



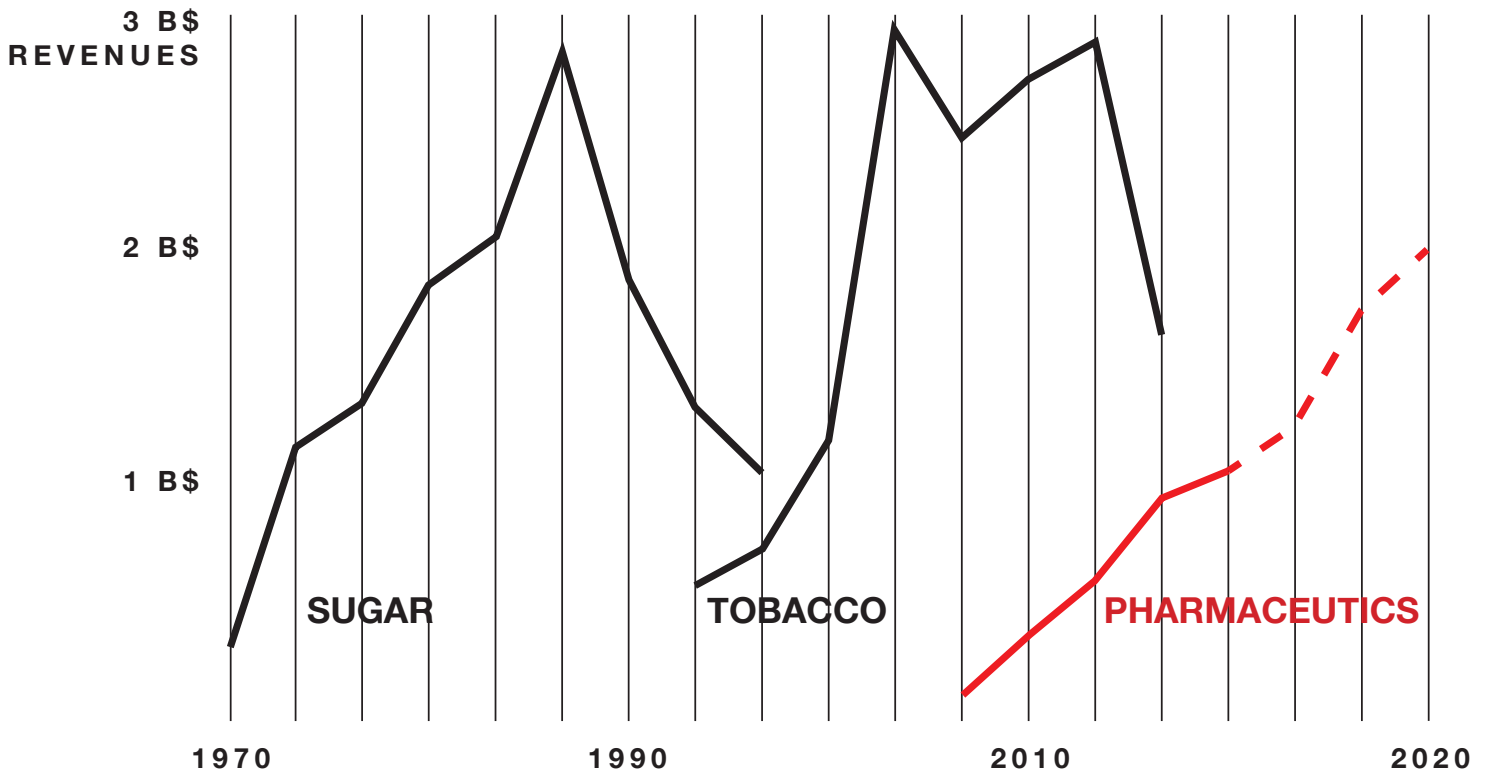
The Cuban Cure. Culture and Ideology in global science

Critical Reflection

Nicola Patelli

#4517350

patellinicola@gmil.com



The economic collapse of the Cuban Healthcare system poses questions about how this process may be reversed. The new legislation and the political shift which international observers foresee offer new opportunity to improve the revenues of the Pharmaceutical sector. In this way the unprofitable side of the system may benefit from the profitable one.

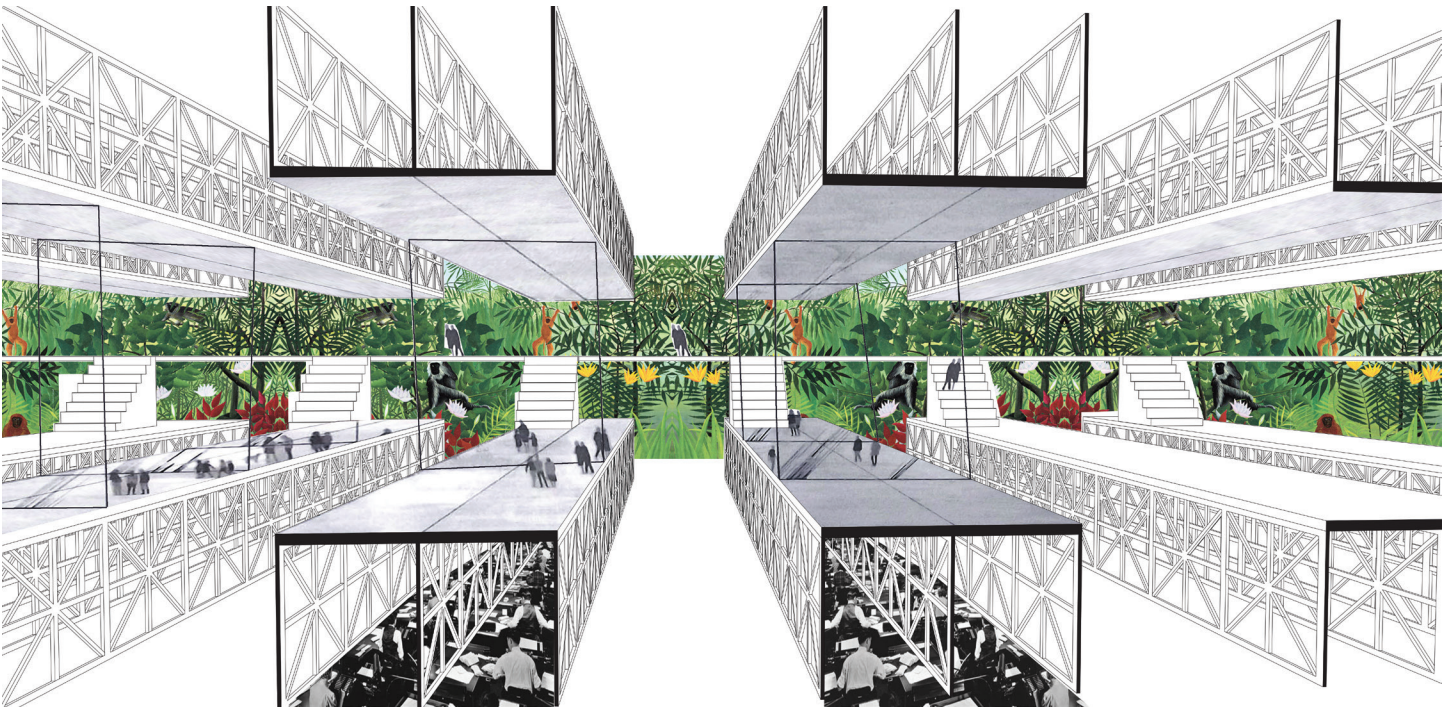
The research questions which guided the design of my thesis projects are:
 How to guide the process of economic opening to the neo-liberal market of a public-owned industry?
 Therefore, how to conjugate these possibilities with the strong cultural heritage of the Cuban Healthcare system?

These issues result in the design of the New Headquarters for the Cuban Pharmaceutical Industry "BioCuba Farma". The new Headquarters are conceived to host facilities of international standards (office space, research and development centre, datacentre, education spaces), keeping into account the cultural meaning of the industry and its impact on the Country's economic wealth. Therefore the design integrates elements and functions of the Public Building, reinterpreted according to the functions hosted and the particular conditions of Havana (also technical, climatic, etc...)

The research moment has made use of a broad literature about the peculiarities of scientific development in countries with non-capitalistic economic system. At the same time these informations were compared with scientific data about mortality all over the world, in order to understand what actually makes a Country healthy or not.

These basic pieces of knowledge were translated into diagrams and texts which step by step gave a particular and personal frame to the theme of pharmaceutical research. In other words, these informations built a precise brief for the design moment. At the same time a rigorous typological research on circulation schemes, programs and volumes complemented the soft and the hard data.

The design phase has been faced as a competition, where the brief is given, and where practical factors (economic sustainability, technical suitability, future development of the interested area) are crucial.



The design of the Headquarters starts with the consideration that pharmaceuticals is going to be the new leading sector of Cuban economy. The nature of this globalized industry will allow Cuba to develop its economy towards a social-capitalistic system, being BioCuba Farma a unique case of public-owned pharmaceutical company.

The problem with Biocuba Farma is the lack of marketing capacity, they know how to make products but they don't know how to market them. Improving Biocuba Farma means to create spaces and facilities for marketing, therefore a new headquarter is necessary.

A visit to the current headquarters and a typological analysis with international examples has confirmed that. Being pharmaceuticals part of the cultural heritage of the island, and its long-established healthcare system which is still reason of pride for the country, the new headquarters will:

1. Be placed in the centre:

The building becomes a symbol for the country and it's influenced by the proximity of the city. The new headquarters have the size and the importance to start the development of a new part of the city, which, for historical reasons, may be considered as a whole.

The former train station is divided in two parts:

-one is a linear park on the east side. parks are missing in Havana and will become more urgent with the growing presence of cars in the streets. the linear park is meant to be the continuation of the well used and popular 'paseo' on the other side of the former wall neighborhood.

-One is a new neighborhood of large, mixed use buildings with a variety of functions: offices, museum, hotels, commercial which profits of the position, inbetween the old city and the new financial district on south.

2. Host extra program:

Like education of new researchers, and large workshop spaces where the meaning of health is always redefined and where the citizens are taught how to prevent diseases by the local community of doctors, in proper spaces.

3. Be transparent and permeable:

The building has a symbolical didactic role for business and openness towards the world. The building should be influenced in its choices by the presence of the city. This means price policies, etc... In sum, the ideological meaning of transparency is considered an important value to pursuit.

Concept:

The main problem to tackle while designing new headquarters for Biocuba Farma is that the structure of the company is scattered and subdivided. Biocuba farma was born recently, in 2006, to unify 24 small companies which research independently on different diseases. If separate locations is not a problem for research, it's a big problem for marketing, where concentration and proximity is needed to improve communications and optimize bigger resources (congress hall, datacentre, etc...).

Therefore the new headquarters are conceived as a collector for all these smaller companies, to coexist and share the same location, while keeping their independence. Head-quarters as the logistic centre, as the brain that controls all the parts of the body. in architectural terms, a bar code concept guarantees the needed independence that every company requires, while allowing them to meet and share a number of spaces (bars perpendicular) and to collectively organize the export of the products. Therefore, every bar contains one main company or it's either subdivided into smaller parts to host smaller companies. Together with this, a portion of the building (level 5) is purely dedicated to the administration, carried on by Biocuba Farma employees.

The bar code concept allows to make the best use of the tropical climate of havana, in order to subdivide a program which is huge (27.000 m2) into smaller, well ventilated, shaded portions. This is meant to research new, positive conditions of working which are only possible in this climate, and to call back some elements of latin american modernism.

Relevance:

The relevance of the project lies in the way the scientific theme is read. The understanding of research as an important field of society which coexists in symbiosis with the political and social environment was crucial for the concept of "open Headquarters", where different skills and professionals collaborate with the city they are supposed to serve. I strongly believe this theme may open new frameworks of thought in the conception of corporate architecture.

