animals, a big screen is placed on the dike that muddles the silhouettes that spectators create. This is clearly an integrated approach to the utilization of the dikes for tourism purposes.

4.3 KEY EXPERIENCES

Now that the different elements have been expounded, and its tourism functions revealed, it is necessary to go a step further in the process of analyzing it; how tourists experience it must be explained. This important step was brought to the attention by Pine II and Gilmore in their highly influential paper on the progression of economic value ‘Welcome to the Experience Economy’ which was published in Harvard Business Review in 1998. They argued that in modern economies experiences are sold rather than services, and that they expect that “experience design will become as much a business art as product design and process design are today” (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998, p.102). These economists furthermore mention that “an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event” (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998, p.98).

In order to clearly identify the tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, grouping these different aspects into experiences offers a very structured approach. An experience has two dimensions; ‘customer participation’ and ‘connection’ (Pine II & Gilmore, 1998). These dimensions will be used to establish what type of experience(s) the Dutch Dollart coastal zone yields.

The first dimension refers to the extent to which the customers – or in this case visitors – affect the performance of the experience. Passive participation – one of the two extremes of this dimension – occurs when the visitors have the least amount of influence on the event, which is the case, as Pine and Gilmore mention, when participants only experience the event as listeners or observers. On the other side of the spectrum lies active participation, which refers to cases where visitors play key roles in the creation of the experience, e.g. as in ice-skating.

The other dimension - connection – refers to the relationship to the external environment that comes along with and thus forms the experience. Immersion and absorption are the extremes of this dimension of experiences. Concerning both extremes of this dimension Pine II and Gilmore (1998, p. 102) stated that “Furiously scribbling notes while listening to a physics lecture is more absorbing than reading a textbook; seeing a film at the theater with an audience, large screen, and stereophonic sound is more immersing than watching the same film on video at home”.

This two-dimensional approach generates four main realms of an experience. The model below indicates that experiences can be typified as being:

- Entertainment, e.g. watching a movie at home –,
- Educational – attending a class –,
- Escapist – wild-water rafting –, or
- Esthetic – bird watching.
It has become clear that the identified tourism functions can be grouped into experiences. These functions stage different experiences. After assessing the different realms it becomes clear that three experiences can be attributed to this region: Educational, Escapist, and Esthetic. Entertainment, in which the experience is characterized by passive participation in combination with absorption, is not something that fits this destination – biking on the dike or observing birds from a bird watching cabin are much more immersing or active than watching a movie at home.
A visitor survey was conducted which was partly used to gauge what experiences are attributed to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone by people who have previously visited the area. In this survey the terms esthetic and escapist were changed into relaxation and adventure respectively to make it clearer what is meant by these terms. Chart 1 shows what percentage of visitors was seeking which experiences. The results clearly indicate that indeed only entertainment is not an experience that can be attributed to the area in question. Each appropriate experience realm will now be discussed in the light of Dutch Dollart coastal zone tourism functions.

4.3.1 EDUCATIONAL

It should not come as a surprise that the information board, commemoration point, and the TIC de Reidehoeve, can be labeled as components of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone that provide an educational experience. These places/objects require visitors to fairly actively participate while absorbing the external environment rather than immersing into it.

4.3.2 ESCAPIST

Also actively participative tourism functions are hiking on and alongside the dike, and to a limited extent walking around in the salt marshes. Biking alongside the dike also forms an escapist experience. As these specific activities bring along a more immersive experience, these aspects can be labeled as more escapist than educational.

4.3.3 ESTHETIC

Esthetic experiences are the more passively immersing ones. Under this realm belong activities such as bird watching, either from the sea-dike or from one of the bird watching cabins, and observing the seals. Furthermore, ‘de Waaiboci’ is also a part of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone which brings along such an experience. Finally, (sitting on) the benches on the dike (watching the admiring the nature) also yield an esthetic experience as it is passive yet immersive.
5. COMPARATIVE STUDY – THE GERMAN DOLLART COASTAL ZONE

This chapter offers an analysis of the tourism functions and key experiences of the German Dollart coastal zone. Consistent with the format in Chapter 4, the findings pertaining to the German side of the Dollart will be subdivided in, man-made elements, natural elements, and key experiences. Additionally, the chapter will be concluded with a short summation of the ideas for possible improvements of the tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, derived from the analysis of the German side of the Dollart coast.

5.1 MAN-MADE ELEMENTS

Beginning with the natural elements, it must be said that the German Dollart coastal zone might have the same general characteristics as its Dutch counterpart; it differs immensely in terms of use and user-friendliness. As is the case on the Dutch side of the border the sea-dike runs along the coast with sheep grazing upon it and salt marshes spread out on the side of its seaward toe. There are, however, great differences. In order to present these differences in an as structured way as possible the following elements of the German Dollart coastal zone will be assessed by listing their main contrasts; the top of dike, the landward toe of the dike, and the mainland salt marshes.

When looking at the top of the sea-dike the following dissimilarities – as compared to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone – are apparent:

- Number of benches present.
- Path on the dike (at certain places).
- Gates that can be opened on the dike.
- Accessible by car (at certain nodal points).

Regarding the landward toe of the dike great differences exist:

- Parking area with benches & picnic tables (nodal points).9
- Small towns with F&B and hospitality establishments Dyksterhusen, Pogum, and Ditzum.

The greatest difference between the Dutch and the German side probably lies in the use of the mainland salt marshes:

- Vast stretches of salt marsh have been converted into grazing fields for the local farmers’ cattle.

Please refer to Appendix XII for a picture of the nodal points

9 Please refer to Appendix XII for a picture of the nodal points
• Paths leading towards the seawater through the mainland salt marshes (at certain points).
• A former off-shore oil drilling platform that is connected to the mainland by a road (accessible by car) that is surrounded by mudflats and contains a large information sign that explains and illustrates that the surroundings are part of the National Wadden Park (Nationalpark Wattenmeer).
• Information boards at each nodal point at the dike

Obviously the differences are numerous. In terms of tourism functions the German Dollart coastal zone offers visitors more opportunities to explore (better infrastructure), to rest (on the dike and on the landward toe of the dike), and to be educated (National Park sign).

Concerning the difference in use of mainland salt marshes and the vicinity of small towns on the German side of the Dollart no lessons can be learnt as these aspects are very unlikely to change (Nieuwe Statenzijl cannot easily be forced to expand and there is a set policy for the use of mainland salt marshes in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone\(^{10}\)).

5.2 NATURAL ELEMENTS

The Dollart itself is probably the only element in which the German side has less to offer than its Dutch neighbor. Although, visitors of the former off-shore oil drilling platform get to see the mudflats from up close, seals can hardly be seen from the German Dollart coast as the points where they congregate are very far away from the east coast of the German Dollart. Apart from this the same tourism functions can be identified, which is limited to just gazing over the mudflats as far as the eye can see and letting time go by slowly.

5.3 KEY EXPERIENCES

Even though there are distinct differences in the degree of infrastructural development between the two researched areas, the key experiences are still very much the same. However, the intensity of the experiences that can be gained does differ greatly.

\(^{10}\) Please refer to chapter 8 for more information on the mainland salt marsh policies in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.
Firstly, educational experiences are more profoundly gained in the German Dollart coastal zone as visiting the former off-shore oil drilling platform and reading the National Park Wadden Sea sign while being immersed in the mudflats is possible.

Secondly, it is possible to gain more elaborate escapist experiences due to the existence of user-friendly gates and paths on the dike. The fact that at some points the dike is accessible by car is more of a transportation benefit, rather than a tourism function that increases a certain experience.

Finally, the nodal points on the landward side of the dike and large number of benches on the dike allows visitors in to gain esthetic experiences as information about the area is offered abundantly and there are more comfortable places to sit while enjoying the view.

5.3 EXTRACTED IDEAS

When looking at the findings above it can be concluded that valuable ideas were generated from this part of the research. The ideas that will be taken into account when formulating the integrated tourism function enhancements and creations are:

- a path on the dike;
- gates in the fences on the dike;
- more information boards;
- nodal points;
- more resting places on the dike.
6. TOURIST PROFILE

As the tourism functions and key experiences of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone have been analyzed, it is possible to look at what type of tourists are likely to visit the area. Furthermore, it is important to list what visitors want to see improved, for which the findings in the previous chapter are used. In other words, in this chapter, these two matters will together culminate in a tourist profile for the area of investigation, which serves as a criterion for the ultimately advised tourism function enhancements and creations.

6.1 TOURIST TYPES

According to Dirk Nijdam (2011), director of Marketing Groningen, there are roughly 2.1 million people in the Netherlands with an overall profile that matches the characteristics of the Wadden Sea coast. Taken into account in this profile are aspects such as age and level of income.

Telephone interviews with the TICs of Oldambt and Delfzijl showed that specific data pertaining to the amount and profile of Dutch Dollart coastal zone visitors are not available. This claim is also supported by the staff of the Reidehoeve, as mentioned by Paul van der Veur (an employee of this centre) this which has a guestbook but does not analyze this information.

Nevertheless, a tourist profile is needed. Judging from the analysis in the previous chapter, the people who fit the tourist profile of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone seek the following experiences:

- Educational
- Escapist
- Esthetic

Furthermore, the little information that is available on the matter refers to the type of tourism that is possible in the greater area. According to the municipality of Oldambt, day-tourists (visiting a destination and going home the same day), cultural tourists, and short-stay tourists (visiting a destination including a maximum of two overnight stays) can be accommodated in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone (Oldambt, 2011). As the short-stay tourists might visit the Dollart coast these are included in the tourist profile.

Finally, the survey that was conducted also offers information for the tourist profile. It revealed that the average age of the survey population was around 50 years. Furthermore, 93% of the respondents were above 30 years of age. Although the sample size was quite small, the fact the youngest person that had visited this area was 27 and that most of the approached people – of

11 Please refer to Appendix IX for the interview transcripts
which only roughly 20% had visited the Dutch Dollart coastal zone – were students, indicates that the tourist profile of this area includes an age group 30 years and above.

### 6.2 VISITOR RESEARCH

Next to the above information related to the motives for visiting and age of the respondents, the survey results point out that there are specific aspects that could be improved in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

The respondents were asked if they felt there was something missing in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. All respondents indicated that this was the case, which shows that there is definitely room for improvement.

The next question offered the respondents the chance to choose from a set of given features they might find that were missing. Personal conclusions drawn concerning missing features during the familiarization trip to the area – concerning off-dike lodging possibilities and direction signs – and the ideas generated in Chapter 5 are the rationale behind the choice of features which the respondents could choose from. As a matter of clarification, it is worth mentioning that off-dike lodging meant options for lodging in the salt marshes and on the landward toe of the dike. Furthermore, information boards in general were posed as information boards on the dike as information boards in general were already included in the nodal point option. Chart 2 represents the percentage of respondents that indicated that a feature was missing.

**Features Respondents Found Lacking**

- Biking Path on Dike
- Gates on the Dike
- Off-dike Lodging Possibilities
- Resting Places
- Information Boards on the Dike
- Direction Signs
- Nodal Points

**Chart 2: Overview of Features that Visitors Found Lacking**
The chart above shows that there is clear demand for biking paths on the sea-dike. Clearly, visitors of this area want to use the top of the dike more than is possible at the moment. This claim is further supported by the fact that 80% of the respondents indicated that they missed gates in the fences of the staircase points. Furthermore, a clear demand for nodal points existed under the respondents as 80% indicated that this is something that was missing. There also seems to be a demand for more resting places, as 70% of the respondents indicated. The fact that between Punt van Reide and Nieuwe Statenzijl there is only one place to sit while taking a break makes this result not much of a surprise.

Equally conclusive, there seems to be hardly any need for placing more direction signs as only five out of thirty indicated this as a point of improvement.

Less conclusive are the answers concerning information boards on the dike and off-dike lodging opportunities. There seems to be some interest in the idea, but with respectively 53% and 47% of the respondents in favor of adding these features no binding conclusions can be drawn.

Finally, the respondents were also invited to write down any other improvements that could be made (not covered in the previous question). Eleven out of thirty decided that there was yet more missing, and even though three of them were not directly related to the coastal zone, there were still some answers that provide this research with some additional valuable ideas. Three respondents even managed to indicate two more improvements. The ideas related to the enhancement and creation of tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone were:

- works of art (6x);
- the possibility to venture into the mainland salt marshes (3x);
- coin or non-coin operated binoculars; and
- bins.

Of these additions, suggestions for adding works of art and making it possible to enter the mainland salt marshes were most prevalent. These will be taken into account as they are both tourism functions that enhance key experiences – esthetic experiences belonging to the works of art and escapist experiences to venturing into the mainland salt marshes. Another interesting suggestion that deserves consideration was the establishment of binoculars on the sea-dike as this is a tourism function that would like the works of art enhance the esthetic experiences that can be gained in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

The idea to place bins in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone is not relevant to answering the main research question, as it has no relation to tourism functions and key experiences, but, nevertheless, this was a valid remark.
Collins Cobuild states that stakeholders are “people who have an interest in a company’s or organization’s affairs”. When the definition is applied to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, the area’s stakeholders are the people who have an interest in it. This chapter gives an overview of who these people (organizations) are and is focused on indicating, when possible, what plans or ideas they have concerning the enhancement and creation of tourism functions.

As including certain stakeholders would not offer any information relevant for the research topic of this project, a selection of stakeholders has been made. The criteria for this selection were that the organizations would have to have any pertinence in terms of plans, ideas, or limitations in respect to tourism functions enhancement and creation in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. In order to describe the various relevant stakeholders in a structured manner a distinction has been made between governmental and non-governmental organizations.

### 7.1 Governmental Stakeholders

The Dutch Dollart coast falls under the jurisdiction of the Dutch national government, of which the province of Groningen is the territorial unit wherein the municipalities of Delfzijl and Oldambt form local government administrative divisions. Within this political structure the province of Groningen plays a connecting role between the national government and the municipalities of Oldambt and Delfzijl (www.provinciegroningen.nl (Anon., n.d.).

**Figure 14: Dollart Municipalities (Province of Groningen)**

**Figure 15: Province of Groningen (Province of Groningen)**
STAKEHOLDERS - COASTAL DEFENSE RELEVANCE

There is a highly structured hierarchy in which the exact roles of these stakeholders in terms of coastal defense are stipulated. What this hierarchy means for tourism function development in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone is grounded in the roles of the Hunze en Aa’s – the regional Water Board – and Public Works and Management.

Hunze en Aa’s is a regional water authority that is responsible for the management of water barriers, quality of the water, and water levels, i.e. the execution of regional and local spatial development plans pertaining to water management (www.hunzeenaas.nl (Anon., n.d.). Public Works and Management on the other hand is an executive arm of the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment, which is compelled with the task of designing, constructing, managing, and maintaining the main infrastructure facilities in the Netherlands, including the dikes (www.rijkswaterstaat.nl (Anon., n.d.).

Under the auspices of the above-mentioned organizations a set of requirements and future plans exist pertaining to the sea-dike of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone that have a limiting effect on possible tourism function enhancements and creations, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

STAKEHOLDERS – TOURISM RELEVANCE

In 2010 the province of Groningen, in cooperation with the municipalities of Marne, Eemsmond, Delfzijl, and Oldambt (the four main Groningen Wadden coast municipalities) issued a proposal for the ‘Kiek over Diek’ (Platduits for ‘looking over the dike’) project. This project is aimed at partly improving and creating a biking route that goes from the most north-western to the most south-eastern part of the Wadden Sea coast of the province of Groningen.

In this plan a coastal biking route will follow the course of the dike on its top or on the landward or seaward toe, transects will connect this route to towns and villages in the hinterland, which will both be supplied with clear direction signs. Where the coastal route and the transects intersect, nodal points – the chosen term for the place where people can park, rest, and receive information – will be created.

The plan was also approved in 2010 and the financing of it has been secured (Hoek, 2011). In 2016 the project is estimated to have been completed. For the Dollart coast this means there are a number of changes planned. As only the planned coastal route, information boards, and nodal points have an influence on tourism function enhancement and creation in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, only these matters will be discussed.

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12 Please refer to Appendix X for an overview of the exact organization of coastal defense in the Netherlands
13 Please refer to Appendix VIII the map of the proposed project
Concerning the coastal route the following plans exist:

- An improvement of the accessibility of the existing road on the landward toe of the dike from Punt van Reide till Dollart Sud by removing small gates that are placed along the cattle grids.\(^{14}\)
- The construction of a synthetic grid that is placed on top of the sea-dike from Dollart Sud till Nieuwe Statenzijl that can serve as a biking path and can be removed when adjustments need to be made to the dike.\(^{15}\)

In terms of direction signs the following plans exist:

- There should be direction signs indicating that there is a biking path on top of the dike.
- There should be direction signs that indicate where the biking path can be accessed.

In terms of nodal points the following plans exist:

- Nodal points should be created at intersecting points such as Het Ambonezenbosje and Nieuwe Statenzijl.
- At Het Ambonezenbosje small wooden lodges should be built so there is an opportunity for tourists to stay the night at the dike.

Clearly, the goals of Kiek over Diek are very much in line with the possible tourism function enhancements and creations that have so far been covered in this report.

### 7.2 NON-GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS

In this section of the chapter the non-governmental stakeholders will be introduced and discussed in the light of enhancing and creating tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone\(^{16}\).

#### STAKEHOLDERS – TOURISM RELEVANCE

Marketing Groningen, an organization that develops marketing strategies for the city and the province of Groningen is discussed here. The main problem that the entire Wadden Sea coast faces in terms of marketing is the fact that its main characteristic, emptiness, is hard to sell. Especially considering the fact that emptiness is hard to be represented by an icon makes this apparent (Nijdam, 2011). In this sense it would be advisable to have focus areas that can be developed and marketed, rather than spreading out touristic attractions along the Wadden Sea coast. This approach is supported by Ytije Feddes, a landscape advisor for the national government, who at the ‘Op ‘n Diek’ symposium mentioned that “it is advisable to only concentrate on certain areas where tourism functions are most abundant” (2011).

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\(^{14}\) Please refer to Appendix VIII for the route between Punt van Reide and Dollart Sud

\(^{15}\) Please refer to figure Appendix VIII for the route between Dollart Sud and Nieuwe Statenzijl

\(^{16}\) For a quick overview of relevant Non-Governmental Stakeholders please refer to Appendix X
Although this does not give insights into possible tourism function improvements and creations, it does reveal that the location of the improvements is also an important factor that must be considered.

STAKEHOLDERS – ECOLOGICAL RELEVANCE

Although the Dollart falls under national jurisdiction, the ownership and actual management of the mainland salt marshes and the mudflats belongs to a number of organizations. The actual owners of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone are represented in Figure 16 and consist of the following organizations:

1. Private owners organized in the association ‘Vereniging van Oevereigenaren en Gebruikers’ (VOG).

Area 1 is owned and managed by private parties that are organized in the VOG. Area 2 & 3 are both owned by Natuurmonumenten and managed by Het Groninger Landschap. The limitations for recreation in their respective areas are discussed in the next chapter.
8. INTEGRATED APPROACH LIMITATIONS

One of the requirements set for the possible enhancement and creation of tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart is that this is done by following the integrated approach. This chapter will explain what this approach is and what the resulting limitations are (flood protection and ecology).

8.1 THE INTEGRATED APPROACH

The integrated approach stands for acting in accordance with the People-Planet-Profit perspective. People-Planet-Profit means that growth of a certain product, service, or region is accomplished without compromising the natural environment, the livelihood of people, and their quality of life. It is a central approach within sustainable development; the main preferred method within development studies. Regarding tourism development in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone; the integrated approach calls for investigation of the coast’s flood protection and ecological functions. This chapter discusses the limitations for tourism development coming from the abovementioned functions, and is, thus, a concrete step towards a truly integrated approach.

8.1 FLOOD PROTECTION

In terms of flood protection in the Netherlands the distinction is made between primary defense areas and dike-system areas. The Dollart coast is considered a primary defense zone (www.st-ab.nl (Anon., 2011). To prevent floods to occur, strict legislature has been drawn up concerning the building and sustaining of dikes – the so-called Water Act (Wet op Waterkering).

Firstly, as mentioned in Chapter 7, management of the Dutch Dollart sea-dike is in the hands of the Water Board Hunze en Aa’s. This organization is thus in charge of making sure that the rules and regulations regarding the sea-dike – as prescribed by the Water Act – are maintained.

These rules and regulations bring along limitations for adjustments made to the dike; the structure of the dike cannot be altered in any way, unless it serves the for flood protection.

Secondly, the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) estimates a 15 to 35 cm rise of the sea level in the upcoming decades, which calls for the reinforcement / enlargement of the existing dikes in the country (Geerling & van de Dijk, 2010). Public Works and Management (www.rijkswaterstaat.nl (Anon., n.d.) states that in the upcoming years it is expected that the dikes, also along the Dollart estuary, will be re-assessed and further fortified.

These impending fortifications bring along limitations; added features must be removable. This means that the tourism function enhancements and creations must be designed and added to the dike in such a way that they can be temporarily relocated without being destroyed in the process.
8.2 Ecology

Concerning the ecological factors influencing the possibilities related to tourism function enhancement and creation in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, the protected status of the Dollart is very important. There are three legal statuses that identify its ecological significance, of which the first two will only be discussed as the legal implications coming forth from these two for the management of certain areas encompasses all the implications coming from the third listed status (Geerling & van de Dijk, 2010):

- European Natura 2000.
- Wetland (Ramsar Convention).
- UNESCO World Heritage List.

First of all, as the Dollart belongs to the Wadden Sea, it is considered a European Natura 2000 area. This is due to the fact that the entire Wadden Sea has been labeled as a Wild Bird directive and Habitat directive area. The fact that the Dollart is labeled as such, means that the owners and users of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone must make sure that the habitats of the species living in these areas are maintained by preserving and/or improving or increasing them (Geerling & van de Dijk, 2010).

Secondly, as the Wadden Sea is also on the list of wetlands according to the Ramsar Convention, the Netherlands has the duty to strive towards carefully using these wetlands and cooperating internationally (www.ramsar.org (Anon., n.d.).

Both acts are included in the greater Nature Conservation Act (Natuurbeschermingswet), which the owners and managers of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone must abide to.

Figure 17 shows that recreation in the Dollart (mudflats and mainland salt marshes) is, due to its protected status, restricted. Punt van Reide is labeled as a zone where recreation is not or hardly allowed, while in the remaining part of the Dollart recreation is permitted to a limited extent.

FIGURE 17: 3 TYPES OF RECREATIONAL AREAS IN THE WADDE SEA (WADZENZEE.NL, ADJUSTED)
The implication of the abovementioned statuses for the owners is that allowing people to enter the mainland salt marshes is limited as this could disturb the animals that live there.

The regional manager of Het Groninger Landschap mentions that they abide to this rule and do not permit visitors of the region to freely enter the mainland salt marshes (in the east) that they manage, let alone construct lodges (Silvan Puijman, 2011). Only from the 15th of August till the 1st of April each year guided tours into the mainland salt marshes are organized (Province of Groningen, 2006).

For the mainland salt marshes of the VOG, however, this does not account. Due to the approval of an application for opening their property for the public, restrictions for entering their mainland salt marshes do not exist (Province of Groningen, 2006).
9. INTEGRATED TOURISM FUNCTIONS ENHANCEMENT AND CREATION

With the existing tourism functions identified, the different criteria expounded, and an abundance of ideas generated, the task of bringing this all together remains. Before this is done, some additional ideas for tourism function enhancement and creation will be shortly discussed. As these have no relation to the previous chapters they are presented here. In conclusion, in this chapter all the ideas will be assessed according to the set criteria, thereby; leaving this report with the actual integrated tourism function enhancement and creation recommendations.

To make sure the advised integrated tourism function enhancements and creations are linked to key experiences and presented as clearly as possible; a further adjusted version of the experiences model of Chapter 4 will be used.

9.1 ADDITIONAL IDEAS

A number of ideas for possible tourism function enhancements and creations have not been covered in the previous chapters as they are not linked to the subjects covered there and they are the result of a combination of brainstorming, discussions with the company supervisor, and presentations at the Op ‘n Diek symposium. The ideas are focused on the:

- creation of an artificial beach such as exists in Termunterzijl (www.campingzeestrand.nl (Anon., 2010);
- installation of webcams (dikecams) on the dike that captures the landscape and is broadcasted real-time on a website (Neef, 2011); and
- a dike stand, which consists of a broad wooden staircase constructed on the landward toe of the dike, leading up to the top of the dike, and on the seaward toe of the dike a wooden cabin that extends towards (alleviated above the ground) the salt marshes, which visitors can use to sit in, sheltered from the wind, and gaze over the Dollart

Both the dike stand and the dikecams have been suggested during the Op ‘n Diek symposium. Concerning the first, the creation of such a dike stand would make looking out over the salt marshes and the Dollart a lot more special and thus enhance the esthetic experience that can be gained. Whether or not this construction would compromise the flood protection function of the dike is an important question that remains unanswered.

As for the dikecams, it must be noted that this idea might not create a tourism function that is available when visiting the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, but, as people can sit back and have a look at what is going while sitting at home; it will add entertainment as an experience. Moreover, these real-time images might stimulate viewers to visit the area and is in no way compromising the ecological and flood protection functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.
The ideas of creating a beach and artificial dwelling hills are the product of brainstorming sessions and talks with the company supervisor. In regard to the artificial beach, there are more cons than pros. Although visitors would be enabled to relax at the beach while admiring the surroundings, swimming is not possible due to the shallow nature of the Dollart – thereby only enhancing the esthetic experience and not the escapist experience (as swimming is both active and immersive). Furthermore, as a part of the mainland marshes would have to be sacrificed, it is not likely that this idea has a chance of being permitted by the responsible authorities.

Together with the ideas coming from the previous chapter, the above stated added features will be assessed and deemed either recommendable or not in the following section of this chapter.

### 9.2 Recommendations for Integrated Tourism Function Enhancements and Creations

The set criteria for the tourism function enhancements and creations were (1) that they fit the tourist profile and do not compromise (2) the ecological and (3) the flood protection function (integrated approach criteria) of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. As extensive analysis has generated a multitude of ideas that differ in the degree of compliance with the criteria, three tiers of compliance have been established. In separate sections each tier of compliance will be explained and the corresponding ideas that have been deemed as a key experience enriching tourism function listed.

#### 1st Compliance Tier

Under this compliance tier the ideas are listed that meet all three criteria. The recommendations for these tourism functions are that they should be implemented. Ideas that fall into this category are:

- a biking path on the dike;
- gates in staircase point fences;
- nodal points; and
- resting places.

These ideas all concern tourism function enhancements and will increase the value of the existing experiences that can be gained in the area in question rather than create new ones. Considering these ideas, it seems that the province of Groningen is doing the right thing with the Kiek over Diek project.

#### 2nd Compliance Tier

This category of ideas complies with the integrated approach criteria but is not or less conclusive in terms of it fitting the tourist profile. Therefore, it is advised that visitor demand must be researched (further) before progressing to the implementation phase. These ideas consist of:
• information boards on the dike (in the form of a sign that explains the ecological status of the area (UNESCO World Heritage) and any other types of information boards);
• landward toe lodging possibilities;
• coin or non-coin operated binoculars;
• dikecams; and
• more works of art.

Concerning a sign that explains the ecological status of the area (UNESCO World Heritage and dikecams, no research has been done as to what importance visitors give to these features. As the first enhances the tourism function of being informed about the surroundings and would, thus, significantly increase the value of the educational experiences gained and the latter creates a new experience that can be gained, it is definitely interesting to further investigate these options.

As for information boards on the dike no conclusive evidence was gained from the visitor research that point out the need for more. Further research concerning this feature would be welcome, as it has the potential to enhance the tourism function of getting informed about the surroundings and, thus, the educational experiences that can be gained.

Regarding the landward toe lodging possibilities, the idea of equipping the Dutch Dollart coastal zone with cabins for overnight stays would create the tourism function of staying the night and, consequently, increase the possibilities for escapist experiences without compromising the flood protection and ecological function of the area, but lacks conclusive evidence that there is a demand for such a thing among visitors of the area. More research is advised to be conducted before the proposed plans of the province of Groningen for constructing such cabins at Het Ambonezenbosje are actually carried out.

Even more inconclusive are the results from the visitor research that indicated that placing coin or non-coin operated binoculars and more works of art on the dike would be an improvement. Nevertheless, the establishment of these binoculars would add the tourism function of using a telescope to observe the area and the creation of more works of art would enhance the tourism function of being able to admire art. This creation and enhancement of a tourism function would both fortify the existing esthetic experiences that can be gained without compromising the flood protection (as has become clear with the Waalboei on the dike in Nieuwe Statenzijl) and ecological function of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

3RD COMPLIANCE TIER

Finally, the third compliance tier contains ideas that possibly might not comply with the integrated approach criteria and have not at all or have not conclusively been proven to fit the tourist profile. Hence, some of these ideas are not advised to be implemented at all and for others further research is needed in respect to visitor demand and possibilities for bending the rules pertaining to flood protection and protected status of the salt marshes before being considered suitable for implementation. This 3rd compliance tier includes:

• the possibility to venture into mainland salt marshes;
• salt marsh lodging possibilities;
- a dike stand;
- an artificial beach; and
- more direction signs.

In regard to the idea of increasing possibilities for venturing into the salt marshes it must be noted that this point is aimed at the salt marshes of Natuurmonumenten, as the VOG marshes are open for public. Whether or not there is demand for such a thing among visitors remains unknown as the conducted research does not provide any conclusive evidence that this is the case. Furthermore, it is questionable if Natuurmonumenten would be willing to change their policy. Even though these uncertainties exist, this idea deserves more attention because it would enhance the tourism function of hiking in the salt marshes and increase the escapist experiences visitors can gain in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

Although the results from the visitor research point out that 47% of the respondents would like to have the possibility of off-dike lodging in the future, the ordeal is comparable to the one in the previous paragraph. Only, in this case both the VOG and Natuurmonumenten would have to agree with the idea at hand. It also deserves attention because of the same reasons landward toe lodging possibilities should be further examined.

Concerning the idea of constructing a dike stand, the fact that there is no proof that such a thing would be welcomed by visitors of the area and the possible negative impact this structure might have on the flood protection of the sea-dike are the necessitating factors for further research. That it is not deemed inadvisable is due to the fact that it would be a very powerful enhancement of the tourism function of admiring the surroundings and thus increase the esthetic value of the experiences that can be gained in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone significantly.

Regarding the artificial beach, it is advised that no such thing is created. Although it will enhance the esthetic experiences that can be gained by adding the tourism function of enjoying the surroundings while relaxing in the sand, the fact that it compromises on the ecological function of the area to such a great extent makes it very irresponsible idea.

Finally, adding more direction signs at this point is not advised, as the primary research clearly indicates that this is not something that needs to be improved.

Please refer to the figure below for a visual overview of the matters discussed in this chapter.
Figure 18: Recommendations by Tier and Experience
10. CONCLUSIONS

Estimations made by the Dutch government point out that the municipalities of Delfzijl and Oldambt, two north-eastern provinces in the Netherlands, will see a substantial decrease in its population in the upcoming years. As these municipalities are located at the Dollart – a bay between the northern parts of Germany and the Netherlands where the rivers Ems and Westerwoldse Aa flow into the Wadden Sea – they also face rises in sea-level, which, after audits performed by Public Works and Management of the sea-dikes that protect the hinterland from floods, was reason to plan reinforcement measures. This decision sparked the establishment of the Climate (Ex)Change project, which is aimed at establishing ways of combining reinforcement of coastal defense structures with increasing their tourism and ecological functions, according to the integrated approach. Coming back to the negative demographic developments mentioned earlier, especially increased numbers of visitors by enhancing existing and creating new tourism functions could serve as an approach that could off-set the decrease in population. The research of which this report is the result was thus aimed at identifying what tourism functions can be enhanced or created that will attract more visitors and will not have compromising effects on the ecological and flood protection function of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

In order to get a better understanding of the Dollart region background information was given in Chapter 3, which revealed that this area is characterized by centuries long reclamation of land lost to the sea for agricultural purposes. This has had a profound effect on the appearance of the coastal landscape. The dike forms a hard barrier between the cultured (hinterland) and the wild realms (the sea) of the region, in which the salt marshes are the ingredient that is just in between the two. A recent shift in salt marsh policies by stakeholders in favor of bio-diversity, underpins the ecological value of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

Chapter 4 first delineated the researched area. The Dutch Dollart coastal zone stretches from Punt van Reide, on the north-west corner of the Dollart, all the way to Nieuwe Statenzijl, on the Dollart’s south-east corner. Along this coast the elements it is comprised of include the dike, the salt marshes, and the Dollart itself.

Then, this chapter described the existing tourism functions. To present the existing tourism functions in a clear manner the experiences model by Pine II and Gilmore was used. The tourism functions could be either labeled as an entertainment – passive participation combined with absorption –, educational – active participation combined with absorption –, escapist – active participation combined with immersion –, or esthetic experience – passive participation combined with immersion.

Entertainment was not an experience that could be gained in the Dutch Dollart coast. The other experiences could be found as tourism functions were found that supplied them.
The information board, commemoration point, and Reidehoeve were all deemed tourism functions that yielded an educational experience.

Escapist experiences were indicated as possible due to the existence of hiking on and alongside the dike, and to a limited extent in the salt marshes. Next to the tourism functions, biking alongside the dike was also one that was deemed escapist.

Completing the spectrum of experiences, bird-watching from the sea-dike or one of the bird watching cabins and watching the seals at the screen on the dike where, together with the artwork on the dike in Statenzijl (de Waaiboei), were tourism functions that offered esthetic experiences that could be gained.

The findings of a comparative study between the Dutch and the German side of the Dollart’s coastal zone, covered in Chapter 5, revealed a number of important ideas for the enhancement and creation of tourism functions. The relevant findings, which were taken as ideas for visitor analysis, were that the German side had more resting places on the dike. There were and paths and gates on the dike as well. Furthermore, at Dyksterhusen there was a big information sign that pointed out that the area was a National Park. Finally, there were nodal points – parking spots with picnic tables & benches – at each little town at the dike and information boards as well.

Chapter 6 indicated that the Dutch Dollart coastal zone tourist profile includes tourists who seek, escapist, educational, or esthetic experiences, who can be short-stay, day, and/or cultural tourists in the age group of above thirty. Furthermore, it became clear that visitors of the area want a biking path on the dike, gates in the fences on the dike, nodal points on the landward toe, and resting places on the dike and did not need more direction signs. No conclusive answers were given concerning the off-dike lodging possibilities and information boards on the dike. Relevant ideas that were revealed during this research were also the possibility to venture into the salt marshes, coin or non-coin operated binoculars, and more works of art.

Stakeholder analysis, in Chapter 7, then introduced the stakeholders for flood protection and ecology in relation to possible limitations; Hunze en Aa’s Waterboard and Public Works and Management, and Natuurmonumenten, VOG, and Het Groninger Lanschap. Furthermore, the Kiek over Diek project was revealed, which is an initiative by the province of Groningen and the four main Wadden Sea municipalities, including Delfzijl and Oldambt. The initiative is aimed at improving the landward biking route along the dike from Punt van Reide till Dollart Sud and constructing a synthetic grid on the dike from Dollart Sud till Nieuwe Statenzijl for biking purposes. Also nodal points should be created at Het Ambonezenbosje (a small forest at the Dollart Sud point) and Nieuwe Statenzijl.

Following this the integrated approach was explained in Chapter 8. This approach means for tourism function enhancements and creations that they may not compromise the flood protective and ecological functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. The flood protection function limits the aforementioned in the way that the dike cannot be altered and in the near future changes must be made to the dike to accommodate to the rises in sea-level, so any additions to the dike must be removable. In terms of limitations coming from the ecological function, the salt marshes of Natuurmonumenten cannot be entered by the public because of their choice to abide the nature protection laws as stipulated in the Nature Conservation Act. For the salt marshes of the
VOG these limitations do not apply as they have been allowed to open their salt marshes to the public.

The final chapter before bringing for the recommended tourism function enhancements and creations, introduced three more ideas, which did not fit in the other chapters. These were an artificial beach, so-called dikecams on the dike, and a dike stand. Then all the findings from the report were brought together and the proposed tourism function enhancements and creations in three tiers of compliance.

The 1st tier covered ideas that complied with the set criteria (fitting the tourist profile, and not compromising the flood protection and ecological functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone). This tier included the biking path on the dike, gates in the fences on the dike, nodal points, and resting places on the dike.

The 2nd tier covered ideas that only complied with the integrated approach which are recommended to implement. This included information boards on the dike (including signs in general and the UNESCO World Heritage sign), landward toe lodging possibilities, binoculars, dikecams, and more works of art. For these ideas visitor demand research is advised before implementation.

The 3rd tier included all the ideas that did not comply with the tourist profile or the integrated approach. These included opening up the salt marshes of Natuurmonumenten for the public and salt marsh lodging possibilities. For these two, visitor demand research and investigating the possibilities for the owners of the salt marshes to bend the rules is advised before thinking about implementation. Furthermore, the idea of adding the dike stand is interesting, but before implementing it, the demand for it and the attitudes of the owners of the dikes must be gauged first. The artificial beach should not be created as it will disturb the ecosystems of the area too much. Concerning direction signs hardly any respondent of the visitor research responded positive, so this should not be considered as an option either.
11. RECOMMENDATIONS

As has become clear from the final chapter of the main body, a number of things must be researched in order to come up with truly integrated tourism function enhancements and creations that fit the tourist profile of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

In order to find out if the ideas that are in the 2nd and the 3rd tier of compliance for the tourist profile a survey should be conducted. The best place for this would be the Dollart Bezoekerscentrum de Reidehoeve, from where the employees of this centre could hand out surveys questioning people’s attitudes towards these ideas. This would make sure that the respondents have indeed been to the area in question and yield reliable results.

Furthermore, interviews can be held with people from Natuurmonumenten, VOG, and Het Groninger Landschap, to discuss possible options for using the salt marshes for recreation.

A final recommendation for future research is aimed at the exact location of the proposed tourism function enhancements and creations. The centralized approach has been shortly discussed in Chapter 7, but in order to make the best out the touristic appeal of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, an extensive research should be conducted aimed at answering where these functions should be focused. This could be included in the survey that would be conducted in Reidehoeve.
12. BIBLIOGRAPHY


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<td>Percentage of people that have or have not visited the area</td>
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<td>5</td>
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This has by far been the busiest time of my life. Juggling two jobs and a graduation project is a guarantee for some stress. It will definitely sound cliché, but this project has been an extremely good learning moment.

Initially, I had no idea what to expect of the Dollart so everything was quite vague, i.e. I wasn’t sure what to expect from the project. Also, the research questions in the initial form did not provide me with enough guidance.

After visiting the Dollart, I had a better understanding of what the characteristics were and I could start answering my first research question.

From this point on everything started to get more and more structured as I got better acquainted with the integrated approach literature and the stakeholders.

Throughout the whole project, until the penultimate week, changes have been made in the approach as new information would come to mind that made me decide to do things a little different.

I am very glad that I visited Germany because this was interesting and it generated some good ideas for the research.

Also, it was good that I conducted a survey; otherwise the conclusions and recommendations would have been very loose. Not that they are really binding now, but at least certain ideas have been comfortably recommended.

In a future research I would make sure that I get the research questions absolutely right in the first week or two, as now it was sometimes a bit chaotic.

Nevertheless, all in all, it has been a project that has made me look differently at the province of Groningen and its people.

Most important of all is that I really enjoyed the field I was engaged in, which is in the end one if not the most important thing.
**APPENDIX II – WEEKLY PROGRESS REPORTS**

**GPJ PROGRESS FILE**

Name student: Mitchell Dröge

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Actual Start</th>
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<tr>
<td>Familiarization trip to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Web-based research concerning tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research trends that affect Dutch Dollart coastal zone tourism</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiarization trip to the German Dollart coastal zone</td>
<td>Not Planned</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Not Planned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct stakeholder analysis of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone online &amp; via telephone</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research the limitations of enhancement and creation of tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
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<th>Planned Finish</th>
<th>Actual Finish</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conduct a survey to identify the experiences of Dutch Dollart coastal zone visitors and their attitudes towards proposed tourism functions enhancement and creation</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend symposium on dike-tourism in Groningen and Friesland to gauge the attitudes of different regional stakeholders in relation to tourism development and obtain ideas for tourism functions enhancement and creation recommendations</td>
<td>Not Planned</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Not Planned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write out ideas for tourism functions enhancement and creation and present to company supervisor</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Write report</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
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APPENDIX III - SUMMARY OF MEETING RECORDS

Meeting with school supervisor

- Choice for specific trends in 2nd research question should be included
- Should include a part where is answered what the integrated approach is

Meeting with Hans Revier

- The fact that certain things are not allowed now in the salt marshes does not mean that they cannot be permitted in the future
- Important to look beyond what seems to be the boundary
Appendix IV – GPJ Agreement

Company Name: Centre for applied research and innovation Area Development NoorderRuimte (KCGON), Hanze University Groningen
Address: Zernikeplein 11, B1.44
Postal code: 9747 AS
City: Groningen
Country: The Netherlands

Contact Person / Company Supervisor: Hans Revier
Job title: Lector – Lectorate Marine Wetlands Studies –
Telephone number: 06-53674194
Website: http://www.hanze.nl
E-mail: j.m.revier@pl.hanze.nl

Short Description of Company:

KC GON is a centre for applied research and innovation at the Hanze University Groningen where professors, researchers, students and professionals from the field carry out research together, spurred on by current, practical issues concerning area development in the north of the Netherlands.

This research is always done from an integrated perspective, which means that attention is paid to ‘people-planet-profit’. The centre is multidisciplinary by nature, i.e. many different disciplines and degree programmes and lectorates are involved. KCGON’s goal is to:

- Share regional development knowledge;
- Unite the educational sphere and the working field;
- Address current issues in the field with applied research;
- Promote an integrated way of thinking and working.

One of the associated lectorates is the Lectorate Marine Wetlands Studies, which carries out applied research pertaining to questions arising from several interest groups from the north of the Netherlands concerning the Wadden Sea area and its coastal zone.

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This address is for temporary, internal IBS use only. Please be aware that it does not change your official address in the central Hanzehogeschool administration!!

Agreement

- The company and the International Business School Groningen agree to carry out a project according to the details as specified on the next pages.
- The International Business School will involve the above named student(s) in the project; the project process will be supervised by a staff member from the International Business School.
- Students are involved in the project as part of the GPJ module, a compulsory part of their studies. The project and its deliverables will be subject to assessment by IBS staff members.
- The company, the student(s) and IBS Groningen will do everything possible to produce the agreed deliverables on the agreed deadline.
- The company will provide the IBS supervisor with the completed questionnaire regarding the performance of the student.

Project Details

Preliminary Project Title:

Descriptive and advisory research for integrated tourism function opportunities in the Dutch Dollart coastal region.

Preliminary Project Description:

The KCGON, following its Climate Conscious Coastal Defense and Physical Planning directive, focuses on an integrated and multifunctional approach. The so-called Climate(ex)Change project, in which is researched how necessary upgrades of the ‘Dollart dikes’ can be combined with
enhancing the ecological and tourism functions of the Dollart region, is an example of such an integrated and multifunctional approach. Climate(ex)Change is a two-year long cooperative project between KCGON, Van Hall Larenstein (Leeuwarden), the Jade Hochschule (Oldenburg), Water Boards in the Netherlands and Germany, and a number of other partners.

A traditional approach to coastal defense revolves around the technical meaning of the word, i.e. defending the coastal areas from the sea. Climate(ex)Change aims to change this and create a platform where adding ecological and tourism functions to coastal defense becomes possible. This integrated approach is more important now than ever from a profit perspective with estimations made by the Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs of a five to fifteen percent decrease in inhabitants in this region in the upcoming fifteen years. Clearly, action needs to be taken to revitalize an area in decline.

The purpose of this graduation project is to describe the current tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region, and identify how this region can improve and create new tourism opportunities (profit) linked to the region’s coastal defense – such as dikes and tidal marshes – while keeping the interests of the different stakeholders and safety (people) and ecological improvements (planet) in mind.

Preliminary Statement of Objective:

The objective of this project is to assess different options for improvement of existing and/or creation of new tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal region and identify those alternatives that fit the integrated approach.

Detailed Research Questions:

1. What are the current tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?
   1.1. What are the natural attractions in this region?
   1.2. What man-made attractions exist in this region?

2. What tourism trends pertinent to the Dutch Dollart coastal region are there?
   2.1. What are the main tourism trends in the Netherlands and Germany?
       2.1.1. What has the effect of the financial downturn been on tourist flows?
       2.1.2. What is the effect of aging of the population on the tourism industry?
   2.2. How many tourists visit the Dutch Dollart coastal region?
       2.2.1. How many tourists visited this region annually in the past 5 years?
       2.2.2. What are the estimated numbers of tourists that will visit the Dutch Dollart coastal region during the next 5 years annually with the existing tourism plant?
   2.3. Who visits this region?
       2.3.1. What age group(s) visits this region?
       2.3.2. What is the average length-of-stay?
       2.3.3. What are their motives for choosing this region as a destination?
   2.4. What is the situation in the German Dollart coastal region in terms of tourism?
       2.4.1. What natural and man-made attractions exist there?
       2.4.2. Who are the main stakeholders in this region’s tourism industry?
2.4.3. What policies and approaches are there to maintain to stimulate the tourism industry in the German Dollart coastal region?

3. Who are the stakeholders of the tourism industry in the Dutch Dollart coastal region?
   3.1. What governmental entities have a stake in the tourism industry of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?
   3.1.1. What are their existing policies concerning the development of tourism in this region?
   3.1.2. What efforts are made to market this region?
   3.2. Who are the non-governmental stakeholders of the tourism industry of the Dutch Dollart coastal region?
   3.2.1. What stake do branch-organizations and or ‘quangos’ have?
   3.2.2. What kind of tourism companies are active (hospitality / service)?
   3.2.2.1. How do they use natural and man-made attractions to appeal to tourists?
   3.2.2.2. How do they market themselves?
   3.3. What collaborative efforts exist between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to develop and market the Dutch Dollart coastal region?

4. What factors need to be considered in terms of an integrated approach?
   4.1. What limitations on the improvement(s) of existing or development of new tourism functions are in place in regard to the coastal defense function of the Dollart coastal zone?
   4.2. What limitations on the improvement(s) of existing or development of new tourism functions are in place in regard to the ecological importance of the Dollart coastal zone?

5. What improvement(s) of existing and or development of new tourism functions are possible in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone, which suit(s) the integrated approach, that will contribute to economic development?
   5.1. How can the existing tourism functions be improved within the borders of the integrated approach?
   5.1.1. How can the natural attractions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region be used (differently) as to improve its tourism (economic) function without compromising the other functions of this region?
   5.1.2. How can the man-made attractions be improved to enhance its tourism (economic) function without compromising the other functions of this region?
   5.2. How can new tourism functions be created within the borders of the integrated approach?
   5.2.1. How can existing man-made attractions be improved in order to create new tourism functions within the borders of the integrated approach?
   5.2.2. What new man-made attractions can be constructed in order to give the region more tourism functions within the borders of the integrated approach?
**Short Research Approach and Strategy:**

This project will be carried out by the descriptive and applied research method, as it is aimed at reporting on the current situation and solving practical problems. These methods will be used to unveil practical ways of using new knowledge to aid the Dutch Dollart coastal region and its stakeholders.

The inductive, or bottom-up, research approach will be utilized as relevant information will be gathered first and then analyzed in order to come with recommendations. As the deductive, or top-down, research approach is suitable for a project where a hypothesis is formulated to be tested by the research outcomes, this approach is not appropriate.

Due to the fact that within this research different criteria should be taken into account when formulating my recommendations, i.e. people-planet-profit, the multi-criteria analysis method will also be applied.

Furthermore, both primary and secondary data will be gathered and analyzed. This will be done by conducting both desk and field research by using qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of resp. literature reviews and case studies, and destination visits and interviews with stakeholders. The data extracted from these research methods will supply me with the necessary information that is needed to engage in several effective brainstorming sessions aimed at formulating my integrated-oriented recommendations concerning the tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region. As the input from an objective, knowledgeable person on the matter is very beneficial I will present my preliminary ideas to my supervisor in week 5 and use his feedback to come up with sound advice in my end-of-week presentation in week 6.

Hereunder you can find a preliminary weekly planning for this project.

Prior to week 1:
- Meet with Mr. Revier to discuss the research objective, research questions, research approach and strategy, methodology, and weekly planning
- Acquire the necessary hard-copy literature from libraries or book stores
- Prepare for destination visit by conducting desk research (website search) concerning natural and man-made attractions and tourism companies in the Dutch Dollart coastal region

Week 1 – Research Question 1:
- Prepare an itinerary for familiarization visit of the Dutch Dollart region visit
- Visit the Dutch Dollart coastal region to get familiar with the region’s natural and man-made attractions, tourism companies, and overall outlook and document these first impressions
- Prepare interview questions related to the tourism functions of the region
- Interview Mr. Revier (an expert on this region) about what his views are on the (possible) tourism functions of this region
- Conduct web-based research on what the current tourism functions are in this region by means of tourism company websites, websites of stakeholder organizations such as Marketing Groningen, and destination specific websites of organizations like the national TIC (VVV)
- Analyze and compile all the found data

Week 2: - Research Question 2:
- Investigate research papers on tourism trends in the Netherlands and Germany
- Investigate material on effects of financial crisis and an aging society on tourism flows
- Gather data from CBS, NBTC, and local TIC’s concerning region specific tourism trends
- Prepare interview questions and arrange a meeting with an expert on the German Dollart coastal region’s tourism industry from the Jade Hochschule for the case study for an interview
- Gather secondary data concerning the German Dollart coastal region’s tourism industry via the Jade Hochschule
- Analyze and compile all the found data

Week 3: - Research Question 3:
- Identify governmental and non-governmental stakeholders of the tourism industry in the Dutch Dollart coastal region by using research done in week 1 and doing web-based research
- Prepare interview questions and arrange meetings with representatives of the different stakeholders for interviews
- Visit the Dutch Dollart coastal region to conduct stakeholder interviews
- Research possible policies and projects concerning for the tourism industry of the Dutch Dollart coastal region
- Analyze and compile all the found data

Week 4 – Research Question 4:
- Research literature on the effects of tourism on the environment
- Investigate in governmental web documents what rules and regulations are in place concerning the Dutch Dollart coastal defense and what limitations this can form for improving and/or creating new tourism functions
- Prepare interview questions and arrange meetings with Mr. Revier and Mr. van der Maarel for interviews concerning these matters
- Analyze and compile data

Week 5 – Research Question 5:
- Start working on proposal for improvements of and/or creation of new tourism functions
- Present a progress report at the end of the week to supervisor

Week 6 – Research Question 5:
- Analyze feedback from supervisor
- Finalize proposal
- Present final recommendations to the supervisor

Week 7
- Write Graduation Project Report

Week 8
- Prepare for GPJ Defense

**Brief Methodology:**

The project “Descriptive and advisory research for integrated tourism function opportunities of the Dutch Dollart coastal region” is a descriptive and applied research project, thus the purpose of this graduation project is to analyze the current situation of this region’s tourism functions, indicate opportunities, and elaborate on the most integrated possibilities. As is the case with many graduation projects, this project has a very limited time frame, i.e. two months.

The research is structured in such a way that the first four research questions (including their sub research questions) need to be answered in order to be able to answer the fifth (last) research question. In order to do so, and answer these four questions as profoundly as possible, three main approaches will be used.

First of all, by means of a familiarization visit to the Dutch Dollart coastal region research question 1 and 3 will partly be answered. Secondly, conducting several non-standardized, semi-structured, in-depth interviews with my supervisor, Mr. van der Maarel, an expert on the German Dollart coastal region from the Jade Hochschule, and several stakeholders will provide the research with insights that will help answer research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. Next to this method, literature review and data collection by means of books and web-based documents will provide the research with the necessary theoretical framework, tourism statistics, and destination specific information, and thereby, complete the answering of the first four research questions.

After collecting all this data, sound analysis must be made. In order to ensure the formulation of recommendations that are as academically respectable as possible, I will use multi-criteria analysis. Answering research question 5 will demand a lot of brainstorming, accompanied with synthesizing my and other’s ideas with all the conclusions coming from the first four research questions, and, therefore, two weeks will be needed for this.

Please refer to the list below for the literature and web sources that will be used to bring this project to a successful end.

**Literature:**
Cooper, Chris et al; ‘Tourism Principles and Practice; 3rd edition
Recron; ‘Recreatie & Toerisme’; 1st edition
Baarda en De Goede; ‘Basisboek Methoden en Technieken’; 3rd edition

Web Sources:

Projectteam ‘Innovatie in de Toeristische Sector Noord-Nederland’; ‘Een innovatieagenda voor toerisme in Noord-Nederland’ [Research Paper]

Nederlands Bureau voor Toerisme en Congressen: www.nbtc.nl
Marketing Groningen: www.toerisme.groningen.nl
VVV: www.vvv.nl
CBS: www.cbs.nl

Hanze University Groningen, University of Applied Sciences’ digital library:
- Hanze UniverSE
- PiCarta
- E-Books
- HBO Kennisbank

Other search engines, such as Google Scholar and ScienceDirect, will also be utilized.

**Deliverables, Language:**

This graduation project will result in the preparation of a research report, consisting of the analysis and outcomes of, and recommendations to the improvement of existing and/or creation of new tourism functions of the Dutch Dollart coastal region. All tangible results of this project will be prepared in English.

**Constraints and Expected Difficulties:**

Natural constraints are time and money, of which time is the most troubling because there are so many aspects that need to be taken into account, i.e. researched, and there will only be two months to do this in.
The availability of data from the German Dollart region might prove to be an obstacle, as the distance is greater between me and this region than the Dutch Dollart region and I have no connections there. Furthermore, I have limited knowledge of biodiversity and coastal defence, which are factors that will have a great impact on my project.

**Planning**

**Deadlines:**
n.b! IBS Project Report cannot be postponed without approval of the coordinator of IBS GPJ’S

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<td>24-06-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation at IBS:</td>
<td>06-07-2011</td>
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**Communication**

This project should deliver analysis of possible opportunities for improvement of existing and/or the creation of new tourism functions in the Dutch Dollart coastal region. The most important issues in this project are the existing functions, the stakeholders, and limitations to adding tourism functions with regard to the integrated approach. The deliverables expected are: reports for both IBS and KCGON, and presentations for both parties. Communication with the KCGON and third parties will be done via email, telephone, and face-to-face meetings in the Netherlands and possibly in Germany, while communication with the IBS coordinators and supervisors will be probably done through email and phone conversations.

**Confidentiality**

The report will not be treated confidentially, unless specified otherwise.

**Statement of Confidentiality**

If the front page of each copy of the report is labeled ‘CONFIDENTIAL’ or ‘VERTRAULICH’, the report will only be made available to the Graduation Project Coordinator and the assessors for assessment purposes only. The report will not be given to any third party, including other staff, students, library etc.

The report cannot participate in any award contest. 
The above statement of confidentiality **Does not apply**

Moreover, the student and the International Business School agree that no information regarding business processes will be passed on to third parties during and after the termination of the contract. This applies specifically for client and dealer lists, turnover data, as well as other financial and economical figures relating to the company or its clients, if not specifically allowed.

Facts and figures relating to the core company information as mentioned above will be modified so that confidentiality can be guaranteed. These issues will and have to be discussed with, clarified and approved by the managing partner of the company.

**Finance**

The Company, the International Business School Groningen
The company has no direct access to the IBS consultancy staff. The student(s) will be the source of expertise. The IBS supervisor will ensure that the process is such that the normal IBS quality level will be obtained. For obvious reasons, IBS will not be able to GUARANTEE the quality of the project.

The Company, the Student
In addition to the arrangement with IBS, financial arrangements between the company and the participating student(s) are specified below:

STUDENT DETAILS

The company will pay the students:
- a total fee of: 0
- OR a monthly fee of: 0
A separate contract is made between the company and the student.

Does not apply

FACILITIES
The company will provide the following facilities
- Office space and equipment:
- Telephone/fax costs:

Travelling expenses: **Travel and accommodation costs made by the student will be reimbursed. The student will receive prior approval from KC GON for such expenditures.**

Other (if any):
Remarks on facilities:

Insurance
The student involved carries out the graduation project as a compulsory part of her education, and are therefore, is subject to the Liability Insurance Policy from the Hanzehogeschool Groningen, which is valid worldwide, except for USA and Canada.

Signatures
This document must be submitted via IBSNet to the Graduation Project Coordinator for approval. Once the Project Agreement is approved the student may start the Graduation Project. To gain the credits for GPJ1 the Agreement must be printed and signed by the student, before it is signed by the Company. Two copies must be submitted to the Graduation Project Secretary who will also sign it and then notify both the Company and the student of the appointed supervisor and co-marker. The GPJ Secretary will send the Company a log-in code and password with which to complete the Company EvaluationForm.

It is the student's responsibility to make sure that this administrative procedure is completed.
On behalf of the company:
Name: Date: Signature:

On behalf of IBS:
Name: Date: Signature:

The student:
Name: Date: Signature:
APPENDIX V – QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire exhibited in this appendix is displayed as a (first) translated version and the (second) original Dutch version. The questionnaire size has been adjusted as to save space.

TRANSLATED VERSION

Dutch Dollart Coastal Zone Tourism – Questionnaire

1. Age:
2. Gender: M / V
3. City of Residence:
4. What was your reason to go to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone? Please circle the answers that correspond to your reason:
   a. Relaxation
   b. Adventure
   c. Education
   d. Entertainment
5. Did you miss anything while at the Dutch Dollart coastal zone? (If your answer is No, please move on to question 8)

   Yes/No
6. What did you really miss when you were at the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Answer (Y=Yes, N=No)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A biking path on the dike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates instead of fences on the dike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-dike Lodging possibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resting places on the dike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information boards on the dike</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction signs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nodal Points</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. What other things that have not been covered in question 7 did you miss during you visit to the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?

**ORIGINAL VERSION**

Nederlandse Dollartkust Toerisme—Vragenlijst

1. Leeftijd:
2. Geslacht:  M / V
3. Woonplaats:
4. Wat was uw reden om de Nederlandse Dollartkust te bezoeken? Omcirkel de antwoorden die het dichtste bij uw reden komen:
   a. Ontspanning
   b. Avontuur
   c. Iets leren over het gebied
   d. Entertainment
5. Was er iets dat u miste tijdens uw bezoek aan de Nederlandse Dollartkust? (Indien uw antwoord Nee is ga dan verder naar vraag 8)
   Ja/Nee
6. Wat miste u precies tijdens uw bezoek aan de Nederlandse Dollartkust? (aspecten die u miste die niet in de onderstaande tabel worden genoemd kunnen worden vermeld bij vraag 8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Optie</th>
<th>Antwoord (J=JA, N=Nee)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Een fietspad op de kruin van de dijk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deurtje in de hekken op de dijk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binnen of Buitendijkse Verblijfsrecreatie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zitplaatsen op de dijk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatie borden (met info over het gebied)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wegwijzers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knooppunten (Plek om te parkeren met picknicktafels en informatie over de omgeving)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Wat voor andere dingen miste u tijdens uw bezoek aan de Nederlandse Dollartkust die niet in vraag 7 ter sprake zijn gekomen?
Here the results of the survey are listed that cannot be found in the main body of this report.

1. Number and percentage of approached people that have and have not visited the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

**Chart 3:** Amount of people that have or have not visited the area

**Chart 4:** Percentage of people that have or have not visited the area
2. Gender distribution of the respondents.

![Gender Distribution of Respondents](chart5.png)

**Chart 5: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

3. City of Residence of the respondents.

![City of Residence](chart6.png)

**Chart 6: City of Residence of the Respondents**
APPENDIX VII – TELEPHONE INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

MUNICIPALITY OF OLDAMBT

Hemmo Philbert, Recreation and Tourism Department

Interviewed on: 22-06-2011

How is the Dutch Dollart coastal zone promoted, i.e. what is the policy of the municipality in this sense?

In the greater tourism policy of Oldambt has a number of focal points in which it wants to manifest itself as a municipality that:

- is rich in possibilities for water sports;
- is open to guests and has a lot to offer in terms of recreation and hospitality;
- is a cultural hotspot;
- is suitable for shopping (Winschoten);
- is open for festivals and events; and
- is suitable for wellness tourism (Bad Nieuweschans).

Within the cultural and recreational policies the Kiek over Diek project is mentioned, which is aimed at making the coastal zone a lot more attractive for visitors by adding bike roads to the top of the dike.

TIC OLDAMBT

Ingrid Tuize

Interviewed on: 01-06-2011

How is the Dutch Dollart coastal zone promoted?

There is no is no policy for the promotion of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone. The only connection the TIC has to this area is in relation to the International Dollart Route (IDR), which the TIC offers visitors that are interested maps for.

What is known about the tourist profile of the visitors of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?

The TIC has no data on these matters. We get hardly any visitors of the TIC that inquire about that area.

TIC DELFZIJL

Harmke van der Woude
Interviewed on: 01-06-2011

**How is the Dutch Dollart coastal zone promoted?**

The Dutch Dollart coastal zone is not promoted by the TIC.

**What is known about the tourist profile of the visitors of the Dutch Dollart coastal zone?**

There are no statistics available related to visitors of that region.
APPENDIX VIII – KIEK OVER DIEK

FIGURE 19: KIEK OVER DIEK – THE ENTIRE ROUTE
FIGURE 20: KIEK OVER DIEK – PUNT VAN REIDE – DOLLART SUD

FIGURE 21: KIEK OVER DIEK – DOLLART SUD – NIEUWE STATENZIJL
APPENDIX IX – SYMPOSIUM SUMMARY

The two-day long symposium ‘op ‘n diek’, which can be freely translated from Platduits (the Low German Language) as ‘on a dike’, was a conference that revolved around the question if opportunities exist for Wadden Sea tourism along the mainland coast of the north of the Netherlands, without cluttering the environment. It was jointly organized by the Waddenacademie and KCGON and held on 21st and 22nd of June, 2011. Among the participants were national and provincial (Groningen and Friesland) spatial advisors, German and Dutch academics from various fields, local interest groups, aspiring architects, and Wadden Sea experts. Their opinions and ideas – and in some cases plans – were brought under the attention of the audience by means of lectures (day 1) and workshops (day 2).

This summary aims to concisely state all the relevant points brought forward by the various participants at the ‘op ‘n diek’ symposium. As this summary is written by one only of the attendees of the conference, the author of this report, please keep in mind that the reproduction of the ideas and plans might not be 100% accurate.

Day 1 – Plans and exploring opportunities, opinions, and stories

Location: Forum Images, Groningen

Keynote Speaker: Jaap Jepma

I. Opening

The symposium was officially opened by the chairman of the Waddenacademie, Prof. Dr. Pavel Kabat and John Bosman, Spatial Transformations Lector at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Groningen. Following these opening speeches a short movie with beautiful images of the northern coast of the Netherlands was shown by Paul Sixta.

II. Horizon

The second part of the day was in English as two of the speakers were German. The goal was to give some background information on dikes by looking at them from a historical and philosophical point of view.

1. Prof. Dr. Norbert Fischer (University of Hamburg)

This lecture was aimed at looking at the dike as a symbol. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- The dike represents civilization (it marks the point where the wilderness turns into the civilized world).
- The dike marks the spot where the civilized world changes into the wilderness.
- Tikes are significant elements in landscape forming.
- The role of dikes / land reclamation is shifting from agriculture to nature.
- The dikes can play a very integral role in the cultural history/character of the Wadden Sea region.
2. **Prof. Dr. Stephan Günzel (Technische Kunsthochschule Berlin)**

This lecture was aimed at explaining dikes as a phenomenon that yields a ‘border experience’. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- Grenserfahrung = experience of the border.
- The dikes are a border that connects countries (the Netherlands – Germany – Denmark).

3. **Prof. Dr. Hans Mommaas (University of Tilburg)**

This lecture’s purpose was to explain the strategy of having a ‘strong story’. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- The storyline for the Wadden Sea is the dikes and its surroundings.
- Without a drive (cultural or economic) coming from within the (business) community subsidized planning will fail (when the subsidy dries up the project ends).
- Socio-cultural anchorage is paramount to creating storylines.
- When developing new economies the success depends on the planners’ ability to combine the organizing capacity, spatial qualities, and economic development.
- Within the realm of building new economies, constructing business cases is preferable as it makes your decisions consequential.
- New economies (the creation of) requires people to step outside their regular space.
- The creation of a ‘third space’ which has a facilitating role is necessary for successful economy creation.

### III. Plans aimed at turning the dike into a crown

The third part of the day was focused on exposing existing tourism development plans. Provincial advisors and a national advisor shared their visions, which was especially relevant as it contained concrete ideas and plans for the Dutch Dollart coastal zone.

1. **Ir. Peter de Ruyter (leader Aterlier Fryslân)**

This lecture was aimed at providing the symposium participants with a clear idea of what vision the province of Friesland has in relation to coastal tourism development on the mainland Wadden coast. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- Locals (farmers) are excellent guides for dike tourism.
- Inspiration and enthusiasm of these guides are paramount for creating key experiences.
- Both creating more salt marsh areas and enhancing dikes are means to countering the effects of level rises, but the first-mentioned deserves the preference of the speaker because studies have revealed that the depth of the water increases the height of the waves and salt marshes decrease the depth at the seaward toe of the dike.
• Infrastructure in the tidal marshes, in the form as hiking paths, are planned to be implemented.
• The dike should be seen as a grandstand from where the surrounding landscape can be viewed.
• There should be efforts made to change the dike as a ‘hard barrier’ and use the inner and outer land more for recreation.
• Ideas exist regarding the establishment of short-stay hospitality facilities (cabin on poles) in the salt marshes.

2. Theo Hoek (leader Atelier Libau)

Mr. Hoek shared the vision of the province of Groningen on the topic of the symposium. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

• Within the ‘kiek over diek’ plan (for which subsidy has been secured) a biking path will be made on the sea-dike along the entire Groningen northern coast.
• The idea is to have ‘trajecten’ that follow the sea-dike (on top) and transects that connect the coastal zone with ‘pearls’ in the hinterland (such as Pieterburen and Nieuwe Schans).
• As no alterations may be made to the dike itself, the ‘trajecten’ will be made on the dike by constructing a synthetic board on the dike.
• The execution of the ‘Kiek over Diek’ project will start in 2011 and be completed by 2016.

3. Ir. Yttje Feddes (national landscape advisor)

Mrs. Feddes shared the vision of the national government on the topic of the symposium. The speaker shared her knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

• The regions peaceful nature is its strength.
• It is advisable to limit the amount of tourism plant and, thereby, using its strength.
• It is also advisable to concentrate the tourism development to places where there is already a certain amount of tourism plant (Lauwersmeer).

IV. Exploration of opportunities, stories, and opinions in relation to the existing plans

In this final part of the day the plans attempts were made to link the earlier mentioned opportunities, opinions, and stories to the shared plans in the previous part of the symposium.

1. Khoji Wesselius (Plattelâns project bureau Noardwest Fryslân)
Mr. Wesselius aimed to link the suggested plans to key experiences. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- The interpretation analysis from ‘Welcome to the Experience Economy’ was used to formulate a gateway message and key experiences for north-west Friesland.
- ‘Waddenland en Overvloed’, meaning ‘Wadden land and Abundance’, was chosen as the gateway message for the north-western part of Friesland.
- Key experience 1 – experiencing the authentic Wadden land feeling on both sides of the sea-dike.
- Key experience 2 – experience what man has changed in the vast, agricultural landscape.
- Key experience 3 – enjoy in peace what material treasures the land and sea have to offer.
- Key experience 4 – experience the different forms of waywardness of the local people.

2. Henk de Vries (Ecologist at It Fryske Gea)

Mr, de Vries shared his ideas on the topic of the symposium and shed some ecological light on the matter. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- Mainland salt marshes are a very rich biotope, with 974 kinds of fauna and 33 types of vegetation of which 221 types of fauna and 26 kinds of vegetation are rare.
- No bike paths should be constructed in the mainland salt marshes as due to the flooding nature of the area, preventing these biking paths from getting slippery and thus guaranteeing safety is not easily done.

3. Annemarie Kok (Editor of Noorderbreedte)

The editor of the northern magazine shared her ideas with the public in terms of the importance of media coverage. The speaker shared her knowledge which can be summarized in the following point:

- Strong, flattering publications on the Wadden Sea coastal zone is a fundamental tool for attracting more visitors.

4. Eric Neef (Regional Manager for ANWB Noord)

Mr. Neef contributed to the symposium by going into detail regarding the tourism perspective of the Eems-Dollart region, by looking at German coastal tourism. The speaker shared his knowledge which can be summarized in the following points:

- In Ost-Friesland there is a strong tourism industry on the Wadden Islands and on the mainland Wadden coast.
- Kulturlaub, a word play on culture and vacation, was created with the establishment of employing cultural attraction to attract visitors.
Many festivals exist on the German side of the Wadden Sea.

An idea for future bilateral tourism cooperation between the Netherlands and Germany is cross-border mudflat hiking.

Day 2 – A ‘strong story’ as a strategy

Location: Atrium Zernikeplein 7 Groningen

Workshop 3 – ‘Kiek over Diek’ – Eems-Dollart

From the given workshops, the, ‘Kiek over Diek’ – Eems-Dollart, workshop was the most appropriate one in respect to the area of research. This workshop was lead by Jaap Jepma (Noordtij) and included topic experts such as Alje van Bolhuis, Angelika Fuchs, Peter Herman, Theo Hoek, Elze Klinkhammer, Ton van der Maarel en Dirk Nijdam (Director of Marketing Groningen).

The structure of the workshop was as follows: a reading from a book on the Groningen landscape, interviews (lead by Jaap Jepma) with the different topic experts, and finally grouped discussions with the other participants and the topic experts.

The conclusions and insights gained from this workshop are summarized in the following points:

- Tourism research has shown that places where activities are abundant rather than peace attract tourists (Dirk Nijdam).
- By matching the tourism functions (accompanying key experiences) and greater nature of the Eems-Dollart region with the preferences (profile) of different people in the Netherlands, 2.1 million people have been labeled as potential visitors of the region (Dirk Nijdam).
- Emptiness is a hard thing to sell (market) (Dirk Nijdam).
- It is very challenging to find an (visual) icon in the Eems-Dollart region that can be used to give the region a face and attract visitors on a large scale (Dirk Nijdam).
- Slow-tourism (quality focused bottom-up approach) deserves the preference above high investment fast-tourism (top-down approach).
- A prerequisite for tourism in the Dutch Dollart coastal zone is education (guidance) of the visitors as the area has a distinct ecological function which can be easily disrupted (Peter Herman).
- Visualization of interesting areas of the region on maps should become more detailed.

Following the workshop a plenary meeting was held in which the conclusions of the workshops were presented and a presentation was given by a architecture student from the Technical University of Eindhoven in relation to a design of a cabin he had made that could serve as a form of outdoor lodging. Prior to the plenary meeting the designs of dike-tourism accommodating structures from various architecture students that were exhibited in the Atrium, were investigated. The conclusions and insights gained from this plenary meeting and architecture exhibition are summarized in the following points:
• Webcams on the dike that documents the landscape and is broadcasted real-time on TV screens in local TICs could serve as a means of attracting people.
• A farm next to the Reidhoeve (Breebaart polder) has been bought by Groninger Landschap, which will be converted into a lodging facility.
• To fortify the regional appeal of the dikes it would be interesting to activate locals and get them to sell regional products (foods) at certain hotspots.
• A broad wooden staircase could be constructed on the landward toe of the dike, leading up to the top of the dike, where on the seaward toe of the dike a wooden cabin that extends towards (alleviated above the ground) the salt marshes, which visitors can use to sit in and gaze over the Dollart (dike stand).
### APPENDIX X - STAKEHOLDERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coastal Defense Stakeholders</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st layer: Government – The Netherlands</td>
<td>Preparing and implementing national water policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd layer: Provinces - Groningen</td>
<td>Preparing regional spatial development plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd layer: Municipalities – Delzijl and Oldambt</td>
<td>Preparing local spatial development plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th layer: Water Board – ‘Hunze en Aa’s’</td>
<td>Performing regional and local water management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative layer: Public Works and Management</td>
<td>Auditing coastal defense structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF COASTAL DEFENSE HIERARCHY (GEERLING & VAN DE DIJK)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Governmental Stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Groningen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stichting Groninger Landschap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natuurmonumenten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vereniging voor Oevereigenaren en Gebruikers (VOG)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### TABLE 2: NON-GOVERNMENTAL STAKEHOLDERS
APPENDIX XI - DUTCH DOLLART PICTURES

FIGURE 22: DOLLART DIKE AT DOLLART SUD (VOLSKRANT)

FIGURE 23: BENCHES ON THE DOLLART DIKE (VOLSKRANT)
FIGURE 24: INFORMATION BOARD WITH THE WORK OF ART, ‘HUNGRY WOLF, ON THE BACKGROUND
APPENDIX XII – GERMAN DOLLART PICTURES

FIGURE 25: PARKING/RESTING AREA AT THE DIKE NEAR DYKSTERHUSEN, GERMANY

FIGURE 26: PATH ON THE DIKE WITH USER-FRIENDLY GATE NEAR DYKSTERHUSEN, GERMANY
FIGURE 27: NATIONAL PARK WADDEN SEA INFORMATION SIGN AT MAN-MADE PENINSULA
APPENDIX – DIKE STAND

This figure is the self-made reproduction of the visualization of the dike stand design as presented by an architecture student of the University of Technology, Eindhoven at the Op ‘n Diek symposium.