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THE DYNAMICS OF MANAGERIAL IDEOLOGY:
ANALYZING THE CUBAN CASE ¹

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ABSTRACT

After the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe, management researchers devoted considerable energy to investigate ways to smooth transition to market economies. But one country of the former Soviet bloc, Cuba resisted transition and reaffirmed loyalty to communism. Little is known about management in Cuba on the managerial impacts of the combination of two major environmental forces: the American embargo and the Soviet Union collapse, both of which have challenged the sustainability of the communist regime. This study intends to approach one particular aspect of management in Cuba: the relationship between national ideology and management practice. To analyze these topics, direct qualitative data from focus groups with Cuban managers and management professors was obtained and complemented with documentary analysis. Results suggest that the dynamics of managerial ideology can be understood as the interplay of several processes operating at distinct levels: institutional, professional, organizational and individual. The study provides a nested, multi-level understanding of management and organization as parts of a wider institutional context, which is both a source of constraint and a non-tangible resource to be used by ideological bricoleurs. The interplay between the acceptance of ideology and its use as a practical resource is a potential source of change. As such, the same professional class (managers) may be both a source of continuity and a trigger of change - a finding that is line with institutional theory's claim that it is necessary to understand both institutionalization and de-institutionalization for understanding organizational change and continuity.

Key words: Cuba, managerial ideology, institutional change, ideological bricolage.

The practice of management and the functioning of organizations is deeply embedded in the national context where it takes place. Clark and Mueller (1996, p.126) argued that “firms are so embedded, constrained and encultured by their national homes that the room for corporate agency and its zones of manoeuvre could be, and perhaps is, rather small.” This article discusses organizational embeddedness in the Cuban case. Through a qualitative approach, linkages at the institutional, professional, organizational and individual levels are analyzed, regarding managerial ideology and practice.

Our interest for the theme was stimulated by the centrality attached by Cuban managers to the role of values and values-based management, spiritual incentives, references to the Communist Party as an ideological beacon and other explicitly ideological themes in the conversations. The importance of values was so stressed by informants that we decided to analyze this specific aspect of the Cuban managerial context. This may be a worthy research effort considering that, as noted by Rodrigues and Child (2003a), there is limited understanding of the process of importation and utilization of ideology by organizations.

It is well known that organizations are infused with ideology (e.g., Simons and Ingram, 1997) but less is known about the dynamics of ideology, namely about the relationship between the individual, organizational, professional and institutional levels of analysis. Additionally, studies devoted to the dynamics of ideology usually have access to cases where a change in ideology (e.g., following a privatization) implies the concomitant adoption of new practice (e.g. Cunha & Cooper, 2002).

In this case, we are, on the contrary, studying how the same ideology was meant to paradoxically stimulate and resist change in managerial practice in a context of environmental change. Due to its particularities in a world of ideological homogeneity (Strang and Meyer, 1993), the case of Cuba appears as a relevant site to dissect the dynamics of ideology.

With the previous goals in mind, we start our discussion with an overview of the Cuban socioeconomic condition. The following sections describe the methods and results. Direct qualitative data from focus groups with Cuban managers and management professors were complemented by documentary analysis. Results suggest that the dynamics of managerial ideology can be understood with recourse to several interrelated dialectical processes operating at multiple levels. The study provides a multi-level integrated approach to the dynamics of ideology, and adopts a dialectical interpretation of change. The opposition between national ideology and the surrounding market forces, is leading to a management innovation process with dialectical features, with new knowledge being dynamically created out of contradictions (e.g., Nonaka and Toyama, 2002).

The paper contributes to several research areas. Firstly, to research dealing with the paradoxes involved in the creation of new management knowledge. Paradoxes and contradictions have been presented as sources of change; the paper will offer empirical material on this (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Secondly, it contributes to the understanding of the relationships between managerial action and ideology. By integrating several layers of analysis, it facilitates the understanding of the dynamics of managerial ideology in a context where the need to change management practice meets

the requirement to keep ideological values untouched. Thirdly, the paper contributes to the analysis of managerial intentionality under high levels of institutional pressure, an aspect that is relevant both to strategic choice as well as to institutional theories. To familiarize the reader with the singularities of the case, we start with an overview of the socioeconomic context of managerial action in Cuba.

CUBA: THE SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXT

Management philosophy in Cuba has been heavily influenced by the Soviet management paradigm. The Soviet paradigm enunciated that there is a clear distinction between the nature and problems of socialist and capitalist administration, with the principles of the latter not being applicable in the former – Miller (1971) developed an analysis of the history of management in the USSR and helped to understand how these differences have been enacted over the course of the communist regime's existence. There are many reasons why the nature and problems of administration in Cuba are different from those in capitalist countries and, of course, different from the problems faced by today's Russia or China, countries that eventually diverged from the socialist model. In order to facilitate the understanding of management in contemporary Cuba, a brief overview of management in the country during and after the communist revolution will be provided in the following sections.

Before the fall of the Soviet bloc. The communist revolution of 1959 established the end of capitalist Cuba and the development of a close relationship with the Eastern bloc. Management practices were learned from the Soviet model and relied on central planning: plants producing the same items were integrated; their trade activity was regulated by a ministry; JUCEPLAN produced a national plan for the ministries, then to

empresas; production meetings were held and workers presented their suggestions for possible modifications; the plan then retraces its steps upwards to JUCEPLAN; plans were approved by the ministries; they finally were sent back down in the form of goals for each plant. Having adopted the Soviet model, Cuba employed the same principles of centralized macro-management that, similarly to the Soviet Union, transformed the economy into something like a “nation-sized organization” with thousands of subsidiaries and divisions (Lawrence et al., 1990). This large “nation-sized organization” was governed according to COMECON’s doctrine that whatever a country was not able to produce could be imported from sister nations at preferential rates. Using the description of Groves et al (1994), enterprises in Cuba may be thought of as “branch plants of a single giant firm”. In this “giant organization” laws regulated the basic functions of management, from resource allocation to reward systems, to the recruitment and promotion of employees. Strong regulatory mechanisms that disseminate and monitor compliance with institutional norms have been shown to be especially strong in governmental sectors (Hoskisson et al., 2000), leading to uniformity in managerial practice and nurturing egalitarianism as a crucial trait of the communist society (Giacobbe-Miller et al., 2003).

After the fall of the Soviet bloc. The difficulties resulting from the combination of the American embargo, tightened after the Helms-Burton law of 1996 (Cuban Liberty Democratic Solidarity Act), and the fall of the Soviet bloc, forced the regime to adopt a plan of economic emergency, which was labeled *periodo especial* or “special period in peacetime”. The enormous challenges confronted during the *periodo especial* have been described by Lara (1999b, p.232) as follows: “Behind these four words [special period in peacetime] lies the greatest crisis that the Revolution has had to confront in its

history". The fall of the Soviet Union hit the Cuban economy due to the two-way trade between the country and other communist regimes – for the three decades before 1989, 85% of Cuban commerce was with COMECON nations (Kaplowitz, 1995), with the economy being kept safely isolated from the logic of the market. Between 1989 and 1993, GNP was reduced by almost 50%. The special period was thus a time of material difficulties and forced change.

The Soviet-style management thinking, learned and applied for decades, was no longer a valid approach to gain access to the resources necessary for reinvigorating a debilitated economy. Thus, over the space of a decade, significant changes took place not only at the economic level but also and inevitably, at the managerial one. Economic change, leveraged by the need to acquire resources in the global market, is illustrated by the rapid growth of the tourism industry, which became a prominent economic sector. Between 1986 and 1994, the number of rooms increased 480%, from 5,000 to more than 24,000. To accommodate this important transformation, changes in the managerial mindset became necessary. The dysfunctional consequences of central planning, labyrinthine bureaucracy and technological obsolescence characterizing most Cuban organizations, became evident when new organizational effectiveness criteria were introduced.

Despite increases in the level of managerial autonomy (Cunha and Cunha, 2003), the communist ideology prevailing in Cuba still refuses the liberal ideology, founded on private ownership, the free market and individualism. In fact, the country adopts the opposite forces as the right ones: state ownership, a tightly controlled market, and collectivism, with companies being instruments of the government rather than

independent entities. In sum, despite recent changes, the government still tightly commands the economy.

Considering the specifics of the Cuban case, it provides an adequate context for the analysis of the co-evolutionary dynamics of organizations and the institutional regimes in which they are embedded. As noted by Rodrigues and Child (2003b), most studies on this theme focus on a free market environment where a high degree of strategic choice is expected to exist (Child, 1997). In contrast, studies are scarce on contexts characterized by high levels of direct institutional regulation. This study, then, contributes to an analysis of the proposition that “even when the environment is highly institutionalized, a degree of strategic choice may be possible” (Rodrigues and Child, 2003b, p.2159). Hence, the study sheds light on how managers may exert strategic choice in a highly regulated context. With the above in mind, we move to the empirical study.

METHOD

The research reported here is based on information collected from multiple sources through several data collection techniques, including analysis of bibliography on Cuban sociology, economy and management (e.g., Dieste, 1997; Lara, 1999a; Castanedo, 2002), informal conversations and personal observations. All these approaches serve to develop a grounded understanding of the context and to complement a central and more structured data collection technique: a series of focus groups with Cuban executives and management academics. The use of qualitative methods to study institutional processes has been encouraged by Dacin, Godstein and Scott (2002) as a means to uncover aspects that may go unnoticed in quantitative studies focussed on the macro level.

We visited Cuba seven times between 1995 and 2004, with formal data collection taking place at three different moments in the years 2000, 2002 and 2003. Our interpretation was constructed around thematic phenomena in accordance with interpretative research methods (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The research is of the descriptive, inductive type, aiming at pattern recognition (Mintzberg, 1979). The themes discussed here emerged throughout the focus groups and via the application of a unanimity rule: only themes considered unanimously relevant for characterizing management in Cuba were retained for consideration (Chilton and Hutchinson, 1999). For analytical purposes, these themes will be treated independently. In practice, however, they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. The persistent mention of ideology and the ideological process motivated us to explore this specific aspect of the managerial process, namely through the articulation between the institutional, professional, organizational and individual levels of analysis. When appropriate, we will use quotes in order to facilitate access to raw data and to improve richness of meaning (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000).

Our sample was composed of 107 general managers, 72 technical/professional staff working for state-owned enterprises affiliated with most ministries and located throughout Cuba, and 32 management professors. The total number of informants was 211. These informants participated in twenty focus groups. The discussions taking place in the focus groups were conducted in a semi-structured fashion. The focus group can be described as “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan, 1996, p.130). The focus group technique is derived from Merton’s focus group interview (Merton and Kendall, 1946), and aims

to generate information that would potentially be lost through the use of more structured approaches. It seems suitable, therefore, for articulating tacit knowledge and generating deep level data.

The focus group seemed adequate for this particular study because, given the changes underway in the Cuban society (Dieste, 1997; Cunha and Cunha, 2003), it could be difficult for outsiders to develop a highly structured data collection approach to the Cuban case. Additionally, the collective discussion stimulated in a focus group may help individuals in their sensemaking efforts. In accordance with the previous arguments, Morgan (1996) argued that the discussion in a focus group represents more than the sum of separate individual interviews in the sense that the discussion elicits new thinking about a given phenomenon, extending the individual repertoires of knowledge. These collective interpretations have been described as leading to the creation of a group mind (Chilton and Hutchinson, 1999), a concept that denotes the potential for knowledge creation through interaction: as put by Weick (2002), “knowledge is not something people possess in their heads but rather something people do together.” (p.S8)

The focus groups were conducted in Spanish, according to an open discussion script consisting of an analysis of the major changes taking place in Cuba. The number of subjects in each focus group ranged from 8 to 15, a number that is higher than the 6 to 8 subjects normally recommended (Asbury, 1995). Time constraints impeded further divisions of respondents into smaller focus groups. Each focus group meeting lasted approximately one hour and thirty minutes. Notes were taken during the discussions. To facilitate open discussion, focus groups were not recorded. Once participants gave their

opinions on a given issue, the moderator summarized by asking the group's consensus on the importance of the specific issue. Lack of consensus led to the exclusion of the topic from further analysis. Notes were organized into a codebook that systematized the topics discussed and the participants' perspectives on these topics. Data collection took place after the regular sessions of a management development programme organized and taught by faculty members of five European universities.

RESULTS

Results suggest that managerial practice in Cuba is tightly articulated with a system of social and institutional sanctions intended to reinforce the role of the firm and that of the manager in a socialist country. Social sanctioning, combined with institutional sanctioning, are the enforcing mechanisms of political and managerial ideologies. Hagen and Choe's (1998) research on the functioning of networks in the Japanese automobile industry found an equivalent combination of social and institutional mechanisms for regulating macro-level organizational behavior. Our study allows, however, the analysis of how the social and institutional levels intertwine and reinforce one another. Below, we discuss the institutional dynamics of the ideological process. We complemented the themes extracted from the focus groups with bibliographical sources in order to gain a deeper understanding of the case. Four levels are considered: institutional, professional, organizational and individual.

The resulting interpretation is summarized in Table 1. This interpretive framework is based upon a dialectical approach, with this theoretical framework being adopted due to the frequent references to contradictory requirements noted during data collection and analysis (e.g., the need to preserve the values of the revolution while improving

managerial practice, the need to attract resources in the international market without embracing the logic of capitalism; the urge to give managers more autonomy and accountability without losing the collectivist ethos of the society as a whole) as well as a consequence of previous use of dialectics to explain the Cuban managerial process; see Cunha and Cunha, 2003 and Cunha and Cunha, 2004). The relevance of dialectics as a theoretical lens for understanding the institutional process has been noted in the literature. Zilber (2002), for example, associated institutional change with the “dialectical interplay between (...) *actions* (practices and structures), *meanings* and *actors*” (p.235, italics in the original). With this study we contribute to the understanding of the dialectics of institutional change through the articulation of the micro and macro processes leading to institutionalization and de-institutionalization.

Table 1 about here

The institutional level. In March 1968, the so-called “revolutionary offensive” closed 50,000 small businesses in Cuba, the justification attributed to the immorality of private business and material incentives. The revolutionary society (thesis) was being created. The institutions of capitalism (antithesis) were said to mar the character of the “new man” expected to arise from the revolution. In May 1967 President Fidel Castro pointed out in a speech to the Association of Small Farmers that “we shall do away with the vile intermediary, money” (*in* Thomas, 2001, p.987). Work heroes in the Soviet style – people willing to sacrifice their self-interest for the sake of common good – were introduced to be emulated, their accomplishments being extraordinary: it is said that in 1963, Reinaldo Castro cut a daily average of 1,280 *arrobas* of cane, compared with the modest 150 *arrobas* of the average cane cutter. Socialist emulation, a reward system in

use between 1962 and 1967 was abolished, apparently due to the troubling choices of first prize winners: material goods, such as bicycles or refrigerators, were often preferred to a more “spiritually attractive” holiday in Russia.

The previous notions express the ideological nature of work in the Cuban organization. The organization, in fact, is part of the socialist system, deeply embedded in it, not independent and autonomous. Cuban organizations were managed in the Soviet style, through a translation of the GOSPLAN to a local JUCEPLAN. Companies’ goals were centrally established according to national needs. Managers and union leaders were appointed by the government from the stock of “vanguard workers” or “exemplary workers”. Their role is as much a professional as a political one. Company walls are covered with posters, adjuring patriotism and highlighting the expected behaviors of the revolutionary worker. The work context is thus an ideologically saturated one. Ideology, operating as a “technology of the self” (Rodrigues and Child, 2003a, p.11), influences not only the managerial function but also individual identity: influence inculcates values and values “are an important source of discipline when we frame problems.” (Weick, 2002, p.88) In this sense, values are self-disciplining premises that mold identity and help to identify, frame and understand issues.

The institutional environment in Cuba is therefore marked by an overt hostility to the institutions of capitalism, namely money, private property and individually-differentiated earnings. As one informant reported, “management should strive for equality, not equity.” Spiritual development and moral incentives are hence presented as the most valuable rewards one can achieve. Quotations like “spiritual motivations are extremely important, especially in a context of material scarcity” or “spiritual

satisfaction is a major work outcome” illustrate the centrality of the spiritual component at work. They were often qualified by participants as the most honorable prizes. The lack of reference to these elements during the discussion of a case study of a Western company was noted with surprise: “The case misses moral indicators. It just includes sales, and other material indicators.”

The education system plays an active role in the sustenance and support of such a highly marked ideological environment. As observed by López (2002), “higher education in Cuba is oriented towards the development of socialist conscience and to the diffusion, with intellectual passion, of the ever more clear intelligence acquired by the masses of Cuban workers.” Active belonging to society is hence presented as an honorable end: “Belonging and being part of society are strong motivators”, one of our informants pointed out.

The previous notions and practices developed over decades and became institutionalized in an encapsulated environment, but the notion of the free market knocked on Cuba’s door following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. After a period of transactions of goods under the regime of special partnerships between communist nations, Cuban companies found themselves competing for resources in the exposed global market, which meant that they have had to start worrying about international competitiveness (Martin de Holan and Philips, 1997). The introduction of agility and efficiency was perceived as a necessary means toward improving organizational competitiveness. A centrally controlled plan was established, aiming to improve organizational competence and controlled competition (synthesis), without resorting to

excessive managerial autonomy and genuinely open and competitive markets. This programme received the name of *perfeccionamiento empresarial*, or enterprise perfecting. It started in 1987 under the aegis of the Ministry of the Armed Forces and has been described as “the first initiative in terms of direction and organization of the enterprise” (Dieste, 1997, p.46). We shall return to enterprise perfecting below.

The professional level. Loyalty to the regime’s official views is not optional. This is evident, for example, in the way people are selected and promoted, which puts some emphasis on political criteria. Managers are viewed as custodians of the revolution (thesis). They are encouraged to see themselves as members of the *sociedad obrera*, the working class. They are expected to coordinate the organization’s revolutionary organisms and to exert participation and democratic centralism (Dieste, 1997). They are therefore protectors of the common good and are expected to respond to the society. The people is both shareholder and the major stakeholder. According to one manager: “The goal of Cuban enterprise is the satisfaction of the needs of the customers and of the working population.” Managerial work is heavily constrained by the institutional environment, a fact which limits managerial options and encourages inertia (Oliver, 1992). This approach is indeed in sharp contrast with the Western conception (antithesis) of managers as self-motivated actors that exercise formally independent and strategically intentional choices (Child, 1997; Tsoukas and Shepherd, 2004) in favor of the owners, being paid to create shareholder value. After the collapse of the communist bloc, the traditional view of the manager as custodian of the revolution was complemented with a new meaning: a guardian of the revolution in this new context needed to show both ideological fervor and managerial competence. To defend the revolution, managers were expected to create the resources necessary to alleviate

people's daily difficulties. A new model-manager emerged through the synthesis of the old thesis and the undesired antithesis: the socialist manager (synthesis). These new managers are still socialist and political guardians of the revolutionary values, but now also professionals with a growing orientation to results.

Managers are usually thought of as enjoying a degree of personal autonomy higher than they may actually have (Hannan and Freeman, 1989). They are expected to make decisions and to be evaluated on the basis of the consequences of those decisions. In the case of Cuba, managers, however, are part of a collective process, which is tightly bounded by state initiatives. They are agents of the state, and vehicles of ideological implementation. The management selection process ensures that positions of hierarchical responsibility are filled with people willing and able to defend revolutionary values and ideals. Promotion to managerial positions depends not only on professional competence but also on political qualities, namely *idoneidad*: "*Idoneidad* is the fundamental characteristic of the socialist worker", as one participant remarked. Those qualities will be evaluated both by the institutional political means and by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. These committees exist on "every street", according to Thomas (2001, p.996) and everyone can join them. They conduct such activities as vigilance and implementing educational, medical or any other type of campaign. Additionally they hold regular seminars on revolutionary instruction. They also report on suspicious counter-revolutionary activities. To become a manager, one needs to be considered as having the adequate qualities according to the committee to which he or she belongs. Managerial selection is hence decided on several grounds with the ideological pressures to comply being significant. Those who do not adequately fit

the revolutionary standards are not allowed to enter positions of organizational responsibility.

Due to the fall of the Soviet bloc, managerial expertise became more important than it used to be: the need to attract and to efficiently manage resources became a fundamental challenge to the society as a whole and to this professional group in particular. As such, managers are not passive receivers of ideological contents, but rather active agents of the ideological process. Evidence suggests that they may be using ideology to legitimize the introduction of new practices that, to a certain extent, may be viewed with suspicion within the current framework (Martin de Holan and Phillips, 2002). These innovative uses of ideology raise, of course, problems of legitimacy, which means that managerial learning in Cuba is contested terrain, in the sense that it must prove not only its effectiveness but also its legitimacy. This is in line with Townley's (2002) observation that institutional change is a contested process, particularly when the sources of change are political in nature. Considering the impact of professional associations in institutional change (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002), it is possible to propose that managers may act as agents of incremental change through modifications in practice (e.g., the introduction of differentiating reward systems). This possibility is further discussed below.

The organizational level. Organizations are "managed", to a certain degree, by their environments (Hannan and Freeman, 1989; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). This external influence is more evident in Cuba's organizational landscape than in other contexts. Orchestration of the organizational functioning occurs in two major fields: the definition of organizational plans and goals, and the limits imposed by ideology on the

organization's role. Organizations in Cuba are socialist in the sense that they are part of a societal socialist project (thesis). This is in sharp contrast with the conception of the firm in capitalistic settings (antithesis). Socialist firms are notoriously linked to a collective mission determined by the state, envisioning the common good. Capitalist firms pursue private interests and work as quasi-independent entities. The visible and invisible hands of managers and the market are less important in Cuba than the powerful hand of the state. The state has recently, in selected cases, decided to allow more discretion to the managerial hand. These cases are those entering the process of enterprise perfecting, mentioned above. Perfected organizations are expected to effect a synthesis between the missionary virtues of the communist organization and the professional management of competitive firms. According to institutional theory, the visibility of these cases as exemplars of modern management may further a process of de-institutionalization of more traditional forms (Lee and Pennings, 2002).

Regarding the limits imposed by ideology on the organization's role, it should be re-emphasized that Cuban organizations exist to fulfil societal needs and not to create shareholder wealth. The fundamental stakeholder is "the people". Companies should then be managed in strict adherence to the revolutionary ideals. After the Soviet Union's collapse, political qualities became insufficient to solve the problems of scarcity and inefficiency facing most companies. This led to the need to develop managerial talent: "[Regarding managerial promotion] In the past political trustworthiness prevailed. Today, it is still a fundamental aspect, but now coupled with competence". New techniques were sought, the above mentioned programme of company perfecting was instigated under the auspices of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, and the degree of managerial discretion of "perfected" companies increased.

This process of managerial empowerment was accompanied by a significant interest for the topic of *dirección por valores*, or values-based management. The theory of values-based management is well known in capitalist societies (e.g. Quinn and Jones, 1995), and Cuban authors on the topic draw extensively on western sources (e.g. Covey, Blanchard, Schein) but include adaptations that are an answer to local issues. Writing about values-based management as an organizational ideology, Llorca (2002) offers a set of thirteen questions to be answered by managers. Question number seven reads as follows: “Do you know any orientations of the Cuban Communist Party and the government in order to have a more successful ‘ideology’?” Political and professional expertise are thus two faces of the same reality. As pointed out by President Castro in a speech in December 2001, “to prepare oneself is the most sacred duty; to develop *professional* and *political* knowledge is an indispensable requirement.” (in Rivera, 2002, p.102; italics added). This institutional-based value system is the rule in Cuba but not in the capitalist countries where value choices are viewed as subjective interpretations of ethical principles (Anderson, 1997). What in the capitalist system belongs to the domain of the private sphere, in Cuba is the object of public control.

The enterprise perfecting programme aims to achieve: the implementation of decentralized functioning, the deepening of market relations across the value chain, and a better use of financial indicators. *Perfeccionamiento empresarial* can be understood as a controlled experiment to substitute the traditional forms of administration by practices more suitable to a market economy logic. Companies admitted to the programme are encouraged to pursue a set of managerial goals that include greater autonomy in decisions of staffing and compensation, management by objectives and monetary

rewards as sources of motivation, the creation of a culture of continuous improvement, and the use of total quality management as a means for organizational betterment. Its tight control by the corresponding ministry ensures that excessive liberties will not be granted to managers and their companies. It then effects a synthesis between managerial accountability and central ideological control.

The individual level. Managers in Cuba were traditionally selected from the breed of “vanguard workers”. Vanguard managers were those who best guaranteed the defence of the conquests of the revolution. Their ideological merits needed to be unquestionable (thesis). This is in contrast with the western view of the competent manager, one who needs to be skilful in technical terms (antithesis). Competent managers in the Fayolian style are said to be those able to plan, organize, direct and control. Or, in the Mintzbergian approach, they are those able to play the interpersonal, informational and decisional roles (Mintzberg, 1973). These roles are concerned with the organization. In the case of Cuba, an alternative concept of the good manager seems to be developing: that of the ideological bricoleur (synthesis).

Ideological bricoleurs use the political context as a resource. Deep knowledge of the ideological material and proved loyalty, allows managers-as-ideological-bricoleurs to use political ideas in unusual, though legitimate, ways. Deep knowledge of the materials is a requisite for bricolating (Weick, 1993); unquestionable loyalty is fundamental for infusing change with legitimacy (Dacin et al., 2002). Taking the context as resource means that micro-political (Burns, 1961) bricolage is a means for variation. Micropoliticking refers to the capacity to use individual prestige and personal relationships to alleviate the institutional pressure and influence the acceptance of

favourable variations in the managerial process. In this case, managerial variation is introduced and legitimized in reference to the political context. We call it ideological bricolage because one needs to be quite familiar with the ideological material to use it in novel ways without appearing to be counter-revolutionary. Martin de Holan and Philips (2002) pointed out how politically respected managers use their prestige as a means for gaining an increasing level of autonomy in the administration of their companies, through a delicate combination of political orthodoxy and managerial innovation.

CONCLUSIONS

In their research on the institutional environment of Chinese firms, Boisot and Child (1988) noticed that organizational behavior was regulated by appeals to “good conduct” (p.512). In this paper we explored the process through which “good conduct” is communicated and enforced in practice through a system of institutional and social sanctions (Hagen and Choe, 1998) that aims to create something similar to what Adler and Adler (1988) called intense loyalty, or the devotional commitment of people to a common cause. Intense loyalty involves both a voluntary and enthusiastic adherence to a mission, and some degree of subordination and domination.

This study contributes to management knowledge through the analysis of the multiple levels involved in the process of intense loyalty creation in Cuba, the last communist country in the western world. We concluded, in line with Merkens et al. (2001), that managers absorb values with high ideological content and use them as triggers and justifications for action. The paper also highlights the role of the political/ideological forces in managerial practice, a fact that tends to be obscured in the West, due to the relatively recent idea that organizations are independent of the state and not instruments

of the government (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2003). Taking Cuba as a “political machine” (Thomas, 2001, p.993), one views managers as political actors who at once reinforce the structure through ideological loyalty, and change it through action intended to solve practical, local problems. The paper thus contributes to the understanding of organizations as instruments of ideology.

This is easy to notice in the case of Cuba but may not be much different in the West, where managers internalize a set of ideological values and use them as part of their strategic repertoires. The ideologies of the free market, shareholder value creation, and managerial agency are possibly no less potent than the socialist ideology in Cuba. Ideological changes may be, however, more difficult to notice in the case of Western countries because they are apparently natural, hence unmanaged. The dialectical tension between the dominant logic and the new challenges is relatively salient in Cuba as a source of change. Similar topics may be less visible in the West because their shaping comes from multiple sources.

In parallel with this research, it could be pertinent to study the dynamics of ideology in the west, namely the emergence of the dominant theories of the firm. This analysis would help to understand the development of different capitalist models as well as the growing dominance of the American-based shareholder capitalism model. If the Cuban state looks for the creation of managers intensely loyal to the socialist approach, it may not be less true that western governments look for intensely loyal managers to the capitalist approach. If that is the case, it could be relevant to analyze the multi-level configuration of processes used for accomplishing such a purpose.

The study suffers from several limitations. Some of these have to do with the design. The approach is qualitative, and alternative interpretations could have been extracted (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1987). This limitation is linked with another: the interpretations developed in this paper have been elaborated from a foreign perspective. This may have advantages, as an outsider may be more distanced and aware of the singularity of management and organizing in Cuba, but it has some disadvantages as well, including the necessarily distant knowledge of national culture. It is also possible that the interpretations produced here have been marked, to some extent, by what Cubans call *doble moral* – double standards (Lepper, 2003): thinking one thing and saying another. Processes like *doble moral*, social desirability or any other form of social conformity exist and we cannot guarantee that, in one way or another, they were not operating during the data collection process.

Despite its limitations, the research provided an exploratory understanding of the dynamics of managerial ideology in Cuba, a country where ideological factors are more explicit than in Western capitalist contexts. It contributed to a nested, multi-level understanding of management and organization as parts of a wider institutional context, which is both a source of constraint and a non-tangible resource to be used by ideological bricoleurs. This dialectical interplay between the acceptance of ideology and its use as a practical resource is a potential source of change. As such, paradoxically, the same professional class (managers) may act both as a source of continuity and a trigger of change, a finding that is in line with institutional theory's observation that it is necessary to understand both institutionalization and de-institutionalization (Scott, 2001), or the persistence and variation of social institutions (Goodrick and Salancik,

1996). This study suggests that these may be simultaneous, instead of contrary or sequential processes, a finding that should be further explored.

The articulation of multiple levels seems to be necessary for understanding the process of institutional change, as pointed out by Dacin et al. (2002). Most of the aspects discussed above may, to a certain degree, be common to capitalist societies, and with this research we hope to have contributed to the understanding of management as a professional process deeply embedded in the wider societal context, namely on the often “transparent” but influential ideological context. It thus helps to explore the concept of agency as “a temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998, p.963) which is informed by the past (e.g., in this case the revolutionary ideals), the present (e.g., the need to solve immediate problems) and the future (e.g., the preservation of the “revolutionary” ideal without the present material constraints).

Post Scriptum: In the summer of 2004, the Cuban government started a campaign to eradicate corruption and illegalities from the business sector. As reported in the business press: “The new focus on corruption has been accompanied by measures to strip state businesses of their limited operational autonomy and to scrap executive perks such as expense accounts” (Frank, 2004, p.5). According to José Ramón Machado Ventura, a political bureau member, Cuba “was not only copying ‘capitalists’ management technique, but [also] its methods and style” (in Frank, 2004, p.5)

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Table 1

The dialectics of ideology at several levels: The emerging themes

	Thesis	Synthesis	Antithesis
Institutional environment	The revolutionary society	The regulated market	Competitive markets
Professional culture of management	Custodian of the revolution	Socialist manager	Managerial agency and intention
Organizational culture	The socialist enterprise	The perfected socialist enterprise	The capitalist enterprise
Organizational behavior	The vanguard worker	The ideological bricoleur	The competent manager