

CHAPTER 7



EGALITARIAN AND HIERARCHICAL TENSIONS IN CUBAN SELF-EMPLOYED VENTURES

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Historically, Cuba has been exposed to different state models. From the Spanish colonial extractivist state, Cuba became a neo-colony of the US, inextricably linked to US industrial and corporate capital. Property and resources were either owned by North American magnates or in the hands of Cuban elites that responded to US interests. After the 1959 Revolution, and particularly since the mid 1960s, Cuba became integrated into the Soviet economy and was under the influence of state corporatism of the USSR, where the Soviet Party controlled both economic and political processes. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba has developed economic ventures with China, Spain, Canada and various partners within the region, such as Venezuela and Argentina. During the decade of the Pink Tide, the regional political configuration of left-leaning governments that supported alternative views to the North American neoliberal model provided a friendlier economic and ideological network for Cuba.

The recent move to the right in Latin American governments and the increasing antagonism of the Trump administration present a radical regional shift. The corporatization of the state in Latin America and elsewhere, more than an economic force, transforms personhood and reconfigures people-state relationships. In the 1960s and 1970s, the leftist projects in Latin America (the Cuban Revolution, Allende's Chile, the Nicaraguan Sandinista Revolution) proposed alternatives to the imperial capitalist North American model. At the core of these ideologies, strongly influenced by Marxism and Anarchism, was the radical challenge to capitalist American hegemony –

an anti-colonialist agenda. After the Cold War, and particularly in the new millennium, the rise of 'el socialismo del siglo xxi' in Latin America saw the emergence of egalitarian ideologies that were less influenced by Soviet and Anarchist thought. A multiplicity of 'alternatives' to the neoliberal way emerged. Indigenous ontologies (Viveiros de Castro 1998), environmental principles (Carneiro da Cunha and De Alemida 2000) and urban social movements (Castells 2012) not only contest US hegemony; they are also incorporated into state projects, such as Bolivia, Chávez's Venezuela and for a time in Ecuador. The content, interests and configuration of anti-colonial resistance diversified and in the process became somewhat disaggregated and atomized, to the detriment of the more international class-based struggle of the 60s and 70s (see Oikonomakis this volume for an example of this in Bolivia).

Alternative movements in Latin America – social movements – dissatisfied with centralized socialist governments must contend with a different emergent form of statehood (see Introduction) to that of the twentieth century. No longer the military regime of the 1960s and 70s, and exceeding the traditional distinctions between left and right, the state is being transmuted into a more corporate configuration: Mauricio Macri in Argentina perhaps represents this move the clearest, although Chile and Mexico are also strongly corporatized states (see Introduction and respective chapters). The apparent demise of the Pink Tide and the emergence of the corporate state with neoliberal discourse as its *modus operandi* are effecting change in Cuban revolutionary conceptions at a time when centralized leftist governments and colonial struggles (though still relevant) are being transformed, and class relations reconfigured. While Cuba is equally exposed to global corporatizing forces – particularly in its relation to the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industry and its close dependence on Venezuela's oil – this takes different forms, given the centrality of the Cuban state in economic and political processes. The penetration of state-transforming corporatizing processes is perhaps most clearly seen in the tensions between emerging forms of non-state employment reconfiguring labour relations.

The corporatization of state structures in Latin America affects Cuba both through regional and international political and economic relations with other (more corporatized) states such as China or Spain, as well as through the internal transformations of state-people relations by shifting labour structures (the development of biotechnology, self-employment, tourism), the growing popularity of the internet, and transformations in the understanding of revolution. Different hierarchies of value emerge, challenging revolutionary ideologies: the atomization of the social, a reduction of the collective subject of the 1960s, a reinvigoration of the family and increased individualism. Paradoxically, while the family – a bourgeois institution par

excellence (Engels 1993 [1884]) – can have oppressive and hierarchical effects, Cuban matrilocally organized kinship structures serve to redistribute resources (particularly in times of scarcity) and are more recently being harnessed to reconfigure political and economic processes outside spaces of state control.

In this chapter, I analyse the tensions within emerging forms of labour in the process of redefining revolutionary value and reconstituting social relations. This is crucial at a time when regional state structures are being transformed and the Cuban state is undergoing its own generational shifts, with the assumption of the new president Miguel Díaz-Canel in April 2018. Tensions exist between different forms of labour: self-employment, state-centralized labour organizations (unions, state employees, taxation offices) and cooperative ventures. These tensions are not merely economic (capitalism versus communism, or the possible penetration of neoliberal policies). They bring to the fore a different crisis: one of the hierarchies of value and egalitarian processes. Self-employed ventures – their interactions with other forms of labour and their structural configuration – reveal egalitarian spaces that partially disrupt established hierarchies (centralized state structures, male-dominated activities, oligarchic groups), contesting them and momentarily subverting them. However, these spaces are also amenable to be co-opted by regional corporatizing dynamics, such as international NGO funding, microcredit financial institutions, émigré Cubans, international corporations and foreign political interests, thus becoming spaces of contestation of competing hierarchies of value. I consider the origins of Cuban egalitarian ideas and argue that other forms of egalitarian processes, not always recognized as such (matrifocality, ‘socialismo’, self-employed ventures), are effecting social transformation and disrupting established hierarchies.

Egalitarian Ideas in the Cuban Revolution

Egalitarian ideology in Cuba has not only been shaped by Marxist and Soviet thought. While the initial ideologies of the *guerrilleros* were more strongly influenced by the experiences and ideas of the Russian Revolution, the strong anti-colonial character of the struggle demanded a Latin American perspective. Anti-colonial thinkers, such as Simón Bolívar, José Martí, José Carlos Mariátegui, Rubén Martínez Villena or Julio Antonio Mella have been cornerstones of the Cuban Revolution, and their ideas are periodically reconsidered and given a current spin (Cantón Navarro 2008; Estrade 2006; Hart Dávalos 2009a, 2009b, 2010), and their words are regularly published in official media (see for example Granma 2018). The incorporation of other

discourses after the collapse of Soviet communism has redefined egalitarian thought in a radically transformed region. The first marked shift was given by the recourse to environmental and ecological ideas, which were widely incorporated in support of urban agricultural programmes in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Gold 2014a). This helped the Cuban revolution position itself in opposition to the increasingly evident ecologically disastrous consequences of Soviet agriculture (Doyon 2005; González 2003). Changes in emigration policies initiated in the 1990s also shifted political discourse regarding the constitution of the revolutionary person. The family replaced 'the people' as an undifferentiated mass, with massive implications for the scale of revolutionary action, as an activity that had the family at its core – once considered a counter-revolutionary individualist action – it would increasingly become defined as politically acceptable (see Gold 2015). In the context of a redefined revolutionary nucleus, kinship relations gained new potency to express revolutionary commitment, but the importance of kinship is not new.

Matrifocality is deeply rooted in historic processes that shaped the Caribbean (slavery and the structures of plantations, colonial settlements, racial inequalities and seasonal migration) (see Safa 2009 for an overview). Structural transformations in Cuba in the 1960s enabled the further development of matrifocal families, such as an increased participation of women in the workplace, a de-stigmatization of divorce, the levelling of inequalities (especially in terms of race and class hierarchies) and the increased role of the welfare state as basic provider. In the anthropological literature, matrifocality has been observed to contest the aggregation of male patrilineal groups into centres of control of resources (land, social capital, money). It is significant that matrifocal networks become relevant again in times of economic scarcity, when the reorganization of domestic activities for economic subsistence becomes important and at a particularly relevant moment in Cuban history when property is once more subjected to accumulation. At a time when property again obtains exchange value, the concentration of property along female lines can serve as a counter-mechanism to male-dominated activities (such as construction, mechanic cooperatives etc.) that are more lucrative than female-based activities in the home. This is particularly important when property enters the chain of value through marriage of a Cuban woman with a foreigner. In the context of regional transformations of state structures that undermine both the centralized economy of the Cuban state and effect transformations at the very level of individual life, historically relevant egalitarian forces that aim to counteract hierarchical structures (male chauvinism, centralized state power, corporatization through cooperative activities and international development funding) are revalued. Matrifocal networks contribute to the revaluing of property and the economic activ-

ities that take place in the home when labour relations are changing with the strengthening of cooperatives into (often male-dominated) corporate groups that compete with the state in the provision of services, and (crucially) do not have the public interest as central motivation.

Matrifocality in Caribbean Anthropology

The concern with matrifocality in the Caribbean is a classic anthropological interest stemming from kinship studies in African societies. Inspired by the likes of Meyer Fortes and his work in the Ashanti area of Ghana, anthropologists like Raymond Smith (1996) applied socio-spatial theories developed through the study of different African groups to understand the lifeworlds of black communities in the Caribbean. Matrifocality was observed in many parts of the Caribbean, particularly among the black and poor (often overlapping categories). Helen Safa (1998, 2005) recognized the historic roots of matrifocality, extending back to slave populations, and the impact of the separation of slave conjugal unions but not of mother-child bonds, making consanguineal bonds stronger than conjugal ones. This was also supported by interracial mixing during the colonial period, as female-headed households were often the product of consensual or visiting unions between white men and slaves or free women of colour (Safa 1998: 205). The mulatto children born of these unions were able to better incorporate themselves into white society. The dual marriage system, which only allowed legal marriage between white elites, confining the rest of the population to consensual unions, contributed to the widespread acceptance of alternative forms of domestic organization (Safa 2009: 43). Labour migrations also weakened the conjugal bond and gave pre-eminence to the mother-child tie.

Matrifocality implies two elements: local organization of the kinship group and the articulation of resources along female kin. Therefore, the organization of the household, the habitation patterns of offspring and the power to make decisions relies on the female head of the household (Miller 1988; Solien 1965). In Cuba, it is the woman in her role of mother that lies at the centre of family relations (Härkönen 2010). This does not exclude the possibility of a male breadwinner, but his presence is more contingent. With the high index of divorce, women form more stable members of households, while men move in and out and have children scattered in different locations. In Cuba, matrifocality presents itself in contrast to the patriarchal image of the revolutionary leadership: Fidel as the 'father' of the revolution and the Cuban nation (Härkönen 2010: 60). The female-focused family unit – increasingly the locus of economic activities at the micro-level – stands in tension with the male-dominated political group (*el pueblo*). This tension did not go

unnoticed by Fidel in his youth, as he initiated many programmes for the incorporation of women into the political project: the retraining of prostitutes, the implementation of child-care services to incorporate women sooner to the workforce and the creation of the Federation of Cuban Women.

Matrifocality became a topic of interest in the 1970s; in many Caribbean locations (Guyana, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Cuba) it was a practice on the rise. Governments and scholars interpreted it as an indication of an aberrant practice that responded to the breakdown of the social fabric (Blackwood 2005), a traditional evolutionist view of the family identified by Engels, Marx and Lewis Henry Morgan, who saw the male-headed household as the more evolved and modern form. As matrifocality increased in many locations across the Caribbean, anthropological studies showed that it was not a symptom of crisis but had instead clear roots in slave history and was simultaneously influenced by race, class and labour relations. Matrifocality could potentially redistribute resources and challenge male-dominated land tenure systems.

In a longitudinal study of family constitutions and females in the workforce, Safa (1995, 1998, 2008, 2009) observed that the presence of matrifocality in different Caribbean locations responds to women's increased participation in the workforce, the prevalence of consensual unions and the erosion of the status of legal marriage. In Cuba, particularly, the acceptance of divorce due to antireligious policies, the shortage of houses and the race and gender equality policies, while not completely successful, contributed to the increase of female-headed households. This gave rise to a structural tension between the hierarchical, male-dominated centralized state and the female control over the private domestic sphere.

Matrifocality is not confined to black or poor populations in Cuba, and the extended family, crucial for the sustenance of households before the Revolution, has gained renewed importance since the Special Period. Lack of available housing sees the cohabitation of three generations, useful in the rearing of children, the concentration of government-provided goods and money and the redistribution of duties. Grandmothers take care of children while mothers work, grandfathers queue at the *bodega* (distribution depot) for rations of rice, eggs, nappies or milk, making the maternal grandparents (particularly the grandmother) a person's most important kin (Härkönen 2010: 62). In my fieldwork observations (2009–2016), it was common for adult unmarried daughters to live with their mothers, while unmarried sons moved in with their maternal grandmother, in the instances where she had her own house.

Matrifocal structures have remained strongly active in the reorganization of labour in times of crisis and the capitalization of the female-centred labour power into self-employed ventures. The division of labour between

calle/casa (Pertierra 2008) – between the public and private spaces – permeates the emergence of new forms of employment, such as self-employed ventures. Ventures predominantly organized from within the household are a source of labour for women. In parallel, however, self-employed activities are also mechanisms by which men can harness what is a female space and capitalize on women's labour for profit. Therefore, the tensions that plague gender relations within social ties are also present in the articulation of economic activities emerging after the Special Period: at once hierarchical and centralized as they are regulated by the state, while simultaneously breaking up hierarchical orders into new configurations of social, political and economic units.

Forms of Employment and Revolutionary Value

Non-state employment existed in Cuba throughout the history of the revolutionary process but was sometimes exposed to stricter control, such as in the Soviet period between the mid 1960s to the late 1970s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, an increase in self-employed ventures (legal and illegal) represented spontaneous expressions of grass-roots subsistence mechanisms aiming to cover the gaps left by a contracting central state. The disappearance of CAME (Consejo de Ayuda Mutua Economica and COMECON, Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) cost Cuba 47 per cent of its exports, its subsidies from the USSR, and a 70 per cent reduction of imports (Sacchetti 2011). The family became the central locus of production and provision, replacing the state's incapacity to cover all the needs of daily life. People became responsible for their own subsistence, selling the subsidized products of the *libretas* (state ration booklet), finding ways to make a living out of tourism, provisioning from state goods, selling services not regulated by the state, and from remittances.

The first self-employed businesses started as exchange networks between the city and the country: food for consumer products (soap, shampoo, cosmetics), but in the IV Party Congress in 1991 the emergence of self-employment was officially discussed, and the constitution was changed to contemplate the possibility of some forms of private property and small businesses. There are today various types of non-state employment in Cuba that have reconfigured people-state relations within the revolutionary project. No longer the sole provider, the state is relegated to the role of supervisor as cooperatives and *cuentapropistas* take over many economic activities. There are legal and structural differences between the constitution of cooperatives (and there are different types of cooperatives) and other small-scale ventures, such as houses for rent and private restaurants, generically

referred to as *cuentapropistas*. There are three types of agricultural cooperatives, described by EcuRed as follows:

1) *Unidad Básica de Producción Cooperativa* (UBPC) Basic units of cooperative production: these constitute a socio-economic community where production is conducted communally and land is communally owned from state land used in usufruct. They are constituted by workers from the state sector and means of production (raw materials) must be purchased from the state. They must focus on specific crops (sugar, citrus, fruit, coffee, tobacco and animal husbandry).

2) *Cooperativas de Créditos y Servicios* (CCS) Credit and services cooperative: These are voluntary organizations of farmers who retain private ownership of their land but share common use of certain means of production (watering installations, services and credits). This organization of individual producers facilitates the provision of credits and financial assistance by the state to a communal rather than individual entity. Infrastructure (tractors and tools) and production are, however, private.

3) *Cooperativa de Producción Agropecuaria* (CPA) Agricultural production cooperative: These constitute a collective form of social property resulting from the decision of farmers to join lands and means of production in collective ownership. It is seen as an advanced and efficient socialist economic entity.

There is a fourth non-agricultural cooperative:

4) *Cooperativa no Agropecuaria* (CNoA) Non-agricultural cooperatives: These are constituted by people working as partners (*socios*) in non-agricultural activities. These emerged in 2013. Ex. Mechanics, construction workers, hospitality workers etc.

A different type of non-state employment includes that of *Trabajadores por cuenta propia* (TPCP workers 'on their own account', *cuentapropistas* for short). These are workers that may or may not be the owners of the means of production but are not subjected to a labour contract with juridical entities and do not receive a salary. This group includes craftsmen, writers, intellectuals, rental property owners, hairdressers, classic-car drivers (and a list of at least 178 activities described in resolution No. 32/2010). They must be registered and obtain a licence from the Oficina Nacional de Administración Tributaria (ONAT), pay for a monthly licence and pay taxes on their income. The numbers of CNoA have dramatically increased from 2013 (the year of their legalization) from 196 to 367 in 2015, with 192 existing in Havana. Out of the total number of CNoA, 131 of them are within the commerce and repair of personal objects; 91 in hotels and restaurants, 61 within the construction industry and 49 in the manufacturing industry (Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2016). The reason for this increase is that CNoA offer a

tributary advantage over TPCP, as they are taxed less over their income because the government assumes that a cooperative ownership will contribute to the redistribution of earnings, while *cuentapropistas* (TPCP) are assumed to benefit individuals.

These are not easy distinctions to make in practice, as CNoA are often constituted by kin, concentrating earnings in family groups, and *cuentapropistas* rely on (and support) a broad network of other *cuentapropistas* in what Armengol (2013) labels as competitive solidarity, which guarantees the redistribution of income from *cuentapropista* ventures throughout vast networks of the informal economy: plumbers, painters, construction workers, food preparation services, car services, tourist services and other *cuentapropistas* that help to ensure that *paladares* and *casas particulares* function properly (see Gold 2016 for example).

One of the most significant changes in the last decade in Cuba has been the boom of self-employment. This phenomenon has attracted much scholarly attention prompting questions regarding the possible emergence of a new middle class (Feinberg 2013), the penetration of the market into a socialist centrally planned economy (Catá Backer 2012) and the role of *cuentapropistas* as a possible site for civil society in the redefinition of the state (Bye 2012). While there is validity in all these observations, these often remain at an economic level, addressing the impacts of self-employment for the larger economic survival of the political project of the Cuban economy. However, these ventures also embed tensions that point to the contradictions permeating revolutionary values within shifting hierarchies of power.

Self-Employment: Hierarchical and Egalitarian Tensions

The 1990s saw the proliferation of tourism through mixed ventures between the Cuban state and Canadian and Spanish companies. Fidel Castro's bet on biotechnology has international partners within the pharmaceutical business, and China has gained prominence within the Cuban economy, investing in biotechnology, mining and tourism. International NGOs settled in Cuba in the 90s in order to promote the growth of civil society and other developmental discourses that attract donors, and since 2011 individuals can receive bank credits. These NGOs have aimed to expand liberal values (of equality, respect for human rights, entrepreneurial ethics), thus encouraging the penetration of neoliberal ideology into internationally funded projects. However, while people have partially incorporated these in order to receive funding in environmental projects as well as health-related and religious ventures (see Gold 2014a, 2014b), these have not completely subverted revolutionary ideology. This is partially due to the close relation of

the non-governmental sphere with the Cuban state, but it also emerges as a reaction against corporatizing processes that are often associated with the antagonisms of the powerful émigré Cuban community in Miami.

Furthermore, since the new millennium, the Internet has become more accessible, and while not everybody might have access at home (although more and more people do) they can access all North American and Latin American television, news and series through a uniquely Cuban product called *el paquete*¹ (the package). That is, Cuba has been exposed to the penetration of western-style corporatizing processes since the 90s, both from within the region as well as from European and Chinese relations.

The economic crisis and a radically transformed political situation after the fall of the Socialist Bloc disaggregated economic power beyond the purely political space of the Party or the state into other forms of association previously relevant but subjugated to the political project of the revolution for thirty years. What Cubans refer to as 'sociolismo' – understood by scholars as the social networks underpinning the informal economy and insufficiently glossed as nepotism – has historical roots in kinship ties and ought to be conceived as more than a response to the economic hardships of the Special Period. 'Socialist' networks and matrifocal structures have the potential to experience the horizontalization of relations opposing the accumulation of resources vertically, under foreign oligarchic power (such as transnational corporations), but they also have the capacity to enable further corporatization by contesting the state and potentially accumulating resources and influence along kinship ties and in successful business groups, giving rise to local oligarchies and emerging social classes, often drawn along racial lines.

The term *sociolismo* emerged in the 1990s to refer to the ambiguous and ubiquitous type of corruption that many Cubans engage with in order to meet their daily needs. It cannot easily be divided between dichotomies of legal and illegal, moral and immoral behaviour or public and private relations, and it exceeds bureaucratic structures. *Sociolismo* is on the one hand a state-based tactic of tolerating illegalities that emerge in times of economic crisis, and on the other, a network of social ties, sometimes superimposed on kinship networks and articulated in opposition to the centralization of power by the state (and other state-like institutions, such as international NGOs). Therefore *sociolismo*, which operates along ties of kinship, race and locality, is an egalitarianizing force aiming to wrest power away from the centralizing structures of the state and other hierarchical groups, like foreign companies or powerful cooperatives. Different from smaller-scale household ventures like *paladares*, rental properties and other gastronomic *cuentapropistas*, cooperatives, particularly those of construction workers, are burgeoning corporate groups that position themselves in competition with the state but rely on the private market of *cuentapropistas* as customers.

However, simultaneously, *sociolist*/kinship structures have hierarchical tendencies and harness kin with a centralizing and exploitative effect.

Cooperatives, encouraged by the state already in the 80s in order to create more autonomous economic units that would nonetheless function against the accumulation of resources in the hands of possible emergent oligarchic capitalist groups – egalitarian mechanisms for the distribution of capital and power – have simultaneously enabled the emergence of more individualist projects within the revolutionary spectrum of participation. Paradoxically, while acting as centres for the accumulation of capital and power in private hands, their particular kinship-oriented structures also contest power from oligarchic groups, such as foreign investors (particularly émigré Cubans from Miami). An analysis of the interactions between cooperatives and other self-employed ventures such as *paladares* (home-run restaurants) and *casas particulares* (rental properties) – often divided along gender lines – reveals the tensions between egalitarian practices that challenge a centrally planned economy and an emerging corporate hierarchy.

Recent studies on *cuentalpropistas* report gender divisions that correspond to domestic life roles: women *cuentalpropistas* tend to rent out houses, mend clothes, provide make-up and hairdressing services, make jewellery and flower arrangements and prepare fast food and pastries. Men drive taxis, have craft stalls, fix home appliances and carry out other activities outside the home (Ferragut and Piza Nicolau 2016; Pañellas Álvarez and Torralbas Oslé 2016). While some argue that these divisions reproduce historic structures of domination circumscribing women to the domestic sphere (Andaya 2013), in practice, women have been attending to domestic duties throughout the Revolution, even while they received at times more support from the state in matters of child care and job opportunities. The possibility of making a profit from the domestic sphere has its economic attractiveness, especially for retired women.

The male predominance of lucrative cooperatives such as construction and agriculture needs to be situated within relations between other self-employed ventures, such as rental properties and small-scale food ventures, located in the household (e.g. *paladares*, bakeries). The female predominance of household activities means that self-employed ventures run from the private spaces of the home are often administered by women, especially when focused on food preparation. The strong interdependence between the different sectors of the emerging (legal and illegal) private economy, underlined by *sociolist* networks, demands *cuentalpropistas* to cooperate in the interests of their businesses.

However, there are tensions between different self-employed activities. While matrifocal networks strengthen the *cuentalpropista* activity of rental houses and grant women access to landed property, other more profitable

self-employed ventures (e.g. construction cooperatives and *paladares*) tend to be male-dominated, making access to capital, contacts and much coveted construction materials more readily available. While men concentrate power and resources through cooperative activities, the centrality of matrifocal networks grants women access to capital, for which the domestic sphere and kinship relations have become key resources. The tensions played out throughout these economic activities are a symptom of the intrinsic dynamics within egalitarian and hierarchical processes, more visible in times of intensification of crisis and always constitutive of one another (see Introduction for more details).

Matrifocality, Corporatism and Cooperativism

The different sectors (agricultural, non-agricultural cooperatives, *cuentapropistas*) are in constant tension. *Cuentapropistas* can act as control mechanisms against the increasing power of cooperatives. The organization of self-employed activities within the household strengthens the ability of matrifocal kin to counteract male control over earnings, and *sociolista* networks that underpin all non-state and state employment provide another form of social organization that sometimes coincides with matrifocal kinship ties but at other times contests them (*santería* kin is an example, see Crahan 2003).

Casas particulares are usually female businesses. It is the grandmothers who run the rental houses. The daughter, married or more often divorced, and the grandchildren move in with the grandmother and rent the daughter's house. While the daughter generally works in a state job, the grandmother manages the rental property. In some cases, it is the grandchildren that manage the business, and the mother continues to work in the state job. In cases when mothers emigrate, the grandchildren remain with the grandmother and rent their mother's property.

This is compatible with Helen Safa's analysis of matrifocality as a mechanism of resisting not only the dominant patriarchal culture but also the conservative Catholic traditions inherited from the colonial era, where legal marriage was a mechanism of control, a legacy of the Republic era and North American influence (Stoner 1991). The extended family was always important in Cuba before the revolution and then gained importance again in the Special Period. The high incidence of extended families cohabiting is due to the austerity of the 90s and lack of availability of housing, but consanguineal ties also determine the spatial organization of families, the economic activities in which they are involved and the relations through which they cooperate. Despite a slight predominance of households with a male head

of 53.8 per cent (ONE 2016), since 2002 non-nuclear households have increased to 32 per cent in 2008 – that is, more and more households are made up of members other than the spouses and dependents (Del Carmen Franco Suárez and Alfonso 2008).

Matrifocality remains an important aspect in the constitution of the home in Cuba, continuing the trend observed by Nancy Solien de González (1965) and Raymond Smith (1973). Solien de González argued that broader consanguineous links are as important as those of mother-son to understand kinship in Cuba. In addition, it was the women who sustained the house and the family, even if the man was recognized as the ‘head of the household’ (Smith 1973). The father tends to position himself marginally in relation to the rest of the household group and to the network of relationships and domestic activities (Smith 1996). Pertierra (2008) observed similar patterns: men tend to move more frequently, occupying the homes of their partners (and the divorce rate in Cuba in 2015 was 2.9 – i.e. 56% of all marriages end in divorce²). Therefore men are less reliable resources in the social bonds necessary to maintain the home. Sons tend to move more than daughters, who usually stay in their mother’s house, even after they are married (Pertierra 2008: 748). This is clearly observed in *casas particulares*, when three matrilineal generations are usually grouped together in one house to be able to dispose of the other house for rent (Gold 2016).

Although the man is identified as head of the household, women articulate the mechanisms necessary for the home to function, as demonstrated by Pertierra (2008) in her study of homes in Santiago de Cuba. It is women who play the central role in the *casa*, and men should contribute to *calle* activities; for example, getting parts to fix household appliances, seeking out *socios* (business partner) for home improvements (such as adding a floor, window or fence). This gender orientation between the house and the street goes back to periods before the revolution, during the Spanish colonial rule among the urban mestizos (Pertierra 2008: 747). Anthropological studies of Cuba throughout history have shown that it has remained fairly stable (Lewis, Lewis and Rigdon 1977; Rosendahl 1997; Stoner 1991). While men can harness a more extensive network of *socios* in important male-dominated sectors such as the construction sphere, women have a stronger influence in the activities localized in the home.

The links that articulate both men and women are essential to maintaining a home. Matrifocality represents horizontal relations that oppose the accumulation of power and resources vertically in the hands of possible patriarchal and oligarchic groups. In times of change, when the state withdraws from the private space, kinship becomes relevant in articulating resources and influence. Self-employment has allowed women to obtain more independence from state employment; it provides a higher income, more

autonomous hours and less government control when granting travel authorization (without which people cannot leave the country), for example. Even while state employment can be valued for being more socially meaningful and having less responsibilities (Gordy 2015), self-employment is often sought (sometimes in parallel) as a form of income. Cooperatives and self-employed businesses are more than expressions of emerging capitalism and neoliberal entrepreneurship. Their kinship patterns indicate other mechanisms at play that go beyond market rules. At times, these networks serve to challenge established hierarchies (the Party, the state, male-dominated groups), even while their egalitarian potential can also be harnessed by hierarchical structures that co-opt *sociolista* networks and matrifocal economic activities for corporate interests.

Sociolismo: A Logic of Social Relations

The term *sociolismo* is a combination of ‘partner’ and socialism; it is an ironic and critical commentary on the state’s official policy. *Socios* (business partners) solve problems of all kinds, ranging from something as innocuous as obtaining flour (an often scarce resource), photocopying a book, printing a document or sending an e-mail, if one does not have the means to, to more important issues such as arranging employment or travel documents. That is, the favours that are asked of a *socio* belong to daily life and transcendental issues alike. The *sociolista* network becomes a resource: in a process of delayed reciprocity, helping a *socio* sets an expectation that at some point the *socio* will repay.

Paladares are particularly reliant on *sociolista* ties because they depend on the contingency of resource availability. *Paladar* owners, who tend to be men, must have contacts in construction cooperatives (to refurbish and extend houses); in agricultural cooperatives³ (to obtain the best produce); in mechanical cooperatives and especially the cooperative of tourist guides (to ensure a regular clientele). In addition, they must maintain good relations with *casas particulares*, as a source of clients both foreign and Cuban with increasing purchasing power – and with neighbours, in order to avoid complaints due to potential excessive noise or increased traffic, or jealousy. Therefore, the owner of a *paladar* needs many *socios* because setting up a business in Cuba is not easy, with the state being the central provider.

In Playa, a *paladar* opened in the basement of a residential building. The basement used to be a shed where the sellers of the local agricultural market stored their products. Predicting that the neighbours would not be happy with a venture that would bring more noise to the neighbourhood, the owner organized a free dinner before the *paladar* opened. He met all the

neighbours and by offering free meals he established personal relationships with them that would encourage them to bring complaints straight to him and not to the municipal inspectors. *Paladares* are still mostly family-run enterprises. In this way they have the effect of wresting economic power from the state, as it no longer is the sole provider of food, jobs and labour. The owner of the venture is the father or the mother, and the children work as waiters, cooks, suppliers, accountants etc. Thus profit remains within the family. After 2011, self-employed ventures were allowed to hire contractual labour, but employees are paid less, sometimes work without a valid contract and are therefore unprotected by the law. In this way, self-employed ventures can become corporate groups and sources of exploitation. In 2016, people demanded the state to intervene in price control of private transport *cuentalpropistas*, who increased costs of transport when petrol became more expensive because of Venezuela's oil crisis. In similar ways to that described by Angosto-Ferrández (this volume), people demanded the state to uphold its role of protector and redistributor in times when corporate groups are seen to conspire against the interests of the social.

Sociolism exists in both public and private spaces – that is, it occurs in self-employment as well as state work because they are mutually dependent. For example, construction cooperatives, some of the most successful, must buy their materials from state suppliers, where the items are overpriced due to state monopoly. Therefore, to make a profit, people must obtain them *por la izquierda* (illegally). This usually implies that a state employee who works for the state-monopolized supplier *salva* (saves, appropriates illegally) the materials to resell, or a member of the cooperative has a *socio* who works for the state construction company and through exchange of favours, money or work obtains the necessary materials. An employee of a state research centre explained they were renovating the centre's buildings, and the work was being carried out by a state-owned construction company. As soon as the company finished building the cement fence along the perimeter, and even though the renovations were not completed, more than half the builders resigned, as once the fence was built it was no longer possible to easily take construction materials to resell or use in self-employment projects, and it was more profitable to use the time in self-employed projects.

The embezzlement of goods does not only take place between individuals and the state but also between individuals and cooperatives. The decree law number 305 'of non-agricultural cooperatives' determines in Article 4 point c) that cooperatives have to be created and directed in a democratic and egalitarian way: 'The acts that govern the economic and social life of the cooperative are analysed and decided upon in a democratic way by the partners, who participate in decision-making practices with equal rights.' Although cooperatives are conceived as egalitarian institutions where the

profits are equally distributed, in practice these are often constituted by a person who calls himself the president – an inappropriate hierarchical title – earns more than others, and has the power to hire and fire employees. Alternatively, cooperatives are built around family units, with different members (mother, father, father-in-law, wife etc.) as associates, which then hire employees, concentrating profits within a family group. The role of *paladares* is particularly interesting in revealing the tensions between the domestic space and gendered labour, as these restaurants must be set up in the home. Taking over the space of the home – a woman's domain – enables the hierarchical power of corporate groups to engulf the egalitarian potential of matrifocal networks that aim to contest the centralization of resources in the hands of a (usually male-dominated) group.

The importance of kinship networks in accruing resources and social capital in Cuba is not common to all of Latin America. A study on the articulation of the formal and informal sector in Bogotá reveals that, in the case of the construction industry, relations of kinship or camaraderie only serve to obtain the lowest paid and riskier jobs within a project (Lanzetta de Pardo et al. 1989). In Cuba, the opposite occurs; kinship relations are central to the organization of many cooperatives and *paladares*. The economic structures of these enterprises cannot be dissociated from the family, since the family is fundamental to the development of the activity, and the household is a central location for most of them.

The most productive *sociolista* links are not random, nor are they purely circumscribed to business. There must be a relationship of kinship, friendship, work, school, neighbourhood, religion or in some cases gender and race for someone to demand a favour. However, *sociolista* ties are not circumscribed to Cubans. Given the changes of 2011 that enabled the buying and selling of houses, many foreigners are buying houses in the name of Cubans. A foreigner can buy property in Cuba but is strictly curtailed by state control on the type of house and use given to it. In order to subvert these limitations, foreigners marry Cuban women (it tends to happen that a foreign man marries a Cuban woman, and less frequently the reverse⁴) to obtain residency and be able to buy a house. This inserts foreigners into the complex kinship networks that regulate the transactions of *sociolism*. The case of Spaniard Alberto with the Cuban Yaneli illustrates this trend.

They have known each other for many years, since Alberto travels to Cuba every European winter to take advantage of the sex tourism that flourished in the 90s. Alberto used to stay in the same private house where Yaneli cleaned. They are good friends; she is of his generation but not his sexual partner; Alberto goes to Cuba in search for younger women. After many years, and thanks to the new policies in 2011, Alberto decided to buy a house in Yaneli's name for his personal use. They got married and made a

prenuptial contract that leaves her the house in the event of his death, and while he is in Spain she takes care of the house. For Yaneli, having Alberto as a *socio* is priceless: a cell phone, the excess building materials she gets when Alberto fixes his house, and she eventually gets to inherit it as her own. Yaneli has a daughter – who lived with her until she left for the US illegally in 2015 – and a son living and working in Cuba. She has her own one-room apartment and is extending it upwards with the help she receives from Alberto. Kinship networks serve as economic resources both inside Cuba and across borders.

Conclusion

The complexities of *sociolista* relations reveal the tensions underpinning the different modes of employment emerging in Cuba, particularly since 2011. Many elements contribute to unpacking this complexity:

- 1) Location and genre of the venture: a household-run activity like a rental property is dominated by women in the family, while construction or mechanic cooperatives are run outside the domestic sphere and dominated by men;
- 2) State-private relations: the overlapping of state and private employment becomes evident through the *sociolista* networks that underpin and interconnect both extremes in the complex scale of employment opportunities in Cuba.

These activities are interdependent; they generate clientele and resources for each other. While male-dominated *calle* activities are often more profitable and accrue more political power, they are kept in check by matrifocal kinship networks that control an important bulk of tourist activities and determine the functioning of household and family life. In a reversal of what was intended by the state, non-agricultural cooperatives have the potential to function as oligarchic corporate groups, while *cuentalpropistas* (often demonized as individuals seeking private profit) interact with other cooperatives and counteract the hierarchies of emerging corporate groups.

These activities do not just reveal an increasing variety of employment opportunities and the – to a certain extent – disaggregation of state control over the economy. More importantly, the re-emergence of the importance of matrifocality in the contestation of male power and accumulation of control over resources reveals the endurance of certain forms of social relations even beyond the project of social engineering that state socialism represents. Another important implication of matrifocality in Cuba at this particular mo-

ment of the intensification of transformations in the region is that different forms of power do not necessarily come from traditional political spheres (political parties and ideologies, social movements, state structures). Patterns of social organization in Cuba – and matrifocality is an egalitarian form of organization, as it contests patriarchal hierarchies – have played a key role in the reconfiguration of activities that generate value (monetary, social or political) in the process of redefining revolutionary personhood.

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NOTES

1. A young Cuban with informal access to the internet at home (perhaps the son or nephew of a member of the FARC, Armed Forces) downloads a collection of media tailor-made for each client and delivers it in a hard drive each week. The cost varies according to the size of the drive.
2. http://www.one.cu/publicaciones/cepde/anuario_2014/11_capitulo_V.pdf.
3. In March 2018, wholesale markets opened in Havana to cover the demand for bulk orders by *paladares* and other *cuentapropistas*. This new measure is intended to address complaints by the non-state employment sector that provisions are scarce and often obtained at whimsical prices.
4. In reverse cases, when Cuban men marry foreign women, the result is usually the emigration of the Cuban man, which in many cases is the intended purpose of the marriage.

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