The act of walking is continuously present in the history of humanity. To walk has been the most primordial instinct of man to recognize, feel and interact with the landscape. In this study an approach on how the act of walking is related to the landscape is presented, as well as the several functions that is has assumed throughout the times, and consequently its relation with society, cultural, technological and social evolution.

To speak of landscape is a seemingly simple, however very complex concept, of holistic and multifold character, and as defined by the European Landscape Convention "Landscape means an area, perceived by the people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors ". In the XIX century, the German scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) defended the landscape as "all the aspects of a region such as seized by Man" (in Pinto-Correia, 2005, pp.153). It is therefore important to mention the importance of perception and emotion in men’s apprehension, and, as stated Znaniecki (1968) "(...) landscape cannot be understood to an objective reality that exists independently, but is rather the human reality with the landscape existing outsider the human perception "(in Kupidura et al., 2014, p.315).

The idea of landscape is understood as a whole, as a dynamic system, where living beings, animals and plants, and man, holder of a culture, act on a physical substrate influencing each
other, creating a certain image, owner of a particular character, integrator of identity. It is a landscape, constructed and dynamic, where urban and non-urban systems are integrated simultaneously in the spatial relationships established between them. "Understand a globalized view of the landscape, while seeking to link the past - tradition – to the construction, the future" (Telles, 1992, p.1), where landscape is understood as an open system where the urban fabric and cultural mosaics are interrelated, as a product of society and whose approach will integrate a holistic and multi-functional understanding of the landscape. (Bernaldez, 1981; Scott, 1999; Pinto-Correia et al., 2001).

Even if during centuries the act of walking was a result of an instinct of man in its search for food and shelter (Palaeolithic ages), in search of new markets and spirituality (Middle ages and Renaissance) (Amato, 2009), recently the act of walking re-emerges as a form of enjoyment that has been massified in the past few years, (Nunes & Nunes, 2007; Rodrigues, 2006; Rodrigues & Kastenholz, 2010; Tovar, 2010).

The act of walking, for its ability to establish a more profound relationship with the surroundings than other means of transportation, and for the possibilities that it offers for new experiences and manifestations, emerges as a form of inspiration, and a new type of art, in the consolidation of a refuge for and by man itself.

Walking frequently assumes a cultural function, the inspiration of thinkers, philosophers, writers, scientists, among others, is frequently associated to the act of walking across the landscape (Amato, 2004; Belo, 2012; Careri, 2002; Solnit, 2000). These are paths of inspiration and creativity.

The appreciation for nature, as well as the origin of aesthetics is related to the roaming through nature. The ascent of Monte Ventoux (XIV century) by Petrarca is a recurrent reference used to mark the first aesthetic experience of men related to nature. Later on, the expeditions of Thomas Burnet to the Alps (XVI century) constitute paths that have become marked by the controversy about nature, and have contributed to the development of theories about aesthetics and appreciation of nature, namely the mountains, opposing the idea that these are only ruins (Andresen, 1992; Rey, 2013).

Also in science, the act of walking had its impact: the investigation of natural history stayed connected to the direct observation of nature – the process of plant classification of Carl Lennaeaus (XVIII century) lead to a large enthusiasm and popularity, and the people walked
the fields to observe, identify and classify plants. To walk through nature became a part of daily life.

In ancient times, Greek philosophers, followers of Aristoteles, would debate and teach as they walked. The paths that the philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (XVIII century) walked, in constant contact with nature, exalt the educational value of the environment. This contributed to the habit of walking. In the same way, Karl Gottlob Schelle (XVIII century), a lover of walks through nature, intended to introduce philosophy into the world, adding to the philosophical spirit a practical aspect of much significance to life: the act of promenade (Shelle, 2008; Solnit, 2000; Steiner, 2013).

At the same time in America, XIX century, a group of thinkers and nature loves was emerging, who strongly advocated for the act of walking. These men were believers in the existence of a relation between nature and men’s freedom itself. Among these Thoreau, Emerson and Muir can be highlighted, who influenced the act of walking in America, taking particular interest for walking through landscapes associated to natural environments, as to enjoy them (Amato, 2004; Thoreau, 2010).

To walk through landscape is also a form of art in which, as well as with dancing, the pleasure is not in the movement of the body, but within the sensation is the soul that are associated with it (Schelle, 2008). It is an aesthetics experience in landscape that was manifested during the XIX century, although in a different manner in the beginning and ending of this century.

In the early decades of the XX century the act of walking was experienced as a form of anti-art, where the roaming of Dadaists, and after of Surrealists, allowed artists to undertake their actions in space. Through the act of roaming, the representation of movement was replaced by an aesthetic action, in real space (Careri, 2000).

The relation between the act of walking through landscape and artistic expression would later be assumed in America through Land Art (appears in the late 60s of last century). Walking was understood as an aesthetical practice, parallel to its function as body modelator, and as an instrument of landscape knowledge. With Land Art the artist adopt this expression of art through the act of walking as a profound aesthetics experience, anchored to visual arts (Rey, 2010).
The act of walking through landscape assumes in this way different forms and different approaches, with the relation formed only through walking, between men and landscape, being indisputable.

The technological development and consequent progressive alterations and transformations that have been occurring in landscape, especially since the industrial revolution, as well as the pressures felt in these landscapes have led to the depletion of resources and degradation of a space frame of exploitation, as well as the deterioration of its visual quality. Life is characterized by a more and more accelerated rhythm, and thus a maladjusted one, when the reference are nature’s own rhythms, of which men is an integrated part. The act of walking will cease to be logical, as the rhythm of the walker will is not consistent with the rhythm that technological development intends to impose (Alves, 2009; Nunes, 2009).

However, society tries to find a biological and environmental balance that was lost with technological and scientific advances, and, in the late XX century a growing demand for rural space is seen. With it there is a significant increase of outdoor activities, especially hikes (Ferreira, 1998; Tovar, 2010). Currently the European countries are connected by 12 walking trails that cross Europe from North to South, and East to West.

To walk, either in organized groups or in a more informal way, has been gradually gaining adepts, which reflects the growing search for different landscapes. Currently the act of walking is associated with different ideas and attitudes: walking through landscape is a form of poetical inspiration, a means to drain from nature’s restorative power, a way to interpret nature, among many other motivations.

References


