



UNIVERSIDADE DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO
PRÓ-REITORIA DE PESQUISA
PROFGEO - MESTRADO PROFISSIONAL EM ENSINO DE
GEOGRAFIA EM REDE NACIONAL

PROVA DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA: INGLÊS

Nome: _____

Matrícula: _____

INSTRUÇÕES

- Leia com bastante atenção cada questão antes de responder.
- Verifique se seu caderno de prova contém 02 questões discursivas fundamentadas no texto.
- Utilize as páginas em branco do caderno de provas para rascunho.
- Todas as respostas devem ser redigidas em língua portuguesa.
- O candidato deverá respeitar o espaço destinado à redação de cada questão da prova discursiva. Será desconsiderada qualquer informação que esteja fora dos limites indicados na área destinada às respostas.
- Utilize caneta esferográfica azul ou preta para responder as questões.
- É permitida a consulta a dicionário impresso nos primeiros 30 minutos de prova.
- Não é permitido o uso de aparelho eletrônico.
- Escreva seu nome na prova.
- Não se esqueça de assinar a lista de presença.

DURAÇÃO DA PROVA: TRÊS HORAS

TEXTO

Space: The fundamental stuff of Geography

Nigel Thrift

‘Space’ is often regarded as the fundamental stuff of geography. Indeed, so fundamental that the well-known anthropologist Edward Hall once compared it to sex: ‘It is there but we don’t talk about it. And if we do, we certainly are not expected to get technical or serious about it’ (cited in Barcan and Buchanan, 1999: 7). Indeed, it would be fairly easy to argue that most of the time most geographers do tend to get rather embarrassed when challenged to come out with ideas about what the supposed core of their subject is, and yet they continue to assert its importance. Rather like sex,

they argue, without space we would not be here. So is all this just mass disciplinary hypocrisy? Not really. It is more about the extreme difficulty of describing certain aspects of the medium which is the discipline's message.

This brief introduction to the topic of space aims to tell you what space is and why we need to study it. It will do this as straightforwardly as possible, but it is important to point out that one of the problems that geographers have with space is that something that appears as though it really ought to be quite straightforward very often isn't – after all, we all have trouble at times in getting from A to B!

Even nowadays, of course, some geographers still persist in believing that it ought to be possible to explain space in such simple terms that you should be able to understand what is going on straight off. But increasingly, this kind of simple-minded approach has come to be understood as more likely to be part of a desperate attempt to try to render down the wonderful complexity and sheer richness of the world in ways which mimic the predictable worlds of those privileged few who have the ability to make things show up in the way they want them to (Latour, 1997). In this piece, in contrast, while I will certainly attempt to write about space clearly, you should not think that this will be the end of the matter. You will need to read more and think more to really start to get a grip on the grip that space exerts on all our lives – and, as we shall see, the ways that we can alter that grip in order to make new kinds of spaces.

Space has been written about in lots of ways. There are, for example, books upon books which document the different kinds of conceptions of space that can be found in disciplines like philosophy or physics (e.g. Crang and Thrift, 2000). But, I want to keep well away from most of these accounts for now, though they will figure indirectly in quite a lot of what I have to say. Rather, I want to write about how modern geography thinks about space. That could cover pages and pages and so I will have to condense these thoughts into a manageable form. I will therefore make what some will regard as the outrageously simple claim that currently human geographers are chiefly writing about four different kinds of space.

However different the writings about these different kind of spaces may appear to be, they all share a common ambition: that is they abandon the idea of any pre-existing space in which things are passively embedded, like flies trapped in a web of co-ordinates – the so-called absolute view of space – for an idea of space as undergoing continual construction as a result of the agency of things encountering each other in more or less organized circulations. This is a relational view of space in which space is no longer viewed as a fixed and absolute container within which the world proceeds. Rather, space is seen as a co-production of those proceedings, as a process in process. To begin with, I will artificially separate these four spaces out but, as I will point out in the conclusion, the exciting thing about geography today is that we are learning how to put them together in combinations that are beginning to produce unexpected insights.

First space: empirical construction

Talking of putting things together, let's start with the empirical construction of space. It takes only a few minutes of reflection to start listing down all the things that we rely on to keep our spaces going – houses, cars, mobiles, knives and forks, offices, bicycles, computers, clothes and dryers, cinemas, trains, televisions, garden paths – but because these things are usually so mundane we tend to overlook them. So we often forget just what an extraordinary achievement the fabric of our daily lives actually is. Indeed, it is only recently that geographers have started to think systematically

about the humble texts, instruments and devices that make up so much of what we are.¹ Let's take just one example of the kind of space that we make every day: the space of measurement. We are so used to looking at road signs measured out in terms of metres and kilometres or consulting a map or looking up an address or working out how long a journey will take that we forget what an extraordinary historical achievement these very ordinary practices are. They didn't suddenly come into existence over night but were the subject of progressive standardizations and co-ordinations that have taken centuries to put in to place. And they required extraordinary investments too. They required the invention of specialized devices that could measure the same things at the same places, culminating in today's satellite-based global positioning system (GPS). They required a whole knowledge of measurement that itself had to be able to be transported around the world in devices, books and journals. They required, latterly, endless boring committees that were able to agree that the same measures would be measured in the same way in different places and then integrated with each other. And they demanded a good deal of brute force. After all, many of the ways space is measured out around the world were imposed by imperial conquest, not prettily negotiated. Nevertheless, it is important to realize the sheer load of human effort that has gone in to making measured space and the often near to insane enterprises that have made this space possible. Let us remember, with a certain amount of awe, the attempts to give birth to a new unit of measure, the metre, under the first French Republic (Guedj, 2001). Between 1792 and 1799 the astronomers Pierre Mechain and Jean- Baptiste Delambre travelled from one end of France to the other measuring the length of the Paris meridian in order to determine the exact length of the standard metre, which the National Assembly had decreed would be one ten millionth of the quarter meridian. The enterprise was an extraordinary one, involving the dragging of large pieces of equipment up hill and down dale, but it laid the basis for the whole decimal metric system which is now so familiar.

What is remarkable about the present time is the way in which this empirical construction of space is currently taking another leap forward. In the late nineteenth century, there was a widespread standardization of time. Driven by the increasing speed of transport and communications and more exact timekeeping instruments, states agreed on a common standard of time (based on the Greenwich meridian) and on a set of time zones spanning the globe in each of which time would be agreed to be uniform. Now, in the twenty-first century, something very similar is taking place in space. Driven by the demands of modern logistics and new, more exact ways of registering space (most especially the combination of GPS, geographical information systems (GIS) and radio frequency identifier tags (RFID)) it will soon be possible to locate everything – yes, everything – using standards of measurement, some of which (as we have seen) were already being laid down in the eighteenth century. Through the standardization of space made possible by these technologies (and the large bureaucracies that employ them), each object and activity taking place on the globe will, at least in principle, be able to be exactly located. The result will be that we will live in a world of perpetual contact, in which it will be possible to track and trace most objects and activities on a continuous basis, constantly adjusting time and space in real time, so producing what is now called micro- or hyperco-ordination (Katz and Aakhus, 2002). Numerous examples of hyperco-ordination already exist in the logistics industry, where it is necessary to continually adjust delivery schedules, but they are also becoming common in our daily lives, for example in the way in which we use mobile phone text messaging to continually adjust meetings with friends or satellite navigation systems to continually recalculate the route as we change our minds about where to go next.

