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Walking – art, philosophy, reality

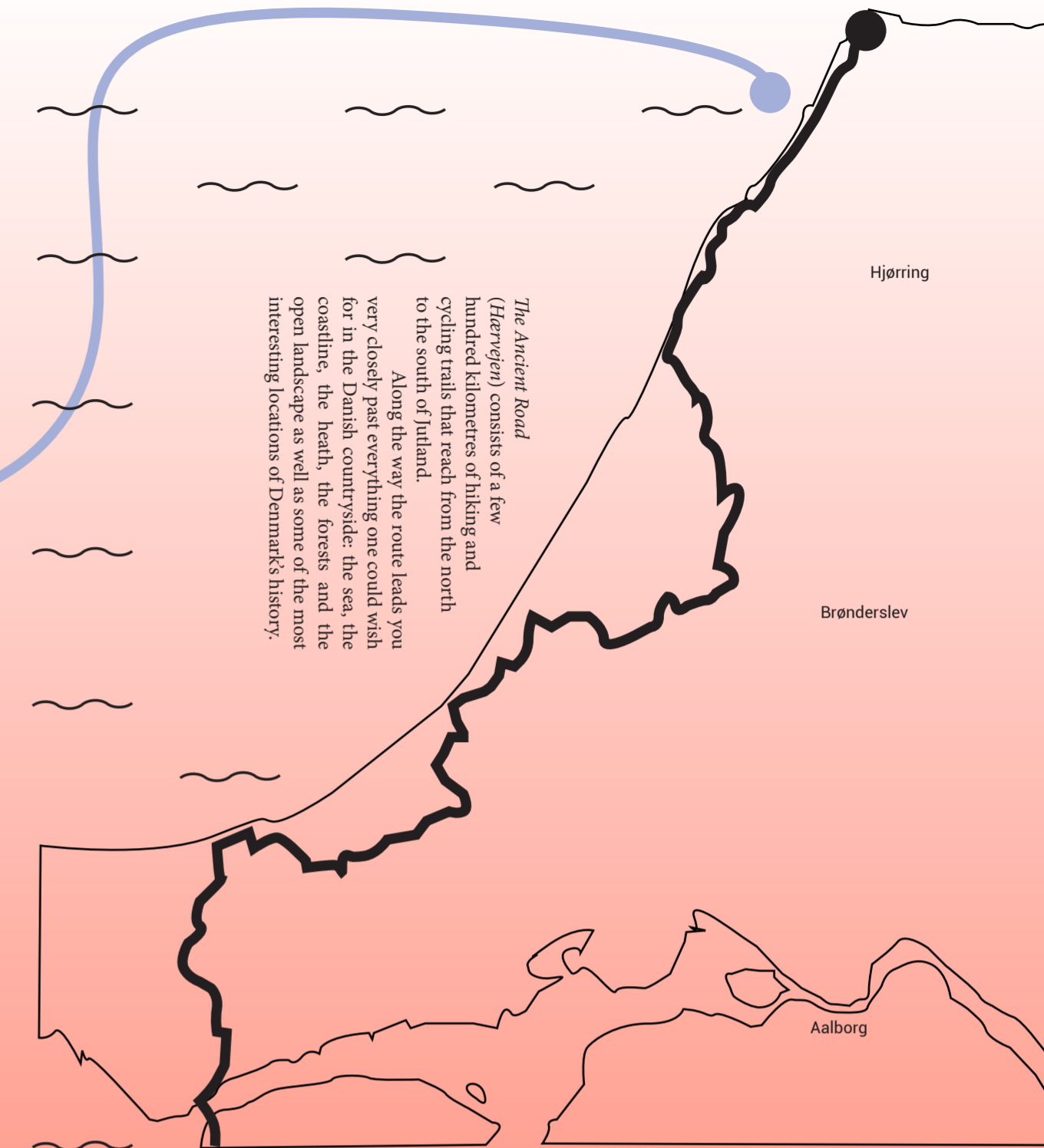
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Hørvejen starting from Hirtshals, Denmark



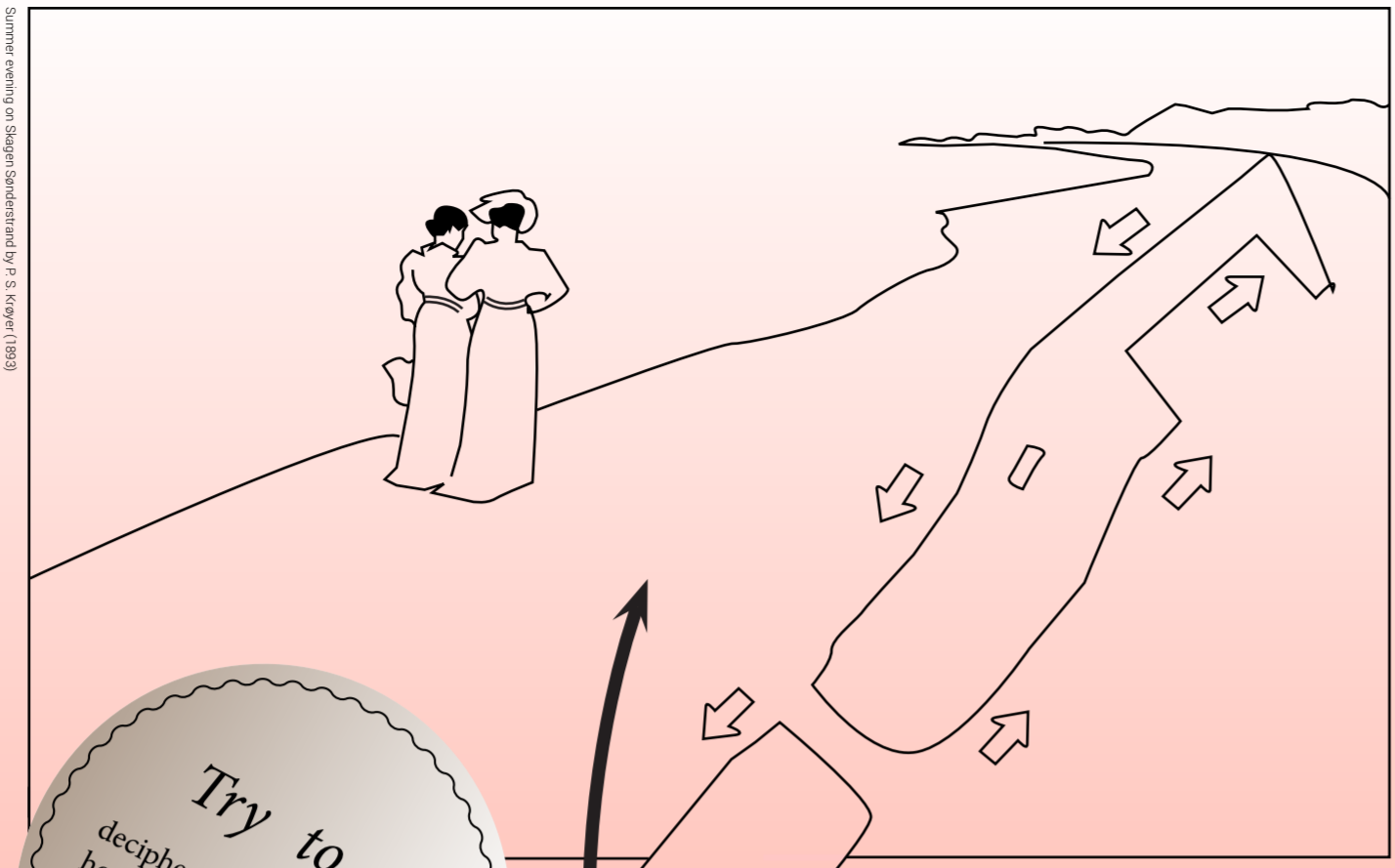
The Ancient Road (Hørvejen) consists of a few hundred kilometres of hiking and cycling trails that reach from the north to the south of Jutland.

Along the way the route leads you very closely past everything one could wish for in the Danish countryside: the sea, the coastline, the heath, the forests and the open landscape as well as some of the most interesting locations of Denmark's history.

Walking alone

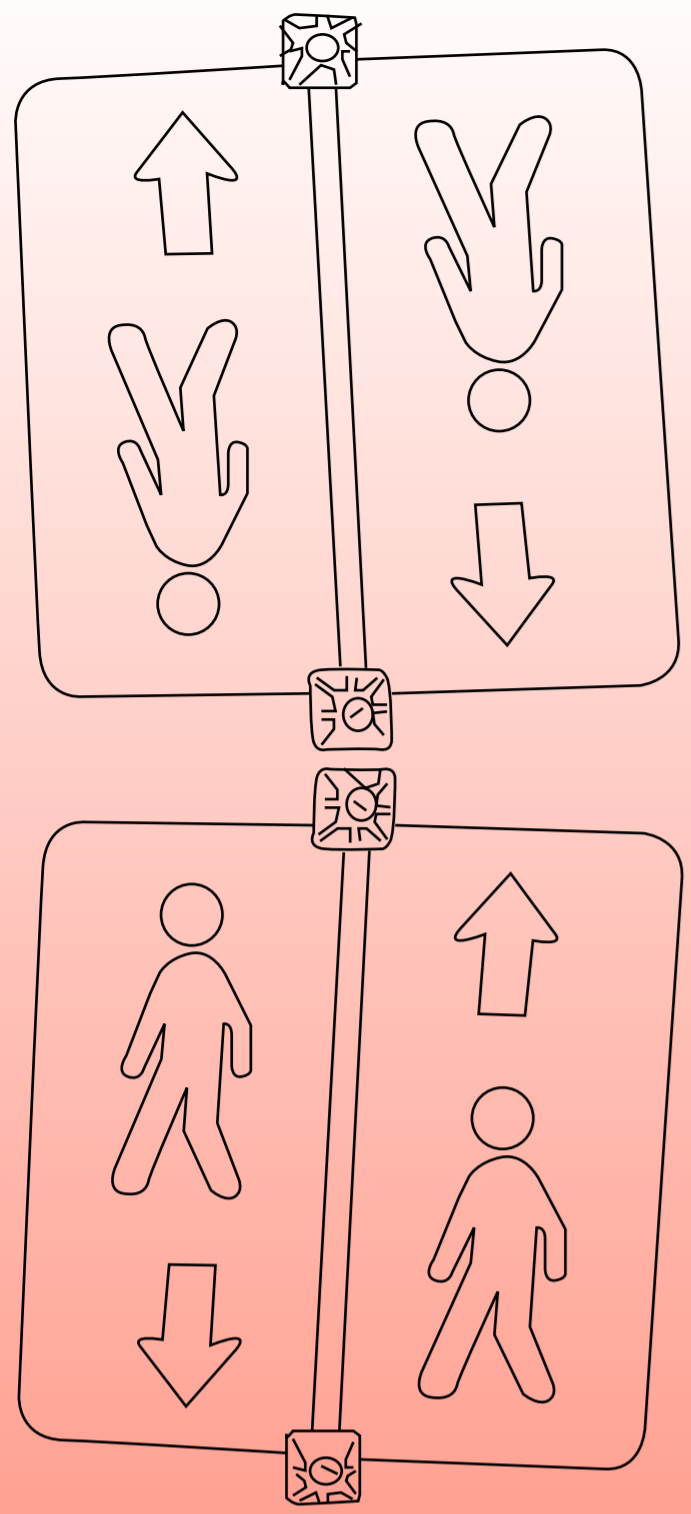
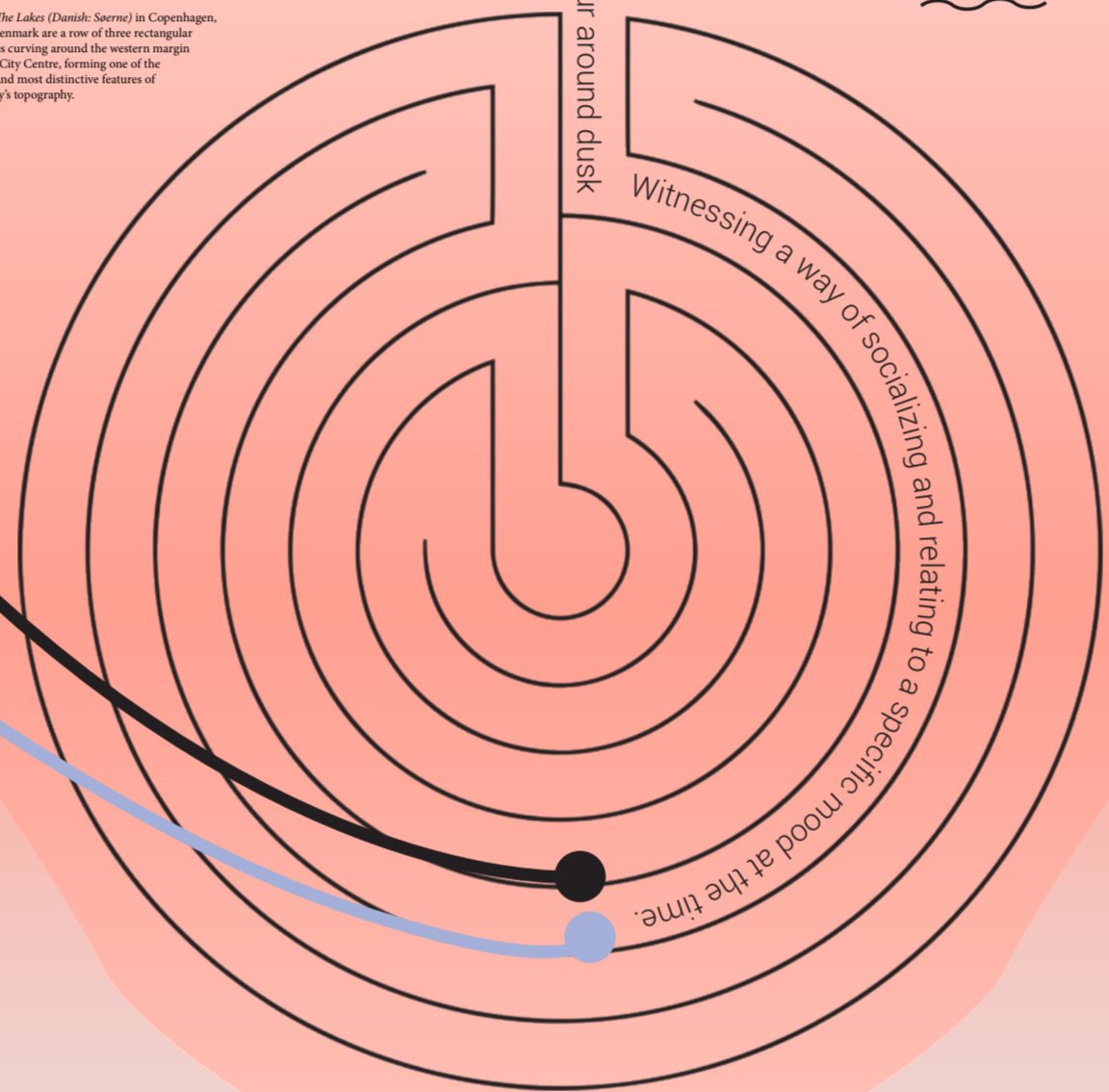
has been preferred by many artists and thinkers, using the solitude to clear their mind or enjoying the company of nature instead.

According to the philosopher *Frédéric Gros*, pace is an important part of walking and this is varying according to how many walks together, where being on your own enable you to decide for yourself in an uninterrupted walk (*Gros, 2011/2015*). In a collective walk there is a consideration of dynamics within the group. A well-known Danish impressionist painting depicted this very act of strolling together along the beach line of Skagen in the 1890s, where *P. S. Krøyer* portrayed walking sessions in the blue



Try to ...
decipher if you have changed how you walk recently. When you walk, notice when this happens.

The Lakes (Danish: Søerne) in Copenhagen, Denmark are a row of three rectangular lakes curving around the western margin of the City Centre, forming one of the oldest and most distinctive features of the city's topography.



An awareness has been inscribed into how we are in shared spaces with others – proximity, distance, exchange, touch – and when contact is appropriate. Precarious walking has become the reality at the time of writing this essay, since the world has turned upside down due to the *COVID-19 virus outbreak*. This has had a great impact on how we walk – and how we are allowed to move, alone or together. Walking has in this context been rediscovered as an exercising tool, giving a sense of freedom from self-isolation and of exploring new territories. In the cities walking directions are reinforced leading us in and out of paths, where physical distancing is having an impact on how slow or fast we walk, either to stay in enough distance to the person walking in front, or we hurry to pass by others to avoid contact. We don't walk like we used to do, we are precariously walking, calculating our distance to others, and finding routes less frequented (with less people). Personally starting an involuntary avoidance registration of paths when walking, creating new patterns of movement. The precaution has been written into our bodies and our register of interaction. This potentially needs to be unlearned when society slowly turns into its normal pace again. Hopefully the urge to be with nature and walking remains.

Author bio

Tina Mariane Krogh Madsen is a Danish artist and researcher, who is educated from the *College of Arts Crafts and Design* in *Nørresundby* (DK), and holds a *Master of Arts in Art History* from *Aarhus University* (DK). Madsen has presented her work internationally in various forms and contexts, been a curator of the *Museum of Contemporary Art* in *Roskilde* (DK), and teaches in contemporary art and curating. Madsen is the founder, organizer and curator of *performance protocols*, a platform for instruction-based art and collaborative practices, which first online exhibition *Walking Protocols 1* opened in June 2019. Madsen is currently a *Doctoral Candidate* at the *Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture* (FI).

www.tmkm.dk
www.performance-protocols.net/

Graphic Designer bio

Kamilla Mez is a conceptual, visual artist, who in 2019 she received a BA in *Art & Technology* from *Aalborg University* and has taken initiative to several cultural projects in *Aalborg* (DK), among them, the art and project space, *Art Room 1000fryd*, and created the discursive platform, *Nordoplyst*, with conversation salons about contemporary art in Northern Jutland. Also, she has been a part of establishing the hybrid art organization, *Aalborg Artist's Association (AAAA)*.

At the moment, Mez is studying a *Master of Fine Arts* at *HDK-Valand*, *Göteborg* (S).

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NORDOPLYST
Walking – art, philosophy, reality

Kamilla Mez
Tina Mariane Krogh Madsen
Author
Graphic Designer

NORDOPLYST
- dialogues about contemporary art in Northern Jutland will in 2020 facilitate a row of meetings in different locations in Northern Jutland. Here, you will be introduced to the many different phenomena and problems within contemporary art by art actors from Northern Jutland.

The course will consist of a row of events, which's different themes seek to create an overall picture of the North Jutlandic (art)landscape.

NORDOPLYST is created by Kamilla Mez, Rikke Ehlers Nilsen and Sofie Zehngraff.

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Summer evening on Skagen, sketched around 1895 by P. S. Krøyer (1859)

Nature, being, and thinking

are factors that are unconditionally connected and many philosophers have engaged in walking and reflecting, using the synergy between this bodily act of movement as a means of producing thoughts and new ideas. Philosophers like *Friedrich Nietzsche*, *Søren Kierkegaard*, *Immanuel Kant* and others used walking as a life practice of thinking, relating and healing (Gros, 2011/2015). In ancient philosophy, *Aristotle* and *Socrates* were walking and talking to their students, with movement and thinking already an entity.

Walking is in this way about drawing lines and making new connections to places and that which crosses the walker's path. Writer *Rebecca Solnit* regards walking as something that connects and aligns us with the world that we live in (Solnit, 2001/2014), closely related to all levels of society. A walk here actively engages the sensuous. It is an embodied practice and experience, which becomes a crucial part of how we use and define the spaces that we inhabit. We can in this way reclaim space as a critical gesture deconstructing the boundaries set by society and other structures of power, where "walking defines our experience of self and of the world" (Benesch and Speq, 2016).

Walking – moving one leg in front of the other, exploring territory, following paths and lanes, with or without a goal – or one which is defined as one goes along. Walking is a practice for both leisure and need and has been used manifold by everyday people as a means of transportation, by thinkers and philosophers for reflecting, for exercise and well-being, as well as for artists as a method of creation and critique. Many factors affect how, why and where we walk. Walking can be regarded as an interdisciplinary act thus combining different fields of practice.

The City

is also a well-engaged place for walking and dwelling.

Especially the Parisian cityscape has historically been a topic for walking practices, which connect to and reflect on a specific urban environment. Both philosophical and artistic. The modernist writer *Charles Baudelaire* characterizes in his essay "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863) a male protagonist that strolls around the city, witnessing its life. *Baudelaire* names this character a *flâneur*.

This type of free walking was an act not allowed for everyone, and not very well-regarded for women, a discriminating restriction present in society at the time.

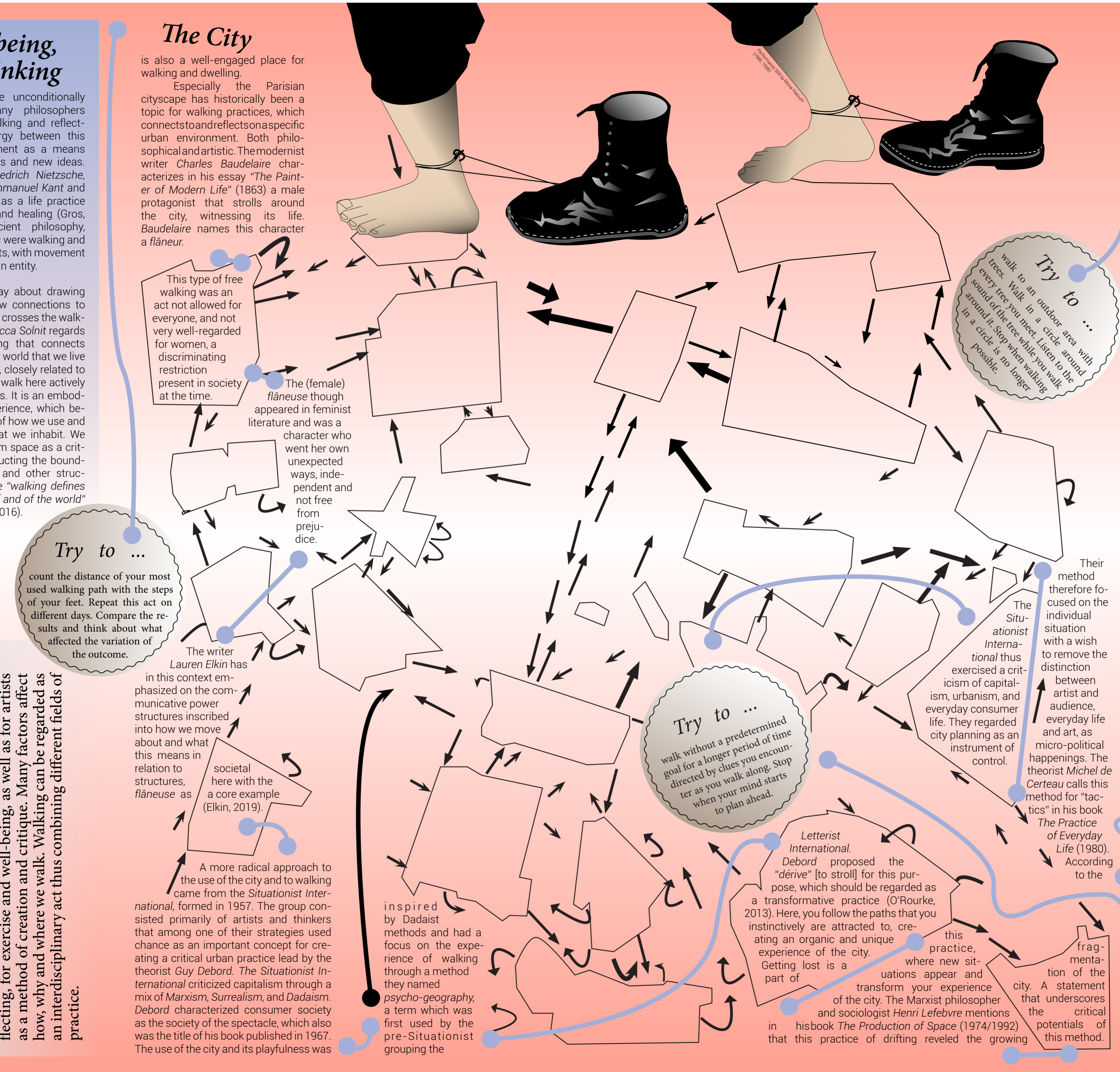
The (female) *flâneuse* though appeared in feminist literature and was a character who went her own unexpected ways, independent and not free from prejudice.

The writer *Lauren Elkin* has in this context emphasized on the communicative power structures inscribed into how we move about and what this means in relation to structures, *flâneuse* as societal here with the a core example (Elkin, 2019).

A more radical approach to the use of the city and to walking came from the *Situationist International*, formed in 1957. The group consisted primarily of artists and thinkers that among one of their strategies used chance as an important concept for creating a critical urban practice lead by the theorist *Guy Debord*. *The Situationist International* criticized capitalism through a mix of *Marxism*, *Surrealism*, and *Dadaism*. *Debord* characterized consumer society as the society of the spectacle, which also was the title of his book published in 1967. The use of the city and its playfulness was

inspired by Dadaist methods and had a focus on the experience of walking through a method they named *psycho-geography*, a term which was first used by the pre-Situationist grouping the

Photomontage: Gift by Manu Hatsum (1986, 1989)



A walking protocol is an instruction that specifies how an activity should be performed. To create the walks, choices are formed. These can be in movements, terms, and power structures of the walk, where specific characteristics and spatial relations, in the pace, patterns, and minor wordings can be of crucial importance for the final score. The goal for these instructions is to set a frame, Manuals and protocols that create and facilitate performative actions have been used in art since approximately the 50s and continued with the *Fluxus* movement and conceptual art in the 60s and 70s, and which is further developed and revisited within contemporary art.

The radical statement of staying in solitude in close relation to nature was in sync with *Thoreau's* position as a critic of society, where he is known for being a spokesperson for the use of civil disobedience as a counter practice (Thoreau, 1862/2018). Walking and the creation of relational structures to nature also became a practice used in environmental and performance art, specifically in the creation of walking protocols and instructions. Many factors influenced these, where lines were walked, new paths created, and the ephemerality of the acts discussed, in an often critical artistic practice.

Walking in art

Situationists, the method of strolling could only be properly accomplished in historical cities that needed transformation and not in already reconstructed capitalist cities, which put an end to this practice when the city planning of Paris became too extensive in the 1960s. The *Fluxus* artists in the 1970s wrote similar instructions and created artist-driven tours in the years following the *Situationist International*, an example was the *Free Flux Tours* from 1976 (Careri, 2017).