

Bert Hoffmann (ed.)

# Social Policies and Institutional Reform in Post-COVID Cuba



Verlag Barbara Budrich

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Verlag Barbara Budrich  
Opladen • Berlin • Toronto 2021

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ISBN	978-3-8474-2546-5
eISBN	978-3-8474-1692-0
DOI	10.3224/84742546

Verlag Barbara Budrich GmbH  
Stauffenbergstr. 7. D-51379 Leverkusen Opladen, Germany  
86 Delma Drive. Toronto, ON M8W 4P6 Canada  
[www.budrich.eu](http://www.budrich.eu)

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from  
Die Deutsche Bibliothek (The German Library) (<http://dnb.d-nb.de>)

Jacket illustration by Bettina Lehfeldt, Kleinmachnow – [www.lehfeldtgraphic.de](http://www.lehfeldtgraphic.de)  
Picture credits: shutterstock.com  
Typesetting by Ulrike Weingärtner, Gründau – [info@textakzente.de](mailto:info@textakzente.de)  
Printed in Europe on acid-free paper by paper & tinta, Warsaw

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Bert Hoffmann

## Social Policies and Institutional Reform in Post-COVID Cuba: A Necessary Agenda

The COVID-19 pandemic has put social policy high on the political agenda around the world. Cuba is no exception. The collapse of international tourism has hit Cuba's leading industry, emigrant remittances have decreased and, as elsewhere, lockdown measures have weighed on domestic economic activity. Already in crisis, the economy contracted sharply in a very short period and dragged the people's living standards down with it. Meanwhile, Raúl Castro's retirement from the Communist Party leadership in 2021 means Cuban socialism enters the post-Castro era, while also facing the uncharted waters of economic reform in a situation of profound social distress.

In the past, the leaders of the Cuban Revolution preferred to speak about "social accomplishments" (*conquistas sociales*) rather than social policies. Health and education were the banners that brought international recognition to Cuba's development model. Much of the core social policies in other countries, such as assisting the poor and unemployment benefits, were seen as typical of capitalism. There was no need for them in socialism: the state economy would provide full employment and everybody was expected to be able to lead a modest but dignified life on their salaries or, if retired, their pensions.

However, the model was in crisis long before the pandemic hit. The all-dominant state sector of the economy that was the great mechanism of social integration and equality went into reverse in the crisis of the early 1990s following the demise of the Soviet Union. As the Cuban peso (CUP) lost value, so did peso-based salaries. And even when the Cuban economy stabilised and returned to growth, currency and salaries never fully recovered. On the eve of the COVID-19 pandemic, the peso was still at 1:25 to the US dollar – or to be more exact to the dollar-pegged so-called "convertible peso" (CUC) that the Cuban state introduced as a way to ban the US currency from physical circulation. The dual monetary system not only distorted all economic relations but access to hard currency from remittances sent by emigrated family members, work in tourism or other means became a key dividing line in Cuban society.

For more than a decade the overhaul of the economic and social system has been on the agenda (Alonso, 2020). When in 2006 Raúl Castro took over the

leadership of the state from his ailing brother, succession was all in the name of continuity. Nevertheless Raúl embarked the country on a process of gradual economic reform. Politically, while any thought of regime change towards liberal democracy was firmly off the cards, Cuba went through a transition from a model of charismatic socialism to one of bureaucratic socialism (Hoffmann, 2016). This culminated in generational change in the state leadership, as Miguel Díaz-Canel, a Communist Party cadre born after the 1959 revolution, succeeded Raúl Castro as president of Cuba in 2018. The change also included a revision of the country's institutional governance structures via the constitutional reform of 2019, which nevertheless left the Communist Party's leading role and other central tenets of Cuba's single-party system untouched.

This change "from above" has been a slow-moving, limited and contradictory process. It struggles with the constraints and contradictions of the legacy of the model developed over more than half a century. It seeks to accommodate the island within the imperatives of a global economy into which Cuba has been integrating primarily as a tourist destination, via migration and remittances, and by exporting medical services through government-negotiated contracts. It reacts to change "from outside": the declining support of its once-generous ally Venezuela; the rapprochement with the United States under Obama and the return of high-pitched polarisation under Trump; and the electoral defeats of left-wing governments in Latin America. And it is in an uneasy, conflictive interaction with change "from below", as Cuban society is undergoing a process of heterogenisation and re-stratification (Hansing and Hoffmann, 2016). Increased access to cell phones and the internet is eroding the state's media monopoly and driving a surge in horizontal communication, while the political narratives and legitimisation strategies of the past no longer produce the same effects as in earlier days.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought things to a head. Epidemiologically, Cuba was remarkably successful for a long time in controlling the spread of the virus, but infection rates only began to go up in November 2020. At the same time, Cuba's biotech sector developed two anti-Covid vaccines that showed high rates of efficacy and which allow the immunisation of the population without depending on imported vaccines. In spite of the explosion of infection rates since June 2021, as the delta strain made its entry into the island, the ongoing mass vaccination campaign makes it possible to reach a "post-COVID Cuba" earlier than in other parts of Latin America. In addition to allowing the island to then market itself as a safe tourist destination, the success of the Cuban vaccine development also has the potential to turn them into a new export product and hard-currency earner.

The economic fall-out from the pandemic, however, has been devastating: the economy has shrunk by 11% in 2020, according to official data, import capac-

ity has fallen by half, and earning foreign exchange has become imperative. This is the situation in which the government on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 enacted a comprehensive monetary and exchange rate unification. Returning to a single national currency and a unified exchange rate is undoubtedly crucial to restoring monetary rationality to the Cuban economy. Devaluing the grossly overvalued 1:1 parity with which state companies were operating is key to stimulating exports and import substitution. But at the same time the measure threatens to unleash the inflationary pressures that have built up over years, to drive state companies into the red and to expose the hidden unemployment in the state sector. Fearing the social and economic consequences, the measure had been postponed time and again until a hoped-for better moment. Now, the Cuban government has been forced to take this step in the most adverse of circumstances.

In post-COVID Cuba, it seems, the time for slow-moving gradualism has run out. The list of pressing problems is long and contradictory. The dire economic situation requires effective social protection measures, while state finances are at a new low. The switch to targeted social assistance schemes rather than the across-the-board subsidies of the ration card system seems as inevitable economically as it is difficult politically. Price caps to control inflation are at odds with market incentives for producers. As the eruption of street protests in places across the island on 11 July 2021 showed, people will not remain patient forever. Citizens not only demand more food on the table, but also new ways of doing politics.

The challenges of economic reform and social policy, of effective governance and credible citizen participation all are on Cuba's public agenda simultaneously. They have been there for many years now, but the implementation of meaningful responses has been slow, piece-meal, or missing altogether. Too much time has been lost and we are seeing the consequences.

This volume brings together analyses of a broad range of the issues at stake written by expert scholars from different disciplines taking diverse approaches, both experienced researchers and young upcoming scholars, both from the island and from outside. It is organised into three parts. The first centres on social policies.

The distinctiveness of Cuba's social policies is the starting point for Laurence Whitehead, Senior Research Fellow at Nuffield College, University of Oxford, and Research Associate at the GIGA, Hamburg. These policies form an integral package that has developed over many decades. Addressing the governance challenges in Cuba's contemporary social policy system, he argues that the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 provide a useful external yardstick that is a good fit with Havana's plans. However, substantial further governance innovations would be required to bring the two together. He concludes

that the Díaz-Canel administration needs an attractive and unifying project, and that a reinvigorated social policy agenda could provide the best opportunity for this.

Betsy Anaya Cruz and Anicia García Álvarez from the University of Havana underscore that social services have always been a priority of the revolution's socio-economic project. However, the country's economic situation has been creating tensions that call into question the sustainability of these services. On this basis they take stock of the achievements and challenges Cuba's public administration is facing in the definition and construction of a new model of economic and social development.

Blandine Destremau from the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) tackles a crucial issue in today's Cuba: the provision of care for the elderly. Thanks in no small part to its extraordinary healthcare system, Cuba has one of the world's oldest populations. Based on an ethnographic survey her chapter shows that the moral ideal of taking care of the elderly in the family home is at odds with ongoing social transformation processes. Developing a sustainable geriatric care regime thus constitutes a major challenge on Cuba's social policy reform agenda.

Another key field of social welfare is housing. Mireia Carrasco Ferri and María Jiménez Campos, architects from the Polytechnic University of Madrid and the University of Sevilla, respectively, focus on the case of habitat management in Old Havana. They propose housing cooperatives as an urban resilience mechanism for promoting comprehensive rehabilitation and sustainable tourism while protecting architectural heritage and improving the living conditions of the residents.

In the post-COVID context, access to food has probably become Cuba's most pressing social welfare issue of all. Anicia García Álvarez and Betsy Anaya Cruz analyse the concepts of food and nutritional security and present an overview of the current situation and its challenges in Cuba. They also make proposals on what can be done to alleviate the tensions. These include reassessing the concept of universal subsidies on products distributed through rationing.

The second part of the book continues the study of Cuba's current socio-economic challenges with a focus on the institutional transformation as part of the economic reform process. The economists José Antonio Alonso from the Complutense University of Madrid and Pavel Vidal from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Cali, Colombia, explore the determinant factors at play in the process of institutional change in Cuba. They see a conflict between the rigidity of formal institutions and the fluidity of informal institutions and, based on a political economy analysis, they identify which sectors tend to favour and which resist reform initiatives.

Marcel Kunzmann, a Cuba specialist with a Political Science degree from Freie Universität Berlin, discusses the role of planning and the market in the Cuban economy, a topic of constant debate and policy change since the 1959 revolution. Using the analytical concepts pioneered by János Kornai, this chapter sets the current reform process in the larger context of the economic history of Cuban socialism. He then analyses both the emergent private sector and state-owned enterprises to ask whether Cuba is moving towards a coherent model of market socialism.

Louis Thiemann, PhD researcher in Development Studies, and Claudia Mare, PhD in Cultural Studies, examine this process from a bottom-up perspective. Applying the concepts of multiple economies, infra-politics and subalternity to the Cuban case, they highlight the links and tensions between the formal, state-led economy and the popular economy of households in which informal markets, social relations and family ties play important roles. By using James Scott's concept of 'everyday resistance', they conceptualise this as an ongoing transition from below. The authors conclude that any new social contract in Cuba should reconcile the formal economic process led by state firms and agencies with the motives, mechanisms and legitimacy of the popular economy.

The chapter by Ruxandra Ana from the University of Warsaw also puts forward a grassroots perspective on the Cuban economy, as she undertakes an ethnographic case study of emerging work practices and associated attitudes in the private Havana dance schools that capitalise on the island's cultural heritage through their work with foreign tourists. A key focus in her study are the tensions between different notions of "professionalism". For the private entrepreneurs, international visibility, competitiveness and personal branding are important markers of what it means to be professional, but at the same time dancers turn to formal training in state-run educational institutions to underscore their professionalism, showing that the line between the state and private is not as clear-cut as is often assumed.

Part two concludes with a study by Rosa María Voghon Hernández, an independent researcher with a doctorate in Sociology from the University of Havana. She draws on the Latin American tradition of critical development thinking to analyse the increasing social inequalities associated with the economic reform process in Cuba. The impact of the COVID19 pandemic makes it all the more imperative to follow an economic model which safeguards effective social protection. At a time of great economic uncertainty and generational change in the political institutions, preserving Cuba's social fabric should be the basis on which the island's future socio-political prospects are built.

The book's third part then turns to institutional reform at the highest national level: specifically, the 2019 reform of the Cuban constitution and its im-

plications. José Chofre-Sirvent, Professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Alicante, explores the function of the new constitution in the context of the ongoing general judicial reform process and the restructuring of the central state institutions. He highlights the separation of roles within the new institutional design, with a president of the republic who is independent of the Council of State and the introduction of the figure of prime minister.

Carmen Antón Guardiola, who teaches Public International Law and International Relations at the University of Alicante, follows up on this analysis with a specific focus on the reception of international treaties in Cuba. The new constitution of 2019, she argues, missed the opportunity to bring internal coherence to the Cuban legal system in this area, as it contains no single procedure for receiving international treaties in the Cuban legal order. It is now left to ordinary legislation to clarify this procedure.

Yanina Welp from the Albert Hirschman Centre on Democracy in Geneva focuses on the deliberative process that went along with the drafting of the reformed Constitution of 2019. Comparing this process with ten participatory experiences in other Latin American countries, she proposes a set of basic criteria to be met in order for these exercises to be deemed fair and democratic. The Cuban case, she concludes, shows that while the process of deliberation involved massive numbers of people, it fell some way short of qualifying as plural and autonomous citizen participation.

The third part, and with it this volume, concludes with a chapter by Francisco Sánchez, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Salamanca, which analyses the dominant coalition that sustains Cuba's current political order. He argues that three factors are crucial: the armed forces' control over the process of leadership change before, during and after the succession from Fidel to Raúl Castro, and then to Miguel Díaz-Canel; the continued centrality of the Communist Party as the crucial locus of power and coordination; and the emergence of a political-technocratic elite which remains loyal to the socialist order. The result is that the demise of Fidel Castro has not led to the breakdown of the regime, but to a transition from a system based on strong charismatic leadership to one of bureaucratic socialism.

\* \* \*

Originally, this book was meant to be the outcome of a conference planned to be held at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA) in April 2020. But then the virus came along and the conference had to be cancelled. We kept the project going nevertheless, and I want to express my sincere thanks to all the authors, who never wavered in their commitment to the project, to writing

their contributions and peer reviewing their colleagues' chapters, to keeping the discussion going even if only via online means, and to meeting deadlines and revising manuscripts despite challenging personal situations. The consequences of the global COVID19 pandemic are not only part of what the book is about, but also part of the story of how it came about.

This volume originates from a major research endeavour, the Jean Monnet Network "Europe Cuba Forum", which brings together scholars from 11 academic centres, both in Europe and in Cuba. I want to extend my sincere thanks to Anna Ayuso, Marina Utgés and their team at CIDOB, the Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, who so ably coordinate this effort, and who also gave invaluable support to the publication of this book. Thanks are also due the European Union's Erasmus+ Programme for funding the project. We hope that it may inform the cooperation between the European Union and Cuba as set out in the Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement of December 2016.

It is a special privilege to see this volume come out simultaneously in both English and Spanish editions. Heartfelt thanks go to Tom Hardy, Anna Calvete and Montserrat Sardà for their outstanding work in translating and copy editing the contributions, and to Simone Gotthardt, Natalia Eduardo and Marcel Kunzmann for their dedicated and skilful assistance with the editorial process. Both versions are fully available as open access ebooks on the publisher's website ([www.budrich.de](http://www.budrich.de)). Special thanks go to Barbara Budrich for her enthusiasm in taking this unusual project on board, and to Franziska Deller for her friendly and efficient cooperation in the publishing process.

Berlin, July 2021

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# **Part I: Social Policies**



Laurence Whitehead

# Governance Challenges in Contemporary Cuba: Social Policies and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

## 1 Introduction

Contemporary Cuba faces severe difficulties on multiple fronts – the Covid pandemic; the persistence of unilateral US sanctions; the foundering of *chavismo* in Venezuela; the slow exit of the old *fidelistas*; and the pinched horizons of the island's youth generation. 2020 brought a crisis as grave as the disintegration of the Soviet bloc in 1990. That previous watershed was followed by a traumatic "Special Period" during which most outsiders and not a few islanders suspected that the 1959 Revolution might topple. Yet, in the post-Cold War era, Cuban communism has now remained in control for as long as its tenure under Soviet protection.

A quarter century ago I reviewed ten books about the condition of Cuba after the Special Period for the *London Review of Books*, under the title "Cuba Down at Heel" (Whitehead, 1995). The best seller of the collection, by Andrés Oppenheimer (still lead analyst for the *Miami Herald*), was entitled *Castro's Final Hour: The Secret Story Behind the Coming Downfall of Communist Cuba*. My main comment on this was "One could equally argue that the readers of the *Miami Herald* should be preparing for Castro's final decade, rather than his final hour". In the event Fidel Castro stood down as president in 2008, and died in 2016. At the IX Plenum of April 2019 the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) set out its National Economic and Social Plan through 2030. My 1995 article ended as follows: "Virtually all the criticisms now to be heard of the Castro regime were already apparent by the time of my first visit in September 1968. To understand what has happened to the people of the island in the intervening years – and therefore what kind of a society Cuba can achieve in the next thirty – we need studies of health, of housing, of justice, more than we need further studies of the Gran Señor, the *predicador* and his courtiers".

This chapter is about social policies in Cuba, and therefore focuses on such specific topics as health, education, housing, employment and inequality. Since

the focus is also contemporary it is essential to include some consideration of the present COVID-19 pandemic, which should certainly be analysed as a health crisis, but which clearly extends from there into all other areas of social policy, via its economic and employment impact. It is too early to assess the consequences of the drastic currency unification of January 2021, but unlike the pandemic that change is irreversible and so will have more lasting impact.

Even before the pandemic, these topics could not be fully addressed in isolation from each other, or from the economic and governance settings in which they must operate. For example, domestic health policies cannot be properly understood without also attending to the international commitments Cuba has made concerning the deployment of its health personnel overseas, nor the dual currency system which affects the pricing and availability of pharmaceutical products that may be distributed both through the local and the convertible currency markets. Similar considerations affect education and employment policies. This was so even before the recent worsening of the foreign exchange constraint as a result of the crisis in Venezuela, the termination of medical service contracts in much of South America, the tightening of the US embargo and, as a final blow, the COVID-based collapse of tourism.

So, it makes sense to situate these social policy issues in the context of some very distinctive contemporary Cuban governance challenges. Yet these social policy problems should also be examined from within an international framework. Cuban exceptionalism is real (Hoffmann & Whitehead, 2007), but can be misused for propagandistic purposes. It needs to be assessed in a non-partisan comparative manner. This requires some external yardsticks that are not part of the usual pro- and anti-regime polemics, but that provide a constructive perspective on Cuba's relative strengths and weaknesses and the policy objectives it might prioritise over the coming decade – especially after the regime's previous ambition to "build a communist society" was dropped from the 2019 constitutional revision. Fortunately, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 have been endorsed both by the government in Havana and by its external critics. Although highly aspirational and somewhat imprecise, these goals provide a set of objectives (and even "deliverables") that can be calibrated and tested for realism both on the island and throughout the western hemisphere and indeed the whole world.

All that this summary chapter can offer is a very synoptic outline of these issues as they appear to me looking at the island from this external and comparative perspective. The aim is not to provide either a comprehensive or an in-depth account of these matters, but rather to highlight some distinctive features of the Cuban case that need to be taken into account both when examining specific social policy dilemmas and when attempting to devise workable reforms.

The first part of the paper reviews the main social policy areas, while the second half turns to the questions of “governance” that arise. Here it is important to start with a disclaimer. My main expertise is in “comparative democratisation”, but my decision here is not to enter into such overworked and underspecified questions.<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this paper “governance challenges” will refer only to those policy alternatives and methods of rule currently in operation on the island – i.e. as determined by the prevailing constitution and legal–administrative structures. But, as the 2019 reform of the 1976 “socialist” constitution made clear, within the existing system a generational transfer of power is underway, and society is articulating a range of new social demands and expectations. These constitute unquestionable “governance challenges” that can be examined from a comparative perspective, even on the (admittedly disputed) working assumption that something close to the current power structure (and existing “rules of the game”) continues to regulate policy formation over the coming years.

## 2 Six major social policy areas

### 2.1 *Healthcare*

Before 1959 Cuba already displayed some relative strength as a centre for medical expertise. After the Revolution the new regime dedicated exceptional priority to the development of a comprehensive, universal and high-quality health capacity that would be free at the point of use (Const. 2019, art. 72). In due course it also made international medical training and assistance a key part of its foreign policy, paying particular attention to the health needs of the poor in various underprovided parts of the world. This was a deliberate and sustained policy choice, no doubt partly motivated by the wish to contrast the benefits of a socialist approach to healthcare with the limitations of the privatised and market-based system prevalent in the USA.

Even before the current pandemic, Cuba’s distinctive approach was widely recognised as a constructive alternative to Western orthodoxies, although it in-

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1 In two previous publications I analysed Cuba’s post-Cold War political prospects as viewed from my “transitions to democracy” perspective. Both in 2007 and again in 2016 I concluded that Cuban “exceptionalism” made it foolhardy to predict a conventional democratisation any time soon. But eventually there is likely to be some easing of the ideological polarisation that has for so long blocked the emergence of any “middle” options. However, my verdict was that the timing and context of any such shift remained extremely indeterminate, making its democratic content open to a spectrum of possibilities. That remains my view even in early 2021. (In Hoffmann & Whitehead [2007] I used Benjamin Constant as the template, and in Whitehead [2016] I reflected on the uncertain implications of the tentative overture from President Obama.)

evitably also attracted much criticism and hostility from the advocates of marketised healthcare. (The core of the criticism was that politicised medical provision denied free choice both to the patient and to the caregiver). Current Cuban provision can be compared with Sustainable Development Goal 3c (UNGA, 2015) to “substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States”. The time horizon for the SDGs is 2030.

According to the December 2018 update of the WHO’s Global Health Workforce Statistics, the total number of Cuban medical doctors was 95,487 – out of a total population of 11.3 million. This equates to 84.2 doctors per 10,000 inhabitants and is considerably higher than anywhere else in the world.<sup>2</sup> Second to Cuba is Georgia with 71.2, then Uruguay with 50.8. Italy has 39.8 doctors per 10,000 people, Spain 38.7, the UK 28.1, and the USA 26.1.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in Latin America, after Uruguay comes Argentina with 39.9, while Mexico has 22.8. By contrast in Guatemala there are only 3.5, in Honduras 3.1, and in Haiti just 2.3 doctors per 10,000 people. Cuba also rates very highly on nurses, and hospital beds per capita.

Cuban exceptionalism in the healthcare field extends beyond domestic provision. It is estimated that over the past half-century Cuban universities have turned out over 100,000 medically qualified personnel, not only nationals but also students from about 80 other nations, who received their education for free. The state-run company *Servicios Médicos Cubanos S.A.* supplies medical personnel on contract to a large number of other countries whose own health provision fails to reach the poorest and most vulnerable. Until 2019 it sent personnel to Bolivia and Brazil, and currently supplies Argentina, South Africa and several Caribbean states including Haiti and most prominently Venezuela. Since the pandemic began scores of doctors and nurses have been supplied to northern Italy to help with the COVID-19 crises there, as well as to Andorra and Qatar. There were 28,760 Cuban health professionals serving abroad in total (including 14 Henry Reeve International Brigades specialised in emergency help in cases of natural catastrophes or outbreaks of epidemic diseases, composed in total of

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2 When discounting the medical personnel on overseas missions the rate is still around an admirably high 68 doctors on the island per 10,000 inhabitants. The WHO acknowledges issues of data comparability, and relies on the International Standard Classification of Occupations.

3 According to the Migration Policy Institute (Gelatt, 2020), 29% of all US physicians are foreign-born, so the ratio of US doctors per 10,000 is below 20 (as is the ratio of UK doctors). Whereas poor Cuba contributes doctors to the Global South, these rich Anglo-Saxon democracies raid the human capital paid for by less-developed nation taxpayers.

about 1,400 medical personnel) (*Cuba News*, April 13<sup>th</sup> 2020). Overseas health services are the island's largest single source of foreign exchange.

It is important to add here that those who receive free state medical education are expected to pursue their subsequent careers as public servants, obeying instructions as to where they work, and accepting the very low levels of remuneration, even for severe hardship postings. Well-paid medics in other countries, who are not themselves willing to face this degree of hardship to serve their people, have been quick to condemn the Cuban state for (allegedly) "profiteering" by retaining a very high proportion of the ensuing foreign currency payments (75% is the ratio reported from Brazil; Senra, 2018). Some also assert that the quality of Cuban health provision falls short of the standards that the more privileged sectors of their populations would expect. But such criticism often seems self-interested and displays little interest in addressing the health inequities that Cuban assistance prioritizes (it has been claimed that some 10% of Brazilian municipalities had no source of medical expertise apart from the recently expelled Cubans).<sup>4</sup>

There is a further international strand to healthcare policy that also requires mention. In some areas (such as meningitis, skin pigmentation, melanoma and anti-amputation treatment for severe diabetics) and on some research fronts (e.g. anti-viral Recombinant Human Interferon Alpha 2-B, used in a joint venture with China as a possible therapy against COVID-19) Cuba is a world research leader and not merely a provider of basic care, among other things it possesses anti-Ebola and anti-meningitis expertise that may be adaptable for the treatment of COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> Health tourism has become an important strand in foreign exchange earnings, with treatments provided cheaply and safely to paying foreign visitors. Moreover, top international political figures (from Saddam Hussein to Lula da Silva, Hugo Chávez and Evo Morales) have judged Cuban healthcare both politically secure and professionally reliable.

But, finally, the key tests for this very distinctive approach to a crucial area of public policy are how well it serves the basic health needs of an ageing and relatively impoverished population on the island, and how sustainable this great fiscal effort can be, given all the competing demands on state resources and the multiple scarcities and bottlenecks that afflict the rationing system under the pressure of a longstanding unilateral US embargo. Those were massive challeng-

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4 On February 18<sup>th</sup> 2020 *El País* reported that there were still 757 medical posts in the most vulnerable municipalities that were vacant due to "abandonment" by the Brazilian personnel hired to replace the Cubans expelled by the Bolsonaro administration in November 2018.

5 The California-based medical journal *MEDICC Review* has a long record of expert coverage of Cuban healthcare. The April 2020 issue (vol 22., no. 2) provides remarkably full and precise information about COVID-19 and the island's initial responses.

es even before the US reinforced its sanctions against the regime and the partnership with Venezuela became destabilised. Many basic medicines (such as aspirin) are in extremely scarce supply in most Cuban clinics.

As the pandemic progresses across the island, it remains to be seen how well Cuba will emerge compared to its Caribbean and Latin American neighbours (Blofield et al., 2020). The very early signs were that strong domestic containment (with 67 isolation centres across the island that provide 10,000 beds) and close contact tracing (8.7 million out of 11.2m Cubans were screened by health workers at the end of March 2020) could “flatten the curve” relatively well, but the knock-on effect on related social policies could prove very damaging (Morris & Kelman, 2020). On the positive side, close medical supervision of the entire population may serve to contain the pandemic. On the negative side, critics of the regime have been quick to cast doubt on the credibility of its claims about health performance, given its centralised control over information and the political stakes involved.<sup>6</sup>

Let us therefore turn to another key determinant of public health, namely,

## 2.2 Food Security

The UN’s SDG 2 is to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture” (UNGA, 2015). Here too Cuban public policy has long been strongly at variance with that of virtually all other nations in the western hemisphere. At least by comparison with its main Caribbean neighbours the island’s policy exceptionalism has delivered some striking positive results – although as we shall see at a high cost, and with a big question mark over its “sustainability”.

Until Soviet aid came to an end in 1990 the “*canasta básica*” (basic basket) of rationed food for every household provided a more or less guaranteed supply of basic foodstuffs sufficient to eradicate malnutrition and hunger – although not necessarily to provide a satisfactorily varied and nutritionally optimal food supply to the people. However, collectivised agriculture and the obligatory delivery of smallholder output to the state at low prices failed to deliver a domestic food surplus, as the eminent French agronomist René Dumont had foreseen half a century ago (Dumont, 1970). Instead the provision of the *canasta* came to depend upon imported supplies, and when foreign exchange became unavailable

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6 Partly to counter this challenge the Ministry of Public Health adheres to WHO definitions and provides exceptionally detailed daily hospital reports, giving biometric and treatment details for each acute and critical case handled, as well as for every death.

the “sustainability” of the Cuban food security system became unreliable. Some efforts at reform and import substitution were forced on the regime during the Special Period of extreme hardship in the early to mid-1990s, but as soon as dollars became more abundant (thanks to Western tourist revenues and help from Venezuela) reliance on domestic production was allowed to slip again. (Cuba ranked 186<sup>th</sup> in a recent listing of countries by agricultural growth (Nation Master a). This is a remarkable policy choice, not only given the favourable climate and soil conditions of the island, but also given the demonstration in Vietnam, China and elsewhere that a more market liberal approach could quickly generate a food surplus, without putting the ruling party’s control of the state in jeopardy.

In 2017 Cuba imported \$246m-worth of poultry meat; \$177m of wheat; \$165m of milk concentrate; \$155m of corn; \$100m of soybean meal; \$82m of animal feed; \$57m of rice; \$28m of coffee; \$26m of beer; \$22m of cheese; \$9m of pig meat; \$8m of butter; \$8m of potatoes, and so on. The island’s overall food imports for that year exceeded its total value of goods exports (\$1.41 billion), and accounted for over 30% of all its imports (OEC, 2020). Many of the items on this import list could have been produced somewhere on the island (half of its arable land is said to be uncultivated). A substantial proportion of food imports were to supply the tourist market, which expected higher food quality than Cuban agriculture, with its guaranteed and low-priced market outlets, were accustomed to deliver. In April 2020 it was reported that local producers had just discovered to their surprise that they could supply Cuban-sourced hamburger meat and hash browns that would be competitive with the imported counterpart.

A further key reason why imported foodstuffs have displaced local sourcing is the poor state of the domestic transport system.

### *2.3 Transportation*

SDG target 11.2 aims at providing “access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all ... notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to those in vulnerable situations” (UNGA, 2015).

Cuba is, of course, famous for its carefully preserved stock of pre-1959 US gas guzzlers, which were imported at a time of low oil prices and close integration with the Florida economy. A surprising number of these are still on the road (often powered by much more modern and economical Japanese engines) – 60,000 are reportedly still in existence, but their annual average mileage is very low. Beyond that niche market there were only 173,000 automobiles in operation in 2004 (very low for a population of 11 million), and although current numbers may be twice that level the roads remain remarkably car free by the standards of all other western hemisphere nations (in a recent listing Cuba ranked 134<sup>th</sup> in motor ve-

hicles per thousand) (Nation Master b). A high proportion of the automobiles in circulation are held by the public sector or are for tourist hire.<sup>7</sup> Bicycles offer an alternative private transport option, although they are accident-prone. Electric bicycles have recently made some inroads.

There is clearly an unusual opportunity here to develop a strong public transport alternative that corresponds to SDG 11.2 specifications. Before US sanctions were tightened and the pandemic hit some progress had been made in this direction. For example, modern diesel buses from China had upgraded the worn-out urban network, and Beijing had also helped improve the long-range (essentially Havana–Santiago) rail freight connection. However, feeder roads and secondary lines remain severely underdeveloped, and in current conditions only the most essential public transport links are likely to be fully maintained. In particular, undercapitalised rural and agricultural locations face further limitations to provision, which is likely to impede agile food import substitution. Poor public transport coverage also handicaps the health system, including its responsiveness to the COVID-19 epidemic. (On the positive side, it may also slow the rate of growth of the disease and facilitate collective acceptance of “lockdown” instructions).

Another issue for management of the epidemic concerns

## 2.4 Housing

SDG 11 is “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. SDG 11.1 is to provide “safe and affordable housing and basic services”. The UN-Habitat programme and its New Urban Agenda note that although there is a rising stock of spare and unoccupied properties in the world, for most of the population housing is not affordable, and for many it is neither safe nor supplied with basic services.

In housing – as in so many other areas of social policy – Cuba is an outlier (Const. 2019, art. 71). The Revolution suppressed renting and eliminated mortgages and the market in real estate. Thanks to the 1959 Urban Reform Law over 85% of Cubans own their homes (or at least reside in housing owned by someone in their family) but this is combined with a long struggle with “issues of insufficient housing supply both in terms of the shortage of available units and the lack of resources to maintain and improve the existing stock” (Grein, 2015: 1). The

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7 If, as reported by *Guardian* environmental editor Damian Carrington (2020), there is a strong correlation between the lethality of COVID-19 and the concentration of NO<sub>2</sub> particles in the urban atmosphere, then Cuba’s exceptionally low vehicle density will assist the authorities in their campaigns against the virus.

Revolution views housing as a social service and not a means of production or investment. But unlike health or education, housing involves private property. In the absence of a market it was officially estimated that in 2012 seven out of ten Havana houses were in need of major repairs. There were 3.9 million residential units for a population of 11.3 million, leaving an estimated shortfall of 500,000. Each year the government built about 16,000, and there was also said to be private construction of about 10,000, but – for example – in 2012 Hurricane Sandy destroyed 22,000 dwellings. Belatedly – half a century after the revolutionary Urban Reform Law – in 2011 Decree 288 opened up a private real estate market, although mortgages remained forbidden, only nationals are allowed to buy, and no-one can own more than two homes.

1,100 government building supply centres had been opened by 2015, and limited government grants for home improvements have been made available. Although renting is once again allowed, evictions are not permitted and tenants have no redress if landlords fail to maintain the premises.

So Cuba approaches SDG 11.1 from a very different angle from all the other nations of the western hemisphere, where renting and private ownership (including property speculation and self-construction) prevail. It is reasonable to argue that existing Latin American property markets do not favour the fulfilment of the UN's goals for 2030. But it is equally clear that in Cuba half a century of blanket suppression of market forces has also not proved the best way to secure “safe, resilient, and sustainable” housing for all. Decree 288 does at least constitute a recognition of the resulting shortfalls, but on its own it does not overcome them. To achieve that, some kind of more flexible and responsive system of supply would be needed, and existing personal ownership rights would need to be expanded (notably in the area of housing finance).

## *2.5 Education*

Cuba was outstandingly advanced in achieving SDG 4 sixty plus years ahead of schedule. This UN goal proposes that all girls and boys complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030. It also aims to provide equal access to affordable vocational training, and to eliminate gender and wealth disparities with the aim of achieving universal access to higher quality education.

In today's Cuba, education is free, universal and compulsory for all those aged between 6 and 17 (Const. 2019, art. 73). The island has been ranked first in the world on government spending on education as a proportion of GDP (Nation Master c). There is near universal literacy and few drop-outs (and no private schools to cream off an elite). The maximum class size is 25 per teacher (with a target of 15 in secondary schools). Free school meals are provided for all, with

the result that – in contrast to everywhere else in Latin America (apart perhaps from Uruguay) – child malnutrition is rare. Obesity is also minimised, as is violence in schools.<sup>8</sup> In rural areas where electricity is unreliable the schools are equipped with solar panels.

Post-secondary and higher education is also free and the gender balance is good (evidence on the racial balance is harder to come by, but see Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020), and in at least some major fields (notably Medicine, but also Applied Sciences) of a competitive international standard – although some other disciplines are too politically sensitive for the authorities to tolerate full expression. Economics has risen in prestige and quality since the fall of the USSR, and economists are allowed more scope than other social scientists to “tell it like it is”. Cuba’s outstanding cultural output (musical, pictorial, theatrical, cinematic and literary) indicates that the humanities continue to thrive, whether supported (or not) by the authorities (for unsupported cultural creativity see, for example, Dabène, 2020).

A more detailed and ethnographic investigation of Cuban education would no doubt uncover limitations to this positive account. Neither teachers nor students are allowed to be too free-thinking, and – as is the case in all countries – provision varies somewhat in quality between privileged and deprived neighbourhoods and social sectors. In a previous essay I made brief reference to the similarities between Cuban and “Spartan” social models (Hoffmann & Whitehead, 2007: 20), and it is probably still correct to evaluate the island’s educational achievements and limitations from that perspective. It is worth noting that Sparta would perform rather well by SDG 11.1 standards. The main issue would concern the word “quality”. How far does thorough and comprehensive training of all go towards satisfying the requirement for quality education (quite a long way in all those Latin American nations where it is conspicuous for its absence) – or is the encouragement of questioning and critical thinking (perhaps Athenian-style) also an indispensable feature of a quality education?

Wherever we stand on that debate, Cuba’s successes in mass education deserve recognition and potentially provide the foundation for further improvements. Most Latin American nations are not so favourably situated. Looking to the future, a critical issue will be that the current workforce (not to mention the next generation of Cuban citizens) will need a level of digital literacy that is hard to develop when IT resources are so limited, and the authorities are distrustful of horizontal and unauthorised channels of communication. Which brings us to a final area of social policy –

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8 The true quality of Cuban educational attainments has become a matter of polemic within the US since Senator Sanders praised this aspect of the Revolution. For a counterblast see the Hoover Institution’s Professor Paul E. Peterson “Cuban Schools: Too Good to be True” (Peterson, 2020).

## 2.6 Employment

SDG 8 includes “full and productive employment and decent work for all”, notably including social protection, and work opportunities for the young and for vulnerable minorities. This is close to articles 68/9 of the 2019 Cuban constitution.

On the bare ILO statistics Cuba appears well-placed. For example, the 2012 labour force participation rate is given as 74.2%; the 2015 unemployment rate as 2.4% (6.1% for youth in 2010); with 41 mean weekly hours actually worked per employed person in 2010; an 81.4% trade union density rate (2008); and excellent figures on health and safety at work, among other areas.

But there is also one much more troubling figure in the series – in 2010 the average monthly earnings of employees in Cuban pesos was 448, which equates to less than a dollar a day at the official exchange rate (all numbers taken from ILOSTAT). The World Bank’s (WB) international poverty line recently stood at \$1.90 a day – although there is also a \$3.20 threshold, and much debate about purchasing power parity calculations. The Cuban earnings number differs from the WB concept, since the former is per worker while the latter is per capita. On the other hand, the WB figure refers to total income, whereas in Cuba benefits such as free education and health care, home ownership and the *canasta básica* all constitute major non-monetary income supplements. In Cuba it is only the actual direct remuneration for employment that is exiguous, so the WB poverty line is not comparable.<sup>9</sup> In fact the domestic market does deliver goods priced in pesos that the whole labour force can afford, so the dollar conversion calculation is misleading. But psychologically the calculation is highly demoralising, and those trapped in a peso economy are very poor compared to those who can access dollars. So these exceptionally low official weekly earnings explain why most Cubans are accustomed to undertaking shadow activities designed to “*resolver*” their income shortfalls. This also lends credence to the ironic saying “they pretend to pay us, and we pretend to work”.<sup>10</sup>

Over the past decade the island’s labour market has shifted considerably, greatly eroding the role of the overpadded public sector as monopoly provider of employment. An accurate portrayal of the rise of private employment is beyond the scope of this paper. In broad terms, only about 8% of the labour force were said to be in the non-state sector at the end of the 1980s, whereas according to the CTC trade union in December 2018 the ratio had quadrupled to 32% (non-

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9 It has been claimed that in the Soviet Union during the 1980s about 60% of all worker income was channelled through various kinds of collective funding, rather than paid as wages (Mandel, 1988).

10 The phrase is amusing and evidence is scarce, but in reality worker supervision, peer group pressure, and even party loyalty inducements probably significantly boost labour performance in the absence of decent monetary incentives to work hard.

state includes workers in co-operatives as well as the smaller private sector). 62% of the workers registered in the non-state sector are affiliated to the sole trade union confederation via over 7,000 grassroots union organisations (*Cuba News* April 25<sup>th</sup> 2019). The list of activities authorised for private work has been expanded at the beginning of 2021, but since these are classified as “self-employed” they have much less social protection than those in the co-operative sector. Beyond these recognised means of employment the “informal” sector is extremely marginal by comparison with the rest of the sub-continent, and organised crime and gang extortion are effectively suppressed.

All these six social policy areas are interconnected and need to be evaluated as a package. We have seen that overall they correspond to the specifications of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals to an unusual extent, in contrast to all of Cuba’s neighbours. But it is also apparent that this matrix was far from satisfactory even before the loss of Venezuelan largesse, the tightening of the US embargo, and arrival of the COVID pandemic. For at least the past decade the authorities in Havana have been attempting to “*actualizar*” (update) their inherited social policy model in order to mitigate these deficiencies – but so far with very limited success. The crisis conditions of 2020 and 2021 and the shortfalls compared to UN SDG ambitions, reinforce the view that the Díaz-Canel administration is confronting extremely grave and long-term structural challenges across the whole social policy spectrum. There is a clear risk that the emergency reforms introduced in January 2021 will redistribute the state’s now considerably reduced resources towards some productive goods sectors at the cost of severely decapitalising already stressed social sectors such as education, housing and pensions. Accordingly, the second half of this paper turns to the “governance” problems that will need to be addressed if the Cuban people are to obtain the social benefits which both the Cuban constitution (as revised in 2019) and the UN’s SDGs portray as their due.

### 3 Governance of the social policies matrix

In October 2019 the 600-member Cuban National Assembly unanimously “elected”<sup>11</sup> Miguel Díaz-Canel as president of the republic, in accordance with the con-

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11 Ken Jowitt’s comparative classification of Leninist regimes distinguishes between a “consolidation” phase that corresponds closely to Cuba’s 1976 constitution, and an “inclusion” phase that matches well with the 2019 revisions (Jowitt, 1992: ch. 3). He does, however, differentiate between Leninist regimes, and in particular notes that Cuba (unlike all others) was set up after destalinisation in the USSR, and for that reason has some “exceptional” features. I would add that the large-scale departure of dissidents to the US reduced the level of internal repression (exit instead of gulag); and that the “heroic” structure of revolutionary charisma was kept alive both by the guerrilla generation, and by the siege effects of US sanctions.

stitutional reform ratified by public plebiscite the previous year. The presidency had been abolished in 1976, under Cuba's "socialist" constitution of that year. Although it has now been revived and the formal government has been strengthened *vis-à-vis* the Communist Party of Cuba, according to the constitution the CCP remains "the superior driving force of the society and the State" (Const. 2019, art. 5). At the 2021 Party Congress, Raúl Castro stepped down as first secretary in favour of Díaz-Canel (who at 59 is 29 years his junior). This is part of a broader inter-generational transfer of responsibilities underway in Cuba, in which the founding cohort of geriatric guerrilla fighters are giving way – in a planned and orderly manner – to a new cohort of state and party bureaucrats whose claims to authority derive from their governmental competence rather than their historic struggles. The 2019 modified rules set age and term limits for the new post-holders, in striking contrast to the lifelong entitlements of their predecessors.

From the outset Díaz-Canel and his colleagues have faced a multitude of governance challenges on almost every front. Some of these were medium to long term; some international and security-related; some domestic (notably concerning the acute dysfunctions of the economic system); some simply related to the management of the transition from old verticalist structures to more normalised and regulated governance practices. By the spring of 2020 all of these were dominated by a much more immediate and urgent – perhaps existential – crisis, partly due to COVID-19, but also to international setbacks that accentuate long-run negative policy legacies. It is in this extremely difficult overall setting that we need to situate the much narrower theme of this paper – governance challenges in the social policy sector. What follows cannot attempt a comprehensive overview of all the policy issues facing the new government. But it would be extremely artificial and misleading to isolate particular sectoral challenges from their encompassing context. The seven headings that follow cover most of the difficulties besetting Cuban social policy choices (and that is how they will be illustrated). But they all obviously extend to wider domains as well. They are

### *3.1 Command and Control*

As noted, the CCP remains the leading force in Cuban society and the state and has a six-decade track record of intrusive (often proudly arbitrary) command and control (Whitehead, 2016). At times of extreme national emergency – like the present – there can be a plausible rationale for stressing the capacity for decisive top-down leadership, but the 2019 reforms were burdened by this approach to governance being pressed beyond its limits (notably delivering disappointing results in terms of consumption levels and food production). The hope and intention was that a more professionalised and rational strategy of governance

(perhaps along the lines that had served the Chinese CP so well over the post-Mao period) could support some much-needed “rectifications” or “course corrections”. At the same time, it remained essential for the people to understand that top-down authority and national unity in the face of foreign danger were still not to be questioned. The “Leninist” mechanics of the constitutional review process and the plebiscite and the stately progress of the transfer of authority were designed to leave no doubt on that score.

At the time of writing all the signs are that the president and the first secretary are managing to collaborate effectively, and that the structures of top-down control are working intact and are not gridlocked. One of the paradoxical consequences of Washington’s use of extreme and punitive sanctions for “coercive regime change” is that it proves counterproductive because it promotes a strong closing of ranks. Certainly, in the Cuban case, any space for critical reflection or liberalisation is liable to be shut down during the current emergency. And, indeed, if the top priority is to contain the coronavirus, a well-focused and scientifically based command and control response is likely to save lives as compared to the demagoguery and medical irresponsibility on display in some of the world’s leading democracies.

Nevertheless, in the slightly longer term Cuba’s social policy matrix will require far more debate, including openness to critical viewpoints and alternative models. Blind loyalty and patriotic discipline are wasting assets where complex trade-offs and deep structural adjustments are concerned. Even if the old reflexes of mass solidarity and revolutionary mobilisation can be made to work against the pandemic (which remains to be seen), command and control will not fix the transport system, or make the housing stock safe, or provide food security for all – not unless it can be informed by honest self-criticism, and upgraded by new thinking.<sup>12</sup> Here is the first fundamental social policy challenge of the 2020s.

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12 “It is only in the initial stages and so long as the charismatic leader acts in a way which is completely outside everyday social organization, that it is possible for his followers to live communally in a community of faith and enthusiasm, on gifts, ‘booty’ or sporadic acquisition ... The great majority of disciples and followers will in the long run ‘make their living’ out of their ‘calling’ in a material sense as well. Indeed, this must be the case if the movement is not to disintegrate ... For charisma to be transformed into a permanent routine structure, it is necessary that its anti-economic character should be altered. It must be adapted to some form of fiscal organization to provide for the needs of the group ... As a rule the process of routinization is not free of conflict ...” Thus, wrote Max Weber on the “routinization of charisma” in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Weber, 1947: 367/70). On pp 386ff he went on to consider the transformation of charisma in an anti-authoritarian direction (towards authority based on meeting public expectations), in accordance with what has since become known as “performance legitimacy”.

### 3.2 Rationing

The general point can be amplified by reference to the deep failings of the inherited structure of state-directed economic allocations. As already noted, it should be possible to separate this policy issue from the more political question of regime type. Other communist party-ruled states have come to recognise the dysfunctions of the command economy.<sup>13</sup> Cuba itself has been forced to pull back from the cradle to grave system it pursued so long as Soviet subsidies were available. But such retreats have been reluctant and inadequate. A coherent embrace of market allocation mechanisms has yet to take place.

Cuba's dual currency system has long been at the core of the problem, and experts have talked about the need to replace it for a generation. The monetary and exchange rate reform of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 indeed eliminated the so-called "convertible peso" (CUC) and left the Cuban peso (CUP) as the sole national currency. In the past, however much command the policymakers arrogated to themselves, they lacked the basic signals they needed to detect the pinch-points of resource scarcity, and therefore to reallocate limited inputs to where they were most needed. The crucial governance point here is that a distinction can be made between using price signals to allocate resources efficiently and "neo-liberal" dogmas that prevent attending to collective social needs and that bestow windfall gains on private speculators. However, as at the same time the circuit of hard-currency stores expanded – where Cubans can pay with dollar-denominated bank cards – a new form of monetary dualism persists.

Some kind of rationing is inherent in the idea of universal healthcare that is free at the point of delivery, free education for all and the provision of a *canasta básica*. Such social policies meet demonstrable needs (especially when US sanctions are tightened and the pandemic threatens all) and provide the elements of a vital "social pact" between the state and the people the authorities are bound to preserve at almost any cost. However, the compartmentalisation of the economy undermines the effects of the formal rationing system. As long a peso market for the masses characterised by severe scarcity exists alongside a hard currency market with more abundant provision for the minority with access to foreign exchange, and a profound imbalance exists between the two (at the start of the exchange rate reform, the rate was set at 25 Cuban pesos for one US dollar), arbitrage and diversion of resources between the two segments can nullify the apparent benefits of rationing. To take a simple example, if aspirin and soap can be sold for hard currency then the public health system will not be able to retain an affordable supply of aspirin for the use of its clients. On a broader canvas, it

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13 See Jowitz op. cit. pp 131/4 on the political structure of the Soviet command economy. A classic statement on the economic aspects is Kornai, 1992.

becomes impossible to measure which economic activities are socially profitable, or in fact generate negative added value, when company (and even many household) accounts require the aggregation of both currency flows.<sup>14</sup>

There is a reason why this apparently straightforward accounting error has not proved amenable to reform until recently. The official argument is that foreign exchange is not available to bridge the gap between the two systems, and that is of course a problem – especially now. But the underlying governance problem is deeper than that. If doctors and teachers were to be remunerated at something closer to their social worth, the magnificent supply of medical personnel and the admirable teacher–student ratios would be harder to sustain, as it would become clear how much other sectors of the economy were being drained to finance these social programmes. As it stands not even the most powerful ministers at the apex of the decision tree have accurate information about what their choices are really costing, meaning decisions may well be taken on doctrinal and even “moral” grounds rather than with clarity about their system-wide effects.<sup>15</sup> The key point here is that if Díaz-Canel is to have the policy tools needed to achieve the UN’s SDGs within a decade, better signalling about resource bottlenecks will be essential.

### 3.3 *Collective Responsibility*

For the first six decades after the revolution Cuba’s core concept of political leadership was the *comandante*. As the term clearly indicates, the ruler’s function was to issue commands, albeit after gathering collective opinions and expert advice according to the matter in hand. The ascent of Díaz-Canel is supposed to inaugurate not only a new generation of leaders, but also a more collaborative and shared approach to the responsibilities of policy formation and implementation. At least in theory there should now be a switch towards more “collective responsibility”. Ministers serving a president and other officers who are constrained by term limits can sometimes risk standing out for a proposal, with the calculation that if it proves successful the originator will get the credit and possibly even improved prospects for future promotion. Under the previous system it was un-

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14 For example, when I made impressionistic enquiries in 2018 about how much it would cost to repair a restaurant in Old Havana the results were grotesquely expensive, since even readily available local provisions were being charged as if imported. This illustrated to me why investments that might be socially productive would not be considered financially viable.

15 The *reductio ad absurdum* of this procedure should have been apparent 50 years ago, when the “Zafra of Ten Million Tons” wrecked much of the rest of the economy, and therefore rendered the sugar harvest target itself unattainable because its essential inputs were disorganised. Entry into Comecon was supposed to protect Moscow from further wastefulness on this scale.

wise to claim credit where the *comandante* might feel sidelined, and holding out against the consensus was a career-destroying strategy.

Only time will tell whether the 2019 reforms do indeed inaugurate such a shift in leadership styles. The CCP will be inclined to continue to operate on Leninist principles even under Díaz-Canel's leadership, and as an institution the Revolutionary Armed Forces are unlikely to embrace too much innovation (although there could be a subsection with business experience who might aspire eventually to break loose). While both these power blocs could well accept a further shift towards greater emphasis on efficiency and results, they are unlikely to look favourably on mavericks and dissenters.

If so, a further governance challenge in the social policy area will be to build enough momentum around any proposal involving deep innovation. In many Latin American nations this obstacle can be circumnavigated by those with sufficiently high status foreign educational qualifications, and/or the backing of specialised agencies like the WB and the Inter-American Development Bank. Upper class connections and private sector lobbying also play their role. None of these aids to innovation are likely to be effective in the Cuban context. Perhaps good contacts with China or Russia (or business operations in Panama) might help a bit – especially in areas like transport where foreign funding and expertise can make the difference – but, in general, policy reformers will have to build domestic support coalitions and/or rely on traditional top-down methods of operation. Will this be enough to address the challenges of food security or unemployment? We now know that the technocrats in the central bank can persuade the cabinet to do what is necessary on exchange rate reform or fiscal rationality. What remains to be seen is how well the existing system can manage the potentially explosive second-round consequences of the currency reform, which could unleash an unrestrained wave of inflation. To achieve a lasting improvement of economic performance the whole of the government would need to buy into an agreed formula and then sell it to the populace, risking their now-limited political capital.

### 3.4 Transparency

Throughout the world both democratic and autocratic governments are finding that lack of citizen trust has become a major challenge to effective governance, both in general and in the social policy area. The Xi government is struggling to regain ground after its disastrous mishandling of the first phase of the COVID outbreak in Wuhan. In Chile the Piñera administration (despite its clear electoral mandate) was almost overwhelmed by the protests it provoked when public transport fares were raised. The *gilets jaunes* have cornered Macron – and further examples abound. So a key policy challenge for Díaz-Canel is to manage public

communications and popular expectations so as to retain the authority needed for effective governance. Such issues are conventionally analysed under the rubric of “transparency”.

This is not an easy topic to discuss objectively when it comes to Cuba. Solid evidence is hard to come by and polemics quickly intervene. I can, however, report a succession of personal anecdotes that illustrate the challenges involved. First, I was travelling in Cuba just after the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. For several days as the news came through and no official guidance was given, various informants expressed their solidarity with a small socialist country subjected to bullying by a Great Power. Then, when the *líder máximo* eventually came out strongly on the side of Moscow, those who had guessed wrong hastened to cover up their mistake. Twenty years later I was in Matanzas when the Berlin Wall came down. The news spread like wildfire. Everyone, whatever their political inclinations, knew that this was a profound moment of dislocation for the Cuban Revolution. But for about a week no official recognition of the facts emerged. It took the CCP that long to prime all its activists on the new party line, which was then imparted word for word to the population at large, as if they were hearing it for the first time. During the Special Period, I witnessed further examples of the disjunction between instant popular intelligence and the much slower formulation of a carefully orchestrated official discourse. By the time of my last visit to Havana, ordinary people would speak frankly about the situation in Venezuela and what it portended for them. At an official event I was alone in explaining that the Europeans who had broken with Maduro were not simply US stooges. The Venezuelan leader was, I said, “*impresentable*” in European progressive opinion. My statement was greeted with united disapproval – as long as the formal event continued. However at the subsequent lunch it was clear that I was not actually the pariah after all, as everyone really knew that what I had said needed to be considered. Criticising Trump at a meeting of Republican senators would invite similar (or harsher) responses.

With those antecedents in mind, what might we expect from the Díaz-Canel government’s communications strategy (in particular on social policy issues)? On paper the current constitution commits to considerable press freedom (Const. 2019, arts. 53 and 60). More accurate reporting may also have been encouraged in part by a desire to contrast with Trump’s tweeting, and perhaps out of a belief that they have a good case to make and a sense that the people are with them. At the same time, they face more competition from domestic social media – if they are to get a hearing they need to upgrade the honesty of their coverage. It remains clear that only some topics can be treated transparently – other key issues remain out of bounds, as the vote on the constitutional reforms made clear.

Still, various of the social policy issues outlined above are now receiving fuller and more informative treatment.<sup>16</sup> There is scope for a partial and provisional expansion of collective deliberation, aimed at taking an educated and concerned citizenry more into account and thus bolstering confidence in the new team. The ignorance and prejudice of much foreign commentary on Cuba (notably in the United States) helps support official messaging. This is by no means sufficient to promote “full transparency”, and it may at any point be subject to retraction. But if the Cuban people are to maintain their discipline and morale in the hard times that lie ahead, it makes sense for the current authorities to reach out to them with honest explanations where they can.

There is, however, one particularly sensitive social policy area where the disjunction between what the authorities say and what the people experience is particularly intractable, namely

### 3.5 Equity

The domestic and international prestige of the Cuban Revolution derives essentially from its claim to offer full and genuine social equality (not just social democratic social inclusiveness). For the first 30 years this was sustained through massive financial support from the Soviet bloc, but the promise has also been kept alive for a further three decades when external assistance was smaller and more unreliable. Throughout all these six decades the Cuban example has been fiercely criticised, implacably opposed and subjected to tight unilateral US sanctions backed by a highly motivated opposition centred in Miami that denies the validity of the Cuban model and works tirelessly to overturn it.<sup>17</sup>

So the core social policy challenge for the Díaz-Canel administration is to make the Cuban model sustainable in the face of US hostility, while preserving and reinforcing those aspects of the historical equity agenda that can be maintained over the longer run. Gini coefficients on income distribution are hard to

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16 A proper assessment would need to consider Cuban television, local radio, exchanges between island residents and their families abroad, and perhaps even (at the margins) Radio Televisión Martí.

17 Deciphering the real agenda of the “Cuba lobby” in Miami is not, however, straightforward. Intransigents have been subject to generational change both in Cuba and Florida, and since 1989 it has become more common for Cuban-Americans to distinguish between the legitimate interests and welfare of the island’s population and their still uniformly detested regime. But on the other hand, since Trump took office the most hardline Miami *revanchistes* seem to have regained some of their former ascendancy. That was definitely in evidence during the November 2020 US election, at least in Miami.

compute given the dual currency issue, but on any plausible basis there must be major (and probably growing) inequalities in this crucial area.

Looking at social equity more broadly, as Cuban policymakers prefer, the UN's SDGs for 2030 provide a non-partisan yardstick. In addition to the objectives discussed above, SDG 5 concerns gender equality, SDG 10 addresses the special needs of marginalised and handicapped minorities, and SDG 16 calls for strong institutions to secure justice and human rights for all. As can be seen, the full UN equity agenda is extremely ambitious, and barely achieved anywhere (Scandinavia may be the closest). Certainly there are major deficits throughout the western hemisphere (Canada may be the outlier here). Cuba has stronger foundations and better performance than most of its neighbours, but its achievements are at risk and its equity shortfalls remain considerable.

On gender equality the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas has a strong presence, 42.6% of the 2015 labour force was female, as were 48.9% of the members of the National Assembly, and eight out of ten public prosecutors. There is close to parity in university enrolments. The revised 2019 constitution specifically includes a bar on discrimination based on gender identity. However, the upper reaches of the power structure are still heavily male-dominated, and most Cuban women struggle with the "*doble jornada*" – combining heavy domestic duties with full-time employment (good evidence about domestic and sexual violence is hard to come by, but see UN Women).

Cuba was slower to move on disabilities (affecting an estimated 360,000 people), and although they are now receiving more attention there is much to be done in terms of mobility, wheelchair access and other areas. Concerning ethnic differences, the issue of racial equality remains highly sensitive and generally under-researched (Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020, provide a valuable exception), and there are also questions to address concerning Chinese, Jewish and various religious communities. Still, in comparative terms, Cuba could be considered rather well-placed to meet these aspects of the UN agenda within a decade.

Goal 16 is more hotly disputed – to "[P]romote peaceful and inclusive societies ... provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels" (UNGA, 2015). Some observers (while mostly silent about the legal black hole and use of torture that characterises the US base at Guantanamo) assert that Cuban justice is a sham.

A recent interview with a Cuban judge provides a representative example. In one question to Edel González, the Spanish journalist calls Cuba the world's largest prison, with 90,000 currently incarcerated (Gaviña, 2020). González himself gives a detailed insider account that in no way corroborates the heated rhetoric used by his interviewer. A judge in Cuba for 17 years, who was sponsored by the NGO Prisoners Defenders and numerous MEPs, he publicly regrets a number

of unfair judgments he had handed down; accepts that there were 126 political prisoners; and that despite the *habeas corpus* provision in article 96 of the current constitution the machinery for them to clear their names was still lacking. At least some had been prosecuted as a result of the excessive vehemence of (mostly provincial) state security officials, who might also intimidate judges that queried their methods. He denounced a “climate of fear” that prevented fair access to the justice promised by the constitution. On the other hand, he also stated that Raúl Castro had issued instructions to all the country’s judges not to fear or be swayed by the Ministry of the Interior, and he considered that the new constitution may give rise to a series of legal norms that aim to improve Cubans’ freedoms (Gaviña, 2020).

By western hemisphere standards it is far from clear that Cuba is a laggard in meeting Goal 16 standards. On the downside it still lacks any real separation of powers (the party still rules, and when times are hard – as in the first half of 2021 – it clamps down fiercely on all stirrings of dissent), but there are some small *bufetes* of independent lawyers that have occasionally succeeded in winning cases against regime zealots (under the Civil Code).<sup>18</sup> More generally, Cuba also lacks the criminal violence and extra-judicial killings that so cruelly negate the paper “justice systems” in a large and growing variety of other republics, as the pandemic underscores.

As already noted, the most fundamental aspect of inequality concerns the distribution of income and wealth. As discussed in section II above (sections on employment and rationing), the key problem concerning the distribution of income has been the acutely inequitable dual currency system. Now that this has been scrapped, the Díaz-Canel administration must persuade the people of Cuba that it will take the consequences of income inequality sufficiently seriously.

The distribution of wealth is a related challenge that is difficult to sum up in a few lines (for more see Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020). In the absence of proper capital, credit and real estate markets the scope for private wealth accumulation by residents of the island is extremely inhibited, despite the shift towards legalising more personal property ownership. It can be argued that when markets are lacking those with access to state power are the true “rich”, but ethnographic work on the Cuban elite would be needed to document the point, and the evidence to hand does not suggest they live in unrestrained opulence. Both public and private individuals can hold dollar accounts abroad, and there are writers, artists, musicians and others who enjoy privileged lifestyles because of the foreign exchange at their disposal. By the standards of wealth concentration in the

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18 One of them, Samuel Alipizar of *Cuba Demanda* (which seeks to develop legal rights on the island by activating existing laws), made an interesting contribution to the Vaclav Havel Center’s May 19<sup>th</sup> 2020 webinar from Florida International University on Reforming the Cuban Legal System.

whole of the rest of the western hemisphere it is hard to view such inequities as excessive (except perhaps by the idealistic standards of socialist theory). Where wealth is obtained by illegal means the Cuban system is better than most in offering a corrective.

Overall, then, Cuba faces some serious (and distinctive) challenges in controlling inequalities and convincing the people that the resources available are being distributed equitably. This aspect of the SDG agenda is tough to deliver. Still, only those who have cracked the problem elsewhere are in a good position to criticise Cuba in this regard, and the existing system could still build on its partial achievements and thereby retain its domestic and external prestige as a pioneer.

### *3.6 External Blockade*

SDG 17 calls for international co-operation, and the promotion of “meaningful trade liberalization” by 2030 to support the cause of sustainable development around the world (UNGA, 2015: 28). US unilateral trade and investment sanctions against Cuba have been in place since the Kennedy administration, and were “codified” by the Helms-Burton legislation signed into law by Clinton in 1996. Although only US citizens and businesses are directly subject to this law, it has been extended via extra-territorial enforcement, notably throughout the EU despite objections from Brussels. Havana has consistently resisted these sanctions, and claims vast sums in compensation for the damages they have done, but for now they are tighter than ever and the Díaz-Canel administration must govern on the assumption that they will remain in place for some time to come. Cuban authorities always explain the hardships faced by their citizens as the product of US aggression and revanchism, and while that argument seemed to be losing its potency during the second term of the Obama administration, it was impossible to deny under Trump. If progress is to be made on SDG 17 it will be despite Washington rather than through its initiative.

Although the so-called “blockade” poses great economic difficulties for Havana it also produces some countervailing advantages. The first is in consolidating internal support around a “siege mentality” patriotic reflex. The second is that it can attract some compensating assistance from non-Western countries that dislike the display of US unilateralism and that may fear the application of similar sanctions against their own interests. In the recent past Venezuela was the leading ally, but China, Russia and to a lesser extent Iran are also possible sources of help. Even Canada, Mexico and Spain, while wary of offending the US and ambivalent about Cuban communism, can offer some limited relief.

If the Díaz-Canel administration can hold on and make a little progress towards SDG goal fulfilment these achievements may gain momentum. On that basis Havana might reasonably hope to secure some reluctant easing of the pressures from Washington that are unlikely to disappear entirely, even under Biden. There is a severe governance challenge here, but one that Havana is well prepared to manage. The really difficult challenge is the last, namely –

### 3.7 *Internal Inertia*

All the social policy dilemmas and governance challenges outlined in the two previous sections are both grave and interconnected. But they are not necessarily insurmountable. The crucial factor that will determine whether they can be overcome is the energy, focus and commitment of the Cuban people as a whole. In other words, however problematic the international blockade may be, the variable that could empower Havana to press forward regardless and even turn the island into an exemplary case of SDG fulfilment is essentially internal – it must overcome domestic resistance and inertia and align the hopes and expectations of the populace with the plans and priorities of their government.

Although in the early years of the Revolution it may have been possible to achieve popular enthusiasm and mass mobilisation, that faith and goodwill ran out at least a generation ago. Some of the most capable and creative people have emigrated. Those who stayed on the island ended up wasting a considerable degree of sacrifice on unsuccessful and incomplete projects. After a while most became sceptical and turned inward, seeking to “*resolver*” personal problems rather than to perform as heroic guerrillas, or even “*new men*”. The present youth generation is particularly likely to be disengaged from official projects. Well-articulated internal opposition is very much a minority sport, but voluntary labour is more so. Two of the three components of Fukuyama’s current recipe for national success are still very much in evidence – order and identity (Fukuyama, 2019; see also Fukuyama, 1995). But the third – trust – will need to be earned all over again. Otherwise, the new administration will find that it is just talking to itself, pulling bureaucratic levers without adequate response. This issue is urgent, but it is not necessarily beyond redress. The community solidarity and collective intelligence elicited by the COVID emergency suggest that a fund of popular support still remains latent in the society. The test will be whether it can be enlisted in the cause of sober administration instead of the pursuit of utopian hopes.

It is not only popular scepticism that feeds domestic inertia. Another equally problematic source of unresponsiveness comes from within the prevailing power structure. An enormous amount of consultation and persuasion was required to secure institutional endorsement first of the “*actualización*” measures, and then

of the modest constitutional reform. Veto groups with precarious advantages require a lot of convincing to embark on even incremental improvements that might jeopardise their small gains. Thus, for example, the *plan de auto-suficiencia alimentaria* has been under review for a decade, and yet food security remains an always-postponed aspiration. Beyond managing low-level trade-offs, there is the challenge of conciliating anxious true believers in the old faith and touchy hardliners. Each of these obstacles can in principle be managed by a skilled and patient political elite, but the cumulative effect of facing too many at the same time can be to induce inertia, especially when the handover from the old to the new is still underway, and a coherent vision of a better future is unformulated. Here too the problems are urgent, but not necessarily hopeless. More trust, more “democratic legitimacy” of some kind (in accordance with Cuban traditions, not simply an import from the Global North) could help to break the impasse.

#### 4 Contemporary Cuban governance in comparative perspective

Jair Bolsonaro (the democratically elected president of Brazil) is straining every sinew to ensure that his nation’s policy path deviates as much as humanly possible from the UN’s SDGs. Donald Trump (democratically elected leader of the USA and thus the Free World) not only pursued the same priorities – he also aimed to dismantle whatever international organisations he could defund in order to ensure that his country could not be entangled in any such commitments. To a lesser extent similar points apply to most of the other democracies in the western hemisphere.

Miguel Díaz-Canel became president of Cuba by designation rather than a competitive popular election. He rose through the ranks of Cuba’s monopoly party through competence and loyal service. It has charged him with stabilising the country at a time of great stress and ideally with setting the stage for a new period of recovery and innovation, while preserving the essentials of the revolutionary inheritance. If he is to gain trust and legitimacy it will be through “performance” rather than “proceduralism” (Dukalskis & Gerschewski, 2017) (the absence of any apparently viable alternative might also work in his favour). The island’s social policies need to perform well if he is to succeed. By delivering on the UN’s SDGs his administration might both build domestic support and reinforce Cuba’s external prestige by comparison with its largest American neighbours. Indeed, they provide an internationally approved and nationally desirable package (or even “vision”) that meshes well with the strong social legacy of the Revolution,<sup>19</sup> and that could appeal to most of the inhabitants of the island.

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19 One more or less objective indicator of the positive nature of this legacy comes from the UN’s

Although Havana's social policies can be assessed and improved one by one, it makes more sense to evaluate them as an integral package. In fact, they could also be understood as a manifestation of what the Cuban Revolution as a whole has been seeking to accomplish. The original goal of building a "communist society" is no longer so clearly in play.<sup>20</sup> And yet with the fruits of that costly endeavour on display – to be appreciated and protected (not least by the people of Cuba who undertook such sacrifices to establish them) – the survival and success of the Díaz-Canel administration will be closely entangled with its performance in the social policy domain. Potentially, the opportunity exists for the next generation of leaders in Havana to reinvigorate their mandate, win recognition from their neighbours and regain the enthusiasm of their citizens by making the SDGs the focus of their efforts. It would be a good start if – in stark contrast to the choices being made by Bolsonaro and Trump – Havana proved capable of overcoming the COVID-19 challenge at home, and then went on to play a constructive role in tackling it abroad as well. Cuba's healthcare investments provide a solid foundation for such an endeavour, but – as this chapter has stressed throughout – no single social policy success can be treated in isolation from the rest. So, even if Havana's management of the pandemic does prove a model,<sup>21</sup> issues of food security, housing quality, poor transport and badly remunerated employment must also be taken into account. As we have seen above, there is a case to be made in favour of the island's social policies on all of these fronts, but in all these areas promising experiments are in need of substantial correction and revision. The SDG framework provides both an acknowledgement of Cuba's potential and a spur to much further social innovation and upgrading.

This is a possibility, but it is highly challenging. The governance of Cuba is not yet fit for this purpose. Indeed it could be dismissed as yet another utopian

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Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2019). According to this source, in 2019 Cuba's rating on human development, adjusted for per capita income, was the highest in the world. To be more precise, in the HDI ranking Cuba was located 43 countries higher than its (low) income level would predict. The next best performer was Georgia (the Caucasus republic, not the US state, obviously) ranked 34 countries above its per capita income. By contrast some oil exporters were far below their expected HDI levels, as rentier states neglected the social welfare of their subjects (Equatorial Guinea was 80 positions behind, Kuwait 52, Qatar 40). Returning to Cuba, this exceptional HDI ranking can be viewed two ways. It shows how much priority the regime has devoted to social policy. But it also shows how poor its economic performance has been.

20 Article 5 of the 2019 constitution still characterises the CCP as such: "It orients the communal forces towards the construction of socialism and its progress toward a communist society". But the revised charter enhances the authority of the Cuban state, and article 13 a) limits the state's mission to the construction of socialism.

21 Not yet an established fact and, in any case, other Latin American republics with more conventional systems of governance, such as Costa Rica and Uruguay, are also performing well so far.

ambition no more plausible than its “communist society” predecessor. Certainly major changes would be needed to give it a chance. Even with the best of efforts and intentions it could be that brute material realities will guarantee its failure. But Díaz-Canel’s administration might also gain purpose and cohesion by pursuing a strong social policy agenda in the face of formidable difficulties. This could build on the unusual merits of the Revolution’s social legacies, while also appealing to the national pride and indeed heroic traditions that have sustained it for so long. At any rate, it is hard to picture another strategy that can give the present incumbents direction and a plausible claim on the allegiance of their citizens. Simply improvising from day to day will hardly suffice, given the existential challenges in play. Since the SDGs, like the 2019 constitutional amendments, envision strong institutional structures and a more responsive and accountable system of decision-making, such a programme might also overcome some of the disconnection between the Cuban people and their rulers (Cassini, 2017).

Two decades ago I posed the following hypothetical question: “If the citizens of Cuba, relatively isolated from their neighbours, were to deliberate and conclude that their one-party communist form of government was democratic, would we (*i.e. democratization scholars*) be required to allow that adjudication to over-ride more conventional external judgements and definitions?” (Whitehead, 2002: 23). This was a theoretical exercise to probe “hard cases” in which popular consent might freely be given to a non-standard regime claiming democratic legitimacy. My conclusion was that under such conditions, since democracy is a social construct, the national verdict should merit tentative scholarly respect – but with stringent conditions. The Cuban people would need the freedom to deliberate freely (constitutional rights in UN documents), including the airing of alternative viewpoints and the absence of any kind of intimidation. They would also need assurance that future generations would retain the option to reopen the issue. Assuming that the island retains its national independence, and that most islanders wish to preserve most of what their Revolution has accomplished, this is the only peaceful route to its further democratisation. As outlined in the “Governance” section of this paper, my old theoretical exercise remains on the table. Taken together, the revised constitution, the generational transition, the shift towards independent social media, the slow easing of state economic controls, and an understandable pride in Cuba’s social policy achievements all contribute towards a possible pathway of slow, cautious and consensual political evolution.

Consider how else history might judge the post-revolutionary generation. If they fail to find a viable path forward comparative experience indicates what else is possible. Alexei Yurchak’s vivid description of the last years of the USSR (Yurchak, 2005) could still become an alternative future for Cuba: “At the moment of collapse it suddenly became obvious that Soviet life had always seemed

simultaneously eternal and stagnating, vigorous and ailing, bleak and full of promise. Although these characteristics may appear mutually exclusive, in fact they were mutually constitutive.”<sup>22</sup> If history is to “absolve” Díaz-Canel and the CCP from such a verdict they will need an attractive and unifying project. Rein-vigorated social policy could provide their best option.

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22 Or, as in Alexander Wendt’s (2015) social ontology, they were in “superposition” (like Schrödinger’s cat, both dead and alive until their moment of reckoning).

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# Social Policy in Cuba: Public Administration Challenges and Achievements

## Introduction

This chapter analyses the challenges facing the Cuban public administration as it defines and constructs a new model of economic and social development. This new model merged from the change of approach introduced in the Guidelines for Economic and Social Policy approved at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), which were updated at the Seventh Congress, and to which other important documents were added. Two transformations seem particularly significant. More space will be given to the market, and while planning will remain the fundamental regulatory mechanism, it will be managed in a more diversified way, with a greater role for self-employment and cooperatives. On the other hand, a shift is proposed from a universal protection model that subsidises products to a more personalised model that directly subsidises the people facing greatest hardship.

Two current approaches to public administration provide the foundations (EcuRed, 2015). The first sees it as the *set of organisations that political authorities award the competences and means to satisfy general interests*. The second defines public administration as *the activity these organisations carry out in pursuit of their mission seen in terms of the problems with their management and their existence, both with regard to their relationships with other similar organisations and with the public*. This analysis is based on the first approach.

To address these issues, it is important to remember how unusual Cuba is as a country. Our socioeconomic model and concept of development have prioritised social development issues above all others, to the extent that social spending represents a significant proportion of GDP (gross domestic product) and government spending. This has enabled it to achieve comparable indicators to the world's most developed countries. However, improving – and even sustaining – these indicators is systematically placed at risk by Cuba's relative economic development.

Social development and social policy are among the concepts used for this analysis. Social development includes not only the main aspects of people's living conditions and well-being, but also how the social structure and level of distributional equity evolve and how social, group and individual consciousness has transformed. This chapter addresses only some of the issues related with living conditions and equity. Social policy comprises the set of social development goals and the means of achieving them that governments and non-governmental organisations set for themselves in order to influence social development (Ferriol et al., 2002). As social spending is a key mechanism for implementing social policy, looking at expenditure can help us understand the priority governments give to a policy.

The work is structured into four sections: the first is this introduction; the second analyses the conception of social policy in the documents from the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC); the third examines the available statistics in order to diagnose Cuban social development from 1989 to the present; while the fourth uses the findings to draw conclusions on the main challenges facing the Cuban public administration in terms of social policy and development.

## Social policies in PCC programme documents<sup>1</sup>

Of the documents examined by the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PCC, analysis is made of the *Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista* (Conceptualisation), the *Bases del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo Económico y Social hasta el 2030* (National Development Plan), and the *Lineamientos para el período 2016–2021* (Guidelines).

From the introduction to the Conceptualisation onwards, it is made explicit that the universal nature of Cuba's social policy is one of its strengths for advancing its development proposals (PCC, 2017: 4). However, as the diagnosis section will make clear, it also involves major expenditure on social programmes. The amounts needed to fund this broad coverage are a major burden on the state budget, especially when the economy goes through adverse cycles. This spending was prioritised even in the hard times the country faced in the 1990s following the fall of the socialist bloc, but in the long run this budget deficit is unsustain-

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1 The documents in question were examined during the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the PCC and later approved by the 3rd plenary session of the Central Committee of the PCC on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2017 and endorsed by the National Assembly of People's Power on June 1<sup>st</sup> 2017. Due to its continuing validity, this section takes up some ideas contained in the article by García, Gratiús and Iñiguez (2013) relating to the assessment of the Guidelines approved by the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress.

able, and other routes must be found that are more consistent with the current economic and social reality. This is probably the greatest challenge to face and the reason why PCC congress programme documents since 2010 have focused on greater efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of these services.

A whole chapter of the Conceptualisation is devoted to social policy (PCC, 2017: 11–13) and draws important distinctions from previous approaches. One is the recognition that the resources allocated to implementation should be considered investment in social development rather than costs. Another distinction is the emphasis on the need to increase labour productivity and economic efficiency to make our socialism prosperous and sustainable: the Guidelines of the 6<sup>th</sup> Congress were insufficiently explicit on this point. There is a recognition that the right balance must prevail between economic and social development, while the need for competent public administration in the pursuit of the prosperity and well-being of the country's citizens is also reflected. Finally, it is worth highlighting the importance this chapter places on work as a fundamental means of accessing prosperity and well-being.

The National Development Plan establishes the vision of the Cuban nation, defining it as a sovereign, independent, socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable society (PCC, 2017: 16). This reiteration of the socialist character of our nation, along with the recognition of the central principle of Cuban socialism in the Conceptualisation – that the human is the central focus and protagonist in our system – are the foundations that determine that human development, equity and social justice are a strategic pillar of Cuban economic and social development (PCC, 2017: 16). Some challenges are identified that must be overcome in order to achieve these goals, such as demographic ageing and the need to achieve effective participation of the population at all levels, and general and specific objectives are set to achieve the transformations necessary to address them (PCC, 2017: 20–21).

The general objectives explicitly include the consolidation of the revolution's achievements in social policy and guaranteeing the progressive and sustainable growth of the population's level and quality of life (PCC, 2017: 21). They also include the intention to progressively reduce economic and social inequality between the country's regions, as well as inequality between segments of the population that do not arise from the quantity, quality and complexity of work or economic performance (PCC, 2017: 21).

Of the 274 updated guidelines approved after the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC, 2017), the chapter that addresses social policy contains 34. While this may seem insufficient, it is important to emphasise that the other chapters contain guidelines that refer directly or indirectly to social poli-

cy-related issues. This section analyses all the guidelines that relate in some way to this topic.

The Cuban revolution's social policy has been characterised by its universal reach. In the platform for building socialist society, the establishment of universal, free national education and health systems was explicitly aimed at eradicating the access inequalities that affect broad strata of the population due to their economic conditions, geographical location or even expectations and motivation.

In terms of education, various social policy guidelines propose changes with indisputable social repercussions, while maintaining the principles that underpin the system. The reorganisation of the country's school network, especially the sharp decline in the number of students boarding in middle and upper secondary school, reduces state spending, but also imposes greater expenses and a heavier care burden on students' families. This will particularly affect families with lower incomes and women, whom the gender division of labour allocates the role of primary caregiver. Similarly, this process of making educational services more compact and regionalised has impacted access, especially in rural areas.

Rationality and relevance are the focus of the changes proposed to the country's education system. The adaptations to primary school network capacity according to pupils' economic and socio-demographic development and places of residence, and to the levels of high school and university enrolment suggest policy is shifting towards rational distribution. Meanwhile, the need to guide enrolment towards agricultural, pedagogical, technological and related basic science degrees, and to give greater recognition to the work of mid-level technicians and skilled workers are signs of the corrections needed to the currently distorted workforce structure.

The changes in the national health system will promote the teaching and use of the clinical and epidemiological method and its untapped resolutive capacity as part of the streamlining of the use of technological methods of diagnosis and treatment. The practice of natural and traditional medicine will also be expanded. Two other guidelines relate to policies of promotion and prevention to improve lifestyles, incorporating intersectoral and community participation and the aim of improving public health levels. Strictly speaking, this forms part of health policy, but it seems clearly connected to the implementation of other guidelines. Among them, agro-industrial policy, particularly the improvement of the supply of food in the domestic market and guaranteeing the safety of the food produced; the territorial management model, and the promotion of projects to expand food production; science, technology, innovation and environmental policy aimed at generating results that allow food production to be increased; and transport policy – improving people's access to transport, among other measures.

When it comes to transport, the promotion of new state and non-state forms of organising passenger transportation is considered, adapted to the characteristics of each region. Several variants have been implemented, especially by expanding the participation of the non-state sector (cooperative and private) and with greater emphasis on the capital city. However, the lack of competition between carriers and the difficulties in the supply of fuel, lubricants, spare parts and repair services cause high service prices in this area. Measures to protect the public's access to these services will therefore be necessary.

Maintaining social security contributions is one pressing concern. In this sense, the proposal is to raise the contributions made by workers (state, private or cooperative) to the specific social security budget. But this is not the only way to mitigate the deficit in this budget. The changing age structure of the population demands that larger-scale efforts be made to deal with the situation already being faced and that to come.<sup>2</sup> Most urgently, labour productivity must be improved. In our view this issue is insufficiently addressed in the Guidelines. This issue of productivity is also the starting point for the later possibility of further raising nominal wages and, in turn, real wages.

A significant fall in real wages was one consequence of the crisis the country faced in the late 1980s and early 1990s and the way it was addressed. Over the years the nominal wage has increased but a full recovery from the impact has still not been made. This raises the pressure on the need for greater economic growth and the purposes of it: if pay fails to cover basic needs, the tendency towards supplementing income through other channels (legal or otherwise) and to declining labour productivity in the formal sector will continue. The attempts to address this situation are based on the various ways of linking wages to the results of work, which have been selectively introduced for certain activities. In 2019, wages increased substantially in the budgeted sector of the economy.<sup>3</sup> However, achieving the necessary impact on purchasing power requires the supply of goods to be increased, which has remained relatively low over the past year.

One important recognition the Guidelines make is the need to restructure consumption based on specific individual funds and social funds. The individual

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2 According to Albizu-Campos (2019), sustained low fertility rates have caused demographic ageing, or the transition to a much older age structure of the population. About 20% of the Cuban population is aged 60 or older.

3 The state sector of the economy contains two subsectors: business, where entities have legal personality and sustain their activity with their own income and have a degree of economic independence; and budgeted, which is composed of units of the services of the public administrations, and which includes the services that are provided free of charge, such as health and education.

should be prioritised in order to stimulate better performance and greater labour intensity and productivity.

A principle is recognised: compensating people in real need should be prioritised over applying generalised subsidies to products that benefit everyone equally and greatly restrict the state's capacity to target specific needs. In the 2000s some measures began to focus support on specific groups of disadvantaged people; their transformation is now being urgently considered. Among the concrete measures for dismantling product subsidies is the orderly and gradual elimination of the ration book.<sup>4</sup> This is a fairly radical change, as the ration book was long considered a significant achievement in the social sphere. It should be underlined that before making such changes an alternative form of support must be designed for people and families who will be helpless to protect themselves from these measures. This is probably why their elimination is planned to be orderly and gradual.

Meeting the population's housing needs is just as pressing a problem. This issue directly affects the chances of raising population growth. However, even in the best short-term economic conditions imaginable, the volume of accumulated need means the resources to reverse the country's housing situation will always be insufficient.

The solution the Guidelines envisage to this problem fundamentally involves non-state sector activity and the people's efforts to self-build. While self-building has been underway since the 1990s, the scarcity and high costs of building materials and labour make it difficult for those with limited resources. To achieve fairer and more balanced results, the production of building materials and the use of available local resources should be promoted. The Guidelines also address this issue.

Sales of building materials to the public are already increasing, and banks are offering more lines of credit and more subsidies are being granted to people with little financial solvency to acquire materials and pay for construction services and other associated costs like transport.

The Guidelines also place particular emphasis on supporting the building and repair of houses in the countryside with a view to improving living conditions in rural areas and helping stabilise the agricultural workforce.

The legalisation of the real estate market in Cuba is also included in the Guidelines, with the proposal that it should contribute to meeting the population's housing demands. The housing shortage drives prices in the "new" market up to levels that only segments of the population with access to substantial resources will be able to benefit from. State agencies and institutions have also

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4 This is the food rations card.

carried out a survey of available real estate originally designed to serve as housing, but which is being used for other purposes – this is also included in the Guidelines.

The measures proposed so far favour two narrow groups of people: subsidies will help those on low incomes, while those with more financial resources will benefit from the real estate market. For the majority of the population that does not fall into these two groups, the remaining option is credit.

Finally, the chapter on trade policy in the Guidelines envisages restructuring the distribution of consumer goods and services to favour unsubsidised mercantile spaces selling at market prices. They also include the need for a consumer development policy that broadens the supply of these goods, which include food products, clothing and footwear, household appliances, bicycles and spare parts, building materials and hardware, furniture, household goods and furnishings, among others. In reality, this type of item has been available in the network of markets for some time, but at high prices that limit the access of people in need. Broader supply is necessary to reduce prices and prioritise domestic products in order to encourage sustainability.

This examination of the Guidelines on social policy reveals an emphasis on economic rationality and efficiency and a trend towards personalising social support. This emphasis seems to suggest that the resources available for social services will be reduced or at least frozen. A population in advanced demographic transition and notably ageing like Cuba's requires growing resources to attend to the health issues associated with ageing and guarantee social security. The measures described could help to mitigate this by redistributing resources currently spent on generalised support to population groups that truly need them. But it seems clear that a tension will be created between the economic rationality and efficiency required and remaining attentive to social equity. Hence the need for a well-sequenced transformation agenda that minimises such contradictions.

## Cuba's social development: services and other conditioning factors<sup>5</sup>

Cuban economic policy has prioritised the allocation of resources to social services as the way to progressively improve people's welfare levels. Even during the most difficult periods of the crisis in the 1990s, this determination remained unshaken and was probably the most important social cohesion factor when facing

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5 This section is based on the authors' previous works: García and Anaya (2010); García, Gratiús and Iñiguez (2013); and Anaya (2008).

the tremendous adversity of losing the country's main economic partners in the space of just two years.

Social spending is one of the mechanisms for implementing social policy. Indicators such as real per capita social spending and social spending as a proportion of GDP and of public sector expenditure help us understand a state's redistribution capacity, the macroeconomic and fiscal priority it gives to social spending and its impact on individual well-being (see CEPAL, 1994; cited in Espina, 2008: 68).

Social spending includes government expenditure in the fields of education, health, culture and art, sport, housing and community services, security and social assistance. Two categories of expenses may be distinguished by their purpose: those concerned with social investment and those meant to compensate for low incomes. The latter category includes social security and assistance spending. As social investment is aimed at promoting people's intellectual and physical development, the other components fit within this category.

The macroeconomic priority of social spending is expressed by the relationship between GDP and social spending, calculated in percentage terms. The fiscal priority of social spending is reflected by the proportion it represents of total state budget expenditure.

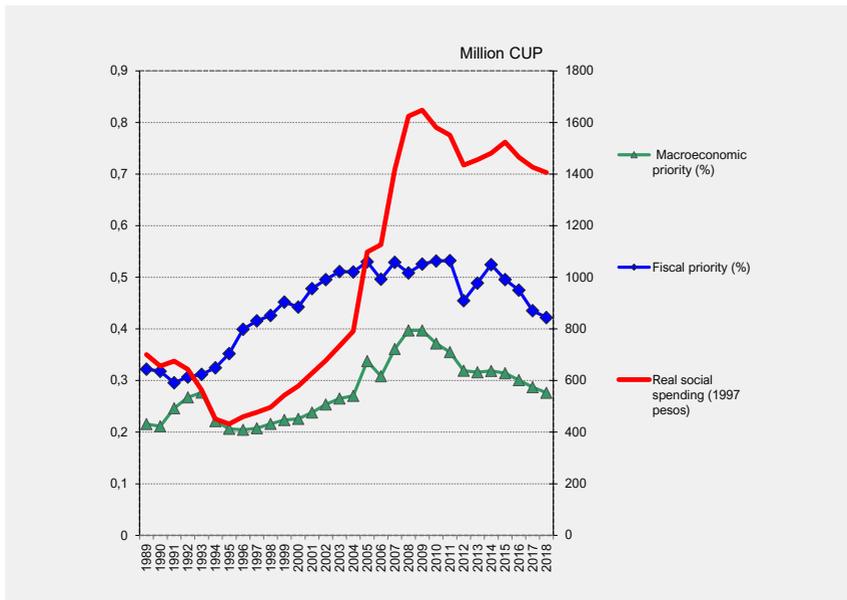
As already mentioned, the period after 1989 was shaped by a deep economic crisis. In these circumstances, social spending was one of the government's most important means of redistributing income, compensating for deficits, reducing poverty and alleviating inequalities. As a result, the importance of social expenditure as a macroeconomic priority in Cuba grew until 1993 (Figure 1). Its share then declined until 1996, after which it began to recover, slowly until 2000 and then much faster, due to a "rescue" of the social programmes. In 2010, this indicator began to contract to almost 30% in 2018.

The fiscal priority given to social spending continued to grow from 1991 until 2011. It declines in 2011, manages to recover in 2014, but continues to fall after that. In 2018, it represented about 40% of the state budget.

Although these indicators allow us to express the level of social expenditure in a relative way, regardless of the size of the economy, they do not help us appreciate the evolution of available resources, as this depends on fluctuations in the level of economic activity. The analysis therefore includes real per capita social spending expressed in 1997 pesos based on the implicit GDP deflator for each year of the period examined. It shows that despite becoming an increasing macroeconomic priority until 1993, real social spending was in fact declining and continued to fall until 1995. The crisis had a negative impact, but the priority indicator shows that it was less affected than the economy as a whole. Between 1995 and 2007, this indicator more than tripled – a sign of the political will and

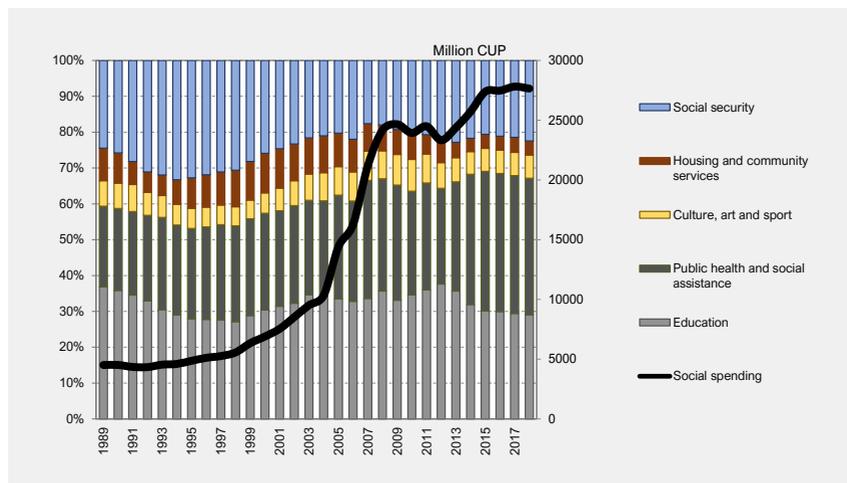
the development strategy implemented to reduce the impact of the crisis on the people's well-being and quality of life. As of 2009, a period of decline in real social spending began, more due to price movements than changes to people's spending habits or spending in nominal terms. From 2013 onwards, this trend began to reverse. It has yet to recover the level of 2009, and in recent years a contraction is notable, again influenced by prices.

**Figure 1. Priority of Cuban social spending since 1989.**



Source: compiled by authors using CEE, ONE and ONEI data (various years).

Social spending in nominal terms remained stable during the initial critical years (Figure 2). Then, starting in 1999, a rapid rise began of close to 17% on average each year until 2007. Instability and even stagnation is notable between 2008 and 2012, but growth returns as of 2013. In terms of sectors, education and health services are undoubtedly those that benefited most from public financing, receiving more than half of the expenditure since 1989.

**Figure 2. Cuban social spending and its structure since 1989.**

Source: compiled by authors using CEE, ONE and ONEI data (various years).

Even with the difficulties associated with the crisis and in the midst of multiple material deficiencies, health and education services for all Cubans remained universal and free and Cuba kept its place among the countries with the best results in both sectors. Similarly, the amounts allocated to human development always surpass the levels established in this regard by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The dedication of these resources, especially to the public health and education sectors, as well as sports and culture, has brought achievements in these areas of social development that are comparable to those of more economically advanced nations. Some of these developments are documented and discussed below.

In the field of education, the country's extensive network of centres stands out (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Network of education centres in Cuba**

	1989–90	1993–94	2000–01	2006–07	2018–19
Day-care centres	1072	1156	1119	1123	1088
Primary	9417	9440	9359	9029	6908
Basic secondary	992	984	1001	989	996
Pre-university	369	303	301	306	302
Polytechnics	782	782	659	585	410
Special schools	487	501	443	430	342
Higher education	35	33	49	64	41

Source: compiled by authors using CEE, ONE and ONEI data (various years).

As mentioned above, from the year 2000 onwards a series of social services rescue programmes were implemented, which were known as the “Battle of Ideas”.

The education programmes included:

- Primary: reducing the number of pupils per teacher; the training of “emerging” primary teachers; and the repair, replacement and modernisation of the built infrastructure and equipment.
- Secondary: repairing schools and expanding capacities to achieve smaller class sizes; the introduction of double sessions in all schools; the training of comprehensive general teachers (Profesores Generales Integrales); and the incorporation of the teleclass system.
- Tertiary: the universalisation of higher education, with the aim of decentralising university education in certain specialties to different regions around the country and increasing access opportunities; the creation of the university chair for the elderly (CUAM); and the creation of the University of Informatics Sciences (UCI) in 2002.
- Computing programme to increase the use of computers from an early age and help give everyone access to computer skills.

As well as these programmes, the enrolment capacity of pedagogical and health-care degrees were expanded.

Changes were made to the health system’s organisational structure, to both services and programmes. The aims were to bring services closer to the people, adapt them to the health situation in each location, to continuously train and develop human resources, and to improve and introduce new technologies.

The need to draw up strategies for the recovery of the health sector had been recognised since the mid-1990s, focussing above all on improving the quality of services and preserving their levels of fairness, efficiency and effectiveness. The challenges of managing the impacts of the crisis on health services that are universal and free and with a population accustomed to using them extensively – including those involving advanced technology – had to cope with limited access to external credit and the markets for medicines, consumables and medical equipment, which were also complicated by the effects of the blockade (Suárez, 1997).

Among the key measures was the *Programa de Reconstrucción y Modernización de los Policlínicos*, which repaired and expanded the services of polyclinics (García Salabarría, 2006). These offered an average of 20 services, and some over 30.<sup>6</sup>

Secondary healthcare services benefitted from the *Programa de Reconstrucción y Modernización de Hospitales*, which repaired, renovated or introduced technological equipment.

The transformation promoted in the Cuban healthcare system, with its clear emphasis on preventive medicine and decentralisation, has posed new challenges to the performance of its activity. For example, expanding the offer of various services by providing them at polyclinic level required more consumables and reagents to be made available, along with specialised human resources. The same was true of the strengthening of the early detection of certain diseases. While this helped cure or stabilise patients' conditions, it also involved greater spending on medicines and treatments in general. In this context, health spending has increased, in many cases based more on the importation of medical equipment and consumables than on integration with national providers. All of this contributed to increasing the Cuban economy's tendency to import over these years.

After the process of updating the economic model officially began in 2011, a programme to make health services more compact and regionalised was designed that used number of inhabitants per doctor as one of its basic indicators. The impact of the process has been different in rural and urban areas. Rural populations have been worst affected and face greatest access difficulties.

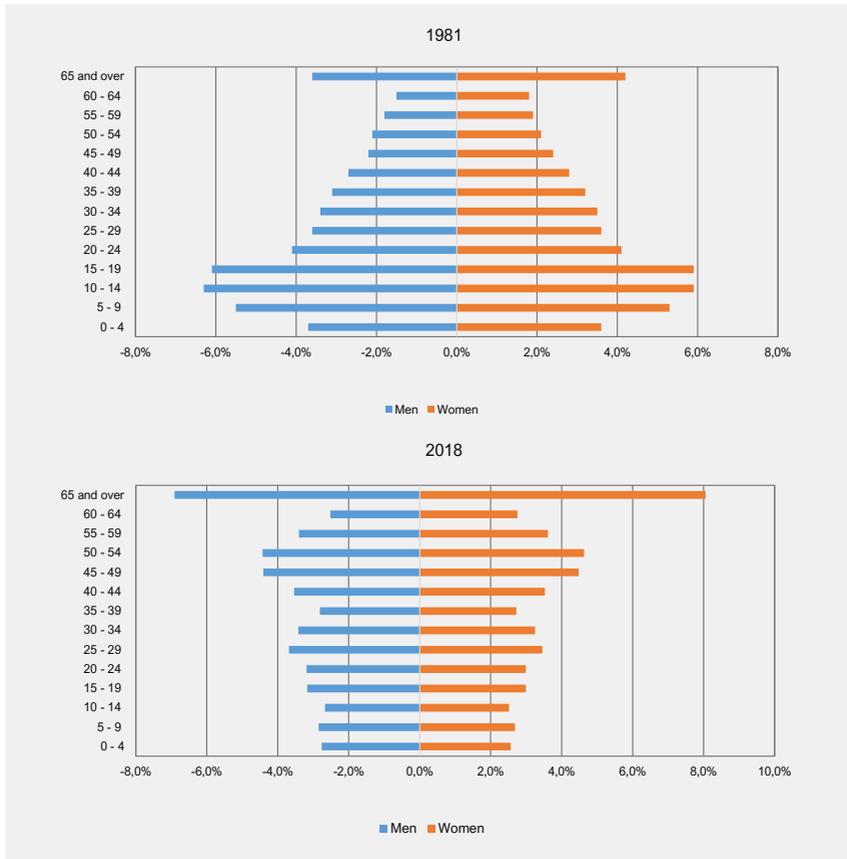
In terms of social security, state expenditure in this area rose systematically due to the growth in old-age pensions resulting from the mentioned demographic ageing trend (Figure 3). This rise accelerated from 2005 onwards, as the levels

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6 For example, rehabilitation services, radiology, ultrasound, optometry, endoscopy, thrombolysis, emergency services, traumatology, clinical laboratories, family planning, dental emergencies, maternal and child care, immunisation, care for diabetics and the elderly, as well as consultations in the specialties of internal medicine, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, dermatology, psychiatry and cardiology.

of smaller pensions were raised, increasing both the minimum pension and the average. In 2019, the benefits were increased again.

**Figure 3. Structure of the Cuban population by age and sex.**



Source: compiled by authors based on data from the *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba* (data from the Population and Housing Censuses).

Cuban social security is a solidarity-based distribution system in which current benefits are covered by the contributions of active workers and their employers. Hence the challenge posed by demographic ageing. As well as the number of people receiving social security benefits increasing, replacement must occur in the group of working age people making the necessary budget contributions.

This is one of the challenges that Cuban social policy is facing. As its impact extends beyond this particular area of social security, a series of measures is required. An amendment to the Social Security Law has already been implemented that among other things: extends the years of work required to receive benefits; establishes that old-age pensioners can return to work and earn the salary of the position they take in addition to their pension; and determines that all workers must contribute to social security funding, including self-employed workers – previously this burden fell entirely upon the state and employers.

However, more important than these provisions is to improve labour productivity, so that a smaller number of employed persons can support an increasing number of dependents. Given all of this, it is important to underline that the country does possess potential labour resources. According to Albizu-Campos (2019), for every 100 people of working age, 51 are not. In other words, for every 100 people not of working age, 200 are potentially active. Contrasting this with the rate of economic activity – and even more so if considering the rate by sex – reaffirms that the potential exists to expand economic activity and raise social security contributions. This subject is examined in more depth when employment is analysed.

Unresolved issues remain in important areas that affect people's basic living conditions, such as food, housing and transportation. These three fields have been prioritised in programmes since the mid-2000s, but they needed to be executed more dynamically in order to more quickly solve the existing shortcomings. Access differences are growing in these areas. For example, people in various locations and with different income levels can find that their access to housing construction and repair, the alternative (non-public) transport that predominates in some parts of the country and even food sources depends on their proximity to emerging or revived economic actors.

When it comes to food, access to an additional subsidised distribution source in addition to the rationed allocation turns out to be a decisive factor in family spending levels.<sup>7</sup> In fact, before the 2019 wage increase in the budgeted sector, high food prices in market places meant that food accounted for between 65% and 75% of the spending of urban Cuban families dependent on average salaries and pensions.<sup>8</sup> In the agricultural market, for example, limitations remain

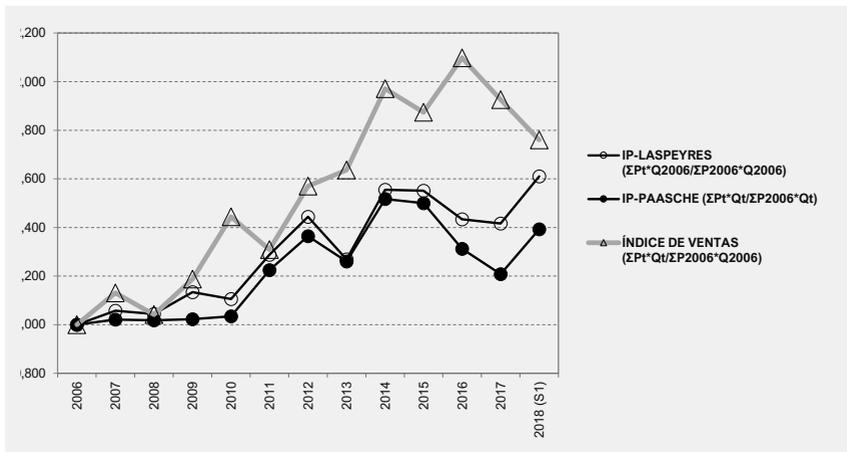
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7 Among the channels distributing food at below market prices are: that distributed via the retail sector to cover rationed consumption, social consumption, public food and self-consumption.

8 Refers to a basic food basket that ensures daily nutritional requirements are met in terms of energy. What is received through the ration book and other subsidised channels is complemented with products such as rice, beans, root vegetables and pork purchased at market prices. Household surveys are conducted in Cuba, but their results are not made public. The authors of this

that restrict competition and its potential efficiency.<sup>9</sup> Prices in these markets, in particular, appear to be continuing to rise (Figure 4) in a context of selective wage growth. In 2019, food spending (once again, referring to a basic basket) as a share of total household spending shrank (between 41% and 50%) as a result of salary and pension rises, but access to food nevertheless remains a central issue for many families. Anaya and García (2019) suggest actions in six dimensions, including: changing the focus in order to address food security; increasing the availability of food from existing reserves in all links of the agri-food chain; and transforming current protection systems and the universality of some subsidies.

**Figure 4. Price indices in agricultural markets.<sup>10</sup>**



Source: compiled by authors based on ONEI data for sales in the agricultural market January–December (2006–2011); sales of agricultural products, selected indicators, January–December (2013–2016) and January–June (2017).

work have made several attempts to address the subject since 2006 (see García and Anaya, 2007 and 2014; and Anaya and García, 2018 and 2019).

- 9 Among them, the following stand out: the marginal nature of supply due to the rules on competitors' access to it, the lack of input markets to enable expanded production and supply, and the decapitalisation of the food production sector; the tacit collusion between the agents in this market due to their rules of access and the scarcity of transport services for this cargo.
- 10 These indices were constructed from a selection of 15 products that represent 2/3 of sales in the agricultural markets in value terms. They cover 100% of the sales of these products to 2011 and from 2012 they cover over 82% of those sales (state agricultural markets, agricultural supply and demand markets and points of sale). The remaining 18% is sold via the new forms of commercialisation (non-agricultural cooperatives and self-employed workers).

Universalising access to food to cover basic needs and good health continues to be a major social challenge in Cuba. Although various reforms in the agricultural sector have raised domestic production levels, the country still imports much of its food,<sup>11</sup> which also has a negative influence on the trade balance.

Housing is a basic human need. The limited availability in Cuba was a pending problem even before the crisis of the 1990s. The impact of the economic contraction, coupled with the increasing incidence and destructiveness of hurricanes and heavy rains since 2000, has seriously compromised the country's housing stock. For this reason, in 2006 the country proposed an ambitious housing construction programme, taking advantage of the economic slack accumulated thanks to the success of exports of medical services to Venezuela and new relations with China, which improved access to credit. This programme proposed the building of 100,000 homes per year, exceeding even the figure reached in the 1980s, the period of greatest construction activity in Cuba. In 2006, the programme essentially overachieved thanks to the completion of a number of projects that only required minor final additions that had been stalled due to a shortage of resources. Subsequent annual levels have been lower. Between 2007 and 2017, an annual average of some 31,700 homes were built, according to calculations made by the ONEI (several years), with a systematic contraction in the construction of homes visible each year (see Figure 5).

Contributing factors to the non-fulfilment of the goal set in 2006 were low productivity in the construction workforce; a shortage of qualified workers – builders and electricians, bricklayers, plumbers and other associated trades people; the poor quality of construction, including urbanisation; the poor conception of the programme's logistics; and low levels of mechanisation.

According to Vivian Rodríguez (quoted in Figueredo, 2018) the current housing deficit is 929,695 homes, higher than that of the early 2000s (600,000 homes in 2004, according to Rodríguez García, 2018).

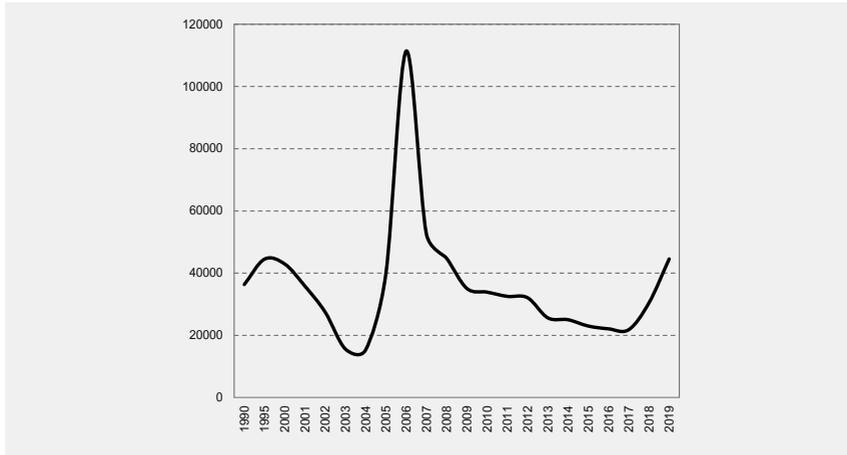
Since 2018, a new house building programme has been formalised that seeks to fill the current shortfall in a ten-year period and is based on the municipal production of building materials. The PLVMC (Programme for Local Production and Sale of Construction Materials) was created for this purpose. Figure 5a shows a rise in the number of homes completed since 2018, while Figure 5b shows increased state participation in this endeavour.

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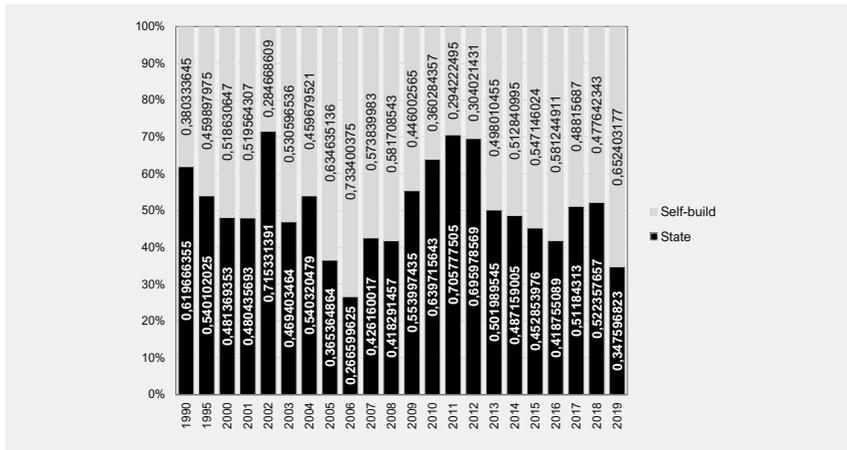
11 According to estimates, in 2007 imported food represented 49% of the available supply in terms of energy and 67% if measured in protein terms (García and Nova, 2012).

**Figure 5. Completed homes and construction by sector.**

a) Completed homes (units)



b) Construction by sector



Source: compiled by authors based on ONEI data (various years).

The experiences of a number of municipalities that are beginning to produce materials have already been reported in the national media. However, for several reasons it is considered risky to limit such a crucial programme for the living conditions of Cuban people to municipal capabilities: conditions not being ho-

mogeneous across all regions, the type of housing built in each municipality will vary; possibilities will depend the workforce available in each place; and small-scale production of this kind may not be economically viable.

Among other counterproductive elements are the fact that the constructions undertaken in recent years fall short of the necessary quality and that ten years to make up the deficit is fairly substantial wait for many people who have been suffering from this deficit for years.

Passenger transport is another area that suffered a dramatic decline, one that was deeper and longer-lasting than that of the Cuban economy as a whole. A priority programme for its recovery is underway, as it has failed to return to the passenger numbers of 1989. In 2018, the number of passengers carried by the various means of transport was 70% of the figure in 1989, despite the efforts made to revive activity (ONEI, 2019).

The two methods of transport used most are buses, which moved 60% of total passengers in 2018, and alternative means,<sup>12</sup> which carried 36% in the same year.

In recent years, the non-state sector has played a greater role in this activity, both under cooperative and private management, especially in the capital.

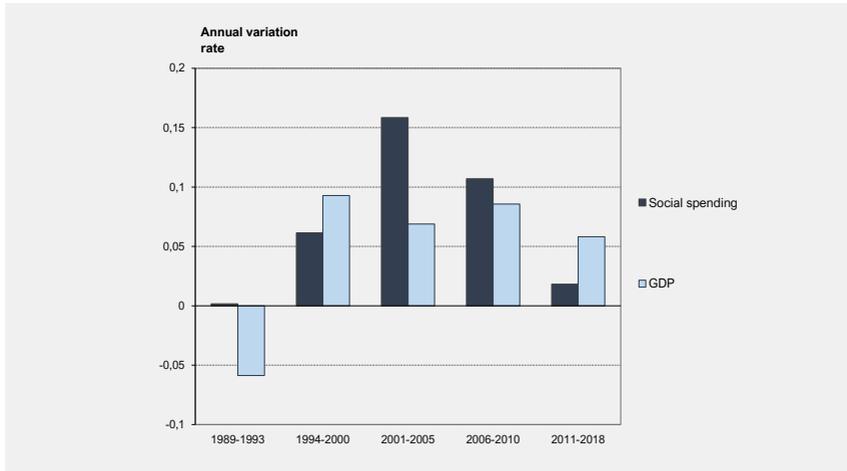
Among the most obvious difficulties of the transport programme are: the need to repair and maintain the roads to guarantee the durability of the fleet acquired; the shortage of drivers to match the increase in vehicle numbers; the social indiscipline that jeopardises the useful life of these means of transport; the supply of spare parts and components given the high breakage rates related to poor road conditions and overuse.

As documented, the 2000s saw a significant increase in the resources allocated to investment and running costs in the fields of education, health, sports, culture and art, social care and security, and programmes to guarantee employment. These efforts lacked a systematic impact evaluation and an analysis of the relationship between rising expenditure and results in order to ensure the system is efficient. Some barriers also reduced the potential positive impacts of these programmes. Specifically, the insufficient decentralisation process and the limited or absent popular participation in the organisation and implementation of some of these programmes prevented them from fully achieving their aims. The conjunction of all these programmes involved such an acceleration in spending on social programmes that their growth exceeded that of the economy itself (Figure 6).

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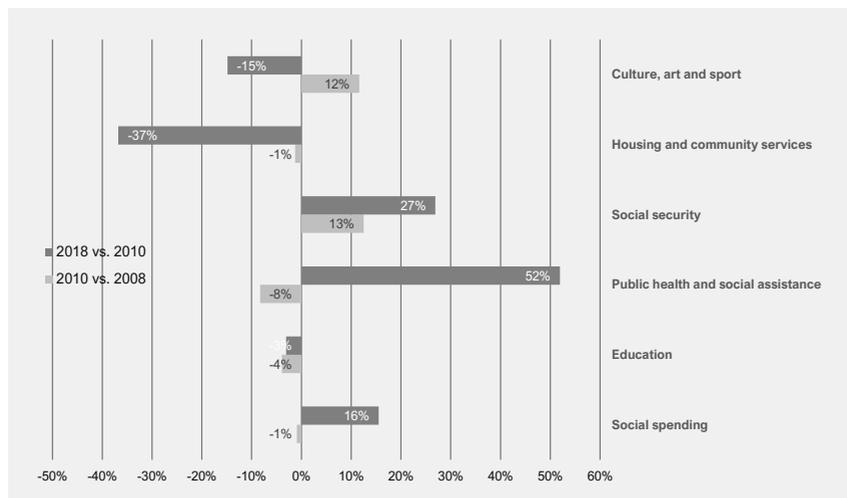
12 Refers to non-conventional means of transport, such as: animal-drawn vehicles, pedicabs, trucks and private cars.

**Figure 6. Growth of the economy (GDP) and social spending by period.**



Source: compiled by authors based on the *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba* (CEE, ONE and ONEI, various years) and the *Panorama Económico y Social de Cuba* (2016b).

From 2007 onwards, under the onslaught of the global crisis, internal problems, extreme weather events, a growing trade deficit and with maturities accumulating in the external debt that could not be met, a social spending adjustment process was imposed that sought not to affect levels of satisfaction; in other words, a more efficient use of resources was promoted in these programmes. Growth was subdued and even the running costs budgeted to some of the country's social programmes decreased (Figure 7).

**Figure 7. Changes in Cuban social spending by sphere.**

Source: compiled by authors based on the *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba* (2010, 2015, 2018) and the *Panorama Económico y Social de Cuba* (2016b).

The total amount of social spending fell in the period between 2008 and 2010, with social assistance expenditure suffering the greatest contraction, falling by almost half (47%). Exhaustive research was carried out on each beneficiary in order to determine whether they meet the requirements for receiving these benefits. Other areas affected by the adjustment were: education, whose budget for current expenditure fell by 3.9% in relation to 2008; housing and community services, with a decline of 1.3%; and health, with a 0.9% decrease. On the other hand, current expenditure allocated to social security and the promotion of sport grew by 12.5% and 34.3% in relation to 2008, respectively.

A process of reorganisation, concentration and regionalisation of health services was announced at the end of 2010. A December 2009 speech by the President of the Council of State of Cuba said that not only was it possible to significantly reduce expenses without affecting the quality of health care provided free of charge to all citizens, it might even be improved (Castro, 2009).

Subsequently, in the 2010–2018 period, the total amount of social expenditure increased by 16%. Specifically, this growth was in public health and social assistance spending, which rose by 52%,<sup>13</sup> and social security, which grew by

27%. Spending fell in the other areas, with the greatest decrease in housing and community services (37%).

As mentioned above, fundamentally, solving the housing issue has been left to private individuals. This is probably the area where spending fell the most, although the provision of community services also seems insufficient, at least in the capital city.

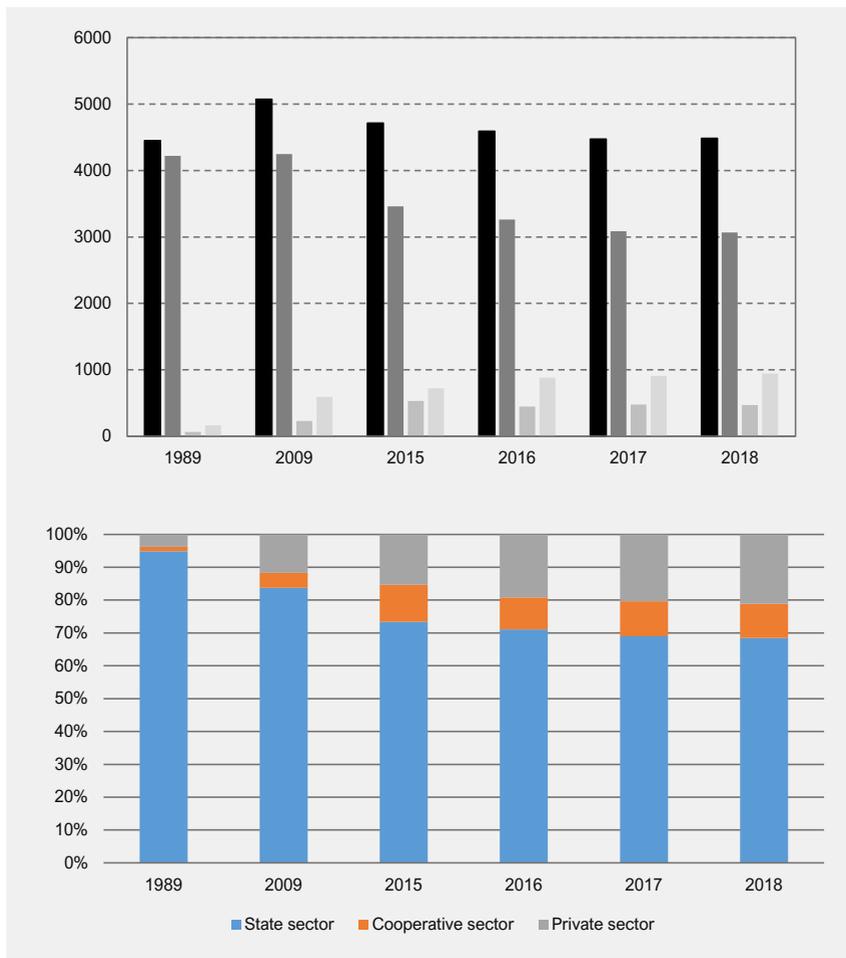
Employment is another area facing difficulties. The programmes of the 2000s achieved significant employment growth, with unemployment falling to below 2%. However, there was recognition of a considerable level of underemployment. Hence, the announcement in August 2010 about the need to reduce state employment by half a million workers in the short term and up to one million in the medium term introduced a new source of tension and challenge for Cuban social policy. Achieving this employment cut in the Cuban state sector took around four years (Figure 8), rather than the planned six months.

In 2010, self-employment was relaunched with a view to assimilating surplus workers from the state sector during its restructuring. The greatest contribution made by self-employment has been to expand the supply of employment, goods and services. This is a result of its design: it can only be performed under a license that features in a list of – relatively primary – approved activities.<sup>14</sup>

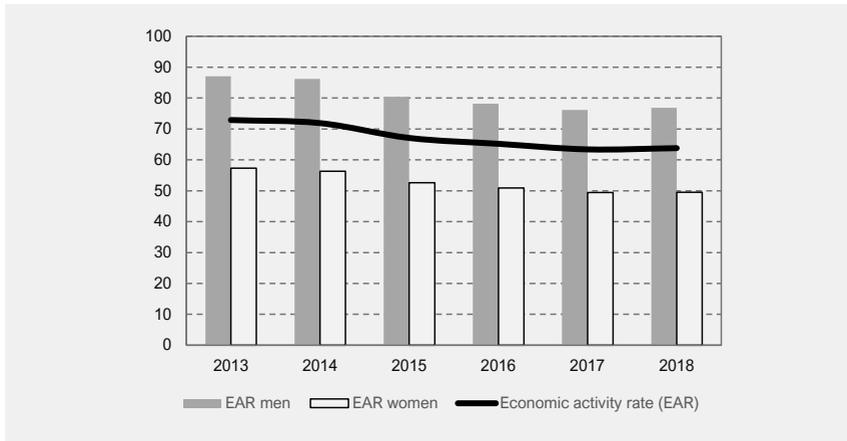
One element to consider when it comes to employment is the decline in the economic activity rate, which suggests that untapped workforce potential exists in the country (see Figure 8). In 2018, the activity rate was 63.8%. In other words, only 63.8 out of every 100 people of working age were employed or looking for work. Among women, the stock is even greater, with 50% “inactive”. In truth, the backward gender attitudes prevalent in Cuban society and the gender division of labour mean that many are either working informally or dedicating themselves to domestic and care work.

Demographic ageing makes taking advantage of the existing workforce a priority. Public policies to promote the greater insertion of women into formal employment must be revised, for example, by achieving greater co-responsibility of the state in the provision of care for children and the elderly. Young people are another group that deserve special attention. They urgently need motivating with attractive job offers that allow them to develop their potential within the country, especially given how migration also affects Cuban population dynamics.

**Figure 8. Employment in Cuba since 1989: volume and structure.**



Source: compiled by authors based on *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba* (2010, 2015, 2016a and 2019) and Gil (2019).

**Figure 9. Economic activity rate (2013–2018).**

Source: Compiled by authors based on ONEI data (2019).

## Conclusions

It is clear from studying Cuba's main social development indicators and analysing the social policy projections in the documentation from the 7th Congress of the PCC that the Cuban public administration faces a number of social management and development challenges.

First there is the sustainability of maintaining the high priority of social spending (both macroeconomic and fiscal) in a context of low productivity and low economic growth. Hence, the need to implement the measures to untie the knots in the country's productive forces. It will always be easier to deal with these distributional issues in a context of greater economic growth, when more product can be distributed.

Economic policies need to be designed to include implicit fairness criteria. In an increasingly heterogeneous society not everybody starts from the same position when it comes to taking advantage of the opportunities opened up by policy, and these policies have different impacts on different people. Among the most significant gaps relate to income, gender and location.

Social policy design must combine the prevailing – undoubtedly effective – universal approach with affirmative policies that favour socially disadvantaged groups. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, not all people have the same starting conditions from which to take advantage of the opportunities offered by

the different policies. For example, employment policy must consider the different situations men and women face when entering the labour market in a way that it does not widen that gap.

Recent economic performance has shown the need for greater public service efficiency, particularly in health and education. Efficiency can be increased two ways: achieve the same results using fewer resources, or achieve better results using the same resources. The first conflicts with the growing need for certain social services (such as health, housing and transportation), while the loss of external income (60% fall in goods exports between 2013 and 2018, plus reductions in medical services exports) puts the sustainability of efficient public services under strain.

The ageing of the Cuban population and its impact on the accelerated growth of spending on social security and healthcare for an older population also clashes with the budget cuts for social issues.

Greater co-responsibility must also be achieved between the state, families and the market in the care of children and the elderly. This could lead to greater numbers of women entering paid employment and help improve the personal circumstances of these women, but also of the economy as a whole, which urgently needs greater economic growth to enable it to support its dependent population.

The linkage must be improved between social services and the rest of the economy, so that their needs for inputs and equipment are increasingly met by national production and their expansion does not mean increasing the propensity to import.

A better relationship is urgently needed between decision-makers in the field of social policy and the population when determining which programmes will receive the scarce resources available to address these issues. A very different way must be found to manage the resources made available to the public administration to address these issues to the one developed to date.

There is a need to coordinate all actors – regional, state and non-state – around the purpose of achieving social, economic and community development. Since 2011, the actors in the Cuban economy have diversified, with greater non-state participation, including the self-employed and non-agricultural cooperatives, many of which are willing to be part of the country's development – particularly the regions where their businesses are located.

Finally, it must be recognised that the policies being implemented have increased the differences in people's access to basic services such as transportation, housing and food, among others. Unfortunately, this difference is not always the result of better labour performance. A decisive influence is the way the markets are organised and the spurious possibility they currently offer of earning profits. This trend towards greater inequality is unacceptable in a society like ours. In the

necessary balance between efficiency and fairness, the losses cannot be allowed to accumulate in the latter.

In this complex context, the need is all the greater to promote a competent public administration in Cuba and one that is above all politically sensitive to issues as important as development and social policy.

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*Blandine Destremau*

## **“Who is Going to Take Care of Me?” Care and Ageing in Cuba: a Social Policy Challenge**

### Introduction

Cuba has one of the highest rates of demographic ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean.<sup>1</sup> Three factors have contributed to this. First, fertility rates, have been below replacement level since 1977, making population growth practically null or negative since 2006.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, a considerable rise in life expectancy at birth has taken place since the 1950s, turning Cuba into one of the world’s longest-lived countries (to an average 78.5 years in 2018, ONEI, 2019). The third factor intensifying the demographic transition and ageing is internal and external migration. Some municipalities, whose economies have been severely affected by agricultural, mining and industrial displacement, have seen their young adults migrate en masse and their populations age accordingly.

This demographic ageing is to a certain degree down to the success of the social and health policies deployed since the revolution (Dilnot, 2017; Destremau, 2019). But it is causing an imbalance in the relations between the economically active and inactive populations: a smaller and smaller proportion of adults who qualify as economically active are obliged to support a growing dependent population of children and, above all, elderly people.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, ageing raises the pressure on health systems. These are responding by developing research and medical care programmes – a particular challenge in a context of internal economic crisis and the tightening of the US blockade. Another effect of this process is the stress it imposes on the care systems established in previous generations – this will be the main focus of my contribution. In this chapter I propose to reflect

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- 1 The median age in 2020 in Cuba is 42.2, just below that of the European Union (42.6 years); in 1960 it was 22.9. Those aged over 60 years make up 21.3% of the total population in 2020, of whom almost a third are over 75 (6.9%) and a fifth over 80 (3.8%) (ECLAC, 2019b). On the other hand, the proportion of people under 15 years of age is 15.8% (ONEI, 2020).
  - 2 In 2017 the lowest number of children per woman in the last 60 years was recorded: the gross reproduction rate was 0.77 children per woman and the fertility rate was 1.6 children per woman.
  - 3 The dependency ratio has been rising since 2002 and was 567 in 2017 (ONEI et al., 2019).

on the tensions developing around the care needs of the elderly, which are still essentially considered a matter of family solidarity. I show that the care crisis is transforming what had largely been left to the private realm of morals and love into a public problem that is bringing changes to social policy reforms.

My research is based on qualitative and ethnographic techniques that pay attention to the sensations, feelings, emotions, projections, representations and systems of signification of both researcher and research subjects. This method develops situated knowledge, meaning that the objects of study are discussed with consideration given to the place and subjectivity from which each speaker begins. In this case this applies both to me, a French woman observing situations in Cuba based on her own socialisation and subjectivity, and the people I interviewed.

My own survey was performed over ten years and included regular stays in Cuba, mainly in the municipality of Centro Habana – one of the most elderly in Cuba – but also outside the capital city. I took advantage of all my encounters and housing situations to establish “participant observation” and to conduct formal interviews and informal conversations with older people and their families. I joined various socio-cultural centres (*talleres de desarrollo integral del barrio*) and two old peoples’ groups in Centro Habana, training groups for family caregivers of dependent elderly people, activities led by churches and religious organisations where I participated in meetings, events, outings and discussions. I was also able to attend university seminars and meetings at the National School of Public Health of Havana and interact with people involved in public policy. As my research progressed, caring appeared to be an invisible backdrop against which lives – particularly women’s – often unfolded for years or even decades.

In the first section, the theoretical framework developed in social sciences around care crisis situations will be presented (1). I will then show that the solution presented as ideal in Cuba is to grow old in one’s family (2), which frequently leads to overburdening caregivers and their withdrawal from professional life (3). I will address the issue of people ageing alone (4), and then show that solutions are being developed to support caregiving families (5). Finally, I will argue that Cuban family culture and the moral and institutional framework of the care regime are evolving as part of a context of social policy reform in Cuba.

## 1 Ageing and the care crisis: a theoretical framework

In a very functionalist way, the OECD defines long-term care as

a range of medical, personal care and assistance services that are provided with the primary goal of alleviating pain and reducing or managing the deterioration in health status for people with a degree of long-term dependency, assisting them with their personal care (through help for activities of daily living (ADLs), such as eating, washing and dressing) and assisting them to live independently (through help for instrumental activities of daily living, IADL, such as cooking, shopping and managing finances) (Dyer et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, feminist definitions of care also consider ethical, moral, emotional and affective dimensions, as well as recognition and mental burdens, and pay attention to who performs care tasks and under what conditions of recognition and/or remuneration. In this chapter I will focus on social care arrangements – those outside the realm of medical care – and on the decisions family members make to provide care for the elderly, and how they intertwine with the course of caregivers' lives. In Cuba, as in many other countries, patriarchal institutions organise the distribution of care according to a naturalised gender and generational order framed by a moral grammar (Weicht, 2015) related to ageing well and filial duty, which promotes norms of conduct and arrangements that articulate consent and coercion, love and work.

In a context of sociological transformations in fields such as urbanisation, work, lifestyles and housing patterns, demographic, economic and social changes place stress on these arrangements, moral frameworks, practices and forms of delivering services. In particular, the mismatch becomes starkly visible between, on the one hand, women's aspirations to participate in labour markets and emancipate themselves from assigned gender roles and, on the other, the growing care needs that come with ageing, whose persistent moral framing continues to encourage family-based care.

This is how situations arise of "care deficit" (Hochschild, 1995), "care poverty" (Kröger et al., 2019), or "care crisis" (Sisto Campos et al., 2016; Federici, 2014; Isaksen et al., 2008), as manifested by the fact that "for a large number of elderly, the positive effects of a longer life-span have been voided or are clouded by the prospect of loneliness, social exclusion and increased vulnerability to physical and psychological abuse." (Federici, 2014). Low-income households and older people living alone are more likely to have unmet needs if they rely primarily on informal care (Burchardt et al., 2018). What is more, situations of material and care poverty perpetuate and accentuate deep gender inequalities.

Women live longer than men, suffer more years of poor health, make up the vast majority of those in widowhood and do the bulk of care work within the family and professionally – often in poor working conditions and for low pay. Hence the fact that in many countries, the family model seems to be reaching its limits, as the recent ECLAC gender report warns (2020: 139): “The current model of the social organization of care, which is based on families and maintained through unpaid work done by women, is no longer sustainable”.

As the tensions rise around the care deficit, the issue of care for the elderly and the development of dignified lifestyles and social inclusion tends to shift from being a private matter to become a public one (Provoste Fernández, 2013; CEPAL, 2020; Destremau & Georges, 2017). This is notable in Cuba. However, unlike the care of young children, elderly and long-term care still belong to the least institutionalised sector of social policy (Abe, 2010; Dyer et al., 2019; León, 2014; Provoste Fernández, 2013).

In what follows, I will show that, according to this theoretical framework, the highly family-based care regime that prevails in Cuba is reaching its limits, and that demographic ageing is creating a growing care crisis. Tensions around elderly care are becoming a prominent issue that calls for political engagement and greater public policy involvement.

## 2 In Cuba “ageing well is growing old in one’s family”

As part of a holistic approach to health and well-being that combines biological, psychological, environmental and social factors (Brotherton, 2013), the Cuban ageing process has given rise to socio-cultural organisations and institutions that aim to promote active ageing, to prevent the deterioration of the body and mind and to provide opportunities for the elderly to socialise independently beyond the pressures of the family, while maintaining their integration within their neighbourhoods and their links with the revolutionary institutions (Destremau, 2020b; 2021b). But what happens when an older person loses his or her autonomy and becomes dependent? How are the needs that emerge gradually in the transition from “young-old” to “old-old” attended to?<sup>4</sup>

Most older people will stay at home, depending on the care of family members. Cuban society has a strong culture of solidarity and interdependence that is kept alive in towns, neighbourhoods and families. A form of intergenerational

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4 A distinction is made between the young-old, who are in good physical health and are autonomous, who actively participate in domestic and family life or even continue to work, and the old-old (generally over 80), who tend to lose their autonomy and have greater medical and social care needs.

reciprocity prevails that more often than not takes place without calculation. For as long as they are able, ageing adults have a central place in their families and play an indispensable role in the home's practical functioning. They help their children balance their working, family and community life, contributing significantly to caring for children and adolescents and to time-consuming tasks such as shopping and all forms of domestic work. Yet, inevitably, as an ageing parent's autonomy diminishes, so does his or her contribution in the form of work. At the same time, their needs for care, presence and support increase (Durán, 2010; Destremau, 2021a).

All the categories of interlocutors with whom I was able to interact in Cuba seemed to agree that the place for people to grow old is within the family and that the family must take care of them, because "they share the same blood".<sup>5</sup> "The best cure for dementia is the family", a geriatrician told me. "Older people need their families, and their families need them; they must always stay with their families", insisted a social worker. The country's 2017 national survey on ageing also concluded that its results could help guide policies aimed at keeping the elderly in their usual family environment as an ideal form of coexistence (ONEI et al., 2019: 81).

Care for the elderly falls mainly upon those who share the home. This is the case for Yanet, a 50-year-old bookseller I met while shopping for books in Centro Habana. Yanet lives with her mother in the house her mother gave her. Her brother takes little care of his mother, and their sister has emigrated to the United States. Indeed, around half of older people live with their children or grandchildren, either out of love, continuity, lack of housing or because they need help, and 68.4% of caregivers live in the same house as the person being cared for (ONEI et al., 2019).<sup>6</sup> Cohabitation becomes more common as age advances because children – especially daughters – who were not living with their parents often choose to take in one or two parents when they can no longer live alone. This is what David and Fanny (two retired engineers in their seventies) did when their mothers became widowed and ill. In parallel, the burden of care and presence tends to grow heavier as the family's caregivers age: in many households, several elderly people live together without working-age adults.<sup>7</sup> This may be one

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5 The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba and the Family Code give a more formal basis to the rights and duties of the family.

6 Half of those who provide assistance or support with the basic activities of daily living (BADLs) are sons and daughters, 9% are spouses and 12.6% are grandchildren. Cohabitation tends to increase the number of hours of care per week, which can reach 98 hours (ONEI et al., 2019).

7 The results of the 2017 survey show that 23.7% of participants over the age of 60 live only with their spouse, who is also likely to be elderly (ONEI et al., 2019).

spouse taking care of the other or, as in the case of David and Fanny, older people taking care of their own parents. The president of one Committee for the Defense of the Revolution told me that she cannot go to Barcelona to visit her daughter and grandchildren because she has her elderly mother to take care of, whom she took into her home.

The ageing of the population is raising healthcare needs. These are largely satisfied by a very high quality health system providing free and universal care (Chaufán, 2014), but hospital care frequently requires the participation of other family members. This is above all because of a lack of nursing staff in hospitals,<sup>8</sup> shortages of supplies and medicines, equipment deteriorating due to the US blockade, the economic crisis and the departure of personnel to other jobs and abroad (Brotherton, 2013; Destremau, 2019a).

The need for family solidarity towards the elderly is not limited to care and presence. It is also to a large extent economic. Despite nominal increases, the real value of retirement pensions declined continuously over the years after the crisis of the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Since then, retirement pensions alone have no longer been enough for their recipients to survive: to avoid destitution, their income must be supplemented by self-employment, remittances or other income from the family unit.<sup>10</sup> This dependency can generate asymmetry in their relationships with their children, which is aggravated when there is physical dependency and a greater demand for care and can lead to situations of abuse. Cohabitation is even more difficult when the family shares a cramped and overcrowded dwelling.

### 3 Overburdened caregivers, a public problem

To speak of family care is, to a large extent, to speak of unpaid feminised work. Research shows that in Cuba the sexual division of domestic and care work remains largely patriarchal (Peciña, 2008; Proveyer Cervantes et al., 2010; Des-

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8 See the ENIG-2016 report (Centro de Estudios de la Mujer and Centro de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo, 2018). According to interviews, the actual number of nurses in public hospitals is one for every 40 to 50 patients.

9 At the beginning of 2021 minimum pensions underwent a very significant rise to accompany monetary unification and the marked reduction of subsidies on basic goods and services. The lowest pensions were multiplied by a factor of 5 and the highest by 3.5, although it appears it does not compensate for the considerable price rises.

10 Through Law No. 105 of December 2008, the Cuban parliament allowed the retiring of workers after retirement age. According to data from the *Encuesta Nacional de Envejecimiento de la Población de 2017*, 28.2% of those 60–74 years old (12.8% of women and 45.4% of men) were in work along with 5.7 % of those over 75 years old (1.2% of women and 11% of men) (ONEI et al., 2019).

tremau, 2015; 2017a).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, frequent matrifocal practices (Zabála, 2010; Vera & Díaz, 2008; Vera & Socarrás, 2008) mean older women more often tend to live with their children than men. Rafael, a retired academic, cares for his mother by himself because he is an only child. David and Fanny share the care burden, each caring for their own mother. But Yanet says that the reason she takes care of her mother (with the attentive help of her husband), is because she is the only daughter left in the country, while her brother helps her very little, and not financially at all.

The downward trend in household size – falling from 4.9 people in 1953 to 2.9 in 2012 (ONEI, 2016) – caused by the declining birth rate and emigration over the last six decades plays an important role in concentrating the care burden on just one or two children. Time pressure has become a key issue in the daily life of caregivers, who must balance paid work, the many complications of material life in Cuba and the demands caused by caring for children and the elderly (Destremau, 2021a). Overburdened by care obligations, more and more women are forced to take considerable time off work and often decide to take temporary leave and then leave their employment early, which affects their pension levels.

Like many others, Caridad, a Trinidadian dentist, decided to stop working shortly after 40 to care for her father after he suffered a fall at the same time as her mother's mental faculties were deteriorating. She did this for 13 years, until they died one after the other. Women who make this decision have to find other economic resources instead of their salary. Self-employment activities may be carried out at home, offer more flexible hours and be more compatible with the demands of home care; or financial support may be sought from relatives, at the risk of losing some independence. For Margarita, a family doctor in Centro Habana, these situations are inevitable and natural: "In our culture it is women who take care of the elderly and in almost all cases a daughter has to stop working. Families give it some thought and the person who earns the least is the one to stop". Fortunately, having inherited a large patrician house from her parents, Caridad was able to dedicate herself to renting rooms to tourists and maintain a good standard of living.

So even provided for free, family care has a cost: it leads to the temporary or permanent withdrawal of a considerable number of workers from the labour force to dedicate themselves to the care of dependent elderly people. This with-

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11 Approximately 68% of those who perform elderly care work are women (ONEI et al., 2019). *The Encuesta Nacional sobre Igualdad de Género ENIG-2016* (Centro de Estudios de la Mujer and Centro de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo, 2018) estimates that the number of women caring for the elderly is one and a half times greater than that of men in urban areas, and more than twice that of men in rural areas.

drawal mainly affects women. In a 2016 national occupation survey 119,000 people declared that they had not looked for work in the past four weeks because they found themselves caring for the elderly.<sup>12</sup> A study by Hernández Montero et al. (2016) estimated that in 2014 the equivalent of 191,000 jobs were lost in the Cuban economy as a result of the need for family care – both workers who decided to leave their jobs and people of working age who declined to seek employment. Indeed, the official rate of female workforce participation has been in steady decline since 2000, and withdrawal to care for an elderly person has played an important role (ONEI et al., 2019).<sup>13</sup> At age 50, the employment rate for women is only 29%, compared to 59% for men. The pressure is increasing: according to ECLAC (2019a), the proportion of informal caregivers required compared to the economically active population under 65 years old was 27% in 2015 and reaches 32% in 2020.<sup>14</sup>

Caregiver burnout and withdrawal from working life is becoming a public problem. The words of a researcher at CITED, which studies the effects of ageing and plays an important role in defining public policy, exemplify this: "It's very good for the older person [that her daughter has quit her job to take care of her], but we have to look at it from the caregiver's point of view as well. We have to organise things before the family model is exhausted". She went on to insist that nevertheless "the family must take care of their elderly".

## 4 Ageing alone

In this context in which the family shoulders so much of the burden of care for the elderly, how is the care organised of those who live alone or do not have a family? This is the case of my friends Marta and Aylén, childless septuagenarians who have younger brothers they do not intend to burden when they can no longer live independently. The first, who is ill and weak, has organised to be cared for by her sister-in-law, who will inherit her house upon her death. The second sees no other solution than entering a nursing home, an unattractive solution that prompts a great deal of anxiety.

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12 Cited by Huenchuan and Rivera, 2019.

13 The male activity rate in the 2002 census was 90% and that of women 60%; by 2018 it had fallen to 76.9% and 49.5%, respectively (ONEI, 2019). This decline cannot be attributed solely to caregiving, but also to greater mobility between jobs and work situations.

14 Cuba is the country in the region that is most affected by the growth in the demand for caregivers. If the trend does not change, in 2030 as much as 50% of the economically active population under 65 years will have to devote themselves to caring for the elderly, almost twice the figure for 2015 (ECLAC, 2019a).

The 2017 survey on ageing shows that 17.4% of people over the age of 60 who participated in the survey lived alone (i.e. almost 400,000 people nationwide), among whom the average age was 71 (ONEI et al., 2019). Half of the participants did not live with any of their children.<sup>15</sup> Although this percentage decreases significantly for the group of women over 75 years old (36.4%), it remains practically the same for the men in the same age group (51.8%). Thus, widowhood is more likely to expose men to loneliness. Many elderly people do not have children, but what may have been a sign of emancipation in individual life courses, or the result of abandonment by a migrant spouse becomes a real handicap when ageing and in need for care. Many others only have migrant children and/or grandchildren who may send them money to pay for home care, but are not there to help them.<sup>16</sup>

The family care deficit is also indicative of a cultural change. Common discourse frequently opposes country and city life, and one generation against another. María Concepción, a nun from a religious community dedicated to helping the sick, gave a sad picture of loneliness in old age in an elegant and well-maintained Havana neighbourhood:

In my village, people are always supportive, but here in the city they become selfish. Young people no longer want to take care of their parents, they distance themselves from them, they want to live their own lives without restrictions. Values have changed, they want to consume, to have money. And then many young people leave Cuba. Everyone fights for themselves.

Isolation exacerbates all kinds of vulnerabilities, especially when older people lose the ability to care for themselves. For people who live alone, the prospect of a loss of autonomy prompts great fear: “Who is going to take care of me?” is a persistent and oft-repeated question. Local solidarity mobilises around an isolated person living in difficult conditions: neighbours and neighbourhood social institutions, such as the *Talleres de transformación integral del barrio*, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the social workers and family doctors represent precious resources and provide presence and care. But these services are not coordinated in a formalised network in order to provide home care according to the specific needs of each elderly person.

Since the 2000s, social assistance programmes have been strengthened in order to respond to the situation of helplessness of elderly people living alone

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15 This percentage is higher among men (53.4%) than women (45.8%).

16 According to the *Encuesta Nacional sobre el Envejecimiento en Cuba 2017*, 7% have all of their children living outside Cuba, while 3% (about 70,300 people aged 60 and over) have all their children and all their grandchildren living outside the country (ONE et al., 2019: 90).

with no resources other than their pension. These increasingly target “social cases” (Voghon Hernández, 2019; Destremau, 2017b; Domínguez, 2008; Espina Prieto, 2011; García Quiñones & Alfonso de Armas, 2014). The typical elderly person recognised as a social case is a single, dependent person who suffers from a degenerative disease, lives in serious material deprivation and whose home is rundown – those living above the ground floor who can no longer use the stairs are a particular focus. Social cases may also be those with families that are “dys-functional” or incapable, especially when the family caregivers themselves are very old, disabled or mentally unfit, and even more so when the family is permanently absent or the person has no children.

In the best cases, isolated people living in extreme poverty receive a small amount of financial help from social assistance to supplement their meagre pension, which enables them to eat better and to give small tips to neighbours who help them. In terms of benefits in kind, the elderly are the main beneficiaries of scattered allocations of mattresses, sheets, household appliances and home renovation materials. Social assistance plans also operate in the field of nutrition, through fortified diets obtained on prescription of the family doctor with the ration book and access to community kitchens,<sup>17</sup> which have developed in recent years in all neighbourhoods. Today, the elderly represent 60% of the beneficiaries of these canteens. They are also the main beneficiaries of the food and clothing distributed by religious groups and churches.

## 5 Supporting caregiving families: a growing need

Over the years, programmes have been developed in Cuba to help family caregivers with their responsibility of caring for the very elderly and people who lose their autonomy.

As long as they are mobile and capable of carrying out the routine acts of daily life, older people can apply for a place in a *Casa de Abuelos*. These day centres accommodate older people who live with their families but who are left alone during the day when their relatives go to work, and who are unable to care for themselves and prone to depression, falls or injury. The number of these centres, at which meals and social and medical care are received, has increased significantly in the last ten years (ONEI et al., 2019). Despite this, they only host 2.3% of people over 75 years of age and less than 1% of the younger age groups (60–75) due to a lack of means of transport and the admission conditions, which are limited to mobile people without physical or mental disabilities. A section of residential homes is often dedicated to this daytime reception, and the idea of

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17 *Sistema de Atención a la Familia*, SAF, established by the Ministry of Domestic Trade.

expanding the temporary use of beds to offer respite to caregivers for a few days or weeks is gaining consideration.

In Cuba, nursing homes are conceived of as substitutes for families in extreme cases of need, isolation and lack of care.<sup>18</sup> But they are not equipped for patients with degenerative diseases, and specialised institutions for these people have only recently begun to open. In conversation, the use of nursing homes (*hogares de ancianos*, or commonly *asilos*) is often energetically denigrated. It is common to hear of buildings in disrepair, a lack of supplies and equipment, food shortages and insufficiencies, neglect of the people accommodated and scant entertainment or activities. My interviews show that making or accepting the decision to place a relative in a nursing home is generally perceived with regret and shame and may be interpreted as abandonment by the family. The homes run by religious organisations, which also receive donations and are better provided with staff, equipment and materials, largely escape this reputation. “There are long lines to get into the homes for the elderly,” Sister María Concepción told me. “There are so many people alone in their homes who can no longer walk up and down the stairs or cook for themselves. Nursing homes are full and people are on the waiting list, especially for religious institutions”.

A fairly common practice for overburdened caregiving families, as well as for lonely people, is to seek outside help with home care. Throughout the decades of revolutionary government, people living alone have accommodated a non-relative who cared for the elderly in their own home until their death, in exchange for the promise of inheriting the house. This practice, which continues today, has declined for two interrelated reasons: the reestablishment of the real estate market and the consequent rise in the value of homes (especially in tourist areas); and the appetites of heirs who since 2013 have been able to reclaim their right of return to Cuba, and who often attempt to recover real estate from legatees via legal proceedings (Destremau, 2021b).

In 2002, the Ministry of Employment and Social Security established a programme to provide geriatric home care at home to be paid for by the state in exceptional cases. Margarita (the doctor quoted above) told me:

If the elderly have no one to help them, I sometimes put them in touch with the social worker. They are usually asked to find their own carer, because they have to get along with her. These people are trained as elderly carers

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18 According to official statistics, in 2018 the state subsidised 155 residential establishments (both public and run by religious organisations) that offered 12,346 beds, a slight rise on previous years (ONEI, 2019). This translates to about 1.7% of people aged 75 and over having a place in a nursing home. In the late 2000s, men accounted for 71% of the elderly people admitted to nursing homes, a reflection of the patterns of matrifocality.

at the polyclinic for a few weeks, and the state pays them 300–400 pesos a month, a normal salary in the public sector.<sup>19</sup> If people are willing and able to afford it, they may add a little extra money.

As my research has progressed, I have come to realise that state-provided geriatric care remains relatively exceptional.<sup>20</sup> Budgetary constraints are one reason, but low wages also make the profession unappealing by comparison to the in-home care positions available on the market developing in parallel. State-paid care assistants often demand extra remuneration from the elderly person's family, or quickly register as self-employed. Family caregivers can also request to be paid as carers for their own parents, but the low level of wages discourages them. That is the reason Yanet, the Centro Habana bookseller, did not accept this solution:

I can't stop working, even though the salary from the book stall is very low. There are social workers who can come to your house to help you with people who need care, but the state only gives this to essential people with lots of responsibility at work. [She laughs.] That will never happen, even if I insist. Instead, they suggest that I stop working to take care of my mother. They offer me 250 pesos a month, ten dollars, what can I do with that? I can't live, or feed Mum and me, especially since I have to buy many things that Mum needs. Mum only gets 300 pesos a month.<sup>21</sup> In principle, social services should help me. Every six months, I can go and get a little mattress cover and a little sheet to put on top. But they almost never have nappies, cream or syringes. The nappies cost me a lot of money. I keep them by removing the wet part and adding a piece of old sheet, but the cloth nappies have to be washed afterwards, and an old lady's nappy is not a child's nappy! They also don't have syringes to feed her, because she doesn't want to eat anymore. And the syringes wear out quickly, the rubber deteriorates. And [they don't even have] cream for bedsores and irritation between the legs, which should also be applied on the bottom, between the folds of the stomach and under the breasts.

The market for domestic and home care services has been growing since 1993 (Romero Almodóvar, 2014), when the profession became an approved self-em-

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19 The average salary in state entities was 471 pesos per month in 2013 and 777 pesos in 2018 (ONEI, 2019). The rate of exchange is approximately 25 pesos to one US dollar.

20 In 2017, only 1.2% of people providing assistance or support with carrying out the basic activities of daily living were home social workers paid by the state (ONEI et al., 2019).

21 The average pension was 259 pesos per month in 2013, and rose to 303 in 2018 (ONEI, 2019), which is around 10–12 US dollars.

ployment activity: “caregiver for the sick, people with disabilities and the elderly”. It is a diversified and hierarchical market: from the neighbour who offers occasional help in exchange for a small sum or a few gifts of food or clothing, to the employment of unqualified people, often racialised migrant women from the eastern part of the island.<sup>22</sup> That is the option Yanet took: once her neighbour became unable to take care of her mother, who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease, she decided to entrust her to a lady from the east during the day, and pays for her in part with small sums of money sent by her sister from the United States, and partly with what she earns from a book stall near the bus station.

The most expensive care assistants are nurses who have left their jobs in public hospitals to specialise as caregivers for the elderly, which earns them much more money. Two whom I contacted after seeing an ad on their door explained to me:

We charge one CUC<sup>23</sup> for an injection, eight to ten CUC for eight hours, and 15 for 24-hour assistance. It depends on the difficulty, and we can negotiate a bit. The people who come to us are people who can pay, whether they are high-level professionals, people with private income from the economy or who receive money from abroad.

What about the poor, I ask, what about those who cannot pay? The answer was unequivocal.

They often don’t get much help. Many are left alone. If they have a home, they can take a live-in caregiver, and leave their home to them when they die.

Private caregivers charge the equivalent of a monthly public salary in one or two days, an extremely high price for public employees or pensioners. This helps explain the hostility expressed by a geriatrician interviewed, who considers that the private market – which she calls the “commodification of the elderly” – “robs” the state of carers. I asked Yanet, my bookseller friend, “But how do people who don’t have money pay for home care?” Her answer was clear and confirms what is said is private:

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22 An individual is racialised when they are perceived to belong to a group that is different, and which is then considered homogeneous. Using the term “racialised” instead of “black” indicates that I consider it to be a social construction rather than a biological category, a social relationship rather than skin colour.

23 Convertible peso, whose value was more or less equal to the US dollar. The CUC has been suppressed by the January 2021 monetary reform.

Everybody "invents" and does things we are not very proud of. The other day I was talking to a doctor at the polyclinic. She told me that when she comes to work she leaves her mother locked in the house all day, tied to her wheelchair. A doctor, can you believe it?

However, one sign that family caregivers have become a concern for public institutions is the existence of programmes created to support families when they are in difficulty, exhausted and overwhelmed. In addition to consultations, both medical and geriatric, specialised television programmes and books, educational courses are being developed in polyclinics and religious training centres for caregivers of older people living in a state of dependency, at which they benefit from the advice of doctors trained in geriatric medicine or social psychologists. For the most part, these initiatives teach the basics about degenerative diseases and the ageing process, suggest appropriate gestures and attitudes and seek to develop the caregiver's sensitivity to the condition and special needs of the elderly. They also recognise the difficulties associated with caring and teach participants how to avoid excessive stress, pain, frustration, depression and so on. Awareness is also raised of the risk of elder abuse, particularly in the context of cramped and dilapidated housing where several generations live together. While these training courses may be a step forward in creating solidarity networks among caregivers, they still do not offer any solution to the material difficulties families face, in particular with regard to the provision of disposable diapers, healthcare equipment, and technical aids for mobility, which are the highest priority demands among those currently performing care duties for their dependent family members (ONEI et al., 2019).

## Discussion – Tackling care needs: a challenge for Cuban social policies

The ageing of the Cuban population is a successful health and social policy outcome, but it generates problems of various kinds. My contribution shows that the patterns of care reproduced by family-centred moral and normative frameworks are under great pressure, particularly due to the considerable burden they impose on families, many of which are characterised by the shortage of children in the country, the ageing of their members, poverty, and poor housing conditions. This situation largely reflects the prevailing circumstances in other countries affected by advanced ageing, especially those in which a cultural and moral pattern of family care persists, as is the case in many Latin American countries (ECLAC, 2018; 2020; Destremau and Georges, 2017).

We have also seen that meeting social care needs removes large numbers of workers – and especially women – from a workforce already depleted by ageing itself. Meanwhile, the state’s capacity for intervention is hamstrung by the budgetary and economic crisis ongoing since the fall of the Soviet bloc in 1990 and exacerbated by the tightening of the US embargo. The current monetary and fiscal reform does not yet suggest that this capacity will be strengthened.

However, several indicators – visible both in national surveys on ageing and care and in my research in Cuba – suggest that a turning point is being reached, and that new moral experiences and regulations are emerging to mitigate the preference for family care. On the one hand, the sons and daughters of elderly people may feel less obliged to care for their parents at the cost of their own professional careers; or they may choose to take care of their grandchildren instead of their elderly parents whose greater longevity is to some extent competing for the time and attention of 50–65 year olds. On the other hand, as the various life stories collected in my book (Destremau, 2021b) show, older parents can themselves choose not to depend on the care of their children and take a different path of ageing and end their lives surrounded by their children and grandchildren. In fact, one result that indicates a change in family culture and practices comes from the national ageing survey of 2017, which cites more than 40% of those surveyed over the age of 50 saying they would agree to enter a nursing home if necessary (ONEI et al., 2019).

I asked Teresa, an 80-year-old woman I have known for many years, who spends much of her time and energy helping her two daughters with their housework and caring for their grandchildren who would take care of her when she was no longer able to take care of her daughters or herself. She answered without hesitation:

I don’t want to add myself [to their household]. I don’t want to live with my daughters. I want to maintain my independence. When my daughter came to live with me, she followed my rules. Many elderly people find themselves living in their children’s home and being exploited and abused by their children and grandchildren. I don’t want to depend on my daughters, even when I’m very old. I will go to a nursing home.

Another example is the mother of a university professor who announced to her children that she had applied to enter a home run by a religious organisation. With tears in her eyes my friend told me:

We almost felt insulted, as if Mum didn’t consider us capable of caring for her. We were also ashamed of what our neighbours would say. But in the

end Mum went into this religious home and everything went well. We went to see her very often.

Today's older generations were born before or at the time of the triumph of the revolution, and they experienced a culture of political emancipation over those 60 years. At a meeting at the National School of Public Health in Havana one geriatrician told me:

The generation that is coming of age is the generation that made the revolution, they are highly literate and committed people with different living conditions, social situations and expectations from those of previous generations. They won't accept playing dominoes in a rocking chair all day, they want to have access to the internet. We have to invent new forms of public care.

Public authorities seem to have grasped the need to strengthen residential institutions for the elderly in order to meet growing demand and have launched programmes<sup>24</sup> to improve both the quantity and quality of nursing homes. The religious institutions that survived the revolutionary period are now presented as examples of good practice. Some experimental sheltered housing has been opened in Old Havana to increase options and alternatives for the elderly, and homes are being built for people with degenerative diseases. But the decisions reveal that the trade-off for expanding and improving care in nursing homes is a drastic transformation in the methods of charging and financing. Public budgets used to cover almost all expenses, with residents making a token contribution calculated on the basis of the average level of public retirement pensions; but now two important changes are taking place. The first is the progressive reduction of subsidies, which translates into significantly higher fees. Another change is the assessment of total household income and, beyond that, of the income of those legally obliged to pay maintenance, even if they do not live with the ageing person.

However, while Cuban public policies aim to keep the elderly integrated and active in their living environment, they have so far proved unable to address the need to coordinate medical care, professional care, the adaptation of homes to the loss of autonomy, informal care and the socialisation of the elderly, particularly those with senile dementia. Therefore, in order not to exhaust the family as a model, as the researcher from CITED quoted above said, it seems necessary to strengthen community care in intertwined coherent local systems (Burchardt et al., 2018; Gross Gutiérrez and Peña Farias, 2018) that allow that the elderly to

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24 In 2011 and 2014, see: [https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu/sites/default/files/go\\_x\\_54\\_2014.pdf](https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu/sites/default/files/go_x_54_2014.pdf)

remain in their own homes for as long as possible. The option of seeking commercialised care, which still lacks formal recognition needs to be included. As the two private caregivers mentioned above told me: “For the family doctor, we do not exist”. There seems to be a need for a framework to be established that can professionalise and socialise these services, while allowing the health authorities to regulate their quality and costs. This would alleviate the risk that this market will reconstitute domestic social and racial relations and increase social and economic inequalities in the access to care resources.

Beyond that, a true cultural revolution is required to meet all the needs ageing brings. First, as the Cuban government acknowledges, unpaid care and domestic work should be recognised and valued through public services, infrastructure and social protection policies (Government of Cuba, 2019: 18). Second, as many researchers have argued,<sup>25</sup> and as various resolutions recommend,<sup>26</sup> care responsibilities must be redistributed between public institutions, the market, the family and community, men and women, and between social strata, which means establishing care services as a universal pillar of social protection and a nexus of interlinked public policies.

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25 See, among others: Lazcano Prieto and Colina Hernández, 2020; Gross Gutiérrez and Peña Farias, 2018; Acosta, 2017; Avila and Lorenzo, 2012; Ramos-Monteagudo and Yordi-García, 2018; Romero Almodóvar, 2019; Romero Almodóvar and Rodríguez Moya, 2020; Romero Almodóvar and Avila, 2019; Álvarez Suárez, 2015; García Quiñones and Alfonso de Armas, 2014; García Quiñones, 2019; Calderón Magaña, 2013.

26 Such as the *Encuesta Nacional sobre Igualdad de Género* (Centro de Estudios de la Mujer and Centro de Estudios de Población y Desarrollo, 2018); the ENEP report (2017); the *Informe Nacional sobre el Avance en la Aplicación de la Estrategia de Montevideo para la Implementación de la Agenda Regional de Género en el marco del Desarrollo Sostenible hacia 2030* (Government of Cuba, 2019). The same position is defended by officials in the Public School of Health, CITED.

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## **Habitat Management in Old Havana: Housing Cooperatives as an Urban Resilience Mechanism for Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Sustainable Tourism**

Threats and vulnerabilities in Old Havana: The cooperative as a response

Old Havana is in a state of permanent emergency. A range of forces of varying strength are causing unrelenting catastrophe in the city's historic centre. The accumulated vulnerabilities require imminent action. But the comprehensive improvement strategies should extend beyond the short-term measures the emergency demands. Resilience, understood as a value that is indirectly proportional to the risk function, is a key factor in urban settings, as it describes a system's capacity to prevent, resist and regenerate in the most unfavourable scenarios. It is the ability to re-establish functioning in any crisis situation, adapting to the change provoked. In this complex context, improving resilience should be prioritised as a key factor in alleviating the main vulnerabilities and threats. Today, these are: precarious construction, social vulnerability, growing cyclonic activity and the impact of tourist speculation.

The dire state of the building stock in Old Havana means an alarming two collapses occur every three days. The pace of rehabilitation remains slower than the fast process of deterioration, a situation that seriously affects inhabitants. According to the *Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo Integral 2030 (Plan Maestro, 2017)*, 80% of the buildings are in permanent residential use but only a third are in good technical-constructive condition. Over 40% of the more than 20,000 houses and apartments in the area fail to meet minimum living standards (Programas de Vivienda en el Centro Histórico de La Habana, 2010). In recent decades, the number of buildings in poor and very poor condition in the old centre has risen, placing a high number of households at risk. Havana is the most densely populated part of Cuba, with 20% of the island's population living on 6% of its land. Along with municipalities such as Centro Habana and 10 de Octubre, Old Havana is one of the country's most overcrowded areas.

The predominant housing type is the *ciudadela* or *cuartería*, a form of collective housing that has taken shape through a complex process of transformation over the last century. Self-building using limited resources on top of an already deteriorated base has led to an imploding densification within the buildings that has produced high levels of precariousness. In most cases, these homes do not meet basic habitability standards. This constant precariousness – in many cases closely linked to its inhabitants' social vulnerability – and the growing demand for better housing requires more effective rehabilitation mechanisms to be urgently developed. In 2018 the country had a housing stock of over 3.8 million homes, of which 39% of the buildings were in poor or fair condition. At the time, it was calculated that a deficit of 929,000 homes existed: 527,000 to be built and 402,000 to be renovated (Figueredo, 2018).

Over the last two decades, Cuba has suffered serious economic losses from natural disasters, including a major impact on the housing sector. Since 2005, over 1 million housing units have been damaged and, depending on the intensity of the cyclone, 10% to 20% of the housing stock has suffered total structural collapse. Hurricanes have also become more frequent over the last two decades, with cyclonic forces regularly causing devastating impact. The vulnerability is exacerbated by extreme hydrometeorological phenomena and other events that sometimes affect the territory, such as coastal flooding due to marine incursions, strong winds and rain. The poor state of conservation of the buildings seriously threatens the stability of the structures and produces a slow and constant deterioration.

In densely populated areas with compact urban morphology like Old Havana these threats have a very significant impact. The high volumes of debris produced when buildings collapse can create sanitation and waste management problems when post-disaster recovery processes are slow. The damage to the housing stock shows that preventive and sustainable models must be produced that promote a gradual evolution of housing quality and improve people's living conditions and increase their resilience (Mesías et al., 2008).

The growth of the market is another factor, with the old central areas increasingly affected by tourism growth due to their monumental and cultural interest. For decades, a national strategy has been in place to make tourism a driving force in the economy and generate capital to invest in rehabilitating the historic centre, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Approximately 15% of the architectural heritage of Havana's historic centre has been totally or partially rehabilitated thanks to these tourism-linked management mechanisms.

According to the Master Plan, in 2017 there were 3,274 tourist rooms in Old Havana (13% of the Cuban capital's total), more than half of which were categorised as 4 or 5 star. As well as four large hotel chains, private houses also

form part of this supply, providing 44% of tourist accommodation (Cruz, 2018: 15–17).

Tourism's role in promoting the protection of heritage and local development is determined by the established management model. Concessions to promote economic growth that are not designed as part of a comprehensive development strategy place social, cultural and environmental stability at risk. What is more, without legal frameworks that anticipate or manage their impact, real estate speculation phenomena may occur, like the gentrification and museification of cities. Both involve the displacement of local residents, as houses are emptied of content in the process of conditioning the spaces for tourists.

To respond to this complex scenario, the model of the housing cooperative offers a potential comprehensive management and governance mechanism that is capable of increasing resilience in favour of sustainable and equitable development. The International Co-operative Alliance defines a cooperative as an “autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise” (ICA, 1995). This habitat management model is a fundamental tool for ensuring decent and affordable access to housing, and promoting the right to its use over its exchange value (Gamboa, 2018: 112–117). In order to consolidate this form of ownership, it is based on deep collaborative dynamics and structured for the collective life that already exists. It is proposed as a mechanism for improving the housing stock on the physical, social and productive levels.

The proposals for housing cooperatives in Old Havana were drawn up by studying the best practices of other models and adapting them to the Cuban context. Particular attention was given to: Uruguayan mutual aid cooperatives (Carrizo, 2018: 106–111; Gil & Rodríguez, 1999); the cooperative habitat programmes of the Regional Government of Andalusia (Junta de Andalucía, Intendencia municipal de Montevideo, AECID, 1999); the incipient implementation of the model of cooperatives in transfer of use in Barcelona (Gamboa, 2018: 112–117) (LACOL, 2018); and long-standing European models in countries like Switzerland and Denmark. To determine the model's viability in Old Havana, its antecedents must be examined in terms of public policies and housing systems, which are understood as inseparable causes and consequences of a place's *cultura del habitar*.

### *Housing systems and cultura del habitar*

Housing systems, as defined by Josep María Montaner, are the set of housing policies, laws and plans whose long development over time both shape and are

shaped by the *cultura del habitar*. This housing culture is part of the identity of any community, city or country. According to Montaner (2018: 61), it links back to anthropology and sociology, is inserted into urban forms, shows us the ways people live and is expressed in their social and political solutions to the right to housing. To define the housing in the Havanan context, the interrelation between the housing systems and *cultura del habitar* must be taken into account and they must be integrated into an inseparable whole.

The aim is to contextualise the viability and relevance of housing cooperatives as a social policy in the sphere of the experience of architecture, urbanism, technology and human geography; in short, of the historical configuration of domestic life, which merits closer study. It is from understanding these processes that this cooperative model emerges.<sup>1</sup>

The structural changes to housing policies following the Cuban revolution were set out in the Urban Reform Law of 1960. Its entry into force brought changes to the ownership system of the “*casas de vecindad*”. This type of housing, which predominates in the historic centre, became state property, converting the inhabitants of what were small rented rooms into their beneficial owners. They appropriated the spaces acquired, incrementally modifying them through self-production, usually without technical support (Menéndez, 2007). This process was the origin of the *edificaciones multifamiliares tuguizadas* (EMTs). We will use this term in this research to cover the domestic typologies of collective housing, generally *cuarterías* and *ciudadelas*, but also other mixed collective typologies resulting from this process that seem well-suited to management through housing cooperatives.

The best-known transformation of EMTs are the vertical subdivisions known as *barbacoas* (barbecues). But the catalogue of solutions for appropriating these homes is much more complex. What begin as isolated self-production resources become consolidated collective processes. Ernesto Oroza describes these processes as technological disobedience: solutions to the same problem transmitted by contagion thanks to the standardisation of communist periods. In times of greatest need, the creativity and responses drawn from self-production experiences resulted in accidental sustainability. This architecture without architects, in Orlando Inclán’s definition, makes up the cultural heritage of Old Havana.

In this setting, the social production of habitat (SPH) grows out of the need to generate strategies to channel and enhance the efforts family groups make

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1 For a timeline of housing and urban planning since the 1959 Revolution as well as further graphics illustrating the analysis see the authors’ contribution to the Foro Europa Cuba working paper series (# 19, September 2020). Online: <http://www.foroeuropacuba.org/en/cooperation-institutional-reform-social-policies/working-papers/>

when producing their habitable space. The characterisation of the SPH allows a production system to be proposed that retrieves the positive aspects of the so-called popular settlements while at the same time helping to overcome the difficulties these developments present. As participation is the methodological backbone of these collective processes, technical support is seen as a participatory social technology transfer (Mesías & Suárez, 2007).

The social production of habitat has emerged in various stages in diverse organised collective formats that are typical in Cuba. Housing policies gradually recognised *esfuerzo propio* and *ayuda mutua* (self-help and mutual aid) as the main means of construction, and they were regulated for the first time in the 1984 General Housing Law (No. 48). It is interesting to note that this law introduced the entity of the housing cooperative, a clear reference point for the model's viability. A temporary cooperative was defined as the grouping together of two or more people for the purpose of building houses for each of the members. Technical support was mostly provided by non-governmental institutions and other national and international actors. After this law institutionalised self-building, housing capacity grew in a single year from 11,000 to 40,000 (Pascual, 2018).

Four years later, in 1988, a new General Housing Law (No. 65) eliminated the denomination of temporary cooperatives. Among those who retained the right to build were agricultural cooperatives, which played an important role in the social production of habitat in the 1990s by opening up the possibility of housebuilding to their members. The Microbrigades (state and social employment) were for the first time recognised as a successful programme – a worthwhile experience of organised self-production that began in the 1970s. An internationally respected practice, surveys indicate that the continuation of this system is also well received by the population. It is the closest currently existing model to the cooperative in Cuba. Recent research promoted via the Master Plan shows as much: a comparative framework is established between the Microbrigades and housing cooperatives to explain their potential by reference to their clearest point of comparison. The Community Architect Programme is another leading instrument for reviewing, strengthening and taking into account the technical advice of the cooperative model. Since the end of the 1980s, it has provided technical support to the people's construction work, offering multiple services at affordable prices. Although the scope of its services fell short of the anticipated needs, the programme laid the foundations for community construction operations and the development of participatory design tools in all their phases (UN-HABITAT, 2014).

In self-build modalities, mass housing production most often occurs without integration into superior physical planning systems at the urban level. Because the habitat is formed of more dimensions than merely the built, comprehensive strategies are needed to provide a joined-up response.

The housing deficit also remains an ongoing challenge. The strategies for solving this problem in recent decades have focused on the mass production of houses and not on the maintenance of existing ones, meaning that losses from the building stock are not compensated. The rehabilitation of the building stock is a pressing need.

Today's legal housing framework continues to provide for self-made housing construction systems, placing the focus on the rehabilitation or production of housing through the Microbrigades. It establishes a process of regulating and legalising houses, rooms, bedrooms and premises to encourage housing solutions for thousands of families without recognised property rights. Property regulation mechanisms must be adapted in order to find solutions to this situation of grave vulnerability.

There is a clear need for social policies that can connect the institutional and community spheres on issues such as managing integrated land use planning, infrastructure and the financing of development projects. Instruments must be designed that connect the people with technicians and politicians and coordinate at an intermediate level, prioritising networked actions over isolated meddling.

## The cooperative habitat in Old Havana

### *Self-managed, self-built and self-sufficient housing cooperatives*

The cooperative, as a strategy, is an integration of three closely related development axis (social–physical–productive). Addressing each area independently would fail to meet the needs of the proposed comprehensive development. The cooperative acts as a regulatory mechanism for these interrelations, presenting measures needed to enable the model to achieve the desired resilience.

The model proposed is that of a self-managed, self-built and self-sufficient housing cooperative, as these three principles form the backbone of the urban resilience strategy to address the need for the comprehensive rehabilitation of the housing stock.

Self-management is the participatory process by which the members of a cooperative seek out and generate the optimal living space. This model involves shared decision-making, which will allow the EMTs to be adapted to the specific community that inhabits it, through the development of comprehensive actions for its regeneration. Once the community consolidates self-management and takes ownership of its dynamics, it is equipped to face future challenges by reaching consensuses over the solutions to be carried out.

Self-production is seen as the solution to rehabilitating the EMT in a way that responds to the varying needs of its inhabitants. The existing mutual aid

self-build housing processes result in the community production of residential, private, shared spaces, understood as a living organism that mutates to reflect the community's interrelations.

Self-sufficiency is the capacity of communities to establish productive means to satisfy their needs. By formalising the services the cooperatives offer, their members' capacities are augmented and the community receives income it can reinvest in its own development. The ultimate goal is the autonomy of the cooperative as an organism, which will be coordinated at neighbourhood level in order to increase urban resilience.

As such, Havana's cooperatives adhere to the principles defined by the International Co-Operative Alliance on Cooperative Identity: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for the community and environmental sustainability.

### *The Havana housing cooperatives: Model and innovation*

The housing cooperatives seek to meet the needs described above. The cooperative model is a proposal for the integrated management of the habitat, to rehabilitate it through collective ownership and production mechanisms. It is in essence a project to carry out the goals the institutions identify and meet the needs the communities express.

In 2017, the Master Plan, a body attached to the Office of the Historian (OHCH), launched the *Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo Integral 2030*, a planning instrument for the comprehensive, prosperous and sustainable development of the historic centre. It brings together the premises, aims and actions for the coming decade. The central purpose of this research is to instrumentalise the aims formulated by the institutions in a multilevel strategy.

The key elements of the model are presented below, along with the set of innovative measures that make up the cooperative strategy for increasing the resilience of Old Havana's housing stock and communities.

### ***Mechanism of protection and access to collective housing***

The housing cooperative is considered the building's collective ownership entity, and ensures the community's development is sustainable, integrated and takes place in equality of conditions.

The rights associated with housing may be reduced to four basic areas: the right to use, to profit from, to sell and to alter the home. Cooperatives focus their activity on the right to transfer of use. Fundamentally, the cooperative, which

owns the entire building, transfers the right to use each home to its inhabitants, while the other rights mentioned are collectively managed. Rather than becoming a consumer good, the housing's social function is restored. That is, its use value takes precedence over its exchange value (LACOL, 2018).

Through collective ownership, the basic right of access to housing is ensured for the inhabitants of the EMTs. It is a protection mechanism against the revaluation of these properties, preventing them from being managed exclusively as financial assets. In an area that is so sought-after for its tourist appeal, management mechanisms are needed that can regulate tourism's impact. The aim is to prevent processes like speculation and gentrification and maintain Old Havana as a living centre (Mesías & Suárez, 2002).

The significant value houses acquire when used in the tourism sector opens up a huge gap with the purchasing power of their inhabitants. This imbalance leads many of the local people who own their homes to sell them to obtain a means of subsistence they could not in many cases otherwise achieve. Meanwhile, local people with fewer resources are displaced by these processes to peripheral areas, uprooting themselves from their community and the services that have always served them. When this happens, old towns are emptied of content and become mere tourist sites. For this area of Old Havana to remain alive, its inhabitants must be granted the stability and security they need. Guaranteeing communities can access the goods and infrastructures that sustain life and preventing their forced eviction is the basis of the right to the city.

### ***Comprehensive participatory rehabilitation: the social production of habitat***

The housing cooperative is proposed as a response to the specific needs of a community that already lives in a collective housing model: they meet, cooperate, share spaces and establish care networks. The processes that formed the EMTs have been explained, including the different self-build projects their inhabitants have carried out over time. The social production of habitat (SPH) is the established housing system that has consolidated collective self-production models.

The SPH structure is the foundation of the cooperatives and they will require continuing support from a technical advisory team in order to reduce the instability of this housing via collective management. Participatory social technology transfer is an instrument for empowering cooperative members, who will be central actors in their community's development. In contrast to other cooperative models of self-build housing, the proposed strategy is committed to the comprehensive participatory rehabilitation of the building stock.

It seems appropriate to systematise the potential technical responses that prioritise structural and constructive safety while taking into account the complexity and richness of the existing self-build housing and construction using

prefabricated materials. The aim is to maintain the existing heritage of popular architecture, while enhancing its qualities and correcting its weaknesses. In order to conduct comprehensive interventions the family groups must be thoroughly assessed (to be performed by the technical advisors) and the duties shared with the rest of the community.

Multidisciplinary accompaniment and assistance will enable the community to equip itself with the management capacity and tools to facilitate participatory design and community construction. When drawing up the strategy and actions to be carried out by the cooperative for its sustainable development, the cooperative community must learn and internalise the tools provided for applying participatory techniques, so that the advisors' support is reduced until it becomes very occasional.

### ***Productive housing: sustainable tourism and actions to promote self-sufficiency***

The housing cooperative involves joint investment by the community (taking into account the complex variety of family situations) to pool its resources for shared, comprehensive development. In so doing, greater achievements are possible than many of the cooperative households would be able to achieve independently.

The high levels of precariousness in terms both of the buildings and the residents' economic instability means innovative financial mechanisms need to be developed that derive from the cooperative management model and complement the contributions of the members of the cooperative while allowing stable economic performance to be achieved.

A productive housing model is therefore proposed that includes strategic actions for the cooperative's self-sufficiency and sustainability over time. Barajas writes that (2016: 14) productive housing functions as an urban infrastructure for building different types of material and intangible assets and above all different forms of social and productive relationships. It is important because it is able to bridge the dichotomy of the productive and reproductive spheres to form a single structure, becoming, as Silvia Federici shows, a fundamental factory of both the social and the urban.

Given the present need to regulate tourists' participation in the historic centre, the first strategic action should be to integrate tourism in a sustainable way, to make it part of the cooperative in a process of mutual inclusion. Spaces dedicated to tourism should be set up within the collective housing infrastructure. These may be tourist accommodation, using EMTs' collective facilities, or the establishment on the ground floor of any type of productive use (shop or hospitality), taking advantage of the exchange relationships that occur on the thresholds

of the houses in Old Havana. The key lies in the collective management of these spaces by the communities which – following the model already established by the Office of the Historian – would reinvest tourism revenues directly into the comprehensive rehabilitation of the heritage. The mixing of uses at urban level is thus promoted in order to generate a network of services that use the tourist's economic contributions to supply the housing cooperatives.

Activities that promote the cooperative's self-sufficiency should not come only from tourism. This economic boost should be complemented by a programme that aims to promote creative economies and the various services (social, cultural, productive) often carried out informally by the residents of Old Havana. Cooperatives should open up to the city, offering community spaces and knowledge transfer that respond to the community's needs while at the same time promoting cooperative values. They can also support self-production workshops and technical training in which members of the cooperative produce the elements necessary for the physical rehabilitation of EMTs from the local level. Finally, the possibility is contemplated of using the cooperative to generate clean, renewable energy for the supply of heat and electricity: this may be profitable in terms both of meeting the needs of the cooperative itself, and supplying the rest of the community.

The cooperative inhabits (collaborates in the city's culture and social actions), builds (participates in the rehabilitation of the historic centre), produces (generates profitable services for public use), and forms part of a management network and collaboration with other cooperatives. Expanding the offer of services (social, technical, productive, tourism) is a response to the specific needs of the historic centre. Neighbourhood management through a collaboration and feedback network is needed that allows lessons to be drawn from the model implemented, in order to improve and possibly replicate it across the rest of the Cuban territory.

## The Cooperative as a Strategy

Once the key elements of the proposed cooperative housing model have been defined, we must address its implementation in Old Havana. In terms of strategy, the cooperative aims to define the form of its implementation and viability, from its management as a public policy at municipal level through to the development of a comprehensive improvement project in an EMT.

The strategy consists of four phases that structure the process. Each will be shaped by a series of guidelines and instruments included in the *Marco Regulator Cooperativista* (MRC), the proposal's regulatory framework, compendium and core component. Its development is intended to guide the institutional re-

form, generating tools specifically designed to make each of the stages possible, from promotion and evaluation to financing, and providing the keys to its participatory community development. Finally, a set of actors are defined as essential structures in its institutional and community viability. After studying the current management of Old Havana, new agents are proposed that can coordinate the process and would join the existing organisation of the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana. The OHCH structure can guarantee the full development of the heritage rehabilitation, linking it not only to the recovery of buildings and public spaces but also to society, housing, education and health programmes, and humanitarian issues.

The OHCH's interdisciplinary bodies and directorates general work together to manage and execute the recovery, revitalisation and rehabilitation programmes of the historic centre (Rodríguez, 2000). Far from being a rigid structure, the work is coordinated via a complex network of relationships between the different actors, as well as with universities and national and international institutions and organisations. The Office of the Historian's duties and values mean it should play an essential role in fostering the management and regulation of cooperative production. Similarly, as the body in charge of urban planning and management in the Priority Zone for Conservation, the Master Plan (2017) should accommodate the development, promotion, monitoring and feedback of the MRC, the basic mechanism for creating and empowering housing cooperatives.

To make the cooperative model a reality, cooperative actors will have to act as conductors and intermediaries between the OHCH and the communities that live in the EMTs. The Uruguayan cooperative model of mutual aid has been used as a reference for defining these new structures, adapting them to the Cuban context and inserting them into the existing management organisation.

The phases are the backbone of the process and as it develops they integrate the role of each actor and the specific guidelines and instruments designed for each stage. Each phase features a back and forth process between institutions and communities through simultaneous top-down and bottom-up bidirectional feedback.

### ***Phase 1. Starting the cooperative***

The first necessary condition for implementing the cooperative model is a mechanism that makes the community's collective ownership of the building it inhabits viable. Currently, multi-family buildings are broken down into individual legal entities grouped into conventional family units. In order of increasing vulnerability, they may be homeowners, beneficial owners, or find themselves in the state rental system or illegally squatting. In recent years, mechanisms have been established for the transfer of home ownership, focusing on community building

and rehabilitation. The implementation of a legal framework for collective tenure is therefore one of the most important steps in making this habitat management model viable in the long term.

Pilot projects are set up in order to establish viability precedents at municipal level, with Old Havana acting as a laboratory for the cooperative system of building rehabilitation to resolve the housing deficit. The aim is for the previously discussed relationship between housing systems and the *cultura del habitar* to work in both directions. If this new form of habitat management successfully consolidates collective housing models, there will be repercussions for housing systems in terms of deeper legislative and institutional reforms. As mentioned, the most recent update to Cuba's Housing Law promotes social production of habitat models and recognises the Microbrigades as a system. In turn, the "Conceptualization of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development" recognises cooperative ownership as one of the main forms of ownership, as does the new Constitution of the Republic of Cuba approved in 2018.

The proposed instrument for implementing the pilot projects is a Cooperative Habitat Programme in which the organised groups living in the EMT constitute a collective ownership association, as a group of their own. This or any similar framework would be useful as an intermediate way of testing and promoting the cooperative housing model without the protection of a specific legal ownership framework. This programme would function as a call for pilot projects run by the Office of the Historian, and would require start-up funding to ensure it possessed the necessary resources. The Andalusian government's self-build cooperative housing model has been taken as a reference. Studying its replicability and importation would require a broader comparative research exercise to find valid synergies for cooperation between cities twinned with Havana like Cádiz and Seville.

In the Cuban context, the Cooperative Habitat Programme would be managed by Department of Housing Cooperative Projects. This coordinating actor's fundamental requirements and operations would be established by the OHCH. Once the model is implemented, it would be responsible for accompanying cooperative housing construction from the formation of the groups of people to the end of construction. It would be in charge of managing the activity and involvement of the different actors involved in the process, while at the same time serving as a meeting point for them, facilitating communication and creating synergies between them. Specifically, it would supervise the performance of non-profit technical advisory organisations by monitoring and evaluating their compliance with their rights and obligations. This body, a mirror-image of the Uruguayan Cooperative Center, could be part of the OHCH's General Directorate of Architecture and Urbanism, which would encourage coordination with the ex-

isting departments. This is a fundamental role for monitoring and evaluating the activities undertaken and applying facilitation mechanisms and instruments, in order to identify improvements that may aid the different actors or the process itself. It will also aid the search for synergies with international cooperation processes in order to facilitate the exchange of practices and the systematisation and accumulation of participatory housing production experiences to identify possible solutions to apply to new cases.

A second fundamental actor emerges in phase 1, without which the development of the cooperative project would not be possible. These are the technical advisory teams, whose services must be contracted by the community in order to begin the cooperative process. The technical advisory teams are multidisciplinary units of specialists qualified to advise on every part of the process: legal, social, technical-spatial and economic. They are commissions specialised in management, execution and monitoring that accompany the community through the phases of their cooperative project. They would form part of the business system within the OHCH's General Directorate of Investment/Construction and be directly involved with the office's other agents, particularly the DPCV (in charge of coordinating their involvement). But they would work most continuously with the communities. The studies by Gustavo Romero and Rosendo Mesias (2004) and experiences like the Community Architect Programme reveal what technical advice is sought in Cuba and the role and level of participation required of these technical teams to transfer knowledge and capacity in management, action and development to the communities. These teams would be trained in participative methodologies and would control the application of techniques and methods, and assess and encourage their adaptation and appropriation by the community.

The technical advisory teams would support the definition of the cooperative's internal structure and formalise all the components needed to conclude the first phase with the Act of Foundation. A key concept is that the mechanisms for forming a cooperative are not enough, cooperativists must be trained.

A process of educating, training and raising awareness among EMT inhabitants is therefore essential to establish a community with a shared interest in starting a process of joint and comprehensive development, which opts for the cooperative process as the way to undertake a systemic improvement of their habitat through self-management, self-sufficiency and self-production.

### ***Phase 2. Evaluating the cooperative habitat***

In this phase the cooperative is formed, with the communities and the technical advisory teams the key players. The latter act as moderators in the decision-making and negotiation of the parties involved. The relationship between the advi-

sory team and the community is strengthened, and at the end of this phase they will decide the scope of the cooperative project and complete its consolidation.

To begin with, a comprehensive assessment of the cooperative habitat is necessary, evaluating its three parts: physical, social and productive. Nine components are measured according to the parameters and indicators established for the specific context of Old Havana. The cooperative framework (MRC) sets out all the assessment instruments, establishing guidelines that are both defined and at the same time open and responsive, in order that they may later be adapted to each case. An evaluation methodology has been designed that reflects the typology of the EMT and its self-build processes as part of the heritage of Old Havana. This typological analysis of the SPH will be classified and gathered in line with the MRC's guidelines.

We developed a model analysis form that includes the core components established, which may be expanded using whatever information the technical advisory teams consider relevant to each case. In this form, a typical survey of an EMT has been carried out – a *cuartería* in which we place a hypothetical sample of 15 families. Using this model, we categorise 15 different self-build combinations and compose a possible physical reality. This reconstruction is based on studying the EMTs via site visits and studies, photographs and reference documents. The data for studying social and productive conditions are obtained from the Population and Housing Census of the National Office of Statistics and Information (ONEI, 2014), drawing on the most up-to-date statistics in documents from the Master Plan for Old Havana. From this, we obtain the profiles of the inhabitants of the potential cooperative model in order to as accurately as possible gather information on the diversity of the inhabitants of the historic centre.

### **Physical assessment:**

The physical characterisation of the structure and self-building is established by measuring four states: material composition, age, pathologies and critical points. The technical advisory teams will make the final assessment of each housing unit and the shared spaces in order to draw up a technical report on the elements that require repair and determine their diligence.

With the level of overcrowding in Old Havana being a critical factor, it is vital to measure the occupied and built areas to set them against the number of inhabitants. The access to services aims to determine the provision of water, sanitation, bathroom/shower and kitchens in the home and/or community spaces. Supply should be measured by capacity and surface area, as well as the distance to services if they are shared. Cataloguing the electrical and household appliances available to the home is recommended, as it can indicate needs that may be

addressed collectively, while an assessment of the state of grid connections is also advisable.

**Social evaluation:**

For the detailed study of the inhabitants' social conditions, each user's characteristics are determined, along with their individual circumstances, position within the household and the role they play in the community. Family composition is classified according to whether it is a single-person, nuclear, non-nuclear or single-parent household. By analysing each household and its structure the aim is to identify social vulnerability as a parameter.

It is essential to use surveys to gather the qualitative data that is relevant to the project's development in each case: the interpersonal relationships in the community, the proximity to the tourist, the level of rootedness, and so on. The more thorough the advisory team's knowledge of the community is, the better it can design the necessary joint responses and actions.

The tenure status of their housing is essential to the shift to collective tenure. For the formation of the cooperative, the decision on the transfer of property and the new acquisition of rights must be unanimous.

**Productive evaluation:**

To evaluate the income of members of a cooperative project, it is important to measure the productive contribution each user and/or household can make to the development of the cooperative. This contribution can be determined in terms of money or labour. This is necessary for the implementation of the priority strategic actions of the next phase and will require the profiles of the users and their skills to be studied.

The socio-economic profiles of the families are distinguished by whether they could contribute an extra payment, a budget-adjusted contribution, request assistance that could be paid in instalments or, ultimately, non-refundable assistance in cases of greatest vulnerability. Similarly, the degree and form of users' participation in key community development activities will be evaluated according to physical capabilities and availability. As part of this, the method is established of quantifying the hours of work that correspond to each user and the resulting contribution each household may make to the cooperative.

The cross-cutting analysis of these three dimensions is the basis for the negotiation process that will result in the binding contract establishing the cooperative's principles and statutes. Mediation by the technical advisory is essential to build a gradual process of agreements at the physical, social and productive levels. Assemblies will be held to negotiate the contributions and scope of each individual and household in this new collective organisation based on the param-

eters described above. These agreements will make up the sections of a document that is agreed upon but also reviewable and adaptable in line with the project's development. Each community will have a tailor-made process, but the common factor lies in the training of cooperative members: users of a new way of living in a process of reclaiming the collective.

### ***Phase 3. Strategic productive action***

Once the cooperative is consolidated, an analysis of all the components will result in the prioritisation of the actions that require immediate resolution. These are expected to be the transformation and improvement of the critical physical conditions that require urgent correction to meet basic living standards.

At the same time, productive strategic action will be launched to provide an innovative financing mechanism. As mentioned above, this will materialise in the generation of services that bring tourists into the cooperatives, so that their economic contribution can drive the development of the comprehensive improvement process. This must be put in place in the short term, and is a safe initial investment that not all communities will be able to benefit from in the same way.

To address this imbalance and ensure the historic centre's development is comprehensive, the creation of a Housing Cooperatives Finance Unit is proposed, which would be responsible for providing financing to projects that cooperatives self-manage in order to strengthen their competitiveness. This body would be established in the General Directorate of Investment/Construction and would benefit from the support of the other directorates and bodies. The participation of the Economic Directorate is particularly important, as it could divert some of the funds collected for the rehabilitation of the historic centre to the unit. On the one hand, the money would be used to create a revolving fund to grant microcredits for the execution of projects promoted and managed by housing cooperatives. This would offer credit lines to be repaid in full or in part, allocated to the co-financing of investment projects for the promotion and development of cooperatives. On the other hand, a renewable fund would be set up to grant non-repayable assistance to housing cooperatives in need of an economic boost to invest in developing their productive activities.

Depending on the funds available, the finance unit would open calls for cooperatives (via their technical advisory team) to submit their requests based on the social–physical–productive evaluation and the project to be carried out, meaning the funds could be awarded based on criteria of equity and solidarity. However, the funds may not be enough. An aid channel should therefore be considered that includes the participation of the interdisciplinary international cooperation body, which would enable very vulnerable communities to participate who need targeted support to embark on the cooperative process.

Such groups may be those who at any time during the cooperative process lack the funds to hire a technical advisory team and are unable to develop a project by themselves to present to the economic funding calls. Or they may be cooperatives that have developed projects that address their needs alongside advisory teams but which involve significant costs or specialised help. They may be communities with shortages of active people (mentally, physically or economically) to manage the cooperative profitably, or with buildings in very poor structural or constructive condition, which require specialists. The former could receive financial or advisory assistance, provided it fits the requirements of the MRC; while the latter show the need for integrated and constant support.

In response, two financing channels are considered. The first is an aid package generated by donations from international entities that provide financial resources for the promotion of housing cooperatives in highly vulnerable communities. If the funds deriving from the Economic Directorate are insufficient, they could be topped up with resources from this package. The second is a database of international organisations that may agree to international cooperation projects in the form of comprehensive support for the formation of housing cooperatives. This aid answers the specific needs of very vulnerable communities that require support that goes beyond the economic and involves stable accompaniment. Developing housing cooperatives through international cooperation projects would mean external actors offering their responses to the Cuban cooperative process. As well as increasing the visibility of different ways of operating, this would expand the range of measures and instruments and thereby enrich the MRC.

The technical advisory team will be responsible for the design and formulation of this strategic productive action as well as managing its start-up and operation. The members of the cooperatives will participate in this phase in order to supervise and approve the entire process carried out by the technical team. At the same time, throughout the process they will learn the technical advisory team's methodologies, techniques and instruments. The technical advisory team will also need to be aware of its role, the main focus of which will be the transfer of knowledge and skills to the cooperative community. The Cooperative Projects Directorate will follow up on these activities, while the technical team must adapt the MRC's guidelines and instruments to each community.

#### ***Phase 4. Community development project***

With the strategic productive action underway and the most pressing damage repaired, the building's comprehensive rehabilitation strategy is designed (by the technical advisory team and the community), based on the parameters analysed and the experience acquired. Taking the composition of the cooperative into account, a progressive and participatory process of community construction

is defined that is dedicated to promoting the social production of habitat and the use of local self-build techniques, managing the project collectively and generating activities that favour its self-sufficiency. The aim of this whole process is to increase the resilience of the communities by building in a network.

The community will guide the process in this phase. The cooperative's members will have gained the basic skills from the technical team in the previous phase, and the community prepares for the comprehensive self-management of the complex with the technical advisory team's support and accompaniment. The MRC will provide the process with a multitude of facilitating instruments, such as the participatory design and community construction techniques (Oliveras et al., 2007) that will be essential for this phase to develop properly. These instruments are drawn from best practices from international and national experiences that are applicable to the current project, and which the advisory teams must assess and adapt to the cooperative communities. In order to operate independently, cooperatives may obtain a Certificate of Self-Sufficiency when they have acquired the knowledge and skills related to the management and construction of their housing complex. However, to present a development project they must have the support of a technical advisory team (preferably the one worked with previously).

In order to achieve sustainable self-sufficiency, in this phase the cooperative has three key self-sufficiency actions (social, technical and productive) to generate community-managed spaces that complement those already adapted for tourists.

Cooperatives could host community spaces for passing on knowledge related to the technology transfer – a process of generation, adaptation and collective transmission of knowledge that aims to obtain permanent, evolutionary results in the community where it is carried out (Romero & Mesías, 2004: 49). These transfers are always possible in two directions, and between various groups and individuals. This community space could be used for the internal activities of the cooperative and for collective activities in the neighbourhood, forming part of a network of community spaces with complementary functions.

Cooperatives must underline the importance of the complexity of self-build combinations, as well as of using parts prefabricated by the cooperative itself through self-production workshops and technical training. These workshops will be especially useful during the community construction phase, as they will allow self-builders to produce their own building components. Acquiring this knowledge also allows subsequent economic returns through the sale of prefabricated parts, training workshops and knowledge transfer, which work in a network. This will facilitate access to prefabricated materials and components suited to the specific processes of the social production of Havana's housing and habitat, re-

duce material purchasing prices, and develop on-site production systems and the manufacture of innovative components by the commercial sector (Ortiz, 2007).

The last step towards self-sufficiency – solar and photovoltaic energy production – is considered feasible. A minimal initial rooftop installation would achieve heat and electricity energy self-sufficiency for the cooperative and its partners. In the long term, joint investments could be made with more cooperatives or neighbouring buildings in order to set up larger installations and share the energy collected. In both cases, the possibility of returning surplus energy to the public grid in an accessible way is considered to be a productive option.

Developing joint actions will multiply the effects of the services offered by the different cooperatives. Key to this will be the creation of a network of productive housing cooperatives in the historic centre for collaboration and joint learning, which acts as a body of the OHCH. Such networks play an essential role in essential role in the Uruguayan cooperative movement and federations like FUCVAM and FECOVI. The network would fit within the framework of the OHCH's General Directorate of Culture and Education, benefitting from its resources for the training and capacitation of cooperatives and complementing them with the services the cooperatives offer. In turn, it would serve as a direct link with the People's Councils in the historic centre, which will act as neighbourhood managers under the coordination of this network.

At the beginning of the cooperative process, this network would be responsible for disseminating and promoting cooperative principles and values among the actors participating in the process (mainly the OHCH and communities). It would offer technical and professional training linked to cooperativism, and promote theoretical and practical learning to strengthen the social economy. The need would end with the development of self-build and capacity-building activities by the cooperatives themselves. When the housing cooperatives begin to self-build, the network would function as a meeting point for sharing experiences and would facilitate synergies between their actions (social, physical and productive) to bring consistency to the work in the historic centre. At the end of the projects, the network would continue to coordinate the provision of services by the housing cooperatives and would be in charge of publicising them among the population.

The aim of this cooperation between cooperatives is for each community to participate in a network of relationships that allows joint, sustainable and comprehensive development of the historic centre of Old Havana.

## Conclusions

The challenge presented by the current housing problem in Old Havana cannot be addressed from a single disciplinary perspective. This research, which began with the intention of providing a technical response to the self-build complexity in the historic centre, therefore results in a comprehensive strategy that aims to include all possible dimensions of the built reality. Housing cooperatives are proposed as a reflection of the *cultura del habitar* of Havana communities, consolidating and regulating the processes that already exist and acting as intermediaries in the management of the institutional objectives and the needs of the communities. Through this strategy, a model is proposed that complements the existing management of Old Havana.

Faced with this scenario of growth, sustainable development models are needed that are committed to a housing balance that protects the local population from urgent threats. Social policies based on the participation of the communities as key actors in the process must be introduced, with their direct impact ensured by their materialisation as institutional reforms. We must progress towards more effective and complex forms of organisation that guarantee rehabilitation, tenure and access to decent, inclusive and diverse housing. This research opens up reflections on the current scenario and proposes mechanisms, actions and responses from other models of habitat management.

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## Food Access in Cuba: Current Situation and Challenges

### Introduction

As a country, Cuba places great importance on food security. Indeed, all the documents approved by the 7<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba and subsequently endorsed by the National Assembly of People's Power explicitly state that. The *Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista* recognises Cuban citizens' fundamental right to food (see PCC, 2017: 5, 12). Among the guiding principles of the *Plan nacional de desarrollo hasta el 2030* is the need to achieve greater self-sufficiency from domestic food production, increase the productivity and sustainability of agri-food chains in order to strengthen food security and make food production a strategic sector for the country and the necessary guarantee for exercising the right to food (see PCC, 2017: 15, 18, 21). Meanwhile, the *Lineamientos para el período 2016–2021* address issues related to all dimensions of food security (see PCC, 2017: 28–31).

In general terms, Cuba's average daily food consumption indicators are satisfactory when compared to nutritional recommendations. However, these results do not reflect the complexity of the issue, because access to food is a constant concern for many Cuban families.

This chapter aims to determine whether a food access problem really exists in the country, what its main manifestations and consequences are, and what can be done to alleviate tensions in this regard. It is structured into five sections: this introduction is the first; the second addresses the fundamental concepts related to food and nutrition security (FNS); the third, the current food availability and distribution channels in Cuba; the fourth, the issue of access, which is the central component of this work; and finally the fifth contains some ideas on how to improve access to food based on the current situation.

## Conceptual aspects of FNS

The concept of food security within a country means that “all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (World Food Summit 1996, cited by FAO, 2019).

It contains four fundamental dimensions: availability, access, consumption and utilisation, and the stability over time of the previous three (see FAO, 2019).

*Availability* refers to food production, imports, storage and the food aid the country receives. To estimate it, post-harvest losses and exports must be deducted.

*Access* may be physical or economic. The lack of *physical access* refers to food being unavailable in sufficient quantities where its consumption is needed. Issues such as the isolation of certain communities and the lack of road, transport, storage and distribution infrastructure can be obstacles to adequate physical access on a permanent or temporary basis. *Economic access* is linked to people having the income to feed themselves with regularity, quality and dignity given the levels of food prices.

*Consumption* concerns whether household food supplies satisfy nutritional needs and cultural and diversity preferences. It also considers factors such as safety, dignity, the hygienic condition of homes and equitable distribution within the household.

Safety takes in the risks associated with food that may impact people’s health, both those that are natural and those caused by contamination, pathogens or that may increase the risk of chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, among others.

*Utilisation* refers to biological use and is linked to the nutritional status that results from the individual use of foods (ingestion, absorption and utilisation) and health status.

All FNS components are equally important and none is sufficient to guarantee it alone; rather, a combination of all of them is needed to secure FNS objectives.

## Food availability and distribution

To assess food availability in Cuba, data is taken from the National Statistics Office (ONE) publication *Consumo de alimentos*, which is available up until 2008 (ONE, 2009). It evaluates the contribution of apparent food consumption in terms of macro and micronutrients per person per day, and contrasts it with the nutritional recommendations for the Cuban population.

Apparent consumption is a calculation based on food distribution (see ONE, 2007). It provides an approximate picture of what the public consumes in terms of food distributed through retail, social consumption, public food, self-consumption, currency stores and agricultural markets. This estimate takes into account losses in the distribution chain from inedible portions and cooking and household waste.

Retail includes food distributed via direct sales to the population by producers and/or distributors to satisfy rationed consumption (quotas), diets, camping grounds and other allocations that enter the retail network of non-rationed goods. The allocations linked to rationed consumption are universal in scope, with every Cuban citizen receiving this allowance; however, there is differentiation according to age group. For example, children 0–6 years old receive the equivalent of one litre of milk every day. Medical diets that vary in accordance with the particular requirements of a condition are issued via prescription. Other retail sales are made according to demand.

Social consumption consists of the allocation of food to education, public health, sport and other sectors. These other allocations include cyclical consumption (e.g. sugar harvests) and that designated to training, sailing and cabotage crew, special fishing fleets, and defence agencies (MININT and MINFAR), among others.

Public food is what is delivered to the restaurant and catering sector for subsequent sale to the public through its establishments and for the preparation of meals and buffets for special trains and similar services, as well as the allocations that ensure the functioning of workers' canteens. Sales through the restaurant and catering sector are made according to demand, while workers benefit from guaranteed supply through the workers' canteens.

Self-consumption refers to food that is intended for the consumption of sectors that generate agricultural production, such as private peasants, state-owned agricultural companies, non-specialised agricultural production organisations, agricultural production cooperatives (CPAs, in the Spanish initials) and basic units of cooperative production (UBPCs).

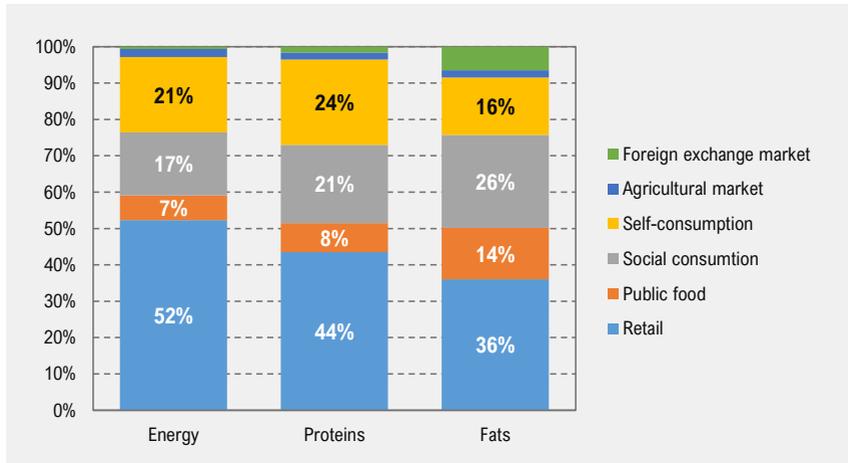
Food is also sold in establishments previously called “foreign-currency shops”<sup>1</sup> that are operated by several different chains (e.g. TRD, Tiendas Panamericanas and Caracol).

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1 The prices of the products in these stores were originally denominated in US dollars. They are currently given in Cuban convertible pesos (CUC). For a few years these establishments have also sold in Cuban pesos (CUP), for which the CADECA currency exchange rate is used. It should be noted that this chapter was written in early 2020, and that since July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, direct food sales to the public in dollars have resumed.

In 2008, food was distributed via these channels in the proportions shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Nutritional contribution of apparent food consumption by distribution source, 2008.**



Source: compiled by authors based on ONE data (2009): *Consumo de alimentos 2008*, September 2009 edition, Havana.

The retail trade mainly serves regulated or rationed consumption, and it is this channel that makes the largest contribution to apparent food consumption. In 2008 it contributed most significantly in terms of energy, while in terms of fat barely exceeded a third of the total.

The second most important channel was self-consumption, with social consumption the third. These distribution channels are available only to the applicable people in each case. Their scope is not universal, but in 2008 they had a greater impact than the pathways determined by demand.

There is no information on food distribution by channel for the last ten years. However, based on the measures implemented in the context of updating the Cuban economic and social model, in some of the channels the following behaviour may be expected:

- Retail: regulated food sales are maintained; however, retail sales are rising of certain basic foods by the state at differentiated prices. Prices in this last sector are high compared to wages, but an effort is made to control the growth

that would emerge if only agricultural markets and foreign currency sales functioned.

- Social consumption: likely to have fallen due to closures of countryside high schools with scholarship students.
- Public food: has probably decreased as a result of the closure of many of the workers' canteens.
- Self-consumption: should have increased since the policy of transferring idle land for beneficial use.
- Agricultural markets: using estimates based on the sales indices, these showed a tendency to grow until 2016; in the last two years they have decreased and a shortage is observed.
- Foreign exchange market: no information is available, but in recent years the import adjustment related to rising short-term debts with suppliers has also led to a contraction of supply.

In the absence of official figures on apparent food consumption after that date, availability has been estimated based on information relating to domestic production and imports. The losses corresponding to distribution, inedible portions and cooking have been deducted, according to the indices used in national planning. Exports are also discounted (including those allocated to tourism). The results are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Apparent food consumption of the Cuban population.**

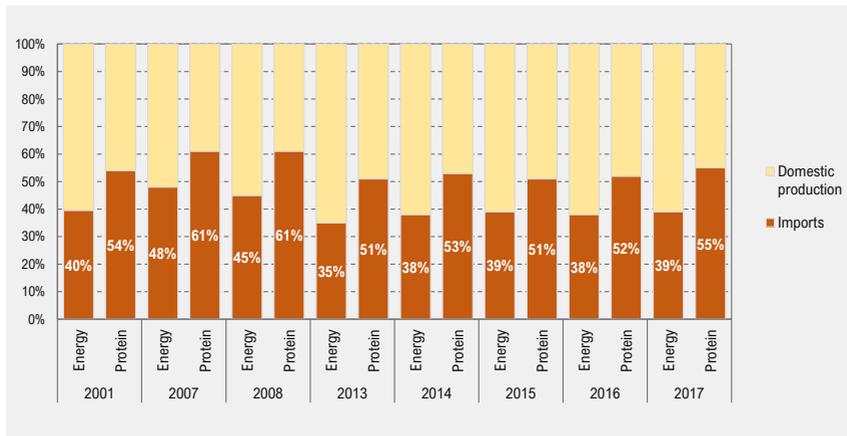


Source: compiled by authors using ONE data (various years, "Food Consumption" and *Anuarios Estadísticos de Cuba*) and ONEI (various years, *Anuarios Estadísticos de Cuba*) and INHA-Minsap (2008).

Based on the estimates for the most recent period, a decline in protein and fat availability is observed as of 2008, affecting one of the components of food security. For these macronutrients, what is available has been oscillating around the required level.

On the other hand, this availability is to a large extent supported by food imports (see Figure 3).

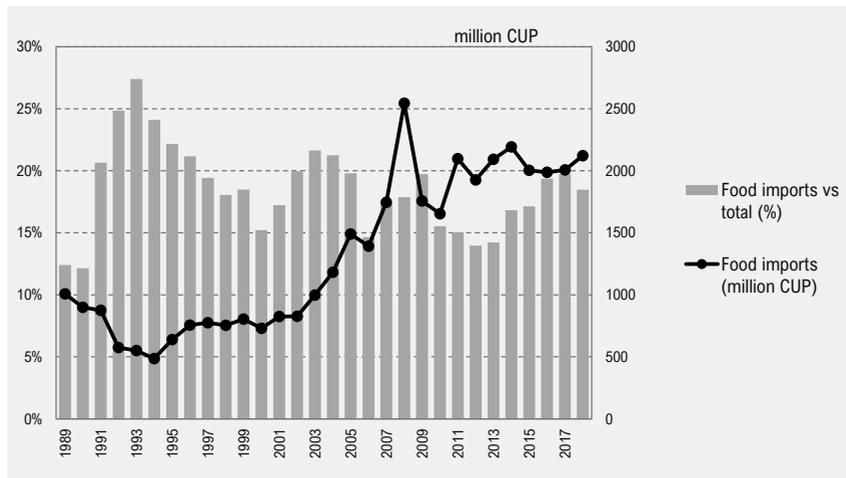
**Figure 3. Contribution of domestic production and imports to apparent food consumption in Cuba.**



Source: compiled by authors.

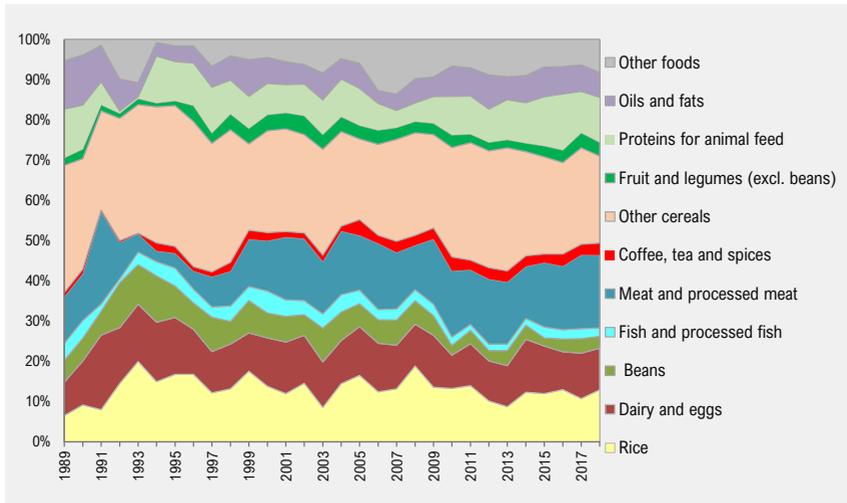
Import dependency is higher for proteins, but imports also supply over a third of dietary energy. An estimate of the import contribution in terms of fats has not been made, but it is undoubtedly high given the shortage of domestic production sources.

External purchases of food average around \$2 billion per year and represent between 15% and 20% of total goods imports (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Food imports as a share of total goods imports (1989–2018).**

Source: compiled by authors using ONE data (several years).

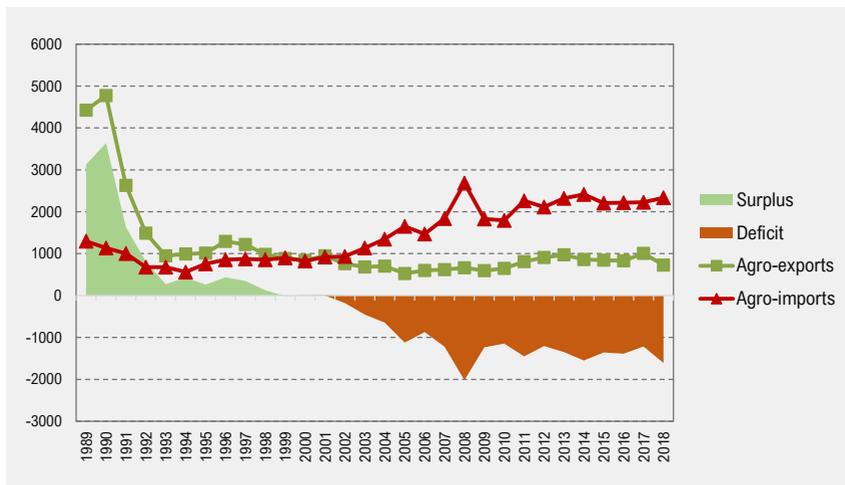
Among the items the country currently imports are rice, beans, edible oils, meat, fish, wheat and other cereals, milk, fruit, vegetables and protein for animal feed (see Figure 5). Several of these items are acquired in order to fulfil regulated consumption and social consumption quotas. Some research (García, 2009; García, Barrios and Echevarría, 2010) shows that almost half could be replaced with domestic production. While there has been a marked emphasis on achieving this goal since 2008, not enough progress has been made over this decade. Rather than substituting imports for domestic production, a process of administrative import contraction has occurred due to the low availability of financial resources in the country.

**Figure 5. Structure of food imports.**

Source: compiled by authors using ONE data (several years).

This tension in external finances is closely linked to the country's poor export performance. In recent years, goods exports have shrunk systematically, with a cumulative fall of 60% between 2011 and 2018. To this is added the loss of income from medical services due to the agreements ending with Brazil and Bolivia, and the economic difficulties in Venezuela, a key destination. This puts acquisition in foreign markets at risk, both of food and inputs for agricultural production.

Specifically, a permanent deficit in the agricultural trade balance has existed since 2001 due to the loss of the sugar agribusiness, which was for many years the engine of the Cuban economy (see Figure 6). As a whole, the value of agro-product exports comprises less than a quarter of that generated in 1989.

**Figure 6. Agricultural trade balance.**

Source: compiled by authors using ONE data (several years).

## Food access

In terms of physical access, not enough food is always supplied to the markets to guarantee people's nutritional demands and needs are fully met. Several factors affect this: the seasonality of domestic production (around 70% of harvests are in the winter months); the lack of adequate infrastructure for the storage, conservation and processing of these products in order to maintain systematic supply throughout the year; and other aspects already mentioned in the previous section, such as, for example, cuts to food imports.

Rationed consumption is able to guarantee a level of both physical and economic access to food via highly subsidised prices. The quantities it provides meet the nutritional recommendations for those under seven years old. However, they do not guarantee the necessary dietary diversity. In particular, they do not provide foods that are rich in dietary fibre, or fresh fruit and vegetables. For those aged seven or older, they provide around 55% of the recommended energy, 50% of the recommended protein, and a third of the fat. The population group aged from 14 to 60 years old receives the smallest proportions (only 43% of the recom-

mended energy, 34% of the recommended protein and 26% of the fat).<sup>2</sup> In these cases the problem of low diversity remains.

To meet nutritional needs use must be made of the various forms of free market, where high food prices prevail. Some of these markets show an upward trend in prices over recent years (see García and Anaya, 2017).

Certain groups face access disadvantages due to income. Among them are the beneficiaries of social assistance, retirees and workers in the budgeted state sector without an additional income source other than what they receive via pensions and salaries. This problem may be more prevalent among female heads of household and single mothers who depend solely on their salaries or social assistance and who do not have a family support network.

In Cuba, systematic surveys are made of households' economic situation, but this information is not in the public domain. Hence, the authors of this work have addressed the issue in several studies (see Anaya and García, 2007; 2014; 2018a; and 2018b). The estimate is based on constructing a budget of basic expenses for a household of three for one month.<sup>3</sup>

As the sociodemographic composition of a three-person household may vary, several possible structures were considered: two adults of working age and one elderly person (with pension and without); one adult of working age, a minor and an elderly person (with pension and without); two adults of working age and one minor. Each family structure produces its own level of household income and generates different food expenses due to the varied access to subsidised sources and their distinct levels of household income. Other expenses may differ due to the presence of an elderly person in the home who requires particular expenditure on medicines or certain foods, but without gathering specific information these details cannot be known.

Of the basic expenses per household, those that grant access to essential living conditions have been considered: food, clothing and footwear, hygiene and cleaning products, medicines, transport, electricity, water and gas. These expenses do not include education or health services, as the state provides those universally and free of charge; nor do they include rent, as most people live in their own homes.

Table 1 shows the contrast between estimated per capita food expenditure and average and minimum wages and pensions corresponding to 2017 and

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2 The nutritional recommendations for the Cuban population by the Institute of Nutrition and Food Hygiene in October 2008 have been used for the calculations (see INHA-Minsap, 2008).

3 This is the approximate average household size in Cuba, according to the 2012 Population and Housing Census (see ONEI, 2014: 69).

2018.<sup>4</sup> The comparison with the total basic consumption expenses referred to above is also included. Following the same methodology as previous studies, we work with two variants of food consumption:

- A “basic variant”, in which the range of food and expenses beyond that provided by rationing and the other subsidised food distribution channels are supplemented through purchases in agricultural markets. These purchases are limited to products that form part of the traditional Cuban diet, such as rice, beans, root vegetables and pork.
- An “improved variant” in which supplementation includes products beyond what is considered the traditional diet, adding others that bring greater quality and variety to the diet. One example is the incorporation of the daily consumption of 400 grams of fruit and vegetables (according WHO recommendations, 2015 and 2017),<sup>5</sup> as well as a glass of milk, poultry meat and vegetable oil.
- Supplementation means incorporating the quantities of food needed to reach the necessary apparent food consumption (about 3,200 kcal per day per capita in terms of energy) estimated by the authors for 2016 and to achieve consumption equivalent to the nutritional recommendation for the Cuban population (2300 kcal per day per capita also in terms of energy, according to the INHA, 2008).

Table 1 includes a range for minimum and maximum expenses (both on food and in total), as these vary according to the different family compositions considered.

The first thing that stands out from the information in Table 1 is that in 2017 neither salaries nor minimum pensions were sufficient to meet the food expenses of the basic variant and an average calorie consumption of about 3,200 kcal per day. Accessing the improved variant would mean incurring additional expenses per person of between 70 and 100 CUP per month on top of the basic variant. Even the recent rise in the minimum pension would not permit this.

Even based on a more modest level of consumption that fits the nutritional recommendations for the Cuban population, those on minimum wages and

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4 By salaries we refer to the monthly direct remuneration accrued on average by a worker in state employment and *entidades mixtas* (public-private ownership); and the pensions and benefits everyone receives based on their age and years of service as an employee for the rest of their life.

5 “... a minimum of 400g of fruit and vegetables per day (excluding potatoes and other starchy tubers) for the prevention of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity, as well as for the prevention and alleviation of several micronutrient deficiencies, especially in less developed countries”. <https://www.who.int/dietphysicalactivity/fruit/en/>

pensions struggle to access a diet that provides the desired energy content and includes greater variety in its consumption (fruit, vegetables, dairy and vegetable fat).

The magnitude of food expenditure as a proportion of average salaries in the community, social and personal services sector in both the basic and improved variants and for an energy consumption of 3,200 kcal per day also deserves comment. At over 50%, the level is excessive, given that families also have other important basic household expenses: services of all kinds (electricity, gas and water above all) and non-food consumer goods.

The comparison contrasts spending with income of a certain magnitude per capita. If another dependent person (either a minor or a senior) must be supported with that income, the situation becomes much more restrictive.

**Table 1. Consumer spending (per capita, monthly) and its comparison with salaries and pensions (average and minimum)**

	Food expenses				Total expenses			
	Basic variant		Improved variant		Basic variant		Improved variant	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
<b>As an absolute value (CUP)</b>								
With consumption equivalent to the average in 2016	224	255	329	355	352	386	655	703
With consumption equivalent to the required level	127	158	198	242	258	289	535	590
<b>As a percentage</b>								
<b>With consumption equivalent to the average in 2016</b>								
Average salary 2017	29%	33%	43%	46%	46%	50%	85%	92%
Average salary for community, social and personal services 2017	36%	41%	53%	57%	56%	62%	105%	113%
Minimum salary 2017	99%	113%	146%	158%	157%	171%	291%	313%
Average pension 2017	78%	89%	115%	124%	123%	135%	229%	246%
Minimum pension 2017	112%	127%	164%	178%	176%	193%	328%	352%
Minimum pension 2018	92%	105%	136%	147%	146%	159%	271%	291%
<b>With consumption equivalent to the required</b>								
Average salary 2017	17%	21%	26%	32%	34%	38%	70%	77%
Average salary for community, social and personal services 2017	20%	25%	32%	39%	41%	46%	86%	95%
Minimum salary 2017	56%	70%	88%	108%	115%	128%	238%	249%
Average pension 2017	44%	55%	69%	85%	90%	101%	187%	207%
Minimum pension 2017	63%	79%	99%	121%	129%	144%	267%	295%
Minimum pension 2018	52%	65%	82%	100%	107%	119%	221%	244%

Source: compiled by authors based on Anaya and García (2017) and ONEI (2018).

Regarding the contrast between total basic consumption expenditure and average and minimum wages and pensions, it is notable that neither wages nor minimum pensions are sufficient to cover estimated levels of expenditure, not even for the basic variant with lower calorie consumption. Similarly, those who depend on average pensions find it difficult to cover their consumption expenses. Those with average salaries have better access, but the number of economically dependent family members will be decisive.

Moreover, the difficulties multiply if it is necessary to take on expenses above those considered basic – for example, for purchasing equipment and other household items, paying private parties for services (equipment repair, transport, caring for children, the sick or the elderly in order to be able to work, and others that the state provision does not cover), the acquisition of non-school books and entertainment.

### ***What can be done to improve access?***

In order to improve access and to achieve greater food security in general, a set of actions is proposed that are discussed below.

#### *Change the approach to food security*

- Produce and/or import safe, healthy food in sufficient quantities to satisfy needs and preferences, as set out by the FNS concept.
- Address food provision with a focus on food security. Producing large quantities of food is important, but so is what food is being produced, its level of acceptance, and how safe and nutritious it can be.
- Understand that this issue is not solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture and other organisations linked to food production.
- Design specific policies for the non-state sector, which is increasingly important in food production and distribution. Coordinate it with the state sector in order to contribute on food security.

*Create a space for coordinating all the agencies and institutions that support and evaluate food security in Cuba, so that this issue is comprehensively analysed and projected.*

- The bodies that issue macroeconomic policies (MEP, MFP, BCC).
- The bodies that issue production policies (Minag and Minal).
- The bodies related to the food trade (Mincin and Mincex).
- The bodies and institutions that evaluate how food is consumed and used (Minsap, INHA).
- Design a system of indicators and incentives to support the goal of greater food security in all its dimensions.

*Increase the availability of food from existing reserves in:*

- Primary production: increase agricultural yields, introduce new varieties with greater productive potential and better seasonal distribution, decrease post-harvest losses, strengthen the focus on demand and nutritional considerations.
- Processing and conservation: reduce losses of raw materials, introduce technologies that preserve and/or enrich the nutritional content of food.
- Distribution: review the retail sales network in order to guarantee the proximity of food outlets to the entire Cuban population; evaluate the effectiveness of food market segmentation in current conditions.
- The capitalisation of the sector: notable heterogeneity exists between agricultural producers. Some have accumulated considerable resources that allow them to take on certain functions, such as, for example, the direct importation of inputs and capital goods and the management of this market; and the channelling of their savings through an agricultural development bank.
- Support services for food value chains: financing, supply of inputs and investment goods, storage, transportation and scientific and technical services.
- The infrastructure to support the chain: among them, the road network and services such as telephony, electricity and communications stand out.
- Living conditions in rural areas: guarantee basic services, such as health, education, retail trade, recreation and transportation, which stimulate people to settle and remain in these areas and, therefore, farm.

*Study the current mechanisms interconnecting the different actors so that import substitution programmes represent an effective stimulus to producers.*

- Direct sales to tourism could become a means both of import substitution and of improving processes and products for related producers through the removal of administrative obstacles, such as the way transactions are made between parties. For example, some forms of production have to be sold through the state company to which they are linked, since they do not have accounts in CUC.
- As the stimulating effect of import substitution is not immediate, a mechanism must be created that allows the resources it releases to be applied to investment in the agricultural sector.

*Achieve a more suitable design for food markets that allows:*

- Higher percentages of domestic production to go to agricultural markets, which could have an impact on prices.
- Price formation that is more in line with the interplay of supply and demand, with an emphasis on prices set in CUC serving as a reference for prices in other market spaces.

- Physical access for the entire Cuban population. The absence of points of sale, even in urban areas, hinders access, especially to people with disabilities and the elderly in a context of accelerated demographic ageing.

*Transform current protection systems and the universal nature of some subsidies*

- Food distribution targeting specific groups such as the Sistema de Atención a la Familia and workers' canteens need modifying due to their very limited effectiveness. Delivering food stamps to the intended beneficiaries of these channels and/or extending the cash payment system in work centres might be considered.
- Another element that should be highlighted concerns the universality of subsidies for products distributed through rationing. Remittances, the dynamic development of a non-state sector in which personal income has outgrown the average salary by several times, and the modification of migration regulations to promote longer stays abroad are all factors that seem to recommend reassessing the efficiency of the universality of this assistance.

In short, all the elements of food security must be considered elements of national security and constitute an essential factor in the people's living conditions that must be improved immediately. On the basis of this work, it is considered that sufficient reserves exist to achieve this.

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## **Part II: Institutional Transformation of economic life**



*José Antonio Alonso and Pavel Vidal*

## **The difficulties of Institutional Change in Cuba**

### **1 Introduction**

Until they collapsed in the 1990s, Cuba's key – not to say only – commercial and financial relations were with the socialist economies of Eastern Europe. For the almost three decades since, the Cuban economy has been immersed in an endless and confusing reform process meant to lay the foundations of a new model of growth and international relations. Granting greater economic scope to private actors has been at the heart of this process, but only within a remarkably restrictive regulatory framework, which maintains the state's centralised control over the economic allocation and distribution processes. This hybrid model has proven unsuccessful and produced notable dysfunctions, which are expressed in the Cuban economy's limited levels of growth, structural change and external competitiveness.

A lack of clarity about the purpose of the reform means the process has taken a rather tortuous path: forward steps are followed by setbacks, measures are attempted and subsequently abandoned, and promising initiatives are announced only to end up being reversed. In general, the process has been characterised by its partial, fragmented nature, and the absence of a comprehensive vision and an explicit, planned timetable. The key measures for establishing a new model of accumulation based on a greater role for the market – ending monetary duality, dismantling the state monopoly in agricultural marketing, and enshrining producers' decision-making autonomy, among others – have receded, despite occasionally being announced and garnering adequate levels of consensus.

Taken as a whole, the Cuban reform process has had three different stages. Fidel Castro was still in office for the first – between 1990 and 2008 – and the reforms were seen as a necessary evil intended to prevent greater ills. Attempts were thus made to limit the reforms to the strictly essential and, where circumstances allowed, to make them reversible. Raúl Castro's replacement of his brother as head of state began a second stage in which the reforms were seen as an objective that was desirable and even to a large extent inevitable. Keeping the inherited system intact was thought to be a certain route to failure, making a profound "*actualización*" (update) of the economic model necessary. But as Raúl

Castro's mandate progressed the reformist momentum of this stage faltered. Finally, the third stage began with the generational change in the state leadership. This stage was characterised by a number of previously planned regulatory changes (constitutional change being the most important) and some modification of the management style in the governing bodies, but the slow pace of the reforms was essentially maintained and in some cases led to regressions from what seemed to be the desired objective (such as, for example, the return to a degree of dollarisation of the economy).

Each stage has its own tone, but three features seem to run through the entire period. The first is the *persistent failure to define the precise goal to which the reform should lead the Cuban economy*. The strategic documents that make reference to the reform are notably vague in this regard.<sup>1</sup> They tend to use somewhat political language and a wishful tone, and make extremely limited commitments to the potential scheduling and priorities of future reforms. Another notable absence is a diagnosis of the starting point using internationally comparable metrics, and the presentation of intermediate and end goals backed by verifiable public data. The lack of planning of the sequence of the reforms inevitably increases the uncertainty for both national and international economic actors, effectively penalising them for investing in the country.

The second consistent feature also derives from the absence of a precise goal: *the partial and fragmentary nature of the reforms*. Thus far, no comprehensive framework of the reform process has been constructed that brings coherence to the changes. Instead, a pattern has been established of opting for partial changes that are tentative, experimental and always subject to modification (or reversal), if the conditions require. There are two consequences of this: i) the regulatory framework becomes more variable, reducing the predictability of the rules; and ii) the fragmentary and uncoordinated approach to decision-making prevents the reforms from giving sense to others made in complementary fields.

Finally, the third feature is that the economic reforms have generally been carried out with the *least possible institutional change*. Aspects of the regulatory and institutional framework that are less important or less controversial have been selected in order to limit or avoid political resistance. While this has managed to reduce the opposition of the most pro-continuity sectors, it has also diminished the scope of the reform and the foreseeable impact of the changes. An attempt has been made to change the Cuban economy's operational logic without altering the institutional framework in which the economy operates (or changing

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1 We refer to: *Los lineamientos de política económica y social del partido y la revolución para el periodo 2016–2021*; the *Plan nacional de desarrollo económico y social 2030 de Cuba*; and the *Conceptualización del modelo económico y social cubano de desarrollo socialista*.

it as little as possible). This resistance to institutional change, which is to a large extent political, is the key to understanding how the reforms are being carried out in Cuba, their partial and fragmentary nature, the absence of a comprehensive vision of the process and the lack of precision about the scenario it is intended to produce.

However, if progress is made in line with the reform programme announced for 2021, this characterisation of the reform may no longer apply. This would mark the beginning of a new phase of more substantial and dynamic changes that seeks to transform the logic of the economic allocation processes in Cuba. Phasing out the convertible peso (CUC) is at the heart of the process announced, along with significant corrections to the exchange rate, relative prices and subsidy system. In parallel, the government intends to make ambitious improvements to wages (and pension and retirement policies) in public companies and entities with a view to protecting the incomes of this majority group of workers, particularly from any inflationary effects produced by the exchange rate devaluation. It is also meant to correct the trend of progressive decline in the living conditions of these segments of the population. The partial opening up of the economy has undoubtedly widened the income gaps between families with links to the private sector and access to international remittances, and those that still depend on depressed state salaries and pensions.

“Monetary ordering” and “unification” appear to be the drivers of this new phase, but doubts remain about the scope of the measures and the consistency of their continuing application over the coming years. In fact, beyond “day zero” the exact sequence of the changes remains unknown, and uncertainty continues to surround the exchange system that will result, the guarantees of the Cuban peso’s convertibility, and the support state companies will receive to adjust to the new costs and prices. The depth of the other structural changes announced to accompany the monetary and exchange rate adjustments, particularly those relating to agriculture, self-employed workers, and small and medium-sized private enterprises, also remain unknown.

While these uncertainties make it difficult to anticipate the scope of this new bout of reforms, they confirm that the features of the previous reforms remain intact: loosely defined goals, fragmented measures, and a reluctance about institutional change. The measures will affect a more central part of the economic system, and may trigger subsequent reforms, but the way the changes are presented makes it hard to believe that the limitations that characterised previous episodes will be overcome. Hence, viewing the process as a whole, after more than 30 years of reform, the crucial question is what lies behind the Cuban authorities’ stubborn resistance to a more comprehensive and coherent reform of the insti-

tutional framework in which its economy operates. Answering this question will help us understand the prospects for the new set of reforms.

As with any process of institutional change, a complex arithmetic of interests is implicit in the reform of the Cuban economy. There are those who believe they will benefit from the changes, there is resistance generated by institutional inertia, immobility among those who benefit from the status quo and fear among those concerned they will lose their position in the social structure. If the reform is to succeed, the authorities must anticipate and manage these tensions.

The vagueness of the goal, the patchy nature of the reforms and the partial compensations seem to have been designed by the Cuban authorities to prevent the sectors most resistant to the reform from digging their heels in. The government has justified its recourse to excessive gradualism on the grounds of minimising the social costs potentially generated by the reforms. Over time, however, this strategy seems merely to have delayed the changes, frustrated the hopes of the most dynamic social sectors (particularly young people) and protected the capacity for action of the sectors most opposed to larger-scale and broader economic reform. Meanwhile, the worsening financial situation, stagnant economic growth and low rates of investment have caused serious regressions in various social areas, including the quality of health and education services and the technological development of the production apparatus.

This work intends to discuss the possible reasons for the resistance to institutional change in Cuba. To this end, a political economy approach will be adopted, in an attempt to identify the conflicts of interest that support and oppose this process. It will be shown that the sectors with greatest access to power are relatively unyielding to reform, while those who most support the reforms have limited access to decision-making processes. At the same time, a widening generation gap is dividing the population, which is affecting the values, beliefs and expectations of Cuba's people about the country's future.

The work is structured into four sections in addition to this introduction. The second section aims to confirm whether Cuba's institutional quality has undergone any perceptible changes during the reform process; the third section explains the resistance to institutional change by considering the characteristics of formal and informal institutions and applying them to the Cuban reality; the fourth section makes a political economy analysis to identify the sectors that favour and resist reform; finally, in a brief final section, some conclusions are drawn.

## 2 Lack of progress

To be effective, economic reforms must be accompanied by institutional changes. Ultimately, all economic reform seeks to promote change in agents' behaviour, meaning the regulatory and normative frameworks that guide social behaviour must also be altered. The framework of economic and social incentives within which Cubans operated in the past is undergoing a process of progressive extinction and must be replaced by another that is consistent with the aims of the proposed reform. The question this section attempts to answer is: has an effective change occurred in the quality of Cuba's institutional framework during the reform period?

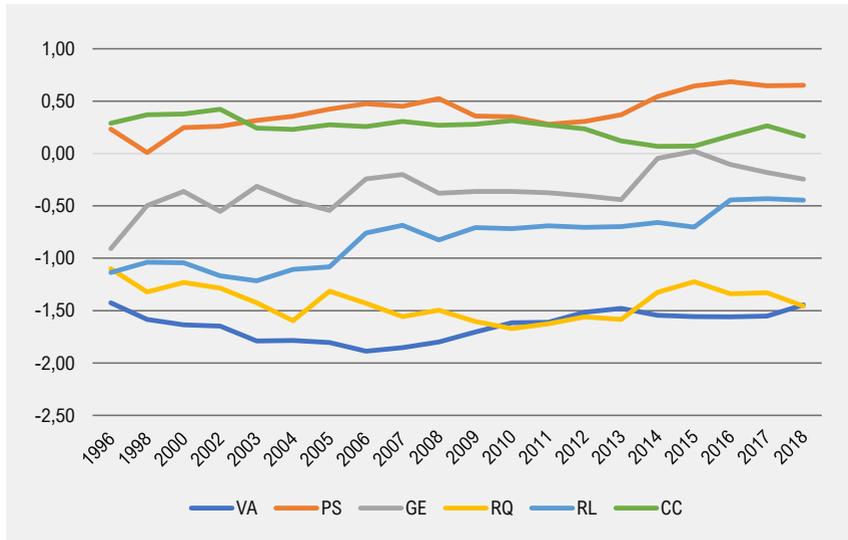
Providing an objective answer to this question is no simple matter, for two reasons. The first relates to the limited reliability of the existing databases on institutional quality. All of the indicators available at international level draw criticism, either for their fragile theoretical foundations, the subjective nature of the sources on which they draw, or the limited comparability of the results both between countries and over time (Malito et al., 2018). The second difficulty is specific to Cuba: the majority of the most widely used databases contain little information about the country. Exceptions to this general rule are the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Index (WGI), and the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), two of the most reliable sets of indicators in this field. A third source of information is the *Cuba Standard Business Confidence Survey*, which has researched the main obstacles entrepreneurs face to developing their businesses in the Cuban market since 2015. Further reference will be made to these three indicators in what follows.

The WGI uses over 30 information sources, with data for over 200 countries grouped into six basic dimensions supposedly associated with the quality of institutions.<sup>2</sup> The evolution of the six dimensions is reflected in Graph 1, with data for the entire period available. The data have been rescaled in relation to the global

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- 2 The WGI covers six different dimensions of governance, using hundreds of variables gathered, in most cases, from the opinions of non-governmental organisations, experts and economic decision-makers (Kaufmann et al., 2010). The six dimensions of governance can, in turn, be grouped into three large chapters, each of which is assigned two indicators:
- (a) The process by which governments are elected, chosen, monitored and replaced is encompassed in: i) Voice and Accountability; and ii) Political Stability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism;
  - (b) The government's capacity to effectively formulate and implement sound policies is covered by: iii) Government Effectiveness; and iv) Regulatory Quality; and
  - (c) The respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern social and economic interactions is assessed via: v) Rule of Law; and vi) Control of Corruption.

average, with their values ranging from -2.5 to +2.5, and incorporating the data for Cuba. The World Bank database also provides information on the variance of the data, which helps estimate the margin of error in the data and determine the degree of significance of the variables.

**Figure 1: Evolution of institutional quality indicators for Cuba**



Source: Based on WGI data from the World Bank.

Note: VA: Voice and Accountability; PS: Political Stability and Absence of Violence; GE: Government Effectiveness; RQ: Regulatory Quality; RL: Rule of Law; DC: Control of Corruption

An overview of this set of indicators allows the following conclusions to be drawn:

- First, in four of the six indicators Cuba ranks below the global average, revealing clear shortcomings in terms of institutional quality. Only in two dimensions – Political Stability and Control of Corruption – does it sit slightly above this average, although at some distance from the higher values. This result seems to align with expectations. Cuba's Political Stability score shows the stability of the political system over time, as well as the absence of violence and manifestations of terrorism. Although corruption exists, it remains relatively under control. There is day-to-day petty corruption (privileged access to services or obtaining consumer goods through unauthorised channels) and another type related with officials in state-owned companies who divert prod-

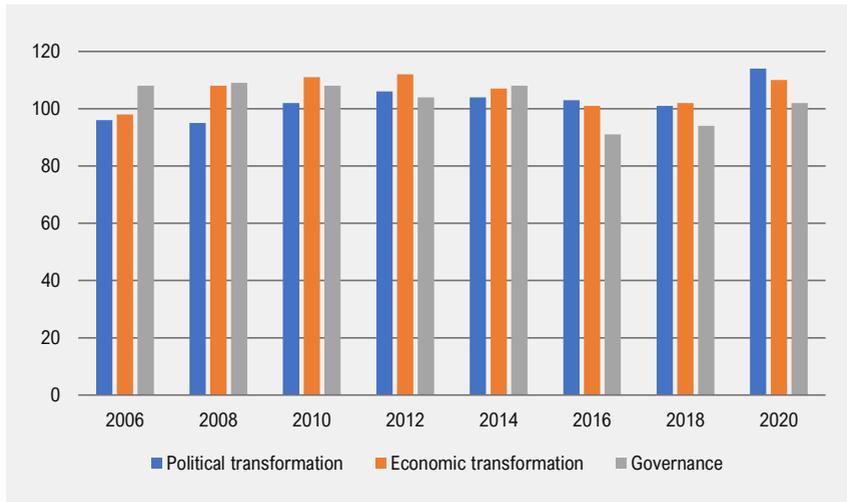
ucts to the black market, but larger-scale corruption phenomena are relatively unknown. The absence of a free media is an obstacle to greater public awareness of corrupt behaviour.

- Second, Voice and Accountability and Regulatory Quality are the dimensions in which Cuba scores lowest, placing to the bottom decile of the global distribution. The first of these dimensions relates to citizens' capacity to elect their representatives, critically monitor public decisions and demand corresponding accountability, all of which are areas where the Cuban political system is clearly deficient. But the government's capacity is also revealed to be poor when it comes to producing quality regulation, defining public policies and regulating the private sector – key to evaluating the process of economic reforms undertaken so far.
- Third, no meaningful improvement is evident in Cuba's relative position in terms of institutional quality throughout the period under consideration. Three indicators – Rule of Law, Political Stability and Government Effectiveness – show a slight upward trend, but not to statistically significant levels. It may be that the processes of institutionalising the current regulatory frameworks, including the recent constitutional change, and the stability of the process of substitution in the governing elites have contributed to the improvements in the Rule of Law and Political Stability. Government Effectiveness concerns the quality of public service provision, which shows a very slight improvement compared to the Special Period of the 1990s. In any case, it should be reiterated that the slight rise noted in the data falls short of statistical significance.
- Finally, the other dimensions either fail to improve or worsen (as is the case with Control of Corruption).

In summary, the WGI data as a whole show no significant improvement in Cuba's institutional quality in the period in which the reform process was rolled out.

A similar picture emerges from the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), another of the better-founded institutional quality indicators. What is measured in this case is the capacity of institutions to face the challenges that arise in three specific areas: politics, economics and governance. In this case the data gathering is biennial, but the time frame of the data available is sufficient to note whether any advances are detectable. Graph 2 shows Cuba's ranking out of the 137 countries for which data exists in each of the years and each of the dimensions considered.

**Figure 2. Cuba's institutional quality according to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index**



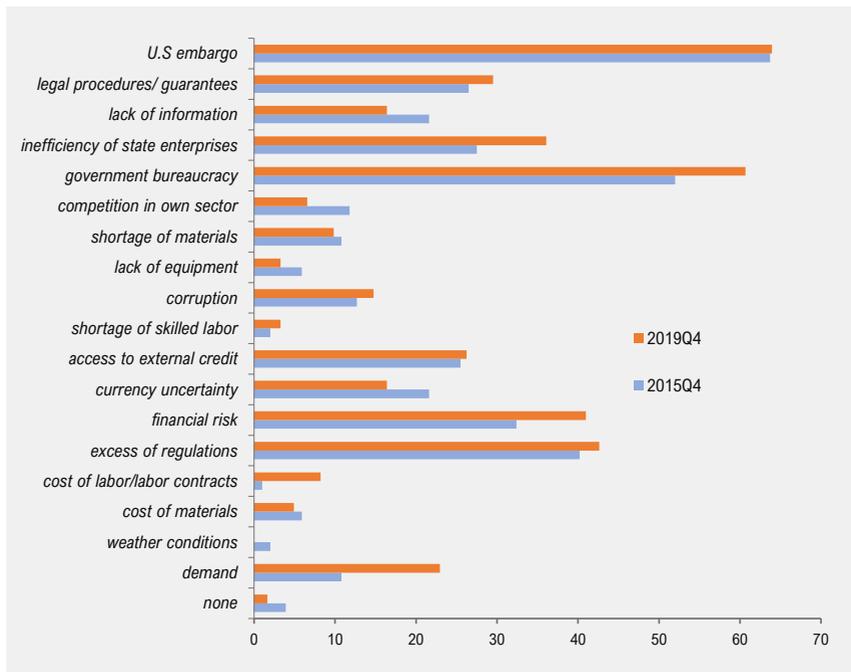
Here it is also possible to draw two general conclusions:

- First, Cuba scores best on Governance, although the differences from the other two dimensions (Political Transformation and Economic Transformation) are relatively minor. In all cases, Cuba is around the border between the fourth and fifth quintile in the distribution of countries by levels of institutional quality.
- Second, taking the period as a whole, all three indicators show Cuba's relative position decline. The path has not been linear, but the data reveal that, on an international scale, Cuba appeared to be better positioned in 2006 than 2020, although a degree of caution must be applied to this assessment given the imperfect nature of some of the indicators. What does seem to be confirmed is that, based on this indicator, no impactful progress has been made on Cuba's institutional framework.

The *Cuba Standard Business Confidence Survey* has been conducted on a quarterly basis since 2015 on a sample of around 100 businesspeople with links to the Cuban market. One of the questions in the survey relates to the main obstacles entrepreneurs face in creating or expanding their businesses in the Cuban market. Over a four-year period the same obstacles are repeatedly encountered. The most commonly cited is the embargo by the United States (US) government

(about 64%); this percentage remained unchanged in both the period of easing under the Obama administration and the more recent tightening under Donald Trump. In both cases, businesspeople saw the US policy towards Cuba as the most restrictive factor of those listed, which is a reflection of the constant prohibitions on investment and trade that have for decades formed the nucleus of the embargo, and which remain essentially unaltered.

**Figure 3. What factors are hindering the possibility of creating/expanding business in/ with Cuba?**



Source: Cuba Standard Business Confidence Survey.

As well as indicating the enormous external restriction that the embargo effectively represents to normal international insertion and the development of projects on the island, the respondents also highlighted internal factors, some of which are noticeably institutional. Cuban governmental bureaucracy, excessive regulation, inefficient state-owned companies and legal procedures were repeatedly cited as major obstacles by respondents. In fact, grouped together these four factors would add up to twice the importance given to the embargo. What is

most remarkable is that in these five years, despite attempts to advance a reform process, those surveyed believe that backwards steps have been taken in all of these obstacles. Monetary, financial and credit factors comprise a third set of obstacles, which are associated with the continuity of the monetary and exchange rate duality, and the financial uncertainty generated by the whole regulatory and institutional framework, and which might also be linked to the handling of macroeconomic policies and the erratic administration of foreign debt.

None of the three metrics referred to in this section is perfect, but their concordance means that we can more convincingly conclude that any institutional improvement prompted by the Cuban reform process is virtually marginal.

This conclusion supports Alonso's (2020) proposed understanding of Cuba as an example of a model of change characterised by institutional stickiness. This model describes cases in which institutional inertia is so powerful that any changes occur only occasionally and are very gradual in scope.<sup>3</sup> The result is to render institutional change barely perceptible, generating a dissonance between the rigidity of formal institutional frameworks and the fluidity of informal institutions activated by a changing society and a rapidly mutating reality (Alonso and Vidal, 2020). The pertinent question, then, is what factors explain the resistance to institutional change in Cuba. We will start by describing the difficulty of the task before referring to the political economy of the process of change.

### 3 Explanatory factors of institutional inertia

The institutional framework of any country is formed of both formal and informal institutions. The formal institutions are expressed via explicit rules or laws that are publicly known and accompanied by an exogenous system of sanctions to ensure compliance (enforcement). The informal are based on norms, values, beliefs and expectations that are in many cases tacit and rely on moral (or reputational) sanctions that promote an endogenous process of compliance (self-enforcement). Clear differences exist between these two types of institution, but both are present in every society, mutually influencing each other through complex relationships of various types.

To understand the effectiveness of the institutional framework, we must explore whether its formal and informal institutions possess congruent logics and objectives. If congruence exists, a process of reinforcing agents' compliance with

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3 This is distinct from three other possible models of institutional change. Namely, one inspired by "critical junctures", when the change is occasional and radical; "gradualism", when change is frequent and gradual; and "serial replacement", where the change is frequent and radical (see Alonso, 2020; and Alonso & Vidal, 2020).

expected behaviour may occur, in accordance with the provisions of the two types of institution. Thus, for example, the reliance of informal institutions on agents' voluntary disposition for compliance may help reinforce a compliance with rules and laws that does not depend on the coercive mechanisms of these formal structures; and, in turn, the formal framework helps preserve norms, values and expectations that form part of the existing informal institutional framework. For example, the world of social networks and collaborative platforms (originally informal institutions) is congruent with the functioning of business-oriented market institutions (formal).

The opposite occurs when the operational logics and respective objectives of formal and informal institutions clash. What happens in such cases, in practice, is either that certain rules are accommodated or displaced by others (at a cost to the functioning of both), or they directly conflict with one another, which weakens them or prevents their proper functioning. An example of accommodation is provided by the African-origin religions preserved in informal institutions in Cuba and Brazil in a context of formal dominance by Catholicism – considered the official religion by the colonial power. The result was hybridisation, a syncretism that masks the references of one religion beneath the formal appearance of the other, with neither being completely faithful to its original content. An example of conflict between formal and informal institutions is the recourse of families in Cuba to buying products on the black market or via direct purchases from peasants: while formally prohibited, informally this is an accepted practice. The consequence is that the formal rule is not complied with and ceases to modulate agents' behaviour.

This difference between formal and informal institutions is also useful for explaining the dynamics of institutional change. In principle, it is assumed that formal institutions can be altered through deliberate decisions taken at a given time in a centralised process enacted through the bodies that possess the capacity to draw up the rules (e.g. the government or parliament). The decisions taken in these fields are, in turn, the sometimes uncertain result of the lobbying capacity of the various interest groups affected by the change. Even a largely top-down or centralised decision may have its origins in a prior, more decentralised (bottom-up) process of challenging or questioning the rules that drives the institutional change. In fact, many institutional changes are preceded by the rules being weakened by a growing dissonance between what the norm establishes and agents' expectations. At any rate, what is important is that the change is ultimately expressed in a centralised decision (for example, of the drafting of a new law).

For their part, informal institutions evolve through decentralised, dispersed processes of prolonged, gradual changes in agents' perceptions, beliefs and expectations. It is a blind process, an evolutionary response by social actors to con-

tinual changes in the social reality. The interests of the different groups affected may cause conflicts to arise, but it is unlikely that any will have the capacity to design or control the process of change, as it concerns agents' values, beliefs and expectations, which are not easily manipulated.

As a consequence, processes of change in formal and informal institutions may be unsynchronised, with the former more subject to abrupt changes and discretionary decisions than the other way around. Thus, a new formal institution may be confronted with informal institutional inertia that is difficult to change. Traffic regulations in certain Latin American countries provide an example of this. Formally comparable to those in a developed country, they are nevertheless incapable of modulating the behaviour of agents still guided by previous informal regulations. Meanwhile, changes in informal institutions may be inadequately reflected in adaptations to the formal framework. Cuba's experience bears this out: people's behaviour has changed faster than the formal institutional structure.

In fact, Cuba is a good example of a society constituted on a large gap between formal and informal institutions. The formal institutional framework has turned out to be particularly rigid and restrictive, and to have limited inclination to change. Meanwhile, a complex web of informal institutional responses has taken shape, created by citizens' permanent search for solutions in an especially adverse environment. While formal institutions are characterised by great inertia and stickiness and are rarely changeable (except in minor aspects), the informal framework appears highly fluid and contingent. The vitality of these informal institutions is at once a cause and an indicator of the limited capacity of formal institutions to mould collective behaviour. Changes to formal institutions should be more closely matched with the changes that occur in agents' expectations, and the adaptation of informal institutions they produce.

But progressing in that process is no easy task. Institutional change in this field faces at least four types of problem:

- First, to encourage institutional change it is not only necessary to correctly identify the institutional failure that needs correcting, but also to find an alternative institutional arrangement that can overcome the deficiency detected. Sometimes the failure is identified, but the technical alternative remains unknown. Or the alternative may appear likely to incur costs or uncertainties that are greater than those generated by the institutional failure in need of correction. This is a relevant issue in the Cuban case: even though the failures of the inherited economic model are recognised, the costs – perhaps exaggerated – associated with alternative institutional frameworks are also recognised.
- Secondly, even when a clear alternative is available, promoting institutional change requires the inertia of the pre-existing institutional framework to be

overcome. All change comes at a cost and in this case the inertia is strengthened by three factors that are characteristic of institutions: i) the interdependencies between the institutions make change difficult, as the functioning of one depends on the effectiveness of many others with which it is related; ii) the dense network (explicit or implicit) of social commitments and expectations of the agents on which every institution rests is difficult to alter; and finally iii) the objectification of values, expectations and beliefs that every institution generates gives rise to realities that are resistant to change (Scott, 2008).

- Thirdly, beyond the inertia in the face of change, all institutional reform has redistributive implications that must be taken into consideration. Every institution articulates hierarchical relationships, which are expressed in the distribution of resources, voice and power that may be altered as a result of change (Knight 1992). This produces winners and losers, and it is reasonable to assume that those who see themselves among the losers will resist the change. The political economy of institutional change is thus key to understanding the viability of the reform.
- Finally, even if an apparently acceptable institutional alternative exists and the inertia that hinders change is overcome, along with the resistance of reluctant groups, the new rules still need to reach the citizens and be internalised in their behaviour. It is therefore important to do the work of justifying the change and disseminating the rules and values associated with the new institutional arrangement. All of this suggests that a high fixed cost is inherent in the design and implementation of a new institution, even when the marginal cost of its operation (once the institution is created) is low. This fact increasingly rewards the existing institutional framework and conspires against the creation of new institutions.

The factors mentioned above help us to understand the difficulties of institutional change and explain why it is often easier for (bad) institutions to survive than for new (and better) institutions to be created. One factor that holds back institutional change is the political economy of the interests at stake. What interests are affected by the reform in Cuba?

#### 4 The political economy of the reform

Any reform's level of success is crucially conditioned by how policymakers manage the conflicts of interest of the sectors affected by the changes. Failing to address this can lead sectors opposed to the reform to end up blocking the changes. The aim should therefore be to widen the space for those who are favourable to change, to dispel the fears of the doubters and the resistance of those concerned

that they may be negatively affected, and to compensate some of the losers, thereby reducing the margin for those who are irretrievably opposed.

To understand the resistance to change, it is important to note that relative losses in this field can be as great or greater than the absolute losses. In other words, even if the reforms raise living standards across society as a whole, those who consider that their relative position (in relation to the other sectors) will decline may resist the change. Addressing this is important, because Cuba's economic reform is likely to lead to a higher level of aggregate welfare in the country, at least in the medium term; enough to compensate the potentially affected sectors, without anyone losing out. And yet, certain sectors may oppose the reform, believing that their position in the social hierarchy (of income or power) will be harmed.

In Cuba, two large sectors have the capacity to guide and promote the reform process: the bureaucrats of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), on the one hand, and the officers of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), on the other. Traditionally, the highest levels of the Cuban administration and the officials with effective decision-making capacity have been drawn from these two large pools. Both sectors are reluctant to actively support the reform, albeit for different reasons.

PCC bureaucrats have traditionally shown very little enthusiasm for the reform process in Cuba. This fits with their position as one of the sectors with most to lose from the changes. The party's reach extends to the National Assembly, whose process of nominating candidates to be members it controls. The electoral system does not permit choices to be made between different options; rather, citizens endorse a list of nominees that has been carefully selected via the party's "policy of cadres". Indeed, the National Assembly was a visible source of resistance to the transformations of the second term of Raúl Castro's presidency, and engaged in open confrontation with Marino Murillo, Chairman of the Permanent Commission for Implementation and Development of the Economic and Social Policy Guidelines (reforms).

The party's "policy of cadres" is also decisive in the selection of leading positions in ministries, government offices, and even in the most important state-owned companies. The policy of cadres and control of the press have been the party's main tools for tying the hands of the reform process. When tensions with the United States government have been at their highest, this group has used its control of the media to spread the rhetoric of unity and memories of revolutionary struggles, presenting any attempt to open up as a potential weakness in this decisive showdown.

Clearly, this group's power depends on the fact that the key decisions about economic life in Cuba continue to be made in hierarchical structures, through

relatively centralised administrative processes. The size of the state and its control over citizens' lives with limited public management accountability leaves a large space for rent-seeking activities and the discretionary exercise of power by these groups. The little to zero transparency with which state institutions operate protects them from public scrutiny. Granting more space to the market, to automatic incentive- and price-setting and to autonomous decision-making among economic agents is a clear way to limit the discretion and power of this interest group. It is no surprise, then, that they work to keep the rigid structures of decision-making processes substantially unaltered, advocating planning as the best way to maintain their control over the country's political and economic processes.

What is more, this sector knows that if the economic reform brings changes to the political framework (via democratic transition), they would be one of the main sectors affected. Indeed, they would lose the monopoly of political power they have enjoyed until now. Hence, their particular resistance to the reforms, accepting only those that they perceive as inevitable in order to prevent greater evils. Their position appears to be inspired by one of Fidel Castro's doctrines. Namely, that in an adverse context, concessions over reforms is an inevitable (but reversible) way to guarantee the regime's survival: a kind of Gattopardian reform doctrine.

Obviously, the bureaucrats refrain from using these arguments to justify their resistance to the changes. Instead, they claim to be defending the interests of the weaker social groups that may be affected by the reform (retirees or benefits recipients), they exaggerate the costs and problems potentially associated with the changes, and play up their staunch defence of the essence of the regime to prevent the reforms from opening up cracks that may be exploited by "the enemy". All of this gives their position a more noble and acceptable aura among the citizens.

For their part, FAR officials, while equally reluctant about more comprehensive and radical changes, have taken a more favourable position on gradually advancing the reform process. Two features distinguish the position of this group from that of the bureaucrats of the PCC. First, the survival of FAR officers as a privileged social group does not depend on preserving the centralised structures and decision-making processes that have characterised the Cuban economy to date. Whatever future lies ahead of Cuba, the armed forces will remain an important group in the state structure. The prestige and social function of the military could, in fact, remain relatively untouched even if progress is made in the reform process or a democratic transition is undertaken. That is the first reason they are less resistant to the reforms than the CCP bureaucrats.

A second factor is that the FAR hold major economic power in Cuba and over time have accumulated not inconsiderable business management experience. Indeed, many of the microeconomic reforms governments have adopted to improve the productivity of companies over the last three decades were first applied in state-owned companies controlled by the armed forces. The military therefore contains specialists with a precise idea of the changes needed to improve the levels of efficiency and competitiveness of the production apparatus. The fact that the prime minister and a number of ministers in recent governments' economic departments have come from the FAR bears this out.

But not all the factors are positive, and this group also presents two major limitations. First, although they are accumulating experience in microeconomic management, the same cannot be said of the macroeconomic areas that will be crucial when designing the reforms in Cuba, such as fiscal, monetary, financial and exchange rate policies. Military officers also tend to have an excessively "engineering" vision of the economic process, focussed more on the material production process than on translating it into market efficiency. This vision may be useful when designing certain microeconomic reforms, but may become counter-productive if it is used to guide macroeconomic restructuring.

The FAR's economic power gives rise to the second limitation. Specifically, the military's perception of the possible impact of the reforms on the economic apparatus they control. As mentioned, the FAR participate, directly or indirectly, in nearly 800 companies in a range of sectors, including sugar production, tourism, basic industries, finance, construction and business services. Indeed, it controls the business group GAESA, which as well as being the island's main tour operator, with 57 hotels, has the capacity to control about 70% of the retail trade. The group contains some of Cuba's most competitive businesses, which could benefit from the reform. But any changes could also undermine the group's monopoly in various markets. These contradictory factors may influence the FAR's position on the reform.

The two groups that view the reform most positively are the academic sector (university lecturers and researchers) and the heterogeneous group of managers of Cuba's private businesses and cooperatives. The first of these groups has great technical knowledge about the changes required in Cuba. As well as possessing knowledge of the workings of other economies that may serve as references, as a sector their position may be improved by operating in an economy that is open to the market. All of this makes them generally well-disposed to the reform process.

Private sector business people, meanwhile, are well aware of the problems they face in their day-to-day life and the potential that could be exploited by altering Cuba's frameworks of regulations and incentives. Young people also comprise a significant – albeit heterogeneous – group that would support a more decisive advance in the reform process.

Academics and private sector business people are the segments of society that most clearly favour the reforms, but it is worth noting that neither has the effective power to condition Cuba's reform processes.

Finally, what about the wider population? What do they think of the reforms? Answering this question with any sort of authority is tricky. Citizens are unable to freely express their opinions, to exert organised pressure against public authorities, no free press is openly distributed and there is an absence of reliable opinion polls that measure citizens' feelings. Speaking to different groups suggests that much of the population wants the reform process to accelerate and expand. But some are also suspicious of the process of change, either because they believe themselves to be among the potential losers or out of the simple fear of uncertainty. Finally, there are those who have been left tired and sceptical of any announcement of change after years of piling up frustrated expectations.

The greatest resistance undoubtedly comes from groups that may be negatively affected by the resizing of the state that the reform process must necessarily entail. Reducing the state's role and spending may have a major negative effect on public employees and sectors of the population that depend on subsidies (most importantly, the retired population). These groups have noticed a significant squeeze on their incomes over the years of crisis in Cuba. In fact, the gap between the salaries of civil servants and workers in the private sector has been widening over time, leaving public sector wages as much as ten times lower. The same is true of retirees, whose pensions have steadily shrunk in real terms.

To stop these groups from opposing the reform, the public authorities must embark on an active policy of committing to deepen the fiscal reform, expand tax revenue collection capacity, encourage job transfers from the public sector towards an invigorated private sector and draw up a social policy that protects incomes when they are most vulnerable. Insufficient progress has been made in all these areas to allay the fears of these potentially affected groups.

However, attitudes towards the reform appear to be conditioned not only by calculations of the expected effects on each sector, but also by the climate of values, beliefs and expectations of the affected group. Without wishing to exaggerate the isolation of Cuban society or to disparage its critical capacity, it seems reasonable to assume that biases exist against the reform. It could hardly be otherwise, given the partisan control of the press, the very low levels of internet access, the restrictions on the freedom to travel and an entire communication and educational system that has promoted an ideology that boosts nationalism and devalues everything beyond the state's borders. The effectiveness of the PCC's "political-ideological work" over decades continually repels the change in mindset now required to activate support for the reform and, with it, the cognitive bases for institutional change.

In terms of public opinion, an intergenerational gap is noticeable, which seems to be widening over time. Some of the values the system has cultivated over the years remain present among the older segments of society. It is a vision of an all-embracing paternalistic state that organises, disciplines and protects the people, while providing services, employment and subsidies, but which does not subject itself to citizen control or accountability for its actions. The limited channels for citizens' voices and representation and the absolute state control of the means of production foster a relationship of passiveness and dependence among the citizens, weakening their capacity to promote change. Some of these citizens hold on to the ideals of the "eighties" and the aspiration to return to the living standards of that era without the need to make major changes to the system.

Younger people clearly do not share these perceptions, and appear more open to the possibilities of reform. The young have been less influenced by the regime's indoctrination and did not experience its "golden moments". In fact, for many, their life experience has been framed by the continuous deficiencies that began with the "special period". Young people are also the most open to using new forms of media (especially the internet) to access different views and opinions about the problems Cuba faces. They are the group most clearly challenging the official messages and the continual delays to the reforms.

The gradual nature and slowing down of the changes is one of the ways the authorities have sought to keep the reform under control and reduce resistance to it. While understandable, as a method it is becoming less and less effective. The progressive worsening of Cuba's economic conditions is one factor conspiring against this slow pace of reform, along with the social deficits that are widening over time and the fatigue of a population whose access to a steady path of progress has been systematically deferred. What is more, the gradual nature of the changes has allowed the sectors that are most resistant to the reform to strengthen their positions, as was evident in the attenuation of the reforming drive of Raúl Castro's first term.

Hence, a more reasonable way to expand support for the changes would be to achieve partial short-term successes that produce a degree of improvement in people's living conditions. As of 2021, this is a possibility. The implementation of reforms aimed at correcting the exchange rate – one of the Cuban economic system's central distortions – could, if the reforming momentum is maintained, drive a continuous process of changes that result from it. The monetary and exchange rate adjustment is distinguished by its intensity (the value will decrease more than twenty-fold) and its comprehensiveness, as it will re-establish the absolute and relative values of wages, pensions, retirement benefits, subsidies, costs and the prices of final goods.

Whether the opportunity these announcements present ends up being fully exploited depends on two conditions. First, keeping up the momentum and taking successive steps that allow the reform to acquire the comprehensiveness and coherence it has thus far lacked. Second, the success of the process depends on overcoming the adverse conditions of the prevailing economic context. Indeed, this new bout of reforms is taking place in a highly depressed and imbalanced macroeconomic environment, without accumulated international reserves and with little state borrowing capacity, which limits the resources available to face the short-term financial disruptions that will result. Access to international financing in suitable conditions appears to be a crucial factor in successfully carrying out the reforms. Achieving a positive economic balance that facilitates the process will depend, on the other hand, on the economy's capacity to make the resource profitable at a more appropriate real exchange rate. Correcting relative prices offers greater transparency to business and fiscal finances, and has the potential to improve the allocation of resources and boost the export sector and production chains. Self-employment, microenterprises and cooperatives are likely to be important candidates for accelerating responses to the new monetary and exchange-rate environment and achieving visible results in the short and medium term. Unlike large companies, this sector has great flexibility to adapt to a new framework of incentives and is best equipped to overcome bureaucratic inertia.

## 5 Final considerations

The foundations supporting Cuban institutions have recently deteriorated. In particular, the implicit intertemporal contract that was fundamental to these institutions seems to have been broken, generating disaffection among young people who appear to want more radical changes than those taken so far. This is the part of the population that is most likely to support the reform, although its capacity for agency is conditioned by the use of emigration as an escape from discontent. This individual "exit" is a response to the impossibility of being "loyal" to a manifestly inefficient institutional framework and the difficulties of constructing a collective "voice" in order to encourage change.

Over 30 years since the fall of the socialist bloc, the failure of real wages to regain their value and the gradual deterioration of health and education services – buttresses of the revolutionary institutions' legitimacy – have contributed to growing discontent. The lack of institutionalised channels for voices and complaints to be raised leads to collective frustration or the recourse to individual solutions (emigration). The transformations in the matrix of exchange rates, incomes and subsidies that begin in 2021 are essential to reverse the decline in real

wages, accumulated inequities and to alter migration trends. But if this new stage of the reforms is not to suffer the same fate as the previous ones, corrections must be made. Specifically, the goal to which the economy is to be led must be defined, and coherence must be given to the partial, fragmented reform process. Changes should also be made to the formal institutional framework to adapt it to the new economic and social setting.

Thus far, Cuba has experienced a slow and fragmented process of economic reform, accompanied by minimal institutional change. This institutional rigidity is a poor reflection of the accelerated pace of change in the people's ways of life, values and expectations, which is translated into a vigorous and fluid informal institutional framework. Cuba thus exemplifies the model of institutional change whereby the inertia and stickiness of formal institutions comes into increasing conflict with changing informal institutions. As a result, the formal lose some of their credibility and effectiveness in shaping collective behaviour. To achieve a better fit between the two institutional frameworks, progress must be made on reforming Cuba's formal institutions.

The most active support for this goal appears to be found among young people, academics and private sector business people, who are the least conditioned by the official discourse. However, the system's bureaucratic logic of top-down decision-making processes means that the demands of these sectors have limited political weight. Given the limited space for democratic deliberation and social pressure, it is difficult to envisage a spontaneous movement emerging from society driving institutional change. In this setting, institutional changes are possible, but they are limited by the demands of the sectors that dominate the decision-making structures.

The two groups with most presence in the power structures are PCC bureaucrats and FAR military personnel. Despite differing on certain points, neither group is inclined towards comprehensive, radical changes to the configuration of the Cuban economy. But the worsening of the economic situation due to the Venezuelan crisis and COVID-19 and the deterioration of social life seem to have inspired certain sectors of the political elites to embrace a faster pace and more ambitious scope for the reforms. The change of direction in US politics does not guarantee a new pace of transformation, but it will bring significant degrees of freedom that favour it. Nothing guarantees that this new reforming drive will be maintained over time and fully realised, but the chance of such a comprehensive change is higher today.

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Marcel Kunzmann

## “Neither Plan nor Market”. Problems and Coherence of the Gradualist Reform Approach

### 1 Introduction: Reading Kornai in Havana

To the surprise of many observers, it took socialist Cuba more than 15 years, which included various experiments and “on the fly” reassessments of basic premises, to finally execute its first five-year plan (1976–1980) using Soviet-style planning techniques. What the Hungarian economist János Kornai defined as the “mature form” (Kornai, 1992) of the classical socialist system finally became a reality in Cuba. Kornai’s comprehensive analysis of socialist economics not only delivers useful categories for evaluating the Cuban model, it also sheds new light on the ongoing debate about the prospects of the economic reforms in Cuba, bringing fresh insights to the increasing contradictions affecting the coherence of the current gradualist approach.

In *The Socialist System*, Kornai looked at the common properties of all societies practising “real socialism” from Moscow to Havana which, “even though their actual systems differ in many details are all members of a broader, clearly identifiable class of social-political-economic systems” (Kornai, 1992: 5). Exactly like Marx’s approach to his analysis of capitalism 100 years earlier, Kornai aimed to define the “properties and [...] laws of movement” of these societies (Kornai & Bossányi, 1990: 315).

His analysis starts with the role of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), which was constituted in 1965, five years after the declaration of the “socialist character of the Revolution”.<sup>1</sup> As the “organized vanguard of the nation”, the Communist Party plays the leading political role and constitutes the political core of the socialist system. It is structured by the principles of democratic centralism and highly interwoven with the state and its branches, so “all major appointments, promotions and dismissals are decided upon by the various bodies of the party”; the party and the state, Kornai quotes an Hungarian party ideologist saying, “are not one, but they are not two either” (Kornai, 1992: 37).

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1 Although the Communist Party of Cuba was officially constituted in October 1965, it really began with the merger of the three different parties and organisations to form “Integrated Revolutionary Organizations” (ORI), two years after the revolution in summer 1961.

Ideologically, the Communist Party of Cuba adheres to the principles of Marxism–Leninism and with the aim to “organize and orient the communal forces towards the construction of socialism and its progress toward a communist society” (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019: art. 5). In this line of thought, socialism is perceived not only as a more human form of social organisation than capitalism and its inevitable heir in the course of history, but also as a means to overcome economic backwardness and poverty as fast as possible. In Cuba (as in other developing countries), socialism was always seen as a way of nation-building. Its construction foresees the abolishment of private property and the market, which are replaced by the instruments of public ownership and planning to enable the advance to a classless communist society. The construction of socialism requires not only willing sacrifice and discipline from the people, but also the establishment of a different state apparatus, led by the Communist Party as representative of the working class (Kornai, 1992: 53ff.).

According to Kornai, all elements of classical socialism – like the party, the official ideology, public ownership of the means of production and central planning – have an organic affinity for each other and form a “coherent”<sup>2</sup> system that reinforces and reproduces itself. But persistent shortages and the failure to keep its basic promises of superiority in contrast to capitalism led to reform, as happened in eastern Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During reform, new forms of ownership are introduced, and coordination mechanisms change. At this point, macroeconomic tensions appear, undermining the central planning apparatus and the system loses its former coherence. Finally, Kornai’s argument goes, the party will lose its power, a “change of system” will take place and capitalism will be restored as seen in eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Kornai quotes the Soviet dissident Yuri Orlov to illustrate his point: “[...] the system designed by Lenin was such that once you pulled out one brick, the whole thing fell apart” (Kornai, 1992: 571). During the course of the Cuban Revolution, more than “one brick” was pulled out of the system. But how did these reforms unfold, and to what extent did they affect the functioning of the system?

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2 Kornai’s uses “coherent” to mean a system with affiliate elements that interlock and reproduce each other (1992: 360–377).

## 2 Patterns of development: Planning in Cuba 1959–1990

### 2.1 Early planning and the “Great Debate”

To understand the roots of the ongoing reform discussion and the shifting roles of planning and the market in Cuba, we must look back at history. As early as the Batista regime, some rudimentary tools of development planning were used on the island, as was common in many developing countries at that time.<sup>3</sup> No clear testimony in the historical sources seems to explain which specific economic model the rebels of the 26<sup>th</sup> of July Movement originally envisioned, but the discussions within the movement before 1959 seem to indicate a “market economy under indicative planning”<sup>4</sup> with different forms of ownership and government-sponsored industrialisation (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 146).

In March 1960, 14 months into the revolution, the Central Planning Board (*Junta Central de Planificación*, JUCEPLAN) was established, which paved the way for the first attempts at economic planning.<sup>5</sup> During the first years of the revolution the economy suffered from harsh disorder. Policies for a more egalitarian distribution of resources prevailed, while the new government was learning how to manage the freshly nationalised companies, as the exodus of skilled workers and technicians significantly constrained the construction of the fundamentals of central planning (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 152–154).

In the aftermath of the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1961, Fidel Castro officially declared the “socialist character of the Revolution” at one of the countless mass rallies held at that time. At this point, it was already clear that some sort of planned economy would define Cuba’s future economic model. In 1961–62, Cuba tried to further boost central planning by implementing the Czechoslovak model with its 500 material balances, introduced by a delegation of that country’s State Planning Commission. But the experiment failed, mainly due to the rather mechanical approach to implementation, the lack of reliable data and statistics and serious miscalculations made by JUCEPLAN’s bureaucracy.<sup>6</sup>

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3 Though planning is the “natural” mode of economic organisation for a socialist system, some form of planning schemes have also been utilised in capitalist countries such as South Korea, as well as other Latin America countries, see: Mesa-Lago (1971: 146).

4 It is said that the movement’s early programme was conceived more according to tactical reasoning than with the aim of developing a coherent strategy.

5 The first planning attempts were mainly based on agricultural development, which may be the root of the still largely centralised approach to agriculture.

6 As Mesa-Lago summarises: “In fact, it was difficult with a few trained people, no previous experience, and inadequate data to convert the chaotic Cuban economy into a planned one in such a short period of time” (1971: 154).

In March 1962, the monthly ration book (*Libreta*) was introduced (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 154).

As the Cuban revolution gained international attention, from 1962 onwards, famous economists like the Polish planner Michał Kalecki, the French Marxist Charles Bettelheim and the Russian economist A. Evinov prepared medium-range development plans following Soviet techniques. All those attempts proved unsuccessful and never materialised, again partially because of a lack of sufficient information about the economy as well as immature institutions and insufficiently qualified personnel (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 155). What followed was the "Great Debate", in which Che Guevara promoted the highly centralised "Budgetary Finance System" in contrast to the position of Charles Bettelheim, who argued along similar lines to the German Marxist Ernest Mandel for the utilisation of the "law of value"<sup>7</sup> embedded in a Cuban version of the recently reformed Soviet-style planning framework (Mandel, 1969: 132; Guevara, 1969: 65f.; Bettelheim, 1969: 95).

In contrast to Soviet economic thinking, Guevara's ideas foresaw the construction of socialism and communism at the same time, with a heavy emphasis on the education of the masses in order to transform their consciousness. The use of voluntary labour and moral incentives for the purpose of forming the "New Man", a morally altered, altruistic human being free of the flaws of the previous society, were some of the basic premises of Guevara's concept. Unlike the Soviet model of economic accounting, with its individual material incentives, Guevara promoted the setting of good examples, constant education and collective rewards to unleash the forces necessary for rapid economic development. According to Guevara, communism can and should be constructed "as fast as possible" and in parallel to socialism. The abolition of capitalist categories like the law of value, private property and money as a basic precondition should therefore already begin in the early stage of socialist construction (Guevara, 1969: 65–67). Hence, the country's factories should cease to operate as relatively independent economic units with their own financial responsibilities, but rather develop into centrally administered entities in order to guarantee a more rational use of national funds and to gradually achieve the abandonment of money and market prices (Guevara, 1969: 76–77).<sup>8</sup>

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7 The Marxist political economic term "law of value" is the counterpart to what is commonly referred to as "market coordination" and will be used here as synonymous, see: Kornai (1992: 92).

8 Guevara had to admit that his concept lacked a coherent mechanism of price-setting and perceiving real production costs without referring to the global market. This problem contradicts his argument of achieving a "more rational use of national funds" by using central coordination, which he hoped could be solved sometime in the future through the establishment of a socialist world economy, see: Yafee (2012: 27).

In contrast to Guevara's position, Bettelheim argued that the existence of independent producers, different forms of ownership and the objective level of development of the productive forces meant that commodity production and therefore the law of value, money and the different forms of property would need to continue to exist during the socialist period for a long time to come. The level of development of Cuba's productive forces was "relatively low", he observed, stating that "the economic organization can never be higher than the forces of production" (Bettelheim, 1969: 92–95). Citing Lenin, Bettelheim concluded that the formal ownership of the means of production by the whole society "doesn't converge with the possibility to actually make use of those as such" (Bettelheim, 1969: 92–95). Instead, Cuba should continuously make use of the law of value within a central planning framework to develop its productive forces (Yafee, 2012: 23). Although Mandel's position significantly diverged from Bettelheim's, he also agreed on the use of the law of value, adding that only after a very high level of development of the productive forces is reached, at which "full satisfaction of the fundamental needs of the citizens" can be "automatically guaranteed" can communist consciousness be achieved.

During and after the "Great Debate", Che Guevara's model was partially implemented along with some characteristics of the Soviet model, but the problems continued. Annual plans lacked the envisaged compulsory character, while "millions of economic microrelations were destroyed at once, breaking the automatic mechanism of market distribution when the state system was not ready to take over these functions", which led to severe economic distortions, especially in the agricultural sector (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 156). At the same time, during the 1964–65 period, parts of the market socialist approach proposed by Bettelheim (e.g. self-financing of enterprises, attention to cost and profitability) were implemented and applied to around one-third of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), though the system at the time "resembled the budgetary-finance model more than the market socialist model" (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 156).

After 1965, the leadership's economic preferences moved towards sectorial "mini-plans", which undermined the parallel establishment of a rudimentary Soviet-style central planning framework with about 200 material balances (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 167). The Russian economist and inventor of input-output analysis, Wassily Leontief, commented after his visit to Cuba in 1969: "Fidel apparently has for some time emphasized what he calls 'mini-planning', that is separate planning of the operation of each individual sugar mill, textile plan, or electric station. No wonder bottlenecks develop everywhere, inventories run down, and unforeseen shortages occur resulting in frequent extremely costly shutdowns" (Mesa-Lago, 1971: 158).

As centralisation progressed with the gradual establishment of the planning system in the late 1960s, Fidel proclaimed the "simultaneous construction of socialism and communism", emphasising Che Guevara's ideas of abandoning money and radical egalitarianism in salaries through the massive use of moral incentives and voluntary labour (Torres Pérez, 2020: 170). The idea was to gradually eliminate money through the expansion of free social services such as transportation, telecommunication and housing. This approach culminated in the Revolutionary Offensive in spring 1968 with the closure of all 56,638 existing small private businesses, which led to serious shortages and organisational problems. Until 1970, "wage differentials proved to be almost meaningless" in Cuba and the role of the market had been marginalised more than in most other socialist countries. (Karl, 1975: 31–34). Official growth rates went down from an average of 3.7 % in the 1962–65 period to a mere 0.4% during the 1966–70 period (Zimbalist & Eckstein, 1987: 8). But it was the failure of the "*Gran Zafra*" (great harvest) in 1970 – according to Karl the "largest mobilization in Cuba's history with more than a million of workers doing voluntary labor day and night" – that marked the turning point in Cuba's voluntarist approach of simultaneous construction of socialism and communism. Despite being the largest harvest in the country's history, bringing in 8.5 million tons of sugar, the campaign fell short of its goal of 10 million and came with high costs for the economy, which basically stood still during the campaign. Fidel Castro subsequently took personal responsibility of the failure (Karl, 1975: 34–35).

## 2.2 *The SDPE: Establishing an institutional central planning framework*

After the failure of the *Gran Zafra*, the country's economic strategy underwent its first radical reassessment since the revolution. In November 1973, Fidel Castro announced:

When we declared on July 26, at the celebration of the Twentieth Anniversary, that we must bravely correct any idealistic errors we may have made, we meant that if at certain times we had tried to advance more than what was possible, it was now necessary to rectify. [...] We must apply the formulas which correspond to this actual phase of our revolution, and apply them in every area [...] (Roca, 1986: 157)

What followed was the most comprehensive wave of institutionalisation of the Cuban revolution, which led to the establishment of the legislative body of "people's power" (*Poder popular*) in the political sphere, along with the PCC's first congress in 1976. In the economic sphere, the Economic Planning and Management System (*Sistema de Dirección y Planificación de la Economía*, SDPE), a

decentralised, state-of-the-art version of Soviet planning was installed in order to “achieve maximum efficiency in the state enterprises” (Roca, 1986: 158).<sup>9</sup> Core properties of the system included: the financial autonomy of SOEs, which should create their own stimulus funds, the use of financial rather than physical production indicators, the introduction of profitability at company level, the application of differentiated wage scales and material incentives and the reduction of planning indicators in order to stimulate enterprise autonomy (Zimbalist, 1989: 72).

The full implementation of the SDPE was scheduled to take place over a ten-year period until 1986, but serious shortcomings again undermined the functioning of the new system,<sup>10</sup> whose introduction had come to an halt by the mid-1980s (Roca, 1986: 161–162). However, despite never being fully implemented, the SDPE delivered respectable results compared with all previous systems of economic management. Growth rates went up from 1971 onwards and averaged a fairly healthy 5.7% in the 1976 to 1985 period, permitting the massive expansion of Cuba’s social services, like free healthcare, education and extensive consumer subsidies during that period (Zimbalist & Eckstein, 1987: 8). Despite its shortcomings, the SDPE led to the execution of the country’s first five-year plan (1976–80), finally increasing Cuba’s planning capacity for the first time towards a medium-term timeframe. The establishment of a comprehensive institutional framework between 1973 and 1976 marked a qualitative leap away from the various inconsistent previous attempts at central planning towards what Kornai calls the “mature form” of classical socialism (Kornai, 1992: 20).

In accordance with the decentralised SDPE framework, which in large part resembled Bettelheim’s proposal during the Great Debate, Cuba withdrew some of the results of the Revolutionary Offensive. In 1980, for the first time since 1968, the government allowed significant private initiative in, for example, the form of farmer’s markets and small repair shops, to compensate for the shortcomings of the state economy and generate additional income in the form of taxes.<sup>11</sup>

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9 Including the financial planning aspects of the 1965 Soviet economic reform.

10 One of the most severe problems was that the envisaged autonomy of SOE management never materialised, with ministries continuing to give direct orders. A document from 1985 that evaluated the problems with the reform in rural Havana province made the following analysis: “One of the key stumbling blocks is the persistent limited economic autonomy in the fulfilment of enterprise functions. What happens is that while the central planning system reduces its directive indicators, the ministries increase them [to the enterprises] and the intent of reform is lost in an excessive paternalism [...]” (Roca, 1986: 161–162). In addition, micro-management by the top leadership remained in areas such as the sugar and agricultural sphere, which continued to distort the plan (Roca, 1986: 171). Zimbalist (1989: 72) gives the most serious shortcomings of the SDPE as: bureaucratic resistance, pervasive shortage and an irrational price structure.

11 Although some private initiative, like car repair work and carpentry on a self-employed basis, was

A fresh variety of vegetables turned up on the streets of Havana, while in 1981 the recently established cooperatives for housing construction were responsible for 38% of all new Cuban homes that year. In 1982, Cuba issued its first law on foreign direct investment (FDI) since the revolution and in May 1983, a new tax regime was established to regulate the emerging private sector (Zimbalist & Eckstein, 1987: 13–17). In 1985, official statistics counted 39,000 self-employed workers in Cuba, only 30% less than on the eve of the Revolutionary Offensive 17 years earlier (Díaz Fernández, 2019). Thus, in contrast to the commonly held view that the reforms in Cuba did not start until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, market reforms were already in full swing on the island during the first half of the 1980s.

That changed with the start of the “Rectification” in April 1986, when Fidel Castro sought a new balance between the “utopian” mistakes of the early revolutionary period and the “rightist” errors of the SDPE period. According to Castro, some transportation drivers supplying the farmers’ markets earned up to ten times more than the country’s top surgeons at that time, while many others were neglecting their jobs in the state sector in favour of greater participation in the private economy. The growing private sector, with its higher salaries and the increasing use of the market mechanism in the economy, undermined the coherence of the system and was increasingly perceived as a threat to the hegemony of the state economy (Zimbalist, 1989: 84). Ideologically, the Rectification campaign sought to re-emphasise the Guevaran concept of voluntary labour and moral incentives. Wage scales in the state enterprises were harmonised in order to reduce inequalities and in May 1986, farmers’ markets were finally shut down. At the same time austerity measures had to be applied as Cuba’s hard-currency revenues in 1986–88 fell to a third of their 1984 level due to growing tensions in the external sector and the accumulation of debt. But the campaign was not a complete revision of the SDPE policies; indeed, apart from the continuing limitation of the private sector it came closer to a “fine-tuning” of the planning apparatus, trying to tackle some of the problems with the SDPE mentioned above by again reducing the role of market relations (Zimbalist, 1989: 76–78).

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allowed from the very beginning of the SDPE in 1976, the early 1980s saw them expand more rapidly and comprehensively, see: Zimbalist and Eckstein (1987: 13).

**Table 1: Patterns of economic development in Cuba**

Period	1959–61	1961–71	1971–80
Phase	Transitional period	Building the classical system	Mature classical socialism
Coordination mechanisms	Market, rudimentary planning	Rudimentary planning, marginalised market	Material and financial planning, minor market
Main economic policies	Nationalisation of enterprises	Revolutionary Offensive	Consolidation of central planning institutions, SDPE
Period	1980–86	1986–90	1990–ongoing
Phase	Reform socialism	Reform socialism (on hold)	Reform socialism (partly on hold)
Coordination mechanisms	Material and financial planning, minor market	Material and financial planning, marginalised market	“Neither plan nor market” <sup>12</sup>
Main economic policies	Rise of a small private sector, decentralisation	Closure of farmer’s markets, Rectification	Various waves of de- and recentralisation

Source: Authors’ compilation

As can be seen in Table 1, Cuba’s economic development from 1959 to 1990 followed certain patterns of de- and recentralisation with constantly changing roles for the plan and market.

The triumph of the revolution was followed by a transitional period, as it was in most socialist countries in eastern Europe from 1946 to 1949, during which the system established itself politically with the creation of the single-party system and social reforms. As mentioned before, Cuba here is an atypical case, where the Communist Party was founded six years *after* the revolution and held its first congress only in 1976, although the basic political conditions were set with the declaration of the “socialist character of the Revolution” in April 1961. Economically, while market mechanisms still played the dominant role during the period of transition, the central planning apparatus was already under construction and increased its control over the economy. In the Cuban case, planning was very immature until the early 1970s, as many policy shifts delayed the development

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12 Expression by T. Bauer, borrowed by Kornai to describe the coordination mechanism of reform socialism. As the reforms in the 1980s still made little alteration to the classical system, this expression gradually became applicable only in the aftermath of the dissolution of the socialist bloc during the 1990s, see: Kornai (1992: 508).

of a coherent framework for central planning, while the marginalisation of the market reached its greatest extent in the period from 1968 to 1973.

With the beginning of the gradual implementation of the Soviet-inspired SDPE in 1976, the first party congress and the establishment of the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP) all in the same year, the mature form of classical socialism took shape in Cuba. With the decentralisation of political and economic power achieved, Cuba was ready to embark on the reform of the system.<sup>13</sup> A revaluation of monetary and financial relations in the state sector took place along with the resurgence of a small private sector, which reached its peak during the first half of the 1980s.<sup>14</sup> Beginning with the Rectification in 1986, market relations outside the state sector were marginalised again, though the financial categories of planning and material incentives remained intact. However, while the market reforms came to a temporary halt, the Rectification was far from a second Revolutionary Offensive. Cuban socialism formally remained in reform mode throughout those years, which was reflected in the overall maintaining of monetary relations in the state sector.<sup>15</sup>

Of course, history does not fit within sharply distinguishable categories like those in Table 1. For example, elements of "reform socialism" can also be found during the classical period of Cuban socialism, and while parts of the private sector first re-emerged in 1976, their broader development did not start before the early 1980s. The timing of the establishment of mature classical socialism is also far from a clear-cut historical event. One could argue that the implementation of the Soviet model in the aftermath of the failure of the *Gran Zafra* in 1971 meant that classical socialism was fully established in Cuba; or that the creation of the ANPP and the start of the SDPE's implementation after the first party congress in 1976 mark the turning point. The same is true for the role of plan and market, since many policies and properties from each phase tend to overlap and contradict each other in the different time periods.<sup>16</sup>

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13 According to the criteria laid out by Kornai (1992: 388), establishing "reform socialism" requires at least "partial, moderate change" in the political sphere, property relations or coordination mechanisms.

14 Overall, the Cuban reforms of the 1980s were fairly modest compared to those of other socialist countries at that time and never reached the level of market use of those in Hungary, see: Pinkstone & Farrell (1997: 78).

15 Due to the limited scope of this chapter, the emerging new model of reform socialism during the 1990s will not be subject to deeper analysis, but many of its still persistent aspects will be examined in the analysis of the current state of market reform over the following chapters.

16 For a more detailed scheme of Cuba's economic development patterns, see: Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López (2005: 4).

Despite these limitations, a general pattern becomes clear. While Bettelheim and Guevara's policies differ on increasing or decreasing the use of the market mechanism and moral incentives – favouring or neglecting different forms of ownership – the influence of both poles of the “Great Debate” have shown long-lasting influence on Cuban economic policies.

### 3 Plan, market and the coherence of the system

Following the dissolution of the socialist bloc in 1990, Cuba entered the so-called “Special period in peacetime”, a phase marked by harsh rationing, frequent electricity cuts and severe shortages. Austerity measures and a drastic reduction of imports had to be implemented as by 1993 Cuba's GDP had contracted by 35% (Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2005: 28). The disintegration of JUCEPLAN, whose functions were transferred to the Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP) in 1994, highlight the end of the old Soviet planning model, which was followed by constant improvisation and crisis management.<sup>17</sup> The opening up to tourism and foreign investment, as well as the mutual economic assistance from Venezuela from the early 2000s allowed much of the classical system to survive in Cuba with only modest reforms and a small private sector, in spite of the tightening of the US economic embargo, which caused great damage to the economy (Alonso & Vidal, 2019: 12).

In the conditions of forced integration into the global market, inefficient state factories, ongoing shortages and the lack of basic consumer goods together with the growing black market continued to erode the country's productive base. Import dependency was high and the material trade balance negative, despite the exportation of professional medical services, mainly to Venezuela, which compensated for low goods exports.<sup>18</sup> Real wages remained at 76% below their 1989 level in 2007 and Raúl Castro admitted in the same year that they were “clearly insufficient to satisfy needs” (Mesa-Lago, 2008: 17). A new liquidity crisis, following the devastating consequences of two hurricanes in 2008 and the global economic crisis of the same year, marked a new turning point in Cuba's pattern of development, as the leadership began again to reassess the country's develop-

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17 As Cuban Economist Juan Triana (2019) explains: “We don't do planning in Cuba. What we have is a system of administrative allocation of scarce resources”.

18 The leadership's awareness of the model's structural problems extends way beyond the Special Period, as a remarkable quote from Fidel Castro in 1985 confirms: “(We always assumed that) everything was available always without asking ourselves how it all came about. (This) gave shape to a wasteful mentality, a mentality of little thrift, a consumption rather than export mentality, an import rather than export mentality” (White, 1987: 156).

ment model, and it became clear that Cuba's socialism could not be built while "balancing on a razor's edge" (Gabriele, 2011: 652).

In this chapter, two main cornerstones of the post-2011 reforms will be examined: the emerging private sector and the reform of state-owned enterprises. It will be shown how the interaction of these two sectors affected the functioning of the coordination mechanism and therefore the overall coherence of the reform system.

### 3.1 *The emerging private sector*

Following some years of modest reforms after Raúl Castro took over the Cuban presidency in 2006, it became increasingly clear that slight adjustments would not resolve the economy's structural problems. The leadership once again opened a public debate about the country's future course. The result – the "Economic and Social Policy Guidelines" (*Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social*) approved at the 6<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2011 – aimed to change the model. Its core pillars were the creation of a "complementary" private sector (self-employed microbusinesses and non-agricultural cooperatives), decentralising SOE management, cutting unnecessary workforce in the state sector, land leases for private farmers and attracting foreign direct investment. Central planning, according to the Guidelines, shall be the dominant coordination mechanism but it "will influence on the market and take into account its characteristics" (PCC, 2011: 12).<sup>19</sup> The Guidelines and their further amendment at the 7<sup>th</sup> PCC Congress in 2016 almost exactly resemble what Kornai describes as the core concept of reform socialism: "The public sector should retain its dominant position, but it should change over to market behavior. At the same time, there should be a private sector, but only with a complementary, secondary role. The two sectors should cooperate while concurrently engaging in market competition with each other" (Kornai, 1992: 506).

Following the implementation of the Guidelines, the number of self-employed workers (*cuentapropistas*) in the private sector rose from 152,600 (with a 3.2% share of total employment) in 2006 to 617,974 (14% share) in December 2019, with most of them working in gastronomy, transportation, house-renting for tourism and other services (Figueredeo et al., 2020; ONE, 2018: 7). By De-

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19 The "Conceptualization of the New Model Economic and Social Model for Socialist Development", approved at the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2016, justified the existence of the "objective laws of the market" with "the level of the development of the productive forces, the social division of labor and the coexistence of different forms of ownership and management" delivering a Leninist explanation for utilising the "law of value", following Bettelheim's line of argument during the Great Debate, see: PCC (2017: 8).

cember 2018, there were 434 non-agricultural cooperatives (many fewer than originally envisioned) with 18,100 members. Along with the agricultural cooperatives, the non-state economy in Cuba (except the widespread informal sector) accounted for 32% of Cuba's total employment by the end of 2018 (ONE, 2018: 7).

Despite these figures, neither the quality nor the scope of the private sector developed enough for it to give substantial lift off to the economy or come anywhere near the role of services exports, tourism and foreign remittances in generating income (*Izquierdo Ferrer*, 2020). There are 123 license categories for private enterprises (most require non-professional labour), while non-agricultural cooperatives (*Cooperativas No Agropecuarias*, CNoAs) still cannot be freely established. In 2015, Raúl Castro warned of the “massification” of this type of property, because cooperatives still needed further “perfection” of their management. Their expansion came to a halt. The same holds true for self-employment, with no new licenses issued for over a year beginning in summer 2017. Like the CNoAs, the private sector underwent a restructuring of its organisational structure, with the approval of a few more activities, while many core demands for its proper functioning (like access to a wholesale market) still could not be met. The official claim was that the non-state sector would be “perfected” to better “control” and bring “order” to these economic activities (*Torres Pérez*, 2020). Continual public affirmations were made of support for the development of the non-state sector as an important part of the economy. It was said that it would absorb excess labour from SOE layoffs so the state could focus on the development of the “command heights” (as Lenin put it) of the economy instead of micro-managing non-strategic activities. Yet, its development has in practice stalled. What happened?

As the previous section showed, development in Cuba follows certain patterns, during which the proportion and supposed role of markets and private property is assessed differently. Although the Guevaran approach of economic growth and socialist construction through the rapid elimination of private property proved unsuccessful, its political DNA remains part of the apparatus. This creates a dilemma for the bureaucracy, which Raúl has repeatedly denounced as the persistence of an “obsolete mentality”, or as Kornai put it:

The bureaucracy behaves ambivalently toward the private sector in the reform phase. Sometimes it reassures and assists it, and sometimes it undermines its confidence and hinders its operation. The ambivalence may take the form of support for the private sector in one branch of the bureaucracy coupled with obstruction of it in another, or of an alternation of periods favorable and unfavorable to the private sector. Both kinds of behavior have their reasons [...] But although one of the bureaucracy's mental compart-

ments is aware that it needs the private sector, another compartment of the same mind nurses a smoldering distaste and hatred for private ownership and individual activity (Kornai, 1992: 450).

In addition to that, the private sector "siphons off some of the labor force, often the best white-collar and manual labor" (Kornai, 1992: 506),<sup>20</sup> because the state sector is unable to compete in the form of salaries, leading to a situation in which workers prefer to work in the private sector even if they are greatly overqualified for their job. Cuba's highly qualified workforce leads to the common phenomena of taxi-driving academics and university professors doing the accounting for private restaurants to improve their living conditions. So the perceived "threat" has a real basis: as long as the state sector does not operate in an competitive and efficient way, the private sector, having proven its ability to create relatively substantial salaries, goods and services that the state is unable to provide in the same quantity and quality, distorts the state economy. The CNoAs, in particular, have in recent years demonstrated their ability to operate in an efficient and competitive manner, which may be the reason behind the delay – now stretching over half a decade – to the approval of this form of economic organisation (Bye, 2020: 41).

Another factor is the lack of sufficient input goods and a coherent market environment, which prevents the private sector from operating properly. Fraudulent practices, arbitrary pricing and a lack of workers' rights have become a common feature of the private economy in reform socialism, fuelling popular anger towards the sector. This pushes the leadership to implement harsher regulations, like the price-caps established in Cuba in 2016 for the agricultural sector and in 2019 for private gastronomy and transportation, in order to demonstrate its ability to "act on behalf of the people" while temporarily sacrificing its own long-term goals of reforming the system (Bye, 2020: 271). Kornai's analysis of the reform socialist economies of eastern Europe and Asia during the 1980s again delivers an astonishingly accurate description of the situation in today's Cuba:

The position of the private sector under reform socialism enters a vicious circle. The ambivalent actions of the bureaucracy and the prejudice in society cause insecurity in private owners and entrepreneurs, who often show under these conditions the worst, not the best, side of capitalism. That heightens the antipathy toward them, which is a stimulus and argument for the bureaucracy to be even more hostile toward them, so that the negative features of their activities come to predominate even more. The system needs the private sector, and the private sector has to acknowledge

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20 Interestingly, this is not a new phenomenon in Cuba; indeed, the pattern of the 1980s reforms is being repeated, just on a qualitatively higher level.

the power of the bureaucracy, which is hostile toward it. But the result is a bitter coexistence, replete with mutual suspicion and conflict (Kornai, 1992: 455).

### 3.2 *The reform of planning and state-owned enterprises in Cuba*

State-owned enterprises are the backbone of the socialist system. In the classical system, state-owned enterprises' residual income flows directly into the state budget, while the planning bureaucracy centrally decides each product's sales price, wages and allocation of input goods. The category of state property as "property of the whole society" is according to Kornai "not only depersonalized, but eliminated. State property belongs to all and to none", leading to low incentives and the common phenomena of worker alienation (Kornai, 1992: 73–75). The companies operate under a soft budget constraint, resulting in their managers' interest primarily in meeting material output targets, even if this implies financial losses for the company. Hence, during the elaboration of the plan, instead of acting on behalf of the whole economy, SOE managers in socialist countries develop a particular interest in underestimating the firm's real capabilities in order to be given weaker targets while overestimating the need for input goods. The hoarding of goods is a fairly common phenomenon in socialism, not only among consumers, but also by state enterprises. Even in the reform mode of the system, when financial criteria gains greater weight – as in Cuba under the SDPE – plan fulfilment remains the core goal of the SOEs rather than profitability, making management decisions responsive merely to price signals and consumer demands (Kornai, 1992: 140–148).

Various reforms have attempted to tackle these problems. The Enterprise Perfecting programme (*Perfeccionamiento Empresarial*) aimed to revive SOEs by giving them greater autonomy, decentralising their management decisions (e.g. on wages, recruitment and pricing) and encouraging the retention of a higher share of their profits for investment decisions. It was also stated that worker participation, a basic promise of the classical system, could be better implemented with a more decentralised decision-making framework at company level (Campbell, 2004/2005: 70). The programme started in 1987 in some military enterprises (mainly in charge of tourism and foreign trade) and later extended to around one-third of SOEs until 2002 (Travieso-Diaz, 2002: 129–133). In 1998, the so-called Higher Organizations of Business Management (*Organizaciones Superiores de Dirección Empresarial*, OSDEs) were founded in order to replace the companies' direct management by the ministry with a more entrepreneurial, less political body (Travieso-Diaz, 2002: 125).

Another reason for the ongoing shortfalls in Cuba's state sector is monetary duality, which creates serious disincentives for production. While the exchange rate between the two official currencies, the Cuban peso (CUP) and the convertible peso (CUC, pegged to the US-Dollar) is 24:1, the exchange rate within the state sector is arbitrarily set at 1:1. This makes imports cheaper (as they are charged at only 1/24 of their actual price) and thereby further discourages SOEs from generating income by exporting competitive goods. Additionally, monetary dualism distorts the overall evaluation of efficiency throughout the economy, hiding subsidies and preventing managers as well as the bureaucracy from taking rational decisions based on real performance results (Doimeadiós et al., 2011: 118).

**Table 2: Selected macroeconomic indicators for Cuba 2011–2019**

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>GDP growth (%)</b>	2.8	3	2.7	1	4.4	0.5	1.8	2.2	0.5
<b>Gross capital formation (% of GDP)</b>	8.5	8.6	9.4	7.6	9.4	9.6	10.3	12	-
<b>Physical industrial output (1989 = 100)</b>	46.8	46.7	55	55.5	62.1	68.7	67.6	67.7	-
<b>Exports of goods (billion US\$)</b>	6.17	5.89	5.56	5.14	3.57	2.54	2.7	2.74	-
<b>Fiscal deficit (% of GDP)</b>	1.7	3.7	1.3	2.2	5.8	6.7	8.7	8.2	-

Source: compiled by author using ONE (2018) and Mesa-Lago (2019) data.

Today, the majority of SOEs are still generating chronic losses while a small share of the sector (e.g. mining, tourism) is responsible for producing the means needed to maintain the rest of the state economy. Since 2006, the number of SOEs in Cuba has more than halved – from 3,519 to 1,776 at the end of 2018 – mainly due to regrouping attempts, although one-third of them were definitively shut down between 2009 and 2017. In 2016, 60% of state firms were still in a “deficient or bad” state, according to the Comptroller General (ONE, 2018: 4; Bye, 2020: 30). As can be seen in Table 2, the slow recuperation of industrial output and modest SOE reforms did not contribute to a growth of export revenues. Exports of goods more than halved between 2011 and 2019 and GDP growth fell short of the official goal of 5% to 7% – the target to accomplish sustainable growth. Gross capital formation (as a percentage of GDP) grew due to the rising

rate of investments and money allocated to the productive sector, but still averaged only 9.7% between 2013 and 2018 – far below the 25% that is necessary to hit the projected growth rates, according to economists. The revival of the state-owned enterprises currently remains the main key for the success of the reforms due to their dominant position, but their decentralisation (as the state refrained from taking some of the SOEs' revenues) also contributed to a rise in deficit spending (Mesa-Lago, 2019: 4).

Following the implementation of the Guidelines, the OSDEs were gradually expanded throughout the whole economy, with the aim of changing vertical state–business relations. Since 2014, SOEs have been allowed to keep 50% (instead of 30%) of their profits to create stimulus funds and take their own investment decisions, albeit on a limited scale (Rosabal, 2013). Five years after these modest reforms, the planning mechanisms again underwent a serious reshuffle. The problems of the SDPE era emerged again. The state media portal *CUBADEBATE* quoted a state factory manager saying that the legal framework of the new OSDE-business relationship was still not “totally clear” after five years (Rosabal, 2013). Some OSDEs arguably began to act as “mini-ministries”, giving direct orders instead of granting autonomy. There was “role confusion” and enterprises received “contradicting orientations” (Roca, 1986: 161). On the one hand, companies were expected to react immediately to market signals, while on the other, autonomy existed only on paper. Or, as Roca described one of the main problems with the former SDPEs: “The enterprise director was obliged to fulfill the output plan, [...] but in terms of decision-making; [...] it was always necessary to consult with the superior level, with the organ that had created the enterprise” (Roca, 1986: 161).

Again, the micro-management inherited from the classical system proved to be more persistent than expected (*CUBADEBATE*, 2019). With the new planning model presented in summer 2019 by the minister of economy, Alejandro Gil, SOEs are now encouraged to take their “own initiative” and negotiate contracts with other enterprises in the state and private sector. This is one way the plan is made more flexible, by substituting a top-down for a bottom-up approach. SOEs should get credits for creating new lines of products and form value chains autonomously. Above-plan surplus can be sold freely, including to foreign companies in the Mariel Special Development Zone (ZEDM) established in 2014. Prices are to be flexibilised, gradually replacing the centrally set mechanism with agreements by both parties (Gil Fernández, 2019; Mesa-Lago, 2019: 18). Although the coronavirus pandemic resulted in a huge economic downturn and the return of rationing, decentralisation was at least partially implemented before the currency reform of 2020/21 with the prior opening up to foreign trade.

### 3.3 Market reform and coherence

How does the emergence of the new private sector and the changing planning model affect the coherence of the system? As Kornai describes, market reforms undermine the coherence of the classical system, which, despite its flaws, operates in a consistent manner with well-defined functions and competences. Macroeconomic disequilibria appear during the reform phase, as market and plan coordination tend to block each other: "The result of the ambivalence in the reform of the public sector is that the shortcomings of the bureaucratic and market mechanisms, far from correcting each other, tend to reinforce each other. The sector falls between two stools. What takes place in the name of coordination is 'neither plan nor market'" (Kornai, 1992: 508). As a result, shortages and public dissatisfaction tend to be more severe than before the reform phase. The formerly coherent administration of society gets more and more blurred by the loss of consistency, which affects not only economic coherence but the system's core values:

The semideregulated public sector shows few signs of being influenced by respect for industry and thrift associated with private ownership, the market, and competition. What it does display is a spirit of cheap commercialism. This permeates the whole society: personal connections with officials in the bureaucracy are used by state-owned firms and private entrepreneurs in matters of production and by individuals in their own affairs, and bribery is often attempted. Buyers suffering from shortage, whether firms, self-employed artisans, or consumers, try to do the same. The wealth of the state has no value in the public's eyes; people do not sense that it arose out of the taxes and sacrifices of taxpaying citizens, or that those handling the nation's wealth could be held responsible for it. Many of the public do not condemn defrauding or stealing from the state (Kornai, 1992: 509).

In Cuba, these problems were perfectly mirrored by Raúl Castro's speech about "social indiscipline" from July 2013, when he criticised the increase in corruption, illegal activities and anti-social behaviour, concluding that "despite the undeniable educational achievements made by the Revolution [...] we have taken a step back in citizens' culture and public spirit [...] I have the bitter sensation that we are a society ever more educated, but not necessarily more enlightened" (AP, 2013).

According to Kornai (1992: 25), reform socialism's lack of coherence makes it "doomed to fail". And, indeed, the history of reform socialism in eastern Europe seems to prove his point.<sup>21</sup> But is the same true for market socialism as

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21 All forms of the classical system – as maintained, for example, in highly isolated Albania – failed during the same time period that Cuban reform socialism has proven to be sustainable for a

practiced in China, Laos and Vietnam? In stark contrast to Kornai's statement from 1992 that any form of market socialism could never form a coherent new model that leads to sustained growth, the Chinese approach of "dual-track" reform, in which the plan load on SOEs is gradually substituted for market coordination within the framework of strategic macroplanning, has not only proven to be highly successful, but also led to the formation of a new model over a sufficiently long period to qualify as at least "viable", if not "coherent" (Qian, 2002: 19). As Alberto Gabriele points out, market socialism could be the most viable alternative for Cuba,<sup>22</sup> solving the structural problems of its economic model, as "the tension between Cuba's exceptional human development achievements and the weakness of their material foundation cannot be maintained indefinitely" (Gabriele, 2011: 671–672).

Indeed, the party's current economic concept papers (approved at its 7<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2016) already point towards the vision of a market socialist system that will be under construction until 2030.<sup>23</sup> However, "market socialism with Cuban characteristics" would not necessarily resemble its counterpart in China and Vietnam in every aspect, as the starting conditions in those countries differ. For example, Cuba has much more developed social security systems and a more highly skilled workforce than China and Vietnam had during the start of market reforms, and the political and cultural conditions are vastly different. Still, many properties of the Chinese and Vietnamese model could prove to be useful for future reforms in Cuba, as all three countries stem from the same family of socio-economic formation, and therefore face similar system-specific challenges.<sup>24</sup>

Summarising the previous chapters, Table 3 shows the three different forms of historically existing socialism with their respected differences in the main economic aspects laid out using the criteria of Kornai (1992: 393) and Gabriele (2012):

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historically long period despite its lack of coherence.

22 For a definition of market socialism, see: Gabriele Schettino (2012: 31).

23 For example, the different forms of property (e.g. for the first time not only small but also *medium*-sized private enterprises) shall interact with each other, while the planning bureaucracy should "give priority to strategic planning" PCC (2017: 9); PCC (2017: 22). The current administrative mechanisms of planning shall be replaced with economic-financial ones (indicative planning), while in a first instance the plan should be "less detailed", as economic minister Alejandro Gil pointed out in February 2020 (*CUBADEBATE*, 2020).

24 For a discussion of the question of what market socialism in Cuba could potentially look like, see: Gabriele (2011); and Wilkinson (2012).

**Table 3: Different types of socialist system**

	<b>Classical socialism</b>	<b>Reform socialism</b>	<b>Market socialism</b>
<b>Political system</b>	One-party state	One-party state	One-party state
<b>Forms of property</b>	>≈80% SOEs, little or no private ownership of the means of production	Dominant state sector, increasing number of private businesses and cooperatives	Mixed economy with predominant state sector
<b>Dominant coordination mechanism</b>	Bureaucratic (plan)	"Neither plan nor market"	Market (with strategic planning)
<b>Planning method</b>	Mainly material	Material & financial	Mainly financial
<b>Market situation<sup>25</sup></b>	Seller's market	Seller's market	Buyer's market
<b>Formation of prices</b>	Centrally set	Partly free	Mostly market driven
<b>Budget constraint of SOEs</b>	Soft	Soft	Partially soft
<b>Coherence</b>	Coherent	Incoherent	Coherent (?)
<b>Examples</b>	Albania (1946–92), GDR (1953–1963; 1971–1989), USSR (1936–53)	Cuba (since 1980), GDR (1963–71), Hungary (1963–89), USSR (1953–64; 1985–91)	China, Laos, Vietnam (all 1980s), Yugoslavia (1949–90)

Source: Authors' compilation

This overview seeks to give the typical characteristics of each version of the system, rather than a complete list of all their respective properties. As explained with regard to Table 2 in the previous section, the boundaries between the different types sometimes overlap and vary over the course of history.

#### 4 Conclusion: Towards a new form of market socialism in Cuba?

As this paper has sought to demonstrate, economic development in Cuba since 1959 followed clearly distinguishable patterns, with phases of de- and recentralisation and different combinations of coordination mechanisms. After the "Great Debate" of 1963–65, Guevara's approach of eliminating the market "as fast as possible" reached its peak with the Revolutionary Offensive in 1968. The sub-

<sup>25</sup> For an explanation of the seller's/buyer's market under the conditions of socialism, see: Kornai (1992: 218–19, 245–52).

sequent “great disenchantment” after the failed sugar harvest in 1970 led to the first fundamental reassessment of the economic system, connecting the objective conditions of economic development with the state’s management abilities. The institutionalisation wave since the mid-1970s reflects this shift of assessment during the first experiments with market reform in socialist Cuba.

After many years of various phases of reforms and their partial reversal, in 2011 the PCC for the first time recognised the existence of the market as integral part of its socialist model. The essence of the reform concept was even enshrined in the country’s new constitution of 2019, where article 18 states that central planning should “consider the market and regulate its functions”. Different forms of private property were recognised. Planning, according to the new constitution, should “essentially project and conduct the strategic development” instead of micro-managing the economy (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019: 3). Thus, Bettelheim, in the end, seems to have won the Great Debate.<sup>26</sup>

But the implementation of the reform programme has so far fallen short of the political consensus reached. At the 7<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 2016, Raúl Castro had to admit that only 21% of the Guidelines had been implemented so far. As examined before, reform since then has stagnated on many fronts due to short-term efforts to resolve tensions, leaving the current state of economic coordination in Cuba at the level of “neither plan nor market”. Although some indicators point towards the vision of a Chinese-inspired dual-track reform framework with strategic planning, currently, Cuba’s reform process is “stuck in the middle”, leaving many questions in the air (Alonso & Vidal, 2019: 17). This picture did not change much until January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, when the staggered devaluation of the peso along with the harmonisation of exchange rates and the abolition of the CUC finally took place in the aftermath of the economic downturn following the pandemic.

Although the updated reform framework amid the 2020 recession does point towards a substantial increase in the use of market mechanisms as well as the tightening of the budget constraint, only time will tell whether Cuba manages to take the step forward from the gradual approach towards a market socialist model on its own basis, which could potentially create the material foundations for sustained and dynamic growth and by solving the economy’s structural problems restore much of the coherence lost.

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Louis Thiemann / Claudia Mare

## Multiple Economies and Everyday Resistance in Cuba: A Bottom-up Transition

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary political economy and economic anthropology research recognises that any national economy must be studied as a web of dissimilar but interdependent spheres: formal and informal, commercial and social, family and corporate, state and community, legal and illegal. A “diverse economies” framework helps us better understand the interconnected flows of valuation, reproduction and development (Gibson-Graham, 2008). In the Cuban case, we see such a framework as essential to analyse an increasingly complex economy, as well as to visualise bottom-up dynamics that could serve as seeds of transformation towards more equitable economies (e.g. Ostrom, 2010; Smith et al., 2014; Richardson, 2015; Koopman, 2011; Goodman et al., 2012).

Addressing the Cuban economic system’s inequalities of income and access to opportunity (and gradually to property), as well as the opacity of its economic flows (Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020; Espina & Togo González, 2012) requires an understanding of how its different realms of production and exchange interact in practice. Diverse, interconnected production relations co-exist and depend on each other, but have their own rules and rights (Ritter, 2015; Pérez-López, 2018). The key structures for formulating public and economic policies remain unreachable (and often invisible) in the public debate, while essential activities for societal evolution have been criminalised or marginalised. This impasse is encouraged by three factors: the lack of independent social research institutions; citizens’ very limited capacity to associate and speculate about issues of social and cooperative interest (Chaguaceda, 2011); and the geographical and ontological distance of comparative cases from which examples of post-socialist transition could be drawn (Reid-Henry, 2007). Beyond the stagnation of the economy itself, we thus face important conceptual gaps in its representation.

Our research approaches this void from two angles. First, a conceptual framework is proposed that breaks with the exceptionalism that prevails in the study

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1 Parts of this work are based on recent essays published in *Foro Cubano* (Universidad Sergio Arboleda, Bogotá): Thiemann and Mare (2019); Thiemann (2019a, 2019b).

and discourse about Cuba (Hoffmann & Whitehead, 2007) and leaves behind the binaries that still dominate discussions about the island's economic "system" (socialism/capitalism; legal/illegal; state/private, etc.). We will explore the utility of two novel conceptual frameworks: Gibson-Graham's theory of multiple economies; and the research on infra-politics and everyday resistance (Scott, 1986; 1990; Tria Kerkvliet, 2009; Ye et al., 2016) based on subaltern studies (Shanin, 1990; van der Ploeg, 2008). In this way, we attempt to link the socio-economic data collected in recent standardised surveys (Mesa-Lago et al., 2016; Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020) with transdisciplinary perspectives that allow us to address the post-socialist economy considering political, cultural and semantic dynamics.

Secondly, the chapter discusses the results of our own interview series, which includes respondents from a diversity of illegal and informal spaces and practices. We collected empirical data in the form of testimonies and life histories that detail the fluidity between legal and illegal practices. Due to the sensitivity of the topics covered and the likelihood of data contamination from patterns of self-censorship, we worked with a team of collaborators who interviewed people they already knew and followed the technique of "snowball sampling" (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). The meetings were held at an intimate, conversational level, and in some cases over several sessions in order both to gain the confidence of the subjects and to better understand the places and mechanisms they use in their livelihoods. For this project we considered a total of 72 accounts collected between 2017 and 2020 in five provinces (Havana, Mayabeque, Pinar del Río, Camagüey and Matanzas). The sample consists primarily of subjects aged 30–59 with experience of both state and non-state work in their sectors, and who live and work in (sub-/inter)urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

We argue that the Cuban transition has created three economies with their own motives and mechanisms of mobilisation and valuation (Table 1). The motives and methods of the paternalistic statism that characterised society during the period of Soviet dependency and led to the crisis of the "Special Period" have largely been left behind. Emerging from the crisis and its structural origins, Cuba has gone through two interconnected transitions: one, top-down, in which the post-socialist elites have reorganised various state monopolies as commercial enterprises that enable the power apparatus to survive and fund a reduced range of social services (Morales, 2009); and another, bottom-up, in which the population has reorganised everyday relationships, both inside and outside the state, in order to allow households to survive.

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2 Thiemann and Spoor (2019) addresses similar issues to this chapter, but focuses on agricultural production and rural livelihoods.

### *Interactions between Cuba's multiple economies*

Table 1 summarises our analysis of the three subsystems that make up the Cuban socio-economic space. The first column contains all the surviving operations of the paternalistic state: a state that intends to feed its inhabitants (regulated and unsubsidised food), offers them clothing, assigns them a job (social service), provides them with subsidised education, health and cultural options, assists in case of unexpected events (Civil Defense) and even provides household appliances (as during the “Energy Revolution” of the mid-2000s). This social economy has been of particular political utility in sustaining egalitarian assumptions and legitimating a stagnating “revolutionary process”. It has functioned as a strategy for social cohesion and signification around the semantics of “socialist equality”. This economy uses state philanthropy to prioritise social concerns and includes several forms of distribution, such as rationing, subsidy, gratuities and loyalty incentives.

**Table 1: Cuba from a “multiple economies” perspective**

<b>Mixed economy</b>	<b>Actors</b>	<b>Motives</b>	<b>Methods</b>	<b>Importance</b>
<b>1. Social economy</b>	Paternalistic state; Under-paid state workers	Egalitarianism; Development indicators; Continuity in power	Workforce control; Subsidies; Bureaucracy	In decline; Dependent on subsidies
<b>2. Corporate state</b>	Post-socialist state: Military companies and elites International corporations	Profit	Monopolies; High margins; Suppression of competition	Rapid growth; Access to power
<b>3. Popular economy</b>	Workers; Households	Subsistence; Everyday resistance; Endogenous development	“ <i>La lucha</i> ”: Theft and private use of state assets; Informal production	Main economy; No access to power; Illegal but partially tolerated

Source: Authors' compilation

This social economy survived the transition, but only just. Pressed by the economic crisis of the 1990s and 2000s, the government approved cuts to general spending, reductions to state services and subsidies, and began raising funds

from previously free services. Thus, in both practical and symbolic terms, the discursive constructs and egalitarian underpinnings of the hoped-for “construction of socialism” were liquidated (Espina et al., 2011: 59–75; Mare, 2019). Thirty years after losing its position as a subsidised “outpost” of the Soviet Union, Cuba’s paternalistic state depends more than ever on the sacrifice of its workforce of specialised professionals, local bureaucrats, manual workers and technical personnel. State-sector workers are the social actors that are both the “natural” allies of the perpetuation of state paternalism and the most vulnerable to its changes. After three decades of inflation and wage stagnation, the 3.1 million full-time workers in the state sector received an average monthly salary of \$32.38 in 2018 (ONEI, 2019), a token amount even in the Cuban context.<sup>3</sup> Several authors have calculated that real wages in 2011 reached only 26%–27% of their 1989 value (Vidal & Everleny, 2012: 9; Mesa-Lago, 2012: 8); Mesa-Lago gives the figure for 2016 as 39.3% (2017: 5). State wages, along with pensions, social security and other redistributive payments, account for just 3.5% of Cuban GDP.<sup>4</sup> Although the monetary reform announced for January 2021 promises to considerably raise nominal wages in CUP, we estimate that inflation, the dollarisation of many domestic markets, and the impacts of the pandemic, will mean real wages will not rise in 2021–22.

When it comes to household sustenance, the post-socialist transition has already taken place. While state employment is still formally the norm on paper, for most state employees their formal salary is only a secondary (or tertiary) source of income. By upsetting the relative balance between wages and consumption that characterised Cuba’s social-centralist economy under Soviet tutelage (1972–1991), the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) reduced its paternalistic obligations. By sending Cubans out to fend for themselves, however, it oddly insisted that they continue to fulfil their part of the social contract between the paternalistic state and proletarian society. The state continues to regulate the economy in a way that means citizens must almost exclusively work, sell, buy from and respond to the demands of its omnipresent apparatus. Hence, rather than seeing it as a deviation from the script of command economics, the PCC’s response to the economic crisis of the Special Period constituted a *radicalisation* of the

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3 In the official press, the secretary general of the Cuban Workers’ Confederation acknowledged that wages were not enough to meet needs (Granma, July 31st 2017). We estimate that fewer than 10% of Cuban households are able to meet the costs of their basic monthly food basket solely through salaries and pensions (those earning over \$50 per household member at the informal exchange rate) (see also Belyea, 2018). This percentage falls even further when daily costs for transportation, utilities, basic home maintenance and medical care are calculated.

4 Authors’ calculation based on ONEI data (2018), taking into account the GDP deflator calculated by Vidal (2017: 12).

Guevaran model of voluntary work based on morality rather than payment. The result is that both the elites and the working population have been obliged to seek other, informal ways of sustaining themselves.

In spite of this generalised sacrifice, the social economy is becoming increasingly limited in scope. Every year since 2008, the “*libreta*” (ration booklet) has offered a smaller variety of subsidised products, with some of the remaining ones habitually substituted or missing from stores. The paternalistic state today guarantees food at subsidised prices for the first week of every month (a policy that appears to end with the January 2021 monetary reform). After that, the population must find solutions on the black market or succumb to the military’s high-priced supermarkets.

In the absence of a new social contract, and rejecting the radicalisation of voluntarism, the vast majority of Cubans reformulated their obligations to the state as opportunities for day-to-day privatisation, increased participation in black and grey markets, and rely on remittances and their domestic recirculation. Rather than trusting the macrodynamics of nation-construction and institutionalised redistribution, their economic lives have shifted to the microdynamics between unsustainable dependencies and illegal autonomies.

Coexisting with the paternalistic state but much less visible is a second sphere: the corporate state. Here, we find the main actors in the top-down post-socialist transition: conglomerates that belong to the military leadership, their loyal managers and professionals, and a small number of international companies associated with this elite. They operate within an opaque environment with little balance of power (Tedesco, 2018; Klepak, 2012; Pedreira, 2013).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, this capitalist sphere has become the main “fortress” of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR): “defending the system” has evolved from military tasks of territorial defence to commercial operations for economic survival. Siddiqi (2017: 1–2) suggests that an economy’s degree of militarisation is not measured only by the size of its defence budget, but by the political economy of its “military capital”: “Profit-making ventures conducted by the military, with the involvement of armed forces personnel or using the personal economic stakes of members of the defence establishment”. So while 1952 marks the beginning of the military dominance over politics in Cuba, which was cemented after the Rebel Army entered Havana in 1959, the military economy we now know is more recent. It was fostered in the 1990s with the unification of the various operations carried

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5 The nature of its organisation and members means that it operates with no direct (or even partial) oversight, that the information on its assets and budget is neither public nor accessible and that its managing officers do not grant interviews or reports. Its military status is justified by the economic strategy in the name of national security and its secrecy on the premise that “the enemy” should not be given access to such information.

out by agents of the Ministry of the Armed Forces (MINFAR) and the Ministry of the Interior (MININT) to provide the country with foreign exchange (Sweig, 2016: 71, 135–6). From that point on, military-led entrepreneurialism expanded to manage tourism, the domestic foreign exchange market, air transport, mining, biomedicine and various exports of profitable products such as tobacco and rum (Tedesco, 2018: 113).

The military's activity in the post-socialist economy therefore differs categorically from the arms and military construction companies set up in the 1960s and 1970s. There are four essential differences: 1) military corporations today react to business opportunities rather than matters of defence; 2) they have embarked on the open pursuit of surplus value rather than defined national security objectives; 3) military companies compete with civilian companies that could perform the same business activity; and 4) the FAR have created informal hierarchies that exist in parallel to those designated by the constitution. During the presidency of Raúl Castro (defence minister since 1959 and main architect of the corporate transition) this elite took control of key ministries and public agencies in order to command the main sources of surplus value (the commercialisation of medical services, tourism, revenues from remittances and the trading of imported products, exports of sugar, tobacco and rum, among others) and capital (e.g. the national spatial planning system, the Banco Financiero Internacional (BFI), and the corporation that manages Cuba's protected areas, Flora y Fauna). The most profitable company in Cuba is currently the multisectoral conglomerate Grupo de Administración Empresarial S.A. (GAESA in its Spanish initials). Its sales are estimated at between \$4 and \$5 billion per year, a figure that represents over 10% of GDP (González et al., 2018).

Through GAESA and other smaller conglomerates, the corporate state concentrates and controls almost all profitable economic sectors. Institutionally separate from the social state's egalitarian, redistributive motives, it seeks to maximise its margins by recasting citizens as paying customers. However, its profitmaking is only possible due to the monopoly it exercises over key economic sectors and the unfavourable regulation of possible competitors. No foreign company can sell its products and services without the participation of the corporate state, while unaffiliated Cuban citizens are only granted licenses and economic spaces that do not interfere with established monopolies. To protect the exclusiveness of its export markets, for example, the government refused the Barack Obama administration's proposal to allow small Cuban businesses to export to the United States as part of the intent to thaw bilateral relations. Crucially, several key monopolies originally established to facilitate the role of the paternalistic state now serve the corporate state. High subsidies have thus become high mar-

gins.<sup>6</sup> In these conditions, GAESA's projects and those of similar corporations can grow very rapidly, and despite being companies with severe operational inefficiencies, they manage to invest in their value chains and establish branches (for example, of the supermarket chain aptly named "Currency Collection Stores" (Tiendas de Recaudación de Divisas) and the Panamericana chain throughout the country.

In part, the corporate restructuring of parts of the state is based on the transition from one mode of international dependency to another. In the 1990s, Cuba was disconnected from what Cubans called the "pipeline" of donations from countries governed by PCC sister parties. Though Hugo Chávez's taking power in Venezuela allowed a new setup of dependency on this (initially) much more productive sister-economy, Cuba's model of intergovernmental dependency appears to have ended conclusively with the collapse of the Venezuelan economy between 2014 and 2017. Rather than unleashing major productive forces at home, the state has since focused on reconnecting with another external benefactor – the diaspora of Cuban refugees in wealthier countries. Rather than opening a new "pipeline", the state now faces a multitude of irregular "hoses" into the country, typically extended by family members abroad. In the period from 2008 to 2018, remittances (as a flow of subsidies to Cuba) exceeded the value of the goods, credit, fuel, knowledge, investment and weapons sent annually by the USSR and its satellites in the 1980s.<sup>7</sup> The main difference between the two periods of external dependence is that the state had direct access to the first, while today it needs to develop commercial mechanisms to seize a share of the second. In order to participate in the transfer and domestic redistribution of remittances, the entrepreneurial state has extended its trade networks so as to be able to buy cheap

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6 One sector that reveals how the corporate state's interest in increasing commercial margins often prevails over the paternalistic state's endogenous development interests is the policy applied since the 1990s to the import and sale of tools in state stores. One interviewee, a representative of a foreign firm with a long-term presence in Havana, explained how basic electric and hand tools are rendered inaccessible to the population: "They proposed that we open a shop to sell electric and hand tools to the public, and we were very interested because there is a large market for these products. We gave them our proposal with the prices at which we'd supply the products to the store, which would be run by Habaguanex. At the next meeting they showed us the list of prices they would set for the public, and they were triple the cost. Nothing would sell that way, and we can't bear the investment costs for a store that will be ghosted" by the population (# 5, Havana, 30.11.17).

7 According to Mesa-Lago (2018), between 2008 and 2018, Cubans on the island received \$57.3 billion from the diaspora. Of this, \$29.9 billion was in cash and \$27.3 billion in goods. In the space of 11 years, this form of external subsidy surpassed the aid Cuba received from the USSR in almost 30 (estimated at \$30 billion), as well as the estimated \$40 billion it received from Venezuela over 17 years.

merchandise on the (overproduction-driven) international market, multiply its value in Cuba's scarcity-driven domestic markets, and thus obtain exceptional commercial margins.

This favourable context for Cuba's fledgling state capitalism is explained by its leaders' direct access to power. While the Soviet central planning model is maintained in the ministries, a parallel hierarchy now controls most of the assets and investments needed to actually implement planning. The Ministry of Domestic Trade (MINCIN), for example, may decide to improve its outdated refrigeration and transport capacity in order to improve the effectiveness of its tasks to collect and distribute domestic products to stores and agricultural markets. In practice, however, these resources are invested elsewhere – primarily in GAE-SA supermarkets that sell imported luxury products (Thiemann & Spoor, 2019). Given their close (often family) relations with the main leaders of the PCC and the FAR, it is likely that in certain cases the directors of the corporate state have more power to make key decisions about the economic sectors they participate in than the (civilian) ministerial cadres whose job it is to plan and regulate the same sectors.

This capacity of the business elite to establish political interests means they may be conceived of as a new class: a social sphere where profit motives and protective power converge with new and exclusive entrepreneurial autonomies from the state's tax and redistributive system that have conclusively divorced from the PCC's egalitarian ideals (Riggs, 2001). This class benefits from access and entrepreneurship opportunities, clientelistic ties, political power and financial leverage far beyond those of the other economic agents we present here. It accepts economic reform, yet retains a Cold War mindset in its political thinking, coupled with an acute need to maintain the ideology of statism on which its monopolies rest. To do so, the entrepreneurial FAR preserves its hegemony in state security matters and encourages military supervision of political processes. In short, a class that is "increasingly despotic in its relations with workers, and which in the course of its consolidation and development begins to self-recruit and to maintain production/appropriation relations of an exploitative nature" (Quijano, 2014: 580–581).

A third sphere of the mixed economy counterbalances the first two, and grows in their contradictions. This is the popular or autonomous economy in which a large variety of black and grey markets, perks and bribes coexist with semi-legal self-employment. Although wages in some state sectors nominally rose in 2018, most of the labour carried out in Cuba takes place in a subaltern context, as an "ongoing struggle for autonomy and progress in a context characterized by multiple patterns of dependency and associated processes of exploitation and marginalization." (van der Ploeg, 2008: xiv). The origin of this

definition lies in debates over non-capitalist relations in agriculture (the “peasant condition”), but in the Cuban context it is notable far beyond the specificities of agricultural work. Through a broad portfolio of economic subversion and resistance strategies, state workers have transformed their jobs into platforms for the “everyday privatisation” of state assets and inputs. Large parts of the population have accepted and normalised their at least partial dependence on illegal transactions and practices. The macroeconomic weight of these practices has increased and – we argue – jumped category: initially supplementary channels for scarce goods, black and grey markets have come to represent the main source of income for a significant majority of households. They are also key markets for many goods and services, from gasoline to cement.

Extensive illegal economies existed in all countries that followed the Soviet central planning model, including the Cuba of the 1980s (Loś, 1990; Smart, 1993; Smart & Hsu, 2007). Within these supplementary economies, citizens set about correcting the clumsy movements of the planned economy (shortages of some products and services, and overproduction of others). Since the Special Period, however, the provision of basic needs and the search for progress in Cuba have become individualised and displaced into the underground economy on a scale that exceeds both the Soviet *blat* and the Chinese *guanxi*. The imbalance between the increasingly limited agency of the paternalistic state and the exploitative practices of corporate monopolies leads many Cuban households to participate in this third economy on a much larger scale and daily basis: when they buy groceries, hygiene products or newspapers; when they pay electricity bills; when they require transport; when they build or repair their houses; when searching for jobs, medical treatment, legal permits or documentation. The lack of official data means that it will remain difficult to quantify this economy, but from our observation the autonomous economy has already become the largest of the three, and the one that “*resuelve*” (solves) most problems and needs in the daily life of Cubans (Ritter, 2015; Hirschfeld, 2006).

Most state workers rely on alternative activities to supplement their wages. Many of these activities take place during their working hours, at their workplace and at the expense of their companies’ social or business purposes. Necessity has led Cubans to legitimise a day-to-day life of illegal trade, misappropriated resources, petty bribery and tax evasion. “*La lucha*” (the struggle) is the name commonly given to illegal (trans-)actions that are performed in order to subsist. But “*la lucha*” also constitutes an area of collective agency that transforms the country from the bottom up, as it allows the practice of resistance to a government that gives no space to other, more explicit manifestations. Lacking serious political platforms, people demonstrate economically.

The praxis of autonomy is rolled out in a series of informal economies that resist power, yet also avoid confronting it (Scott, 1985). We depart from the common analysis that Cuba's black markets are a "proto-capitalist" sphere of entrepreneurial spirit that reveals that "Cubans are capitalists" after all, in spite of their government's refusal to legalise such "innate" pursuit of profit (Cave, 2012). We propose to frame the vast majority of self-employment within what Shanin (1990) calls "expolary economies" – spaces of subsistence practice and motivation that lie outside the socialism–capitalism dichotomy.

Grey markets can also describe civil servants who improve their salaries with what Riggs (2001: 817–818) calls "prebendary income": personal income or advantages deriving from access to state assets (vehicles, machinery), scarce goods and services, privileged information and administrative powers (cf. Katsenelinboigen, 1977). Even the majority of legal businesses (state-run, cooperative and private) routinely engage in opaque transactions, source from the black market, hire unlicensed labour and evade taxes. Most of these activities take place in a regime of "tolerated illegality", whereby the government avoids explicit prosecution of most illegalities so as not to incur economic and political tensions, thus effectively permitting these activities within a legal limbo and limiting itself to selective interventions (Bloch, 2018).

The mixed economy produces bifurcations and gaps that are undesirable but latent in the country's day-to-day life. According to Bloch, they form the basis of the balance of power between the PCC and society, developed over the last three decades of post-socialism. If the paternalistic state were to enforce its own laws, leaving the population with only the token salaries it provides legally, a mass exodus from state jobs would result (including from the bureaucratic and executive bodies) and the PCC would face more serious threats to its absolutist retention of political power. And yet its operations, alongside the military's margin's, have shaped the state into a double-edged presence in people's lives. It has, in short, come to unite two contradictory functions: improving people's conditions (in CUP), and sharpening their exploitation (in \$).

### *Subversion and everyday resistance in the autonomous economy*

In the contemporary context of globalisation and the centralisation of commercial and state hierarchies, studies of the popular economy have highlighted invisible forms of resistance and autonomy reproduced in everyday practices. These resistances are not merely considered forms of reaction or explicit confrontation, but also of production, affiliation and action. Authors such as Negri (2006), van der Ploeg (2013) and Schneider and Niederle (2010) consider that, while open, direct organised resistance (political movements, armed struggles) tend to

be most visible, often everyday, indirect, disorganised resistance processes have a larger impact on countries' political and economic evolution. In his theory of "everyday resistance" (1985) James Scott engages with a phenomenon that may be applied to the Cuban reality. He analyses the set of disorganised, covert and generally depoliticised acts that subvert the norms, laws and economic and social structures imposed from above. In Scott's theory, everyday resistance begins where compliance with what is established ends, and any action against the system is considered an act of "rectification". Far from being a deliberate act of speculation to defend apparently selfish personal interests, it may be understood as a subaltern initiative to survive and reproduce under difficult conditions. Although these exercises occur by altering economic relations, they avoid open and organised confrontation with political power (Scott, 1985: 290). In this sense, everyday resistance is incapable of overthrowing a government, but quite capable of overriding its policies.<sup>8</sup> Linz and Stepan (1996: 9) suggest that in systems that more severely restrict economic rights, the strength of illegal practices that empower the population on a broader scale (i.e. without creating new hierarchies) can be seen as de facto democratisation. Everyday resistance can thus promote greater economic plurality, as well as the development of forms of association and exchange that oxygenate the status quo. That is why it is common for "illegality" to spike in periods of political decadence, societal realignment and transition.

The informal mechanisms and structures of everyday resistance in Cuba not only comprise an economy that is larger than the official one, they also represent a more widespread socio-cultural phenomenon than the top-down culture of voluntarism, and a sphere of everyday politics that draws more citizen participation and discussions about what is legitimate and what is not than the PCC's mobilisations and the debates around the "socialist model". Since the 1990s, the effects of everyday resistance have become more and more pervasive; they have accumulated and amalgamated. The internal policies of state companies and agencies are no longer what ensure that their employees remain at their jobs. In many sectors, achieving a living wage means adjusting to activities that have largely lost their stigmata and are considered essential to basic sustenance: theft from the state, misappropriation, bribes and commissions are thus justified and sanitised.

In Scott's terms, "infrapolitics" are socio-economic actions that have political weight while occurring in a depoliticised way (Scott, 1990: 183–201). His integrated vision of infrapolitics explains how different practices and discourses of resistance can sustain each other. Everyday resistance as a behind-the-scenes

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8 In *Everyday Politics* (2005), Benedict Tria Kerkvliet describes how acts of everyday resistance in the predominantly peasant societies of Vietnam and China managed to defeat communist collectivisation projects and lead to a legitimacy opening to private initiative from the bottom up, which the government began to institutionalise in the 1970s and 1980s.

phenomenon of societal readjustment can also be assimilated within the study of “free spaces”. These are meeting places where close association fosters collective identity, shared grievances, frameworks of opposition and tactical innovation (Johnston, 2005: 108–137). From a sociolinguistic point of view, such legally porous livelihoods tend to shape a lexicon as elusive and cryptic as the practice it accompanies. In this lexicon the “hidden transcripts” of everyday economic culture are expressed, revealing forms of a resistance that often remain invisible. Thus, the study of infra-resistances is not limited to a range of practices that contravene the public transcripts of the dominant group. It also involves deciphering speech acts that may include rumours, urban legends, jokes, euphemisms, codes and rituals, as well as other symbolic, relatively passive covert acts that have immediate effect but lack an explicit identification with the political sphere. In fact, not only do the vast majority of the subjects interviewed not link their actions to an explicit political objective, they deny any (potentially dangerous) relationship to politics at all.

In Cuba, “to live and let live” has become the basis of the language between workers and those meant to monitor them (inspectors, police, company managers, etc.). As one interviewee said, referring to the inspectors with whom he has a bribery agreement: “I know what they want and they know what they are coming for” (# 67, Camagüey, 22/1/20). The popular saying “*invento, luego resisto*” (I invent therefore I resist) is an example of the enigmatic language that as a metaphorical operation accompanies daily activities to the point of representing essential business communication. Several small traders we interviewed – intermediaries between the source of misappropriation in an official institution and the clientele of families and small businesses – said that they communicate with their buyers via mobile phone, always calling and never via messages, in order to avoid surveillance. In the calls they use an alternative language: for example, beef – a product whose commercialisation is still a criminal offence – is referred to as “tomato” for these purposes. In such circumstances, good relations must be maintained with partners to ensure no one reports you (“*echar pa’ adelante*”), which would lead to being caught (“*te llevan*”) because, after all, as one interviewee comments, “if you don’t screw, you get screwed, and if you don’t go there, they take you” (#10, Havana, 03/2/17). This cause and effect relationship seems to reduce the impact of illegality on daily life and normalises theft, fraud and the misappropriation of goods. A popular saying gives a clue to the perceived acceptability of this practice: “Thief who robs thief [read: the state], a hundred years pardoned”. This language becomes highly functional for everyday resistance not only in strategic terms, but also to create common references around a social space, to open up opportunities and accompany contentious political action. In this sense, social learning takes place via extrinsic motivations that

nevertheless have a normative sense: by observing social models, these mechanisms are reinforced by repeating what is legitimate and refraining from what is sanctioned in public life.

In a report on the blog *Generación Y*, the independent journalist Yoani Sánchez describes the inevitability of living with the black market from the perspective of consumer:

I try to imagine an incredible 24 hours when I don't have to resort to the informal market. How about one day without the milk bought from those knocking on my door [...] I can't imagine a day without delving into the black market to buy eggs, oil or tomato sauce. Even to get a cone of peanuts, I have to cross the line of illegality [...] Not to mention the wide range of underground workers I have to call upon when the washing machine breaks, the gas burner clogs or the shower stops working. All of them – in the shadows – support my day-to-day and supplement the limited services provided by the state [...] But the most amazing thing is the infinite capacity for regeneration informal sellers show after one of the frequent raids on them. I don't know about you, but I can't live a day without the black market (Sánchez, 2008).

Without “*la lucha*” or access to the opportunities it provides, the vast majority of Cubans would struggle to survive, let alone prosper. They thus overwhelmingly choose a livelihood over a political voice. They invest their dissatisfaction, effort and aspirations in constructing black and grey markets, in underground production and suitcase-based importation, in the spontaneous and concealed privatisation of state resources, in the expansion of practices beyond those authorised by “self-employment” licences,<sup>9</sup> in the evasion of controls and taxes, among other ruses to avoid the law. These practices are so prevalent that their motives, ethics, structures and consequences far exceed the rationale of proletarianisation and voluntary work. In place of orders and slogans, a more informal activity that is individualistic but family-based and self-directed predominates, but with the fears and insecurities that are natural to the subaltern sphere.

One interviewee, a storekeeper in a hospital, explained the social dynamic created so that a specific job may be used to meet family demand. His fundamental expenses are food, and in his position he is able to “*resolver*” the needs

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9 Since 1993, certain specific economic activities have been legalised under the unlikely common legal denominator of *cuentalpropismo* (self-employment) (Mesa-Lago et al., 2016). The portfolio of approved private businesses includes a range of businesses, from those that generate liquid assets and have privileged access to imports and neo-patrimonial ties to the corporate state (e.g. non-agricultural “cooperatives” formed by former cadres with connections), to small-scale individual or family production.

of his six-member family in terms of dairy, meat and eggs. While his boss does not know exactly how he does it, he turns a blind eye to him taking some things because “he knows how bad the situation is and he does it himself – so I should have my turn as well ... Then I help out the caretaker with a packet of milk or a bag of yogurt and I leave with the products in the trunk” (# 49, Havana, 11.18.19). To supplement his 750 CUP wages, the interviewee also sells some of the stolen products. Taking one example from his account – the powdered milk intended for hospital patients – we learn that the respondent misappropriates approximately 20% of the total stock and sells it for 2,200 CUP per month. This product alone thus raises his salary by 293%.

As it is safer to involve other workers in the product extraction chain (shift manager, caretakers, colleagues), the practice of this so-called “*búsqueda*” (search for resources to misappropriate) has collective traits in many workplaces. This relationship is described in popular parlance as “*sociolismo*”, a jovial inversion of the term socialism (*socio* in Spanish means associate/partner). In (and between) workplaces where “*sociolismo*” reigns, the people involved do not necessarily like each other, but everyone keeps up appearances. Relations based on bribery thus become small theatres of friendship, as the word “*socio*” shows – a partner is someone you ask for help and who helps as if you were a friend, concealing the fact that they are really helping you in exchange for a bribe, money or protection.

Masha Gessen’s *The future is history: How totalitarianism reclaimed Russia* includes a popular saying from the Soviet Union that attempts to describe this balance: “We pretend to work, and they [the state] pretend to pay us” (2017: 64). Several interviewees underlined that as well as offering higher earnings, self-employment allows them – albeit temporarily – to overcome the stagnation and inefficiency of work in state hierarchies. For professionals, state jobs continue to offer a desirable and necessary source of social status, while non-state work in their sectors is more strictly outlawed and stigmatised. Many professionals therefore maintain themselves by working in both spheres, gaining status and tranquillity in the one and monetary sustenance in the other. An interviewee who works as a journalist described it:

The reason I don’t leave journalism to dedicate myself entirely to online marketing is not just because of the facilities the first gives me to achieve the second, like the internet connection, but because promoting private business has no legal recognition. I live in an endless ethical conflict: run the risk of being caught, with the professional consequences that would bring, or continue to financially support my family (#71, Camagüey, 11/3/20).

That said, everyday resistance cannot be analysed as an exception that can be located and eradicated, but rather as an endemic and functionalised element of the Cuban system. Any future regulatory or legislative change – in any direction – will face an economic reality created by millions of Cubans “*luchando*” (struggling within/against) the law, normalising and legitimising their economic countercultures. Aware of this reality, the government has nonetheless not embarked on structural changes that could free the population from the illegalities they practice every day and from the uncertainty, inefficiency and dependency they generate.

Ritter and Henken (2015) locate the cause of widespread illegalities precisely in their statist critique. They write that the state’s monopolies that structure legality according to unpopular expectations and the exercise of rigid central planning create chronic bottlenecks, inefficiency and missing incentives for workers. The authors consider that this creates a perfect environment for rent-seeking, for the theft and private use of scarce state resources, for corruption, the black market and the underground economy. Given that the vast majority of civil servants and state employees (including the managers, ministers and generals) participate extensively in the illegal economy and that the systematic repression of this illegality would worsen the situation in the country, the state is obliged to tolerate it and restricts itself to drawing red lines. This approval is also the foundation of the post-socialist political system: the state limits the application of its own laws against the illegal economy, but firmly maintains the power to grant or prohibit access to each individual or profession. Instead of universal economic rights, subsistence thus depends on individual favours that are conditioned, personalised and come with certain obligations:

Virtually every instance of personal domination is intimately connected with a process of appropriation. Dominant elites extract material taxes in the form of labor, grain, cash, and service in addition to extracting symbolic taxes in the form of deference, demeanor, posture, verbal formulas, and acts of humility. In actual practice, of course, the two are joined inasmuch as every public act of appropriation is, figuratively, a ritual of subordination (Scott, 1990: 188).

Cubans give up their political and civil rights on a daily basis in order to maintain their economic rights – in other words, their *carte blanche* to continue acting outside the law. As apolitical individuals, they are permitted to “*luchar*” in their state or private jobs. Individuals and projects that express dissident opinions or seek to escape the web of imposed loyalties, however, are quickly stifled by the application of dormant legal and administrative regulations. Vincent Bloch quotes a source that describes this relationship succinctly: “You *suffocate*, then

you start to *invent*, meaning you *mark yourself*, then you have to *clean yourself*, and then you fall into Fidel's machinery" of self-censure or token participation (2015: 34).

Notions and experiences of power and subordination are renewed via this daily ritual of defining, committing and absolving illegal acts, more so than by explicitly political deliberation. On the one hand, power, in the state–society hierarchy, shows a capacity to disregard and repress economic processes of great importance to the people, but on the other it cements that capacity as a legal necessity, establishing illegality as normality. The deference, tributes and perks that buy and maintain the powerful's benevolent tolerance thus become a necessary daily condition for the subaltern. On a personal level, the application of the many prohibitions in force is highlighted by close, public experiences of confiscations and convictions that have an intimidatory effect (also resulting in the world's second-highest rate of incarceration).<sup>10</sup> These may be avoided in exchange for voluntary un(der)paid labour, as well as symbolic work, ranging from participation in official demonstrations to public non-dissent. At the sectorial level, it ensures that most members of each trade (whether they are artists, taxi drivers or plumbers) tend to abstain from association and criticism.

Another great value of Scott's ontology of the relationships that interweave domination and submission lies in his attention to the fact that, far from a simple application and affirmation of power, they represent a field of mutual negotiation and inhibition. Here lies both the key to the continuity of the Cuban order of domination-by-prohibition, as well as the explanation of its futility in development terms:

The bond between domination and appropriation means that it is impossible to separate the ideas and symbolism of subordination from a process of material exploitation. In exactly the same fashion, it is impossible to separate veiled symbolic resistance to the ideas of domination from the practical struggles to thwart or mitigate exploitation. Resistance, like domination, fights a war on two fronts. The hidden transcript is not just behind-the-scenes griping and grumbling; it is enacted in a host of down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation. In the case of slaves, for example, these stratagems have typically included theft, pilfering, feigned ignorance, shirking or careless labor, footdragging, secret trade and production for sale, sabotage of crops, livestock, and machinery, arson, flight, and so on. In the case of peasants, poaching, squatting, illegal gleanings, delivery of inferior rents in kind, clearing clandestine

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10 According to official data in *Granma*, May 22nd 2012, and the international list by Warmesley (2012), from which micro-nations were excluded.

fields, and defaults on feudal dues have been common stratagems (1990: 188).

Although the PCC retains the nuclei of control and loyalty necessary to perpetuate its position of absolutist power (single party, tactical control over large companies, tight censorship of the press and academia, etc.), everyday resistance has significantly limited its ability to set agendas and priorities. In other words, everyday resistance has made Cuba an often economically ungovernable country. The vice president of a Havana municipality shared an interesting parable with us. In his experience as a state manager, “the country is like a person with an open belly. Everything slips out, the organs cannot function, and the effect of any order we may give them is overridden” (#1, Havana, 2/3/18).

## Conclusions: How can a new social contract be developed?

What do we learn from a society in which the usual study of economic statistics, publicly expressed opinions, laws and formal powers, and open and organised resistance is intertwined with the study of the hidden transcripts inscribed in its fabric by illegal, informal and everyday transactions, hierarchies and practices of resistance? Much has been written about how alternative spaces for expression and subsistence developed in so-called illiberal or “closed societies” (e.g. Gessen, 2017: 47–64; Fitzpatrick, 2000). Several authors have traced how these previously illegal practices have been formalised during post-totalitarian transition processes, and how they have affected the course of these transitions (Thelen, 2011; Polese & Rodgers, 2011). Little study (and even less comparison), however, has been made of countries where the political transition – with its fundamental basis in the legalisation and normalisation of existing popular economies – was abandoned half-way. Cuba’s paternalistic system conclusively collapsed in 1992–3, causing (and for wages we might say formalising) the need for a bottom-up transition that has been carried out over the subsequent three decades without legal and political recognition, but with even more force and dominance in everyday life and livelihoods.

We conclude with four themes that are both implicit interpretations of our ongoing research and questions/hypotheses for further inquiry:

1. *The importance of the popular economy*: The series of transactions that make up the popular economy, including black and grey markets for products, services and access to opportunities, remittances arriving via irregular channels, everyday resistance and illegal activity, constitute essential supports for the Cuban population. From being a supplementary space for exchange, black and grey

markets have become the main economy. The proliferation of digital markets, including sites such as *revolico.com*, the different “*paquetes semanales*” (compilations of digital information that reach every corner of the island, cf. Dye et al., 2018) and promotional applications will continue to offer new routes for illegal everyday activities, while avoiding both state control mechanisms and the physical monopolies of its corporations.

2. *The political dimension*: Every economic transaction, especially those committed in spite of the risk of sanctions from the state, is an expression of people’s opinions and preferences. The more deficient a population judges the economic system imposed on it to be, the more intense, ingenious and obstructive will be the acts of resistance to which they resort to defend themselves from scarcity, stagnation and inequalities of access. In a setting in which virtually all inhabitants depend on illegal activities, the system of governance perpetuates a vulnerability among its citizens (subalternity) that privatises their discontent and dissent. Acts that constitute theft, illegality and corruption from a legalistic perspective are in Cuba above all acts of disobedience of the military-controlled corporate state’s attempts to extract foreign exchange. They also show disobedience of the paternalistic state’s demands that its employees work in exchange for insufficient wages and subsidies. Hence, when the leaders of the party-state carry out campaigns against corruption, they do so from their position as employers who manage projects of exploitation as well as projects of development.

Rather than accusing the self-employed and participants in black markets of corruption and moral deficiency, policymakers should rethink the core issues hindering transparency in internal market relations. In Cuba, an intolerable gap has opened up between the narrative of continuity promoted by the government and the daily experience of a population navigating the transition, seeking terms for its analysis, means to express interests and spaces for association. Trust – in the government, in the legal system, in the perception of justice – is a shared perception variable that will not grow through official propaganda, but from a project to formalise the popular economy.

3. *The socio-cultural dimension*: The rational response of a society that faces a series of uncertainties lives on in its social imaginary. For the time being, it is difficult to imagine how, after decades of generalised and legitimised theft, Cuban society can re-develop codes of citizenship, tax discipline, a mutually beneficial relationship with state institutions and societal agreements about acceptable and unacceptable levels of inequality.

4. *The social contract and formalisation*: The absence of a social contract which the majority of society subscribes to and upholds is due to the state – in its laws, proclamations and interactions – failing to recognise the real economic relations the population is developing, thus leaving them in a legal, cultural and political limbo. According to Gauthier (1986), a social contract is founded when the different classes that make up a society enter into a sufficiently transparent, credible and majoritarian commitment on how to conceive, generate and distribute a country's wealth and opportunities. The PCC has not been able to reproduce the social contract of the Soviet period – “a tacit agreement” between the regime and the workers “to exchange political obedience for social security” (Cook, 1993: 1–18) – without massive donations of economic means from a sister country. Cuba's fledgling state capitalism will not result in a new pact between the social classes because its low productivity and focus on recirculation economies (receiving remittances, tourism and the sale of imported goods) prevent value creation that is broad enough to improve wages at a societal level and thereby forge a new consensus based on capitalist development – as in the case of Chinese and Vietnamese post-socialism. The PCC would face difficulties reinventing its “historic mission” and monopoly of power in this setting. Most importantly, current international conditions – most importantly the technological shift away from cheap-labour driven manufacturing – will likely prevent a repetition of the “Chinese transition”. In Cuba, a new social contract can only be conceived by reengaging with the motives, mechanisms and (de)legitimacies of the popular economy.

A social contract is a basis for cooperation (Rawls, 1971; Gauthier, 1986). As long as the motives behind the three economies remain unreconciled within a tacit societal commitment, and as long as post-socialist transitions (from above and below) continue to advance in a disconnected manner, it is hard to imagine how the entrenched mutual inhibition between the three economies could turn into beneficial cooperation and competition. In order to achieve a dynamic of endogenous development in Cuba (i.e. development not driven by donations from sister countries or the diaspora), participants in the popular economy must limit theft and the subversion of the law, the paternalistic state must limit its outlawing of actions that contribute to subsistence, and the military-run business system must limit the over-exploitation of the country's human capital and resources. Neither of these developments appears likely at this point.

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*Ruxandra Ana*

## ***Bailarín, Bailador, Callejero, Inflador: Being/ Becoming Professional on Cuba's Dance Scene (An Ethnographic Approach)***

On New Year's Eve 2019, halfway through my eight-month fieldwork in Havana, I found myself at a house party organised by Isabel, one of my closest and dearest acquaintances in the city. Her son, Ernesto, had been my first dance teacher when I started travelling to Havana in 2011, and even though he had given up teaching tourists, we would still dance together occasionally and talk about my experiences with different salsa schools in the city. On the night of the party, Ernesto told me: You see how this became good business in the past years? How many dance schools do you remember from the first time you came here? And look how many you have now. It's easy money, and any good dancer will have more knowledge than most of the tourists coming here, so what they do is they keep dancing with you during class, like I did with you tonight, but they call it teaching and they take your dollars.

His words resonated with my own dancing experience in Havana. Over the years, I took lessons in living rooms, basements, backyards, kitchens, studios, theatres, parks, terraces, rooftops – and this non-exhaustive list does not include the “lessons” I received (sometimes even against my will) in the street, in bars or at parties. Year after year, the lessons started more to resemble my lessons in Europe than my first lessons in Havana: I was making online appointments on the schools' websites, my teachers carried business cards and wore t-shirts with the school name and logo, they discussed their methodology with me before starting the class, made sure I stretched before and after class, offered me discounts after a certain number of lessons, invited me to try out other dance styles, and made sure to check I had left a positive review on Tripadvisor, Airbnb and Google Maps. And, most importantly, I would always be reassured that I was in a “professional” dance school, with “professional” teachers. Almost imperceptibly, a shift had happened.

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This paper puts forward a grassroots perspective on Cuban entrepreneurship and newly emerging work models by addressing the increased professionalisation of dance teaching aimed at foreign tourists. By analysing the experiences of dancers and dance teachers in Havana, I discuss the tensions between notions of “professionalism” defined from the point of view of the Cuban state and its institutions that specialise in dance education, on the one hand, and private businesses, on the other, where notions of market, competitiveness and personal branding put forward new understandings of what it means to be professional. My ethnographic fieldwork indicates that professionalism comes to be understood primarily as individual responsibility, ambition and improvement, with internationalisation – whether through social media or more direct relations with foreigners – playing a key role in developing the business. At the same time, the relationship between tourism economies, entrepreneurship and politics of (self) representation reveals ambivalent and shifting attitudes towards the state and the emerging private sector.

The paper is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Havana over 12 months in 2018–2019 in two research stays and draws upon previously conducted research, mainly among dancers, dance instructors, owners of private dance schools, performers and tourists taking part in dance lessons. The main methodological tools I employed were long-term participant observation among groups directly or indirectly involved in the creation, development and commodification of dance-related heritage and ethnographic interviews.

The embodied aspect of dance was key to my fieldwork. I participated in individual and group dance lessons, as well as in workshops organised for tourists and in training sessions before stage performances. Whenever possible, I attended dance events in various locations in Havana, from well-established venues, famous among Cubans and tourists alike, to newly opened spaces or parties organised by the different dance schools I worked with. The first part of the article discusses the reforms introduced by the Cuban government in order to facilitate entrepreneurship and some of the social consequences of these new measures. I focus on the relatively new businesses centred on dance and their position in the processes related to the commodification of heritage. I then move on to analyse the meanings attached to “professionalism” by dancers and dance school owners, discussing the implicit tensions and ambivalence in relation to the state.

## Cultural heritage and emerging work practices

The collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1991 determined a series of drastic changes in Cuba, as the country lost the support of its most important economic partner. Cubans faced extreme poverty and changes to the political and economic

system became inevitable. Two reforms that occurred in 1993 were particularly significant: Cubans were allowed to own foreign currencies (thus introducing two parallel denominations, access to which would only deepen economic inequalities and social stratification)<sup>1</sup> and to take up private initiatives (*trabajo por cuenta propia* or *cuentapropismo*), which would bring supplementary income to the state budget. The country reopened to foreign visitors and the government invested heavily in tourism infrastructure. Small businesses renting rooms to tourists were legalised in 1997. Initially depicted by Cuban authorities as a “necessary evil” (Fernández, 1999), the sector has undergone a dynamic expansion over the past two decades, becoming one of the main sources of foreign currency and investment. At the same time, although a marginal activity after the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 (Carmona Báez, 2004), *cuentapropismo* has established itself as one of the key areas of Cuba’s tourism-based economy. This became especially relevant as the financial crisis intensified, tourism and remittances fell as a result of the international crisis (Hoffmann, 2010) and the enterprising strategies used to creatively navigate daily hardships came to signal the island’s neoliberal turn (Perry, 2016). The broad body of literature addressing recent economic reforms has emphasised public policy towards entrepreneurship and the informal sector (Ritter & Henken, 2015), the social effects of economic adjustment (Espina Prieto, 2004) and the impact of transition on social policy (Mesa-Lago, 2007). However, the relationship between entrepreneurship, commoditised cultural heritage and the politics of (self)representation remains under-represented in studies of contemporary Cuba.

Self-employment in Cuba allows a shift from the state sector to the private sector, reshaping work relations and becoming a symbol of economic and political transformations. This is due to the meanings attached to the legalisation of independent work, with *cuentapropistas* being regarded as facilitators of the transition from socialism to a free market economy (Phillips, 2006). Self-employed workers remain subject to strict regulations and taxation by the state, but are otherwise characterised by occupying a distinct position outside state-regulated work, defining new market relations that place them between the state sector and the private sector. New spaces and forms of economic activity as well as emerging work practices, common for post-socialist transitions, create the basis for individual explorations of new spheres of decision-making and self-reliance. While self-employment may not necessarily lead to entrepreneurship, the speci-

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1 The Cuban convertible peso (CUC) and the Cuban peso (CUP) were Cuba’s official currencies at the time of my research. The value of one CUC was roughly equivalent to 1 US dollar and worth 25 times as much as the CUP. As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, Cuba transitioned to the unification of its double currency system, eliminating the CUC.

ficity of the Cuban context and state regulations make developing the enterprise possible only through self-employment (Peters, 2015). Its peculiarities lie in the fact that it has been shaped by state socialism and the “second economy” (Pérez-López, 1995) that emerged to provide the goods and services the state was unable to and which went on to become a structural feature of Cuban economy.

As discussed by Ritter and Henken (2015) in their analysis of Cuban entrepreneurship, restrictions on the private sector have either resulted in a classic “brain drain”, pushing some of Cuba’s most educated and skilled citizens abroad, or in a particular form of “insile”, forcing them out of their field of expertise and into much better remunerated work, although perhaps less socially beneficial. Such downward mobility, which saw doctors, lawyers and teachers working as taxi drivers, waiters or managing private accommodation, happens because professional activities are still prohibited, as well as private business in sectors like education and healthcare. However, some exceptions, while still heavily regulated, have opened the doors to innovation and created the premises for capitalising on cultural heritage both in Cuba and outside it.

The above-mentioned downward mobility has a counterpart in the cases I am addressing in this article: with no other capital required except for bodily capital, Cubans who become involved in the dance business experience an upward mobility – financial and symbolic – due to the imaginaries and narratives about dance and dancers created mostly outside the island. By adopting and adapting these narratives, Cubans subject themselves to a “self-folklorization” process (Klekot, 2014) which underlines the inequalities of international tourism, which are made and remade in social practices. For tourists, dance practices become “embodied souvenirs” (Ana, 2017) that make Cubanness available and, in a way, portable through the body that experienced it. In this way, dance comes to function as a key symbol of cultural tourism, employing the “rhetoric of the Caribbean body” (Scher, 2011) – understood as lightheartedness and sensuality – and leads to the commodification of Cubanness in its entirety, a phenomenon that can only be regarded in relation to class, gender and racial hierarchies that are deeply rooted in colonialism (Stoler, 1995).

With music and dance at the core of Cuban popular culture, their transnational circulation and popularity abroad brought about processes of commodification that are simultaneously cultural and political and have played a key role in the development of the tourism sector. Anthropological studies have discussed artistic forms beyond their local anchors, and in the field of dance in particular it is possible to observe the creation of transnational “social spaces” around specific genres (Waxer, 2002; Pietrobruno, 2006; Davis, 2015). While in the Cuban context the dance business itself is by no means comparable to well-established

private initiatives like *casas particulares* or *paladares*,<sup>2</sup> it does occupy a central position in processes related to the commoditisation of heritage and it illustrates the standardising regimes that situate dance between cultural heritage and leisure commodity (Pietrobruno, 2009). Performances and the transmission of dance traditions become part of the touristic and political uses of culture, strongly determined by economic factors and operating with essentialist concepts and definitions of identity. Intangible heritage creates socio-economic revenue and the moving body becomes the main tool for accessing tourism economies. Economic realities and social inequalities that stem from contact with foreigners result in creative approaches for financial gain, perpetuating expectations about Cuban fantasies, as dancing bodies become transactional through the maximisation of bodily capital (Wacquant, 1995).

Images of “authentic” music and dance have to a great extent come to shape the touristic modes of visualisation and experience, at the same time revealing the processes of commodification and standardisation behind these images. Ultimately, they have also contributed to the creation of a rapidly growing market for dance and dance teaching.

Over time, dance practices on the island also started functioning as an interface for more complex networks of alternative economies, revealing the rising inequalities and social stratification that arise as direct effects of market socialism (Morris, 2008), creating new spaces, forms and means of revenue. In the next section I discuss how, against this background, the processes of institutionalisation of Cuban dance reveal the fluid relations that stem from encounters on the dance floor between Cuban dancers and foreign visitors and reshape the notion of professionalism.

## The business of dance: what makes a professional?

In 2010 the Cuban government announced that it would reduce work in the state sector while at the same time introducing new policies to facilitate self-employment. The private sector was ultimately supposed to absorb the “redundant” workers in the state sector, which proved to be rather unrealistic, especially given the stigma that still surrounded the private sector. The list of permitted activities was published in *Gaceta Oficial* no. 12 in October 2010 and included 178 categories (some of them extremely detailed, such as piñata seller or umbrella repair), to be augmented to 181 in 2011 and 201 in 2013, and again reduced to 123 in 2018 through the reorganisation of 96 activities within 28 categories. With the new laws, the hiring of labour was liberalised and it was permitted to rent facil-

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2 Restaurants run by self-employed people.

ities from either the state or other citizens in order to set up small enterprises. While all professional activities were still prohibited, there were some exceptions – and number 101 on the list read “*Profesor de música y otras artes*” (Teacher of music and other arts). The first half of 2011 saw a change of tone in official media, and self-employment stopped being deemed a temporary solution. Instead, it was encouraged and by 2014 the number of self-employed workers had tripled compared to 2010 (Ritter & Henken, 2015: 162). The Cuban state intended to introduce a radical overhaul of the Cuban economic system that would favour *cuentapropistas* (Pérez Villanueva, 2015), which was however brought to a halt in August 2017 when the government suspended the issuing of new licenses to certain businesses until “the self-employment system has been brought to perfection” (*Gaceta Oficial* no.31, 2017).

It was in this climate of uncertainty that in March 2018 I found my friend Mireya worrying about the future of her business amid the uncertainty surrounding the forthcoming new regulations from the government. For the past four years she had been quite successful in running a dance school owned by her brother, who after a few years spent abroad had returned to Cuba and reclaimed his business. She had lost any source of income and even though she had found a place for a new school, she could not hire people who wanted to work for her because they could not apply for a dance teacher’s license. Two of the teachers who had worked with her in her brother’s school chose to follow her and started training the future teachers, so that they would be able to start working once they got their license. In order to be able to register her new business, Mireya had to change her documents so that the address of the new school would appear on her ID as her residence. Despite the hardships she had to navigate, Mireya managed to set up her new school and even receive her first groups of dancing tourists (in other contexts, this would have been labelled a form of neoliberal governance which compels – or “empowers” – people to consider themselves entrepreneurial subjects). “There is no need to wait for the state to give you anything. I am an *empresaria* (entrepreneur), I make all the decisions, and the government has no say in this as long as I pay my taxes”, she told me one day in front of the school, while handing out leaflets to passers-by. She did however express her support for another measure rumoured to be included in the new laws, namely allowing only one license per person. “It’s not normal to have five or seven licenses, you can’t cook here and dance there, you either cook or you dance”.

Later that year, on July 10<sup>th</sup>, *Gaceta Oficial* no. 35 would shed some light – and cast a lot of doubt – on the new laws and regulations regarding self-employment. The Vice Minister of Work and Social Security, Marta Elena Feitó Cabrera, clarified during a press briefing that the new measures did not mean self-employment was taking a backwards step, but it would be carried out in a more orderly

manner (Figueredo Reinaldo & Extremera San Martín, 2018): “There are workers who own a cafeteria and at the same time have a manicure license or one for producing and selling shoes. In practice, this person is the owner of several businesses and this is neither the essence nor the spirit of self-employment, which consists of workers carrying out their activities on a daily basis”. In her support of the government’s decision to limit the number of licenses one could hold, Mireya expressed a certain degree of trust in the state’s regulatory framework; however, with labour security shifted towards the individual and an unstable income she found herself in a position to somewhat circumvent the regulations.

As far as the activity of dance schools and dance teachers was concerned, the new regulations described it as follows: it is forbidden for teachers of music and other arts to constitute schools or academies, they cannot issue graduation certificates, work is individual and therefore they cannot contract the services of other teachers or instructors, nor organise events of a competitive nature or otherwise.

The new dispositions came into life as of December 7<sup>th</sup>, but as early as November they were already all everyone ever talked about in the schools where I conducted research. In a display of distrust that characterised much of everyday life under socialism (cf. Verdery, 1996) the actual legislative text was deemed less important and relevant than the various interpretations of it which circulated widely among dancers, who would voice their concerns over what they had heard from their peers about the new laws. Mireya expressed these worries one afternoon after a group lesson which involved ten of her dancers: “Only three of my teachers have licenses. And now they say that they will check who is a trained dancer and who is not. I think it’s because the government didn’t get enough money from the dance schools, we pay taxes in Cuban pesos so it’s not profitable for them”. The only bright side she saw – if they were allowed to continue without the requirement for trained dancers – was that she had managed to change her documents and thus appeared to be renting out the space to the dancers teaching in her school. Thus, if the authorities come to inspect, it would be easy to justify that they are in fact doing “individual work”, and thereby complying with the rules. Sofia, the owner of another dance school, found a different way to circumvent regulations: “Most schools will have to shut down because of these new requirements for teachers to have graduated from the ISA or the ENA in order to work in dance schools.<sup>3</sup> But this is not a problem for us, 70% of my dancers graduated from one of these institutions. I always said I wanted professional dancers, long before the new laws were announced. Now, if an inspector comes to check, even if he spends the entire day at the school, instructors who are not graduates

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3 The Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) and Escuela Nacional de Arte (ENA) are two of the most prestigious schools for the arts established by the Cuban government.

can be presented as assistants, so it is not a problem". These reactions illustrate the type of accommodating relationship that arises when the total avoidance of the state is seldom possible (de Soto, 1989). But they also indicate the role of the state not just in legalising a particular activity, but in legitimising it and making it more profitable through the sense of security and responsibility implied by the notion of being "professional".

This became particularly relevant in recent years, with the increased demand for "experiential tourism" (Salazar, 2011). Cultural practices and symbols that ensured recognition and revenue gained meaning both locally and internationally,

A few years ago I noticed that whenever I was offered lessons in a dance school the license was the main argument used to convince me. "I am a dance teacher, I have my license and everything" was the usual conversation opener. But as more dance schools started functioning, especially in Havana, the license argument stopped being enough. Unlike *casas particulares* and *paladares*, legality was no longer the main concern nor the main argument used to attract potential new clients – professionalism was. The most common explanation given for this was the state's failure to control and regulate certain key aspects of self-employment. In an 2018 interview, Rogelio, choreographer and owner of a dance school, explained as much: "Nobody asks for any proof or documents [of formal education in the field of dance], you just go and say you want a license to be a teacher of music and other arts. And they did this in all sectors, cell phone repair, hairdressers – nobody checks your skills. Nobody but the market. When people realise that you don't know your job, they will stop seeking your services. But with dance it's more difficult because sometimes tourists don't know if they were taught well or not. Beginners in particular can't tell the difference between a professional and a fraud, they can be tricked easily".

Rogelio's comment draws the attention towards the regulatory mechanisms of the market, which can establish and confirm one as a professional where the state fails to acknowledge the differences between practitioners. In fact, one's ability to understand the market and the demands that come from tourists is understood as the key to achieving success and is very often presented in opposition to the state's lack of flexibility and capacity to innovate. Two of the dancers who followed Mireya to her new school pointed out the differences between the two business models – the "socialist" one and the "capitalist" one – making it clear that from their point of view a private business should adopt what they considered a successful capitalist model. Eduardo explained it in the following way: "when you have a business which does not belong to the state you need to have a capitalist way of thinking, you need to think more about the business than about the personal problems of the people who work for you. Let's say we both work for

the same school and you are a much better dancer than I am, you teach better, but I constantly have problems and complain to the owner – she will give me all the clients and leave you with no work for days because I have problems. This is very unprofessional”.<sup>4</sup>

Functioning outside the state-regulated system, many of the self-employed dancers and dance school owners enjoy a new-found independence and sense of freedom that the state sector lacks. But at the same time, they contribute to the creation of new social norms characterised by increased individualism and autonomy (Ewick & Silbey, 2003). The “self-steering” capacities of the individual designate new rules for everyday life: initiative, ambition and personal responsibility, in an attempt to maximise one’s human capital (Rose, 1996).

Another recurring aspect in discussions around the professionalisation of dance teaching is the increased flexibility and readiness to adapt to an ever-changing schedule based on clients’ demands. Whenever I apologised for being late for a dance lesson (having somewhat internalised a more relaxed approach to time and schedules), my teachers would explain that while the client can be late, the teacher cannot, as this would be considered unprofessional and be reflected in the reviews left by the clients. As opposed to being employed in the state sector and therefore having a somewhat fixed schedule, work in the private sector means adapting to a different kind of lifestyle, one that puts the clients and their needs ahead of one’s private life, personal plans and priorities.

Many of the dancers I worked with pointed out that their free time had become practically non-existent, since the time they didn’t spend teaching was dedicated to finding new clients. Such was the case of Merced, owner of a dance school and *casa particular*, whom I’d meet quite often at salsa parties in one of the most popular venues in Havana: “I am a professional, I graduated from ISA, and at times I can go a week without anyone. If you don’t have a [travel] agency or a foreigner to send you students, your only option is to be out in the street all the time”. For Merced and for many other dancers, having graduated from a state institution is an extra legitimisation which should at least theoretically ensure a steadier flux of clients, this differentiating them from the teachers who lack this kind of formal training. However, in most cases dancers cannot rely on their expertise or experience alone to build their client base, and it is widely acknowledged that international cooperation with a travel agency or a dance school abroad can increase client numbers (especially given the rising pop-

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4 My findings match those of Amelia Rosenberg Weinreb (2009), who in her study of Cuban “consumer-citizens” points out that while abandoning an analysis built around binary categories might be an appealing intellectual endeavour, some of these binaries remain present and relevant in the daily lives of Cubans.

ularity of “dance trips” or organised tours that place a strong focus on dancing and include lessons and parties in the programme). The desired/targeted client is a tour operator, who would ensure a steady and significantly higher income. In reality, many schools rely on individual clients who find information on the internet or simply happen to be passing by the school, ask for dance lessons on the spot or make appointments from one day to the next. Social media has come to play a very important part in running the business: before opening the new school, Mireya had already made sure she had hired a team of professionals to build the school website and manage social media accounts; reviews on TripAdvisor and Facebook comments were carefully monitored by school managers, who would sometimes employ strategies the dancers disapproved of just to make sure the clients were content. Sofia recalled one such situation during one of our interviews: “When one client couldn’t have his lesson as planned, I offered him two free lessons, as a courtesy. I had to explain to the teachers that even if the client doesn’t pay, they will still get their money, but this is a way to make sure the client leaves happy and writes a good review. Most of the times they don’t understand how this works, because they just want their money, they don’t care about anything else”.

The professionalisation strategies discussed above were ultimately aimed at ensuring international visibility (most often measured in reviews, popularity on social media and reservations from tourists who had either seen videos of the teachers dancing, or had come across the school’s website) and a relatively constant workflow, at least during high season. But at the same time the growing demand for dance re-emphasised a differentiation between two groups of practitioners: those who learned to dance from family and friends, and those who acquired it through formal instruction (McMains, 2013). This, in turn, generated a series of ambiguities around the very notion of professionalism and rendered the apparently clear-cut distinction between state and private somewhat less clear-cut, as I discuss in the following section.

## Bailarín, bailador, callejero, inflador

In 2012, while doing research among rumba practitioners in Matanzas, one of my closest acquaintances at the time shared the good news that her grandson Omar had been admitted to the ENA. “We are all *bailarines empíricos*<sup>5</sup> in this family”, she told me, “and he has been dancing ever since he was very little. But he is the first of us to get into the ENA, even though others have tried before

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5 A term used to describe those who learn to dance in informal community settings (e.g. from family and friends) rather than in organised classes.

him". As I returned to Matanzas in the following years, she was often critical of the knowledge being passed on to her grandson and his classmates, since in her opinion the teachers were superficial in explaining Afro-Cuban folklore, which she referred to as "our heritage, our roots". However, she did point out that as a *bailarín profesional* (professional dancer) he would have more opportunities to find work in a dance company after graduation.

Six years later, I met Omar on the set of *Bailando en Cuba*, a TV programme/competition aimed at finding Cuba's most talented young dancers while at the same time promoting the island's dance heritage. He was going to perform with some fellow dancers and then he was off to work in one of the hotels in Vedado, one of the more affluent neighbourhoods in the capital, a major tourist attraction with a bustling nightlife. "I work as a choreographer for a dance company and we have shows four times a week, it's going really well. Before this I was in another company, we would train a lot but there was no work". Omar was not the only one to draw a clear line between training and actual work. Many of the dancers I worked with pointed out that being in a dance company meant – in the best-case scenario – a salary of a few hundred CUP and additional money when the company is contracted for a show. This kind of insecurity led many of them to seek employment with the somewhat more profitable dance schools aimed at foreign audiences, where, as explained by Danaysi, "you don't have to wait for the end of the month to get your money. And besides, clients take you to places you can't afford, because they are too expensive. As a teacher you work a lot, but it's not the hard work of a *bailarín profesional*".

A few months later I met Omar again at Casa de la Cultura in the neighbourhood of Centro Habana. I was there with a group of tourists from Poland who had come to Cuba to take part in dance, music and personal development workshops, organised by Anna, a dance teacher I had taken classes with a few years before in Warsaw. Omar was there to help his friend Yordanis, who led the class along with Anna. Just like Omar, Yordanis works as a choreographer for a dance company and for this occasion he had to find five other male dancers, so every woman in the group would have a partner. Before the lesson started, I asked Anna why she didn't choose any of the salsa schools for her project. "I know Yordanis and his work, but I also know how they work in those dance schools and I am not interested. I wanted professional dancers for my women, not some random guys from the street who say they are dance teachers".

The lesson had a different structure to the one I was used to from the dance schools: there was no warm-up, no exercises to prepare the body, no breaking down of the basic steps into smaller sequences. After the lesson Yordanis explained that none of these things made sense and they were just inventions for tourists, because Cubans learn how to dance without stretching their muscles be-

fore and after class. Halfway throughout the lesson he asked his fellow dancers to lead better and more forcefully, because as the women didn't know how to dance, they didn't understand their partners' signals. He went on to tell them that this was not really learning to dance because the time was too short: the point of the lesson was to give the women an idea of Cuban culture. On our way back to Old Havana, Anna told me: "I didn't want to say anything to Yordanis because I didn't want to spoil the mood, but I specifically asked for professional dancers. And you saw, some of them didn't even know how to lead". A few days later I met Yordanis at the end of his training session with his dance company. We talked about tourists, dance and teaching, and he explained: "Teaching tourists is monotonous and repetitive and not challenging enough for a *bailarín*. Sometimes *bailadores* are better for teaching tourists because *bailarines* don't know.<sup>6</sup> They will teach you what they learned, they have very good technique, but their dancing does not have the street style (*pero no bailan callejero*)".

In the previous section I discussed issues related to legality and the roles played by the state and by the emerging dance market in defining a professional. But for many Cubans involved in the dance business, notions of professionalism are strongly related to formal training and to an education completed in a state institution (this also holds true, to a certain extent, for more generalised perceptions, not only those of the people involved in dance teaching). While in some cases professionalism is understood as a marker of an entrepreneurial self, in many others it has less to do with business and more to do with the chosen career path of someone who decided to pursue a degree in dance. From this perspective, there is a clear cut distinction between the two categories mentioned by Yordanis: *bailarín* is the professional dancer with a formal education, whereas *bailador* is a dancer who has not benefited from formal training, but the notion itself does not imply any qualitative judgment on the skills and abilities of the *bailador*. What Anna expected when she asked Yordanis for professional dancers was, in fact, highly skilled *bailadores*. Yordanis made sure he offered what she had requested (as in the end this was a business opportunity he did not want to miss). Professionalism was what sealed the deal – but their ideas and understandings of the notion did not coincide.

Just as Yordanis and Omar taught tourists from time to time while still focusing on their careers as choreographers/dancers, Lianet, who at the time of my research was teaching at the ISA, told me she would work with travel agencies every now and then, earning in one hour the same amount she received from the government for a month of teaching. She also pointed out that for a *bailarín pro-*

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6 While both *bailarín* and *bailador* can be translated as "dancer", the meanings attached to them differ, as I explain further on.

*fesional* there is no professional development in just teaching tourists – although it’s easy money, a professional will have a career to think about, new choreographies to create, and will seek out performances that give more visibility. At the same time, the dance market is not necessarily compatible with the background and formation of professional dancer: “Salsa<sup>7</sup> is not something you are taught at the ISA or the ENA. It’s a popular dance and even if you have classes on it they are usually superficial – just to give an idea. Because these are dances that Cubans learn at home, or with our friends, everything you see happening in dance schools now is a methodological invention. It exists because there is a market for it”. While teaching foreigners is a remunerated activity and usually more lucrative than dancing professionally, other financial aspects separate the worlds of *bailarines* and *bailadores*. They were clarified by Rogelio after one lesson, when he also explained what he believed to be the essential difference between the two categories and added a third one: *el bailarín* comes from the school, from academia, has theoretical and practical knowledge; *el bailador* knows how to dance, hears the music, knows when to start,<sup>8</sup> he comes from the street (*viene de la calle*); but he is not the same as the *callejero*, who usually doesn’t know how to dance, hears the beat but starts whenever he wants without paying attention to the musical phrase. “Havana is definitely a city for *bailadores*”, he told me. “The dance schools are constantly looking for teachers, all the festivals are looking for teachers, a *bailador* goes to a festival and is content with free admission and with showing his dance skills. Even if they don’t come from academia, they are usually good dancers and have many students. They are out every night, they need to be in this world all the time. For a *bailarín*, dancing is his job – he wants money for his work, and usually there’s no money for this”.

Night-time entertainment, centred on music and dance events, provides the venue for further delimitations and constant negotiations of identity. Night-time interactions in Havana, juxtaposed with an imagined, fantasised Cuba, and images of romantic love created and communicated through dance, make tourists susceptible to being seduced by the scripted performances (cf. Grazian, 2008) articulated in spaces of cultural interactions between tourists and locals.

Since tourism reinforces the idea that in Cuba everyone dances, dance schools usually take responsibility for creating “safe spaces” for their clients including

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7 The term is used by Cubans to refer to a dance style otherwise known on the island as *casino*, which came to be known internationally as “Cuban salsa”, and was adopted as such especially by dance schools aimed at foreign tourists.

8 In salsa, the basic step is done to a quick-quick-slow, quick-quick-slow rhythm on beats 1-2-3, 5-6-7 of an 8 count, and “knowing when to start” means finding the beat for the first step, informally known as “finding the 1”.

outside the class. In such contexts, professionalism gains yet another meaning: taking responsibility for the client, making sure they do not become the target of *infladores* – self-professed dancers/dance teachers with no knowledge or skills but with a strong presence which can quite often be deceiving.<sup>9</sup> One night, at a party to which he had accompanied one of his clients, Noel explained to me just how deceptive they could be: “Sometimes I go out with my clients and I tell them it is fine if they want to dance with someone else, but if you want to leave with the guy, you need to let me know. Of course I know many of them [the men who usually attend salsa parties], you can find respectful people, but often girls don’t understand that guys have other intentions, that they want money, or sometimes just to be with a foreigner. There is a difference between *I love you* and *I like you*. *I like you* pretty much always means I like your money, I like your phone”.

Such protective behaviour is seen as a professional obligation, but it becomes the carrier of multilayered messages that are open to identities in the making, because more often than not the strong discourse around professionalisation is built not so much around what a professional is, but around what a professional is not: “A professional dancer is not one of those guys from the street who always look for girls. This kills the image of the professional”, was a comment made by Ricardo, one of my dance teachers from Sofia’s school. As such, responsibility for one’s clients is not only a strategy for defending the image of the business and ensuring an overall positive experience, sheltered from the nuisance that may occur in random street interactions, it becomes a means of self-affirmation and ultimately self-esteem for the dancers and for how their subjectivities are understood and articulated.

These themes, which are central to the way dancers and dance teachers perceive themselves and their work, relate to the phenomenon of *jineterismo*, widely discussed in Cuba and often considered a consequence of tourism (Rundle, 2001; Simoni, 2016). The term literally means horseback riding, but it is used to define hustling and/or prostitution. The persons engaging in *jineterismo* (called *jineteros* or *jineteras*) offer sex, company, guidance and sometimes goods (usually cigars but not exclusively) in exchange for money, meals or a night out. Often such engagements with tourists are expected to lead to marriage and, subsequently, the chance of leaving the country. The phenomenon is also perceived as a very delicate issue for the country’s socialist government, as it constitutes an affront to revolutionary morality. Relationships are seen as either purely sexual – usually between Afro-Cuban women and male tourists (cf. Fusco, 1998) – or romantic,

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9 The term literally translates to inflator or pump, but it is commonly used in Cuban slang to refer to a person who uses trickery and deceit, usually by pretending to be someone or something they are not, in order to obtain certain gains or benefits.

lacking economic connotations (Fernandez, 1999). The relationships between Cuban men and foreign women are often framed as “romantic involvements” (without disregarding the economic component) that reinforce the sexualised racist fantasies that attract female (sex) tourists to the Caribbean (Kempadoo, 2004; Simoni, 2015).

But *jinetismo* raises issues related not just to economic inequalities, it reveals divisions related to class, race and gender, and is frequently framed as challenging to Cuban notions of morality. In explaining the distinction between *bailarín* and *bailador*, Lianet referenced the low cultural level as a differentiating aspect between the two: “They [*bailadores*] have a very low cultural level and many times they are in the business for what comes along with the dance: the money, finding a foreigner and leaving the country, so teaching salsa is rarely about teaching salsa”. The moralising argument against *jinetismo* seems to have become dominant in the late 1990s (Kempadoo, 1999), particularly among white, middle-class Cubans who tend to consider it a manifestation of a “low cultural level” (*bajo nivel cultural*) generally ascribed to Afro-Cubans, revealing racialised ideas of morality and behaviour.

For many dance instructors, it became important to emphasise their opposition to *bailadores*, *jinetes* and *infladores*, while at the same time pointing out that simply being immersed in music and dance is not enough for tourists to learn how to dance themselves. More and more schools started offering the service of “taxi dancer”, giving clients the possibility of being accompanied to dance parties or concerts by a teacher for a fee that covers entry to the venue chosen by the client, drinks and a few hours of dancing (usually from two to four). This would help tourists practice what they learned in class in a safe, secure environment, which would not only protect them from possible trickery, but would guarantee the quality of the dancing (most of the dancers I worked with explained this as an attempt to avoid tourists going to parties and only dancing with people with poor dancing skills). I discussed this with Isabel one day and she promptly commented: “The only difference between taxi dancers and *jinetes* is that *jinetes* don’t have t-shirts with a logo. Besides, *jinetes* can always choose how far they want to go, how much time they spend with tourists. Dancers don’t have this possibility, they are like *jinetes* hired by the dance school, and they probably get less money anyway”. While, financially, such activities do pay off, giving dance instructors the possibility of earning in one night the equivalent of half a month’s state salary (prices for taxi dancing usually start at 15 CUC), this night work in fact joins the circle of objectification, (mis)representation and emotional entanglements, shedding light on the ways the individual is locked into a mode of constant promotion, while the self becomes commodified in social spaces of self-affirmation.

## Conclusions

With heritage and tourism functioning as collaborative industries (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998), they offer the venue for the negotiation of memory, identity and social mobility, articulated in spaces of cultural interaction between tourists and locals where “authenticity” functions as a tool for legitimising and validating the tourist experience. Music and dance become part of a set of key symbols that define the tourist experience before it actually happens and during the experience itself. While for the tourism industry and for tourists themselves the representational emphasis is more on the imagined attributes of the island, Cubans use aspects of this discourse in order to promote and develop initiatives deeply rooted in pragmatic motivations. In a country where legal employment in the tourism industry is the fastest way to accumulate capital, the main aim is access to foreign currency.

Against this background, the institutionalisation of dance-related practices (and particularly teaching aimed at foreign tourists) is related to the (re)conceptualisation of work and productivity within emerging small businesses. The reforms introduced by the Cuban government to allow self-employment brought with them a strong discourse of professionalisation and new work practices in the field of dance. Becoming a dance teacher in a private school aimed at international tourists has a dual outcome: on the one hand, it gives access to foreign currency, making it possible to earn more than in state jobs (some simply do not possess the capital required to set up a different kind of business).

On the other hand, this type of mobilisation of cultural resources through tourist encounters creates the premises for capitalising on cultural heritage both in Cuba and outside it. At the same time, it illustrates a dynamic that to a certain extent mirrors the downward mobility experienced by highly skilled professionals in the state sector who choose to work in the more profitable private sector. While this is mostly the case for trained dancers coming from academia, it is also true for dance aficionados without formal training who experience an upward mobility that is simultaneously financial and symbolic. This prestige and symbolic capital are reinforced by ideas that circulate around Cuban dance and by the ability of dancers themselves to quickly adapt, adopt and capitalise on these narratives. Through these processes, a certain ambivalence towards the state emerges: with dancers displaying similarities to other self-employed workers in their ability to circumvent regulations and navigate an intricate legal and taxation system, they also rely on the state as a legitimising tool. While for other self-employed workers the relation with the state is usually only a matter of legality or formalisation of their activity, dancers turn to the state in order to emphasise their professionalism, as a result of proper training in one of the higher

education institutions. In this way, the lines between notions of state and private become more blurred and the processes related to the commodification of heritage reveal the inner tensions that arise in the wake of political and social change.

## Acknowledgments

The research for this article was conducted as part of two research projects funded by the National Science Centre, Poland, number 2017/25/N/HS3/00315 and number 2019/32/T/HS3/00379, and during a research stay at the Ibero-American Institute in Berlin from November 2019 to April 2020.

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# Cuban Institutional Reform and the Crossroads of Inequality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Any analysis of the institutional reform implemented in Cuba this century faces the complexity of addressing a process that remains ongoing and includes multi-temporal dynamics and intersecting interests.<sup>2</sup> Economic considerations are prioritised in this process, in a wider Latin American context of coexisting regressive and progressive political changes. In the Cuban case, legal instruments and policy documents guide the search for a path of autonomous development.

The ongoing reform has (re)aligned basic pillars of social distribution in place in the country since 1959. It is too early to evaluate the magnitude and scope of the changes, given the slow process of their implementation. However, the starting point of the adjustments and their handling is vital to thinking about the present and future of Cuban society in the socialist transition; not least because the transformations are designed to improve the sustainability of Cuba's overall strategy (PCC, 2011a; 2011b; PCC & ANPP, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c; PCC & ANPP, 2019). The general aim of this chapter is to analyse the structural and symbolic correlations of deepening inequality within the framework of the current reform.

The discussion of ideas in this paper is based on the cooperative production of sociological research appropriate for these issues, as well as a contemporary review of official documents (PCC & ANPP, 2019; *Gacetas Oficiales* No. 13 and

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1 This text has benefitted from the valuable reading and recommendations of Dr Blandine Desretnau, who improved it with her informed suggestions about Cuban society and helped to bring more coherence and precision to the theoretical and practical dilemmas addressed in it.

2 When referring in the chapter to "institutional reform", the perspective used is that of interrelating the transformations of the legislative framework with the desirable (or otherwise) effects they produce at the social level. To be sure, the process of (re)commodification in Cuba and of significant transformations to the welfare system began long before the changes implemented this century, but narrowing down the ideas presented here has led to a focus on the impacts of the commodifying shifts in Cuban government policy strategy from 2010.

85,<sup>3</sup> 2019), newspaper articles and research outputs. The chapter proposes a theoretical understanding of the processes, the actors involved and the temporalities affected by the changes underway. The overarching ambition is to debate the political economy premises of the reform and its effects on social justice in emancipatory terms.

The existence of an expansive, well-established structural and ideological context of capitalist accumulation at global level and in Latin America means Cuba's institutional reform faces challenges beyond the merely economic. Critical evaluations of this Caribbean experience therefore urgently need to be produced and disseminated within the framework of Latin American political alternatives.

This chapter aims to contribute to the dialogue on these challenges, and its analysis develops over four sections. The first sets out Latin American contributions deriving from inherited and contemporary critical thinking to consider the limitations of development on the continent, with particular attention to Cuba. The second addresses the political dilemmas facing the reform, not only to act with the stated economic urgency but to give greater consideration to processes and context when evaluating the changes. The third section presents the importance of broadening the analysis of inequality and poverty towards a multidimensional approach that examines habitat, local differences and generational factors to achieve the political consensus needed to advance the current adjustment strategy. In the fourth part, a diagnosis of inequality is sketched out based on the impacts of old and new actors in the reform,<sup>4</sup> as well as the articulation of diverse and emerging sociabilities within the restructuring of Cuba's social classes. Finally, the fifth section outlines a more comprehensive and inclusive course for both political and academic agendas.

One last clarification and statement of principles. The author's work of thinking about and questioning Cuba has been continuous, but she is not directly exposed to the country's everyday life experience or to the heat of the discussions in situ about the direction of the changes and the conflicts they entail. At the same time, looking at events in Cuba with a more global perspective is proving to be an enriching experience. Hence, the call to recognise the need for an open approach to the dialogue of knowledge between academics, civil society and policymakers thinking about the island that also includes emigration.

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3 *Gaceta Oficial* No. 13 refers to raising pensions and pay scales in the state sector, while No. 85 adds and modifies elements of the practice of self-employment.

4 The focus of the article is general and looks at the transformations of actors produced by the reform. The processes of the production of poverty in detail can be found in other works by the author (Voghon, 2016; 2018; 2019).

## 1 Critical thinking in Latin America: a useful perspective for understanding the dynamics of inequality beneath Cuba's universal policies?

In the first decade of the 21st century, one of the most important considerations when reflecting on Latin America's social protection architecture is the viability of the development models underway. The arrival in power of several progressive governments contributed significantly to regaining autonomy in the leadership of national projects,<sup>5</sup> as well as to expanding assistance and the social policy system in general. Geared towards addressing social vulnerability and extreme levels of poverty, these instruments, however, have proved incomplete when it comes to transforming the social and symbolic structures of the (re)production of poverty and inequality, the regressive nature of the tax system and the foundations of exploitation in wealth production and distribution.

The shift from the Washington Consensus to the Commodities Consensus established new problems and paradoxes that even reconfigured the outlook of Latin American critical thought and the left as a whole (Svampa, 2019: 30). As Gudynas argues (2015), more than a mode of production, extractivism refers to a mode of appropriation in which the extraction of natural resources – and their negative social and ecological impacts – is legitimised by a larger role for the state in capturing that surplus and redistributing it.

Progressive governments have emphasised the comparative advantages of the demand for commodities in the international market, introducing new paradoxes that have reshaped the Latin American left and critical thinking. Neo-extractivism has shown the limitations of projects that also legitimised the mindset of infinite development by minimising or denying the unequal and negative ecological impacts of the extraction and export of natural resources on a large scale (Svampa, 2019; Gudynas, 2015).

Hence, the complexity of analysing inequality requires a historical perspective: one that questions the centrality of income as a structuring element of socioeconomic class (Antía et al., 2015) in contemporary societies and particularly those in Latin America. The dominant vision in both the social sciences and policy measures ignores the limitations of income and results analysis. It is necessary to reflect more on the processes that produce inequalities, which, for the most

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5 The regional background to these projects was the advance of integration mechanisms such as the creation of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP). However, these alliances hinder the development of a robust and systematic system of cooperation on the continent.

part, are not are located in this secondary sphere of distribution. It should be recalled that the monetary form of this inequality tends to mystify these processes through its abstraction (Pérez, 2017: 73).

The technocratisation of social policy during the boom in conditional cash transfer programmes reinforced this historical legacy and deepened gender inequalities within families due to a moralising (Cunha & Ivo, 2019), minimal and clientelistic view of poverty (Álvarez, 2005; 2013). The difficulties progressive governments face in the 21st century and their setbacks and advances in development matters are useful for discussing the importance of political instruments that link democracy and equality.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of political will and with the state captured by Creole and transnational elites, this equation seems to offer little hope of success. Particularly when, under neoliberal rule, the power structures uphold the logic of capitalist accumulation. In the current domestic and international setting, specifically worsened by the effects of the pandemic, Cuba also finds itself unable to escape this neoliberal mandate.

It is therefore worth highlighting some of the Latin American contributions that will help us reflect on Cuban inequalities (Cattani, 2008; Arzate et al., 2011): 1) a relational and dynamic perspective on the mechanisms that explain the existence and (re)production of inequality and poverty; 2) recovering the historical-cultural as a structural and shaping element of development; 3) the relationship between the global, national and local levels and the mechanisms of power and domination that make them possible; 4) the need to question the persistent nature of transnational capital's hegemony in peripheral economies, as imposed by the international division of labour; 5) the existence of agents/mechanisms that generate inequality and poverty in a context of asymmetric relationships; and 6) the increasing sophistication of the symbolic mechanisms that legitimise these social forces and contribute to maintaining the status quo. These premises are critical in order to tease apart the complex web of (re)production of inequality in Cuba and the contradictory nature of the ongoing reform.

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6 This chapter employs a basic definition of “development” that centres on the relationship between material and human components. In Cuba, in conditions of economic dependence, significant human development progress is observed, along with stagnation in the political and participation structures meant to respond to the challenges of creating a political alternative to the neoliberal.

## 2 Postponed economic urgency: the political dilemmas of the reform

A more abstract conception of the reform reveals two problem areas: the break with an integrated, complex vision of development;<sup>7</sup> and the existence of stagnant political practices that cause obstacles and incongruencies for the proposed transformation. A relatively recent example of these contradictions was the (re) centralisation drive towards the end of the 1990s (Triana, 2015). The slowdown of the current reform is the result of systemic gaps in the development agenda begun in the 1990s upon the fall of the socialist bloc and the resurgence of the US blockade. To trace a path of many twists and turns, of which the recent “monetary ordering” is but one (*Juventud Rebelde*, 2021), it is necessary to critically review the agenda of priorities and the set of measures approved so far. A fact that should not be overlooked is the way civic mobilisation shapes this agenda. Despite centralised state power, pressure groups assert their demands to the detriment of others who are growing increasingly silent.

The first areas on the reform agenda that opened up sketched out the economic and social policy priorities roadmap. Some of the most important were the economic measures such as increasing the flexibility and promotion of the private sector,<sup>8</sup> loosening the immigration reform, releasing certain banned products and goods for consumption, access to hotels and cell phones, the purchase and sale of cars and homes, and the promotion of foreign investment.<sup>9</sup> Other initiatives such as the (arbitrary in most cases) creation of non-agricultural production cooperatives,<sup>10</sup> guaranteeing broader levels of autonomy to Cuban enterprises, the transfer of idle lands and the decentralised management of local governments face(d) greater vicissitudes in their implementation despite being fundamental actors/areas in the change process.

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7 Official documents propose the idea of sustainable development (PCC & ANPP, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c), and put forward a conceptual model of a comprehensive implementation pathway for achieving it.

8 Inaccurately called the self-employed sector from the start. This euphemism, used to characterise both employees and employers, has also encouraged a failure to distinguish between different business sizes and types of activity.

9 The Foreign Investment Law, No. 118 of 2014, was approved just three years after the extensive consultation exercise on the *Lineamientos de la Política Económica y Social* (LPES) by the National Assembly of People’s Power; there was no grassroots consultation about its legitimacy as a key instrument within the reform strategy.

10 Although recognised as the second most important form of property after state ownership, contradictory incentives have prevented it from playing a fundamental role.

Nevertheless, when referring to Cuban society recent documents do not use the word “inequality” (PCC & ANPP, 2017a; 2017b). By contrast, the documents legitimise the differentiated access to and enjoyment of the supply of goods and services, declaring the intention to eliminate subsidies and ineffective expenses (PCC, 2011a; 2011b).<sup>11</sup> In this sense, these documents lack a strategic perspective of the links between economic advances, sustainability and the expansion of social policy by which to promote equality.

The urgent economic need and the promotion of mercantile dynamics have clearly given rise to a degree of conflict between the economy and development in the current Cuban context. This imbalance has had serious implications for social assistance policies, wages and the pension system (Mesa-Lago, 2015). The delayed economic transformations in key areas such as agricultural development and food security policies have contributed to the mechanisms of inequality and social stratification worsening at a faster rate in the absence of strategic measures designed to contain them.

Among the characteristics shaping the emerging policy modulations of the reform underway, the following may be noted (Voghon, 2019; Hernández, 2015):

- 1) The state’s formal withdrawal<sup>12</sup> from the traditional spaces of social protection;
- 2) The restructuring of classes and the growing demands of well-positioned pressure groups/actors;<sup>13</sup>
- 3) The recognition of the market as an actor that should be given more space within the social distribution mechanisms;
- 4) Little or zero articulation of co-responsibility as an approach for defining actors and welfare policies in a public–private governance scheme. Hence, the family becomes the recipient of political demands in facing social risks as

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11 These advantages were not removed for certain groups, such as the armed forces, the political high command, the police and certain segments of the diplomatic staff who have retained privileged access to income and consumer goods that other population groups have been denied both in the period prior to the crisis of the 1990s and in successive reforms.

12 “Withdrawal” in this text refers to the relative absence of state responsibility in key areas of social protection. The term suggests the greater burden imposed on the family or individual to meet basic needs. One example is the current constitution’s legalisation of family responsibility for risks and care, criteria that went on to be used to evaluate whether or not to offer social assistance benefits (*Constitución de la República de Cuba*, 2019: Chapter 3).

13 A deeper appreciation of this issue in the implementation of the reform agenda is urgently needed in order to understand the class restructuring process in Cuban society today.

a result of norms and cultural behaviours in which moral discipline is key (Cunha & Ivo, 2019);<sup>14</sup>

- 5) When addressing vulnerabilities, there is an increased use of individual/family and moralistic rhetoric, in combination with targeted actions shaped by a humanitarian perspective;<sup>15</sup>
- 6) The lack of coordination between different levels of the institutional system of social and economic policies means the capacity is lost to effectively respond to changing social processes and problems;
- 7) Robust evaluation mechanisms that assess the reform implementation and its results in priority human development areas are incomplete or barely exist.

While the priority is given to economic development, the crucial task is to overcome the practices that have shaped the institutional development of the Cuban political system and their effects throughout the entire social fabric. A key example of this continuity, also present in the current Díaz-Canel government, is the fact that in parallel to the initial economic changes since Raúl Castro came to power, a process has been underway of consolidation and expansion of the military sector.<sup>16</sup> Another contradictory aspect is the legislative component of the legitimation and stability of the measures. Even today, many of the institutional order's legal mechanisms are produced by decree. It is important to note this procedure in light of the fragmentation it introduces, which results in a random field of action that offers ample leeway to arbitrary decisions when defining the relationship between rights and duties.

The new constitution approved in 2019 is a concentrated expression of the conceptual dilemmas associated with the process of change, and of the experience gained in the preparation of previous fundamental documents (PCC &

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14 Here, "co-responsibility" means an approach that emphasises the central place of care in development and establishes which collective, community and family mechanisms will guarantee it.

15 A key area in which this shift may be appreciated is attention to homeless people, whose numbers have been rising, particularly since the purchase and sale of houses began. For more, see the list of journal articles in the References section. Another example is the start of university training in social work: by going further than the current training, it will open up new possibilities.

16 Through the Grupo de Administración Empresarial, S.A. (GAESA), the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) control high added-value natural and tourism resources, import and export companies, customs control, and ports and transportation, as well for example the Mariel Special Development Zone. During the reform, many of the currency collection stores (TRD) and the CIMEX corporation were transferred to the FAR's management system. The dissolution of Habaguanex S.A. was a paradigmatic case. Created by the Office of the Historian, it had formed part of the local-management model of Old Havana's historic centre.

ANPP, 2017a; 2017b; 2017c). However, compared to the ambitious development objectives of these previous texts, its scope is limited. Close reading of the final document reveals the importance given to the political and ideological content as key components of building a society in the socialist transition. Another significant advance is the incorporation of a rights focus, although the practical implementation of these guidelines throughout the legislative calendar will need further assessment and evaluation.

Cuba's processes of institutionalisation have left a major deficit in the formalisation of citizen participation, which has been stripped of its transformative and innovative character when seeking community/local solutions. Popular Councils, the most important grassroots organisations, have been granted very limited space within the constitution. Their absence is notable from the section on the processes of promoting foreign investment. It should be borne in mind that from the 1990s onwards the country opened up to neo-extractivist formulas in both the tourism and mining industries, of which the nickel exploitation in the Moa area of Holguín province is one example (De la Cantera & Toppin, 2019). The minimal tradition of socio-environmental conflicts meant that investment projects based on foreign capital, such as the Castellanos mining megaproject in the province of Pinar del Río, got underway without the necessary consultation and participation of the populations involved in managing the ecological risk they pose.

As Svampa warns, neo-extractivism is characterised by the gigantism or large scale of its undertakings, which is also a warning sign of the magnitude of the investment (capital- rather than labour-intensive) and of the actors involved. In general, these are transnational corporations, although the so-called trans-Latin corporations play their part. Such megaprojects generate little direct employment after their initial construction phases,<sup>17</sup> produce few significant endogenous supply chains, disrupt traditional local economies and displace people or cause health problems for those who remain (Svampa, 2019: 22–23). Given their major eco-social impact, these issues merited greater consideration in the consultation over the final drafting of the current constitution. The inclusion of regulation and public consultations in those projects is critical given the lack of previous debate about the drawing up of the foreign investment law.

The constitution was an opportunity to promote a socialist transition that is more closely attached to the democratic value of citizen participation and its

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17 In these small communities, generally located in rural areas of the country, the levels of job creation resulting from this type of investment and male-dominant activities amplify social inequality, as certain groups are included in these projects at the expense of others, a process that also includes notable gender inequality.

contribution to development. It could also have promoted a model of access to information and knowledge centred on a collective perspective that extends beyond the individual.<sup>18</sup> At this point, the persistent political dilemmas found an ideal niche for their reproduction, and neither the reform as a whole nor the laws that underpin it are able to provide an answer. They remain at the mercy of their contradictory essence.

### 3 A multidimensional reconfiguration of inequality and poverty in Cuba

The Cuban system's main strength has been the existence of the political will to guarantee positive social indicators even in times of economic downturn. Traditionally, this model has been characterised by the existence of a structure of universal guarantees, which have worked with relative effectiveness for over half a century, establishing an institutional legacy of social protection (Álvarez & Matarr, 2004). It has also been distinguished by the state's central role in providing social protection and the people's identification of it as the main agent for securing those guarantees.

Despite the social spending in the key human development areas (health, education, employment, habitat, access to information and culture), inequality persists in the access to the institutional social policy architecture meant to ensure inclusive social mobility for families with different starting positions in terms of accessing material and symbolic resources (Voghon, 2018). Local differences and habitat appropriation are two essential factors when analysing processes of inequality at urban and rural levels.

Housing is key to explaining the contemporary dynamics of spatial and cultural segregation in the access to welfare. In Cuba, the development of homebuilding and renovation policies (Núñez, 2008) has been too slow and falls of the short of levels needed to respond to the dynamics of generational replacement and the (re)composition of the family unit. Access to housing has proven difficult, increased by the limited capacity for self-management and cooperative solutions for this problem (Carrasco & Jimenez, 2021).

The diverse temporalities that coexist within the revolutionary context and its policies are key to understanding Cuba's present and future challenges. The vectors of tension between the present and past in generational terms unfold throughout the historical development of the socialist project in the country. The

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18 The use of urban land is another key omission from the document, with the focus more on the regulation of idle land in rural areas.

experience of inequality is therefore not temporally or generationally homogeneous,<sup>19</sup> but is riddled with processes of retraction, improvement and bifurcation that have marked and characterised the Revolution's history and its policies of promise (Davies, 2017). Hence, the reform is the product not only of a moment of urgency on the part of the government, but also of the way alternative actors organise a response to the raft of generational problems and social demands interwoven in civic mobilisation and or individual/collective struggles.

The reinforcement of equality in Cuba requires more complex and systemic approaches that go beyond the conception of income as a variable for measuring well-being. Extensive study has been made of government structures and their weaknesses from a participatory perspective (Dilla, 1996; 2000). More research is needed to advance theoretical and methodological research on wealth accumulation and state capture practices (Cañete, 2018; Durand, 2019) within Cuban society. This is because these mechanisms are at the heart of Cuban enterprises' lack of autonomy, the advance or regression of the private sector, the access to and management of information and the increasingly stratified supply in the leisure industry. Hence, the importance of recognising the channels and actors involved in the dynamics of inequality.

#### 4 The drivers of inequality: actors and mechanisms.

This chapter has repeatedly raised the need to go beyond a vision that focuses on income and consumer goods. More complex analyses are needed when addressing the social dynamics of the (re)production of inequality. One observable reality within the long transformation that began in the 1990s is the weakening of work as a source of social integration.<sup>20</sup> Among other processes of vulnerability, the reform legitimised the figure of the on-call worker,<sup>21</sup> as well as job insecurity

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19 Throughout this chapter, generations are not just considered in their chronological dimensions. Instead, temporality means a generation's modes of production, and therefore concerns deep variations in economic and social conditions. These differences shape group identities at a given moment and not necessarily the whole society (Mannheim, 1928/1952; Bourdieu, 1980; 1999).

20 Fundamentally, this disconnection is caused by the relative decline of state-sector salaries and the pensions derived from workers' social security contributions – the most significant group in the Cuban labour network. The fall in their earning capacity makes it difficult for workers and their families to meet their expenses, despite recent measures to increase wages and pensions (*Gaceta Oficial*, 2019a).

21 In labour terms, the rules of the game demand higher levels of skill in the face of reduced job supply in the state space. Faced with these mechanisms, the unskilled workers in this sector who have spent much of their working life in a particular position are forced to relocate or lose their job. The biggest shock of this process at the subjective level was that state work ceased to

and precariousness (Peña & Voghon, 2014). The current Labour Code (*Gaceta Oficial* No. 29, 2013) turns out to be a weak legal instrument for tackling the existence of ad hoc mechanisms that undermine rights in the world of work.

Remittances have contributed significantly to weakening the labour factor, its social value and contribution to social inclusion (Hansing & Hoffmann, 2020). Their relevance as a parallel factor of social distribution due to their irrigational capacity explains a great deal of private sector investment and the strategies developed by individuals and families to satisfy their needs (Munster, 2014; Delgado, 2016). Despite the permanent updating of the regulations on the exercise and development of the private sector, three obstacles remain: the low inclusion of skilled jobs; the fragile implementation of the tax system; and the mechanism of supply and assurance of these initiatives. One positive element of inclusion in the 2019 regulations was the disaggregation of tax burdens by territory and type of activity (*Gaceta Oficial*, 2019b).

What follows is a simplified and incomplete review of actors<sup>22</sup> and scenarios that are well-placed in the social structure and have the capacity to achieve upward mobility and an influential political voice in the island's present and future. Some worth mentioning are: the self-employed, artists, academics who regularly travel abroad or participate in international cooperation schemes, workers in the mixed public-private sector, those involved in tourism or who form part of internationalist missions via the provision of professional services, agricultural landowners who never formed cooperatives, those who recently took advantage of the increased flexibility in the transfer of idle lands, and Cubans with dual nationality who take advantage of flexible migration policies to practice circular migration (Aja, 2017).

To piece together the unsolvable puzzle of progressing with the reform, the informal economy must be mentioned. More in-depth social research is required on this topic (Peña & Voghon, 2014; Rodríguez, 2017a; Rodríguez, 2014). As an unproven hypothesis, this space may be proportionally as significant as the formal sector – or even more so – when it comes to re-establishing social distribution. Its dynamics must also be considered when addressing the mechanisms for maintaining the political system.<sup>23</sup> Since the removal of foreign travel restrictions

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represent secure employment for life.

22 In this chapter, when referring to groups no pretence is made of homogeneity, which would only contribute to the opacity of processes and actors. The intention is to indicate those who are presently – or who have the potential to be – well-placed within the reform framework.

23 Although it seems to contradict and contravene it, in fact, the black market plays an essential role in satisfying the needs of individuals and families, of the private sector of the economy and of the system as a whole, because it enables individual responses to collective problems.

for Cubans in 2012, the informal sector has driven the circulation of resources from abroad to meet individual/family needs, and aid the operation of private businesses. Finally, it is important to highlight the endurance of underground cultural practices such as the lottery and the sale and consumption of drugs.

Another group is the elite linked to political power and the government. The divide between the public and this group is overwhelmingly huge. That is why researching their privileges is no easy task, and even trickier is getting a full understanding of the threads moving the social and patrimonial capital this sector is able to mobilise based on access to information, resources and political legitimacy.

Finally, two groups who appear to be a minority in fact occupy a significant position by aiding social mobilisation. The first of these are the religious organisations. The second are the communication media and platforms whose management, production, distribution and reach in most cases evade state control (Sosa-Valcárcel et al., 2019: 9). The access to technologies and information in a global context of connective interdependence has taken the confrontation into areas of the exercise of hegemony that have no tradition in Cuban post-1959 history.

The role of religious organisations has been widely addressed in terms of their cultural practices, but less attention has been given to their political nature and significance. They played an important role in the consultation process for the constitution, preventing the advance of progressive content within it. Martínez writes that some of the Protestant circles made serious efforts via their civic commitments, ethics and ecclesiology to participate in the defence of solidarity within society (2015: 201–202). In doing so, they also stress the need for transformations to address current problems, while providing fundamental material and spiritual support in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities.

The subjective configurations and imaginaries built around the reform (Peña & Voghon, 2014) show that public opinion is in favour of the need for change, while at the same time tacitly accepting the structural inequality deriving from it. On the subjective level, the most significant contradiction, and one that may be expressed with a certain level of reluctance, is the withdrawal of state protection in priority areas. In this context, a question remains about the conflictive interaction between the anti-capitalist struggle and the power relations (Martínez, 2015) that uphold the political dilemma that characterises Cuban society today.

## 5 Conclusions. Proposals for an alternative academic and political agenda

The application of Cuba's current reform "seems" slow and inoperative when set against the main economic objectives and goals that gave rise to it. However, the impacts in terms of reinforcing inequality are compelling. In the context of readjusting political consensus, challenges arising from the unfulfilled promises of the present motivate the collective building of the utopian reality of the future (Davies, 2017). A clearer and more appropriate definition of distributive justice is called for within an ethical framework that fits the present and future. It should consider that:

- 1) Economic growth must be subject to well-being, meaning it must be supported by a balanced relationship between social and economic policies that consolidate an effective social protection model.
- 2) A cultural change is urgently needed that allows us to produce an alternative ethic to the dynamics of capital accumulation. The consensus over the "desirable" society must be formed based on generational renewal.
- 3) Inequality and poverty are two issues of primary importance. The pandemic has also amplified Cuba's social and eco-environmental asymmetries. Among other things, a society advances through knowledge. Without official data on these phenomena and verifiable sources of diverse research, the transformative capacities of society and academia to respond to the challenges of the present are diminished.
- 4) The country's educational and productive model must increasingly adjust to the scenario of info-communications and new technologies that characterises today's societies.
- 5) A fundamental part of the discussions around the implementation of the changes has been the call for a change of mentality, an idea promoted by the Cuban government during the Raúl Castro administration. At present, producing this transformation on a volitional basis will fall short, given the old, reissued corrosive political practices applied in handling the reform. The first real step towards achieving this goal must be a critical survey of all the government's shortcomings and limitations in the long term. The imminent generational power shift requires the active recovery of the collective memory to face the info-communication and cultural challenges Cuban society will face in the future.

The current reform deals with recurring dilemmas around the economic opening up and political renewal that began in the 1990s. Without popular control and

advocacy, the goals of this process will remain unreachable. We must not underestimate the long memory of colonisation within the DNA that maintains Cuba's chances of becoming a reference point for political transformation. Indeed, as Martínez (2015: 203) points out, among other requirements, there is a need to recognise that what appear to be fixed realities may actually be in motion. In doing so, we must jettison some certainties in order to embark on a re-identification that extends from values to institutions, and above all to create and recreate – a minimum aspiration if we are to be pragmatic in the anti-capitalist struggle.

The current pandemic has highlighted the importance of stable and integrated architecture in the social protection system. At a time of crisis, such as the one humanity now faces, Cuba must be analysed based on the interaction between the micro-stories of daily life, the interaction between past, present and future temporalities, and generational changes. The divisions over social and economic priorities produce unfertile ground for opposing the entrenched inequalities generated by an increasingly unipolar world of eco-environmental destruction.

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# **Part III: Constitutional reform and beyond**



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# **Cuba's 2019 Constitution and Socialist Constitutionalism: Realities and Challenges**

## **1 Introduction**

The usual approach to studying the Cuban constitution and its varied content is to make a comparative study with the principles of liberal constitutionalism. But the Cuban constitution does not fit with the principles and foundations of that constitutionalism; it is conditioned by the parameters of socialist constitutionalism, which gives it a different political, legal and ideological grounding.

Both of these constitutionalisms (and there are others) has its own view of reality. It is their radically different foundations that makes a comparative analysis from a liberal constitutionalist perspective a useless, merely rhetorical and ultimately melancholy task.

It was initially hoped that the recent constitutional changes would reflect the social development that has taken place in Cuba over a number of years. But those hopes became deep frustrations when it was confirmed that the material reality of the constitution, in other words, the balance of the powers that interact in society (Revolutionary Armed Forces, Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), bureaucracy, economic system, Cuba's international position and its relationship with the United States) and which dialectically give life to the formal constitution not only have not changed, they continue to be shaped by the strategies and principles of socialist constitutionalism. As such, making interpretations of the Cuban constitutional text that are materially limited by the parameters of the constitutionalism of which it forms part does not seem feasible.

The historical circumstances that engendered this model of constitutionalism in Cuba are not identical to those of today, but the model's foundations and structural principles have been consolidated over the years, as a full reading of the 2019 constitution shows. Cuban society in 2020 is the product of substantial transformations that have occurred progressively and unceasingly for some decades now.

Framed by this paradigm, the analysis of the 2019 constitution will focus on verifying the contrast between the norm and the reality, between the formal constitution and the material constitution, and on confirming, at least tentatively and to the furthest possible extent, whether the political, social and economic

forces condition or are able to condition what the letter of the constitution establishes.

## 2 Socialist constitutionalism. The position of the constitution in the “legal order”: constitutional supremacy and direct application

The 2019 constitution is intended, in principle, to be coherently related to the society from which it emerges. In fact, it legitimises a contradictory situation that resulted from the economic and social transformations that began with the *Lineamientos* (Guidelines) of the PCC approved in 2011, which led to continual flagrant violations of the 1976 constitution (modified in 1992 and 2002) of various types, but above all linked to economic activities. The creation of the Office of the Comptroller General of the Republic is one example: in this case, an important new institution was incorporated into the fabric of the Cuban institutional system extra-constitutionally. In other cases, reforms have been made to the economic system, among other things to create new forms of self-employment and new labour relations, that ought to have required prior constitutional amendments before their implementation. Their post hoc inclusion in the current 2019 constitution shows a lack of respect and consideration for the state's highest law.

Hence, the constitution has been used not to address profound changes across all orders of society, but to re-legitimise the system, fundamentally for external consumption. The 2019 constitution is manifestly a continuation of the previous political and institutional model, which is that defined in the 1976 constitution, and which in turn drew on the sources of the 1936 Soviet constitution.

### *The position of the constitution in the “legal order”: constitutional supremacy and direct application*

For the first time it is recognised that “the Constitution is the supreme norm of the State” (Const. 2019, art. 7). Never before had the principle of constitutional supremacy been recognised, which involves the subordination of power and citizens to the constitution, as well as the other legal norms.

The consideration given to the constitution as the “supreme norm” is an important advance, but the material reality exhibits structural issues that make it extremely difficult for the formal constitution to be truly reflected in the country's social, economic and political life.

There is more than one reason for this lack of alignment. The institutionalisation of the principle of “unity of power” is one. This is the way the “people's

power” is upheld, and it means that the National Assembly of People’s Power (ANPP), as the expression of the will of a homogeneous society without class differences, approves both legal and constitutional norms, which therefore appear to be politically homogeneous. This system means that any doubts that may arise about the constitutionality of certain norms are resolved by political decisions supported by the ANPP (Const. 2019, art. 108 e.). The second reason is the level of disregard for the law, which means that, historically, rather than the subordination of power to the constitution, what has been most notable is the subordination of the constitution to power.

This devaluation of the law and more specifically of the constitution is no more than a reflection of the USSR’s constitutional parameters and, specifically, of its 1936 constitution, a decisive influence on Cuba’s 1976 constitution.

The Cuban constitution is essentially ideological, and its foundations lie in Marxism–Leninism (Const. 2019, art. 5). This ideology, which is transmitted via the PCC structure, invariably determines the conceptions of the state and the law that derive from the worldview of the social, economic, political and legal reality of socialist constitutionalism.

In socialist constitutionalism, the constitution is nothing more than a political and ideological programme – it is not a binding norm. The constitution has instrumental value as a dynamic, transformative agent in the work of achieving communist society. That it is intended to transform reality is one essential quality that distinguishes it from liberal constitutions, which preserve the status quo.

The law is a superstructure that the Cuban revolution did not encourage particular adherence to or respect for. The sense of personal security, equality and equity was not based on the law, but on the social and political conditions created by the revolution. Slow, painful legal proceedings recalled bourgeois institutions and forms. Hugo Azcuy (1995: 145–155) claimed that the revolution was made not with law but with politics. With that reality recognised, Azcuy went on to unambiguously defend the law’s normative function (Chofre, 2017).

The roots of this conception of the law and therefore of the constitution lie in the very origins of the revolution. This conception has not changed, and as long as we find ourselves constrained by the same parameters, it will not change. In reality, the dominant position is one that recognises the supremacy of the law over the constitution. Many of the economic and social reforms undertaken in the years prior to the new constitution were manifestly unconstitutional and, for example, breached the provisions of Article 14 of the 2002 constitution, which establishes that: “In the Republic of Cuba, the system of economy based on socialist ownership of the means of production by all the people prevails, and the suppression of exploitation of man by man”. Certain changes were made, above all in the economic field, that derived from the PCC Guidelines approved in 2011, with no

consideration given to whether they fitted within the constitutional framework. This is one of the specific cases where constitutional reform was required in order to provide adequate legal coverage, even if in an unorthodox way.

Enshrining the constitution as the “supreme norm of the State” is a very significant step and an inescapable commitment for all organs of the state and all citizens to comply with and respect the magna carta. A highly illuminating and illustrative statement on the position of the constitution and its place in the Cuban legal system was made by José Luis Toledo, then president of the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Commission of the ANPP on the occasion of the debate in the assembly on the preliminary draft of the constitution. He very forcefully stated that the PCC was above the constitution and was the highest governing power of both society and the state. In a different setting these declarations might cause astonishment and perplexity, but they are fully coherent with the revolutionary conception of the law within the framework of socialist constitutionalism, whereby the constitution is subordinate to power and a different reality should not be expected (*OnCuba News*, 2018).

Despite the conditions imposed by the external reality and the clear establishment of political and ideological frames of reference, during the constitution's gestation process most Cuban constitutionalists supported the recognition of a Constitutional Court – or, at least, the conversion of one chamber of the Supreme Court into a Constitutional Chamber – in order to guarantee the express provision of Article 7 that the “constitution is the supreme norm of the State” and must be fulfilled and respected by all. In short, this was to give recognition to the constitution's supremacy over the law rather than the other way around.

Nevertheless, the view of Cuban constitutionalists (Martha Prieto's opinion is representative: Prieto Valdés, 2019: 59) was not reflected in the final approved text for the precise reason that the political, ideological and legal reference framework is that of socialist constitutionalism, which is tethered to the principle of unity of power and democratic centralism – today synthesised in the “principles of socialist democracy” (Const. 2019, art. 101). The institution of the Constitutional Court fits perfectly (although not indisputably) within liberal constitutionalism and with the principle of the division of powers, but not within socialist constitutionalism. The same logic explains why the 2019 constitution formally recognises the supremacy of the constitution, while in practice maintaining the system of constitutional review that has existed since the 1976 constitution (Const., art. 75 c.; and Const. 2019, Articles 108 e. and 122 h. and i.).

Making constitutional review a function of the ANPP means that in material terms no effective constitutional review exists: the ANPP is responsible for carrying out constitutional review of laws, decree-laws, presidential decrees, decrees and other general provisions, and as such becomes both part of the legislative

process and its judge, at the same time approving laws and exercising oversight of them (Const. 2019, art. 108 e.).

Bourgeois states have oversight bodies that supervise the fulfilment of the constitution, that interpret it and check that the laws parliament approves comply with it. These oversight bodies are placed above the parliament. According to Zhidkov et al., the reactionary nature of such bodies is worsened by the fact that they do not depend on representative institutions (1988: 260). This is the coherent logic that shapes the entire 2019 constitution within the framework of socialist constitutionalism: conceiving of an institution that is able to correct the criteria defined by the ANPP – the people’s highest representative and the central pillar of the Cuban power structure – is impossible.

Against that background, and subject to the constraints inherent in the prevailing constitutional model, one of the challenges Cuban authorities face is ensuring that the constitution, the “supreme norm of the State” is applied directly by the different judicial operators and, especially, by the courts of justice in the specific case in question. It is not necessary in every case to wait for implementing legislation to be approved before directly applying the constitution – that is why it is defined as the “supreme norm of the State” and “[a]ll are obliged to comply with it” (Const. 2019, art. 7). This does not preclude the need for implementing legislation to be approved on the matters in question; it would be unacceptable for such laws never to be approved, or for them to be approved with such delay as to reduce the respect for and prestige of the constitution itself.

The main task facing judicial operators is to place the constitution at the very heart of the theory of interpretation. This means applying criteria to assess the compliance of norms approved both prior to the constitution’s approval and afterwards. These laws should then be interpreted and applied in the light of the provisions of the new fundamental law, which will be progressively assimilated by citizens and become a “living constitution” for them and all the organs of the state. A living constitution is one that dialectically adapts to a highly changeable reality. The Cuban constitution declares a large number of good ideals that will nevertheless be difficult to implement without mechanisms aimed at their fulfilment.

If all judicial operators take a course of action that fails to adapt to the arguments outlined and if the constitution fails to regulate the political, social and economic reality, we will face a scenario in which the public perception of the constitution becomes increasingly degraded and discredited and becomes a “semantic” constitution, a mere façade without substantial content, or in Lassalle’s words, a mere “piece of paper”.

### 3 Socialist law and the rule of law

Socialist law is the theoretical basis for the creation of the new society in Cuba. According to the concept of socialist law, law and government play a positive and dynamic role in the creation of socialism. Lenin saw law as a political instrument (cited in Evenson, 1994: 20, note 21), and it may indeed be used to lay the foundations of the continuous evolution towards socialism.

The definition of socialist law is an abstract expression that appears not only in the constitution but also in other laws and includes not only the legal norms that serve as instruments to regulate and transform society, but also the set of values and methods on which the evaluation and amendment of the law are based (Evenson, 1994: 16).

To continue strengthening socialist law ongoing state surveillance and party control of the activity of all state bodies and social organisations is needed to ensure their strict and rigorous compliance with the law (Alexandrov, 1963: 218).

For the first time within the hegemonic framework of socialist law, the 2019 constitution recognises “rule of law” as a category in Cuba (Const. 2019, art. 1). It is a category that socialist constitutionalism has previously considered taboo. Marxists attributed it to bourgeois thought, historically belittled it, and as it was unknown, even vilified it. That the Cuban constitution includes it in its frontispiece is an attempt by socialist constitutionalism to assimilate this category,<sup>1</sup> altering the content established over centuries while at the same time instrumentalising it as it has with others, such as the law. Words mean what they mean, not what power wants them to mean.

It seems impossible to consider that the category “rule of law” can fully develop its values, principles, institutions and norms within the material limits established by the reality of the Cuban political system.<sup>2</sup> The “people’s power” structure and the hegemonic position of the PCC prevent further exploration of such unknown paths. Time will reveal the extent to which this until-recently re-viled clause is developed.

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1 During the debate on the draft constitution in the ANPP, Homero Acosta, secretary of the Council of State, highlighted the inclusion of the term “*Estado Socialista de Derecho*” (socialist rule of law) as a transcendent and innovative concept taken from the bourgeois liberal thought of the 19th century. Capitalism wants exclusive use of the term, he said, but we have re-evaluated it in order to incorporate it. In the European socialist experience, this concept was never defined, which was a failure with consequences – it was one of the factors that undermined those states at the time, he said (*Radio Miami*, 2018).

2 The meaning of the “rule of law” has developed over centuries. It relates to setting limits on power, separating powers, the supremacy of the law, and the declaration of rights and freedoms and their jurisdictional guarantees.

Interpreting Article 1 of the constitution while ignoring the meaning “rule of law” has held since the Enlightenment and the requirements deriving from it is no easy task. An enormous intellectual and creative effort is needed to give a different dimension to this historical category, coined so many years ago, and frame it within socialist constitutionalism. Difficult, if not impossible, unless we conclude along with Kelsen that every state by virtue of being so embodies the rule of law.

### *The category “law” in the 2019 constitution*

Several years of excessive improvisation and spontaneity have left the Cuban legislative process lacking systematisation and coherence (Guntin, 1988: 145–150). The problem has been compounded by the pace of change since 1989. The need to maintain stability in the midst of ongoing urgent reforms complicates the chance of achieving an adequate, balanced framework in accordance with socialist objectives (Evenson, 1994: 17–18).

The underlying issue in Cuba is the interaction and confusion of the state with the PCC. The “law” does not yet represent a precise limitation for the party-state. The “law” is a mere instrument for upholding the current political and economic order. Since 1959, the category “law” has been used synonymously with “general provisions”. The law is not yet a constitutional legal category.

The 2019 constitution does not seem to have changed that approach or what the “rule of law” requires. The glossary of the 2018 draft constitution clarifies what we should understand as “law”:

Although the term literally refers to the normative provisions approved by the National Assembly of People’s Power, *in the text it is also conceived as referring to any type of norm regardless of the body that issues it.*<sup>3</sup>

The vagueness of this categorisation of constitutional law, which is so solidly established in the configuration of the “rule of law”, has significant negative consequences for two of its fundamental principles. First, it impacts legal certainty, begging, for example, the questions: Will a fundamental right, for example, be implemented through a “regulatory provision” that is not a law? Which body other than the ANPP can pass it? The second principle that is affected (and which is connected to the first) is normative hierarchy. Can a “regulatory provision” repeal a prior law? In the case of a conflict between a “regulatory provision” and a “law”, which takes precedence? Then, of course, there is the principle of pub-

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3 The italics are mine.

lishing the norms in the *Boletín Oficial*, which allows advance notice to be given of their formal existence and their consequences before they enter into force. Not doing this generates distrust in the legal system, which in turn causes a lack of certainty in the law that makes it impossible for Cuban jurists to confidently advise Cuban citizens and foreign clients, for example.

The principle of hierarchy is fundamental to the structuring of the legal system. The relationship of the constitution to the rest of the legal order is based on this criterion, although it might better be conceptualised as a relationship of supremacy, since the principle of hierarchy provides a narrower field of action than that of supremacy. In any case, the principle of hierarchy is an essential technique for redirecting the order towards unity and achieving the coherence needed to properly speak of a legal order. The absence of this principle from the constitution itself makes it difficult to coordinate a coherent unit that could qualify as a legal order, if we understand that an order is not merely a juxtaposition of norms, but a *prius* in relation to the elements that make it up. The order's validity mirrors its effectiveness: a legal order is valid if it exists, that is to say, if it is genuinely effective. The order's validity – its existence – can only be determined in relation to the society it is intended to regulate. An order is valid when it is effective: when most of its rules are observed by most of those subject to it (Balaguer, 2012: 85).

As well as those mentioned above, certain other situations show the difficulty of evaluating the existence of a true legal order. For example, even after certain policies are given legislative expression and become law, in practice the PCC Guidelines and even its leaders' speeches may modify or repeal prior laws and any other type of "regulatory provision", directly breaking the structures meant to support the concept of the rule of law and particularly the principle of legal certainty.

This confusion in the operation of certain fundamental principles of the "rule of law" is due to the status of the revolutionary institutions and their particular conception of the law, which has not historically promoted particular adherence to or respect for the law, leading to outcomes that call into question the existence of a true and genuine legal system.

If introducing the categorisation of the "rule of law" (Const. 2019, art. 1) is intended to initiate a shift towards greater consideration and respect for the law, so that the "supremacy of the law" can develop to its full potential by reducing discretion and in some cases arbitrariness in the exercise of power, its incorporation into the constitutional text will be very welcome and will mark an extremely important step forward. But governing by the law and respecting the values, principles and procedures set forth in the constitution itself as a way to reduce subjectivity in the exercise of power do not seem an easy fit with the "peo-

ple's power" form of government and the PCC's hegemonic position in the state. Cuba's transformation into a state that is governed by laws, let alone one under the rule of law, is no easy task.

#### 4 The PCC and the restructuring of the central organs of the state

Of the reforms introduced by the 2019 constitution, those affecting two particular areas of the organisation of the state stand out: the restructuring of the state's apparatus – the state as the central power; and the restructuring of the state community – the state as a local power. The analysis in this chapter will focus on the state apparatus, or state as central power, leaving the other for later study.

The institutionalisation of revolutionary power in Cuba, starting with the 1976 constitution, took the organisational and operating principles of the Soviet system as a political model for consecrating the revolutionary process, guaranteeing the total centrality of the state in all economic, social and legal spheres.

The principle of unity of power (not identified with unity of functions) is the essential core of the Cuban revolutionary constitutional tradition and is manifested in "people's power", which is the way power is organised in Cuba. The new 2019 constitution leaves this untouched, and defines its two immovable and irrevocable pillars: the socialist system adopted since the revolution, and the PCC's predominant role as the guiding force in society and the state. Hence, a socialist bureaucracy is established that is subject to the dictates of the PCC but not to any oversight.

The PCC's leadership in this type of model means it participates decisively in the selection and distribution of the governing cadres. Democratic centralism permits close hierarchical dependence within the party. And not only within the party. In fact, a dense network of dependency relationships built on solid bonds is observed that is often extremely closed and centralised. Democratic centralism has progressively limited the parameters of public debate and the channels for public influence on national policies. The PCC monopolises the formulation of policies and uses the grassroots organisations to implement its decisions.

The principle of socialist democracy began to lose its profoundly democratic freshness from the moment the limited channels of public influence began to reflect the political elite's permanent lack of trust in the people to lead the socialist state and the simple refusal of those in power to cede control. Over time, the bureaucracy's firm control tightened (Evenson, 1994: 26).

Socialist democracy informs the 2019 constitution when it comes to the revocation of elected officials' mandates, which is linked to their accountability to

the voters (Const. 2019, arts 80 f. and 101), and the recognition of citizens' right to participate in the formation, exercise and monitoring of the state's power.

It is within this political and ideological conceptual framework that the changes the constitution introduces to the structure of the state organs must be analysed.

At the apex of "people's power" – formally, although not materially – is the ANPP, which is configured as the supreme organ of state power by virtue of representing the people in their entirety and expressing their sovereign will (Const. 2019, art. 102). The absolute concentration of power around the ANPP is unquestionable, which gives it the legitimacy to define the guidelines for the state's operation. This pre-eminent position makes it the source of the legitimacy of the other constitutional bodies that emanate from it, with these bodies considered mere executors of its decisions, whose ultimate purpose is to promote the advance towards communist society (Const. 2019, art. 5); while, at the same time, that concentration of power is further reinforced by the attribution to the ANPP of exclusive constituent and legislative authority (Const. 2019, art. 103).

This absolute centrality of the ANPP in the structure of the organs of the state is not reflected in the country's political, social and economic reality. The ANPP lacks visibility and direct connection with citizens. This estrangement is partly explained by the fact that its parliamentary activity is limited to two periods of ordinary session each year (Const. 2019, art. 110 b.), when it sits for two or three days each time (notwithstanding the activity of the parliamentary committees). We therefore observe a certain lack of correspondence between its formal hegemony and the limited material development of its functions.

This glaring disparity is further visible in the fact that the vast majority of members of the assembly – the citizens' legitimate representatives – do not attend parliament outside the annual sessions. For the rest of the year they continue at their workplaces, which provide their pay, as their status as parliamentarians does not bring economic benefits (Const. 2019, art. 115). As Guanche (2018) points out, the limited permanent professional activity of its members leaves the ANPP with little choice but to compensate for its lack of control, information and powers by more often than not unanimously ratifying the government's general provisions, which are passed via the Council of State.

This paradoxical situation clearly shows that it is the Council of State (an ANPP organ that represents it between sessions) and not the ANPP itself that is materially established as the supreme body and that adopts fundamental political decisions on day-to-day business.

The latest constitutional regulation on the Council of State reduces it to 18 members, in addition to the president, vice president and secretary, who will hold the same roles in the ANPP (Const. 2019, art. 121). The previous Council of

State had 31 members, including a president, a first vice president, five vice presidents and a secretary (Const. 2019, art. 75). The body's current configuration is more dynamic and functional after a major generational change took place, as those who fought for the revolution from its very beginnings were removed, which reduced the average age (51) of its members significantly.

The members of the Council of Ministers and the highest authorities of the judicial, electoral and state control bodies are ineligible for the Council of State (Const. 2019, art. 121, para. 2).

That the same people lead the Council of State and the PCC's Central Committee is the real embodiment of the principle of democratic centralism and the source of the confusion between party and state. In practice, this means that as the "leading political force of society and the State" (Const. 2019, art. 5), the guidelines defined by the PCC will define the direction of the state, even, if necessary, above the constitution, as confirmed by José Luis Toledo, president of the Constitutional and Legal Affairs Commission of the ANPP.

While the Council of State materially plays the key role, the ANPP remains the formal centre of gravity of the entire Cuban political system, and as such elects the president and vice president of the republic; its own president, vice president and secretary; the rest of the members of the Council of State; it appoints the prime minister, the deputy prime ministers and other members of the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the president of the republic; elects the president of the People's Supreme Court, the attorney general of the republic and the comptroller general of the republic; the president and the other members of the National Electoral Council; the vice presidents and magistrates of the People's Supreme Court, as well as the lay judges of that body; and the deputy prosecutors and deputy comptrollers general of the republic. All of the positions the ANPP appoints may be revoked or replaced by the ANPP itself (Const. 2019, art. 109).

With the ANPP defined as both centre and backbone of Cuba's power structure, the new constitution introduces some changes with respect to the 1976 constitution that affect the principle of unity of power as the basis for the organisation and operation of the state organs. Nevertheless, the essence remains unaltered, as this principle is the fundamental support upholding "people's power".

A novelty of the 2019 constitution is the incorporation of the president of the republic as head of state, independently of the Council of State. In the 1976 constitution, amended in 2002, power was concentrated in a single person, in that case, Fidel Castro, who assumed the position of president of the Council of State, head of state and head of government (Const. 1976, amended in 2002, art. 74).

This break with the concentration of power in a single individual is enacted via the establishment of a president of the republic as head of state independent-

ly of the Council of State, and the creation of the figure of the prime minister. As head of government of the republic (Const. 2019, art. 140 et seq.), the prime minister leads the highest executive and administrative body, and is appointed by the National Assembly upon the recommendation of the president of the republic for a five-year term.

The principle of unity of power – the expression of the state's unity of political action – is not affected by the new institutions of the president of the republic and the prime minister, despite their different structures and functions. The ANPP, which is the guarantor of the unity of power, as we have seen, has the power to elect and revoke both positions. The PCC, meanwhile, retains its always superior position, materially defining the state's fundamental policy lines. Historically, the head of state combined that position with that of first secretary of the PCC (as well as other posts) and thereby held the totality of power. However, this is not presently the case, as the president of the republic is not the first secretary of the PCC. But this deconcentration of power, of separation between the two positions, is entirely temporary.

As Raúl Castro stated at the act of inauguration of the current head of state, the moment the president again simultaneously holds the position of PCC first secretary the position of the president of the republic will be strengthened and the PCC's position as the state's guiding force and fundamental pillar will be reaffirmed (Castro, 2018).

Setting to one side the fact that the president of the republic is able to consolidate their political power by assuming the leadership of the PCC, the 2019 constitution lays the foundations for a deconcentration of power between different authorities: the president of the republic, the head of government and the president of the Council of State, who will also be president of the ANPP.

This deconcentration of power into three institutions is a significant change introduced by the 2019 constitution. The harmony and fluidity of relations between them is the result of the institutional and political structure that sustains them and gives them a foundation and meaning, specifically, "people's power" and the PCC. This monolithic, closed structure, which provides it with support, may at some point break down due to a range of circumstances that cause dissonance in the exercise of power and translate into self-interested interpretations of the constitution by any of the three fundamental institutions of the state, giving rise to a constitutional conflict of competences, in addition to the underlying political conflict between institutions.

Despite the dominant positions of the president and PCC first secretary, formally, the ANPP as the supreme body of the state can fully or partially revoke all general provisions, including presidential decrees (Const. 2019, art. 108 h.). The president of the republic does not have the right of veto over provisions approved

by the ANPP, which for Bertot Triana would have meant breaking with the principle of unity of power and moving closer to a presidential model with political and structural differentiation (Bertot, 2019: 31).

These circumstances are of particular sensitivity when considering the real dimensions of the new constitution: any analysis should be guided by the dialectic between the formal and material constitutions.

The division of the concentrated power held by the figure of Fidel Castro, the separation of the positions of president of the republic and president of the Council of State, which is a permanent organ of the ANPP, and the establishment of the president of the assembly as the head of that council (Const. 2019, art. 121) seem to lead us to two conclusions: on the one hand, that the Council of State could develop a more active role in the ANPP's functioning; and, on the other – and deriving from that – that it may enjoy progressively greater “autonomy” and, therefore, growing institutional projection in accordance with the central position of the ANPP in the Cuban political system.

In any case, the ultimate driver of the decision-making process is not the unit comprised of the central organs of state power, but essentially the PCC's leadership. The most important decisions are made by the PCC's Central Committee and only then are they adopted and executed by the competent state bodies. These are some of the structural elements that define the material constitution and interact dialectically with the formal constitution.

## 5 “Human rights” and socialist constitutionalism

None of Cuba's revolutionary constitutions consider rights to be expressions of natural and inalienable requirements. Rather, they are seen as contingent products of specific historical moments, and acquire particular and precise efficacy only in socialist society, which concerns itself with providing citizens with the material means needed for their realisation.

Socialist law strives above all to guarantee collective welfare on the basis of equality. It enshrines the material guarantee that the state makes with its resources and makes very limited reference to legal guarantees; it even applies rights via material guarantees rather than with laws. The lack of an education law, for example, has not prevented the state from setting up free education at all levels (Prieto, 2019: 58).

But in a context of economic crisis, the insufficiencies of the material guarantees that have been and remain the main factor of legitimation of the socialist system at the national and international level are revealed. As the economic crisis deepens, it becomes increasingly difficult to preserve its socialist principles. The 2019 constitution is a sign of this difficulty.

Until the late 1980s and early 1990s the concept of “human rights” was considered alien to socialist constitutionalism. But from the 1990s onwards, the category of “human rights” began to be used, except interpreted in a way that aligned with the principles of socialist constitutionalism. As such, no distinction was made in the Cuban constitution between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. Of course, this lack of distinctive criteria led to a lack of definition about whether a hierarchy existed between them. The latest constitution has not changed this, and the different types of rights are not distinguished from each other. Chapter II of Title V is generically called “Rights”, and contains civil rights such as “[the] home is an inviolable space” (Const. 2019, art. 49), the right to privacy (Const. 2019, art. 48); political rights, such as political participation (Const. 2019, art. 80); and social and economic rights, such as the right to “adequate housing” (Const. 2019, art. 71), and the right to education (Const. 2019, art. 73).

Two important aspects of the configuration of rights in the 2019 constitution require our attention

On the one hand, as we have already pointed out, all rights have the same rank and consideration. However, Article 99, which establishes a “preferential, expedited, and reduced” means of protecting rights, determines that the law will establish which rights are protected by this guarantee. A simple reading of the constitutional text will not tell us what those rights are. As well as its essential content – what the right is – a fundamental issue with any right is what its procedural content is, in other words, which processes are envisaged for making the material content of the right effective. To guarantee legal certainty, the rights that are protected by this preferential resource should be expressly determined by the constitution, rather than leaving the final decision to the ANPP, the Council of State or any other body – if it ultimately decides to define them.

What is more, when the rights included in the constitution require implementation or regulation via a subsequent law, this is not done in an imperative manner (the law “will regulate”, the law “will implement”), as a mandate to the legislator, but in a neutral way (the law “establishes”, “according to the law”, the law “defines”). This apparently banal difference in the use of a different verbs and tenses, is revealing because behind it lies the implicit recognition that the constitution cannot impose its legal mandates on the ANPP due to the configuration of “people’s power”. The constitution does not appear to be above either power or the party.

All of this translates into a lack of commitment to addressing the implementation of rights in order to make them effective. Of course, the law that implements or regulates a right should not establish its essential content – that is found in the constitution itself; what corresponds to the implementing legislation

is to respect that essential content in all cases. That is one of the basic guarantees of fundamental rights: the essential content of the constitution is “unavailable” to the legislator.

It is especially significant to note that the advance of the recognition and protection of human rights in Latin American constitutionalism has not been reflected in the Cuban constitution. Cuba’s constitutions – that of 1976 (partially reformed in 1978, 1992 and 2002) and the current one of 2019 – are in no way influenced by those of neighbouring countries like Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia. Curiously, Cuba has not managed to spread its constitutional model to any other country in America, and the models of its ideological peers have not influenced Cuba’s new constitution. Cuba retains its own unique character. Cuba remains an exception, in spite of the approval of the current constitution.

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*Carmen Antón Guardiola*

# The Reception of International Treaties in Cuba in the Light of the 2019 Constitution

## 1 Introduction

The international arena is increasingly shaped by states' growing desires for greater integration, and Cuba is no exception. Bilateral and multilateral treaties – many of which address matters of pressing concern to citizens – have proliferated. Hence, the interest of this research in the appropriate mechanisms for ensuring these international conventions are effective at domestic level.

States' law-making activity takes place both at domestic and international levels. At the domestic level, the competent state bodies develop the country's specific system of sources or national law and, at the international level, the state collaborates with other states in the formation of public international law.

At any moment in time, any act, situation or conduct may, at the urging of states, become a subject that is governed by international law.<sup>1</sup> At such a time, the two systems – state and international law – may converge or even coincide on these matters, making it necessary to consider what relationship exists between them in order to achieve the necessary inter-system coherence.

A brief review sketches the theoretical and doctrinal dimensions of the subject, which then it will be addressed from a legal-positivist point of view. In other words, we analyse how the Cuban system has responded to the relations between international law and national law.

Whichever theoretical underpinning is accepted (monist or dualist), today the doctrine is shifting towards a greater emphasis on data from the international context, and places the centre of gravity in the different national systems and the concrete solutions they offer. In short, this is because each state's constitutional norms determine the use of international law in national law, as well as its scope at national level, regardless of its effects at international level. Hence, our work centres on analysing the provisions in the new Cuban constitution promulgated

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1 For example, the fundamental rights and freedoms of the human person were for a long time regulated only by states' national law, but with the Charter of the United Nations of 1945, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and other international treaties they became a matter that also falls within the material scope of international law.

in 2019 that refer to the reception of international treaties in order to seek to identify which procedures incorporate these norms into Cuban law and thereby identify their dualist or monist roots.

International law takes no position on dualism or monism: it does not affirm the unity or separation of international and domestic law, nor does it refer to the validity of domestic norms when they conflict with their international counterparts. The only thing it clearly establishes is that in the international arena international norms prevail over national ones. Hence, the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) describes a model in which, under the general rules and principles of international law, such as that of good faith or *pacta sunt servanda*, domestic law does not serve as an excuse for non-compliance with international obligations without incurring international responsibility, and it is therefore for states to ensure that their internal systems are compatible with those commitments.<sup>2</sup>

## 2 The relationship between the international and domestic systems

States use different techniques to establish the relationship between the international and state legal systems and achieve the necessary inter-systemic coherence: reference, complement or dependence. In this sense Cuba is no exception.

*Reference* is a commonly used technique whereby one of the orders refers to concepts or categories from the other. Thus, the domestic may refer to the international order or the international the domestic. This is the case, for example, with international norms that refer to “the competent authorities of the state”, as such authorities must be determined in accordance with the national law of that state. Or, by contrast, a national law may refer to “diplomatic representatives of foreign states”, as the Cuban Penal Code does in article 113. In order to determine who such representatives are, reference will need to be made to the rules of international law on the status and functions of diplomatic missions and their staff.

Relations where one system *complements* the other are also common. Essentially, this is when international treaties demand domestic implementation measures, and merely establish the obligation on states parties to adopt the domestic legislation needed for their implementation.

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2 Article 26 of the VCLT connects the two principles, when it says “Every treaty in force is binding upon the parties to it and must be performed by them in good faith”. Article 27 establishes that “A party may not invoke the provisions of its internal law as justification for its failure to perform a treaty”.

Such relationships are found in international treaties on criminal matters, such as the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which only establishes the type of crime, and leaves states parties to criminalise and sanction such conduct in their domestic law. In Cuba, for example, this crime is set out in article 116 of Law No. 62 of the Cuban Penal Code,<sup>3</sup> with no mention of the international norm of origin.

Resolution 206/2015, the Procedure for Bilateral and Multilateral Treaties, provides for such relations when it requires authorities interested in concluding an international treaty to submit an opinion detailing, among other things, the implications for Cuban domestic law and any consequent need to amend, repeal or enact new laws.<sup>4</sup>

In such cases, the national legislation adopted to execute the international law is complementary to the international treaty in question. Reciprocally, each set of norms complements and explains the another.

Finally, the relationships between the two systems can also be addressed from the point of view of *dependence*. In this case, a domestic norm depends on an international one. This relationship of dependency occurs when an interna-

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3 Article V of the Genocide Convention contains an obligation on states parties to criminalise and punish the crime of genocide: "The Contracting Parties undertake to enact, in accordance with their respective Constitutions, the necessary legislation to give effect to the provisions of the present Convention, and, in particular, to provide effective penalties for persons guilty of genocide or any of the other acts enumerated in article III..."; the act is defined thus in article II: "... genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

In line with this, the Cuban Penal Code criminalises and establishes the crime by taking up the definition of genocide from the convention in article 116, as follows: a custodial sentence of ten to twenty years or death shall be the punishment for those acting with the intention of destroying all or part of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such: (a) subjecting this group to conditions of existence that constitute a threat of extermination to the group or any of its members; (b) taking measures to prevent or impede births within that group; (c) carrying out the forced transfer of children from that group to another; (ch) seriously killing or harming the physical or mental integrity of the members of the group (*Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, Extraordinary Edition, No. 9, December 29<sup>th</sup> 1987).

4 See: Articles 20.2. (e) and 26.2 (g) of Resolution No. 206/2015, "Procedimiento para los Tratados bilaterales y multilaterales" (*Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 40, Ordinary Edition, 29 September 2015).

tional norm allows states to regulate a particular situation, meaning that state legislation is justified by the existence of the international norm.

This is the case with international rules such as the Law of the Sea, in particular the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which allows states to establish a 12-nautical-mile “territorial sea” or a 200-nautical-mile “exclusive economic zone” through their domestic legislation. Both the delimitation of these marine spaces and the rights enjoyed by states in them are determined by international law. If this were not the case, in other words, if the domestic norm did not comply with the international requirements, that domestic norm, while valid in the domestic legal system would not be effective against other states at the international level. What is more, its application would constitute an internationally unlawful act that would generate international responsibility.

In the Cuban legal system we find this kind of relationship, for example, in article 11 of the Constitution of the Republic of 2019, which defines that the national territory extends to the outer boundary of the territorial sea, and declares its powers both in the national territory and in relation to the natural resources in the waters, bed and subsoil of the exclusive economic zone, in accordance with international law. As a state party to UNCLOS, Cuba has also established the geographical boundaries and powers exercised in its maritime areas by means of several decree-laws.<sup>5</sup>

But, beyond this, from a structural perspective that contemplates the totality of the legal order, the relations between the two systems – international and domestic – materialise in the attitude national law takes towards international law.

In this regard, it should be recalled that the international community is a radically decentralised social group composed of sovereign, independent and equal states that coexist within a horizontal structure. No political power is superior to that of the states themselves and no international body exists with the power to create law. The states themselves are the creators of international norms, as well as their subjects. The logical corollary of a system structured on the basis of state

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5 Some of these norms were incorporated into Cuban law when they were customary in nature, that is, before they were codified by the Convention on the Law of the Sea. Decree-Law No. 1 „Del Mar Territorial“, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 6, Ordinary Edition, February 26th 1977; Decree-Law No. 2 „De la Zona Económica Exclusiva“, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 6, Ordinary Edition, February 26th 1977; Decree-Law No. 158 „De la Zona Contigua“, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 14, Ordinary Edition, May 11th 1995; Decree-Law No. 212 „Gestión de la Zona Costera“, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 68, Ordinary Edition, August 14th 2000; Decree-Law No. 266 „Del Limite Exterior de la Zona Económica Exclusiva de la República de Cuba en el Golfo de México“, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 17, Extraordinary Edition, of May 18th 2009.

sovereignty is that any binding quality of international law depends on states' consent. Hence, for an international norm to emerge – whether conventional, customary or the binding act of an international organization – and for international rights and obligations upon states to be established, the initial consent of each state and common consensus with other states is necessary.

For reasons of legal coherence, if the state projects its will in the international sphere in order to formulate international norms, it should facilitate the technical mechanisms needed to integrate those norms into its domestic legal system.

At this point, two different legal questions present themselves: on the one hand, it is necessary to identify the procedures by which international norms are incorporated into domestic legal systems; and, on the other, what position the norms, once incorporated, occupy in the state system's structure of sources or, in other words, what strength the international norm has in the domestic legal system in the event of a regulatory conflict. In what follows we will address the first of these questions.

### 3 The theoretical dimension of the problem

Studies of the relations between international and national law have traditionally revolved around two opposing concepts: dualism and monism.

The dualist conception emerged from the theoretical premises of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century legal positivism, specifically the works of Trieppl (1899 & 1931) and Anzilotti (1956: 281). The conception is based on the presumption that a stark separation exists between international law and national law – that they are distinct, separate and autonomous legal orders. According to this school of thought, the two orders are distinguishable from each other by the subjects they address, the processes by which they formulate their norms and the bases on which they create them.<sup>6</sup>

Based on these assumptions, and as a result of them, in order for an international norm to be applied domestically it needs to be transposed into a domestic norm, and from that moment acquires the status of the national norm that transposes it. It follows that the treaty's binding force does not lie in the international norm, but in the law incorporating or transposing it. Hence, any clash between an international norm already transposed into domestic law and domestic law

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6 International law aims to regulate relations between sovereign states through rules created by them, of which they are the subjects, and the basis for which is their intention. National law regulates domestic relations, its subjects are individuals, it arises from the intention of a single state and its norms emerge from an "authoritarian" source, in so far as they are imposed norms.

itself must be resolved by applying the traditional rules of law, namely, that a subsequent contrary norm repeals the previous one.

The monist conception is based on the opposite presupposition. Both Kelsen (1926: 227) – from a normative position based on his “pure” theory of law – and Scelle (1932) from a sociological perspective, deny that any difference exists between international and national law. In this school of thought, the domestic and the international are merely two different manifestations of the law; and although one legal order is placed above the other, that is because the link between the two is largely the product of the relations of subordination between them. In terms of legal logic, equally admissible hypotheses can be made for the superiority of national law and the superiority of international law.

For Kelsen, the unity of the law could be attributed to the concept of the “basic norm” of the system, from which the validity of all the rules within it derive, with international law at the apex of the pyramid. Thus, in the event of any conflict arising, the domestic norm that clashes with an international norm must be regarded as null and void *ab initio*, since its validity is conditional upon the higher norm. Scelle reached the same conclusion through the idea of “delegation” from international law to national law.

Since these initial formulations, a doctrinal evolution has shifted the issue towards more moderate positions that advocate for the coordination of systems and not their strict separation. It should be noted that these theories emerged in the early twentieth century in a highly specific, markedly statist context in which there was also a struggle between those advocating for state sovereignty and those who gave a privileged place to individuals and, in turn, to international law. Today, states are not the only actors involved in creating and implementing international law. This has led normative sources to multiply, along with their aims and the tools and means for achieving them. In this context, efforts have been made to adapt old doctrines to new challenges; some are even committed to a more radical renewal (Nijman & Nollkaemper, 2007; Novakovic, 2013; Acosta Alvarado, 2016; Acosta López, 2017; Rivas Ramirez, 2019).

One of the leading exponents of moderate dualism, Arangio Ruíz, insists that dualism is useful (despite its flaws, which he considers can be overcome) for explaining the relationship between international law and domestic law and for accommodating several of the recent mutations on the international scene into the domestic. In this regard, he suggests that the need to focus on national norms in order to decipher relations between the two systems is the result of a dualistic premise and that, despite what is often claimed, dualism never denied the interaction between the two systems; what it denies is the possibility that international law could diminish the validity of national norms. According to Arangio Ruíz, dualism is useful for understanding both the current scenario of

interdependence and why we continue to refer to national norms when seeking to determine the scope of the relationship (Arangio Ruíz, 2007: 15).

Moderate monism or neo-monism recognises that while international law has its own structures and tools, in order to be implemented in the state system it needs the national order and its mechanisms. These, in turn, must respect the particular characteristics of the system and, therefore, the international nature of the norms and ensure their coherence (Cannizzaro, 2011: 35; Somek, 2010).

In reality, both approaches are very similar and, at any rate, both agree on the importance of national law in ensuring the effectiveness of international norms in domestic systems. That is why, from a legal-positive perspective, we will focus on the response of the Cuban legal system to the issue of the reception of international treaties.

#### 4 The reception of international treaties in the Cuban constitution of 2019

If the constitution is the basic norm upon which the state's internal legal order is built, logically the same must be true of its international activity. We must therefore look at the constitutional mandates in order to understand how state bodies are able to act at the international level, as well as the recognition of the commitments in national law.

Before addressing the reception of international treaties in the Cuban legal system, it is therefore worth mentioning the means by which the Cuban state's foreign intentions are formed.

##### A) The formation of the Cuban state's foreign intentions

In keeping with Cuban constitutional history article 108 (n) and (ñ) of the 2019 constitution establishes that the National Assembly of People's Power is the supreme body of state power, which represents all the people, expresses their sovereign will and has the authority to approve the general guidelines on foreign and domestic policy, as well as to approve peace treaties.

According to article 137 (d) it is for the Council of Ministers, the highest executive and administrative body, which constitutes the government of the republic (see article 133 of the 2019 constitution), to approve international treaties and submit them for ratification by the Council of State. In line with this, article 122 (ñ) establishes that it is for the Council of State, as a permanent body of the National Assembly, to ratify and denounce international treaties.

According to article 137 (d) of the mentioned constitution, "ratification" of a treaty by the Cuban Council of State is an act of national law that precedes the

international “ratification” of the agreement, the purpose of which is to authorise the executive to declare at international level that the state consents to be bound by the agreement.

As D’Estefano Pisani points out, ratification is a solemn, written act that must be distinguished as a domestic procedure (national ratification as approval of a treaty under the national law of the state concerned) or as an act of international relations (formal act by which a state confirms such a decision) (D’Estefano Pisani, 1977: 27).

Internal ratification of the treaty is the means by which the willingness of the state to be compelled by international provisions is established in national law. The interconnection between the two acts – internal ratification and international ratification – is therefore necessary for the validity and consequent enforceability of international agreements in Cuban national law.

However, the precepts of the constitution itself, specifically articles 12 and 16, present an initial obstacle to the Council of State’s authorisation for the Cuban state to be bound by a treaty.

Under article 12, treaties, concessions and pacts agreed under conditions of inequality or which disregard or diminish the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Cuba are considered illegal and void. According to Richards Martínez, the constitutional text insists that international agreements must meet the demands of national sovereignty and, consequently, the political, economic and social foundations of the Cuban state, as a prerequisite for being incorporated into the domestic system (Richards Martínez, 2012: 141).

Article 16 (a), meanwhile, stipulates that “economic, diplomatic and political relations with any other State may never be negotiated under the force of aggression, threat, or coercion” (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019: 8). In our view this provision is superfluous, because the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties of 1969 itself includes such circumstances among the grounds for invalidating an international treaty. Specifically, article 52 declares a treaty null and void “if its conclusion has been procured by the threat or use of force in violation of the principles of international law embodied in the Charter of the United Nations”. This constitutional formula makes no sense “per se” except, as Azcuy points out, on historical grounds – as an expression of the Cuban people’s rejection of the consequences of restrictions on their sovereignty and the imposition of arbitrary pacts by American imperialism (Azcuy, 2000: 67).

Once these barriers are overcome, it is clear from the above-mentioned constitutional provision that *all* treaties the Cuban state intends to sign must go through the pre-procedure of national ratification by the Council of State. However, Decree-Law No. 191/1999 on International Treaties contradicts that

mandate,<sup>7</sup> as it requires the intervention of the Council of State only for certain groups of treaties:

Article 14.- The following international treaties are subject to the constitutional procedure for approval by the Council of Ministers and ratification by the Council of State:

1. BILATERAL TREATIES:

- a) on mutual friendship, investment, cooperation or collaboration and support between states,
- b) on the delimitation and demarcation of the maritime borders of the Republic of Cuba with other states and those of air navigation rights,
- c) on geological prospecting and drilling,
- d) on visa waivers,
- e) any other signed on behalf of the Republic of Cuba or its government.

Excluded from the previously stipulated are external debt renegotiation agreements signed on behalf of the Republic of Cuba, which shall only require compliance with the administrative approval process regulated in article 22.

2. MULTILATERAL TREATIES:

- (a) treaties signed on behalf of the Republic of Cuba or its government,
- (b) treaties that have not been signed, but in which the Republic of Cuba or its government will participate,
- (c) the annexes and amendments to the above-mentioned treaties,

Article 15.- The Council of Ministers shall approve and shall not subject to ratification by the Council of State:

1. BILATERAL TREATIES

- (a) treaties with potential financial implications not contemplated in the state budget, namely:
  - treaties negotiated and signed by the state's central administrative agencies in the fields of their competence,
  - treaties negotiated and signed by the Central Bank of Cuba, within its area of competence.
  - Protocols that execute, complement or derive from treaties already in force.

2. MULTILATERAL TREATIES

- (a) Recommendations by international bodies that require government approval,

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<sup>7</sup> *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, No. 12, Ordinary Edition, March 12th 1999.

- (b) Annexes and amendments to international treaties not covered by article 14 (2)
- (c), that contain financial implications that have not been contemplated in the state budget.

Richards Martínez considers that as the wording of the constitution does not distinguish between agreements that merit approval or ratification and those that do not, all treaties approved by the Council of Ministers should be approved by the Council of State, granting the permanent representative body a degree of oversight over the executive (Richards Martínez , 2012: 141).

In our view, this is close to a maximalist position. In practice, given the enormous development of conventional international law, most constitutions employ a material criterion, according to which only certain treaties require prior parliamentary ratification. That no requirement exists for the Council of State as a permanent body of the National Assembly of People's Power to intervene in all treaties approved by the Council of Ministers is therefore not unusual. However, we consider it desirable that the distinction between treaties should be made clear in the text of the constitution itself, since this divergence adversely affects the internal coherence of Cuban law. In this sense, we believe that the constitutional reform that culminated in the 2019 constitution was a wasted opportunity to align constitutional provisions with implementing regulations.

Once the procedures established by Cuban domestic law have been complied with, Cuba can register its consent to be bound by the treaty at international level. And from that moment on, as the 1969 Vienna Convention sets out, the treaty will enter into force “in such manner and upon such date as it may provide or as the negotiating States may agree” (see VCLT: Art. 24). From that point on, the treaty becomes binding upon the parties and has legal effect on them, and must be fulfilled in good faith in accordance with the expressed intention.

Hence the importance of the mechanisms for the reception of treaties. In order to integrate international legislation into national law and ensure coherence between the state's external and internal action, domestic law should provide for such mechanisms. A constitutional mandate is required that establishes the procedure to be followed for their execution and implementation.

## B) The international treaty reception process in the Cuban legal order

Reception – defined in the Cuban legal environment as a complex, sovereign act of domestic law by which international norms are incorporated into the domestic legal order of the state, which has expressed its consent to be bound by them (Moré Caballero et al., 2003: 37) – is particularly valuable for understanding which theory or stance predominates in the practice of the state.

For an international norm to have domestic effect, national law may prescribe that an internal procedure must be carried out: for example, the official publication of the treaty or its conversion into a provision of national law. This may be described as a special reception system that is the expression of a moderate dualism in the first instance, and a pure dualism in the second. If, on the other hand, no procedure is required, meaning that upon its entry into force the international norm has direct effect at the domestic level, this is known as automatic reception, and fits with the tenets of monism.

Generally speaking, the procedure to be followed is found in the state's constitution. The 2019 Cuban constitution does not expressly establish a single, general mechanism for incorporating international treaties into the Cuban legal order, either through an automatic reception system or a special reception system, making it impossible to clearly determine its monistic or dualistic basis. Article 8 of the constitution merely provides that what "is prescribed in international treaties that are in force for the Republic of Cuba constitute or form part of national legislative regulations, as applicable" (Constitución de la República de Cuba, 2019: 6).

The two verbs at the heart of the sentence "constitute or form part" seem to create a degree of ambiguity. "[C]onstitute" favours a system of automatic reception of certain international treaties; while "form part" appears to allow for a special reception system, in other words, via the necessary adoption of a legal act of domestic law that incorporates the treaty into the Cuban legal system.

Article 8 does not offer greater precision: that is to say, it does not in any way establish which international instruments are incorporated automatically and which require a formal act of reception. Its lack of clarity in this respect is total.

The distinction between "self-executing" and "nonself-executing" treaties may help shed some light. In order for a treaty's clauses to be applied by a state's domestic authorities, those clauses must be self-executing. This means that they directly generate specific rights and obligations for individuals, without the need for any legislative or regulatory implementation measures. These are clauses that contain direct mandates which can be implemented immediately by state authorities. By contrast, if the clauses lack such regulatory precision – if they are not complete and detailed enough to contain obligations of general application – the clause is non-self-executing, and will require domestic legislation to be adopted. Of course, a single treaty may contain both self-executing and non-self-executing provisions, with the former applied directly, and the latter only after further development.

Human rights treaty provisions provide one example of self-execution, and are particularly suitable for automatic reception, as the trend in Ibero-American constitutions shows (Manili, 2002; Ortíz Ahlf, 2002). It is worth noting in

this regard that the inclusion in the American Convention on Human Rights of a provision (article 2) requiring the adoption of legislative or other measures to enforce the rights and freedoms protected in the convention does not affect the immediate enforceability of the obligations set out in the convention (Medina Quiroga, 2003: 21–25).<sup>8</sup>

In the field of human rights treaties, the absence from 2019 Cuban constitutional text of a formula similar to article 10.2 of the Spanish Constitution of 1978<sup>9</sup> – and which appeared as article 39 in the Preliminary Draft Constitution – prevents us from stating that such treaties can be applied automatically in Cuba without the need for a special reception procedure. Indeed, article 39 of the Preliminary Draft Constitution established that “The rights and duties recognized in this Constitution are to be interpreted in accordance with the international human rights treaties ratified by Cuba” (*Proyecto de Constitución*, 2018: 14).

As mentioned this formulation vanished from the final approved text. It would have had the potential not only to integrate or incorporate international

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8 Contrary to the thesis that article 2 of the American Convention on Human Rights indicates that its substantive provisions would not apply directly and that articles 1 to 32 would therefore be non-self-executing – in line with the first interpretations of that precept – the rich jurisprudence developed over more than 30 years by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) (which has direct effect in the system of sources of the domestic law of states parties to the convention that have accepted the contentious jurisdiction of the IACtHR) has been interpreted as meaning that article 2 does not affect the immediate enforceability of the obligations established in article 1 of the convention, which is a general provision whose content extends to all of its provisions. Cecilia Medina Quiroga, former president of the IACtHR, points out that when a state is party to a treaty it has an obligation to adapt its domestic legislation to the provisions of that international instrument and to comply with its provisions in their entirety. She therefore considers that article 2 was not really necessary, and should be regarded only as an application of the maxim *abundans cautela non nocet* (abundant caution does no harm). In this regard, Gros Espiell noted in Advisory Opinion 7/86 that “The obligation that results from Article 2 thus complements, but in no way substitutes or replaces, the general unconditional obligation imposed by Article 1” since “when Article 2 was proposed, it was explained that its only purpose was to emphasize and clarify that the requirement to comply with that obligation was immediate, direct and obligatory, and not to signify a change or ignore the special obligation that results from Article 1” [IACtHR. (1986): 13, para. 6]. The debate around this provision was explained at length by Medina Quiroga (1988) *The Battle of Human Rights. Gross, Systematic Violations and the Inter-American System*, Martinus Nijhoff, Dordrecht/Boston/London, 1988, Chapter V, p. 93.

9 Article 10.2 of the Spanish Constitution contains the following formula “The principles relating to the fundamental rights and liberties recognised by the Constitution shall be interpreted in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international treaties and agreements thereon ratified by Spain”, available at: [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1978-40001](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-1978-40001).

agreements ratified by Cuba on the rights of the person into Cuban domestic law, but also to help define their interpretation by the oversight bodies established by them (including potential future interpretations), thus providing a minimum standard of protection that Cuban domestic norms or international jurisprudence could strengthen (Mangas Martín, 1980: 150).

However, it should be noted that neither the 2019 constitution nor Cuban law contains any general prohibition on the direct applicability by Cuban internal bodies of any self-executing international norms to which Cuba has committed. To give but one example, article 20 of the Cuban Civil Code states that if an international agreement or treaty to which Cuba is a party establishes rules that differ from those expressed in the previously mentioned articles or are not covered by them, the rules of that agreement or treaty apply.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, article 4, paragraphs 1 and 5, and article 5 of the Penal Code, which relate to the jurisdiction of Cuban criminal law, contain exceptions favouring the application of the international treaties signed by the Cuban state.<sup>11</sup>

Such provisions undoubtedly establish the primacy of treaties over the law and confirm the applicability of international treaties in Cuba. What they do not tell us is whether that application is direct or not; that is, whether the treaty needed to be previously incorporated into the Cuban domestic legal system by an act of domestic law or not. The wording of these provisions – treaties to which Cuba is a party, or treaties signed by the Cuban state, without further conditioning factors – leads us to infer that these treaties are immediately applied in the state upon their international entry into force. However, in Cuban practice, the competent authorities do not recognise the need to apply the requirements of international treaties when they conflict with domestic norms. Moré Caballero writes that in administrative practice there is often no recognition of the need to resort to international regulations, with the result that they do not apply. This is a manifestation of an unconscious dualistic attitude (in some cases radical and un-

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10 Law No. 59, Código Civil, *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*, Extraordinary, No. 9, of July 16th 1987.

11 Cuban Penal Code. Article 4.1.: Cuban criminal law applies to any and all offences committed in the national territory or on board Cuban ships or aircrafts, wherever they may be located, with the exception of any dispensations established in treaties signed by the Republic [...]

5. Issues arising from offences committed in Cuban territory by diplomats or foreign citizens excluded from the jurisdiction of the courts of the Republic by international treaties shall be resolved by diplomatic means.

Article 5.2. Cuban criminal law is applicable to any and all Cubans committing an offence abroad who are delivered to Cuba to be judged by its courts, in compliance with the treaties signed by the Republic.

justified, because what prevails is ignorance) [...] similar circumstances surround Cuban judicial practice (Moré Caballero, 2007: 390).

All of this brings us back to the initial problem of treaty reception in the Cuban legal system. As the 2019 constitution is silent on the subject, we will attempt to find a legal foothold in the ordinary regulations on the boundary between international treaties and Cuban national law and investigate the possible existence of a reception mechanism, either through the adoption of an internal law that transposes it or through the publication of the treaty.

In this sense it may be useful to consider the abovementioned Decree-Law No. 191/1999 on International Treaties, especially articles 26 and 27, which to some extent relate to publication.

Article 26 establishes that:

Information on the ratification of bilateral international treaties by the Republic of Cuba and its participation in multilateral international treaties and their entry into force should be published in the *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*.

Article 27 stipulates that:

The President of the Council of State and of the government may order the publication of the treaty text in its entirety or only of information on ratification, acceptance or approval.

However, we do not believe that the legislature's intention to provide a treaty reception system can be inferred from reading these two provisions. On the one hand, this is because notifying that Cuba has ratified a treaty in the *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba* cannot be understood as a sufficient mechanism for understanding that the treaty has been incorporated into domestic law and will have legal effects in it. To achieve this, the text of the treaty would need to be published in full. This would mean publishing the text itself, as well as any annexed documents or supplementary agreements in which states develop or explain treaty-based rules and, where appropriate, any reservations or declarations Cuba made at the time of expressing its consent to be bound by the treaty, and any acceptances of or objections to such reservations.

What is more, the treaty's publication is optional – the President of the Council of State and government *may* order the full publication of the text of the treaty. There is no obligation, as the president may decide only to publish the information that Cuba has ratified the treaty.

For its part, paragraph 1 of article 52 of Resolution No. 206/2015, the Procedure for Bilateral and Multilateral Treaties, stipulates that once the date a treaty will enter into force has been decided the Directorate of International Law is obliged to immediately communicate it to the national authority responsible for its implementation and to send the announcement to the Secretariat of the Council of State for publication in the *Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba*.

Again, it is not the full text of the treaty that is published, but the *announcement*. The announcement's publication is mandatory and aims to make it known that the Cuban state has been internationally bound by a treaty. Through the publication of the announcement, the society at large is informed that the state has approved or ratified a particular international agreement, but that is not sufficient to introduce the agreement into domestic law.

Neither the Cuban constitution of 2019 nor the implementing regulations allow us to infer a legislative intention to consider publication a mechanism for the formal reception of international treaties Cuba signs that would make these treaties part of Cuban law and give them legal effect in the domestic sphere. Under no circumstances do these provisions determine the scope of international agreements in Cuban domestic law, nor do they declare that they may be implemented by national authorities. Publication is merely a mechanism of disclosure, which simply announces or reports on the ratification of a treaty by the state without any legal consequences.

It is therefore essential to refer to Cuban practice in order to determine the country's treaty reception procedure. According to Moré Caballero, the regular procedure followed on the island is a dualistic system that consists of incorporating treaties into Cuban domestic law through the promulgation of internal provisions. Even human rights treaties – which as mentioned above are particularly suitable for automatic reception – always benefit from an internal norm that reproduces the agreed protection regime (Moré Caballero, 2007: 382). Moré Caballero shows that the 39 conventions on human rights listed in a joint work by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba, the Ibero-American Institute of Human Rights and the National Union of Jurists of Cuba have been integrated through internal provisions that allow their subsequent application in the country.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, Cuban practice shows an inclination towards a system of special reception of international treaties that is clearly dualistic and transforms the international norm into an internal norm, which from that moment on acquires the status of the norm used for domestic transposition – law, decree-law, decree,

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12 Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba, Instituto Iberoamericano de Derechos Humanos y Unión Nacional de Juristas de Cuba (2001). *Instrumentos internacionales sobre derechos humanos ratificados por Cuba*, 1ª ed.

resolution. The treaty thus loses its direct legal force and becomes an indirect source (Matilla Correa, 2004: 145).

## Final considerations

The 2019 Cuban constitution contains no single procedure for receiving international treaties in the Cuban legal order. Neither are the implementing regulations clear in this regard. This being the case, we believe that the constitutional reform process provided an opportunity to bring internal coherence to the Cuban legal system in this area. This opportunity was missed.

A close reading of article 8 of the constitution may lead us to conclude that it includes a double system of reception: automatic, for certain types of treaties – although without specifying which; and special for other, also unidentified, types of treaties. As a single, general mechanism for incorporating international treaties into the Cuban legal system is not expressly established, it is not possible to clearly determine their monistic or dualistic lineage.

In this regard, we consider that it would be desirable for the process of international treaty reception in Cuban law to be clearly determined. Specifically, what kinds of treaty *constitute* and what kinds of treaty *form part* of Cuban law. While the opportunity has been missed to do include this in the constitution, it should be done in ordinary law. This would undoubtedly bring coherence to Cuban law in this area and legal certainty for the authorities and actors involved in the application of these rules.

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Yanina Welp

# Deliberation in the Constitutional Reform Process: Cuba in Comparative Context

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

According to official data, for a period of 12 weeks between August 1<sup>st</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> 2018, more than 7 million Cubans inside and outside the island discussed a constitutional proposal, the draft of which had been prepared by a commission appointed by the National Assembly of the Popular Power (ANPP) (ANPP, 2019; *Agencia Cubana de Noticias*, 2018). This is the official information, but alternative media and consultations with representatives of Cuban civil society confirm that the process effectively achieved mass participation, although they stress that the context was not one of free deliberation, but was tightly controlled from above (Domínguez et al., 2020). On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, five weeks after the end of this participatory process, the ANPP approved the final text, which was then eventually ratified in a referendum on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. With 90% participation, 87% voted in favour of the new constitution (ANPP, 2019).

Considering that the Cuban electoral roll is close to eight million, such participation is of a scale rarely seen in other parts of the world (in fact, no records exist of anything similar anywhere). This may reinforce the typical trend of considering Cuba an exceptional case. Regional comparisons seem to confirm this, as the constituent processes involving citizen participation that have been most studied and cited in recent decades, and which are part of the new “Latin American constitutionalism”, did not engage such numbers of participants. In Colombia (1991), Venezuela (1999), Ecuador (2007) and Bolivia (2006–2009) not even include a quarter of the population participated, let alone half.<sup>2</sup> In some cases, such as Ecuador in 2008, participation reached notable levels (see: Ortíz Lemos, 2013), but far short of that observed in Cuba. For some scholars, this is a true sign of the validity of old-fashioned democratic centralism, with the people exer-

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1 I would like to thank Bert Hoffmann and Laurence Whitehead for their comments on previous versions of this chapter.

2 See Welp (2018), Jiménez Martín (2006), Ortíz Lemos (2013), García-Guadilla & Hurtado (2000), Maingon et al. (2000), Tanaka & Vera (2010).

cising constituent power. For others, it shows that the government has never lost control and provides a new example of political manipulation.

This study aims to analyse the Cuban participatory constituent process by contrasting it with the experiences of other Latin American countries from 1976 until the present. In doing so, two dimensions will be analysed. The first is the mechanism of participation: who is allowed to participate, in what, for how long and with which information. The second is the method of processing the content generated during the deliberations: Is there a method for classifying or selecting amendments and suggestions? If so, it is known in advance? Who is in charge of implementing it? Is it published, so that changes may be identified and traced?

I assume that neglecting one of these two aspects – participation mechanism and content processing method – leads to erroneous or incomplete conclusions, underestimating mobilisation and/or overestimating its influence on the final text. For example, if the process of participation is open and plural but content is later on selected by a government-controlled commission, the results will not reflect “the will of the people”. If the process of amendment is transparent but only members close to the regime are allowed to participate, the result will also be biased. In the Cuban case: what was the process and how does it fit into the regional experiences of participatory constitution-making?

This paper proceeds as follows: the next section reviews the findings of previous research, showing the need to deepen the analysis of the mechanisms of deliberation and the procedures for including the content generated by participatory processes. Then the methodology and case selection are presented, followed by the empirical analysis. Finally, conclusions are drawn.

## 2 The role of “the people” in the constitutional agreement

The imaginary of modern constitutionalism is theoretically based on the founding role of the people expressed in a constitutional agreement (Negretto, 2018). This role for “the people” is claimed both in liberal democracies and the Soviet tradition of “democratic centralism” – the two strands that shaped the theoretical development of constitutionalism during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In liberal democracies, direct participation was perceived as an expression of authoritarianism, while indirect politics (that is, through representation) were considered more legitimate (Zaremborg and Welp, 2020).

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a dichotomy had emerged between authoritarian participation and democratic representation. In the 1970s it began to break down, and after the fall of the Berlin Wall citizen participation became more popular in the West. Since then, by diffusion or *zeitgeist* (spirit of the time), various mechanisms of citizen participation and control have spread throughout the

world, as it is considered that by complementing and enriching the relationship between participation and electoral representation they enact a form of democratic deepening. Thus, in recent decades, some blurring has occurred between these two traditions in terms of participatory processes, and participation formats with procedural similarities have been observed.<sup>3</sup>

Citizens' engagement in constitution-making has above all been promoted in contexts of conflict resolution, decolonisation and independence, with international organisations like the United Nations (UN), the United States Institute for Peace (USIP) and the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) encouraging citizen participation (see: Hart, 2003; Ghai, 2006; Gluck and Ballou, 2014). More recently, citizens' engagement in constitution-making has also been promoted in democratic contexts where deep crisis might lead to a considerable loss of legitimacy, such as Iceland in 2011. Ginsburg et al. (2009) point out that constitutions gain weight when they are developed in extraordinary contexts of popular mobilisation, which include extra-parliamentary processes of ratification and communication. Other studies have supported similar conclusions (Eisenstadt et al., 2017; Contiades and Fotiadou, 2016). However, the results of these processes in terms of increasing legitimacy and giving stability to the new regimes are not crystal clear. For instance, Parlett found evidence of constitutional systems in post-communist countries in Europe and Asia that have been established and endured without backing from popular mobilisations, while many of those approved in such conditions do not necessarily produce better constitutions in terms of limiting the concentration of power in the president (Parlett, 2012: 195–196). However, such a discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter; here, the focus is on the criteria to be fulfilled for a process to be considered fair, competitive and democratic.

After analysing constituent processes in post-conflict scenarios, Saati (2015) concluded that not enough evidence exists to show the positive effects of citizen participation. According to Saati, minimal, insignificant experiences have been overvalued due to their promotion by international organisations even when minimum guarantees of citizens' inclusion were not met.

In Latin America, the "new constitutionalism" has emphasised the participatory nature of the processes observed in the Andean region, especially in the analysis of Venezuela (1999), Ecuador (2007–2008), and Bolivia (2006–2009) (Viciano Pastor and Martínez Dalmau, 2011). However, participation has been overrated, with not enough attention paid to the intrinsic characteristics of these processes and in particular to their (lack of) autonomy from the ruling govern-

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3 Laurence Whitehead (2017) developed a clearer overview of "the 'fiction' of representation and the 'faction' of direct democracy".

ments, inclusiveness, and the transparency of the processing of their content. Other research has analysed the extent to which pluralism conditions the results of the constituent processes.<sup>4</sup> This pluralism is a central element of our proposal, which relates to the subjects that participate and to the supervision and coordination of the process.

Most studies have focused on case analysis, and it is our view that not enough attention is paid to the conditions that a constitutional change process with deliberative participation should meet. In order to contribute to understanding these processes, as well as to the discussion of standards in previous work (Welp & Soto, 2019), I propose two groups of conditions that are determinants of the type of process generated. The first is *the mechanism of deliberation* (access to information, time given for it, actors included and the openness of the agenda) and the method of processing the content generated: Does something like a method exist? Has it been disseminated beforehand? Is it traceable and does it allow the contents to be connected to the final discussion of the constitution – and, if so, how? These aspects are key to explaining whether or not an informed, open, plural deliberation occurs, but they are not enough.

The second dimension is *the method of processing content*: Does a method exist? Has it been previously defined? Does it allow results to be traced? And, is it controlled by the government? Even if participation is plural, it may not have a connection with the constituent process, unless a specific mechanism establishes one. The traceability condition does not presuppose automatic approval of citizen proposals, but it does presuppose their consideration (essential criteria for a process not to be merely symbolic). The public information given before, during and after the process is also key. Government control over the procedure will be addressed as part of the second dimension of analysis. Even a broad, inclusive and participatory process may be controlled by the government at the final stage if content is filtered with methods that lack transparency and legitimacy.

### 3 Methodology and case selection

The focus here is on collective deliberation and collective content produced for a new constitution. Thus, I will not address other types of consultation (participatory budgeting or other citizens' assemblies) or referenda (which are designed neither to produce content nor deliberation). The type of participation I am interested in may occur before (prior consultations) during (discussion of the draft), or both. Collective public participation is a necessary condition for inclusion in my sample. I selected experiences in which participation was regulated and/or

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4 See: Bejarano & Segura (2013), who focus particularly on Colombia.

promoted by the government or public institutions, excluding those in which it occurred in parallel, as an act of civil society. The time-frame focuses on what Elster (1995) identified as the sixth wave of constitution-making, which started in 1970 (1970–2019). Eleven cases in ten countries were selected, as listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Eleven cases of citizen deliberation for constitution-making**

Case	Year	Context	New constitution?	Final referendum?
Cuba	1976	Institutionalisation of the revolution	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	1986	Institutionalisation of the revolution	Yes	No
Guatemala	1994–1996	Pacification	No	Yes
Brazil	1988	Transition to democracy	Yes	No
Colombia	1991	Pacification	Yes	Yes
Venezuela	1999	Transformation of the political system	Yes	Yes
Ecuador	2007	Transformation of the political system	Yes	Yes
Dominican Rep.	2007	Institutional reform	Yes	No
Bolivia	2006–2009	Transformation of the political system	Yes	Yes
Chile	2015	Institutional reform	Not initiated (yet?)*	–
Cuba	2018	Institutional reform	Yes	Yes

Source: Compiled by author.

\* After a plebiscite on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 approved the replacement of the 1980 Constitution, the electoral process to select the constituent members is scheduled for April 2021.

I am interested in this chapter in the institutional design of the mechanism of deliberation and the procedure for processing the content generated, rather than the final constitution.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the design, practices are analysed (how they occurred and whether the outcomes were published) based on primary and se-

5 Accordingly, I will not discuss which changes are amendments and which lead to a new constitution. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the doctrine is not uniform in defining the limits of one and the other. A new constitution may result: (a) in a strictly procedural sense, from the total revision of the constitution according to the procedure established by it; and/or (b) from the breaking of the constitutional rules, which makes room for other specific discussions.

condary sources for each of the cases. The dimensions and indicators were defined as follows.<sup>6</sup>

Characteristics of the mechanism of deliberation:

- **Information and civic training stage:** Was the process accompanied by an educational and/or dissemination of information stage? Coded as *Planned* or *Improvised*. If it was, an assessment of its adequacy is made (*Sufficient/Insufficient*), and whether it was based solely on the government's vision (*Biased*).
- **Time:** Was there time enough to conduct a real discussion? Coded as *Improvised* (not fixed) or *Planned*. If *Planned*, was it *Sufficient* or *Insufficient*? This is a controversial criterion. The evaluation was based on reports from civil society organisations and scholars.
- **Actors convened:** According to the call, was the process aimed at a few actors (*Restricted*) or was it *Inclusive*? An observation is then made of how it worked, according to reports.
- **Agenda setting:** Was the agenda *Closed* and predefined or *Open*?

Characteristics of the procedure for processing the content generated:

- **Method:** Defined as the existence of criteria for preparing the systematisation of documents (*Yes/No*).
- **Observation** of whether the method was previously disseminated (*Yes/No*)
- **Traceability:** Once the content is published (even without an explicit method for the aggregation of preferences), is it possible to track its incorporation or at least its discussion? (*Yes/No*). This is not possible when citizens do not have access to documentation.
- **Influence:** Traceability identifies whether the content produced had influence or not. If no clear outcome (e.g. a written report) is produced, it is not possible to observe whether the constitutional discussion incorporated issues arising from the citizen deliberation. A number of methods exist that guarantee that the contents of the participatory process are discussed by the constituent body (e.g. citizens' proposals backed by a certain number of signatures; or compulsory discussion of suggestions), alternatively discussion may be optional and discretionary. Does the mechanism require the contents generated to be discussed in the Congress or constituent assembly? (*Yes/No*). It is *Mandatory* when it leads to discussion and *Optional* when the specific discussion is at the discretion of the constituents.

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<sup>6</sup> These dimensions are based on Welp and Soto (2019).

- Connection with the constituent process: Was there government control? There are many options here, including the “*smokescreen*” whereby, ultimately, a few actors of doubtful legitimacy decide what enters and what does not (e.g. the most recent Cuban process of 2018). Coded as *Independent* (not controlled by the government) or *Prejudiced* (under government control).

#### 4 Analysis: Meaningful citizen participation or smokescreens?

In this section, a brief presentation is made of each of the 11 cases before their processes of deliberation are classified and compared and conclusions are drawn. As an additional goal, I will observe the extent to which the processes conducted in democratic contexts are – as should be expected – clearly democratic by comparison with those in hybrid or authoritarian regimes. I suggest that when the basic conditions are not met, even in a democratic setting the participatory process may be merely a “smokescreen”.

##### *Cuba (1974–1976): Many can talk but few in the party decide*

In 1974, the Cuban government and the Communist Party appointed a Drafting Commission with 20 members. The experience was inspired by the elaboration of the Soviet constitution in 1936 and the Czech constitution in 1960, where the Communist Party had notable participation and the project was subject to popular discussion (Guzmán, 2015). It must be mentioned that in 1940 Cuba had approved one of the most progressive constitutions of the time. However, backed by the United States, the dictator Fulgencio Batista suspended the constitution and the rule of law (Rojas et al., 2017), creating the conditions for the revolution. From 1959 until 1974 the revolution did not create its constitutional foundations. In 1975 there was a public discussion in which 216,000 people proposed more than 12,000 modifications (Zaldívar Abad, 2016: 25–26). The draft was discussed by party members and followers, grassroots committees and governing bodies of the Union of Young Communists, the trade unions, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution and, among others, the Revolutionary Armed Forces. The participatory process would have resulted in the modification of 60 articles (Guanche, 2013) but the discussions were not made public and there is no information about the process of selecting and rewriting the draft. The First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba approved the text, which was finally ratified by popular referendum.

### *Nicaragua (1986–1987): The institutionalisation of the Sandinista regime*

In Nicaragua in July 1979, the Sandinista revolution put an end to the dictatorship of the Somoza family (1934–1979). After the electoral victory of Daniel Ortega in 1984, the constitutional process was launched. A special commission (unelected), composed of representatives of seven political parties, elaborated the constitutional proposal: 750,000 copies were published and between May and June 1986, councils were organised throughout the country. More than 70 councils were activated, in which contributions were received from all social groups. About 100,000 citizens participated, of whom 2,500 made suggestions in the councils, while 1,800 delivered them in writing. The Constitutional Commission was responsible for receiving the results of the open constitutional councils and the opinions and suggestions made by citizens. After the systematisation, several changes were recommended that were subsequently submitted for discussion and approval by the plenary of the legislative body (Asamblea Nacional, 1987).

### *Brazil (1988): “The Citizens’ Constitution”*

The case of Brazil is well known because the constitutional replacement was conducted within the transition to democracy in 1988. Different instruments were designed to channel citizens’ suggestions, proposals and criticisms, with clear prerequisites for their activation. For instance, 72,719 petitions by 122 civic associations were accepted and registered after gathering around 12 million signatures. Of these, 83 (a low number in proportion) met the formal prerequisites to be presented at Congress,<sup>7</sup> and became an antecedent of the popular initiative. There were also approximately 400 citizen meetings at the local level that generated around 2,400 suggestions. Finally, once the first draft of the constitutional text was presented, legally registered associations were entitled to make new suggestions if they had the support of 30,000 signatures (Rauschenbach, 2011). The final decisions were in the hands of the parliament, but the mechanism guaranteed that certain issues were raised and forced MPs to discuss them. The key point is not that the procedures allowed the decisions to be directed but that the rules for participation were clearly formulated and the discussion of proposals mandatory.

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<sup>7</sup> Brazil did not have a constitutional convention; the parliament was in charge of writing the constitution. After delivering the constitution, the parliament retained that role and completed the mandate.

### *Colombia (1991): Popular support for a new social contract*

In the late 1980s, violence and the discrediting of the political class dominated the Colombian public sphere. In 1988, President Virgilio Barco (1986–1990) tried unsuccessfully to promote a constitutional reform. In 1990, before the general elections, three candidates for the presidency were assassinated: Luis Carlos Galán of the Liberal Party, Bernardo Jaramillo of the Patriotic Union and Carlos Pizarro of the M-19 (linked to the guerrillas). A student-led movement known as “the seventh ballot” (*la séptima papeleta*) requested the convocation of a constituent assembly through an ad hoc referendum to be held on March 11th, alongside the parliamentary elections. Despite being informal, 2.2 million ballots were counted, following a court order (Jiménez Martín, 2006). As a result, the new president César Gaviria (1990–1994) took on the mandate of changing the constitution and called a new referendum. The participatory process took place prior to the launch of the convention. A total of 1,580 working groups were formed that operated throughout the country between September 16<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> 1990 (constituent elections would take place in December), leading to the presentation of more than 100,000 proposals. The proposals made by the working groups were recognised in a synthesis prepared by the same preparatory commissions and later discussed by the convention (Jiménez Martín, 2006; Welp, 2018).

### *Guatemala (1994–1996): A frustrated participatory process*

In 1994 an agreement between the government and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG) reopened the peace negotiations that aimed to put an end to the civil war. The United Nations and several countries acted as observers and mediators. A Civil Society Assembly (ASC) consisting of 84 delegates representing 47 organisations was launched and thematic commissions were created to formulate proposals on priority issues, which were then discussed in plenary sessions by delegates of all participating groups. The model allowed for plural and open participation. These documents were shared in other meetings with various political and social actors, including organisations representing women, businesspeople, indigenous people, peasants, the Church, human rights NGOs and displaced persons, which resulted in an agreement signed by the government and finally submitted (and rejected) in a referendum in which only 17% of citizens participated (Delgado & Brett, 2005; Álvarez, 2004).

### *Venezuela (1999): Mobilisation as a strategy to overcome institutional obstacles*

The victory of Hugo Chávez in the 1998 elections opened the door to the long-postponed constitutional replacement (Maingon et al., 2000). However, it was not easy to promote, since the constitution in force at the time did not allow the convocation of a constituent assembly (CA) and the president did not have the parliamentary majority to promote a constitutional amendment reform prior to replacement. The government opted for an advisory referendum to authorise the convening of a constituent assembly. The process was extremely controversial (for details, see Massüger & Welp, 2013) but it was finally accepted. Despite often being cited for its participatory nature, there were no formal procedures to channel or process the information generated by the grassroots participants. The first three months of the constituent assembly were characterised by a participatory debate, while the second discussion of the constitutional project took place over just a few days. The most participatory stage was that involving assembly members during the election campaign, while the ruling party's representatives in the CA discouraged debates and prevailed through strength of numbers (García-Guadilla & Hurtado, 2000).

### *Bolivia (2006–2009): A participatory process without influence on the draft*

The Movement to Socialism (MAS) led by Evo Morales triumphed in the 2005 elections and initiated constitutional change. In Bolivia, unlike Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador, there was no controversy over the legality of calling a constituent assembly, since it was regulated in the existing constitution (2004 reform, art. 232). However, there was a confrontation around the powers granted to the constituent body. The constituent assembly was criticised for a lack of debate and racism that materialised in disqualifications based on clothing and habits and in the refusal to allow members of the population identified as indigenous to enter restaurants and hotels near the convention. The territorial meetings, which saw the 255 assembly members travel across the country to listen and present proposals, contributed to counteracting the absence of debate in the assembly. However, they had little impact on the preparation of the final text (Lazarte, 2008; de la Fuente Jeria, 2010). While social movements were fairly active, their influence was shaped by informal exchanges with representatives rather than being channelled through an open process of participation

### *Ecuador (2007–2008): Massive participation, presidential control over the process*

Like Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, in Ecuador Rafael Correa (standing for the PAIS Alliance, the new party he created for the election) had campaigned on the promise of convening a constituent assembly, and once he entered government in 2007 he activated a referendum to unlock the process. This was necessary because the constitution did not permit its own reform by a constitutional assembly and the new president had no representation in parliament. Also similar to the case of Venezuela, Correa's arrival in government occurred within a period of huge social and institutional crisis.<sup>8</sup> The election of assembly members for the constitutional convention gave Correa and his allies a considerable victory (80 of the 130 seats). A Social Participation Unit was created and three people were given the mandate to organise and systematise all the proposals and comments received. The number of participants and suggestions overwhelmed the process: some 170,000 visits were registered. Workshops and discussion groups with experts were also organised (see: Ortíz Lemos, 2013; Centro Carter, 2008). The lack of resources and methods, on the one hand, and the tight control of President Correa on the other, meant there was limited pluralism within the assembly (for details, see: Welp, 2018).

### *Dominican Republic (2007): Experts and authorities consulting “the people”*

In the Dominican Republic, the initiative emerged from an initiative promoted by President Lionel Fernández in October 2006 to form a commission to take charge of preparing the draft reform of the constitution prior to a participatory process. The process in question was entrusted to a commission of 13 jurists (decree No. 323/2006), which prepared a document with 77 questions and designed a methodology of popular consultation accompanied by open councils. The implementation was carried out by a team of facilitators who had to articulate a participatory process at the municipal level and systematise the results generated. The conclusions were presented at a national meeting (February 2007), based on a report of recommendations (April 2007) that were weighted by an elected Review Assembly (2009) that finally approved the final constitutional text (DI-

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8 Eight different presidents led the executive between 1996 and 2006, which were interrupted by three institutional breakdowns provoked by popular protests. These included a particularly harsh economic crisis in the early 2000s and inter-institutional clashes that led to the Supreme Court's failure to function for almost a year in 2005.

APE, 2007). This means that there was a methodology and clear rules, despite the process being oriented towards consultation rather than towards promoting deliberation.

### *Chile (2015): (Still) frustrated citizen's dialogue*

In Chile, the instance of participation arose as a commitment by President Michelle Bachelet (2014–2018). In this case, rather than the draft, the participation concerned three topics of constitutional discussion: values and principles; rights, duties and responsibilities; and state institutions. The consultation process included two modalities: a digital form that was answered individually and in-person collective deliberation. The collective debate stage, in turn, was implemented in three phases: local, provincial and regional. The first, called local self-convened meetings (ELA), registered the highest participation, with 106,412 participants; followed by the individual consultation with 90,804 responses. In the provincial and regional councils, 12,852 and 8,621 people participated, respectively. In total, more than 200,000 people participated. The process was accompanied by a Council of Observers and another of systematisers, who presented their respective reports in January 2017. In March 2018, as she left government, President Bachelet sent a new constitution project to Congress based on the results of the participatory process (although it attracted some criticism). This project was not discussed in the parliament (Soto & Welp, 2017). In 2021, the elaboration of a new constitution was again on the agenda, after being approved in a plebiscite on October 25<sup>th</sup> 2020, but it is unclear if the results will be connected with the drafting and/or if a new participatory process will be conducted. The 2017 experience had the most advanced and transparent methodology applied in the region until now, and all the data generated is available.

### *Cuba (2018–2019): Massive and controlled*

In 2018 Cuba conducted a new process of deliberation. According to official data, more than 7 million Cubans (64% of the population) discussed a constitutional proposal prepared by a commission appointed by the National Assembly; the discussion was held over 12 weeks in neighbourhoods and towns. While this suggests mass participation, in fact the opposition was prohibited and persecuted. From the 133,681 meetings, about 10,000 proposals were generated. The National Processing Team analysed the interventions as they were received, without predefined criteria. The documentation generated was then passed to the Analysis Group, which was composed of eight members of the Editorial Committee

and 22 experts from various branches of law (handpicked). They drafted the text that was approved by the National Assembly and it was ratified in a referendum on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. Unlike the 1975 process, all of this documentation has been made available. For these reasons, the process had influence, although it was controlled.

## 5 Discussion

The 11 cases analysed share certain elements and differ on others. The mechanisms of participation show that, with the exception of Cuba, the processes were open and plural. Only in Cuba was there political persecution and restrictions placed on what could be discussed, despite notable differences between 1976 and 2018 (when the discussions were much larger and more open). However, despite the emphasis on the participatory nature of the new regimes in Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, there was no real planning of a civic stage and/or of the citizen deliberation. Chile stands out as the best-organised process but, interestingly, it did not end in constitutional replacement and is therefore not a model for our second dimension, where we address the mechanisms for systematising the content generated and connecting it to the convention.

**Table 2: Characteristics of the mechanism of participation (11 cases)**

Case	Information/Civic education stage	Time for deliberation	Participants	Agenda
Cuba 1976	Planned / Biased	Planned / Sufficient	Restricted	Partial
Nicaragua 1986	Planned / Adequate	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Guatemala 1994–1996	Planned / Adequate	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Brazil 1988	No	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Colombia 1991	No	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Venezuela 1999	No	Improvised	Inclusive	Plural
Ecuador 2007	No	Planned / Insufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Dominican Rep. 2007	Planned/Adequate	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Bolivia 2006–2009	No	Improvised	Inclusive	Plural
Chile 2017	Planned / Adequate	Planned / Sufficient	Inclusive	Plural
Cuba 2018	Planned / Biased	Planned / Sufficient	Restricted	Partial

Source: Compiled by author from primary and secondary sources for each case.

In contrast to the openness, planning and pluralism that characterised most of the countries in the first dimension, the procedure for systematising the contents generated was only clearly fixed in three cases (Brazil, Dominican Republic and Chile), and only Brazil really worked in terms of connecting the citizens' demands to the constitution-making process. In Cuba in 1976 and 2018, the final decision was in the hand of the government. The same applies to Venezuela, Ecuador, and Bolivia, but in these cases, there is no report summarising citizens' proposals and, accordingly, no evidence to suggest a connection between citizens' requests and final decisions.

**Table 3: Characteristics of the procedure for systematising the content generated (11 cases)**

Case	Method	Previously informed	Traceability (published)	Influence	Connection to constituent body
Cuba 1976	No	–	No	No	Prejudiced
Nicaragua 1986	No	–	Yes	Yes, optional	Independent
Guatemala 1994–1996	No	–	Yes	Yes, optional	Independent
Brazil 1988	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, optional and mandatory	Independent
Colombia 1991	No	–	Yes	Yes, optional	Independent
Venezuela 1999	No	–	No	No	N/A
Ecuador 2007	No	–	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dominican Rep. 2007	No	–	Yes	Yes, optional	Independent
Bolivia 2006–2009	No	–	No	No	N/A
Chile 2017	Yes	No	Yes	(No)	N/A
Cuba 2018	No	–	Yes	Yes	Prejudiced

Source: Compiled by author from primary and secondary sources for each case.

## 6 Conclusions

Citizen participation in the definition of public affairs is a founding myth, an articulating principle and a fashionable remedy for disenchantment with the political status quo. This is no less true of the process of constitutional reform. Cuba fits within this framework, but with specific characteristics. The first and most relevant for our purpose is that it is not a democratic system. The second is that more recent patterns of participation bring little that is new to the current discus-

sion because they tend to reproduce patterns of functioning typical of authoritarian regimes with state control. A third novelty is that while control from above was tight, more information is available than on previous occasions with which to monitor the mechanism activated to create the illusion of participation: the participation was real but lacked legitimate influence on the final constitution. This is the result of the use of new communication technologies, which enabled a greater systematisation and publication of results.

Some issues sparked much debate and others less, and there have been notable and late changes, such as the recognition of the legal supremacy of the constitution and the possibility of enshrining rights in law. As mentioned above, communism as a principle remains in the constitution, the direct election of the president has not been included, and neither have steps been taken to recognise political pluralism (the text preserves the “leadership” of the Communist Party). The constitution recognises various forms of ownership, including private, mixed and cooperative, with the state given the role of market regulator. One of the issues that has generated most controversy is same-sex marriage. The 1976 constitution recognised marriage between a man and a woman. The first draft of the new constitution released by the commission has sought a neutral formula by speaking of “spouses”, which does not close the door to same-sex marriage but does not completely open it either. As with many other rights that remain unresolved, it is announced that the laws will give it shape: in this case, a Family Code that would be voted on in a future referendum. Many doubt that this referendum will take place because the party is not aligned around a position and does not tend to open doors to internal divisions, much less let the citizens decide without tutelage.<sup>9</sup>

My research confirms that deliberative processes implemented in non-democratic contexts tend not to meet the minimum requirements to be considered open and plural, but it also shows that deficiencies also exist in the processes implemented in democratic contexts (Ecuador is a notable example). The conclusions suggest that it is essential to define standards for fair deliberative processes and invite readers to discuss the most appropriate mechanisms for this (two possible examples are sorted assemblies combined with referendums and/or deliberation processes that allow initiatives to be generated when backed by signatures). At the level of policy design, these findings invite promoters of deliberative participation, in general, to take into account the minimum criteria that a process of these characteristics requires to prevent them from continuing to feed the spiral of disenchantment. The main theoretical implication invites us to

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9 Detailed information was provided by *El Toque* (2019), using the official documents registering the deliberative process.

consider that a participatory initiative must comply with minimum parameters that make it possible to distinguish between a mere symbolic or instrumentalised exercise and a fair, competitive and democratic procedure. In relation to Cuba, it shows once again that mass participation does not mean democratic, fair, plural and autonomous citizen participation.

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# Stable Change in Cuba after the Constitutional Referendum

“Se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come, bisogna che tutto cambi.”  
Tomasi di Lampedusa

## 1 Introduction

On February 19<sup>th</sup> 2008, *Granma* published the letter in which Fidel Castro announced that he would “neither aspire to nor accept the positions of President of the State Council and Commander in Chief” (Castro, 2008). Ever since, speculation has been unceasing about the change of leadership and the rise of a new elite to political, military and economic power, with age alone meaning the new leaders would not be representatives of the so-called “historic generation” (Escobar, 2019). But in reality, the change began not in 2008 but on July 31<sup>st</sup> 2006, when Fidel Castro stood down for health reasons and his brother Raúl, the first vice president, provisionally became president of the Council of State. Raúl Castro was also minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), and it is important to note that as well as controlling the military apparatus, the role is a central pillar of Cuba’s economic and political power structure. No further change occurred in Cuba’s senior leadership until April 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, when Miguel Díaz-Canel assumed the presidency of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, meaning the two Castro brothers were no longer part of the executive. The generational replacement and symbolic handover from the elite that had ruled the country since the victory of the 1959 revolution was thus complete. The desire for renewal extended to a legal limitation introduced on the election of over-60s to certain roles.

In addition to these changes, institutional renewal occurred in the form of the new constitution (CC) approved on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2019. The new constitution nevertheless retains the main institutional features of the 1976 version: roughly summarised, Cuba would remain a republic with a socialist economic model and single-party government by the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). But beyond the macro-institutional continuity, modifications were made to the government structure: layers of subnational power were created to increase the forums for

participation, and posts that combined several roles and thereby concentrated executive power were separated out. What consequences these changes have had for the island's governance and, above all, if and how the reform will affect the nature of the political regime are questions that need to be asked.

Almost 15 years since the beginning of a cycle that was meant to involve processes to liberalise the political and economic system, little progress seems to have been made, as certain actors and analysts predicted (Hoffmann, 2019). To explain why, this chapter discusses the endogenous factors that helped maintain the internal cohesion of the core group that controls the island until just before the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. In the uncertain international scenario the pandemic has provoked, it seems possible that the group's unity and correlation of forces will be altered, although any forecasts in this regard must necessarily be cautious, given the resilience Cuba has previously shown to external shocks like the US blockade and the fall of the eastern bloc. Thus far, it seems safe to say that major political and/or economic transformations have yet to transpire, despite changes in institutions, leaders and the ruling elite. Cuba seems different, in this sense, from cases in which transitioning from rulers who have held power for decades often brings crisis to the regime. For the time being, the country's shift to what Hoffmann (2016) calls bureaucratic socialism has been notable for its continuity and stability.

The thesis this chapter addresses is that this stability is due to the ruling coalition or power group remaining intact. To verify this assertion, the institutional change brought by the new constitution will be reviewed, particularly the changes to the form of executive power and existing power structures and actors. The analysis will focus on the potential implications of this as a mechanism for separating powers, and how it was prevented from occurring. Then, certain aspects of the Cuban political system that have served to hold the ruling coalition together will be examined. Analysing a number of formal and informal institutions that are well-consolidated in the Cuban political system helps us explain how, despite the mentioned changes, the preservation of the status quo has been guaranteed. This is evident in at least three areas: 1) the control exercised by the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) during, before and after the turnover process; (2) the centrality of the PCC as a space of power and coordination; and, above all, 3) the formation of a political-technocratic elite ("*cuadros*", cadres in local jargon) that does not question the essence of the regime, and accepts and defends the revolution as the basis of its legitimacy. The final section will seek to explain the transformations in Cuba's centres of power, based on the composition of the Council of Ministers, the Council of State and the PCC. It will be shown that no substantial changes have occurred in the structure of the ruling coalition, but that the group formed throughout the process has gradually been taking up positions in

it, filling the government and bureaucratic apparatus and, as a result, controlling the island. Continuity of the political and economic model is therefore likely, with any changes being very gradual.

Finally, it should be noted that this chapter will address neither the actions nor the influence of the groups that oppose the regime and aim to force political or economic change on the island. Unlike works that seek possible areas for reform, this analysis focusses on showing the ruling elite's cohesion and mechanisms for controlling dissent in its role as the ruling coalition in the processes of stability and political change.

## 2 Stability, change and the ruling coalition

The academic literature on political regime change grew substantially in the early 1980s, seeking to explain how authoritarian regimes became third-wave democracies (Linz & Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1994). One of the key questions was why some authoritarian regimes became democracies while others did not. According to elite theory (Szmolka, 2016) the change can be explained by the modifications to the ruling coalition, that is, the group of actors who control the resources of power, as Linz (1964, 1978) showed when interpreting the Franco dictatorship in Spain. Since his seminal work on political regime change, Morlino (1985) has underlined the role actors play in the consolidation or weakness of political structures. He argues that a coalition of political actors becomes dominant when it has the opportunity to impose its preferred solutions through the possession or conscious use of the majority of resources, which may be elective, non-elective and influential, or coercive. Broadly speaking, these coalitions are the politically active social groups that uphold the regime in its phase of establishment and in successive periods. More precisely, these elites are the direct or indirect expression of the regime's social base and participate in governance by holding leadership positions in its key structures. In an authoritarian regime, agreement also exists (*de facto* and explicit) about the ways political conflicts are resolved. The ruling coalition will almost always benefit, while all other actors are excluded and marginalised through a combination of police repression and the adoption by the regime's elites of the ideological apparatus for their own legitimation (Morlino, 2004).

Applying this theory to the study of the transition to democracy, authors such as Maravall and Santamaría (1988) explain that the stability or instability of an authoritarian regime depends on the existence or otherwise of a cohesive coalition of actors to support it. A fracture in that coalition is thus a fundamental factor in provoking the crisis that gives way to the transition. This interpretation fits with Rustow's (1970) three-phase regime change model, where the process

begins in a “preparatory phase” in which a struggle takes place between those in power and their opponents or diverse forces promoting change. Once the ruling coalition is divided, those seeking change take power.

While these models were designed to explain political change, they may also be used to explain a lack of change and the reason a regime persists. That is what is proposed here for the case of Cuba, where instead of cracks in the ruling coalition, we find a cohesion and strength that allows it to control the process. To define the specific characteristics and workings of the ruling coalition at least four elements must be considered: 1) the role of the leader who interacts with the different parts of the coalition, arbitrating between the various interests, privileging or subordinating one in relation to another, either consciously or out of ideological choice; they also perform the fundamental task of connecting interests via a range of strategies, whether personal loyalty relationships, promises, forms of coercion, or others; (2) the control of the coercive, influence or status resources actors use to pursue their own objectives; (3) the development of the ideology that justifies the regime; 4) the control of the political structures created and institutionalised by the regime (Morlino, 2004).

To be sure, this proposed explanation focusses on the role of elites as a variable that is independent of the processes of change. But the role of structures and institutions and the economic, social or political environment is not underestimated, and neither are the specificities of the regime that emerged from the Cuban Revolution, with its permanent resilience and adaptation within the island via, for example, processes that include the participation of grassroots organisations in decision-making. The choice of approach is due to the desire to understand how the groups that control power operate, and how they have managed to preserve stability despite the period of change in the leadership, increased US pressure and the economic crisis.

### 3 New constitution, new form of government

Of the changes introduced by the constitution approved in 2019 (Chofre, 2019; Noguera Fernández, 2019), this chapter is interested in those relating to the division of the leadership of the executive branch. When the figure of prime minister was abolished in 1976, executive power was concentrated in the president of the Council of Ministers, a position that Fidel Castro effectively held until 2006. The figure of the prime minister as distinct from the presidency of the republic was then restored. The president is the head of state, is elected by an absolute majority of members of the National Assembly of People’s Power (ANPP) and serves at most two five-year terms, if re-elected. Meanwhile, upon the recommendation of the president of the republic, the prime minister is appointed by the ANPP as pres-

ident of the Council of Ministers, and serves as a kind of head of government. The restitution of the figure of the prime minister may be understood as a way to create a shared power structure that decentralises executive decisions, even though the president of the republic possesses a number of supervisory mechanisms. In this spirit of further separating roles, the president, vice president and secretary hold the same positions in the Council of State. This contrasts with the pre-reform era when the key political figure was the president of the Councils of State and Ministers, as the posts were held by Fidel Castro (1976–2008) and Raúl Castro (2008–2018), as well as being linked to the position of first secretary of the ruling (and only) party, the PCC.

The Council of State (arts. 120–124 of the CC) is an institution that is particular to the Cuban system of government; a kind of standing committee that operates in the periods when the ANPP is not normally sitting. Chaired by the president and vice president of the National Assembly and formed of members elected by the ANPP, the council has legislative and supervisory capacities, the most striking being that of suspending presidential decrees, agreements and other provisions that conflict with the constitution and the law. It informs the ANPP of any suspension at the first session after it is agreed (art. 122. h. of the CC). Reading the reforms in terms of the division of power, it should be noted that members of the Council of Ministers cannot join the Council of State or occupy the highest positions in the state's judicial, electoral and supervisory bodies.

In liberal democracies the form of government is the institutional structure by which power is separated in order to create control mechanisms that prevent its accumulation. Since the time of classical liberal theory on the separation of powers such as Locke and Montesquieu, there has been an understanding that its purpose is to share power between more political actors. The form of government, in a minimal instrumental definition, is the way it is organised into a political system and, in particular, the way its leader is chosen (Sartori, 1997). In presidential systems, the principle of the separation of powers becomes effective by unlinking the origin and survival of the executive and legislative. In a parliamentary system, on the other hand, it is the legislative branch, elected through direct, plural votes that appoints and, if necessary, dismisses the head of government (Mainwaring & Shugart, 1994; Sartori, 1997; Shugart & Carey, 1992).

Cuba's government structure closely resembles that of a parliamentary system, because, according to articles 104 and 105 of the constitution, the ANPP (legislative power) is formed of "representatives elected through a free, equal, direct, and secret vote of the electors" in a proportional system for a five-year term. This assembly is responsible for electing the president and vice president of the republic and, upon the president's recommendation, appointing the prime

minister and assigning the members of the Council of Ministers to government portfolios (art. 109 of the CC).

Cuba's executive, however, is similar to that of a semi-presidential system, as the president of the republic, as well as being head of state, takes on and shares certain powers with the prime minister – the *de facto* head of government. Moreover, the appointment and dismissal of the prime minister by the legislative assembly are subject to the recommendation of the head of state. This manner of vote of confidence by the ANPP also applies to the Council of Ministers, which is appointed by the legislature but upon the recommendation of the head of state, not the prime minister (arts. 128, 140, 141, 142 and 143 of the CC).

It is therefore a structure in which executive power is divided. *A priori*, this could produce incentives to redistribute duties among the leadership and, at the same time, mutual oversight between the different bodies, as is appropriate in liberal democratic government. But it should be noted that, while certain institutional safeguards exist, such as the ANPP's powers over the president and the president's power the Council of Ministers, the PCC remains a structure of cohesion of the ruling coalition, as its members are the only ones who can nominate candidates.

To understand the singularity of Cuba's system of government, it must be recalled that article 5 of the CC retains the PCC as the central pillar of the political and representative systems. Therefore, even though the rules provide for free, equal, direct and secret elections, they are not plural because of the supremacy of a single party and because the National Candidature Commissions consult with representatives from all over the country about who should appear on the corresponding draft nominations to be submitted to parliament. In accordance with article 76 of the Electoral Law, the Candidature Commissions are formed of representatives appointed by the leaderships of national, provincial or municipal authorities (depending on the type of candidacy) of political and grassroots organisations – the Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC), the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), the Federation of University Students (FEU) and the Federation of Secondary School Students (FEEM) – and are chaired by a representative of the CTC. This is clearly a fairly effective mechanism for managing the admission and allegiance to organisations, because the candidate's continuity and political life depends directly on the leadership's approval.

So while the electoral model allows Cubans to vote for their representatives at the neighbourhood, municipal and provincial level, no mechanisms exist for directly electing the senior leadership, who are voted for in substantial majorities by the rest of the ANPP. As such, the members of the ruling coalition select the country's most senior officials, while preventing people entering into the highest

spheres of power who are not fully committed to the system's continuity. However, in a hypothetical scenario of pluralistic elections with a multiparty system, the CC's institutional design could easily result in a liberal democracy that resembles parliamentarianism.

## 4 The ruling coalition and continuity mechanisms

This section will analyse several formal and informal institutions that have served to bring continuity to the Cuban political and economic model, creating incentives and conditions that unite the political actors in the ruling coalition. The description is intended neither to be exhaustive nor to comprehensively address processes that deserve their own research. It will merely indicate which elements influence the formation and cohesion of the coalition that governs Cuba and sustains the current government structure.

### *4.1 Leadership continuity since 1959*

The long leadership of Fidel Castro was one element that helped uphold Cuba's power structure. More recently, Raúl Castro – unquestioned among the “revolutionaries” – has been instrumental in guiding and mediating the handover of command to the new leadership, as well as supervising its enactment. The two brothers' leadership has been characterised by the concentration of power in a single person at the head of the highest executive and legislative bodies: the Council of State, Council of Ministers, and the PCC – the gateway to political power in Cuba. This structural framework made it very difficult for any other actor to gain power by controlling part of the state or party without the support of Fidel Castro or challenging his hegemony.

Castro's charisma has been amply studied (Hoffmann, 2009), but he also showed himself to be able to perform the tasks Morlino (2004) attributes to the leaders of ruling coalitions – arbitrators or distributors of incentives and resources and, above all, creators of strong bonds of symbolic ideology-based affinity. It should be added that, unlike other examples of strong personality-based leadership, he shrewdly forged institutional management structures that possessed degrees of autonomy but ultimately responded unquestioningly to his authority.

Fidel Castro's young age when he reached power partly explains the lack of changes. The symbolic legitimacy of achieving that power through armed means also prevented divisions from emerging within the ruling group borne of desires to seize control of it. Additionally, unlike processes where succession occurs due to the leader's death, Castro had the opportunity to lead and shepherd the process of change. This is an important aspect to consider, as succession in social-

ist regimes has elsewhere fractured ruling coalitions, producing struggles and clashes within communist parties when the time comes to choose who will take on the state's highest powers. As the last survivor of the Soviet bloc, Fidel Castro was able to take note and learn from other experiences and anticipate certain problems.<sup>1</sup>

#### *4.2 The cohesion of the Communist Party of Cuba*

Closely associated with the above is the PCC's role as a centre of power and meeting place for the various leadership groups, as well as of representatives of the framework of political (state and administration), social (grassroots organisations) and military control. It thus serves as a field for coordinating interests and, where necessary, ironing out differences. The PCC is structured around the Central Committee and Politburo: while various groups may participate, all are subordinate to the first secretary, a position held only by the Castro brothers. It is worth recalling that communist parties adopt a Leninist model; in other words, a centralised system of managing and concentrating power resources (Gaido & Jozami, 2017). The entry and departure of people from the committee or the Politburo have also served as means of exerting discipline (this will be discussed later) and control.

The current PCC is defined by the constitution as “unique, Martiano, Fidelista, and Marxist-Leninist” and the “superior driving force of the society and the State” (Constitute Project, 2019: 4). The party was formed in 1962 out of three groups that were represented in the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations thanks to Castro's leadership and the purging of its members for the “errors of sectarianism” – the accusation made of those who showed resistance to the impending process of power concentration. Since that time, the PCC has faced no public episodes of internal division that have threatened Castro's leadership or party unity. The ruling coalition has therefore remained united and, lacking spaces for dissent, no alternative powers have developed. Multipartyism was defined as a counter-revolutionary dogma at the Fourth PCC Congress in 1991.

The PCC produces ideological and programmatic discourses to bring cohesion and legitimacy to the ruling coalition. To achieve this, it uses mechanisms like the resolutions it adopts at its congresses, which cover a wide range of politi-

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1 A classic historical example is Lenin's long succession in the USSR due to his illness. As guiding the process proved impossible, and his chosen successor, Trotsky, failed to take control of the party ahead of Stalin, Lev Kamenev and Grigory Zinoviev, when Lenin finally died in 1924, Stalin already controlled the Communist Party and was ratified by congress as secretary-general, from where he led a purge of the political apparatus.

cal, social and economic issues and become guidelines for the public administration and social organisations (Leogrande, 1980).

José Luis Toledo, chairman of the ANPP's Constitutional Affairs Commission clearly defined the PCC's power and centrality in the current Cuban process. The party is a force that is above the state, he said, and is its leader and superior; thus the constitution cannot set the party's guidelines. Toledo's statements show an understanding of the party as an entity to which all the people do not belong, and which does represent them, but which ranks as the highest power in society, since the constitution places it above the system's elected institutions (*BBC News Mundo*, 2019).

Studies have established that in communist countries, party membership is a mechanism for accessing resources, power, status and job opportunities (Romanò & Echevarría León, 2015). But this is not an option that is available to all Cubans, as there are only two ways to secure PCC membership: being chosen as a "vanguard worker" or distinguishing oneself in the Union of Young Communists (UJC). Candidates are assessed based on their private life, family history, activism in institutional associations and participation in their neighbourhood, conduct at work, education and political background. Joining one of Cuba's central power structures is a process that can take up to two years and many filters must be passed that ensure access is granted only to people who are loyal to the operational principles of the political system.

### 4.3 *The Revolutionary Armed Forces*

As well as its epic resistance of US-sponsored operations and participation in military campaigns abroad, the FAR has gained symbolic value and legitimacy as the successor to the Rebel Army that overthrew the Batista dictatorship, and for having achieved high levels of citizen security compared to other countries in the region. Along with the PCC, the FAR is the structure that has supported the Cuban regime over time and from where the transition process to the post-Castro period is being directed. Both organisations have overcome the conflicts they initially faced (Leogrande, 1978) and defined their spaces of power and hierarchies.

The FAR is one of the last remaining strongholds of power directly controlled by one of the Castro brothers, with Raúl retaining the rank of commander. From there he has supervised the transition process and the armed forces' significant economic and political resources, distributing power and penalising individuals or groups in order to consolidate the ruling coalition (Diamint & Tedesco, 2017; Tedesco, 2018). Throughout history, the FAR has played the important role of giving protection and power to the revolutionary commanders – the old guard – and cohesion and confluence to the interests of various groups. At the same time

it has served to prevent other commanders from criticising the leadership and destabilising the regime, as this would mean losing privileges.

At operational level the FAR is an effective mechanism of sanction and control thanks to the powerful intelligence team it controls from the Ministry of the Interior. This ensures that political leaders remain loyal to the ruling coalition and the leadership, a factor that will be explained in more detail later. As well as controlling the system of cohesion and repression – the police and army form a single whole – the FAR has been Cuba's most important economic actor since it began acquiring companies during the "Special Period" for the purposes of financing itself and posing less of a burden on the state. Over time, this became a mechanism for accumulating the island's greatest wealth, which in turn translated into political power and the ability to distribute resources and incentives among members of the ruling coalition (Klepak, 2005).

#### *4.4 Control of economic resources*

Cuba's socialist economic system in which the state controls most of the economic resources has granted the ruling coalition effective tools for distributing incentives and sanctions among its members. The permanent economic difficulties deriving from its international isolation that seriously worsened after the fall of the socialist bloc have only reinforced this situation. US blockade measures have made Cuba's international trade inefficient, with goods and products supplied at higher prices than other countries, which also hinders the modernisation of its production facilities. That its exports are restricted to potential buyers who do not fear US sanctions aggravates the situation. All of this makes it more difficult for Cuba to secure financing in the international market to make productive investments.

In these circumstances, the coalition that leads the state and controls its material resources is well aware of the country's particular circumstances due to its involvement in public management. Specifically, it knows that it is extremely difficult to access resources without state involvement. Hence, it is highly unlikely that any politically autonomous group could emerge or attempt to break that power structure and match political capacity with economic power.

Meanwhile, self-employed people in the fledgling private economy lack close links to the circles of power. Indeed, as Romanò and Echevarría León (2015) point out, self-employment is not an easy fit with PCC membership. Although the theory of modernisation suggests that greater access to economic resources tends to increase demands for access to political power resources, thus far Cuba's self-employed have maintained a very low level of public exposure, as their activity is not clearly regulated and exists in a legal grey area. It is worth bearing

in mind in this regard that any action that makes the ruling coalition or the authorities feel threatened, such as increased control mechanisms or regulation, may have negative effects.

Through its conglomerate of companies, the FAR controls Cuba's most important productive and business resources (Bacaria & Serrano, 2020). Meanwhile, the military's strategic vision means the proper functioning of the Cuban economy is perceived as a matter of national security, which, as well as all its practical implications, strengthens the role of the institution, as mentioned above. The FAR's business experience began during the "Special Period in Time of Peace", when it began to run a number of companies with the aim of financing itself. Soldiers became managers who "discipline the economy" and generals became directors (Tedesco, 2018). At the same time, civilian cadres incorporated to manage companies are promoted to other areas of power, the most significant being Manuel Marrero, current president of the Council of Ministers. Marrero began his career managing military-owned hotels and, according to available information, gained his previous position as minister of tourism and current post as prime minister thanks to military support.

Another relevant example is the Grupo de Administración Empresarial S.A. (GAESA), which is attached to the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (Minfar) and whose current executive chairman is Brigadier General Luis Alberto Rodríguez López-Calleja, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and head of the 5th department of the FAR. It should be added that he was married to one of Raúl Castro's daughters and is father to one of his grandchildren, who bears his grandfather's name and has the peculiar task of being head of his personal security.

GAESA is wreathed in a kind of legend and is alleged to control between 50% and 80% of business revenue in Cuba (Aznarez, 2019) – over 60% of the national economy and 80% of the tourism sector (Valle, 2015). Various Cuba experts cast doubt on that figure (Bermúdez, 2017), but everyone agrees that GAESA's power increased as Raúl Castro assumed the state's highest offices. Around the same time the military conglomerate absorbed the companies and financial arrangements of Cimex – a state group of government-controlled companies – and tripled its size to become the island's largest business oligopoly. Cimex was made up of 73 subsidiary companies and 21 partner companies, with 61 based outside the island.

The first part of its expansion strategy was the acquisition of Habaguanex, a financing mechanism for Havana's Office of the Historian, whose income contributed to restoring some of the capital's historic centre. Habaguanex included around 100 "dollar stores", 21 hotels and hostels, and an extensive network of cafes and restaurants. Finally, GAESA took control of the Banco Financiero In-

ternacional (BFI), which specialised in international foreign exchange management, and Financiera Cimex (Fincimex), which has a monopoly on the sending of remittances to Cuba and controls the operations of Visa and Mastercard.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned, the state and the ruling coalition effectively control Cuba's economic assets through the FAR. Unlike in other socialist countries, where oligarchies challenged the power of the state and the party by appropriating and running state resources, in this case the aim seems to have been for the most efficient of the state branches – which is at the same time the guarantor of the revolution – to maintain control. It also has a powerful tool for distributing incentives and sanctions. A single example suffices: thanks to its business structure, GAESA controls the island's best-quality and most sought-after jobs, which is fundamental given the major limitations of the labour market.

#### *4.5 Disciplinary mechanisms*

Organisations like the Union of Young Communists (UJC) and the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) figure among Cuba's mechanisms of exerting discipline. Both have representatives on the Candidature Commissions and issue reports on people's political commitment and conduct, which, in such a state-regulated setting, may mean denying access to a number of resources. Without embarking on an assessment of Cuba's levels of coercion and repression – undoubtedly not those of a liberal democratic regime – it is worth noting that, unlike similar regimes where hierarchies have been very tolerant of the excesses of the people around them, the Castro regime was aware that such an attitude only politically weakens the government. A great merit of its disciplinary systems is that they apply to everyone, even, unhesitatingly, to their own relatives, which sends a clear message to the members of the ruling coalition that they will be excluded for the slightest slip or loss of trust in them.

These measures have ranged from the shootings of the early years of the revolution to the creation of a highly efficient counterintelligence system and prison or exile. But, once the regime was established and consolidated, perhaps the

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2 The sectors GAESA controls are summarised in the following non-exhaustive list: 1) hotel facilities, with approximately 29,000 rooms and agreements with around 14 international chains; 2) the national network of retail stores via TRD Caribe; 3) shipping companies Melfi Marine Corp and Servinaves Panama S.A.; 4) its own airline, Aerogaviota; 5) car sale and rental through Havanautos and Havanatur; 6) construction, through the Unión de Construcciones Militares and real estate with Almest; 7) banking and financial services; 8) imports and exports through Tecnotex and Tecnoimport; 9) port, customs and transport services through Almacenes Universales S.A.; and 10) control of the Mariel Special Development Zone (Zdimisa).

most extreme example of the unbending nature of the sanctions imposed by the regime was the shooting of General Ochoa, who began in the guerrillas fighting Batista and had a brilliant military career, being named “Hero of the Republic of Cuba”. But none of this, nor his close friendship with Raúl Castro, were enough to spare him the death penalty for drug trafficking offences. To a lesser degree (and stopping short of imprisonment or exile), other senior government officials have been punished with demotion within the employment structure when the regime has considered they may become a threat. Roberto Robaina is one such case. The former foreign minister was very close to Fidel Castro and a rising figure in Cuban politics, but was dismissed for receiving money from the governor of the State of Quintana Roo for works in the ministry. Then there was the case involving Prime Minister Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, and Fernando Remírez de Estenoz, foreign affairs chief of the Communist Party of Cuba, who were dismissed when images and audio recordings leaked of a private meeting with a representative of the Basque regional government in which criticisms were made of the Castro brothers, among other things. The events went on to take on the dimensions of an espionage and counterespionage plot. Such sanctions, known in Cuba as “*truene*” (thunder), involve the loss of all privilege and operate as a permanent threat that promotes cohesion. As Foucault (2012) suggests, their public and highly visible nature gives shaming and making examples of them an educational function.

Dissidents’ testimonies suggest that one of the missions of Alejandro Castro Espín, son of Raúl and head of the Defense and National Security Commission until 2018, was to lead an intelligence unit that monitored relatives and close associates of political leaders. But whether this special unit exists or not, the fact that disciplinary sanctions are imposed on close relatives of the leaders of the revolution sends a clear message to the people that the implementation of punitive measures is strict and general. One clear example is the dismissal of Fidel Castro’s son of the same name from the Secretariat for Nuclear Affairs for “inefficiency in the performance of his duties”, which was announced via a statement in *Granma* (EFE, 2018); another is the case of the son of Commander Juan Almeida, who grew up in Raúl Castro’s home, and resorted to a hunger strike in order to be allowed to leave Cuba after falling out with the regime.

#### 4.6 Forming cadres and technocracy

Unlike other Latin American countries, Cuba has managed to professionalise its public administration by providing careers opportunities within it, making this a clear incentive for doing these jobs. Cuba’s foreign service is perhaps the best example of the very powerful technocracy established. Formed of career diplomats

specially trained since university, its efficiency may be the reason an island of just over 11 million inhabitants has such international impact. The consultancy work its intelligence services perform in other countries could also be cited, with Venezuela the most recent case.

It should be added that Cuban technocracy nurtures the ruling elites, as will be seen in the next section. Those who reach the summit of power via the public sector join the ruling coalition after a career in which they will have gone through several selection processes and demonstrated their loyalty to the Cuban political project. A look at the Higher School of State and Government Cadres helps us understand the Cuban leadership's conception of the mechanisms of promotion and meritocracy. It is a training centre in public administration and political indoctrination to which students cannot apply, but must be recommended by their workplaces or social and political organisations. An examination of the careers of Cuba's youngest leaders shows that all attended this school.

The National Defense College works in a similar way. This higher education centre is aimed not only at the military cadres, but also civilians in senior management positions, and trains them in basic political, economic, social and military knowledge in order for them to work on national defence. One hypothesis is that by inviting civilians to join these formations the FAR forms relations with those who will fill senior management positions. Marta Sabina Wilson, current president of the Central Bank, seems to fit this pattern, as she took those courses despite her career path being ostensibly somewhat removed from the defence sector.

## 5 Changes and continuity in the Cuban political elite

Confirming the hypothesis of this chapter, it may be said that the change of government in Cuba did not greatly affect the interests of the ruling coalition. This is due to the cohesion and control mechanisms in the systems of promotion within and access to the government. It must be said that the "historic generation" successfully formed a leadership group whose lives have been shaped by the power of the revolution, and who have made its interests and political project their own.

Miguel Díaz-Canel's election as president of the republic in April 2018 to replace General Raúl Castro is an example of this machinery in operation, as Castro leads the final phase as a kind of guardian of the essence from the position of first secretary of the PCC until its next congress in 2021. Everything that took place prior to the publication of this chapter shows that the generational transition is occurring with little upheaval and fitting neatly into the command structures. Díaz-Canel is a 60-year-old (in 2020) who has been successful in senior positions at the national level in the Union of Young Communists since the late 1980s,

who then held leadership roles in the PCC in the provinces of Villa Clara and Holguín, was minister of higher education and, since 2013, first vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers. He has also been a member of the PCC's Politburo since 1997.

The vice president, Salvador Valdés Mesa, is another leader with a long track record. An agronomist by profession, he stands out for his technical training (like the president), as well as for the symbolic capital of his African descent. His accomplishments are mainly union-based, as secretary general of the CTC from 2006 to 2013, but he also previously occupied the position of minister of labour and social security from 1995 to 1999 and the leadership of the party in the province of Camagüey from 1999 to 2006. Since 2008 he has been a member of the PCC's Politburo.

But perhaps the most surprising appointment and that which best explains how the mechanisms of power work in Cuba today – in the sense, as mentioned, that they are conditioned by the FAR and its economic interests – is the election of Manuel Marrero as president of the Council of Ministers, even though he does not have a long history as a PCC leader or of participation in political and social organisations. An architect by profession, placed in charge of tourism by Fidel Castro in 2004, he was the most veteran minister at the time of the transition. *Granma* characterises him as a politician who emerged from the grassroots of the country's tourism industry, one of its main sources of foreign exchange. He started out in the sector in the province of Holguín before taking various positions managing hotels in the eastern provinces and in Varadero. His election was relatively surprising because he was not among the favourites for the post, who were Roberto Morales (minister of health) and Inés María Chapman (member of parliament and of the Council of Ministers). But the most intriguing thing about Manuel Marrero's professional background is that in 2000 he became president of the Grupo de Turismo Gaviota, one of GAESA's leading tourism companies – a clear sign of the military's trust in him.

Beyond the prominent figures, the new ministers are an army of technocrats with clear experience in their fields, who have risen through the administration. Cuba has developed a kind of meritocracy which, combined with the control mechanisms of the ruling coalition mentioned above, has managed to nurture new leaders to promote to the leadership group who are very well trained in their technical fields and have political experience, so that no major risks are taken. Table 1 clearly shows that all ministers about whom we have information have held high-level positions in the state structure. Particularly relevant is that over half were second-in-command of their ministries before they became ministers, which sends a clear message of reward for work well done and loyalty to the organisation of which they form part. In what follows it will be shown that the

Council of Ministers is the centre of power that has undergone most renewal. The data once again show the role of the PCC and the FAR as core mechanisms of power and control, as they tend to provide the ministers with less technocratic profiles.

**Table 1: Professional background of Cuban ministers 2020**

Ministry	Name	Previous position
Science, Technology and the Environment	Elba Rosa Pérez Montoya	Official of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba
Culture	Alpidio Alonso Grau	Official of the Ideological Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba
President of the Council of Ministers	Manuel Marrero	Minister of Tourism
Domestic Trade	Betsy Díaz Velázquez	No data
Agriculture	Gustavo Rodríguez Rollero	No data
Central Bank of Cuba	Marta Sabina Wilson	President of the Foreign Bank of Cuba
Food Industry	Manuel Santiago Sobrino	President of the Assembly of People's Power of Granma Province
Education	Ena Elsa Velázquez Cobiella	Rector of Frank País García Pedagogical University
Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment	Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz	Cuban Representative at the UN <sup>3</sup>
Secretary	José Amado Ricardo Guerra	Personal Secretary of Raúl Castro/ General in the FAR <sup>4</sup>
Deputy Prime Minister	Salvador Valdes Mesa	Vice President of the Council of State
Audit and Control	Gladys María Bejerano Portela	Deputy Minister of Audit and Control
Finances and Pricing	Meisi Bolaños	Vice Minister of Finances and Pricing
Employment and Social Security	Marta Elena Feitó	First Deputy Minister of Labour and Social Security
Public Health	José Ángel Portal Miranda	Deputy Minister of Medical and Social Assistance of the Ministry of Public Health

3 UN = United Nations

4 FAR = Revolutionary Armed Forces

<b>Ministry</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Previous position</b>
Energy and Mines	Liván Nicolás Arronte	Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines
Construction	René Mesa Villafaña	Deputy Minister of Construction/Official of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba
Tourism	Juan Carlos García	Deputy Minister of Tourism
Transport	Eduardo Rodríguez Dávila	Deputy Minister of Transport
Economics and Planning	Alejandro Gil Fernández	First Deputy Minister of Economy and Planning
Higher Education	José Ramón Saborido Loidi	First Deputy Minister of Higher Education
Industry	Eloy Álvarez Martínez	First Deputy Minister of Industry
Armed Forces	Leopoldo Cintra Frías	First Deputy Minister of the FAR
Foreign Affairs	Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla	First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
Interior	Julio Cesar Gandarilla Bermejo	First Deputy Minister of Interior
Communications	Jorge Luis Perdomo Di-Lella	First Deputy Minister of Communications
Institute of Sport	Oswaldo Caridad Vento Montiller	Vice President of the Institute of Sport
Justice	Oscar Manuel Silveira Martínez	Vice President of the People's Supreme Court

Source: Websites of the various ministries, informative bodies and ANPP.

A second aspect to consider is that the Cuban model of controlling power is via the combination of new and old cadres. In this sense, the PCC and social organisations provide stability: the PCC, by controlling the mechanisms for accessing state positions; and social organisations by mobilising the population. What is more, although – as has been shown – the military controls the material resources, interconnections appear to exist between the two (beyond the possible role of Raúl Castro), with many members of the PCC Politburo either being members of or having passed through the FAR. Another contributing factor to the renewal is that those who have recently joined lack military experience and have more technical training. Table 2 shows that nearly two-thirds of the decision-making core have been in these areas of power for 20 years or more. Hence, it may be said that changes in government are not always reflected in changes in the other power structures, which gives short- and medium-term stability to the

regime. It will be interesting to observe the performance of the Politburo once older members such as Ramiro Valdés and Raúl Castro, who have also held positions in the interior and defence ministries (mechanisms of social and political control of the revolutionary project), leave their positions.

**Table 2: Composition of the Politburo of the PCC 2020**

Name	Position	Age	Training	Organisations	Military career	Year
Ramiro Valdés	Vice President of the Council of Ministers	87	Military	PCC <sup>5</sup> , CDR <sup>6</sup> , ACRC <sup>7</sup>	FAR, MI-NINT <sup>8</sup>	1965
Raúl Castro	First Secretary of the CC <sup>9</sup> – PCC	89	Military	PCC, CDR, CTC <sup>10</sup>	FAR	1965
José Ramón Machado Ventura	Second Secretary of the CC – PCC	90	Medicine	PCC, CDR, CTC		1975
Esteban Lazo Hernández	President of the ANPP <sup>11</sup> /Council of State	76	Economics	PCC, CDR, CTC		1985
Leopoldo Cintra Frías	Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces	79	Political and Social Science	PCC, CDR	FAR	1991
Miguel Díaz-Canel	President of the Republic	60	Electronics	PCC, CDR, CTC	FAR	1997
Salvador Valdes Mesa	Vice President of the Republic	75	Agronomist	PCC, CDR, CTC		1997
Álvaro López Miera	Chief of General Staff	77	Military	PCC, CDR, CTC	FAR	1997
Ramón Espinosa Martín	Vice Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces	81	Military	PCC, CDR, ACRC	FAR	1997

5 PCC = Communist Party of Cuba

6 CDR = Committees for the Defense of the Revolution

7 ACRC = Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution

8 MININT = Ministry of the Interior

9 CC = Central committee

10 CTC = Workers' Central Union of Cuba

11 ANPP = National Assembly of People's Power

Name	Position	Age	Training	Organisations	Military career	Year
Lázara Mercedes López Acea	Member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party	58	Forestry	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC <sup>12</sup>		2011
Marino Murillo Jorge	Head of the Permanent Commission for Implementation and Development	59	Economics	PCC, CDR, CTC		2011
Bruno Rodríguez	Minister of Foreign Affairs	61	Law	PCC, CDR, CTC		2011
Marta Ayala Avila	Deputy Director of the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology	53	Biology	PCC, CDR, FMC, CTC		2016
Roberto Morales Ojeda	Vice President of the Council of Ministers	53	Public Health	PCC, CDR		2016

Source: Websites of the PCC, official informative bodies and ANPP.

The third pillar of the Cuban political elite to be observed is the Council of State which, as noted, functions as a delegated committee of the ANPP. Although it is the body whose members have least direct power, it is nevertheless an important space for representation and connection with provincial elites or with those from social and political organisations and the productive apparatus. It also serves as an important arena for training emerging politicians, even more so given the incompatibility between being a member of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers. Table 3 shows that the Council of State has the youngest members of the bodies examined. But that does not mean that they lack strong political backgrounds; indeed, half of them are part of the PCC's highest management bodies. It is also worth highlighting the growing trend towards including more women and people with technocratic profile in the administrative bodies studied.

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12 FMC = Federation of Cuban Women

**Table 3. Members of the Council of State**

Name	Position in addition to Council of State	Age	Province	Training	Organisations	Politburo/PCC	CC/PCC
Acosta Álvarez, Homero	Secretary	56	Mayabeque	Law	PCC, CDR, CTC, FAR		X
Amarelle Boué, Teresa María	Secretary General of the Federation of Cuban Women	61	La Tunas	History	PCC, CDR, FMC, CTC	X	X
Berlanga Acosta, Jorge Amador	Head of Projects and Research at the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology	57	Granma	Veterinary medicine	PCC, CDR, CTC		
Bravo O'Farrill, Yansi María	Provincial Chief Comptroller of Havana	42	Mayabeque	Law	PCC, CDR, FMC, CTC		
Fernández Castañeda, José Ángel	President of the Federation of University Students	23	Havana	Law	UJC <sup>13</sup> , CDR		
Fournier Frómata, Rosalina	Director of the Guantánamo Provincial Design and Engineering Company	54	Guantánamo	Architect	PCC, CDR, FMC, CTC		
Guilarte de Nacimiento, Ulises	Secretary General of the Cuban Workers' Federation	56	Artemisa	Automatic control	PCC, CDR, CTC	X	X

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13 UJC = Young Communist League

Name	Position in addition to Council of State	Age	Province	Training	Organisations	Politburo/PCC	CC/PCC
Johnson Urrutia, Beatriz	President of the Provincial Assembly of People's Power of Santiago de Cuba	51	Santiago de Cuba	Chemistry	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC		X
Lazo Hernández, Esteban	President	76	Matanzas	Economics	PCC, CDR, CTC	X	X
Lorente Jiménez, Alexis	President of the Municipal Assembly of People's Power of Sancti Spiritus	45	Sancti Spiritus	Pediatrics	PCC, CDR, CTC		
Mari Machado, Ana María	Vice President	56	Villa Clara	Law	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC		X
Martínez Blanco, Carlos Alberto	Provincial Director of Public Health in Havana	51	Havana	Veterinary medicine	PCC, CDR, CTC		
Martínez Suárez, Felicia	Director of the Oriente Base Business Unit, Aluminium Production	55	Santiago de Cuba	Industrial	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC		
Miranda Martínez, Carlos Rafael	National Coordinator of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution	55	Pinar del Río	Social Sciences	PCC, CDR, CTC		X
Moreno González, Yipsi	National Athletics Commissioner	39	Camagüey	Training	CDR, FMC		
Morfa González, Susely	First Secretary of the Union of Young Communists	38	Cienfuegos	Psychology	UJC FMC, CDR		X

Name	Position in addition to Council of State	Age	Province	Training	Organisations	Polit-buro/PCC	CC/PCC
Nicado García, Miriam	Rector of the University of Havana	60	Villa Clara	Mathematics	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC	X	X
Peña Turrueblas, Elizabeth	National Director of Urban, Suburban and Family Agriculture	55	Santiago de Cuba	Agriculture	PCC, CTC, CDR, FMC		
Sánchez Cuéllar, Yoerky	Director of the Juventud Rebelde newspaper	36	Villa Clara	Journalism	PCC, UJC, CTC, CDR		X
Santiesteban Pozo, Rafael Ramón	President of the National Association of Small Farmers	50	Holguín	Political and Economic Culture	PCC, CTC, CDR		X
Torres Cuevas, Eduardo Moisés	Director of the Martiano Program Office	77	Santiago de Cuba	History	PCC, CTC, CDR		

Source: ANPP website and official information bodies.

## 6 Conclusions

The data provided throughout the chapter corroborate the hypothesis that Cuba's ruling coalition has not fractured during the process of leadership change thanks to a number of cohesion, control and selection mechanisms that have enabled renewal of the original group. The result is it has been possible to transition from a system based on strong charismatic leadership to a system of bureaucratic socialism.

Changes in the structure of the executive branch and the people who make up it have also brought no further transformations because, as has been explained, the PCC and the FAR control the social, political and economic resources. This leaves the government with little room for manoeuvre and decision-making, not only because it lacks the assets, but because it must reach agreement with other centres of power. In this area, the change to the system is notable. Previously, Fidel Castro or his brother Raúl could function as transversal actors in the de-

cision-making process, but the current president must rely on the bureaucratic mechanisms of legitimacy.

In short, the success of the Cuban regime seems to lie in its unyielding control and sanctions procedure, which has prevented the entry into the ruling coalition of representatives of groups that might generate division or criticism from within. To this end, it has articulated a system of incorporation of new leaders based on meritocracy and political loyalty that has allowed everything to change so that everything stays the same.

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# Social Policies and Institutional Reform in Post-COVID Cuba

Overcoming social inequality and guaranteeing minimum social standards for all have been central achievements of Cuban socialism. But across-the-board subsidies for food and housing, decent pensions for the elderly, and the universal provision of quality education and health services are not sustainable over time without a solid economic foundation. Well before the COVID 19 pandemic hit, the Cuban government put the reform of Cuba's economy, institutional structures and social security schemes on the political agenda. The impact of the pandemic, stepped-up US sanctions, domestic contradictions and the generational change in the leadership are now putting the island's system of governance and social cohesion to an unprecedented test.

This volume brings together a unique set of experts from on and off the island, from different disciplines and political perspectives, to make a multi-faceted analysis of the challenges of social policy and institutional reform in post-COVID Cuba. It is the result of the cooperation between Cuban and European academics in the Jean Monnet Network "Foro Europa-Cuba".

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ISBN 978-3-8474-2546-5



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