

Título de la ponencia: ““A Geography of Places”: Six Vectors Towards Geographic Knowledge”

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Resumen: In this presentation I develop a methodology for what I call “a geography of places”, an epistemology rooted in latent popular curiosity (Baker 2003 and Murphy 2018) about areal variation (Agnew 1989) and the social imperative of geographic literacy. “A geography of places” complements three other epistemologies in the discipline, what I call “a geography of place”, which looks for general theories, “a geography of justice”, which is directly motivated by social justice, and “instrumental geography”, which consists of identifying and solving problems through technology, mainly GIS and remote sensing. As for latent popular curiosity, I refer especially to three questions that appear in common conversations and that illustrate a desire to place people, know the character of that place, and how it varies from other places: “Where are you from?”, “What’s it like there”, and “What part of [said place] are you from”. One of the foremost obligations of geographers is to make the public more literate about places. This imperative of geographic literacy is true both for the more abstract and humanistic idea about empathy for others, and for the more practical task of solving complex problems in the workplace. Knowledge about places does not simply end at being able to identify place locations on a blank map, but continues into the realm of having a sense of what places mean and how they relate to each other. To borrow an analogy from Mead (1969), the creative task of geographers is to produce the honey to fill in and enrich the comb of people’s mental map of the world.

I have identified six vectors or lenses (authors, regions, types, paths, maps, and events) that make geographic knowledge especially legible to anon-academic population. To do this, I draw principally from three sources: 1) my own fieldwork, namely in Uruguay, 2) the work of geographers in the 1970s and 1980s, namely Donald Meinig, John Fraser Hart and Marwyn Samuels, and 3) three texts from neither geographers nor academics in other disciplines that serve as a call-to-arms for encounter-driven field methods in geography, Georges Perec’s *Species of Spaces* (1974), Ryszard Kapuscinski’s *Travels with Herodotus* (2004), and Seth Kugel’s *Rediscovering Travel: A Guide for the Globally Curious* (2018). The six vectors can be summarized as follows: authors are the people who make places, regions are the fundamental unit of areal variation, types are the archetypes into which people group buildings and landscapes, paths are the journeys we take through which we perceive places, maps are the representations through which we perceive places, and events are the moments that give meaning to particular places. I conclude the talk by urging how thinking, researching and writing in terms of these vectors can lead to a richer reading of Brazilian geography.