

# HENRI LEFEBVRE: SPACE, TIME, AND CHANGES IN THE REGIONAL ECONOMY

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## Abstract

This paper emphasizes Lefebvre's interpretation of relational space as a social construct that enabled a "spatial turn" in the social sciences in the late 1960s. This is evidenced by his most important essays and books (1968, 1991, 2003) on space, the results of which have been transposed into other disciplines, as evidenced by works from a wide range of social sciences, from geography (Harvey, 1973; Soja, 1989; Peet, 1998; Dear, 2000; Elden, 2004; Castree, 2004; Shields, 2011; Gregory, 2015), spatial planning, urbanism and urban studies (Kipfer, 2008; Goonewardena, 2008) to economics (Berend, 2009; Nijkamp, 2012; Capello, 2016; Suwala, 2021). This led to theoretical bases for new disciplinary directions in geography (radical and postmodern geography) and regional economy by introducing a new classification of relational space (diverse-stylized and diverse-relational). Understanding this epistemological transition is possible through different concepts of space and absolute, relative, relational. Broader ontological reasoning is needed, and this has been provided by numerous theorists, such as sociologists (Blaas and Foster, 1992; Schmidt, 2008) to philosophers and social theorists (Bachelard, 1969; Foucault, 1984; Prigge, 2008; Cusset, 2015; Knoblauch and Löw, 2017). In this way, the theory of the social production of space became widely accepted. Still, the ideological component of that concept (material social practice as a Marxist thesis) became the antithesis of the emerging poststructuralist antithesis (fragmentation of socio-cultural issue of nations, through cultural studies, into numerous identity micro groups) led to a neoliberal synthesis (privatization and deregulation of the market, to strengthen the role of financial capital in socio-economic relations).

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*Keywords* : Lefebvre, regional economy, space production, geographical space, economic space.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

About other social sciences, space was later discussed from an economic point of view. Therefore, several reasons can be related to the founder of the regional economy, Walter Isard. First, he pointed out the decisive influence of the neoclassical school, which started the temporal analysis of economic development as crucial while neglecting the space variable consequently for simplification. Isard confirmed this in the views of Alfred Marshall (1920: 286), who considered that the difficulties of a problem mainly depend on variations in space and time in which the market in question extends; the influence of time is more fundamental than space.” The second reason was explained by R. Capello (2016: 2) through the relationship of this variable (space) in economic analysis, which can ”complicate the logical framework.” She sees the reasons for that in analytical tools, which until recently could not simultaneously deal with temporal and spatial dynamics ”nor could they cope with the appearance of nonlinearities of space, such as agglomerations or the economy of proximity.” This led to the introduction of this variable (space), which required ”the rejection of the simplifying hypotheses of constant yields and perfect competition.” According to economic logic, the market is spatially divided among producers, and some companies do not compete with all companies but only with the closest ones. It follows that spatial distance is an obstacle to market entry, and it, therefore, emphasizes that the regional economy is trying to answer the following fundamental questions:

- \* What economic logic explains the location of companies and households in the area?
- \* What economic logic explains the configuration of large territorial systems (e.g., urban systems)?
- \* Why are certain areas - regions, cities, individual territories - more developed than others?

Capello states that the answers to these questions are given by two large groups of theories, which make up the regional economy:

- \* Location theory, as the oldest branch of the regional economy, deals with economic mechanisms that distribute activities in space.
- \* Theory of regional growth (and development) focuses on the spatial aspects of economic growth and territorial income distribution.

The answers to these questions, which define the theoretical assumptions of economic geography and regional economy, imply a previous clarification of the geographical meaning of the term space, then a ”spatial turn” in the social sciences, and only then, as the most complex, economic aspect of the term space.

## 2. GEOGRAPHICAL SPACE

The epistemological basis of geography is broken through the notion of space because geographical knowledge has always been based on understanding space and its cartographic representation. The expansion of this knowledge depended on the applicability of various innovations, which led to new concepts of space. During the historical development of geography, the notion of space has been modified by specific links between ”power, knowledge, and geography.” According to Gregory et al. (2015: 2), XIX c. was an age dominated by ”time” while the XX century. Marked ”space,” during which ”modern” became ”postmodern.” This is marked as a ”spatial turn” in a wide range of humanities and social sciences, with the ”conceptualization of space” being a watershed between geographical directions.

The contribution to the scientific foundation of modern geography was marked by the concept of space, which developed along the historical vertical: Descartes, Newton, Leibniz, and Kant. From the point of view of geographers, Humboldt and Hettner expanded the theoretical conception of the term ”absolute space” and thus modern geography, and the final form was given to it by Hartshorne (1939) by introducing the term ”spatial differentiation.” The concept of space and its philosophical interpretation will become the basis for developing different geographical views of reality in the second half of the twentieth century when there were

two more changes in the concept of space, which also represented divisions within geography. Schaefer (1959) began a quantitative revolution in geography (the idea of relative space) as the theoretical basis for the new geography. A more complex geometry was needed to clarify the new concept of space, which introduced the process of abstraction into the spatial analysis (basic methodological procedure) as a precondition for the transition from "physical" to "mathematical" space. During this phase in the development of scientific geography, the antagonistic relationship between the concepts of space and regional tradition will appear when space is artificially separated from the natural environment. Peet (1998: 32-33) emphasizes that a kind of crisis of the identity of geography arose from this and because of its complexity (natural and social science).

Table 1: Conceptualization of space and development of scientific geography

Space	Space	Space	Scientific Geography	Scientific Geography	Scientific Geography
Concept	Feature	Founders	Approach	Method	Direction
Absolute	Physical space	Kant, Humboldt, Hettner, Kropotkin.	Spatial differentiation	Classical deduction	Modern geography
Relative	Mathematical space	Schaefer, Bunge, Neef, Ullman.	Quantity revolution	Mathematic. statistical	New geography
Relational	Social space	Lefebvre, Foucault, Harvey, Deer, Soja.	Social practice	Historical materialism	Postmodern geography

Source: Mutabdzija, 2020.

The quantification of geographical phenomena and processes was an expression of the need to simplify geography's meaning and practical needs, which began to lose its academic significance and disappear as a permanent course at well-known universities. It was similar to the relationship between the terms space and place in the 1970s or, to a lesser extent, as space and the natural environment in the 1970s and 1980s.

## 2. HENRI LEFEBVRE AND THE CONCEPT OF RELATIONAL SPACE

Henri Lefebvre is credited with defining the relational concept of space, which stemmed from social practices. To properly understand these terms, it is essential to immediately mention two capitally critical essays from 1968. The first essay was written by M. Foucault is called "Other Places" (*Des espaces autres*), while the other "Right to the City" (*Le droit a la ville*) was written by Lefebvre. According to Prodanović and Krstić (2011: 426), through the notion of heterotopia, Foucault opened "a completely new field of analysis, in which space gained a crucial role in trying to gain insight into how society functions" because space "cannot be part an abstract theoretical system, but rather a socially constructed network of meanings that are inextricably linked to our (every day) actions." This introduced into geography a relational concept in which space is "folded into" social relations through practical activities. This was allowed not only for the "socialization of spatial analysis" but also crucial for the "specialization of social analysis," which stepped into the world of postmodern geographies. To gain that insight, it is necessary to return to Lefebvre and his "production of space."

According to Kipfer et al. (2008: 2-3), he introduced Hegel's and Marx's early works into the contemporary academic debate, resulting in his "original heterodox Marxism through a series of critical engagements related to French phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, surrealists, Dadaists, and avant-garde situationists". . According to them, Lefebvre's most notable contribution includes a critique of everyday life and the study of urbanization and space, with "his influence in critical theory fading," but in broad fields of academic research, from architecture to urbanism and radical geography, he still enjoys celebrity status

personalities. They emphasize three lines of understanding of Lefebvre's work, the first of which refers to the spatiality that arose from the "urban economic-political" representations developed by D. Harvey (1973). Based on this, Mutabdzija (2020: 23) states that Harvey introduced this social practice into geographical research, so instead of asking "What is space?", He asked the question "How can different human practices create and use characteristic concepts?" lysis of space" or why space is condensed. The second concerns the teachings of E. Soja (1989), who directly connects the emergence of the concept of postmodernity with relational (social) space, while the third derives from contemporary works of S. Elden (2004) and E. Merfield (2006) and concerns Lefebvre's observations on distance, time, and urbanization. Such an interpretation of Lefebvre connects urban-spatial debates with the "open appropriation of his meta philosophical epistemology shaped by continental philosophy and Western Marxism." It rejects the "weakening dualism between political economy and cultural studies" that marked the difference between the "first" and "second" waves. Instead, the differences within these theories during the 1980s and 1990s led to "bifurcations of theoretical debates that identified Marxism with studies of material, social relations, classes, and political economy, while considerations of subjectivity, identity, differences, and culture shifted to poststructuralist versions of cultural studies."

At the end of this introduction to Lefebvre, it is essential, in addition to interpreting relational space, to highlight the broader creative work of this neo-Marxist philosopher and existentialist, whom Shields (2011: 279) says was a sociologist of urban and rural life and a theorist of state and international currents. Capital and social space. As a witness to the modernization of everyday life, industrialization of the economy, and suburbanization of cities, he noted that different methods were combined to "destroy the traditional life of the French peasant." He wrote about it from different angles, thus advancing various disciplinary research, so without referring to his arguments, it is "difficult to discuss concepts such as everyday life, modernity, mystification, social production of space, humanistic Marxism, or even alienation."

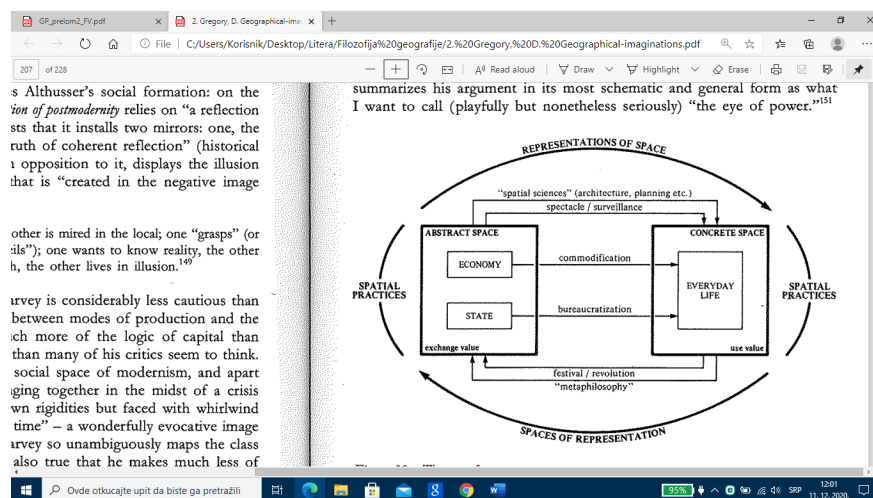
## 2.1 Lefebvre's interpretation of space

Lefebvre's significance and influence on human (social) geography should not be overestimated, but it cannot fit into narrow geographical frameworks alone. As Shields (2011: 279) notes, he was a critic of "excessive disciplinary specialization in economics, geography, and sociology," which has "parceled out" the study of space. This assessment results from his collaboration with the group *Situationist International* and Guy Deborah, which focused his attention on "the urban environment as a context for everyday life and an expression of the social relations of production." He later extended his critique of domestic life to the neighborhood and urban life, asking a fundamental question: what does urbanity consist of? He answered that the urban is not even a specific population, geographical size, or set of buildings; it is neither a hub, a transfer point, nor a production center. "For him, urbanity does it all together, and every definition must look for the essential quality of all these aspects. This shows that in this definition of the urban, he sees a "phenomenological basis with a Hegelian form" in which the urban is "a social centrality in which many elements and aspects of capital intersect in space." Three phases in the development of his interpretation of space can be identified. The first is characterized by social centrality, developed in the "Right to the City" (1968). The second concerns the study of social space as a national and global expression for the mode of production that best reflects the notion of specialization in "Production of Space" (1974). The third phase refers to the multidimensionality of his thesis, which was "in direct contrast to the more common reduction of space to one segment of the triple process (production, exchange or accumulation)" and in which he views space as a fourth area of social relations "in which production, exchange, and accumulation of wealth and surplus-value." From this, he concludes that space is not given, nor that a city is an object, but that space is also urban "immaterial but constitutive aspects of society, its virtual image," which he presented in "Urban Revolution" (2003).

According to Schmidt (2008: 27), Lefebvre's interpretation of space created a "spatial turn," which affected the social sciences, and space spread beyond geography. In essence, this is related to the combined processes of urbanization and globalization, which at all levels of space, from micro to macro, have led to the creation of new geography and new spatio-temporal configurations. This determined our world through the reference

to new concepts of space, which correspond to current social conditions, which were explained in a very acceptable way by Lefebvre's theory of space production. Its importance is that it "systematically integrates the categories of city and space into a single, comprehensive social theory that enables the understanding and analysis of spatial processes at different levels." Therefore, Schmidt's work aims to clarify the "formative elements of its basic structure and epistemology" through a comprehensive analysis and reconstruction of the theory of space production, which shows that three (so far neglected) aspects of understanding Lefebvre's theory.

First, the specific concept of dialectics can be considered its original contribution. During his extensive oeuvre, Lefebvre developed a version of the dialectic that was original and independent in every respect. This dialectic is not binary but triadic and based on Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche. This is still not adequately understood and has led to significant misunderstandings. Another deciding factor is language theory. The fact that Lefebvre developed his theory of language, relying on Nietzsche, is hardly ever considered in the reception and interpretation of his works, from which the linguistic turn arose. Here, he first understood and concretely applied his triadic dialectic—the third essential element in French phenomenology. While Heidegger's influence on Lefebvre's work has already been discussed in detail, the contribution of French phenomenologists (Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard) has generally not received due attention (Schmidt, 2008: 28).



These three neglected aspects could contribute to a better understanding of Lefebvre's work and a fuller appreciation of his essential and revolutionary theory of social production of space, which points to "paradigmatic changes in the sociological conception of space and time." The starting point is that "(social) space is a (social) product," whose understanding requires the rejection of the widespread knowledge of space which is conceived as an independent material reality that exists "in itself." In this regard, using the concept of space production, Lefebvre opposes a theory that understands space that is essentially related to social reality. It follows that this space can never serve as an epistemological starting point because space does not exist "in itself" but is produced. In explaining this process, Lefebvre starts from the relational concept between space and time, in which, according to Schmid (2008: 29), "space exists as simultaneity, asynchronous order of social reality; time, on the other hand, signifies a diachronic order, and thus a historical process of social production." Society here does not denote either the spatial-temporal whole of "bodies" or "matter" or the sum of actions and practices. Central to Lefebvre's materialist theory are "human beings with their corporeality and sensuality, sensitivity and imagination, their thinking and their ideologies; human beings who enter into interpersonal relationships through their activity and practice." Based on these assumptions, Lefebvre constructs his theory of the production of social space and social time, where space and time are not purely material factors that are understood as integral aspects of social practice. Lefebvre sees them as

a social product, the result and precondition to produce society. Accordingly, space and time do not exist as universal categories but can only be understood in the context of a particular society (since they are socially produced). It follows from this that space and time "are not only relational but also essentially historical categories," whose analysis requires the inclusion of the social constellation, i.e., power relations and relevant conflicts in every situation." Now is an excellent time to analyze the way of producing (social) space.

Diagram 1: Production of space according to (Source: Lefebvre, 1991).

According to Schmidt (2008: 30), the key to understanding Lefebvre's theory lies dividing space production into three dialectically interconnected dimensions or processes, which Lefebvre calls the formants or moments of space production. They are doubly defined and accordingly double marked. On the one hand, they refer to the triad of "spatial practices," "representations of space," and "spatial representations." On the other hand, they refer to "perceived," "imagined," and "experienced" space. This parallel sequence indicates a twofold approach to space: phenomenological, and the other is linguistic or semiotic. In Lefebvre's work, these three dimensions "exist in a state of uncertainty, where he first introduces them as approximations, and then explores their scope of validity and modifies them." The meaning of these three dimensions becomes clear only in the overall context of the theory. It can be reconstructed only based on the entire Lefebvre work, which a diagram can conditionally represent:

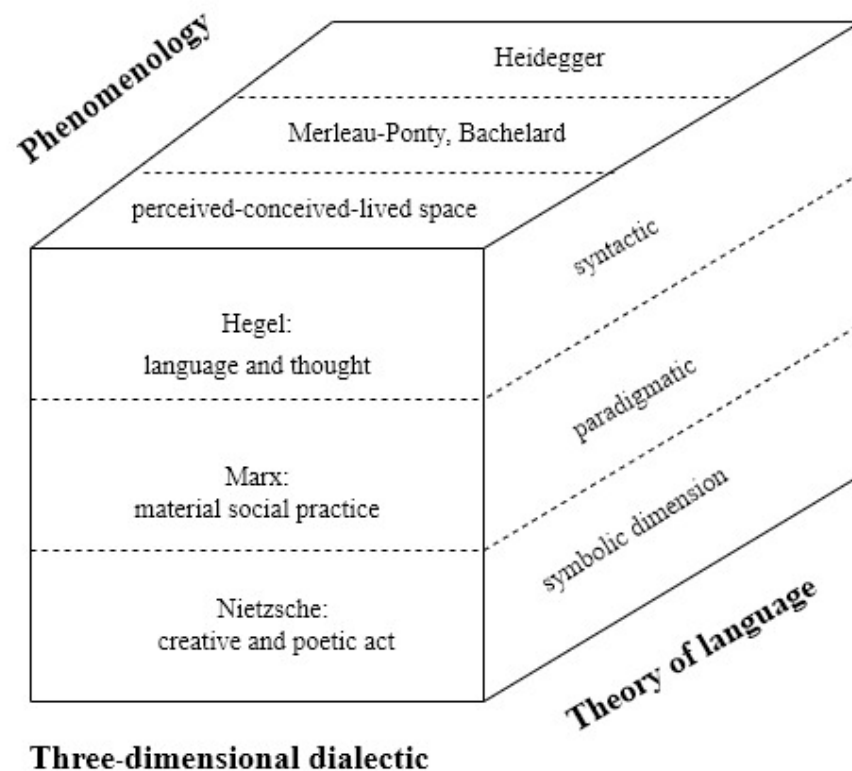


Diagram 2: Lefebvre's theoretical concept that allows an understanding of the concept of relational space

The previous diagram provides a pictorial presentation of Lefebvre's theoretical concept. His understanding of the concept of relational space can be understood, which includes a solid philosophical and socio-theoretical framework, which creates a three-dimensional figure of social reality. At the end of this introductory discussion, it is essential to mention Prigge's position (2008: 49) on Lefebvre's thesis on the dominance of space over time, which is associated with the current phase of capitalist specialization. It is characterized

by a "totalizing tendency of urbanization" that must cause an epistemological shift. Still, it is no longer an industry focused on capital and labor, classes and reproduction, which make up the episteme, but urban and its forms concentrate on everyday life and consumption, planning and spectacle" that reveal the tendencies of social development in the second half of the twentieth century.

Urban is, therefore, pure form; a place of meeting, gathering, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but it is the center of attraction for life. It is an abstraction, but unlike the metaphysical entity, it is an urban concrete abstraction, connected with the practice. . . . What creates a city? Nothing. Centralizes creation. Still, it makes everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without unification, without closeness, that is, without relationships. The city creates a situation in which different things occur one after the other and do not exist separately, but according to their differences. Urban, which is indifferent to any diversity it contains . . . it just connects them. In that sense, the city constructs identify and liberate the essence of social relations. . . . We can say that the urban rises above the horizon, slowly occupy the epistemological field, and becomes the episteme of an epoch. History and history continue to move away (Lefebvre, 2003: 118-119).

## 2.2 The Triad Dialectic

According to Schmid (2008: 30-32), the starting point for understanding Lefebvre's work is related to dialectical thinking, which means recognizing that social reality is marked by contradictions and can only be understood through understanding these contradictions. The deeper meaning of this debate arises with Hegel (*das Aufheben des Widerspruchs*) because according to him, *Aufheben* (sublation or transcendence) has a double meaning. On the one hand, "it is negation and overcoming, and on the other, preserving and putting on a higher level," and that is why it "does not mean finding a higher, so to speak, final truth." The contradiction strives for its resolution because the resolution not only denies the old denial but, at the same time, preserves it and brings it to a higher level. Thus, dismissal carries within it the germ of a new contradiction. This understanding of dialectics is characterized by a profound historical and dynamic interpretation of development and history, and Lefebvre notes: "movement is, therefore, transcendence." This could be read the other way around: "transcendence (sublation) means (historical) movement." Therefore, according to Schmidt, these passages clearly show that Lefebvre's dialectic has excellent and different sources, which he connects with the thinking of Hegel and Marx, and Nietzsche.

During his long creative endeavor, Lefebvre developed a very radical critique of Nietzsche-oriented philosophy, articulating at the same time a new triadic dialectic. Schmidt (2008: 33-34) notes that the most crucial realization and application of this recent debate find its expression in the "Production of Space," in which Lefebvre develops a three-dimensional figure (three-dimensional dialectic) of social reality.

In this way, the three-dimensional dialectical appears in a figure in which three moments are dialectically interconnected: material, social practice (Marx), language and thought (Hegel), and a creative, poetic act (Nietzsche). Crucial is that with this three-dimensional figure, the nature of dialectics has fundamentally changed. While Hegelian (and Marxist) dialectics are based on two concepts opposed to each other and sublimated through the third term, Lefebvre's triad dialectic sets three ideas. Each can be understood as a thesis, and each concerns the other two, thus becoming a mere abstraction without the others. This triad figure does not end in synthesis as in the Hegelian system. Instead, it connects three moments that have remained different without reconciling in the synthesis. These are the three moments in interaction, conflict with each other or an alliance. Thus, these three concepts or moments gain equal importance, and each takes a similar position about the others. In this way, a new, three-dimensional, or triadic version of dialectics appears (Schmidt, 2008: 33).

Schmidt (2008: 34) states that according to Lefebvre, the Hegelian triad "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" allegedly interpreted the process of origin of his theory of space production because it constructed only a play. In contrast, the challenging Marxist triad "affirmation-negation-negation-negation," produced the process of becoming. In comparison, Lefebvre advances his dialectics, "triadic" or "ternary," through three-valued analysis. He establishes three moments of equal value that "relate to each other in different relations and

complex movements in which now one, now the other prevails the negation of one or the other.” Lefebvre’s claim is no longer an interpretation of becoming, not even the production of becoming, but an analysis of becoming. Thus, the triad “form-structure-function” appears several times in different parts of his work, including the theory of language (paradigmatic, syntactic, and symbolic dimension). In contrast, the triad rhythmic analysis (melody-harmony-rhythm), according to Elden (2004: 195), Lefebvre, by his admission, took over from Bachelard. In the end, the fundamental triad unity is realized in the concept of space-time (space-time-energy).

### 2.3 Language and space

Lefebvre is the first application of this three-dimensional He achieved this principle in his work “Language and Society” (*Le Langage et la Société*). He developed his Nietzschean-oriented theory of language. Schmidt (2008: 35) notes that this theory has a three-dimensional construction and represents a “preliminary phase in the theory of space production, even if Lefebvre does not explicitly point to it.” The starting point of Lefebvre’s theory of language is Nietzsche’s poetics, based on which he “understands society as the space and architecture of concepts, forms, and rules whose abstract truth prevails over the reality of senses, bodies, desires, and passions.” Starting from such considerations, Lefebvre develops a theory of the three-dimensionality of language, adding a new, symbolic dimension and the syntactic and paradigmatic dimensions. “He admits that the concept of symbols is confusing here, as they can be attributed different meanings.”

On the one hand, they are formalized mathematical signs, and on the other hand, they are “charged with images, emotions, affectivity, and connotations.” Lefebvre aims precisely at this second meaning of the symbol, which makes it “substantiality, ambiguity, and complexity that is an integral part of lived and living language.” The application of this scheme in space now seems obvious, so Lefebvre again takes it for granted that activities in space establish a system that corresponds to a method of words up to a certain level. From this perspective, the three-dimensional analysis of space production looks like this:

\* Spatial practice: this concept signifies the material dimension of social activity and interaction. Spatial classification means focusing on the aspect of simultaneous action. Spatial practice, by analogy with the syntactic extent of language, means a system resulting from the articulation and connection of elements or activities. One can think of networks of interactions and communications, which arise in everyday life (e.g., residence and jobs) or in the process of production (production and exchange relations). \* Representation of space: representations of space create an image and thus also define space. Analogous to the paradigmatic dimension of language, one spatial representation can be replaced by another, which shows certain similarities but respects differences with others. Representations of space are created at the level of discourse, speech as such, and therefore include verbalized forms. Descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space. Moreover, Lefebvre contains maps and plans, information in pictures, and signs in the representations of space. These performances are architecture, spatial planning, and social sciences (critical geography). \* Spaces of representation: Lefebvre defined this third dimension of space production as a (terminological) inversion of the representation of space. This concerns the symbolic dimension of space. Therefore, the spaces of representation do not refer to the spaces themselves but something else: divine power, logos, state, the male or female principle, and so on. This dimension of space production refers to the process of marking that is associated with the (material) symbol. Symbols of space could be taken from nature, such as trees or prominent topographic formations; or they could be artifacts, buildings, and monuments; they can also develop from a combination of both, for example, as “landscapes” (Schmidt, 2008: 36-37).

According to this scheme, (social) space can be analyzed about these three dimensions. In the first, social space appears in the dimension of spatial practice as an interconnected chain or network of activities or interactions that rest on a specific material basis (morphology, built environment). In the second, this spatial practice can be linguistically defined and demarcated as space and form a representation of space. This representation serves as an organization of schemes or a reference framework for communication, allowing (spatial) orientation and thus co-determines activity. Finally, in the third, the material “order” that appears on the ground can itself become a vehicle that conveys meaning. In this way, (spatial) symbolism developed that expresses and evokes social norms, values, and experiences.



## 2.4 French phenomenology

The third and critical segment of the neglected aspect of understanding Lefebvre's theory of space production refers to the contribution of French phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty and Bachelard and reference phenomenological terms: observed, imagined, and experienced. Since perception is the central concept of phenomenology, does it explore how the subject perceives an image, a landscape, or a monument? The perception depends on the issue because we do not see our landscape the same way as tourists who visit it for the first time. Based on this, Lefebvre combines perception with the concept of spatial practice to show that perception takes place mentally and is also based on concrete-produced materiality. At the same time, he found significant support for his concept in descriptive phenomenology, i.e., capital works of French phenomenologists. Maurice Merleau-Ponty is the author of the book *Phenomenology of perception*, in which he developed a theory based on fundamental concepts: space, time, and the lived world (*monde vécu*). In it, he made an explicit distinction between the perceived and the experienced world, based on which he distinguished between physical space, constructed by perception, from geometric space, conceptually understood, and lived space (*Espace vécu*) "mythical space, dream space, schizophrenia, and art."

The importance of the influence of other philosophers on Lefebvre, especially Heidegger, was highlighted by Elden (2004: 76-82), while Schmidt (2008: 38) emphasized the importance of Bachelard and his major work "Poetics of Space." This book significantly impacted M. Foucault and represents a classic phenomenological analysis of living space through imagination, based on poetic images of "happy space." These paintings seek to define the human value of "espaces de possession," a space "defended from enemy forces, beloved or sublime space." Concerning its protective matter are also imaginary values, which will become dominant. Therefore, "the space occupied by the imagination cannot remain an indifferent space that is subject to measurements and assessments of surveyors." Still, he points out the difference between the "real" (material) aspect of space and the "experienced" aspect, and both aspects can refer to the same space. Therefore, a comfortable space "is not only imagined or lived but has original, real protective values, which also correspond to spatial practice."

The third aspect is the lived space, which appears in Bachelard's work and is explicitly separated from the imagined space. Schmidt (2008: 39) connects it with the "context of the aesthetic about the hidden," which metaphorically deals with closets and drawers. Bachelard (1969: xxxiii-xxxiv) states that "an empty drawer is unthinkable. One can only think of her. And for those of us who must describe what we imagine before we find out, what we dream before we check, all the closets are full. "Lefebvre's next passage, conceived as a critique, reads as a continuation: "Empty space, in the sense of a mental and social void that facilitates socialization, of the still non-social realm is in fact only a representation of space." Thus, the final (reference) point of the theory of space production is revealed by French phenomenology.

## 3. ECONOMIC-GEOGRAPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF RELATIVE SPACE

This aspect of Lefebvre's work should be related to the stage of development of capitalism in which he created. This is the period called "30 glorious years" in France, and it refers to the post-war economically accelerated growth, which enabled a significant increase in the living standard of citizens.

### 3.1 Characteristics of the mixed economy in France

Essential assumptions of this development relate to the emergence and development of a mixed economy associated with the free market. Mutabdzija (2021: 92) states that it was, in part, managed by the government, with the majority in the ownership structure being private companies. The state has influenced the field of public service delivery (health, education, i) and business regulation to prevent the emergence of monopolies. She also reported the application of progressive taxes and benefits based on wealth to reduce inequalities. In the domain of prices, determined by market forces or the "invisible hand," the government could regulate some goods through higher taxation (e.g., cigarettes and alcohol) to discourage their use. As a new economic system, the mixed economy began to develop in the capitalist states of Europe (West) after 1945. It was not a complete novelty but a series of previously known elements that only received a new framework. According to Berend (2009: 219), the essential component of the mixed economy system was

state interventionism, which was taken from the design of regulated markets but supplemented by elements of "countercyclical measures, subsidies, foreign trade, and monetary regulation." This led to the establishment of a robust public sector in the economy, developed by planning measures, best illustrated by the French experience of indicative planning, which was based on the plans of the Planning Commission and used various incentives to encourage public and private actors to behave optimally.

Another essential feature of this system is the mixed ownership structure, in which companies mainly were privately owned. Still, even partial state ownership was not uncommon, as the idea of conducting was to complement and improve market efficiency through indirect planning. In this way, a departure was made from the old concept of dirigisme, so France remained a capitalist economy focused on capital accumulation, with companies maximizing profits and market distribution of productive goods. Therefore, we can talk about the corporate environment, which was inherited from the economies of Italy and Spain and proved to be successful in conditions of non-market competition in the pre-war Soviet Union.

Finally, the most crucial element concerns integrating elements of state interventionism in the free trade system because it avoided the emergence of an economy of self-sufficiency, which existed in the interwar period through state regulation, protectionism, and state-owned companies. Through free trade, an integrated market has been established, as a precondition for the emergence of a common market, first the EEC and then the EU. Blaas and Foster (1992: 2) emphasize that this corporate system functioned in democratic conditions (without authoritarian dictatorship) based on planned cooperation of independent partners, unions, and employers, and equalization of wages and profits by the state (fiscal policy) resulted in increased investment and economic growth. For them, the state was not an external entity but "an integrative stabilizing factor, part of a productive, self-correcting market economy."

### 3.2 Commodification of knowledge

Some proponents of critical theory (Frankfurt School) noticed immediately after the war changes in the previous way of producing knowledge, which began to be treated as a commodity. Kipfer et al. (2008: 4) suggest that Adorno pointed to such a prevalence of the commodity form, which is why he complained about "how practically disarming, but hierarchically arranged procedures" encourage in intellectual work the servile "departmentalization of the mind" which was ready to be used in all situations. This "departmentalization" was realized in the conditions of administered mass production, which was partially replaced by even more intensive forms of instrumentalization and commodification. As post-Fordist conditions were dominant in the academic community, changing needs for creative and innovative production emerged. This is indicated by the analogy between industrial practice and knowledge production in the academic community, which has increasingly taken on the character of goods through pronounced commodification processes and knowledge quantification. According to Castree and Macmillan (2004: 470), this pressure for "continuous intellectual innovation is symptomatic of academic capitalism." It is associated with Walter Benjamin's (1999: 62-82) capital work on fashion. He creates an "entrepreneurial" an entrepreneurial scholarship that brings time-space fashion closer and where the commodity fetish is established through the worship of the marginally new but structurally repetitive. "

After this review of contemporary deviations in the domain of epistemology, it is interesting to make an insight into the different interpretations of Lefebvre's work, primarily its ideological dimension. Namely, in addition to numerous philosophers and social theorists who have described this trend, geographers, spatial planners, and architects have recognized it, for whom the interpretation of Lefebvre's triad on social space and its insistence on the "political" nature of space is now acceptable critical theory in geography, spatial planning, or architecture. That is why it is unusual that Lefebvre's work is more prevalent in the USA than in France, as well as that the interest in his work in Europe has a changing temporal character. For Kiefer et al. (2008: 5), his popularity, especially in the New World, was part of the prestige enjoyed by "French theory" in English-speaking academic circles and its transnational branches. The reason lies in the fact that he represented a kind of antithesis to structuralists and poststructuralists, who provided an excellent theoretical basis for creating new policies. In the USA, it referred to cultural policies in the conditions of neoliberal thinking, and in France to the fight against "totalitarianism (read: Marxism and the New Left) to

turn France into a bastion of neoliberalism.”

On the other hand, Cusset, the author of the French theory of the same name, sublimates the influence of this group of French poststructuralists on American public life and the formation of identity policies through the power of Marxism on late capitalism, mentions Lefebvre in three places. This influence of French theory on public life in the United States, Cusset (2015: 211) describes as a twofold process in which, on the one hand, strengthens nationalism and political propaganda (America is back), and on the other, affects the disintegration of socio-cultural fabric of the national identity micro-groups. At the same time, intensive privatization and deregulation took place in the background, which increased the impact of financial capital on the economy.

#### 4. ECONOMIC SPACE

An economic interpretation of space has emerged from previous interdisciplinary discussions on the importance of social sciences for regional development. This is most visible in the field of the regional economy. After 60 years of its existence, it combines many approaches, theories, and models based on which it interprets the choice of locations and regional development paths. It possesses increasing interpretive power, which characterizes different theoretical approaches based on how space is built into these theoretical models. As economic activity arises, grows, and develops in space, the understanding of space has its evolution, which indicates its conceptualization and thus different interpretations of growth and development. According to the definition and classification of various aspects of spatial reality, today we can recognize three approaches in using the term space in the regional economy, with the name of Henri Lefebvre, mostly not mentioned, and more about the lack of theoretical knowledge of the author. Space or, on the other hand, about their ideological exclusivity. Whatever the real reason, we cite three recent reference authors and their work on the importance of space in the regional economy.

##### 4.1 Capello: Variable relational space

Although she does not mention Lefebvre, Roberta Capello (2009; 2016) has written a significant study on different types of economic space. She notes that the earliest regional development theories were theories of growth that sought to explain trends in income and employment during periods of varying duration. The reason for this is that space affects the functioning of the economic system because it is a source of economic advantages (or disadvantages), such as factors of production. Therefore, it assigns a particular group of theories, concepts, and models to each of the four types of space (physical-metric, uniform-abstract, diverse-relational, and diverse-stylized space), ideas, and models, which were used in regional economic research. The first group of these theories refers to location theories based on “a purely geographical concept of continuous, physical-metric space, which can be determined in terms of physical distance and transport costs.” From this concept of space arise the laws of variation of prices and costs, as well as their consequences in terms of “choice of location and division of the market among firms.” This was the concept of space used by great economists and geographers of the first half of the twentieth century. Location theory sought to explain the distribution of activities in space to identify factors influencing “the location of certain activities, the allocation of different parts of the territory between different types of production.” division of the spatial market among producers, and functional distribution of activities in space.” Location models differ according to hypotheses about the spatial structure of supply and demand, which reflect the goals that models strive for. Accordingly, Capello (2016: 3) singles out three variants of these models: identification of market areas, location of production areas, and analysis of economic and spatial mechanisms. Regulate territorial agglomerations’ size, functional specialization, and territorial distribution.

The second concept of space is characteristic of the first theories of regional growth, which were developed in the middle of the last century. Economists abandoned the concept of physical-metric space used in location theories. They replaced it with the notion of uniform-abstract space, in which supply and demand conditions are identical throughout the region. Geographical space is divided into “regions,” i.e., a limited physical-geographical size that essentially corresponds to administrative units. Therefore, it is considered that the space has become internally uniform and thus “synthesized into a vector of aggregate characteristics

of socio-economic-demographic nature.” This is the case with neoclassical theories of regional growth, which deliberately ignore any economic diversity within the region with this definition of space. They assume that the territory is unique, that production processes do not have cumulative and synergistic effects, and that there is no agglomeration economy, which plays a significant role in location theories. This definition of space enables the interpretation of the local growth phenomenon using macroeconomic models adapted to the specifics of the local area. Capello (2009: 37) explains the advantage of this uniform-abstract space, in which economic variables assume the same values in the whole region (conceived as a point in space), with the possibility of “stylizing the economic behavior of the region in aggregate macroeconomic models and theories.” Therefore, the analyst can predict the development of the economy based on the interactions between certain variables (e.g., the propensity to import or consume or the ratio of capital to production). These settings are essential for regional growth theories that tend to interpret “the trend of synthetic development indicators, such as income, with the inevitable loss of qualitative information, but with the undoubted advantage of analytical modeling of the development path.” This concept of space was adopted by theories of neoclassical regional growth, export base theories, and interregional trade theories, which developed from various branches of the main directions of the economy during the 1950s and 1960s, such as macroeconomics, neoclassical economics, development economics, and economics of international trade.

The third interpretation of space refers to the diverse-relational aspect of economic space. Unlike the previous performance, this approach assumes the existence of marked polarity in geographic space and the presence of specifics in relations between people, within society, and the territory on which development is based. This conception of space requires an analysis that enables the transition from a macroeconomic and macro-territorial approach to a micro-territorial and micro-behavioral one. Theories based on this conception of space can be defined as development theories that do not seek to explain the cumulative growth rate of income or output but identify all elements, tangible and intangible, exogenous or endogenous, that characterize the development process. This concept of space has been adopted, e.g., in the theory of growth poles, while analyzing the role of multinational companies in local development and studies on the spread of innovation in space, seeking to identify (exogenous) causes of territorial polarities on which growth depends. Great emphasis is placed on the role of local relations in development, which explains why these theories view space as “relational” and diverse. That is why Capello (2009: 39) emphasizes that this interpretation of space is most strongly expressed by theories about “industrial districts, milieu or learning regions” because they look for endogenous determinants of development.

Space thus becomes an independent economic resource and factor of production. It creates static and dynamic advantages for the companies located in it, and this crucially determines the competitiveness of the local production system. Since theories of endogenous development mainly deal with external relations, localization, and economies of the region, it can be said that they represent the core of the regional economy, a discipline in which theories of location and development intertwine and merge. These theories allow abandoning the notion of competitive development, which resulted from the simple regional distribution of aggregate growth rates, and instead adopted the idea of generative development. The national growth rate represents the sum of growth rates of individual regions (Capello, 2016: 7).

Finally, the fourth group is the latest theories, based on the concept of diverse-stylized space, which is specific in that they encompass the polarities that create development. These polarities do not have a territorial dimension because they are stylized in simple points in space. This concept has been adopted by theories of new economic geography and views of endogenous growth, which allows them to construct an elegant economic model that includes synergy and cumulative feedback processes that emerge in space. Introducing the advantages of agglomeration in a stylized form, through increasing yields, nullifies the territorial dimension. Thus, these theories renounce the aspect of the most significant importance for regional economists, which starts from the fact that “space, territorially defined as a system of localized technological externalities, or as a set of tangible and intangible factors, due to proximity and reduced transaction costs, affect productivity. And enterprise innovation”.

#### 4.2 Knoblauch - Löw: Space definition

The authors of this sociological theory of space quoted Lefebvre widely in the introduction, who they say played a "fundamental role in reconstructing space, essential for understanding capitalism and society." They also note that thanks to him, we began to "attend what was called a spatial turn," which they call a topographic or topological turn. In this way, space has ceased to be seen as a social environment marked by limited territories and defined by the code "here and there." Still, it becomes a relational category based on social interaction and interdependence. Although there is a lack of space research within the framework of social theory, it has become evident that society, i.e., the spatial organization of sociability, has transformed rapidly over the last decades. Due to the lack of an adequate conceptual framework for this, Knoblauch and Löw (2017: 2) believe that our understanding of these changes is unclear and compare it with existing incomplete theories, such as Deleuze's and Guattari's (1988) concept of nodes; Mol and Lou's (1994) idea of fluid spaces; Castells' (1996) idea of a network society or Appadurai's (1996) notion of landscape (scapes). They complement this view by saying that despite numerous publications on space and society over the past twenty years, "many critics complain about the lack of continuation, elaboration, and specification of spatial theory of sociality, which is considered insufficiently theorized." In doing so, they cite the assessments of relevant authorities (Massey, 2005; Hubbard and Kichin 2011; Shields, 2013) who believe that many studies refer to the notion of relational space only rhetorically but do not theoretically substantiate it. Therefore, they refer to Lefebvre, who explicitly confirmed that "space" and "spatiality" contribute to the constitution of the social order.

To achieve this, they predominantly referred to Schutz's (1962) ideas of reciprocity, Elias's (1976) spatial figuration of society, as well as Giddens' (1991) theory of p. structures. This theoretical framework provided them with an explanation of the spatial transformation of modern society, which they called refrigeration, which for them represents a "preliminary general hypothesis that helps us understand what we perceive as a fundamental change in our understanding of space." The elaboration of this hypothesis takes place through three processes, the first of which is mediatization, which is the driving force of space redefinition through digitalization. A new method of spatial development is trans localization, which means that social units (families or religious communities) have "different locations that are connected by the circulation of knowledge, ideas, and things." The third process is polycontexturalization, which views changing relationships within space as "contexts of different social activities, forms of communication and social functions." It follows that re-figuration "does not only deal with general social changes but requires continued thinking about what is meant by space and how we can imagine the sociability of space," which was inspiring in the spatial turn towards a relational understanding of space. This implies the existence of two parallel processes, the first of which refers to the placement of objects in certain places (with space), and the second refers to the conceptual synthesis and design of the relational meaning of space in that space.

To connect these processes, Knoblauch and Lev (2017: 4) borrow the geophysical term assemblage from Deleuze and Guattari, which implies the connection of its axes with different assemblies. The horizontal axis deals with "machine body assemblies, actions and passions" and "collective assembly of pronunciations, deeds, and statements of infertile parts of body transformations." In contrast, the vertical axis has "territorial or reterritorialize sides that stabilize it and cutting edges of deterritorialization that carry it." In this way, the authors present space as a relational set of social goods and living beings in specific places. They conclude figuration as an active practice and the achieved synthesis.

Spaces are, therefore, always structured dynamically. This ongoing process is a dynamic and situational developmental order, created based on rules inscribed in material and physical resources structures, which are used to stabilize space. The sensual modality of subjective perception, the type of physical performance and materiality, and the form of spatial objectification can vary greatly; moreover, subjects can remember experiences, reproduce them as knowledge, and interpret them as imagination; on the other hand, objectification arranged in space can affect issues in different sensual ways, create an atmosphere and gain meaning in such a way that they become part of assembled rows of signs (such as maps), technology (such as CAD) or objects, such as which is like built architecture (Knoblauch and Lev, 2017: 4).

To answer the importance of this new concept of space for the regional economy, it is necessary to emphasize

the importance of change in the process of globalization, which has taken a new form. The authors emphasize that this shift was caused by the new media, increased transnational cooperation in the political and economic spheres, and the new political map of Europe in 1991 (the fall of the Berlin Wall). This event marked the end of the "short" twentieth century. Social processes had a dynamic and changing character because, after the 1970s, the spatial reorganization of the social order included "increasing dominance of capitalist economies, neoliberalism and consequently declining social welfare." The recognizability of this refinement is most visible in the domain of "economic changes and development of communicative capitalism, mass deindustrialization of the West, transfer of advanced technologies to other parts of the world and reduction of industrial labor due to replacement by automated, digitalized and increasingly robotic production agents." This means that "the principle of centrality, hierarchical order, and territoriality have given way to trans local labor organizations, network structure, and decentralization, which is especially expressed in the growing dominance of multinational companies, increasing international interactions and networking of production chains." These new configurations can no longer be understood in terms of "spatially nested hierarchies" but must be understood as "networks that overlap with spatial dimensions while concentrating organizational principles in enterprises."

#### 4.3 Suwala: spatial concepts in the regional economy

Lech Suwala (Suwala, 2021) does not mention Lefebvre. Still, based on the concept of spatial refinement (Knoblauch and Lev, 2017), he creates comparative research on space from the perspective of economic geography and regional economy. Through the definition of space, he offers an "abstract framework capable of understanding spatial relations of any order" and, through various scales, discusses the use of four different concepts of space (absolute, relative us, relational and thematic).

The concept of absolute space (an allusion to the physical container) relies on the earliest ancient (Ptolemy) and modern ideas about space (Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, and Descartes). It is a space that reflects the external boundary of research objects into which particular things from the physical-material world can be inserted. This concept of space is widely used in everyday understanding and abstract visualization of space in purely mathematical or idealized economic models, economic geography, and regional economy. Suwala (2021: 4) notes that the traditional understanding of this concept of space is based on the early ideas of German economic geographers from the first half of the twentieth century on economic space (Wirtschaftsraum), economic landscape (Wirtschaftslandschaft), and economic formation (Wirtschaftsformation). This concept implies three sub-conceptions, the first of which is the abstract visualization of space in pure mathematical or idealized economic models in political economy and regional economy, Suwala (2014, 2021) mentions "Isolated State" (Von Thunen, 1826) and "Pure Location Theory." (Weber, 1909), which were expressions of "abstract" spaces in pure and universal theories. This has also been achieved in the regional economy, especially in Keynesian and neoclassical approaches of regional growth. The second sub-conception is uniform-abstract space. Supply (e.g., sectoral and production structure) and demand conditions (e.g., consumer preferences) are identical within a particular spatial entity, neglecting economic diversity. The third sub-conception refers to diverse-stylized space, which has been applied in endogenous growth models (Romer, 1986; Lukas, 1988) and new economic geography (Krugman, 1991; Fujita et al., 1999) and refers to constant yield hypotheses. Or perfect competition within a particular spatial entity. This model considers that (regional) endogenous growth is generated by the abstract economy of the agglomeration, stylized in the form of growing yields "and can be presented as spatial and scalar entities such as regions providing a diverse framework/container.

Relative space is a concept in which space is identified with economic location, which can be explained by supplementing Harvey's (1973: 13) definition according to which it is "the relationship between objects that exist only because objects exist and relate to each other" and which is conceivable as a "system of relative position (Lagebeziehungen) and location (Standorte) of material objects from a certain perspective, based on the problem" Suwala (2014: 121). Therefore, it is considered that there are "multiple geometries to choose from, and the spatial framework critically depends on what and who relativizes" (Harvey, 2006: 122). Objects are no longer limited to the absolute space of the Euclidean coordinate system. Still, depending on the purpose of the research, they can be interpreted as locations on maps with different reference scales

because of relative positions. Suwala (2021: 8) emphasizes that these ideas are reflected in a series of classical models for individual location decisions made by respective companies (Hotelling, 1929; Launhardt, 1882; Weber, 1909) or entire location systems (Christaller, 1933; Isard, 1956; Losch, 1940).

Relational space has the character of space as a social place. In economic geography, Suwala (2021: 10) states that it serves "as a gateway between various other disciplines and based on which many theories and methods were adopted, mostly from cultural sciences, sociology and psychology, which makes it almost a public place (Gemischtwarenladen) and probably the most influential concept. "To prove this, Suwala widely cited Harvey (1973), Capello (2012), etc. and stated that some authors use the concepts of "relational space" and "relative space" as synonyms. Relational space means space as a social place or network of relationships because it recognizes the "difference between here and there and this is what allows people to assess what is near and far." According to Suwala (2014, 2021), this concept stemmed from the "continuous maintenance of a relational network between active agents who assign meaning to relationships," emphasizing that the notions of "place, connections or relationships" categories by which he understands relational space. Therefore, he emphasizes that relational space "arises only as a social place through the formation and constant maintenance of a relational network between subjects and that over time the relations of external actors internalize them and thus become subjects of study." The interactions between these actors (as active subjects) thus constitute the space and at the same time enable the actors to reach they give meaning to spaces as social places. Since relational space is conceived as a form of different types of economic proximity, it indicates the possibility of building efficient and practical structures, either proximity or distance, that govern social places constituted by economic forces.

Finally, the fourth concept is thematic spaces, in which space is presented as a cultural landscape and whose constitution, according to Suwala (2021: 13), was mainly contributed by Japanese scientists. Namely, the philosopher Nishida (1999) developed a different conception of space, which was then applied in management studies (Nonaka, 1991; Nonaka & Konno, 1998), and then came to life in economic geography. This understanding of space concerns the fundamental characteristics of the behavior of Japanese society and its predominant organization in small groups, which make up "protected spaces." In these spaces, individuals are indirectly connected through space through the individual-space (individual) relationship, which is called "thematic relationships" or "topocentric relationships" and which differ from relational (individual-individual) or polycentric relationships. Although like relational space, the spatial metaphor changes from a grid to a "field," where the field is "the result of the intersection of topocentric networks and can be visualized as the area above the umbrella."

Thinking on the ground requires a reversal of the entire everyday vision of the social world, an idea interested only in those things that are visible [...], just as Newton's theory of gravity could develop only after breaking with Cartesian realism, physical activities other than direct contact, in the same way, the concept of the field presupposes a break with the realistic notion, which reduces the milieu effect to the effect of direct action that takes place in interaction (Suwala, 2021: 14, based on Bourdieu, 1982).

Suwala (2021: 14) emphasizes that this conception of space proves an integration of different insights from psychology and cultural studies on the regional economy and compares it with the issue of economic agency, which was current in the 1980s. This connects with the "cultural turn" in economic geography and the multitude of new metaphors or topological propositions that represent space: from Foucault's "limited regions" (1966), Latour's "network" (1996), Deleuze's "flows" (1971); Bohme's "dual localities," which indicate a "polycentric" economic geography that emphasized the qualitative diversity of economic spaces. This is part of economic research that has found its way within a sub discipline called behavioral (economic) geography.

## CONCLUSION

Relational space arose because Lefebvre researched social practices. A theoretical work enabled the broad application of the new concept of space (relational) in many social sciences and their further disciplinary readings. This also happened in the regional economy, which was looking for new ways to include the territorial dimension in theories that could combine different concepts of space. Therefore, other aspects of economic

space and geographical size have a foothold in the regional economy and a completely different meaning. They arise from interpreting economic activities that occur and develop in space. Since economic actors choose economic locations in the same way as they choose their production factors and technologies. With the existing inequality of production resources, an imbalance is created in their geographical distribution.

From this, the fact of the crucial importance of space and its multiple impacts on the functioning of the economic system, through sources of economic advantages or disadvantages, and the benefits arising from the cumulative nature of production processes in space. In this regard, the geographical distribution of exogenous factors (raw materials, natural advantages) has far less impact on development than factors from recent history, which concern: human capital, socially fixed capital, land fertility, and accessibility. It is evident that with the spatial turn and the understanding that space is a social construct, a new (postmodern) phase in the social sciences occurs, which can be explained by dialectical thinking. During this phase, space takes over the dominance of time, which is first recognized, as usual, in the domain of economic change.

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