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**HEALTH MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND
THE REFORMATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL
STRUCTURES**

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Abstract: The paper is concerned with analyzing organizational changes penetrating public health institutions after the introduction of managerial techniques descending from New Public Management's modernizing indoctrination. Based on a literature review, the purpose of the analysis is to examine the reformation of control structures through a dialectical conceptual framework. Crises in public administration, triggered by contradictions of the larger system, tend to fuel changes, urging bureaucracies to move towards a technocratic orientation. The reformation of control is reduced to the exploration of organizational contradictions, namely the incompetence of established control structures to respond to the requirements for increased productivity. Managerial control is setting new values and creates new limits to doctor's professional autonomy, indicating the redistribution of power within the organization. Applying materialist dialectics for exploring changes in public health institutions offers a new insight towards a better understanding of organizational phenomena, highlighting critical challenges for further discussion.

1. Introduction

New Public Management, or the prevailing, neo-liberal framework of reorganization for public institutions, is textured by a 'series of overlapping elements consisting of a cluster of ideas borrowed from the conceptual framework of administration in the private sector' (Farrell and Morris, 2003, p. 136). National Health Systems have not been excluded from the current of change. In particular, 'concepts, methods and values characteristic of commercial enterprises have been extolled as remedies for health-service production and administration' (Flynn, 1992, p. 183). Principles of Total Quality Management (TQM), Performance Management, and Project Management, embedded in the theoretical framework of Health Management, are just a few to mention out of all available examples been introduced to public health institutions, aiming at the enhancement of the already redefined organizational effectiveness and at the formulation of the ideal normative model of functioning.

Argumentation favoring the introduction of business methods and market-liberal principles in public administration could be summarized into three points: first of all, it is claimed that the technocratic reorganization will deliver greater efficiency and will reduce expenditures; second, the performance of public institutions, in terms of quality, will be improved thus offering better social services; and finally, bureaucratic obstructionism will be superseded through the redistribution of power. Several empirical studies (for a review of that literature see Farrell and Morris, 2003) have already revealed numerous cases under which bureaucratic pressures have been intensified owing the departmental and hierarchical proliferation, thus bringing about an increase in expenditure on administration. At the same time, the democratization of public organization was challenged after observing more centralization of power. Finally, the improvement of the quality of the social service was questioned granted the repositioning of the orientation of the production process, whilst ethical issues were brought up after rendering social services' distribution amenable to social differentiations.

Several questions arise along with the introduction of New Public Management's principles in public administration. Particularly Health Management's diffusion in public health institutions has encouraged challenges regarding the effectiveness of linear techniques, such as TQM, in such organizational environments of high social,

technological and professional complexity (Loughlin, 2004). However, Health Management Research, generally dominated by contingency, rationalism, and functionalism, is thought to be hugely concerned with enhancing managerial performance within health institutions (Learmonth and Harding, 2004). On the other hand, Critical Management Studies usually question, without subverting though, most orthodox assumptions.

Aiming at an unconstrained and profound understanding of the phenomenon, it is necessary that the role of management in contemporary public health institutions is conceptualized in reference to its historic context and that the tensions that characterize public bureaucracies are revealed. Regarding those issues, the purpose of this paper is to highlight the theoretical contribution of organizational studies in analyzing managerial practice and to demonstrate the process through which New Public Management was introduced in public administration, while unfolding the changes public hospitals are undergoing. Using materialist dialectics, as the framework of analysis, would reveal organizational contradictions thus enabling the exploration of the process through which reified relations, such as the organizational control structures, change.

2. Dialectics in Organizational Studies

In philosophical terms, theory and praxis constitute a unified dialectical entity (Kovel, 2008). As materialist dialectics imply, any entity is consisted of itself and its contradiction. Theory and praxis form a dialectical relation considering the contradictory dynamics between them, where praxis, bearing the determinate role, is producing theory, and theory is then affecting praxis, until that historical point of an ongoing process during which praxis is superseding theory, therefore forcing it to readjust, forming another historically temporary generalization of the data that praxis is providing it with (Rozenhal and Yudin, 1967).

For that reason, Benson (1977) argues that organizational theories are depicting the social context in which they were produced while at the same time they influence the way in which actors construct organizational realities. The dialectical relation of praxis and theory is highlighted by Heydebrand (1977, p. 83) too, considering

organizational theory and any other mental work as a historical product depicting and “reconstructing” its own environment.

Consequently, the necessity for the articulation of an alternative theoretical framework for the study of organizations needs to be justified by the weakness of existing or dominant models to respond to praxis. There is abundance of critical reviews in organizational literature, stressing that empirical paradoxes need to be re-examined under different epistemological perspectives. In dialectical terms, that would stand for negation, viz. the first step in the process of synthesis.

According to Benson (1977), positivist methodology has dominated organizational research while rational and functional theories heavily relying on abstraction fail in explaining the process through which organizations change. On the contrary, he suggests that dialectical theory is filling this gap, offering a “processual perspective” (p. 2), while calling for a critique of “theories which affirm the present order or which deal with minor adjustments or variations upon that order” (p. 6). At the same time, he admits that “conventional, theoretical approaches and positivist methodologies may contribute to the description of these orderly patterns” (p. 5).

Goldman and Van Houten (1977) argue that organizational analysis is predominantly undialectical, historically alienated, socially abstracted, usually focusing on microanalysis, and finally ‘elitist’ regarding its orientation. Again, as Benson (1977) did, illustrating the potentiality of conventional researches for dialecticians, they claim that, under the condition of reinterpretation, the literature stands for a valuable fountain of organizational data and an indicative demonstration of the tensions characterizing corporate elitism.

Regarding the objectivity dogma of mainstream management literature, Adler (2011), drawing his argumentation from Marxian thought, claims that politics could never be excluded from any process of knowledge creation granted that established, politically-shaped or at least partly politically-shaped concepts mediate in that effort. Consequently, he argues that the neutrality perspective and the theories relying on it “legitimize and naturalize the status quo” (p. 127) while being unable to explore the structures of the social world that produce exploitation and domination. To put it in other words, as long as ideological forces penetrate social praxis and theory, scientific research should neither ignore them nor conceal them. Similarly, Heydebrand (1977)

contends that organizational theory is dominated by ideological forces, resulting into the reproduction and legitimization of the established socioeconomic structure. For that reason, following the politically-void view of abstracting organizations as integral “actors” or “in action” is concealing interests related to and/or realized in the terrain of the organizations (Heydebrand, 1977, p. 89).

However, adopting a critical posture alone, that stresses limitations or questions the exploratory and explanatory potential of prevailing methodologies in organizational studies, is not enough for scientific research to move forward. In fact, it is crucial that a solid and unified theory is developed out of this contradictory relation. For that purpose, and dialectically speaking, the negation must be negated.

Organizational theory incorporates a plethora of endeavors to formulate a coherent dialectical framework both in terms of conception and research. A very indicative example of such an attempt would be Benson’s (1977) dialectical perspective upon organizations. Based upon Mills’ (1962) interpretation of Marx’s basic features of method of analysis, he addresses a model constituted upon four principles: the social construction of the world; the totality of the phenomena and their ties with their environment; the contradiction between the “constructed social world and the ongoing process of social construction” (p.16); and finally, praxis interpreted as any kind of human creative activity, thus producing his consideration of organization as “a concrete, multileveled phenomenon beset by contradictions which continuously undermine its existing features” (p. 1).

Upon the sociology of organizations, Goldman and Van Houten (1977) assert that a Marxian systematic analysis is absent. In their effort to form “guidelines to be followed in analyzing bureaucratic behavior” (p. 109), they propose that some central concepts of the Marxian theory should be embedded in such a framework. Those are the labor theory of value, the forces and relations of production, the historical development of capitalism and finally class structure/struggle.

Heydebrand’s (1977) theorization of organizations, based on a critical adaptation of Marxian categories, is proposing the idea of contradiction between historical activity and historical outcome as the central axis of a dialectical analysis. Specifically, he is clarifying the sense of the term used in materialist dialectics, differentiating it from any other conceptualization of contradiction found in the history of theory and lies

with logical opposites, dualistic distinctions or even conflict. In general terms, he emphasizes the idea of the ongoing *activity* as contradictory to the *outcome* (either product or method) of previous activity, both of them being historically mediated. Making use of general Marxian concepts, such as the forces and relations of production, he addresses the concept of *organizational contradiction*, juxtaposing organizing activity vs. organization and evolving forms of organizing work vs. organizational control structures. At the same time, he proposes organizational contradictions between functional and historical phases of the work process. Finally, he argues that the notion of (re)production of the social relations of capitalism is crucial for understanding the structure of work organizations, while he points to political, economic and social contradictions in organizations to be of guiding value for the exploration of class contradictions that affect the organization.

Mouzelis (1967) claimed that organizational theory treated phenomena ripped off of their historical context thus producing seemingly applicable results whatever the circumstances. Ollman (2008, p. 9) refers to fragmenting social phenomena, in sake of analysis, as the “Humpty Dumpty problem”, that is to irreparably split the whole into pieces, therefore undermining the potential for further understanding. For that, the necessity of perceiving the totality of the phenomena while grounding organizational research in a larger socioeconomic historical context is stressed (Adler, 2011; Benson, 1977; Goldman and Van Houten, 1977; Heydebrand, 1977).

A distinctive feature of dialectical thought is the fact that not only does it perceive the social researcher as part of the phenomenon studied, but also recognizes that the research itself is interacting with the phenomenon in the context of totality, forming a unity. The perspective is outlined by Benson (1977, p. 6) for instance, referring to the practice of social sciences being “like other human activities, a process of production imbedded in a social context”. That view is found in the work of other academics as well (cf. Heydebrand, 1977; Goldman and Van Houten, 1977).

Contemporary attempts for the articulation of a dialectical framework applicable to organizational research, including those discussed above, are either inclusive of or abstracted from the materialist framework sometimes even constituting a post-modern elaboration and fusion of theories. Seo and Creed (2002, p. 224), for example, are adopting Benson’s (1977) perspective to examine institutional change, stressing that it

incorporates both “the viewpoints of several authors writing in the tradition of dialectical Marxism” and “the perspectives of phenomenological sociologists”.

Above all, materialist dialectics, as a conceptual and methodological framework, can liberate research revealing the relations and forces inherent in organizational phenomena and those processes through which they emerge and evolve. Granted the ontological assumptions, it is particularly suitable for exploring organizational processes that lead to changes. Taking into consideration the contemporary state of rigorous change that the capitalist state and public administration are undergoing, dialectics is standing as a powerful, yet neglected by dominant literature, conceptual and methodological framework, able of providing scientific research with a profound understanding of the phenomenon.

3. The Necessity of Control and the Role of Management

The main body of management is considered as a unique organizational function having emerged along with the enlargement of the productive formations and the assembly of workers under the same unit (Marx, 1977). In fact, Taylor’s (1911) Scientific Management represents management’s first systemized expression. Needless to say that it should be distinguished from any other idea of administration or organization as conducted during any other historical point of evolution, such as the case of craft guilds, where craftsmen themselves conducted and executed work (Marx, 1977), or even such as the case of primitive community work (Engels, 2010).

Labor process theory is considering the need of managerial control been exercised over labor as a way of dealing with “the indeterminacy of labour”, meaning the existing gap between “workers’ actual labouring efforts” and “their potential labour power” (Sewell, 2005, p. 685). Thus control is an essential practice, granted the capitalist social relations, aiming at ensuring that workers will mobilize their potential labor power during the production process (Sewell, 1998). Within modernity’s framework of analysis, this gap can only be exemplified in terms of rationality, while it stands for the legitimacy of control manifested by a fixed set of behavioral rules. However, Marxism points to capitalist relations of production, and especially to labor

being deprived of the means of production, as the framework of analysis for understanding the indeterminacy of labor and therefore the inevitability of control.

A very central concept for the analysis of control is the subordination of labor to capital. Subordination could either be formal or real. The latter is concerned with a relative shift in the labor process “by the introduction of new production techniques” (Adler, 2011, p. 132), whereas the former refers to the initial period of establishment of capitalism, when the labor process is yet not affected by the evolution of the forces of production (Marx, 1977). Taking up an historical review, starting from the very first point of the division based on gender (Engels, 2010), and following the technical division among professions, we reach the capitalist era, when labor was further divided into *planning* and *executing*¹, or in fact into *making decisions* and *executing decisions*. According to Braverman (1974), Scientific Management stands for the managerial expression of the intensification of control for that it accomplished labor’s real subordination to the capital.

Management stands for the delegator of capital in the production process organizing and supervising production and labor. Its role is concerned with a variety of tasks such as disciplining, monitoring, scheduling, planning, organizing, controlling, etc. Granted the gap between labor and labor power, Sewell (1998, p. 398) argues that “managers attempt to ensure that expended effort approaches the full potential of labor power” through the determination of the tasks to be executed and by directing effort “throughout the working day to make sure that these tasks are completed”. In Adler’s (2011, p. 138) account, that is part of managers’ contradictory role, because apart from delegating exploitative relations, they are also the “coordinators of a complex division of labor and part of the collective worker”.

However, the content of managerial activity needs to be analyzed further. Heydebrand (1977, p. 90) claims that “under capitalism, the growth of the productive forces of labor, skills, and technical innovations has been necessary for the creation and

¹ Regarding the division of labor introduced by Scientific Management, the distinction between *thinking* and *acting* often met in the literature is reconsidered for the purpose of the present analysis, as such an abstraction is not consistent with the ontological implications of the materialist perception of labor.

accumulation of capital”. Thus, forces of production are needed to be developed² to raise the surplus value produced. Within the organizational formation, management, being the delegator of the capitalist, is concerned with extracting as much productive labor as possible from the worker. Then again to do so within the given social relations of the capitalist mode of production, the control over work and labor force has to be ensured.

Goldman and Van Houten (1977) emphasize that disciplining the labor force has always been a concern and central issue in managerial practice illustrated by historic examples since late 18th century. In general, they argue that management is getting involved with insuring certainty in the social relations of production, through managers’ power to policy creation and policy implementation for purposes of capital accumulation and social control. Before that, they point to the development of new forces of production in sake of strengthening the existing social relations of production as a determinate assumption for the Marxist thought.

So, management was introduced in the production process when that had become too wide to be controlled directly by the capitalist, achieving the real subordination of labor to the relations of production. Management has historically undergone changes regarding its expression, all of them been depicted in scientific theory and schools of thought respectively. Since the second half of the 20th century, management has infiltrated public administration in several countries of the world (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) finally forming a diffused practice, theoretically declared in the late 1980s as New Public Management.

4. New Public Management

The introduction of New Public Management strategies in public administration is usually seen as a political choice, as it historically coincided with a conservative turn in national government (e.g. during 1980s in UK) (Common, 1998). However, whatever the ideological thrust, and sometimes even hardly exemplified by the

² According to Adler (2011), [capitalism’s] “characteristic relations of production greatly intensify pressures to develop the forces of production” (p. 129) and they do so “by integrating a widening of specialized skills into the ‘collective worker’” (p. 133).

prevailing political context, fiscal crises of the state have best served as the framework of legitimacy, embedded in the dominant political speech. In fact, fiscal crises of the state are usually treated as surface phenomena and as such reduced to organizationally driven shortages or administrative pitfalls of obsolete bureaucratic systems in well-fare states.

Fiscal crises' analysis needs to be grounded to the contradictory relation between state and capital³, meaning that the state itself is as much necessary for the realization and accumulation of surplus value by the capital, as it is "contradictory to the general character of private capitalist appropriation and accumulation" (Heydebrand, 1977, p. 89, quoting O' Connor, 1973). Granted that contradictions between state and capital generate fiscal crises then, public administration is affected, forcing public institutions (viz. public bureaucracies) towards a technocratic reorganization, interpreted by the introduction of managerial strategies, which are generally textured by efficiency and cost-effective practices.

In terms of analysis, there is a point, historically specified, where the established social relations embodied in state bureaucracy (manifested as labor laws, labor relations, system of government, etc.) slow down the growth of productive forces. At that point, crises may emerge, as the expression of contradictions, calling for bureaucratic structures of control and administration to be superseded for that would set further growth of productive forces possible, and facilitate further increase in surplus production and appropriation. The organizational framework is the terrain where the contradiction of the state social relations of production, interpreted in the form of bureaucratic control structure, authority relations, and administration, vs. the private capital's need for appropriation and accumulation is reduced.

In Heydebrand's (1977, p. 90) account, crises in public administration identify with the expression of organizational contradictions, namely the incompetence of established control structures to respond to the requirements for increased productivity that is the "relative capacity and efficiency of labor in generating surplus value". Therefore, he claims that the first contradiction to be observed within a "work organization" is that between "policies designed to rationalize work activity" and the

³ Engels (2010) makes a thorough analysis of the historic process through which the state emerged and its role in relation to the socioeconomic evolution.

“system of authority relations” expressed by the division and control of labor (p. 90). Specifically, he argues that the technocratic turn in the USA’s judicial system was characterized by the “imposition of narrow budgets and cost-effective procedures” and by “the introduction of business methods and administrative innovations and strategies to increase productivity” (p. 100).

Taking into consideration management’s role as discussed in the previous part as well as Heydebrand’s (1977) remark, it can be argued so far that the technocratic reorganization of public bureaucracies is aiming at the increase of the productivity of labor while it is threatening the dominion of the established control structures. Taking for example public hospitals, the development of rational forms of work organization and administration, incorporated in the framework of Health Management, is contradictory to the control structures of traditional elites - that is a temporally objectified outcome of previous organizational activity- such as the medical professional authority. Nonetheless, for a better understanding of that contradiction, authority relations and control structures should be analyzed along with the tensions characterizing the organization of medical work.

5. Health Management

Health Management research, having already explored several empirical cases distilled from both the private and the public sector, is usually concerned with highlighting either the potential of managerial innovations in health institutions or the conditions upon which they would deliver better results in terms of organizational performance and quality of service (Casalino et al., 2007; Goodwin et al., 2006; Smith, 2002; Stamatis, 1996). However, the introduction of business strategies and the implementation of rationalizing techniques of work in health care, contextualized by management in its plurality of expressions, e.g. Total Quality Management, Continuous Quality Improvement, Six Sigma, etc. (Printezis and Gopalakrishnan, 2007), are signifying important changes in medical practice, worth of analyzing.

As Ritzer (2004) have noted, private health institutions have already introduced a new framework of work organization for medical personnel. A significant example of process-based techniques’ innovation in medical work is “pathways” as described by

Wyshoki (2003) (Ritzer, 2004, p. 111). In particular, “pathways” constitute a predetermined, standardized series of actions that is to be carried out in accordance to a number of cases (Ritzer, 2004). In a similar vein, performance related pay schemes are renovating the remuneration system (Marsden and French, 1998) aiming at the enhancement of productivity. Finally, a quite recent aspect of health institutions’ reorganization, inspired by the manufacturing industry, is Lean Health Care. It emphasizes on procedures that support the continuous flow of patients through the departments of the hospital, minimizing the time of hospitalization, medical errors and wasted effort (Jimmerson et al., 2005; Printezis and Gopalakrishnan, 2007).

Such organizational innovations are setting labor’s performance and results interpreted in a quantitative vocabulary, thus elaborating managerial control to be executed effectively over a complicated yet transparent production process. For doctors’ performance to be rendered calculable and efficient, medical practice and ethics are significantly affected. For instance, planning and evaluating effort through the number of patients been treated along with the number of visits and the time spent in each of them or assessing patients in terms of profitability (Ritzer, 2004) are intensifying work while interfering with medical ethics, systemically encouraging the reproduction of social discriminations (Casalino et al., 2007).

Drawing inspiration from the private sector, public bureaucracies are being reorganized in accordance to this spectrum, generally promising the enhancement of organizational performance through the rationalization of work and the quantification of the object of labor. At the same time, public administration’s reorientation has raised concerns regarding the autonomy of professional work (Levay and Waks, 2009; Farrell and Morris, 2003; Exworthy and Halford, 1998; Pollitt, 1993).

Professionalism has been a common theme of the literature (Haug, 1975; Derber, 1982; 1983; Engel and Hall, 1973; Stelling, 1972). Heydebrand (1977, p. 92) considers professions to be “collegially and peer-controlled status groups” whose activity is “based on control over a theoretically and scientifically expanding as well as rationalized knowledge base” while they “gain additional power by the use and sale of ‘judgment’”. Professional autonomy is then vulnerable to any attempt to set professional practice transparent for that would render it “accessible to external scrutiny and control” (Levay and Waks, 2009, p. 510).

Public hospitals, as public professional bureaucracies, are economically directed by the state, while the core work is executed by a highly professionalized and considerably autonomous work force, such as doctors. That means that public hospitals are primarily bureaucratic environments where doctors act in accordance to a set of professional rules embedded in a bureaucratic context. Although bureaucracies are considered to be the expression of rational control over labor (Barker, 1993), they did not manage to impose significant intervention in the organization of medical work, thus professional authority or domain. From Heydebrand's (1977, p. 93) point of view, "the rise of bureaucratic and technocratic administration, embraced by state and capital, nevertheless threatens professional autonomy, privilege, and domain and is initially opposed on grounds of subverting the quality of service, but later subordinated to professional dominance". Bureaucratic organization only achieved the formal subordination of professionals, assembling and coordinating them, yet it never managed to interfere severely with the organization of medical work, and consequently doctors' domain and authority.

On the other hand, the mobilization of productivity measures and the rationalization of organizational procedures are challenging the established control structures, meaning threatening professional power and autonomy to conduct medical practice based on professional discretion within a bureaucratic environment. Managerial control is setting new values and creates new limits to doctors' professional autonomy, one that up to now had been subject merely to peer control exercised upon a concrete system of ethical codes and the scientific body of medical knowledge. Health Management, seen as a theoretical framework of managerial control, is addressing rigorous innovations in the organization and execution of medical work, therefore restricting doctors' professional autonomy of making decisions. To summarize, Health Management's innovation in public health institutions implies the rationalization of medical work, aiming at the increase of the productivity of labor under an emerging intensified managerial control structure, therefore threatening hereafter those historically temporary established relations, such as doctors' professional authority and domain.

6. Conclusions

The paper has covered a literature review highlighting contributions of several researchers towards the formulation of a dialectical theoretical framework for the study of organizations. It should be clear so far that the need for a solid conceptual and methodological framework in organizational studies, which would embed and/or develop valuable insights found in the literature, still exists. In fact, even though the guidelines of organizational analysis already proposed by theorists stand for a substantial contribution to the field, it is necessary that those are further demonstrated for their validity, “both in terms of theoretical-historical elaboration and empirical-practical analysis” (Heydebrand, 1977, p. 102).

Materialist dialectics is providing scientific research with important ontological and methodological principles, facilitating the potential of introducing to organizational studies a powerful exploratory and explanatory framework towards understanding the processes through which organizational phenomena emerge and evolve. The present analysis stands for a theoretical perspective of contemporary changes in public administration, partly elaborating the contribution of organizational researchers discussed. Nonetheless, it should be stressed that, granted the methodological gap, the analysis is missing philosophical grounding (even though that was tentatively attempted) and methodological coherence. Therefore, the perspective is as much dialectical as the organizational literature implies, but not materialist necessarily, due to the critical, and sometimes creative indeed, adoption of theory as found in the field. In particular, the paper is not including, no matter how important that would be, an analysis of and grounding to the wider socioeconomic environment in which contemporary organizational tensions discussed here take place.

Attempting a dialectical perspective of the contemporary tensions in public administration meant looking back at the origins of management and its evolution throughout the historic development of productive forces under capitalist social relations of production. Public bureaucracies and particularly public health institutions have been analyzed under Heydebrand’s (1977) conceptualization of organizational contradictions juxtaposing evolving forms of organizing work vs. organizational control structures. According to that, managerial innovations to rationalize medical work and increase productivity tend to contradict professional control structures, viz.

doctor's authority and domain. Finally, the analysis is stressing that Health Management is theoretically and practically imposing interventions in the way medical work is executed within hospitals, therefore challenging the autonomy of medical practice.

The perspective is implying a theoretical at least attempt to restrict doctors' autonomy and control over the production process of health services, therefore bringing up questions of whether medical practice is actually vulnerable to real subordination or not. Granted that the reorganization of public hospitals is setting the terrain where doctors' authority, domain and autonomy are challenged, further empirical exploration is needed so as to reveal not only the processes through which that is enabled (if enabled at all), but also the potential of such a theory itself to respond to organizational praxis.

Heydebrand's (1977) dialectical perspective of contradictions between activity and outcome implies that temporally objectified relations are superseded through the conscious practical activity of productive forces. Since the notion of praxis is dialectically bound with consciousness, professionals' attitude or ideas towards the rationalization of work procedures need to be explored as well, for that it would contribute to understanding professionals' conscious practical activity and the way in which that affects established or emerging relations.

Management's introduction in public health institutions signifies a technocratic reorientation in public administration as well as a new organizational framework of discipline. Although, Health Management's ideological and practical innovations imply a significant challenge for the autonomy of the medical work, it is argued that, granted the division among professionals (Friedson, 1994), it has mostly affected certain categories, such as nursing (Brannon, 1996; Newman and Lawler, 2009). Regarding doctors' autonomy to conduct medical practice upon discretion based on ethics and science, a dialectical analysis could provide literature with a better understanding of *how* their autonomy in terms of organizing their own work was the least or even not affected at all.

Even though, materialist dialectics is not the prevailing theoretical framework in the field, it is possible that such a perspective might encourage future research aiming at exploring and further analyzing the tensions in public administration and the changes

that contemporary public bureaucracies are undergoing. Heydebrand (1977) thought that contradictions between theory and praxis might occasion an ideological transformation of organizational studies, which he considered to be highly unlikely for as much as it depended on the ideological consensus among scholars. Above all, it seems that the history of Marxism in organizational studies has been as turbulent as the history of humanity in the 20th century. For that Adler (2011, p. 147) argues that, granted the contemporary socioeconomic crisis, “the future of Marxist organization studies appears bright”.

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