CCG463 - BRAZILIAN WAY FROM CONTROLLERS? STANDPOINT

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Resumo
This paper aimed to investigate how were the controllers? standpoint about Brazilian way in their professional quotidian. Thus, we carried out a qualitative investigation interview-based to gather data from the field. We conduct 20 interviews with controllers. All interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed to comply our investigation method. In order to get better insights, we conduct a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo 11. We find a general perception about Brazilian way was related to the formalism or a deviation of predetermined conduct, and it is also considered as bad. However, improvisation is perceived as been a harmful behavior, and the flexibility has two approaches, one related to capability of been able to adapt to changes, also called as adaptability, and a second to make rules flexible. Some other finds of our research agree with shown the literature review, like positive aspects (creativity and innovation, for example) and negative ones (such as communication and integration problems, and the trend to avoid rules) were observed due to the Brazilian way. Therefore, our research contributes to encourage the discussion about Brazilian cultural aspects and its influences over both controller occupation and management control systems.

BRAZILIAN WAY FROM CONTROLLERS' STANDPOINT

ABSTRACT

This paper aimed to investigate how were the controllers' standpoint about Brazilian way in their professional quotidian. Thus, we carried out a qualitative investigation interview-based to gather data from the field. We conduct 20 interviews with controllers. All interviews were tape-recorded and fully transcribed to comply our investigation method. In order to get better insights, we conduct a Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis with NVivo 11. We find a general perception about Brazilian way was related to the formalism or a deviation of predetermined conduct, and it is also considered as bad. However, improvisation is perceived as been a harmful behavior, and the flexibility has two approaches, one related to capability of been able to adapt to changes, also called as adaptability, and a second to make rules flexible. Some other finds of our research agree with shown the literature review, like positive aspects (creativity and innovation, for example) and negative ones (such as communication and integration problems, and the trend to avoid rules) were observed due to the Brazilian way. Therefore, our research contributes to encourage the discussion about Brazilian cultural aspects and its influences over both controller occupation and management control systems.

Key-words: Brazilian way. Controller standpoint. Controller perception.

1   INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian culture, permeated by Lusitanian, African and indigenous practices and influences, notably in the relations established in the work (employer-employee) (Holanda, 1976) also reflects habits and behaviors adopted in organizations. In public and private organizations, relations between bosses and employees, bosses and subordinates, according to Motta & Caldas (1997), show a distance of power so large that they seem to remember the distribution of national income and the slave-past. Rescuing the origins of these disturbances, Holanda (1976) argues that, as power relations have consolidated, especially since the sugar mill era, many structural properties - among which personalism, protectionism, aversion to uncertainty, formalism, receptivity to the foreigner, and the way in which they are - have shaped what is currently Brazilian culture.

In this context, highly sophisticated organizations are observed in Brazil, bureaucratized and guided by efficiency criteria at one extreme and, on the other hand, traditional organizations with personalistic traits in which it is still possible to find favoritism practices based predominantly on personal relationships: Patrimonialist criteria override rational judgment criteria (Pedroso, Massukado-Nakatani & Mussi, 2009). The existing contrast due to this heterogeneity in Brazilian society, classified by Riggs (1964) as prismatic, is justified, according to Guerreiro Ramos (1983), by the fact that it coexists the old and the modern, the backward and the advanced, the old and the new.

Considering the scope of this work, the analysis rests on a singular trait or characteristic of Brazilian culture: the Brazilian way, that is, the way in which difficulties can be solved with(out) contrary to norms and laws. The Brazilian way, according to Barbosa (1992), calls attention to its universal, multifaceted and ambiguous character. Like other cultural characteristics, the Brazilian way is present and influences people's daily lives. However, this does not mean that all people are obliged to make use of the

way, but rather, that, at some point, they end up having contact with this practice, either actively, sometimes passively (Pedroso, Massukado-Nakatani & Mussi, 2009).

Thus, this study aims to verify **what is the controllers' perception about Brazilian way in the organizational environment.** Consequently, this paper has two main contributions. The first contribution is the analysis of Brazilian way influence over controllers' activities and functions, specifically controller's routines. The second contribution refers to a methodological approach of this research that allows a study of other cultural characteristics not covered by the Brazilian way and exploring in depth the influence of national culture in management accounting research.

2   WHAT MAKES BRAZIL, BRAZIL? THE BRAZILIAN WAY

Often, in Brazil people say "*Eu dou um jeito nisso*"[1] when they fix or solve a situation whose solution was not anticipated, or whose expected solution is not within immediate reach. Also, it's the way in which is possible to solve problems with(out) contradicting laws and regulations. Starting at this point, in this section we discuss about the main characteristic of interest in Brazilian culture to this research: the Brazilian way. However Brazilian scholars pointed out other characteristics such adventure spirit, sensuality, street smarts, protectionism and receptivity of foreigners when they carried out investigations in Brazilian organizations (Freitas, 1997; Shimonishi & Machado-da-Silva, 2003).

This aspect becomes from the societal level and have their roots on the Colonial era when the rules and laws were the same of Portugal's Court and did not protect Brazilians. On this way, is a common sense that the Brazilians tends avoid rules, by the way, enjoy creating rules in order to that era. Then, it is a protection behaviour which persists until nowadays (Borges, 2011; Motta & Alcadipani, 1999). By contrast, the excessive rules and laws produced in Brazil can be perceived as a contradiction.

Other common sense is that Brazilians have a short-term orientation and always looks for advantages. This behaviour is explained by the definition of "*homem cordial*" (Cordial Man) of Holanda (1976) and the "*malandro*" (Trickster) of Motta (1984). The cordial man (or the trickster in a bad approach) are that who find excuses that justifies not comply with the rules and laws. So, if the rules and laws are not fair, is socially accepted not respect them.

However, Holanda (1976) points of as a dimension of Brazilian way the emotiveness in Brazilian relationships. Thus, the cordial man is not a gentle person, but one who acts driven by emotion instead of reason, sees no distinction between the private and the public, disregards formalities and put aside ethics and civility. This way, in order to achieve it the suitor must be friendly, humble and show how a situation is unfair. (Motta & Alcadiponi, 1999). Whereas the world deals with individuals, Brazil has chosen to deal with people. Thus, being receptive to strangers, thinking about new solutions to all kinds of problems and even giving up a place in the queue, for example, form the good, original and not yet understood side of the Brazilian way.

On the other hand, the bad side, remains the mockery of previously established rules, and the fad of assessing advantages exclusively for themselves (or for theirs), even if it harms an entire collectivity. In this context, some colloquial expressions such as "to

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[1] I'll fix it

move a few chopsticks," "do you know who you are talking to?", "Nobody will know", "everyone does so", demonstrate the existence of deep individual self-corruption, a tendency to ignore minor corruptions committed on a day-to-day basis, complaining only of those in power diverting billions of public coffers.

Thus, the Brazilian way can be considered as peculiar – or even particular – cultural characteristic, and understand it helps to comprehend the Brazilian reality faced by local and foreign firms that operate in Brazilian frontiers (Motta & Alcadipani, 1999). To a better understanding, the Table 1 summarizes some researches about this Brazilian cultural characteristic.

Table 1 - Brazilian way concerns

Author(s)	Year	Concerns
Campos	1966	The Brazilian way is not legal nor illegal institution, is simply paralegal. Its roots are linked to three main factors: the historical origin, attitudes related to laws and social facts, and the religious attitude.
Torres	1973	The Brazilian way is a way to be peculiarly Brazilian, the product of particular historical conditions that allowed the creation of this kind of philosophy of life. It translates into the ability to adapt to unexpected or difficult situations and demonstrates creativity, improvisation and Brazilian cleverness.
Viera, Costa e Barbosa	1982	The Brazilian way is a special, efficient, fast and creative way to act: to control and facilitate situations, achieve and solve things, overcome difficulties, to curry favor, look friend, escape the bureaucracy, solve problems, accommodate themselves, get out of a situation and circumvent the inspection, using personal sympathy, influence of third parties, a good chat, a financial satisfaction, technical arrangement, etc.
Abreu, Costa & Barbosa	1982	The Brazilian way is a power relationship along the lines of "Do you know who I am?" What differentiates those who can do and those who should do, those ones who have and have-nots, in short, people and individuals.
Barbosa	1992	The Brazilian way is always a "special" way to solve a problem or difficult situation or prohibited; or a creative solution to any emergency, whether in the form of fraud to any rule or pre-established norm, whether in the form of conciliation, cleverness or ability.
Motta	1997	The Brazilian way is a cordial practice that involves personalize relationships through the discovery of an affinity or common interest. It differs from corruption (by not involve financial gain) and street smarts (for not harm any person directly).
Freitas	1997	The Brazilian way is part of street smarts, as the trickster is a master in the art of "jeitinho".

Source: authors

As shown in Table 2, there are no congruence among authors about the Brazilian way concept. Nevertheless, in this paper the Brazilian way is defined as a typical process by which one person reaches a given objective in spite of contrary determinations (laws, orders, rules, etc.). It is used to "avoid" determinations, which, if taken into account, would make it impossible to achieve the intended action by the person who asks, emphasizing thus the staff at the expense of the universal (Motta & Alcadipani, 1999). Furthermore, the Brazilian way is an action to solve day-by-day problems or unexpected situations, however, it's an institution.

Some of those concerns provides and highlights aspects of Brazilian way such as: Creativity and Innovation; Initiative to change and ability to solve problems; Ability to negotiations (persuasion and conciliation); Adaptability and flexibility; Ability to personal relationships; Improvisation; Trends to avoid rules; Trends to corrupt or be corrupted; Trends to use power of hierarchy; and Alienation - trends to let be manipulated (Pedroso, Massukado-Nakatani & Mussi, 2009).

The Brazilian way, according to Barbosa (1992), draws attention by its universal character, multifaceted and ambiguous: *Universal*, because it is a widely-recognized habit, since everybody practiced or have already used the "jeitinho" (Motta & Alcadipani, 1999); *Ambiguous,* because it is characterized between the favor considered honest and positively characterized and dishonest corruption perceived negatively (DaMatta, 1979); and *Multifaceted*, because it has a lot of interpretations. (Barbosa, 1992).

3   DATA AND METHOD

This study had two stages: (a) pilot interview; and (b) semi-structured interviews. The first stage aimed to develop familiarity with study subject and adaptation of protocol design. Thus, a pilot interview was conducted. Then, the second stage was the interviews with controllers about the influence of Brazilian way over controllers' functions and activities. Were interviewed 20 controllers from different Brazilian federal units. The Table 3 summarizes our interviewees attributes.

Table 3 - Interviewees' attributes

	Gender	Training Area	Office Time	Acting Sector
Interviewee 01	Female	Management	Short-term	Construction
Interviewee 02	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Electric Energy
Interviewee 03	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 04	Female	Management	-	Technology
Interviewee 05	Male	Accounting	Short-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 06	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Transformation industry
Interviewee 07	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Import and Marketing
Interviewee 08	Female	Economy	-	Hospitality
Interviewee 09	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Food & Beverage
Interviewee 10	Male	Management & Accounting	Long-term	Textile
Interviewee 11	Male	Accounting	Short-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 12	Female	Management	-	Hospitality
Interviewee 13	Male	Management	Short-term	Hospital
Interviewee 14	Female	Accounting	Short-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 15	Male	Management	Long-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 16	Male	Economy	Medium-term	Construction
Interviewee 17	Male	Accounting	Long-term	Logistics Services
Interviewee 18	Male	Accounting	Medium-term	Retail
Interviewee 19	Male	Accounting	Long-term	Hospitality
Interviewee 20	Male	Management	Long-term	Automotive

Source: transcription of interviews

The interview protocol was based on nine questions. Two to know the profile of the interviewee, two to know the profile of the company and five about the Brazilian Way. All the questions were elaborated based on the literature review and adjusted after the pilot interview. All the interviews are made in Portuguese, the mother language of the researchers and interviewees, and then translated to English.

The semi-structured interviews, were face-to-face and via videoconference-based. They constitute our main method of data collection in this study. The utilization of this interview method will be essential to gain insights into the participants' perceptions, opinions, and views about the influence of Brazilian way in controllers' day-to-day activities and functions.

In order to gaining access to interviewees, firstly, we will contact professionals via LinkedIn and our close friends, students, and ex-students which are involved with Department of Managerial Accounting activities both controllers or personal near to them to guarantee an initial access. Those ones, which are not controllers, we will ask for a meeting with the controllers. Therefore, the technique of snowball sampling will be employed to recruit other participants for our study. Such technique implies that the

existing contacts who are the initial interviewees will be asked to nominate other interviewees who fulfil the theoretical criteria of the study.

Thus, in order to provide better insights and conclusions, in this research, all 20 interviews were audio-recorded and then fully transcribed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2006). In addition, the interviews were conducted during 7 months, between July and December of 2016. The total of hours recorded are around twelve and the media of each interview was 40 minutes. Therefore, the transcriptions were send back to respective interviewees for confirmations of meanings and ideas as practiced by Wiesel, Modell e Moll (2011). In addition, in order to support the process of analysis, we performed a qualitative data analysis assisted by computer with the software Nvivo11. In the qualitative analysis of interviews, the research adopted Miles and Huberman's (1994) methods of analyzing qualitative data which consists of three activities:

First the **data reduction:** process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in transcriptions. The data reduction was made by writing summaries of interviews, coding and categorizing transcriptions, and writing memos. As described by Saunders et al. (2006) in addition to this process will be developed a diary to record ideas and reflections about the project.

Our codes were divided in tree nodes into two groups. The firs group was dedicated to general information of interviews, respondents, and organizations, then summarized to identify some attributes to aids the analysis process. The second group was dedicated to Brazilian way perceived characteristics, impacts into controllers' routines, strategies to fix it and contradictions. This way we have initially 52 nodes. After the second round of reviews, there are 135 nodes to the second group.

Second the **data display:** data display involves organizing and assembling the reduced or selected data into diagrammatic or visual displays. Matrices, graphs, charts, and networks are examples of displays. It is intended to prepare a diagram or chart, which represents the interplay between the Brazilian way aspects and asses how they impact the controllers' routines. By displaying what we found in interviews, we proceed to the last one activity: **data interpretation,** in order to draw and verify the conclusions of the study.

Finally, in order to guarantee the reliability and validity of this work, we fulfilled Ahrens' (2008) criteria of reliability and validity: (i) Authenticity and familiarity with the field. Thu, we collected authentic data in the field and became familiar with the information and actors in there. (ii) Plausibility, that is, the presentation of actual research. So, we presented a real research, having in fact gone to the field. (iii) Criticality in all stages of the research; due to our attempting to divergent information and conflicting statements. (iv) Multiple voices in the field; since we observed multiple voices and resources in the field - made field observations and document analysis, as well as interviews with different actors in the field. And, (v) Writing and living in the field, due to carried out transcripts of the interviews analyzed, as well as several notes about the data obtained and observations made in the field. Our results are exposed in the next section.

4   CONTROLLERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT THE BRAZILIAN WAY

To introduce the perceived aspects of Brazilian way and how it is perceived in controllers' day by day, we first answer the question presented in the title of this section by claiming the same words used by an interviewee:

On the one hand, it is very positive, but on the other hand, this cleverness at some point may have a high price. [...] Whether used for good, the Brazilian way helps. Now if you are trying to deceive or omitting information and situations, it will have a high price in the future. (Interviwee 07)

This passage clarify that Brazilian way is multifaceted and ambiguous, as we presented in section 2. Thus, we intended to divide it in two categories, the positive and the negatives aspects of Brazilian way. However, these characteristics appears to be interconnected or interrelated, because of Brazilian way roots. By analyzing the transcripts of interviews, we found, as can be observed in the Figure 1, the following aspects of Brazilian way:

Figure 1 - Cluster of Brazilian way aspects
Source: Transcripts of Interviews

However, were more significant, in frequency appearance: the time horizon orientation, adaptability and flexibility, the formalism, reliability, and creativity and innovation. Based on the interviewees discourses, we didn't judge appropriated to divide those aspects of Brazilian as good or bad to them, as a black or white classification. Our finds look like more as a gray scale of perception and usage of some Brazilian way aspects.

At this point, was clarified that there are some aspects that can be perceived as both good and/or bad, other solely as positive or negative, depending on actors' intentions into some situations. In order to provide a better clarifying, we make some distinctions to those five main aspects as follow, and in the end, we present our diagram according our findings.

4.1 Time horizon orientation: why do it today, whether i can do it tomorrow?

At least in the social level, Brazilian are known by postpone everything and by arrive late – or in the Brazilian time. In our analysis, this cultural aspect appears to be present in all cases, at organizational level. Thus, this demeanor can produce some misfits with organizational objectives and inefficiency and/or losses into activities. As can be observed in the speech of an interviewee:

This is all about priorities. We try to establish what is a priority, but it's not always followed. 'So, let's deliver it for tomorrow, today we will do whatever we can, but tomorrow we will end it.' Sometimes we end up getting complicated because of this. In the controller, we cannot leave anything to the last minute, because everything is onus, everything is disbursement, mainly in the tax part (Interviewee 03)

Therefore, the presence of this conduct, implies in some delays into organization activities. This way to handle the daily operations organization need more people. As a consequence, the Brazilian time can rise risks and errors which can imply negatively the financial health of organization, and manage in this scenario as perceived as traumatic by an interviewee:

> *Considering that of all the projects that we have, I think that between 2% and 5% maximum, have its activities completed according to the planning.* (Interviewee 09)

> *You'll need more people to handle the operations, since it is not an organized or planned thing. Affects by the fact of the risk of error, of you forgetting a payment and having to pay with interest and fine. [...] By the lack of planning you can affect your cash flow and you have no recourse to fulfill your obligations on the date. Then, it is somewhat traumatic.* (Interviewee 07)

However, in our interviewees' speech the only exception are tax obligations. The Brazilian tax code is very complex and impose some disbursements whenever its requirements are not achieved. It is the reason of organization draw their day-by-day activities and employ many resources to achieve the Brazilian tax requirements.

> *Tax legislation is immense, highly complex and subject to interpretation. She is not clear. As a rule it is dense, heavy, and long. Few legislations have a coding in which you concentrate everything on single structured code like ICMS, but you have a lot of tax benefits of each stay that leaves the interpretation different [...] The part of IR and CSLL, which is constantly changed ... PIS and COFINS is very complex. Social security is not even talked about. What happens is that PIS, COFINS and ICMS, and in certain IPI mode, as different treatment for different products and activities, then also contributing to the search and search for ways / opportunities to do as operations in a different way based In the Legislation, thus making you design your operation in the most advantageous way from the tax point of view.* (Interviewee 18)

> *[...] it affects by the fact that you miss a tax calculation, and because the information arrives at the time you can pay wrong, or a wrong statement and can suffer a notice.* (Interviewee 07)

> *Just for you to have an idea, if I delay sending an information, I'll go to lose a tax benefit. So, in a 1 day delayed information I'll have to pay around U$320 thousand, U$350 thousand only for the delay of an accessory information.* (Interviewee 17)

In addition to the attention to Brazilian tax requirements, our interviewees also seemed to worry with the responsibility of gathering data, produce information and supply the decision-making process. As following:

> *Delays are never positive. It will not be ugly for anyone who sent the information late, it will be ugly for me, or for those who were responsible for finalizing, that did not deliver on time.* (Interviewee 01)

In some cases, it is stronger than other, but a general perception lies on avoid this conduct. However, it is influential and is associated to organizational planning and priorities.

> *Actually, there is this cultural component but it is influential.* (Interviewee 18)

> *What happens here is that the company has a management that is very centralized and this makes people, or managers in each of the areas, get a little comfortable with the results, achieve goals, achieve improvements [...] because as they do not have access, they do not have the power to make strategic decisions within the company, of course people settle in and do only what is their responsibility, which means that they do not think about the company as a whole, just think of their box and in their activity.* (Interviewee 13)

In our analysis process, this perspective seems to be the reason to improvisation, which will be explain in a following section.

4.2 Creativity, Innovation & Improvisation: to make happen

According to Shneiderman (2007) "Creativity includes discovery or invention of a significant idea, pattern, method, or device that gains recognition from accepted leaders in a field, while innovation requires further steps to ensure adoption". Generally, the creativity is a capability perceived as black & with scale: or you have it or you do not. However, there are persons more creative than others.

The creativity and innovation are common used to provide small solutions on day-by-day activities and process, that not involves nor affect a strategic decision making. In addition, these aspects are perceived as success key-factor to any organization, and in some cases, it can open doors to every individual to contribute with ideas which can be adopted, and further contributing to organizational performance.

Oftentimes, when an organization faces an agenda conflict or some challenges in its daily routines, specific requests are generated. Brazilians, particularly, avoid do not correspond what is expected from them. Thus, they generally accept all request independently if them can achieve it. In addition, the requester can be offended with a negative statement for his or her ask. These situations are not common solely in vertical hierarchical relations, the same happens in horizontal relationships.

> *Sometimes your boss asks you something and you [...] will not tell him that you will not do it. You turn around, do, create, invent, exchange, change this and that, to make it happen. So, I think we really need to be creative inside the company to give small solutions. It's very personal.* (Interviewee 01)

> *Americans are more direct, for example: "I need that for today…" and you answer, "I cannot", so, this will be rescheduled and will stay for tomorrow, or you stop what you are doing and do what has the highest priority. In Brazil, you say that you can do what is requested, even knowing you don't, and at the next day you did not gives as promised, and compromised the work [...] maybe for fear of not meeting expectations.* (Interviewee 18)

The environment in which creativity and innovation are most explored are which less regulation or rules. In structured or formal organizations, the routines and rules are plastered, suppressing the possibility of actors being creatives. In some organization, the creativity and innovation, is not supported as a cultural aspect inside their organizational culture. Thus, the creative process is not supplied by an ordinated or systematic process, it remains informal.

> *Those who work in a regulated environment do not have the freedom to create. Who is on the other side wants the information [...] 'When force comes on the scene, right goes packing', but in small things, we see improvements in processes.* (Interviewee 02)

> *Sometimes the processes in the Department of Managerial Accounting are plastered, but often we can be creative and bringing productivity gains by stopping, talking and watching the business.* (Interviewee 04)

> *We are not structured to the point of working innovation as something cultural to listen to suggestions, we need to structure this better. The suggestions sometimes start from a meeting, but it is not organized, structured to work the innovation itself.* (Interviewee 17)

However, when creativity takes place, it can help the organization to improve some activities and process, increase the team motivation, and stimulate a better interpersonal and interdepartmental relationships.

> *Creativity is very useful for us to break the quotidian, break the routines and I like to incentive this in our teams, I just allow them to think quite at ease. You're an analyst, think as a coordinator, you're a coordinator, think as a manager; you're a manager, think as a director.* (Interviewee 07)

> *Everyone can help to improve the organization, each one can be heard.* (…) *Not always what we need is already represented in the standard report, which is already ready for the system. Not always the standard report can identify a problem, so we have to develop reports, develop accounting-financial analysis and this analysis is customized, tailor-made. The information that sometimes escapes standards and literature - are indicators that do not have in the literature, which we create, specific to meet the needs of the company. So, we create differentiated reports to present the company's result, positive or negative, or a failure. We, at least daily, have the freedom to present something new, to plan, to create new things, to be heard in every area. So, this accounting-financial report in which we created the indicators for the company's results presents something that the standard report would not present.* (Interviewee 10)

In contrast, when individuals use their creativity time driven, it may entail in temporary solutions, in this case, improvisation. The interim solutions can create in individuals a sensation of solving problem, but without have not solve it, postponing the

problem to a nearby future. The Improvisation is avoided by organization and interviewees due to the consequences of its use.

> *Then, unfortunately inside the Department of Managerial Accounting we wrongly call contour by solution (…) It's kind of a temporary solution to solve that problem, so this concept gets in the way a little bit, because we sometimes try the interim solutions, but we do not treat the problem at the root, then that same problem comes back to repeat itself.* (Interviewee 10)

Finally, we can differ the creativity of improvisation. Individuals need creativity to provide solutions then innovation, nevertheless when there is no time and driven by personal factors, they can think in temporary solutions that not complies the organizational rules. In so doing, into an ordinated process the creativity can provide some ideas that will turn into innovation.

> *Creativity is good as a principle and becomes essential, otherwise you do not create new products or processes. But it can be confused with the lack of organization or some disorganization and the way it is too. Some things you can make flexible, but you cannot invent when it comes to answering a customer, issuing a tax invoice, entering products ... sometimes the person makes an invention because he does not know and he does not have anyone to ask, he does not want to ask or is ashamed.* (Interviewee 18)

As pointed out in the second section, the Brazilian way is an action to respond or solve day-by-day problems or difficulties. This way, at organizational context improvisation can be avoided when it comes to make things happen, without even comply the rules. When this behavior is repeated many times, can bring some problems for organizations, as seen in the passage above extracted from the speech of an interviewee.

Furthermore, as a core, the creativity can be used into a structured process leading an innovation or in a non-structured process or unexpected situation what leads to improvises. Both, innovation and improvisation have the same root, Brazilian smartness and/or creativity, but they are a key to Brazilian support the changes and daily tasks.

4.3   Adaptability & Flexibility: when it is better to me…

First of all, the general perception of our interviewees about the adaptability and flexibility of Brazilian lies on the general idea that they are very easygoing and can support every weathering. In order words, Brazilian are very versatile, and to them seems there is no bad time or crisis. About this versatility, one of our interviewees commented:

> *Brazilian is half ninja. Examples we have several here, the staff really excels in this aspect (…) the Brazilian is very versatile, very creative.* (Interviewee 07)

In this sentence, ninja is a colloquial expression – slang – that means a very smart person with a large ability in to do something. Thus, is adaptability, flexibility and improvisation positive to organizations? The answer of this question depends on the individual and organizational philosophies. At individual level the perception about these aspects of Brazilian way lies on affinity and previous experiences of the controller with these characteristics.

> *I think that flexibility and adaptability are a great management tool. [...] the Brazilians have the gift of improvising and being flexible.* (Interviewee 04)

Those interviewees which had more affinity with adaptability and flexibility, points that it is a positive market differential to their careers. As the following statement:

> *The Brazilian controller is more able to deal with organizational problems and find a solution than those in other countries, because of the Brazilian way, that is kind: "Ah! The guy did not give me that!" I end up thinking already on possibilities of not delivering the person to create an indicator to give me the same thing, then I believe that there is a problem that entails giving me a positive market differential.* (Interviewee 09)

Whereas, the others affirm that there are no possibilities of being different from the rules and argue that when someone employs any of those aspects into the organization routines it affects the Department of Managerial Accounting's work – the main impacts perceived into controllers' routines are detailed in the section 4.2. These last ones, highlights that at an organizational level, the organizational culture and management model of the organization seems to (in)directly stimulate it, or not.

> *The norm was made to be fulfilled [...] I think you must put in the head of the collaborators the reason why the procedure exists, what the objective of it, and to clarify that his work will impact there in the front, if he does not do that.* (Interviewee 05)

Although the adaptability and flexibility in individuals' behavior to adapt to a new situation is perceived as a good thing, if this demeanour represents to circumvent of current rules, needs to be repressed. In other words, flexibility is a virtue since it does not represent cheats or circumvent norms. Upon there is a conduct which not complies with the rules, we face the formalism, the most typical aspect of Brazilian way.

4.4 Formalism: this is not fair in my case…

There is a general perception in Brazil that Brazilians are governed by many laws, rules and norms, and so there is often a tendency to try to circumvent these norms in an informal way. For this, it is tried to show how much the norm is unjust for the specific case (Motta, 1997). However, even when the normative appears to standardize, people look for faster and easier ways to do the same over time regardless the hierarchical structure. Thus this fact is perceived as natural for human beings. As follow:

> *Looking for a shorter path is very natural to the human being. However, going to the wrong way, I do not particularly see within the company. If there was, when he realized that it was a wrong way, he turned back and corrected himself.* (Interviewee 01)

> *The normative always appears as a necessity: the need to standardize, to give a hierarchy, to teach, or to give step-by-step. Of course, over time it goes into the automatic, and if there is no revision work, over time it becomes obsolete, because people find faster and easier ways, but as I said, the environment is very regulated, then there are things that cannot escape the*

requirement. Here the big challenge is to fulfil this giant number of standards without breaking the law. (Interviewee 02)

In addition, the formalism is an intrinsic cultural aspect and it seems to be rooted in each social relationship such at work and at home. It implies in an informal flexibility of legal rules, being a paralegal institution that aid to do things faster, or achieve a wanted target. In so doing, it can be perceived as corruption by not comply with legal requirements.

It is cultural, and this happens in all spheres: at work, at home, at school, in college, it is in every corner, all relationships. It's amazing how ingrained this is, so I guess we just have to be careful not to let it become a rule and become like that, the reason you get corrupted and go the other way, you know? But I think flexibility has to exist, understand? You have to have the line, head hard and be totally inflexible. You always have to weigh both sides of the coin, understand? Do not give in too much, but too. (Interviewee 05)

This way, the formalism need to be done carefully in some spheres because, since to circumvent rules is corruption, this demeanor cannot be repeated often, in order to not be the rule, but just an exception to small or irrelevant things. Sometimes, these actions can be provoked by lack of communication and information about the rules and norms, by a self-benefit seeking, or even when the norms and rules not make sense with perceived reality of actors which leads to a circumvent approach.

The rules were made to be fulfilled. I do not think anyone is crazy enough to create a bunch of procedures, a giant notebook, a giant manual, with a lot of procedures, if that doesn't make sense there. So, everything has to make sense. The bad thing is that sometimes people don't always know why they have to do it because someone says it has to be done. (Interviewee 05)

People will always try to circumvent a rule whenever it is to meet their interest. [...] When a system was implemented for people to apply electronically, we claimed for no deviations from the rule, but situations occurred and situations still occur. [...] Then you begin to see that people, if it is a situation in which they will be for self-benefit, will seek to justify why they have been out of the norm. In general, this has a very strong impact on Department of Managerial Accounting, since it is an area that has several functions, but the great contribution is the establishment of controls to ensure the rules are followed and the results achieved. (Interviewee 13)

According with our finds, to circumvent rules and norms can affect controllers' work and reliability because is expected from this department the establishment of controls. In spite of this fact happens in many cases on our interviews there is a perception of decreasing in function of the economical dynamics with more relationships with global organizations from other cultures, especially from developed countries. As follow:

I feel it has been decreasing. If we did a historical analysis, this is a thing that has been decreasing, especially in the last boom of

2008 so far. In the Northeast, where we had the arrival of many multinationals, I see that this way has been decreasing, being more controlled. As I worked a lot on the south-southeast axis and in other countries as well, outside I already felt this a lot, especially in São Paulo, which is the heart is the economic one, and they see that this does not work as much. Now they are bringing this culture to the northeast and north. (Interviewee 07)

The increasing of interactions with other cultures and the rising of organizations complexity stimulate the professionalized management that seeks to be a barrier to the social cultural aspects. However, this is a slow process and it's not applied in all cases. As can be observed in the following assessments of our interviewees:

As the management of the company is very professionalized, all the managers came from other big companies, they already usually bring that culture. It's an evolution. Now every change in culture is slow. (Interviewee 07)

There is not. Dealing with professionals gives us a very great tranquility. We are in a company that tries to follow the laws, although for that we pay a high price that sometimes a project that another competitor could launch in a year and you throw in two because it will follow a via cross of do not know how many organ disorganized. (Interviewee 16)

Since formalism is an aspect of the Brazilian culture related to obtaining self-benefit, its use in labor relations can affect the degree of trust between people of the same organization, and with this, difficulties arise at work. The next section is dedicated to clarifying the main perceptions about the individualist versus collectivist views in the analyzed cases.

4.5 Individual or collective orientation? What is better to me or my group.

At social level, there is a perception that Brazilians always looking for advantages to themselves as an unique person or individual group. In our analysis, most of our interviewees perceived the individualism as a problem to the organization. In addition, the lack of reliability is something very specific from person to person or between departures, and not a generalized conduct inside organization. As follow:

I think this is a very particular thing [...] it is part of Brazilian culture, but I cannot say that I have this as a generalized scenario here. I think it's a very cultural thing. (Interviewee 06)

I get it inside some departments, you know? When I identify this tendency to want to take an advantage, there is a confidence break, so the idea is not to work with people I do not trust, do you understand? (Interviewee 05)

However, this cultural aspect seems to be less present than the others. On the other hand, this demeanor involves taking advantage at work, as an example, by passing responsibilities, functions, and so on, to another person or departure nearby. Those ones who looking for visibility or more benefits can do everything to achieve their goals, including fraudulent/illegal and non-ethical conducts.

Maybe in less proportion than these other problems pointed out, but it happens, want to take advantage, especially in what you say, right? In passing a problem, not concerning anything fraudulent, but wanting to pass a problem that can be solved in the area, be given to another. (Interviewee 10)

Difficult to give an example, but in fact this happens a lot here because people always aim for something for their good. If it's good for him, run after him, sort things out ... but if it's something that does not work for him, benefits, visibility [...] people often think it's not interesting, or it's not a situation that be good. (Interviewee 13)

In contrast, there a taken for granted perception like a karma: what will be, will be. Thus, if the organization is conducted ethically and protecting the right/correct conduct, they will take their advantage, despite the difficult in keep the synergy among the people. In our interviews, we identified the origin of this lack of collaboration becoming from a lack of communication about the individual roles and functions, performance evaluations metrics, and competitive environment, and also a personal factor of personality and character.

We do the best for the company, if it is to take advantage it will have, but it will not be by storm or loss to anyone. Another important thing is that the board for being very present in the day to day, all the employees they have it in their training in the company. (Interviewee 04)

There is a difficulty for people in the accounting area to understand the technical area [...] and in the same way, the technical area understands the importance of building accounting information that supports control and decision making. [...] So, I see this as a natural challenge for any company. To be able to join the technical vision with the business vision, and turn it into a record. [...] If I make clear in the system that everyone will see themselves in the process and will see the information that will come out of that process, I think it is a very big gain. (Interviewee 02)

Finally, the individual conduct seeking advantages, can be interrelated with an street smart to achieve the desired target. This way, when people spend their effort for their good, they are being proactive to a specific personal aim.

Individually, there will always be someone you trust more, and others less. But [...] if everyone had positive thinking and tried to solve, and to be a facilitator, we would have less bureaucracy. In some ways it is important, but I see it in a way that it is against the Brazilian way of blocking and giving more reliability to the process and the routines to avoid it. (Interviewee 07)

4.6   Roots of Brazilian way inside organizations

Regardless company attributes, at least one or a couple of Brazilian way aspects can be observed, depending on behavioral restraints promoted by organizations. This way, the influence of Brazilian culture is influential according to the incentives and disincentives in each organization. Also, can be inferred that this circumstance is a consequence of a mishmash of organizational culture and management model, and philosophical believes of individuals at social and organizational levels.

So, what leads to the Brazilian way? As the Brazilian way is defined as a typical process by which one person reaches a given objective in spite of contrary determinations, the first element is the normative environment. As our interviewees pointed out, the normative appears to standardize, teach, and regulation of procedures, routines, and practices. The normative arise from an interaction with an uncertain environment. How much bigger is the uncertain, major the regulation carried out to reduce it.

Furthermore, the regulation arises as a mechanism to reduce uncertainty – at least is expected it will do it. Increases in uncertainty levels, rises the regulation. As Brazilians face an inconstant, ether chaotic scenario, is an incentive to rising norms and rules. However historically, these norms were not made to protect the minorities, in contrast the laws guarantee the interest of small groups. This way, these unfitted rules are decoupled or disrespected. Thus, within a highly uncertain environment combined with an excessive presence of rules and hierarchies the formalism (Brazilian way) appears to achieve personal goals despite of difficulty inherent to this environment.

Other element is the individualism. The individualism can be observed by an opportunistic response to lack into the determinations and/or motivated by personality/character. Thus, a large regulation can contain lack of understandings, contradictions, and so on, which can be explored by individuals into an opportunistic act to achieve a goal. On the other hand, an illegal conduct seeking self-benefits are related to honor and character, also refers to street smart or mockery in day-by-day situations.

In addition, to aggravate this scenario, add the short-time horizon – the idea postponing schedules and Brazilian time. The urgent requests or unexpected situations make possible access the Brazilian creativity. In order to solve this "problems" Brazilians use their creativity, more specifically by improvisation, to survive in this environment.

5   CLOSING COMMENTS

In this research, we aimed to highlight some aspects of Brazilian way and its influence over the controller occupation. In order to achieve this goal, we conduct some semi-structured interviews to access this black-box with the aid of Brazilian controllers. In our conversations, the general perception about Brazilian way was related to the formalism or a deviation of predetermined conduct, and it is also considered as bad.

In opposite of presented in our literature review, the improvisation as perceived as been a harmful behavior, and the flexibility has two approaches, one related to capability of been able to adapt to changes, also called as adaptability, and a second to make rules flexible. The first approach helps the controller's functions in the sense of promote a better synergy among the group and a fewer avoidance to change. However, is mentioning worth at individual level the restraint to change can be associated with the how things will vary, but once the actors do not control the change process they just accept it. On the other hand, the second, is associated with treat individual cases differently. This

approach is negative associated with expectations of controller's occupation by affecting the reliability and credibility of his/her job.

Some other finds of our research agree with shown the literature review, like positive aspects (creativity and innovation, for example) and negative ones (such as communication and integration problems, and the trend to avoid rules) were observed due to the Brazilian way. Some aspects cannot be observed by delicacy of the treated subject as an example of corruption, abuse of authority (by using the power of hierarchy) and alienation. For instance, one of our interviewees works for a company that is involved in a large corruption case, and even then, claims the participant does not recognize illegal conduct within the company. In the same way, it was notorious the brainwashing in many of the companies to employ in the workers the idea of belonging to the business team.

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