

THE KOLLEKTIV

The official news letter with the latest news and updates



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The Kollektiv is an initiative of the staff of the History and Theory of Architecture and Urbanism section. As we speak, more than 20 students – masters, premasters, bachelors – have joined the Kollektiv, all of them lovers of iconic cities, beautiful buildings and intriguing histories. After a successful trip to Budapest and Antwerp in 2022, we are quite confident many more interesting cities will be discovered in this initiative.

Discover the Groninger Landscape with Zef Hemel

Dear members of the Kollektiv, we proudly present the ninth newsletter, with the announcement of a new exciting adventure to come.

We are certain that you won't want to miss the opportunity to take a walk through the charming Dutch countryside of Groningen with the esteemed hoogleraar

‘(professor) Zef Hemel, which will take place on **friday the 9th of june at 10.00**. Hemel, a renowned urbanist and former chief government advisor on urban planning, is the perfect guide to lead you on a journey through Groninger landscape.

The route will be as follows:

- Station Appingedam
- Appingedam – Zeerijp
- Zeerijp – Loppersum
- Food and Drinks Hotel Spoorzicht
- Station Loppersum

If you are interested in joining us for this walk-a-long, please simply [join our WhatsApp group](#) by scanning the QR-code or clicking the link.



The Art of Walking - Laboratory of the mind

"I declare that on one beautiful morning, I'm not sure anymore at what hour, I felt like going out for a walk. I put on my hat, left the writing or mind room, walked down the stairs, and hurried towards the street.'^[1] This is the first sentence of what in all likelihood is the most famous short story on walking, Robert Walser's *Der Spaziergang*, translated as *The Walk*. What follows is a very precise description of everything the story's main character sees and experiences. The walk generates a 'romantic adventurous mood' and produces a feeling of intense happiness. 'Everything I saw gave me the pleasant impression of friendliness, virtue, and youthfulness. I soon forgot that upstairs in my room I had been brooding over an empty piece of paper just a few minutes before.'^[2] Robert Walser (1878-1956) wrote his story in the peculiar style that made him a cult figure after his death - he had a heart attack during one of the regular walks he took from the mental asylum where he spent a large part of his life, and died in the snow, on a Christmas day...

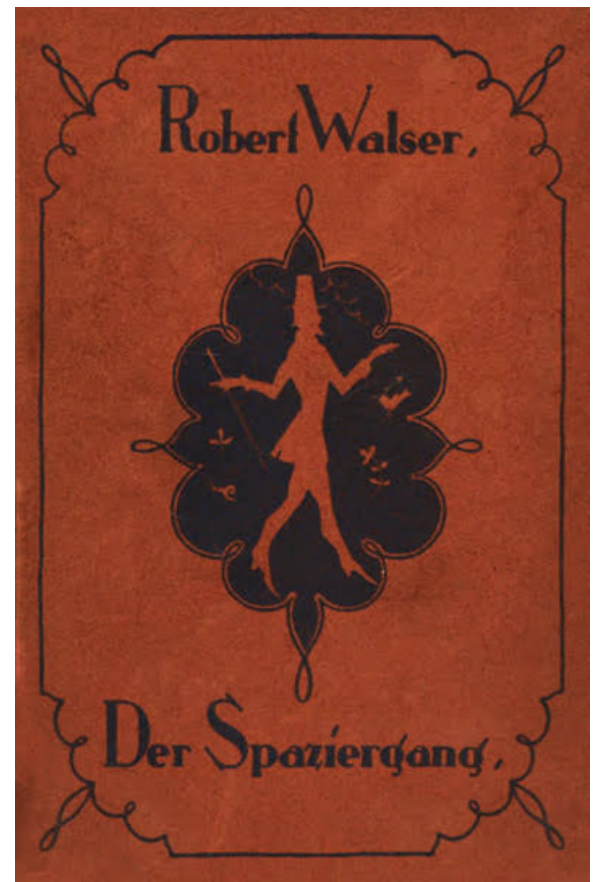
There is a lot more to walking than moving on foot from one place to another. Since times immemorial, it is associated with what is dubbed 'Lustwandeln' in German: walking for pleasure. Accommodating this has been a key component of garden design since Antiquity, but the joy of walking isn't limited to nature and gardens. Strolling around in cities may also do the trick - as Charles Baudelaire's 'flâneur', who walks the streets of Paris, makes clear. Baudelaire invented his flâneur in the mid-nineteenth century, long before bicycles, motorbikes and cars conquered the streets. Back then, walking was the most common, and for most people the only way to move around. The flaneur, however, doesn't walk

[1] 'Ich teile mit, daß ich eines schönen Vormittags, ich weiß nicht mehr genau um wieviel Uhr, da mich die Lust einen Spaziergang zu machen, ankam, den Hut auf den Kopf setzte, das Schreib- oder Geisteszimmer verließ, die Treppe hinunterlief, um auf die Straße zu eilen.' Rober Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, first published in 1917.

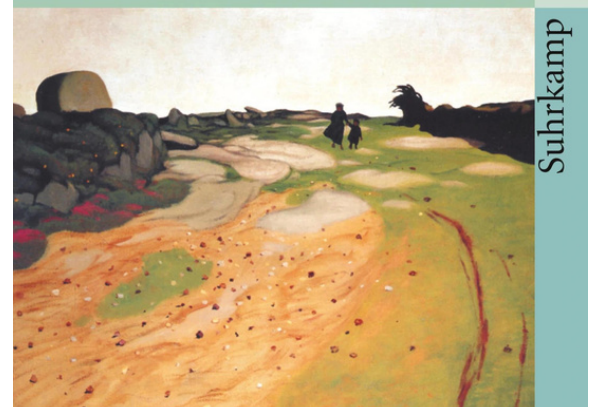
[2] 'Alles, was ich erblickte, machte mir den angenehmen Eindruck der Freundlichkeit, Güte und Jugend. Rasch vergaß ich, daß ich oben in meiner Stube soeben noch düster über ein leeres Blatt Papier hingebütet hatte.' Rober Walser, *Der Spaziergang*, first published in 1917.

because he has no other option. He does so because he wants to observe his fellow citizens while they roam the streets, and he wants to be seen himself. Observation is what it is all about, and whether the scenery is urban or rural doesn't matter. Walser takes the intensity of observation to the limit. At the time he wrote his story, its protagonist could also have taken the bike, the streetcar, the bus – but he didn't. He walked. It is the most intense way of experiencing the world...

Enjoying the sequence of visual scenes can cause aesthetic emotions. But the impact of walking doesn't stop there. Walking with the eyes wide open, hikers become aware of another quality of space: space is a treasure trove of information about the most diverse phenomena. Hidden underneath the surface is the geological groundwork, the types of soil and the way they evolved in the course of tens of thousands of years. On top of this, history left its imprint. In the Netherlands, historical traces often date back no more than two or three thousand years. They are clearly visible. They designate space as something that is often referred to as a palimpsest. Space is a book that waits to be read – that is the message of Karl Schlögel's groundbreaking *In Space we Read Time*, originally published in 2003 as *Im Raume lesen wir die Zeit*. It is well worth citing the introduction. 'History is set not only in time but also in space. The very words we use to talk about space and time leave no doubt that they are inextricably interwoven. Events take place. (...) Space is implicit in the metaphor of the "political landscape," which we roughly subdivide into left, center, and right. Even the language of meta-historical abstractions cannot do without the historical or social "place" of an idea. This observation is so elementary, it seems so self-evident, that we may shrug it off as a commonplace or think it not worth talking about. But now and then something new starts with a conversation about what has been thought of as self-evident for a long time, perhaps for too long, or with the mere recollection of something that has fallen into oblivion—in this instance, the fact that all human history occurs in space.' [3] A walk through a city or a landscape is also a walk through history.



Robert Walser Der Spaziergang

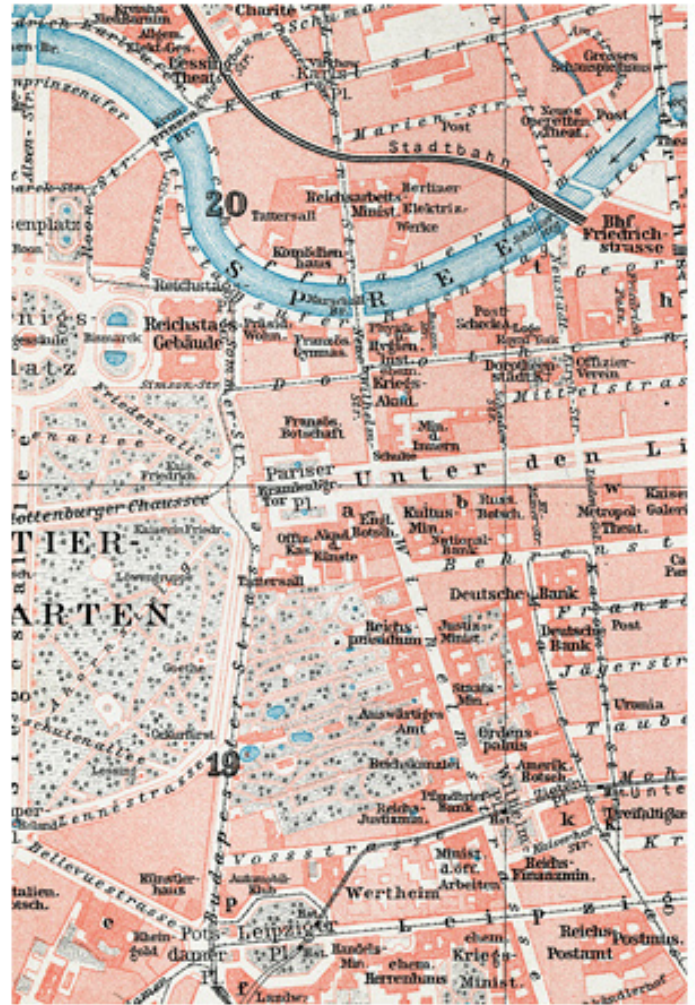


Appingedam

Our trip begins in Appingedam, the only place in the city-state of Groningen that managed to develop into a city, albeit a small one. In 1327 its rights as a city were officially recognized. Appingedam's economy was doing quite well until the city became the victim of a series of military conflicts. During one of which most of its population was assassinated (this happened in 1514); the outcome of another conflict was the decision to erase Appingedam from the map. This never happened, though the city lost its belt of fortifications. A few short-lived periods of economic recovery left resulted in a renaissance town hall (early seventeenth century) and the reconstruction of several facades in the mid eighteenth century. The 'hanging kitchens' which hover above the small river that acts as the city's central axis is one of its main tourist attractions. Appingedam is a shrinking city and, to add insult to injury, one that suffers from the consequence of the earthquakes caused by the gas industry.

In Space We Read Time: On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics

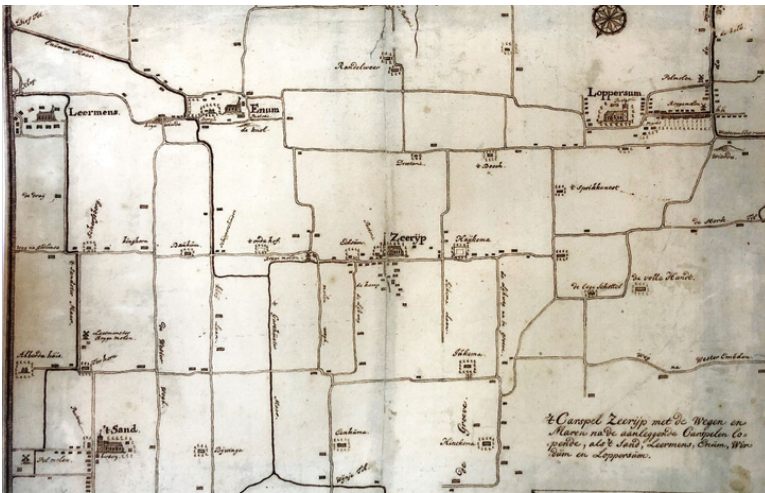
Karl Schlögel



The maps of Beckeringh

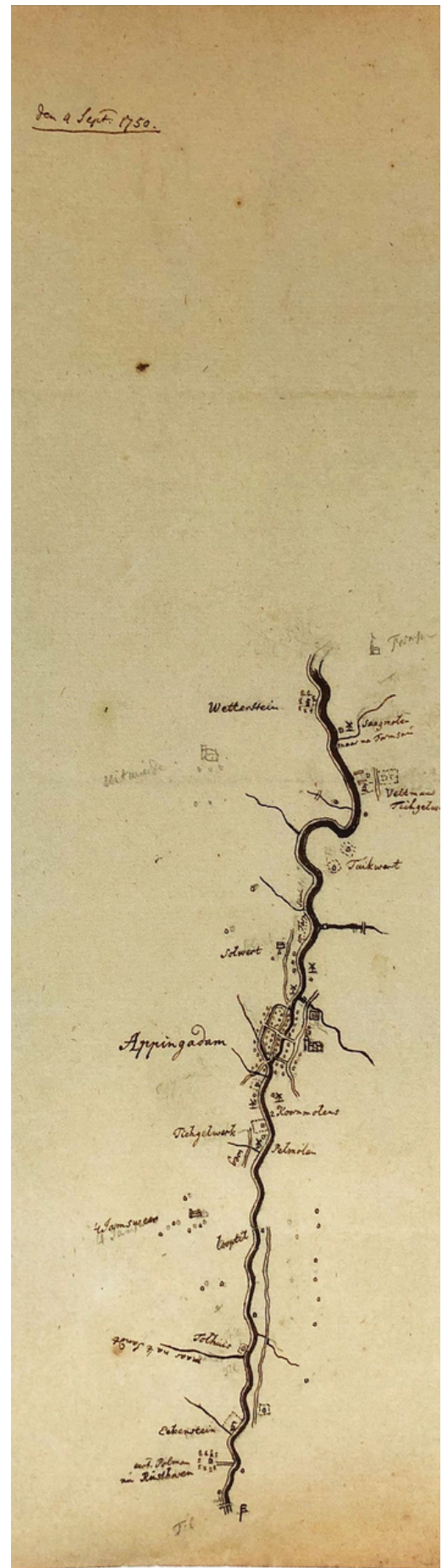
Even when strolling aimlessly through nature or a park, without a destination in mind, every walk generates a trajectory through space. Maps are the perfect tool to visualize the spatial framework of these trajectories. They relate one's position in a city or a landscape to places that cannot be experienced from that position in real life – these places are out of sight, too far away. Maps reduce long distances to only a few centimeters. On a map, travels that take hours in real life can be understood in a matter of seconds. In the eighteenth century, the act of positioning oneself in space acquired a philosophical dimension: it equaled defining one's position relative to nature as the all-encompassing environment that determines who we are. Newton's law of gravity

explained what kept planets and stars in their preordained orbits. The orbits of the earth and the moon also defined time and the seasons. In the eighteenth century, Newton (1643-1727) became a cult hero. Apparently, his findings endowed maps with a symbolic, philosophical meaning – and since they had little practical use (apart from defining political borders and the lines of division between ownership titles), in the age of the Enlightenment that seems to have been their main purpose. They combine the universe of natural laws, which function without human interference and for which nobody is responsible, to the physical and spatial realities of the man-made world – the landscape, the farms and landed estates, the villages, the cities, roads, canals,

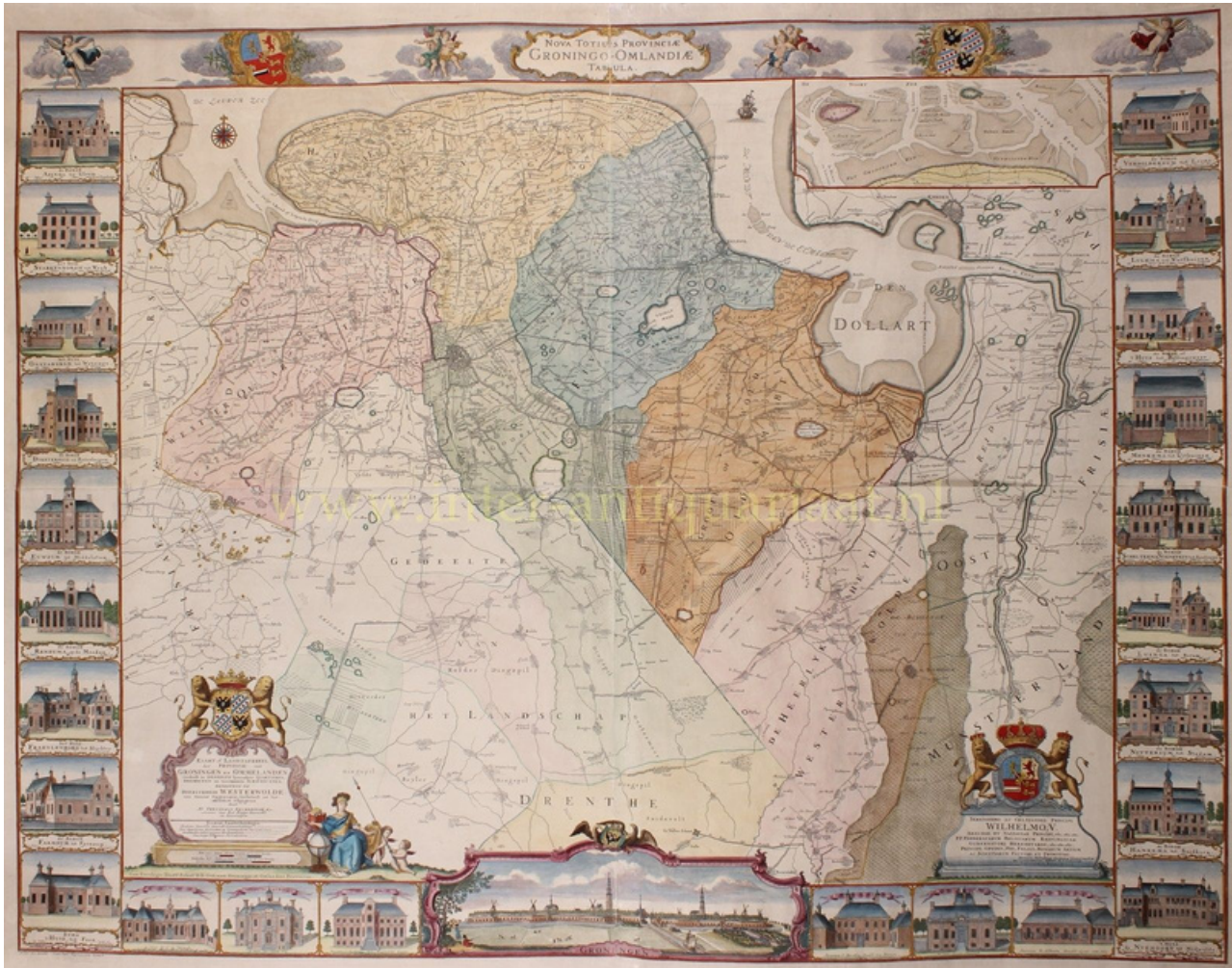


1759

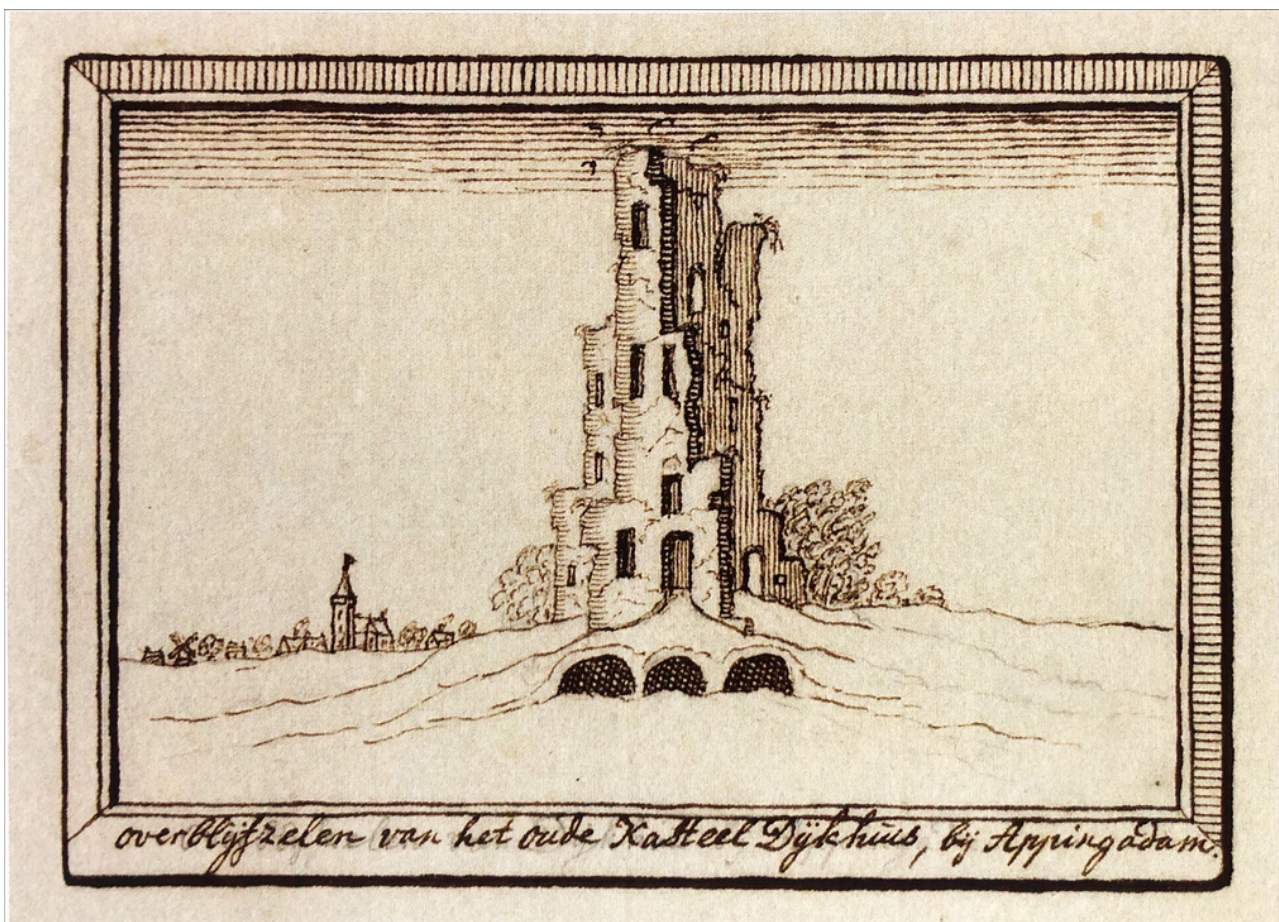
rivers, dikes. They enrich the definition of space as an objective grid devoid of human meaning with the traces of human activity. One of the heralds of cartography in Groningen was Theodorus Beckeringh (1712-1790), who published his famous Borgenkaart in 1781. On it, we can follow the trajectory of the walk from Appingedam to Zeerijp. Beckeringh also made detailed maps that show fragments of our walk. In Schlögel's spatial history, Beckeringh takes us back to the eighteenth century. A period of intellectual fermentation in which the northern Netherlands played a key role – but we will put that story on hold and save it for the introduction of another walk.



1750



1784-
1849



1740

Topotimeline



1870



1920, showing the railway line from Groningen to Delfzijl and the Eemskanaal



1970, with a new main road that removed through traffic from the historical route south of the small river



2020, with new neighborhoods added to Appingedam and Loppersum

Walking and health

The act of walking is healthy – it has been officially recognized as one of the most healthy activities people can engage in. It prevents gaining too much weight, reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, and type 2 diabetes, keeps the veins in good shape, helps to strengthen bones and muscles, and gives energy – to mention but a few of its benefits.

The Landscapes of the Ploeg

For the purpose of highlighting another quality of our trip, we now move to early twentieth century. We begin our walk in Appingedam, a miniature city, but for the most part we will be hiking in the open countryside. Members of De Ploeg, the Groningen based avant-garde in the visual arts and architecture, a movement that is often seen as representative for Dutch expressionism, made numerous paintings of the landscape. Inspired by the German expressionism, notably Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), they transferred the observation techniques that proved so powerful in urban scenes to the meadows, ditches, dikes, farmsteads, churches and villages. These provide an equally rich subject. Rarely has the beauty of this green universe been presented so convincingly.

The Ploeg, known for its innovative and experimental approach to art-making, was active from 1918 to 1928. The flat, open landscape of



Groningen provided the artists with a unique visual landscape to explore in their paintings. One of the key features of Ploeg paintings is their use of bright, vivid colors. The artists were interested in creating dynamic, expressive works that captured the energy and vitality of the Groninger landscape. They often used bold, contrasting colors to create striking visual effects.

Another important aspect of Ploeg paintings is their focus on the everyday lives of rural people. The artists were interested in depicting the



working-class people of Groningen and their daily struggles and joys. They often painted scenes of farmers working in the fields or fishermen bringing in their catch.

Overall, Ploeg paintings are known for their vibrant colors, expressive brushwork, and their ability to capture the unique beauty of the Groninger landscape and its people. And who knows, maybe you will recognise any of the depicted landscapes here during our walk with Zef Hemel...



The artists associated with De Ploeg were a diverse group of painters, sculptors, and graphic designers. Here are some of the key members of the group:

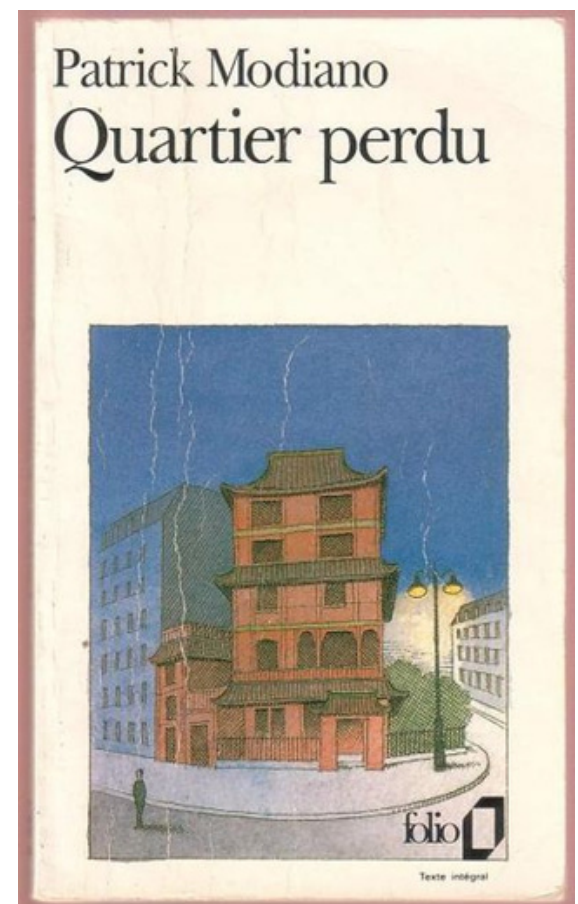
- **Jan Wiegers (1893-1959)** - Wiegers was a painter who was instrumental in the founding of De Ploeg. He was inspired by the work of German expressionist artists like Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and his paintings often feature bold, expressive brushstrokes and vivid colors.
- **Johan Dijkstra (1896-1978)** - Dijkstra was a painter and graphic designer who was known for his innovative use of color and composition. He was interested in capturing the unique character of the Groninger landscape and its people in his work.
- **Jan Altink (1885-1971)** - Altink was a painter and one of the founding members of De Ploeg. He was interested in creating a new, modern art that was rooted in the local landscape and the everyday lives of the people of Groningen.
- **Hendrik Werkman (1882-1945)** - Werkman was a printer and graphic designer who was associated with De Ploeg. He was known for his experimental use of typography and printing techniques, and his work often featured bold, abstract compositions.



Appingedam, Zeerijp en Loppersum Today

Today, the area we explore has many problems. Man-made earthquakes caused by gas extraction, a failing labor market, the minimization of public transportation because of budget cuts, the disappearance of basic services (schools, shops), the consequences of reducing the co2 emissions in agriculture – there are many issues here, but during our walk they cannot obscure the brighter qualities of this region. It is an area full of potential that waits to be realized.

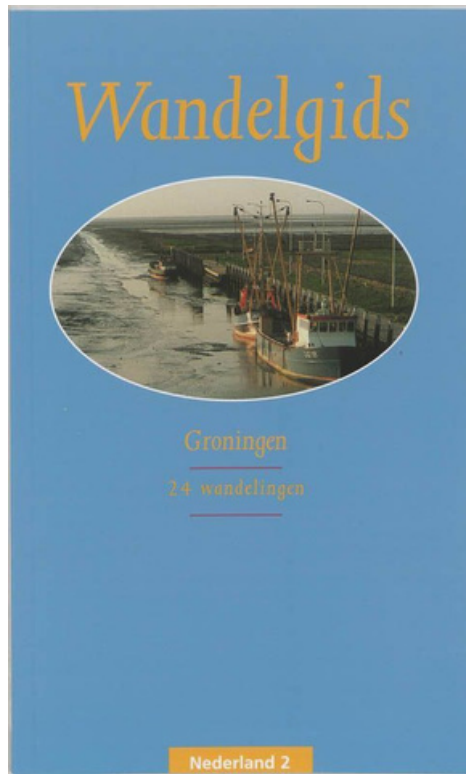
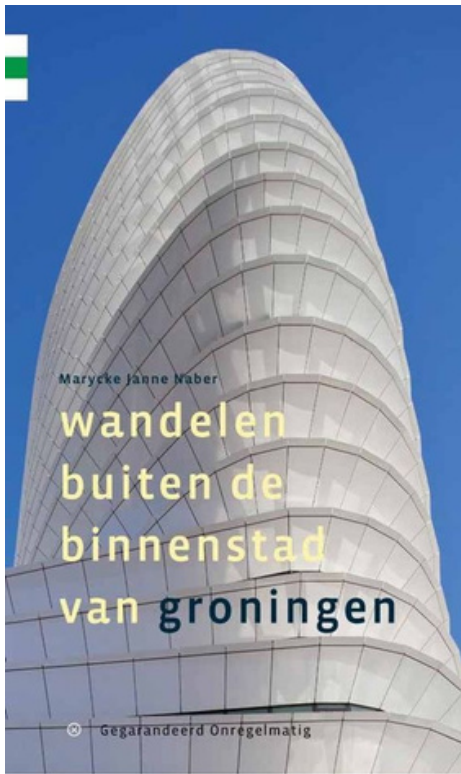
Our walk promises to be a journey of discovery and opens your eyes to things you can only experience on foot. Walking provides ‘pleasant impressions’, as Robert Walser whose *Spaziergang* opened this little introduction, put it. Escaping from home or office promotes a feeling of relief. You will enjoy the pleasure of the scenery that unfolds when slowly moving along streets and country roads. You will feel aesthetic emotions provoked by the beauty of cities and landscapes. You will have the satisfaction of being able to read your surroundings as a treasure trove of information that connects you not only to space, but also to time, to history. And that isn’t all. Patrick Modiano (1945 –), winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 2014, is fascinated by the way our surroundings re-awaken memories and allow us to re-enact episodes of our life that we forgot – walking helps to reconnect to the past. ‘At this time, Paris was a city that corresponded to my heartbeat. My life could not leave its imprint anywhere else but on these streets. It was enough for me to walk in Paris all alone, without a plan, and I was happy.’[4] Walking can replace the physical, spatial qualities of the surroundings with the way the brain processes them. In his *New York Trilogy*, Paul Auster (1947-) features this aspect of walking: ‘Motion was of the essence, the act of putting one foot in front of the other and allowing himself to follow the drift of his own body. By wandering aimlessly, all places became equal and it no longer mattered where he was. On his best walks, he was able to feel that he was nowhere. And this, finally, was all he ever asked of things: to be nowhere.’[5] Clearly, walking – it doesn’t matter where – opens ways of dealing with the word



that cannot be experienced in any other way, and even though it implies that you use your feet, you will find out that you will put one foot in front of the other also inspires your intellect and intelligence. Walking is a laboratory of the mind.

[4] ‘En ce temps-là, Paris était une ville qui correspondait à mes battement de coeur. Ma vie ne pouvait s’inscrire autre part que dans ses rues. Il me suffisait de me promener tout seul, au hasard, dans Paris et j’étais heureux.’ Patrick Modiano, *Quartier Perdu*, Paris 1985, 132.

[5] Paul Auster, *The New York Trilogy*. *City of Glass*, London 1987, 4.



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...an initiative of the staff of the History and Theory of Architecture and Urbanism section. As we speak, more than 20 students – masters, premasters, bachelors – have joined the Kollektiv, all of them lovers of iconic cities, beautiful buildings and intriguing histories. We are quite confident that the next trip will take place to Copenhagen. We are absolutely sure that the program of social gatherings and literary entertainment leading up to this seminal event will be filled with movies, lectures, fine food and vodka.

Only members of the Kollektiv can participate in its events. Membership is open for architecturally minded students of the Department of History of Art, Architecture and Landscape (bachelors as well as masters, including exchange students and visiting students), PhD-candidates, staff members and invitees. Membership is free of charge. The costs for participation in the Kollektiv's events need to be paid by the members themselves. Interested in joining? Send an e-mail to the Kollektiv's Secretary-General, Jenny van Calsbeek: jvcalsbeek@gmail.com