We live in an era in which the relationship between time and space in human experience is transforming. Hence it is no surprise that there exists a current emphasis, both theoretical and methodological, on approaches which capture the spatial reality of historical processes of social differentiation. Besides, there exists good reasons for reexamining our suppositions about the spatial dimensions of the “places” and “territories” from which we act. Pierre Bourdieu in a seminal work on the spatial dimensions of social differentiation observed that social space is “a space of relations as real as geographical space”. In an essay contemporary with the work of Bourdieu, David Harvey argued over the necessity of analysis of social space but in relation to conflicts and contradictions in the geography of capitalism. According to Harvey such conflicts are evidenced by fixed and immobile infrastructures with relative permanence in the landscape of capitalism; infrastructures that support but also confront the geographical mobility of capital and labor power and the processes of accumulation and over accumulation.¹

The work of Bourdieu or Harvey indicate the importance of research aimed at comprehending the confluence of historical processes of differing scales and magnitudes in the local setting and in relation to the emergence of new social identities and practices. We present in this number five different efforts at responding to such theoretical-methodological concerns.

Our thematic section begins with an article that studies the changing power relations in the organization of the rural area of the Tuxtlas Highlands in the south of the State of Veracruz. These changes and their impacts run from the Cardenist agrarian reform period to the recent neoliberal efforts of a program for the certification of ejidal rights (PROCEDE). Eric Leonard uses the theoretical frame of the new institutional economy in order to examine the relations between local forms of agrarian regulation and agency over productive space. According to Leonard, the relations between the institutional-economic transfor-

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mations made evident in the local development of new “institutional arrangements” and the production of territories constitute central elements for the geography of social space.

Brigitte Boehm places emphasis on the importance of reestablishing a dialogue with scholars who have contributed the theoretical-methodological bases for the exploration of social space. With reference to the problem of “reading” the cultural landscape, Boehm presents the central protagonists in the development of the school of cultural ecology and through a review of their central concepts attempts a theoretical reconciliation between approaches that focus on social-cultural integration and those that stress political-economic articulation. In an annex to her essay, Boehm illustrates how this reconciliation permits her to begin a “reading” of the transformation of the northern shoreline of Lake Chapala from the Porfiran period to the present.

A central problem in the description and study of social space is the relation between the local and the global. In effect, globalization marks a change in the factors that condition the proximity of actors. For example, Thierry Linck argues that “the density and clarity of communications systems” are currently more determinant than the traditional factor of distance; the possibility of acting in “real” time overcomes the factor of “real” distance. This has important implications for the organization of producers and has resulted in processes characterized as the “de-territorialization” of national agroindustries. It is in this context that Linck reflects on the possibilities of action engaged in the introduction and maintenance of non-mercantile values in the global or transnational commodity market. The argument centers on the presentation of strategies of strengthening local patrimonies of production as competitive alternatives to global capital. In this regard, Linck shares with Harvey and others an interest in achieving geographies of capitalism capable of orienting actions of resistance.

The relation between social differentiation and regional integration, a central relation in all the theoretical orientations of the articles, is approached in descriptive terms in the study of Esteban Barragán. Barragán analyzes the archaeological, historiographic, geographic and ethnographic registers for the area of the south slope of the Sierra del Tigre on the boundary lines of the states of Jalisco and Michoacán. Although the documentary and monumental registers are few, they permit an ambitious sketch of over five centuries marked by changes in the relation between the integration of three bio-climatic zones and differing regimes of social organization.

The thematic section concludes with an article by Juan Manuel Mendoza. Mendoza describes two decades (1977-97) of changes in the ejido of San Francisco in Uruapan, a large ejido (almost 7,000 hectares) in an increasingly urban area of transnational agroindustry. Mendoza documents different “markets” that transform the landscape and the processes of production in the ejido. He offers us an overlapping and interconnected sequence of conflicts over the ordering of production in the ejido and thus makes evident the links between different groups of producers with differing access to the resources of the ejido and the changing “situations of interest” related to the Mexican political economy.

In the documentary section, Pedro Piccato contextualizes and introduces a letter by Luis Cabrera published in the newspaper, La Vanguardia in 1920. The letter is an effort to present Cabrera’s opinion of the Mexican political situation just two months after the assassination of Carranza and the end of Cabrera’s political career. The letter situates in a fascinating way the “place” from where Cabrera is writing.

Two historical studies constitute the general section in this number. Beatriz Rojas analyses the concepts of sovereignty and representation as ideological referents and, of course, reciprocal orientations in the political practices of New Spain during the turbulent years of transition to independence. Arguing that the different perspectives of sovereignty and representation correspond to political imageries (all susceptible to change), she takes the case of Zacatecas between 1808 and 1835. With emphasis on the relation between the local governments (ayuntamientos) and the projects of centralized government, she analyses the complex relations in the organization and reorganization of power in relation to differing political imageries.

Clara Elena Suárez Argüello examines the toll way systems between Mexico City and Veracruz. Her study, from the end of the colonial period in New Spain to the beginnings of Independent Mexico, documents the political and economic problems of developing and maintaining strategic roadways. A long history of competing projects and political and economic obstacles to the development of a secure infrastructure for transport reveals important power groups operating in Mexico in this period.

Relaciones has the honor of announcing that the article of Brigitte Boehm de Laheimeras and Margarita Sandoval Manzo, “La sed saciada de la ciudad de México y la nueva cuenca Lerma-Chapala-Santiago. Un ensayo metodológico de lectura cartográfica” (published in number 80, “La cuenca del río Lerma-Santiago”, Autumn 1999, volume xx), has received the distinction of “honorable mention” in the area of “Historiography” by the Comité Mexicano de Ciencias Históricas.
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