

Ruth Cardoso: a tribute

Future directions and closing remarks

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Acknowledgments

In writing these thoughts about future trends to close this seminar, I chose to discuss two themes. Themes that, to my mind, are relevant for researchers in the area of organizational studies, my current field of work. And for business school professors, of course.

The first theme is the issue of culture versus ideology and its importance for researchers. The second regards social entrepreneurship. Increasingly, this is not only a research subject, but also part of the curriculum of management education programs.

First, I would like to give a testimonial and to share with you my personal experience of learning from Ruth. Then I will discuss specific aspects of our two themes and their meaning for the future.

I enrolled in the Social Sciences course of the University of São Paulo in 1968, when Ruth and Fernando Henrique had just returned from political exile.

I had the privilege of studying under both. However, it was from Ruth that I learned the trade of sociology. From her, I learnt how to knead the clay of research, rigorous methodology, and concern with diversity - so dear to anthropologists. At Cebrap, the Center of Analysis and Planning that she was involved with, an entire generation of young researchers, like me, enjoyed direct contact and debates with intellectuals and thinkers from all over the world. Not to speak of the thrill of university life within an international context.

At a seminar on human, local and global development held in 2007 at the Business School of the University of São Paulo, Ruth delivered a testimonial about her professional career. She commented that changes had been frequent and a major source of learning. She also described the origin of her doctoral thesis. When she became a PhD candidate in Anthropology, her thesis advisor, Professor Egon Schaden, dictated that his students should study either German or Japanese immigration that year. She chose the latter. Although her advisor's imposition had its disadvantages, it demanded a methodological rigor that proved to be important for her training and education.

When she moved to Chile in 1964, she tried to continue working on her thesis, but found it difficult. As she began teaching there, she woke up to the need to state more clearly the assumptions and concepts underlying her thesis, and to refine her project in terms of theory and methodology. Meanwhile, she also had to learn how to communicate and interface with an audience whose education and visions were different from those of Brazilians.

The development of concepts based on a sound theoretical framework, the clear enunciation of issues, methodological strictness, and international experience were key learnings that proved to be important for her own career. And among the key learnings she conveyed to her students.

Now, let us move on to our first main theme: culture and ideology

As a professor at the Social Sciences Department of the University of São Paulo, Ruth, at a certain time in her career, migrated to the field of Political Science, along with Eunice Durham.

As a graduate student, I followed the theoretical and methodological discussions on culture and ideology between them and their students, relevant themes for both areas of knowledge.

What became clear is that each of these concepts has its own specificity, despite some overlapping. I would like to revisit them, using a text on the subject that

Eunice Durham¹ published in 1984. To this day, I still use it in graduate courses. I also feel that the definitions in this text formed the basis of the social policies Ruth Cardoso implemented as first lady of Brazil.

Culture studies, in particular of primitive peoples -- the main area of study of anthropologists -- tend to focus on the following question: what is the meaning of the strange, seemingly incomprehensible habits of societies other than our own? The answer, which is the cultural patterns anthropologists describe, results from an investigation of this issue. These patterns explain the underlying logic of a given conduct, but cannot be seen as a mold that shapes the production of identical behaviors. Instead, they uncover a structure that allows one to grasp the meaning of certain actions. In sum: they tell you the rules of the game.

On the other hand, in the world of ideology, the chief question is: what is the importance of ideas in the preservation of social order? The concept of ideology concerns broad systems of ideas that explain and justify the nature of society and of power relations in terms of their legitimacy, or lack thereof.

So, a political dimension is inherent to the concept of ideology, and discussions about what is false and what is true, about what is reality and what is representation are found in the work of many authors where ideological phenomena are concerned. The possible transformation of a society and changes in its patterns of dominance go hand-in-hand with constructing a new order of ideas, a new ideology.

The anthropological approach to cultural phenomena, however, analyzes concrete social practices first. Examining social groups' representations comes first and their political relevance can only be determined afterward. But this doesn't mean that it's impossible to politicize the concept of culture and observe

¹ Durham, Eunice. "Cultura e Ideologia em Dados" [Culture and Ideology in Data] – *Revista de Ciéncia Social* [Social Science Journal], vol. 27, no. 1, 1984, pp 71 to 89.

how symbolic elements (certain community heroes, for instance) can be used for domination purposes.

The key point of this discussion is that it highlights that culture and ideology are different concepts.

This discussion was important for me and helped me to structure the theoretical framework of my post-doctoral thesis². It was a study about the mining company Vale, which now maintains a center of studies here at Columbia. By anchoring the concept of culture in its anthropological roots and even proposing to politicize it, I was able to add a different level of depth, a novel texture, to organizational studies.

Today, as I monitor organizational culture studies throughout Brazil, I can see how important it was to combine this conceptual approach and the qualitative method with the field of business; at the meetings of Anpad, the Brazilian Association of Graduate Studies and Research into Business Administration, the subject has gained the same degree of relevance, status and depth as other themes that are dear to business, such as strategy, finance and marketing.

Let's now move to our other main theme, social entrepreneurship. This is important for research and Business Administration teaching and here too, Ruth Cardoso had a major impact.

As first lady, she implemented the Solidary Community project. From its very inception, she tried to understand the specificities of the communities served; the actions that were being undertaken; and the networks and alliances already in place or that could be built. Projects determined, implemented and evaluated always took these three factors into account.

² Fleury, Maria Tereza Leme – “O simbólico na relações de trabalho” [The symbolic element in labor relations] - post-doctoral thesis, 1986, FEA USP (School of Economics and Business Administration of the University of São Paulo) and Fleury, Maria Tereza Leme – “O simbólico nas relações de trabalho” – Cultura e Poder nas Organizações – Editora Atlas, 1987 (3ª Edição 2000) São Paulo.

Ruth brought her experience as a researcher of social movements into her work within the government. So she worked with the cultural dimension of the communities served, observing the power relations that were at play in them, but never transforming the Solidary Community project into a big ideological apparatus.

In her text “Sustainability, the challenge of social policies in the twenty-first century” in the book *Communities and the New Development Vision project*, Ruth revisited her experience at the head of the Solidary Community project and highlighted important points for this discussion.

She discussed the changes in Brazilian society, which no longer accepts social inequality, one of our country’s historical trademarks, as a natural thing. And how the traditional assistive social policies are now questioned. In her words, “Assistive social work is a style, a way of doing things; its consequence is to establish a relation of submission, without providing the tools for overcoming the mitigated needs. When associated with dependent clienthood, these forms of aid become instruments of power.”³

All of the above leads us to two crucial elements for guiding policy design, in Ruth Cardoso’s views. They are not only crucial today, but will become even more so as we go forward. And for those who work in business administration schools or research centers, they are particularly important.

One is the development of partnering arrangements between government organizations, companies and associations.

Though all of these are based on different rationales, one must build a relationship among equals. Today, in the third-sector study centers, both at the University of São Paulo and at the FGV schools of business, all research and

³ Cardoso, Ruth – *Sustentabilidade , o desafio das políticas sociais no século 21* [Sustainability, the challenge of social policies in the twenty-first century], p 41

action projects take into account this relation between government entities, private enterprises and third sector organizations.

The second important element is the need to focus on a specific target audience. Focusing is not an end in itself. It is just a method for doing the work. However, a clear definition of the target audience is important for a program to succeed, along with other action-oriented methodologies.

The growing number of third-sector study centers, research studies, partnering projects, plus the undergraduate and graduate disciplines in Brazil's business schools all point to the rising maturity of Brazilian society. New players have come on stage and Ruth Cardoso's contribution to this progress is undeniable.

By the way, I came here both as a professor of USP and as Dean of FGV.

We have signed an agreement with SIPA for exchanging students, faculty and a dual degree program. However, the most important of all, for joint research projects in many areas of interests.

It is looking to the future, for new opportunities.

Therefore, in terms of future directions, I believe that this seminar open new and very relevant venues:

1. The importance of an interdisciplinary approach that Ruth ingrained in all of us. From the first paper delivered by Tereza Caldeira, to different fields of knowledge: anthropology, sociology, urban movements, cinema, politics, economy, organizational studies – the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach with sound theory and method (a book has to be published from the papers presented in this Seminar);

2. Embracing theory and practice and her example of Comunidade Solidaria;
3. The importance of partnership or strategic alliances between our institutions here represented.

Ruth Cardoso's contribution to the progress of these ideas is undeniable.

She will be missed terribly, but her legacy as an intellectual, as an educator, as an entrepreneur and as great woman will remain with us as an example for future generations.