



# Institutional dynamics in Cuban agriculture

A case study from three Cuban farms

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU  
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences  
Agriculture Programme – Rural Development  
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## Abstract

Cuba is still subjected to the trade embargo imposed by the United States in 1962, restricting global trade and historically forcing Cuba into a dependency on the Soviet Union for energy, oil, and agricultural inputs. Today's agricultural system in Cuba bears the imprint of this historical reliance in the form of institutional constraints that shape Cuban farmers everyday activities. Our thesis aims to identify institutions affecting the agricultural activities on three Cuban farms using a method consisting of interviews and field observations. Furthermore, we examine whether identified institutions are adapting to the structural changes of the post-Castro era. Empirical evidence is analyzed using a theoretical framework based on concepts including institutions, pre-definitions and habits, bureaucracy, and new institutionalism.

In the context of Cuban agriculture this thesis identifies both informal and formal institutions present on the three farms. Our findings identified the Cuban farmer as an informal institution consisting of collective notions of what it means to be a Cuban farmer. Additionally, we also identified practices from the era of state agricultural collectives as an informal institution. We address how habits from the era of state agricultural collectives are passed down through generations and become institutionalized.

Secondly, this thesis also identifies bureaucracy as a formal institution, notably the Cuban agricultural bureaucracy (CAB). This thesis emphasizes the bureaucratic problems that Cuban farmers face, such as complex regulations, delays in obtaining essential equipment, and the significance of connections and privileges within the system.

Lastly the thesis discusses institutional change in Cuban agriculture. Cuba's government has expressed interest in restructuring the agriculture industry and decentralizing some authority to cooperatives. Alongside farmers have experienced legislative changes that, for example, guaranteed greater access to farmers' markets. While there is a desire for change, our thesis emphasizes that the historical context and path-dependency of institutions continue to exert influence. While large external events such as COVID-19 and subsequent emigration have also had significant impacts on Cuba, potentially pushing the government to take action for change.

*Keywords:* institutions, institutional change, Cuba, agriculture, path-dependency, informal constraints, formal constraints

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# 1. Introduction

In all contexts when meeting farmers, either Swedish or Cuban, there is a large presence of constraints that frame farmers activities. The constraints can be government bureaucracy or something much more elusive like public opinions about what a farmer is and what they should occupy themselves with. Either way, all around us is “something” that both constrains and frames farmers (and everyone else's) actions. These are the institutions that authors like North and many scholars have focused a great amount of thought on.

Farming in Cuba is at first glance maybe more constrained than in other parts of the world, which makes it all the more interesting. A common saying to hear on the island is “*you get more time in prison for killing a cow than a person*”. The saying ridicules the at times absurd regulations put on farmers, such as the need for state officials to authorize the slaughter of individual animals. But moving on from the formal regulations there are also informal constraints such as the collective mind-sets inherited from when the state had a much stronger role in agriculture. However Cuba is changing in many respects, the days of the 1959-revolution feels increasingly far away. The question is whether the old institutions of agriculture are keeping up with said change. At the same time it must be stated that what is formal and informal differs a lot between contexts and cultures. Which makes it hard to correctly distinguish formal from informal, when theories about institutions often come from a global north perspective.

Changing institutions is not done with haste and according to some schools like historical new institutionalism it may nearly be impossible. But Cuba is entering a new era, the post-Castro era and the government is taking new steps to reform the country. Things that some farmers thought would never be allowed have been changed in just a few years. Our thesis will focus on identifying institutions within Cuban agriculture and describe how (or if) they are going through change.

The following will be a description of the thesis layout and its parts. Initially we present a short background of Cuban history regarding agriculture and the problem formulation. Here we try to frame the basic essence of the thesis in order to present the purpose and research question thereafter. Thereafter is the method, including research and ethical concerns, where reflections on the topic are made.

Following the method is the theoretical framework of the thesis. It includes four sections; institutions, pre-definitions and habits, bureaucracy and new institutionalism, concepts central for this thesis. Afterwards we display three farm cases from our empirical evidence to give a picture of the material in question. In the chapter on results and discussion, we try to define institutions in the Cuban agricultural sector with the help of the cases and theoretical framework. We do this in order to discuss institutional change in the discussion section. Lastly conclusions are presented.

## 1.1 Background

### 1.1.1 Background: Cuban history

In order to understand the emergence of today's Cuban agricultural system and its mechanisms, structures and vulnerabilities, one must first be familiar with Cuban history. This brief historical overview begins with the 1959 revolution, where Fidel Castro among others seized power from the US-backed rule. The revolution and the subsequent socialist transformation of Cuba meant a new system of nationalization and collectivisation of agriculture. Following the revolution the United States imposed a trade embargo against Cuba. Cuba's ability to engage in international trade was severely constrained by the trade embargo, which was put in place as a result of Cuba's relationship with the Soviet Union (this was during the height of the cold war). Consequently, until the fall of the Soviet block in 1991, the Soviet Union served as both Cuba's main trading partner and its primary source of oil imports (William N. Trumbull, 2017).

With the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba experienced an abrupt economic decline and energy shortages. Wright (2009) states that 78 percent of chemical fertilizers, pest- and disease control as well as 45 percent of electricity was lost as a result of the collapse of the Soviet block. Food and seed imports also plummeted by over 50 percent. This demonstrates the extent of Cuba's past dependence on the Soviet Union (Wright, 2009).

The collapse of the Soviet Union was the start of what Castro declared as “the special period”. The real effect of the crisis struck according to Wright (2009) a couple of years later when the system's storage and surplus was used up. Cuban agriculture could not function productively without the inputs required for the industrialized agricultural system, which until 1991 was supplied by the Soviet Union. As a result, the sale of sugar decreased by half, from 7000 million tons in 1989 to 3663 million tons in 1993 (Wright, 2009).

This led to the need for a new agricultural paradigm in Cuba, one focused on low-input solutions and innovations, agroecology. Agroecology with its focus on traditional methods and farmer innovations was adapted at an increasingly fast pace. Agriculture in the late 90s and early 2000s has been greatly characterized by this new paradigm, where a large movement for agroecology developed. An important part has been Cuban sovereignty, trying to create an agricultural system not dependent on external forces (Rosset & Benjamin, 2002 ).

### 1.1.2 Background: Cuban Agriculture today

We will now with some historical context try to describe some key aspects of current agricultural structure in Cuba. In some respects the 1960s agricultural reforms still characterize the farming sector, such as the type of farms that operate. After the revolution the government seized most lands in order to take control of food production. A large part was kept in state hands, much of these lands ended up as state farms (often sugarcane). The rest was put into different types of cooperative solutions, which significance has grown with time (Alvarez, M., et al. 2006).

Today there exists three types of cooperative organization forms; UBPC, CPA, CSS. Cooperativa de Producción Agropecuaria (CPA), is a cooperative where individual farmers have voluntarily joined their land and resources to a collective unit. There were economic incentives for doing so in the past, one being that the collective would pay a sum to the new farmer in compensation for the newly joined land and resources. Cooperativas de Créditos y Servicios (CCS) is a much less coherent form of cooperative, where farmers are more individualistic. In this case farmers still have rights to their own land, which they largely work on their own. However they do share some resources that may be capital intensive such as machinery. Lastly Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa (UBPC) are former state farms turned into cooperatives, with government aims for production. These cooperatives don't own their own land, as it belongs to the state. Furthermore they receive many of their inputs and resources needed from the state (Alvarez, M., et al. 2006).

All the farms that make up the empirical evidence for this thesis belong to the CSS type of cooperative. However, it was mentioned by all the farmers we met that the organizational type was not as crucial as it might seem. They proposed that it was merely a way of organizing land ownership and that some cooperatives work better than others.

### 1.1.3 Background: Change in Cuba

This last section of the background will focus on recent and current indications of change happening in Cuba. The last 10 years has presented a new reality for Cuba, as it has slowly entered a post-Castro era with first Fidels and more recently Raols stepping down from power. Some researchers have chosen to analyze the Cuban Communist Party's (PCCs) recent party congresses to identify change.

Fernandez (2014) focuses on the sixth party congress where the party identifies many ongoing problems, mainly within public administration. According to Fernandez (2014) the party aims to

“... establishing a proper balance between state centralization and decentralization, strengthening the institutional framework, confronting bureaucratism, and monitoring the effects of these measures on the population and on social justice”. (Fernandez, 2014)

Furthermore the PCC sees potential in a less centralized and planned economy, especially regarding agriculture. Where the cooperative sector is deemed as a good alternative to take greater responsibility. Something that already has been occurring in recent years with the state giving more and more land to the CPA and CSS cooperatives.

The most recent party congress, being the eight, has also been through analysis where similar themes appear. The Caribbean Council (2021) identifies that change is indeed in the air, especially with the new president Diaz-Canel. They state in their report;

“Díaz-Canel (president) said that the past five-year period which the Congress evaluated had not shown good economic results because of inefficiency in parts of the state business system, structural problems, overspending, and a lack of control of material and financial resources, as well as unnecessary bureaucracy”. (The Caribbean Council, 2021)

Lastly it should be mentioned that there are other sectors that have been going through great change in the post-Castro era. Hoffman (2016) brings up mainly four areas; press & media, bureaucracy, migration and foreign policy in regard to the USA. The non-state media, although not free, has been more tolerated in recent years, which is quite a shift compared to the past. Bureaucracy is in Hoffmans (2016) words moving from “*charismatic socialism to bureaucratic socialism*”. Meaning that the era where personal-ties in government and administration had great importance is coming to a close. Migration has also been loosening up, where it is much easier to be granted permission for going abroad



for a longer time than before. Lastly, the foreign policy and especially the stance towards the USA has been changing, where dialogue (especially during the Obama years) has been taking place. Perhaps the days of the embargo may come to a close at some point.

## 1.2 Problem formulation

Change is occurring in Cuba, something that both farmers and the government seem to be aware of. All change can be viewed from an institutional perspective, which this thesis will focus on. Cuban farmers must adapt to the changes that are taking place in the agriculture sector. According to our understanding, there is a lack of empirical evidence that defines institutions present in Cuban agriculture and examines how they change. The objective of this thesis is to identify institutions and its change through interviews and observations. Understanding institutions within the Cuban agricultural sector is crucial for comprehending the dynamics of Cuban agriculture and exploring avenues for change within the system.

## 1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the thesis is to identify which institutions are present on three Cuban farms. In addition, the thesis seeks to find possible suggestions to whether, and if so, how, and why these institutions change. The research questions is constructed as follows:

1. *Which formal and informal institutions can be identified within Cuban agriculture from three farms?*
2. *How (if) do these institutions change? And what institutional explanations could be suggested to this change?*

Existing research on institutional changes in Cuba is lacking according to our knowledge, we therefore believe it is important to create an understanding of how Cuban agricultural practices are influenced by institutions.

## 2. Method

In this section we will present as well as discuss the methods utilized to collect and analyze our field material. We start by outlining the methodology used for the interviews and observations conducted. Next, we remark on generalizability and reliability. Finally, we discuss the ethical implications of this thesis from the standpoint of the four research ethics principles in humanistic-social science research

### 2.1 Interviews

This thesis is based on observations and interviews conducted on three separate farms in the provinces of Artemisa and Sancti spiritus in Cuba. The farms all know of each other since they are all prominent within the agroecology movement in Cuba but don't collaborate in terms of trade or production. To each farm belonged a varying number of family members and/or employees. We conducted one semi-structured qualitative interview per farm. Candidates were chosen for the interview based on their position at the farm and their proficiency in English.

According to Bryman (2002) semi-structured interviews allow for the respondent to move in different directions and thereby reveal what is perceived as relevant and important to the interview while maintaining some degree of structure. On one hand we require this freedom of movement in order to detect what institutions are present in everyday life for our interview subjects. On the other hand, we had limited time with each farmer and the interview had to capture the essence of how farmers interact with institutions. Consequently, we decided on using semi-structured interviews. In hindsight this turned out to be a good choice because although all the farmers had many interesting stories, they also had a tendency to talk about pretty much everything, so it took some structure to keep the conversation significant to our study and on topic. Since the interviews follow approximately the same format, it was also possible to relate the interviews to one another.

Each time we conducted an interview, one of us led the conversation while the other took notes. As we spent several days on the farms it was not possible in practice to record every single conversation and interaction. As a result we only recorded some of the material.

## 2.2 Observations

We conducted observations in addition to the interviews. The intention was for the observations to be made in relation to everyday life on the farm, in relation to the agricultural labor we did on the farms, the conversations we had with farmers and field workers, and everything that happened in the vicinity of these activities.

As explained by Ahrne and Svensson (2015) an observation can either be open or hidden. In an open observation the researcher makes himself known while in a hidden observation the researcher operates under cover. In a similar manner can an observation be characterized as either passive or participatory. The passive researcher stays in the background and does not interact very much with the individuals he observes while a participating researcher, on the other hand, participates in different types of rituals (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). Our observations are characterized by being open and participatory.

There are several reasons why we decided to do observations in addition to the interviews. First, certain questions related to our research can be perceived as disrespectful. For instance, asking workers about the difference in productivity between the manager's presence and absence would not be appropriate.

Second, observations can provide answers to questions that cannot necessarily be expressed in interviews about the inner workings of the farm according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2009). This is essential if we're to comprehend Cuba's social and political environment in relation to its agricultural practices.

Lastly, it can be difficult for the interviewees to answer questions about their everyday life since it goes on without them taking special notice of it. Brinkmann and Kvale state that observations are particularly useful when it comes to getting answers to questions related to everyday life. The authors explain that observations can provide an insight into everyday life interactions and provide a more holistic view of social reality (Kvale & Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009).

## 2.3 Reliability and generalizability

In qualitative studies, reliability is defined by Bergström and Boréus in *Textens mening och makt* (2012) as, "...to be thorough in all stages of the investigation, to eliminate sources of error as far as possible" (Bergström & Boréus, 2012). Additionally, Brinkmann and Kvale argue that different researchers should be able to obtain the same results (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). Would the response

be the same, for instance, if a different researcher asked the same questions to the farmers we interviewed? Because the wording of the question affects the content of the answer, we made an effort to design our interview questions fairly neutrally. We do however include questions such as “*Are women limited to housework?*” which can be perceived as leading. However, according to Brinkmann and Kvale such questions do not necessarily jeopardize the validity of the answer. Leading questions can be used to confirm the reliability of the interviewee's answers or confirm the interviewee's stance ( Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009). Although discussing reliability in qualitative studies is challenging, we nonetheless want to touch on the topic with the claim that placing too much emphasis on reliability can restrict interviewers' creativity and interview style.

The generalizability of the essay should be discussed as a final point. Further, Brinkmann and Kvale explains how a high degree of generalizability indicates that the finding is relevant in contexts other than the local one. The authors further discuss whether generalizability is relevant in qualitative interview studies. On the one hand, research cannot be said to be accurate since the claims made by qualitative research are based on a small number of observations. But each phenomenon has its own logic and structure, negating the usefulness of generalization (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009).

In light of this, the generalizability of our study as a whole is on one hand limited since it only relies on interviews and observations of three farms. On the other hand, the research can serve as a guidance in other scenarios if the circumstances and conditions are sufficiently comparable regardless of whether it is based on only three informants.

## 2.4 Ethics and reflexivity

The four research ethics principles in humanistic-social science research serve as the foundation for the ethical reflections of this essay. The first one being the information requirement and the second being the consent requirement. We will only briefly discuss these and place greater emphasis on the last two ethical research principles. According to Vetenskapsrådet (2002), the information requirement implies in short that the researcher must inform all concerned parties about the objective of the research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). All participants involved in this paper have been informed twice about the researchers' goals: once while initiating contact via email and once in Cuba prior to the start of each interview. The necessity of consent has also been taken into account. The informants were participating on a voluntary basis and were informed about their right to abort the interview at any time.

The third ethical principle is the confidentiality requirement. The research must, as far as possible, respect the integrity of the participants and information provided by the informants must not be accessible to unauthorized persons (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). All participants' names and the names of their farms have been changed to remain anonymous for the purposes of this study. However we have not omitted information about the farms' location. The essay clearly states in which province the respective farm is located as well as provides detailed information like production orientation or farmsize. This information could theoretically make it possible to identify the farms and thus the farmers. Naturally, this is undesirable and violates the necessity for confidentiality. In writing the essay, the risk of non-confidentiality has been weighed against the benefit of the results. The findings of this study are important for the end purpose which is the thesis itself. In order to make this text as good as possible, we have chosen to include above mentioned information about the farm .

The last of the ethical principles in humanistic-social science research is according to Vetenskapsrådet (2002) the utilization requirement. The goal is to prevent the use of the research for applications that are commercial. When we received funding from the Maria Adelcruz scholarship fund we committed ourselves to distribute more generally comprehensible material that the public can take part in, as popular science. We have tried as much as possible to leave out personal information and instead put emphasis on general principles of Cuban agriculture and its innovative approaches.

It is also important to reflect on and discuss the author's role in this part of the essay, and most importantly, how the field study's funding through the Maria Adlercreutz Scholarship Fund, managed by the Swedish Cuban Association, is affecting the research. Firstly, the authors of this essay are two Swedish youths that in comparison to most Cubans can be considered of another socioeconomic background. Although time was spent working the fields at the Cuban farms involved in this essay we can not truly understand and navigate Cuban culture, norms and customs fully. We do not have the same level of familiarity with Cuba that a Cuban does, which may account for lack of detail and nuance. Because we lack the resources (languages, knowledge or lack of insight) to investigate them, some things might not be visible to us.

Furthermore we must be clear about the fact that the Swedish-Cuban friends association is funding a majority of our research in Cuba. Without the scholarship from the Swedish-Cuban friends this thesis would not have been possible to complete as we lack the funds required to travel to Cuba and collect the field

material. We cannot change that fact, but we can at least be aware of it and make an effort to relate to it at every stage of the essay writing process.

## 3. Theory

The following section will discuss the theories which we intend to use to answer the thesis research questions. In order to demonstrate how formal and informal institutions are manifested in Cuban agriculture, North (1991) and Hodgson (2006)'s theoretical conceptions of institutions are applied. We will also take a closer look at Luckmann and Berger (1966)'s concept of pre-definitions and institutionalization as a result of habits. Thereafter follows an account of new institutionalism. With examples from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, we'll concentrate on the historical branch of new institutionalism that employs the idea of path dependency to explain inertia in institutional change. Further, we will discuss Weber's (1966) definition of bureaucracy, its inadequacies as described by Viswanath (2022) and Merton (1940). Last but not least, we shall outline how these theories will be applied in our thesis.

### 3.1 Institutions according to North and Hodgson

Institutions act as both frameworks and constraints on human behavior, as expressed by the authors featured in this section. One popular definition of institutions comes från Douglas North (1991);

“Institutions are the humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction. They consist of both informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct), and formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights)”. (North, 1991)

North (1991) makes a distinction between what is formal and informal, something that authors like Hodgson (2006) criticizes. Hodgson contends that because formal intuitions depend on informal principles to operate, they are not truly formal. He believes that customs and morality provide informal support for formal laws and declarations. For instance, stealing is wrong on both a legal and moral level (Hodgson, 2006). Institutions should not only be viewed as the constraints of society as Hodgson (2006) argues, they are also the frames of human action. Without these frames, society would not be able to progress.

The topic of defining formality and informality should also be addressed, as it has great implications for the thesis. De Soysa and Jütting (2007) discuss how informality and informal institutions are highly influenced by their cultural surroundings. Meaning that what's informal in Sweden and in Cuba may differ a lot due to the difference in culture and context. Which also has implications for formal institutions as they fundamentally are based on informal notions.

Moving on, North proposes that institutions can be viewed as the “rules of the game”, where the “players” are actors such as organizations, movements and individuals. So society can in some sense be seen as a game where different players (organizations, individuals) engage with each other within these frameworks of rules (institutions) .

While institutions are fluid to their nature, being both formal rules such as legislation and informal rules such as societal norms. An example of a central formal institution is the land ownership rights that exist in many societies. While an informal institution can be a common notion such as “love can’t be bought” (Engdahl & Larsson, 2011). Connecting to Hodgson (2006), we can see how some parts of the latter institution have made their way to formality in some countries, where laws about prostitution are passed.

## 3.2 Inefficiency in state agricultural cooperatives

In order to discuss our findings of informal institutions in later sections, we must first account for the inefficiency in state agricultural cooperatives as claimed by Alvarez and Puerta (1994).

The central claim made by Alvarez and Puerta (1994) in *"State intervention in Cuban agriculture: Impact on organization and performance"* is that non-state farms outperform state farms in terms of volume and quality despite having uneven access to inputs and other resources in the 1950s and 1960s. Claiming that ineffective labor, including management, may be one reason for the state sector's poor performance. Since the state sector had access to the greatest technology, the authors conclude that the reason must be related to the quality and/or quantity of workers on the state farms. Further, the authors stress that although there are no available statistics to explain the difference in efficiency between private and state farms, the private sector's efficient workforce likely made up for the absence of technology.

Additionally, Levia (2000) details how Cuban labor law was modified under the Castro administration and claims that major elements of the Stalinist labor model were adopted into Cuban law. Levia (2000) describes among other issues that; *“Cuban workers must participate in uncompensated “voluntary” work, usually in the form of field labor.”*

Furthermore, Levia (2000) explains that despite the fact that the law guarantees rights such as freedom of speech, the right to protest, eight-hour workdays, paid



holidays, and social security for sick or injured workers, the law contains a contradiction. Article 62 of Cuban legislation serves as a “catch-all provision” as Levia (2000) expresses it, on any Cuban trying to exercise a legal right, stating that “*none of the liberties guaranteed can be exercised against the constitution and Cuban law, nor against the socialist state.*” This is applicable to any workers who attempt to form independent labor unions or pursue other crucial labor rights, including the right to secure working circumstances. Ultimately Levia (2000) claims that the Cuban legislation intended to limit workers' access to rights and to exert control over them.

In conclusion, the limited rights of agricultural workers can be assumed to be one of many possible reasons why non-state farms whose workers, not directly subject to government control, perform better according to the statements of Alvarez and Puerta (1994).

### 3.3 Luckman & Berger: Pre-definitions and habits

Luckman and Berger (1966) define pre-definitions as common assumptions derived from habits and routines that facilitate social interaction. Pre-definitions are a prerequisite for our society's social interaction norms; they constitute ideas about how we should interact and allow for the handling of a greater stream of encounters with strangers. To put it in the context of Cuban agriculture, an example of a pre-definitions of the Cuban farmer is that the profession is passed down through the family. This is the collective assumption that underlies what a farmer is in a Cuban context and it is reproduced through, for example, upbringing. Furthermore, Luckman and Berger (1966) argue that there are obvious repercussions for breaking away from the pre-definition.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) also assert that all social phenomena must be viewed as a product of human awareness. When humans interact repeatedly habits arise and become habitualized, reducing the number of possible choices and ultimately freeing the individual from the burden of choosing between all possible options. It may seem that these habits have always existed, but Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that they are products of human interaction over time. These social structures appear normal and natural to the individuals involved. After habitualization follows institutionalization, this is when norms and beliefs become so accepted that they come to constitute the reality for the individuals involved. Berger and Luckmann (1966) assert that once habits have been institutionalized, it is difficult to modify.

### 3.4 Bureaucracy

In this thesis, it shall be assumed that bureaucracy is an institution. Bureaucracy's most influential definition is the one by Weber (1966);

“Bureaucracy is an organizational structure that is characterized by many rules, standardized processes, procedures and requirements, number of desks, the meticulous division of labor and responsibility, clear hierarchies and professionalism.” (Weber, 1966)

The Weberian definition has some core values of organization such as standardization, distinct hierarchies, clear divisions of expertise and depersonalisation of the bureaucrat. Weber meant that these values are important in order to guarantee an efficient and fair organization in, for example, the public sphere. There would be no room for personal attachments and judgments.

This way of thinking has as Viswanath (2022) frames it, had great repercussions for how states and their public administrations function. Public administrations in for example the USA but also to a great extent in the whole world have bureaucratic tendencies. Weber's ideals are sought after in public administration due to the need to treat citizens in a similar manor while guaranteeing efficiency. However as Viswanath (2022) points out, there are many examples of how bureaucracy fails to uphold those original ideals. For example Viswanath (2022) presents how the United States Agricultural Department (USAD) has for years been mistreating women farmers. Partly due to the so-called trained inability, where male bureaucrats have been taught how to help male farmers but not female ones, resulting in unequal amounts of help.

Furthermore Viswanath(or Portillo) (2022) highlights how the ideals for bureaucracy such as total neutrality to avoid personal ties and corruption are quite impossible to obtain. She argues that in the end the bureaucrat is just a person, even though they have the “right” merits such as academic background. The merits will not remove the humanity in the bureaucrat, so problems of personal ties will still occur.

Merton (1940) has written more on the subject of Weber's bureaucracy and more importantly, its shortcomings. The bureaucrat will according to Merton (1940) always make their decision based on previous decision makings, in order to standardize the process. This process may work well in societies that are completely stable and static, however many societies are quite the opposite. So if a new reality presents itself, the bureaucrats' framework for decision making will be outdated, which will provide “wrong” or “bad” decisions for the affected.

Furthermore there is a broader issue within bureaucracy that the bureaucrats are put in such a hierarchical system with distinct divided sections of responsibility. This can have the effect that a bureaucrat in public administration that is introduced to an issue, will have difficulties if the issue is not within their area of responsibility. Resulting in the common practice that citizens are just shuttled between different sections in the public administration, having difficulties getting the right help. (Engdahl & Larsson, 2011)

### 3.5 Historical new institutionalism and path dependency

Historical new institutionalism focuses among other things, on how political processes affect actors through granting different actors different rights. This way, actors have different constraints and possibilities to act (Engdahl & Larsson, 2011). A crucial thought within historical new institutionalism is how institutions change and perhaps more importantly, why they don't change. The idea of path dependency is used by historical new institutionalism to explain this phenomenon. Path dependency states that a decision will be greatly influenced by the surroundings and the goals it originally sought to achieve. So even though the context changes in the future as well as the goals, the decision has a tendency to stick to its original form. It will be path-dependent, and historical new institutionalism claims that it is very difficult to dislodge a decision off its path (Lasan, 2012). Pierson (2004) presents some reasons for institutions path-dependency, one being the reproduction of themselves. Moreover an institution will, when set in motion, become more and more autonomous, making it less influenced by its surroundings. Institutions are in this way hard to change from their "original" form, and there is an inherent slowness to change.

Lasan (2012) discusses how institutions can change through large exogenous events or if they really do change. In Lasan's (2012) example, EU's Common Agricultural Policy is discussed as path-dependent although going through seemingly large changes in late 1990s and early 2000s. The author means that large trade negotiations at the time, partly forced the EU to redirect the goals of CAP. However at the same time, CAP did not change as much as it was expected, in the end it was a lot of compromises. Lasan (2012) proposes that external pressures can have a large role in institutional change however they may not be as efficient as they seem on a surface level.

### 3.6 This thesis usage of the concept of institutions

There is no universal way of understanding a theoretical concept. Therefore, it is of importance to define essential concepts in our thesis and how we intend to measure these concepts (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).. Both Norths (1991), Hodgson (2006), and Luckman & Bergers (1966) definitions of institutions are of use in this thesis. Where North (1991) and Hogdson (2006)'s concept of institutions allows for highlighting formal institutions as structures that constraints and/or shape human activity. Luckman & Bergers (1966) makes it possible to discuss informal institutions as socially constructed notions over time.

Moreover in order to discuss change regarding the institutions we will make use of historical new institutionalism and the work of Lasan (2012). Thereby the role of external pressures, path dependency and internal movements can be highlighted.

## 4. Cases

In order to understand how the theoretical framework relates to the Cuban farmers we will describe the farm cases shortly below. These descriptions are to provide an overview of the cases as the results and discussion section will go into more detail. All the farms in question are active in the agroecology movement in different ways. It should also be noted that they are all quite prominent in their agroecology practices.

### 4.1 Finca Luchar- the newcomers with feeling for community

Finca Luchar is a farm run by two originally outsiders that have worked to create greater cooperation with their neighbors. The farm is located west of Havana in the province of Artemisa, it is a 30 minute car ride from the capital. The farm consists of 13 hectares and produces mostly fruits (mango, oranges, pineapple, guava, coconut to mention some examples), sugarcane, herbs (oregano, rosemary, parcel), yucca, black beans, honey and rabbit meat for domestic consumption. The farm also produces fish of the species Tilapia in a constructed pond. The farm is managed by the couple Adelina and Diego with a set of about 10 employees, 5 women and 5 men. What sets Finca Luchar apart from their neighbors in the cooperative is the abundant tree cover on their lands. Adelina explains during a forestwalk that these trees have saved their house during several hurricanes.

Adelina and Diego have directed part of their focus towards agritourism. They welcome tourists and visitors from Havana, and Adelina, a cook with expertise, makes lunch using products from the farm or nearby farms. She is the one most responsible for the agrotourism part of the business, fixing the visits and gastronomy experiences. Diego on the other hand has a long academic background within IT and career within rural development projects.

Neither of them are native to Cuba as they are both immigrated from other parts of Latin America, which has presented some problems. As Diego explains, it can be hard to be accepted into the farming community as an outsider as many are born into their role. However today the couple has become tight knit members of their community and work extensively with their neighbors. They cooperate in many aspects such as seeds, fertilizer and machinery.

## 4.2 Finca Alegría- the family with aims of sovereignty

Finca Alegria is perhaps the most classic farm in a Cuban sense, being a family farm for generations, although the two most recent generations have changed a lot, transforming the farm into an agroecological lighthouse. Finca Alegría with its 15 hectares is located in the province of Sancti spiritus, which in comparison to the other farms are much further away from a larger city. Sancti spiritus is quite literally in the middle of the island and as Adelina frames it; *“There are a great many provinces between Havana and Santiago, what happens there in between?”*(Adelina, 2023). There is a greater sense of remoteness, which became obvious on our trip to Finca Alegría, first a 40 minute car ride from a small town and then a shorter horse ride from the main road.

The family farm consists of several generations and is currently inhabited by four families. There’s the older generation consisting of Emilio and his wife Roza, the parents of three adult siblings living on the farm. Then there are the three siblings and their respective partners and children, making the farm a home for 8 adults and 4 children.

A central characteristic of Finca Alegria is the notion of self sufficiency, they are in regards to both food, water and energy close to sovereignty. Many classic crops such as beans, yucca, malanga, sugarcane are grown and preserved to last longer. Animals are also abundant as there are cows, pigs, chickens, tilapia and even peacocks to name a few. The cows are central as they produce dairy products which are the only products that Finca Alegría sell to external actors.

## 4.3 Finca Crecimiento- the academic with visions of a new food system

Finca Crecimiento is both a farm and center of a network with grand visions of the future, as they try to stake out a new path for Cuban agriculture building upon agroecological principles. Similarly to Finca Luchar, it is located in Artemisa not too far from Havana. The farm is run by Rafael and Lucia, who are assisted by a workforce of around 30 people. Even though this was the largest farm we visited it was no more than 25 hectares (with plans for expansion). But the operation was as Rafael put it *“not large, but complicated”*(Rafael, 2023).

Rafael has a background as an researcher in agricultural science, something that has benefited him greatly. He has tried to put theory into action on his farm, using his broad network that he established during his many years in academia. The farm itself is not the only focus, as Rafael has created an administrative unit called

an “enterprise”. The motivation for this was that he wanted to create a network of farms working together (similarly to a cooperative) and selling products together. In order to do this he needed special permission from authorities, making Finca Crecimiento a one of a kind. The enterprise status also allows Rafael to sell products through different market channels such as hotels and exporting.

The network consists of around 50-farms in the area with Finca Crecimiento as a central hub. In contrast to Finca Alegrías, self-sufficiency at a farm level has not been the goal for Rafael, instead he wants to create an area of self-sufficiency. The amount of connections and networks Rafael has established should not be understated. Plenty of international delegations have visited the farm including Prince Charles (now king), first lady of Japan. Moreover people like Fidel Castro have visited the farm, implying Finca Crecimientos near celebrity status.

## 5. Results and discussion

In this section we will with the use of our cases and theoretical framework define and discuss formal and informal institutions. The primary focus will be on the formal institution bureaucracy and informal institutions of the farmer and inherent work mentality. Thereafter we will go on to discuss external and internal factors for change of institutions.

### 5.1 Cuban agricultural bureaucracy

When discussing formal institutions, we have chosen to focus on bureaucracy, what we call the Cuban agricultural bureaucracy (CAB) to be more specific. In this text we will seek to define what Cuban agricultural bureaucracy (CAB) is with help from the theoretical framework and farmcases. As well as discuss some of its characteristics.

The Cuban agricultural bureaucracy (CAB) is the government's public administration that handles agricultural issues. Characterizing bureaucracy in this manner has been done in other cases such as Zhou (2021) did with the Chinese bureaucracy in his work. Zhou (2021) puts a range of government organizations on both local and central level under one umbrella, as they are all essentially a coherent bureaucracy. The agricultural issues that CAB handles regard many activities such as distribution of inputs (seeds machinery etc.) and government contracts. CAB is also all the laws and decrees that regulate what is allowed for farmers to do (and not do) by law. There is thereby a multitude of organizations active within this institution.

An introductory example from the cases is from Finca Luchar, where Adelina describes a broader view of Cuban bureaucracy. While discussing the US embargo she remarks;

“There is the outer embargo but sometimes we talk about the inner embargo, which is all the trouble with bureaucracy and getting permissions and all that”. (Adelina, 2023)

This should be put into the context that Finca Luchar has indeed been subjugated to this so-called “inner embargo”, a few examples shall be presented below.

In the Finca Luchar case, the arrival of the irrigation system was the largest event during our visit. The long wait to retrieve the irrigation system was according to Diego partly due to new requirements appearing each time he went to the harbor;



“I’ve tried to retrieve it [the irrigation system] for six months, every time they point at a new paper, so I have to go back home and fill in something new”. (Diego, 2023)

Another example also regards imports, however this time regarding tractors a few years before the irrigation system event. Diego had managed to strike a deal with a Dutch company to buy five tractors with some neighbors, which they sent from the Netherlands. However as Diego states “*I bought 5 tractors but the government took them all*”, it did not go as planned. On the question why the government took them, Diego replies somewhat jokingly “*Because it's the government*”. He explains that for all the years he has been a farmer, it has been impossible to import equipment without middle men, as he did with the irrigation system.

Diego tells the story of the previous irrigation system (that broke nearly immediately) he acquired through the state channels. Then he gave a description of what kind of system he needed, to the bureaucrat handling his case. The bureaucrat did either not agree with Diego or was not able to deviate from above directives, so he was allocated another system. The system that faulted after a few months, which left Finca Luchar without irrigation until the day we happened to be visiting.

Reconnecting to bureaucracy as a formal institution these are showing examples of how the institution poses formal constraints on Finca Luchar. It fits with North's (1991) definition, where the CAB poses obvious formal constraints upon Finca Luchars actions. The bureaucracy becomes the rules of the game with Finca Luchar as one of the players. We can also highlight how CAB falls in line with previously recognized issues in the Weberian bureaucracy. The way that Diego was forced to return multiple times to the harbor in order to fulfill changing demands displays a stiff bureaucracy. As Merton (1940) writes, in the bureaucracies fulfillment of standardization it is unable to satisfy new needs. CAB has not handled cases such as Diego before and does therefore not have a standard for it.

Another example comes from the case of Finca Alegría, the family farm. Where Viola was able to acquire a tractor from abroad two years ago. Violas describes that her academic background makes it easier to navigate bureaucracy “*It does not make it easy, just less hard*”. This is an example of Engdahl & Larsons (2011) reasoning about bureaucracies' tendency to have strict divisions of competence, making it hard for outsiders to navigate to the right bureaucrat. Because without rigorous knowledge it would have been nearly impossible for Viola to acquire this tractor. She reflects upon the fact and mentions that their neighbors have been unable to get a new tractor.

Furthermore if we move focus to Finca Crecimiento, the successful farm enterprise, we can yet again see CAB making its appearance. As Rafael was in the beginning actually keen on starting a cooperative and not an enterprise. However he met a heavy and non flexible bureaucracy which made it hard, resulting in an enterprise instead. As the enterprise has grown it has gotten a special status which has not gone unnoticed by other farmers in the country. As Adelina from Finca Luchar states “*After Rafael it has become the new hot thing to start enterprises*”. Continuing Diego comments on Finca Crecimiento,

“I know that many farmers are angry with Finca Crecimiento due to their special status, but I dont think that is the problem... the problem is not Rafaels status, its that everybody should get those privileges, we dont need one Rafael we need hundreds of Rafaels to produce enough [food]” (Diego, 2023)

Firstly we can once again recognize the stiffness of CAB, as Rafael was unable to start the cooperative, which could be related to Merton's (1940) arguments. Secondly it is noticeable that Finca Crecimiento has gotten privileges that other farmers have not been able to acquire. Maybe Rafael's broad network of connections have helped him on the way to achieve the enterprise special status. In any case, this can be seen as a break with bureaucratic neutrality in a Weberian sense. So for most farmers the same rules apply, but with the right connections it might be possible to get other opportunities. This falls in line with the critique that authors like Portillo (2019) have directed to bureaucracy, naming it “the myth of bureaucratic neutrality”.

We can start to define what CAB is as an institution, and what constraints it poses to the farmers in question. But as Hodgson (2006) argues we should also look at the institution as something that makes human action possible, thereby we return to Finca Alegría.

As described in the case of Finca Alegría, it is quite rural to its location compared to the other two farms, affecting its market channels. The farm's continued dairy deliveries to the government is due to no other actor finding it profitable covering such large distances. In this way it can be seen as the government making it possible for Finca Alegría to continue their dairy production. Maybe an example of where bureaucratic values present an opportunity, with its strife for neutrality and standardization. In this case, all dairy producers are allowed to sell through the government despite location. In a Hodgson (2006) sense the institution of CAB frames the actions of Finca Alegría making them possible.

The institution of Cuban Agricultural Bureaucracy (CAB) can be understood with the examples given above. In its essence the institution consists of formal

constraints to farm actions, with its bureaucratic values. Formal constraints can be the standardization and its stiffness that multiple of the farms encountered in their quest for materials such as irrigation and machinery. It can also be the over complicated gathering of rules regarding what's allowed and not, making it hard for farmers to navigate. However the formal institution of CAB can also in some cases be seen as the frame for actions, such in the case with dairy deliveries from distant areas.

## 5.2 The farmer as an institution

In this section, the farmer as an institution will be discussed in relation to Luckman and Berger (1966)'s theoretical frameworks.

According to Diego, the founder of Finca Luchar, the concept of the Cuban farmer lies, among other things, on collective perceptions of farming as a profession that is passed down through generations. Diego explains that this is the way things have always been and that there is a clear hostility towards those like himself who do not come from a long line of farmers. He recalls his neighbors' initial remarks about him when he first established his farm in the area of Artemisa: *"Here he [Diego] is again with his books. He thinks the books know how to farm"* (Diego, 2023). Rafael from Finca Crecimiento describes similar experiences of not being descended from farmers and thus facing mistrust, the difference being that he is not from another country as Diego, but rather from another province, a province known for the capital Havana rather than its agriculture.

In the context of Cuban agriculture, our findings suggest that the pre-definition of the agricultural profession is that it is inherited. Similarly, agricultural knowledge is something that is passed down through generations, not something that can be learned in a book. Luckman and Berger (1966) argue that the emergence of these beliefs are socially constructed. This is a result of Cuban culture's upbringing of children with the notion that one can only be a farmer if one or both of one's parents are farmers. Further Luckman and Berger (1966) argues that breaking away from the pre-definitions results in repercussions, like the skepticism and hostility experienced by Diego and Adelina at the beginning of their establishment or the mistrust facing Rafael.

In contrast to Finca Luchar and Finca Crecimiento, Viola from Finca Alegría states that she has not experienced hostility or skepticism from the surrounding agricultural community. Applying Luckman and Berger (1966)'s theoretical framework, this would be explained by the fact that Viola's family have been

farmers for generations and that they were also born in the province of Sancti Spiritus where the farm is located. As a result, there are no exclusionary implications for these.

### 5.3 Inherent mentality of the state cooperatives

Our informants address how it is challenging to delegate tasks to their employees as a result of a mentality that has been carried over from the era of state agricultural cooperatives. Adelina explains to us during our visit to Finca Luchar that each morning starts with a meeting to determine what has to be done, how and by who. She recently requested that employee X perform a certain task with a machine. However, there was a power outage when Adelina was away in Havana for the day. X was unable to complete the duties given to him since the equipment required power to operate. Later that day, Adelina arrived home, and X had not engaged in any other non-power-dependent activity. She explains that this mentality is an inheritance of the extensive state and cooperative planning that was dominant in the past.

This was not the only occasion when the inherent mentality of the state agricultural cooperatives made itself known. Rafael's response to a question regarding decision-making on the Finca Crecimiento serves as another example. Rafael explains that he makes more decisions than he would like. He wants to promote self-empowerment but claims that the workers at Finca Crecimiento prefer waiting for instructions on what to do.

Then there are Diego's claims about top-down agricultural planning, in which all crops are planted and harvested nationwide on set dates. Which could potentially be seen as an inherent mentality from the era of state agricultural cooperatives. He states the following in an interview,

“Due to the planned economy people are used to planting everything on the same day. For example, if the 15th of november is tomato day then the whole fuuuucking country plants tomatoes. Then when its beans january 12th the whoooole fucking country plants beans. So when it's time to harvest everyone has to stress to get the harvest done and in the end a lot become rotten. But don't we live in a warm country? We could plant tomatoes at any time! And have tomatoes and cucumbers available the whole fucking year, instead of everyone doing it at the same time”. (Diego, 2023)

Diego explains that the harvesting of tomatoes is very labor intensive and there are not enough workers to harvest all the tomatoes in the area at the same time. They end up rotting and it is hard to get a decent prize for the harvest. As a result of this top-down agricultural planning, Diego decided to sell his bean harvest for

half the price one year. All the farmers were selling their beans at a fixed price determined by the local authority at the local farmers market. Diego was weary of not having his products purchased and having to return home every day with his beans so he decided to sell his beans to half of the fixed price. He reasoned that he was already losing money on the production and he figured that he might as well favor the local community. The beans sold in an instance. Diego was happy, the locals were happy but representatives from the local government were sent out to talk to Diego. There was nothing in the legislation that said he couldn't sell the beans for less than the predetermined price. So the representatives from the local government couldn't do anything in the end. Diego claims that Cubans are so accustomed to being instructed what to do rather than being informed what is explicitly not allowed. They are therefore not accustomed to think freely within all the rules of the law.

With the help of Berger and Luckmann (1966) definition of internalized habits, we can try to understand why the inherited mentality of the state cooperatives still is present in Cuban agriculture today. However, we must first briefly look at the circumstances that served as the foundation for agricultural output throughout the time of the agricultural state cooperatives.

As Alvarez and Puerta (1994) states, during the 1950's and 60's the achievements within the private farms were higher than those in the state farms. This was according to Alvarez and Puerta (1994) due to an inefficient workforce. Why was labor inefficient? It is not hard to imagine that the lack of rights for workers accounted for by Levia (2002) as well as the forced uncompensated “voluntary” work most Cubans must participate in, resulted in substandard motivation. As Berger and Luckmann (1966) mentions, repeated human interactions become habitualized over time. And once institutionalized, it is difficult to change. The substandard motivation under Fidel Castro's rule seems to be expressed in Cuban agriculture today. For example, Diego and Adelina from Finca Luchar and Rafael and Lucía from Finca Crecimiento find it hard to delegate tasks to their employees. It's possible that this dates back to the Castro era when agricultural state cooperatives dominated and workers were strongly controlled by the state and thus lacked room to take their own initiatives. These state-worker interactions may over time have become habitualized and later institutionalized.

Regarding the tradition of planting and harvesting crops on a specific day, this was practiced throughout the days of state cooperatives, and it has remained in place since then possibly because of being institutionalized.

Connecting to the present, we can once again return to Finca Luchar and the case of Diego's cooperation with his somewhat problematic neighbor. As Diego stated,

*“He works hard, and that’s a rarity in this country”*(Diego, 2023), being the main reason he continues to collaborate with this neighbor. It is a telling example of how institutionalized the mentality is. The fact that Diego accepts his business partner cheating with organic certification and making bad business decisions just because he has a different work mentality to what is common.

## 5.4 Institutional change- path dependency or a revolution within the revolution

In the previous sections we have tried to answer the questions regarding which institutions that can be identified in Cuban agriculture. Both formal (CAB) and informal (Farmer identity and inherent work mentality) institutions have been discussed in regards to the empirical evidence and theoretical framework. We can thereby move on to the last question regarding change of these described institutions. To begin with we need to once again discuss change in a broader meaning happening in Cuban society.

As established in the introduction of the thesis there are multiple authors, Fernandez (2014), Caribbean Council (2021), Hoffman (2016), who point at a general shift occurring within Cuban politics. Both Hoffman (2016) and Fernandez (2014) highlights that one sector that the government sees potential in conducting change within is agriculture. The author's lifts that the PCC has in its last party congresses pointed to some constraints that exist within Cuban public administration at the moment. Furthermore the new president has been outspoken in his will to act for change in areas such as decentralization and over-bureaucratic systems. There is also an apparent belief in the agriculture sector's change, with the state wanting to leave more responsibility to other actors such as the cooperatives. A phenomena that can be noticed through the increasing land transfers from state to cooperative hands mentioned in the background.

This intent from official sources could also be noticed at a ground level when talking with farmers and farmworkers. Rafael and Lucia on Finca Cresimiento tell us about the many laws and decrees that have been changing in the last two years. Rafael says *“At times it becomes hard to keep track of what’s allowed and not”*(Rafael, 2023). He continues to explain how many rules have been loosening up, such as the ones regulating farmers markets, where it is much easier for farmers to sell at those markets now compared to two years ago. Furthermore the whole situation with Finca Cresimiento being allowed to conduct its enterprise business can be seen as a shift in policy, which we will return to.

Moving on to Finca Luchar the change was discussed quite a lot by Diego and Adelina, in many respects. Diego had a saying that often came up, he would state “*there is a revolution WITHIN the revolution*”(Diego, 2023). The latter revolution he was referring to is the 1959 Cuban revolution, the one that has molded current Cuban society. However he means that there are large changes happening within this revolution. He would then come with examples such as the irrigation system that newly arrived. Another example Diego gave was “*It's a revolution that I can sell potatoes for dollars and not have to do pesos*”(Diego, 2023). As it has been forbidden to sell crops for hard currencies instead of pesos before.

Change was also a hot topic at Finca Alegría, where Viola talks about all the new opportunities for farmers that live closer to cities. Viola described that the possibility to sell produce at farmers markets and hotels more easily is surely great for those who can. But for Finca Alegría being so remote it is not really an option.

From these examples we can at least highlight a will from government and officials to change the agricultural system but perhaps the old institutions still play a role. As our descriptions of formal and informal institutions suggest, these institutions from the time of the revolution are still present in the everyday work for the farms visited. CAB continues to pose formal constraints with its Weberian bureaucracy while the inherited mentality and farmer identity make up informal constraints.

These institutions have their history in common, all tracing back to the days of the revolution more or less. According to us this could be viewed from an institutional lens, where these institutions are path-dependent. They are influenced from the surroundings and context that they were formed in, the newly revolutionary socialist Cuba. As Lasan (2012) discusses, the context of the time is crucial for the future path for example an institution. In other words, it is hard to off-set the institution from its historical context even though the present context is fundamentally different. So even though there are incentives for change as Hoffman (2016), Fernandez (2014) and Caribbean council (2021) presents, these institutions are path-dependent in accordance with their historical context. Connecting to Piersons (2004) reasoning, it could be said that the institutions from the days of the revolution have been reproducing themselves and with time becoming more autonomous to external influence. One example being the farmer as an institution, which has reproduced through generations of certain upbringings.

The institutions may then seem to be the sluggish part of the system, as they are perhaps not changing as radically as people want, but what about the change that

is occurring. As Lasan (2012) argues in the case of CAP, even though path-dependency exists, change happens but maybe not as radical as involved actors would want.

Moving on it should be mentioned if there are any large external events that could have put change into movement. One big event that often came to discussion with the farmers was the Covid-19 pandemic and the large emigration following it. In talks with Lucia she says *“Everything has changed after covid”*(Lucia, 2023), she continues to talk about the enormous economic crises it put Cuba through. In the same conversation Lucia talks about the large emigration of young adults from Cuba, *“it is hard to build something when all the young newly educated decide to leave the country”*(Lucia, 2023). Perhaps the pandemic is such a large external event as Lasan (2012) describes, making the government forced to take great actions for change.

However it must be mentioned that path-dependency is just one out of many possible explanations for these institutions. Because there is also contradicting information regarding change, as Finca Cresimiento displays. The fact that Finca Cresimiento is allowed to exist shows a great amount of willingness from government actors. It could be reasoned that maybe change is occurring due to grass-root movements and actions by farmers. Farmers like Rafael from Finca Cresimiento are maybe changing the scene by pushing the limits of what's allowed and not. The same could in some sense be said about Diego at Finca Luchar, where he is at times acting in the gray zone of formal and informal rules. Nonetheless it poses the question if the institutions really are path-dependent or if they are actually going through change pushed from a bottom-up process.



## 6. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to identify which institutions that may be present in Cuban agriculture. In addition, the thesis sought to find possible suggestions to whether, and if so, how, and why these institutions change. From the empirical evidence gathered at three farms we have presented descriptions of three possible institutions, one formal and two informal. The formal being Cuban agricultural bureaucracy (CAB), which can be identified by the formal constraints farmers experienced in many instances. CAB could also be the framework that makes actions possible in some instances. We suggest that the farmer as an institution is an informal notion, where pre-definitions of what a farmer is poses certain frames for the farmers own actions. Lastly we propose the existence of an inherited work mentality as an informal institution. Which makes itself known as the farmers try to delegate work with mixed results at times. These are of course not the only institutions existent within Cuban agriculture, but with the empirical evidence, these are the ones we suggest with the help of the theoretical framework.

Secondly we suggest some possible explanations to what's happening regarding change of the institutions. We have chosen to primarily discuss change through the concept of path dependency, in which these institutions can be seen as context dependent to when they formed. So one possible reason for their sluggishness may be path dependency from the era of the revolution. However at the same time there are examples of how maybe some farmers are causing change from a grass-roots level, maybe causing more change than we were able to observe.

In essence, there are both formal and informal institutions that pose observable constraints to the farmers we interviewed. At the same time as the institutions also can be a framework for action, making their farmwork possible. Change is occurring and there are many actors with a willingness to change at the same time as it seems to be somewhat sluggish. One possible reasoning could be path dependency of old institutions.

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