

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29327/5337529.1-3>



# From underground to podosphere – ***Conversas da Kata***<sup>1</sup>

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## Teaser: The origins

They had just had lunch. The three of them left the University Restaurant talking in pleasant randomness that were endlessly amended. The steps were towards *Katacumba*, a space with some rooms, pantry and bathroom reserved for graduate students in Social Anthropology in the basement of the University

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1 On our digital networks, we share not only episodes, but also profile referrals, podcasts and much more. You can find us on twitter and instagram with @podcastdakata. Our episodes are available on the following players: Anchor, Spotify, Apple Podcast, Breaker, Overcast, Google Podcast, PocketCast and Radio Public. Our special thanks go to Marcelle Lucena for the Logo design and Fabian Zierler for the QR code inclusion.

of Brasília (UnB). They passed the transition stairs between the world of the sun and the underground of *Minhocão*, also known as the Central Institute of Sciences (ICC), a famous building at UnB, and soon after they were in front of the entrance gate. The keys opened the bars and, as an already ingrained habit, they made their way to the pantry.

Two minutes later, Mimi, the cuteness in the form of people, took care of the water that was about to boil. The coffee powder was ready in the filter waiting for its moment. Marina and Ana sat on the benches next to them, talking about the riots in Latin America. They all agreed that not enough was said about it. Now they were in Chile, but they had just left Bolivia. As she cleaned and heated the thermos, Mimi kept her magical ears open, which, in the near future, would be great for reviewing episodes. Once again, she gave us an accurate comment: *Colombia is also in an uproar*. The three were amused by the word that had just circulated between them, and Marina was already thinking about throwing more gunpowder on everything. Sprinkling a thought-provoking reflection here and there, along with an amusing commentary, is rightly one of her best qualities. Now, the smell of coffee was spreading, and Peru and Argentina also joined the wheel.

Coffee with a Latin conjuncture ready, they headed to their desks. Second door on the left. Distance traveled in the midst of *Geente! There's coffee!* that the members immersed in their rooms listened with a smile animated by the new batch of fuel announced. Each one in their corner goes back to their research with the steaming cup at their side. Anna lets out a sigh. *Ah, I want to smoke a cigarette*. Marina jokes: *I want my mother!* Soon after, Ana announces a bizarre new tweet from the president. She, our future Twitter queen and artist of communicative aesthetics, is always up to date with the latest news. The three of them stop for a while and look at each other thoughtfully there, immersed in our little revolutionary stronghold, between submerged railings.

Images of speeches depicting a flat Earth and voices in defense of tortures flashed through their minds. They were lies repeated countless times that paraded through the country, bothering and indignant. Being silent was terrifying. *We must record our conversations, there's a lot of gossip but there's also good stuff here. What do you think?* The question planted the seed of the podcast and halfway between the idea and the first episode, the fourth element appeared. As he grabbed a cup of coffee in the same pantry, Bruner could hear an animated conversation about the

proposal walking along. Curiously interested, he asked about the project and soon after he was integrated into the newly created team of future podcasters with his head clouding with ideas. His trademark would be this spontaneity and creativity, always coming up with a thousand ideas for the podcast.

## **Episode#0: Why Kata<sup>2</sup>?**

It wasn't exactly like that, but it could have been. Our podcast takes the audience into this world of cozy and informal atmosphere, with the smell of coffee, conversations and reflections between colleagues and friends. *Katacumba*, affectionately called *Kata*, is one of the enchanted corners of UnB, where masters and doctoral students in Anthropology have been working since 1972, the year of the creation of the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology (PPGAS). It is a space of bookshelves, books, tables, chairs, a nap hammock, people, headphones, strong coffee without sugar and bats. Yes, bats! So, at the beginning of each episode, you hear the sound of little bat wings beating. Some time ago, our anthropologists in training lived with bats in the *Kata* and, since then, the *katacumba*s are also called bats.

But *Kata* is also a space for debates, concentration, drafts, games, ideas, writing, companionship, projects, reception and friendship. Our vignette was designed precisely to bring you some of the different topics and most common phrases that circulate and fill our (almost) home. In the chairs or in the hammocks, we vent, we put our anxieties, we throw to the underground winds what, sometimes in written or typed words, we can't express.

The name of our podcast, *Conversas da Kata*, was borrowed from the academic event that was the face of *Katacumba* transformed into a congress and organized by PPGAS graduate students. The event came about when the *katacumba*s took the debates and lively conversations that took place without an appointment in this environment to the meeting room, a spacious former classroom with a board on the wall. These *katacumba*s already knew at the time that what they were talking about could be taken to other colleagues. Thus, works were presented and discussed in a cozy atmosphere. Roundtables and workshops with topics of great interest to students inspired and animated some generations of *Katacumba*s. As of 2013, the event became official and annual.

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2 In English, the name of the podcast can be translated to "Kata Conversations".

The seven editions of the *Conversas da Kata* event were more than enough to transform this event into a tradition very well-liked by undergraduate and graduate students. Each organizing committee has the autonomy to reinvent everything according to the conjuncture and the needs they discover. Thus, what began as a more internal conversation between more or less close colleagues turned into a space for reception, debate and experimentation that expanded to undergraduate courses, other institutions and even other formats. The autonomy, the informal way and the very productive conversations of this student meeting, was what inspired us to guide the spirit of the event out of that basement. So, it acquired a new form: sound waves sailing through the podosphere.



Our dear Kata: warmth and concentration. Author: Bruner Titonelli

## **Episode #1: The trajectory of the *podcast***

But our project did not just come out of Kata. It took shape in conversations during class breaks, at bar tables, on walks through the university, in the anguish of reading... until one day what some people call coincidence and others call the universe working in our favor happened: Ana appeared with a public notice from the Ralacoco Studio of Community Communication of the Faculty of Communication (FAC) of UnB. They were proposing to help with podcast projects.

We sat together in *Katacumba* and put our ideas down on paper. So, we were welcomed into a small, soundproofed room and instructed by a very dear team in the art of recording and editing.

The podcast was born from our desire to jump the university walls with our voices, reach an audience that normally does not read our texts and does not attend our events, talk about our research and show the importance of the science of Anthropology around the world. We were choking on reflections and words just spoken between us about so many things that are not going well, but also about events that bring us joy and hope, subjects that captivate us, that make our hearts beat faster.

As we well know, for dreams to come true, the road is long. Who has never started a project, a text, a work of art without knowing exactly where it will end up? With our podcast it was no different: from the initial ideas to the format we have today was quite a journey. We debated, disagreed, delayed, changed, rethought, until we could understand what our goal was and how we wanted to achieve it. The lessons learned were not just about production techniques, but also about teamwork, developing what we call the editorial line, reaching a consensus on how we want to take forward the podcast.

The process of collective creation has these things, right? And we realized that being open for this project to be transformed according to the needs faced, as it was also the case with the academic event in each edition, is an important step. Thus, spontaneity and experimentation are part of the organization. From time to time, important and moving events have forced us to readapt the schedule so that we don't miss the moment to talk about the subject and, who knows, contribute to the defended causes. So, it was with the protests that took to the streets of Peru and with the topic of the Time Frame (Marco Temporal) in 2020.

The demonstrations in Peru came after the now ex-president Martín Vizcarra was impeached and a politician named Manuel Merino, linked to a right-wing conservative agenda, took office. He appointed a number of ministers along this political line. In the episode, we talk about the police violence that claimed two young victims in Peru and about the various demands of these protests. The demand was not just for Merino's resignation, but also for a new constitution.

Our Episode #06–“A história não começa em 1988 – O marco temporal como negação do direito originário”<sup>3</sup>, concerns a lawsuit in the Federal Supreme Court (STF) that argues that indigenous peoples would only have the right to the lands they effectively occupied on October 5, 1988, the day of the proclamation of the constitution. If enacted into law, this thesis would have the power to paralyze the processes of demarcation of indigenous lands in progress and even to reverse demarcations already made. We discussed why this law would be a tragedy for indigenous peoples and we talked about its somewhat colonialist content and how it ignores the history of expulsion and denial of access by different ethnic groups to their lands.

Resuming the thread: when the path of our podcaster team seemed firmer, the COVID-19 pandemic came, taking us away from the Ralacoco studio and our dear Katakumba. The podcast ended up becoming more and more a space for connection, venting and dissemination of what we were going through and researching in the midst of this scenario worthy of a dystopian movie. It was the way we found to stay connected with each other and with our colleagues, even with the physical distance, and transform some anxieties into a creative process to be shared with a few clicks.



Our team: from left to right: Marina Fonseca, Yazmin (Mimi) Safatle, Ana Carolina Oliveira and Bruner Titonelli at the late Ralacoco studio. Author: Fernando Alves.

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3 History does not begin in 1988–The Time Frame as a denial of the original rights

## Episode #2–Popularizing Anthropology

Anthropologist Tim Ingold (2016) says that if Anthropology does not have the impact it deserves on the world, this is partly because it is too closed in on its own world, stuck in thinking about itself. We like to say that “the anthropologist gets into everything”, this is reflected in the diversity of research topics and workplaces. We are present in every possible corner of the public sphere, working in the Ministry of Health, in international relations, in NGOs that work in defense of the environment or that fight in defense of victims of violence. In our episode *Antropologia a serviço de que(m)?*,<sup>4</sup> we discussed the extent to which anthropologists work outside the university, but, as our professor Henyo Trindade Barretto Filho put it, Anthropology has not yet been able to guide its own image. This means that most people do not know what to understand by “Anthropology” or have ideas that are far from reality.

In another episode, *Procura-se antropóloga: O misterioso mercado de trabalho da antropologia*<sup>5</sup>, we talked to the anthropologist Soraya Fleischer about the (hidden) Anthropology job market, which is also the subject of one of the courses she offers at the undergraduate level in Social Sciences at UnB. We discovered together the different roles that anthropologists occupy, and the various skills acquired during the training.

We believe that a world in which people know what Anthropology is is possible and desirable. We are part of this wave of podcasts in Social Sciences that, as Soraya Fleischer and Daniela Manica well describe, “communicate, translate and popularize the knowledge produced in the area” (2020, p. 50). These authors mention the importance of reaching a wider audience, especially in times of attacks on Science. This is also because if people do not know Anthropology, they will not recognize its importance and will not contribute to its defense when this area of knowledge “suffers attacks, has resources cut off, has its legitimacy questioned” (FLEISCHER, 2020). For this, it is essential to think about other forms of dissemination than text, building an attractive material, with short and creative texts, images and videos and audio material.

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4 Anthropology at the service of what(whom)?

5 Looking for an Anthropologist: The Mysterious Anthropology Job Market

With the podcast, we take a step in that direction and bet on a public Anthropology (MARTIN; MADRONAL, 2016). That is, an Anthropology that is not restricted to the academic environment and intends to actively contribute to the transformation of society. This does not mean positioning oneself in terms of political parties, but in Ingold's (2016) sense of a committed Anthropology: having a commitment to life. Maybe you've already seen the phrase: *If you stay neutral in situations of injustice, you choose the side of the oppressor*. This phrase attributed to Desmond Tutu, bishop and human rights activist from South Africa, corresponds well to what has been discussed in Latin American Anthropology, driven by the contributions of black and indigenous anthropologists (JIMENO, 2004). We echo the anthropologists who conceive the position in the face of situations of violence and injustice as part of the intellectual work, in addition to being a commitment that we assume with the communities that receive us (MARTIN; MADRONAL, 2016). Commitments are part of what it means to do research.

### **Episode #3: Irreverence and Anthropology**

Unlike academic writing, our episodes, lasting from 30 minutes to an hour, are generally less formal, less solitary: the comfortable atmosphere of conversation appears, as if we were in our dear Kata. We can make jokes, we can get a little slurred in speech and the irreverence is in it: freedom of speech, freedom of form and even to swear at times and criticize everything and everyone we want. Irreverence is each one being able to express themselves authentically, the way they are. We come from a university environment in which language, especially writing, is very regulated and subject to different norms. This language, the difficulty of access,—it is necessary to know how and where to look—and the size of many texts, ends up keeping research restricted to the academic community.

We want to talk more about our research without worrying about whether we are using Times New Roman 12 font and 1.5 spacing (so-called "ABNT standards"). And what could be further from that shape than the irreverent sound wave? Thus, we allow ourselves to escape these rules. Although we know that, in the world of podcasts, other rules apply, we realize that these are more conditioned to what we want and our personal goals and not to what is already imposed. This reminds us of our dear Kata: feeling free to express ourselves as we want, to be more our own way with our rules. We understand, for example, that



even our different tones of voice and ways of speaking are important and help to get the message across.

We don't think we need to say: *Now let's do a social analysis: here's the thing...*, but that we can approach the themes from our concerns, question, criticize, bring references. Involving the public without a warning that what we are doing is social criticism, it is problematization. We try to maintain a broader editorial line and generally avoid the heavy theory, which often amazes even anthropologists. We strive to dilute a little bit of this knowledge in the conversations of each episode, without any pretense of exhausting the complex subjects we talk about.

In this vein, our scripts are a guide, a guide for conversations, and not a ready-to-follow recipe. Overall, we divided our episodes into thematic blocks and thought of some central questions for our guests. In the longer episodes, we can delve into one or another issue and even allow ourselves a little daydream. We do all this in a light, relaxed way, as in a chat with coffee.

Because we believe what Ingold (2016) told us earlier, we also know that accessing Anthropology outside the academy is difficult and has its obstacles. We ourselves have already questioned if we really understand what this author said because of a writing so far-fetched that it looked like another language. Obviously, we love to read, but the colors provided by podospheric waves are potent experiments in connection with other non-academic worlds.

So, we use different episode formats depending on our goals. Our "series" are sets of episodes and pills that have a major theme in common, an umbrella, so to speak, like the 2019 uprisings in Latin American countries. Our podcast is born along with this popular effervescence. As soon as we took the first steps, we already started with a series that we call "Especial América Latina" which at the time of writing this text has three episodes (about Chile, Colombia and Peru) and is not yet finished. Through our conversations with people living the protests up close, we seek to explain some of the motivations behind popular mobilizations and understand the differences and similarities between what our Latin American neighbors are experiencing. The anthropological vein of making comparisons pulses strongly when we talk about this topic. We and our guests were always surprised by the parallels between the situations experienced by our countries. The

fundamental characteristic of this series is the analysis of the existing similarities with the Brazilian situation.

When we realized the importance of thinking and talking about the moment we were facing collectively—although physically isolated—, we created our second series: *Conversas de Quarentena*<sup>6</sup>. It came about when two of our members did something that would become routine for the next year: a video call. Something unimaginable at that time. In this conversation full of heated debates, we try to understand how to maintain our research, health and life during the pandemic. The series came from the need to vent about the conditions of study, anthropological work and everyday issues facing the pandemic. So far, we've dealt with problems involving fieldwork, academic productivity, emergency remote teaching implemented by UnB, the working conditions of application deliverers and research mothers in these times of isolation.

The format chosen for this series was the “pills”. Basically, they come in “smaller doses” and are more synthetic than episodes. They are shorter in duration, more focused and often feature stories with a beginning, middle and end. In them, we bring more of our own elaborations and talk less with guests. It is a great format to deal with more urgent issues, which need engagement on the part of society, such as the delivery strike, and to carry out a more “jet” outburst. Because they are shorter, they circulate through networks more easily, reaching more people.

In *Conversas de Quarentena*, we talk about the challenges of working from home and the gaping inequalities in this pandemic. In one of the five pills produced in this series, we talk about fieldwork, the most used method in Anthropology, in times of pandemic. As this usually involves the displacement of an anthropologist to observe, participate, talk and learn from other people, we sought to talk to those who carried out their fieldwork in the last minutes of the second half, before the whistle that started the quarantine by COVID-19.

Another pill from the quarantine series that deserves special attention is the one about UnB's Emergency Remote Teaching. In this one, we were able to add the narratives of a teacher, an undergraduate student, a doctoral student who is also a mother, an indigenous master's student and a graduate student in Social

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6 Quarantine Conversations

Sciences who had COVID-19. In-person classes have migrated to the virtual format, as have seminars, academic events, meetings, among others. This meant that the entire academic community had to readapt to this new format. Many students had problems with access to the Internet, financial difficulties and also faced grief, illness and the care of more vulnerable family members. The episode is a way of not making us forget that, behind the screen, there are different stories and challenges to be faced in these times of pandemic.

Another subject discussed a lot in our podcast, and especially in our pills, are experiences of political mobilization, protests and social movements. After all, it was these events that fueled our desire to do science in another format, right? In the podcast, we always seek to bring a more general context and understand what is behind movements. In the pill on the application delivery strike, for example, we discussed how the phenomenon of the so-called platformization of companies make precarious the working conditions of this category. This concept concerns the process of companies offering their services through applications and websites on the Internet, so that physical encounters between the agents involved become increasingly scarce. Under the promise of “freedom of choice” and “little bureaucracy”, these precarious workers have to work many, many hours a day to get a minimum wage. They are not entitled to insurance in the event of an accident or burglary.

We are also venturing to talk about some more general subjects, because there is magic in the most everyday things! And not just magic. Daily life reveals a lot about our society, how it suffers the effects of a connected, globalized world, as we say in the Social Sciences, and the way in which the economy and the relationships between people and countries take place. Football is a good example. Just look at how teams are financed and what it tells us about the interests of those in power. Or, then, why were there changes in the style of the game? Where does this particular way of playing come from? Who determines this? What does this have to do with globalization? Anthropology also looks to the stands in this never-ending attempt to understand the world and must appropriate these situations that are taken as commonplace to feed important debates also held outside the academy. Why not discuss racism, using the chants of organized supporters?

We want to demystify the idea of an anthropologist Indiana Jones with a notebook, hat and machete clearing the jungle, as well as that idea of a silent ac-

ademic sitting in his office reading until dawn. Our Anthropology is also done in the hallways and at the bar tables, and it doesn't lose its potency because of that. The freer format of the podcast, and the publications written on the Internet that accompany it, also allow us to bring in authors not so valued within the university. In addition to rescuing the production of inspirations for us like Zora Hurston and Marlene Cunha, we use our space to publicize the work of our colleagues, as in our episode 5–*Zora Hurston e as Negras Antropologias*<sup>7</sup> and in pill 6–*Nossos passos vêm de longe – Coletivos Negros na Pós-graduação, construção e resgate do nosso saber*<sup>8</sup>.

Zora Hurston and Marlene Cunha are black anthropologists. Zora was born in 1891, was North American and worked with black folklore in the United States and with the Voodoo religion in Haiti and Jamaica. Her works show the relationship between gender and race and the subversive role of folklore. Marlene Cunha was a Brazilian anthropologist, a pioneer in the work of gestures in the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé, showing the relationships with African ancestry in Brazil (Cunha, 2017). Two black collectives pay homage to these two anthropologists: Coletivo Zora Hurston (PPGAS from UnB) and Coletivo Marlene Cunha (PPGAS from UFRJ). You can find these two collectives on Instagram: @coletivo-zora and on Facebook: @coletivonegromuseunacional.

## Episode #4: Building networks

As we enter the podosphere, we realize the need to be present on social networks, such as Instagram and Twitter (the era of Facebook is kind of over, right?). We were experimenting with different ways of managing the networks, getting the hang of it and getting to know our audience. According to data provided by Instagram, our main listeners are from Brasília (57.8%), women (60.2%), mostly between 25 and 34 years old. This also shows that we still have a way to go to circulate on the Internet in order to dialogue with people from other corners of Brazil and of other ages and professions.

To be able to expand our network, we realized that we must start by approaching colleagues and people with whom we have affinities. That is why we

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7 Zora Hurston and the Black Anthropologies

8 Our Steps come from far away–Black Collectives in Graduate Studies, construction and rescue of our knowledge.

created the #IndicaçãoDeKinta<sup>9</sup> Series on our social media. In times of devaluation of science, social, political, health crises, and hatred of diversity, these networks become even more important. Just as *Katacumba's* physical space and the Kata Conversations event lead us to discover wonderful research and projects that often don't get the reach they deserve, #IndicationDeKinta was the way we found to do that in the virtual model. Every Thursday we release a tip on our social networks about some work we like—from independent publishers, scientific dissemination channels with proposals similar to ours to writing clubs.

Increasing the visibility of the podcast and the number of listeners—and, thus, anthropologizing more ears -, is possible, among many other ways, through engagement on social networks as well. The way we found to keep the networks active not only with episodes was by diversifying what we post and sharing more interesting information from the world of Social Sciences and Anthropology.

So, in addition to listening to us, you can also read *Katacumba* stories that are being released little by little. These are reports from colleagues and professors who experienced this space of coexistence at different times. The *Antropólogas Marginalizadas*<sup>10</sup> Series also emerged from the desire to keep the networks active, with a different approach: we briefly present the biography and relevance of anthropologists who are discriminated against in the academic environment on account of race (here we are talking about a social reality, not a biological one), class, sexual orientation and/or country of origin. This way, podcasting is much more than just making sound episodes. In today's times, it's also about being present on social networks and using them to talk about what is important to us.

Of the various tools that these platforms offer us, Instagram stories are the ones we use most often. We always share previews with titles, images and a short audio of the episodes and pills. We like this tool because it's a more personalized environment, where the audience can get to know the faces behind the voices of the podcast. We made everything more personal, more affective and satiated some of the curiosities by putting both our face and the recording and editing process for the game in the stories. Last but not least, it is on our social networks that you meet our fifth member, at the same time our mascot: the revolutionary

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9 The literal translation would be #Thursdayindication. In Portuguese, “quinta” (thursday) also refers to “de quinta categoria”, which means something “cheap”, “sleazy”.

10 Marginalized Anthropologists

cat Mercedes. The owner of the great meow of Latin America is always present in the moments of recording and editing the episodes and following the news from the global South.



Our fifth member: the cat Mercedes. Author: Marina Fonseca

## Episode #5–Anthropologizing the podosphere

We started our journey in the podosphere by taking to the networks the chats we had inside Katakumba, our space for cozy conversations. It was a way we found to jump over the walls of the university. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the *podcast* has also become a way to keep us connected and to vent and reflect on these times. Some mishaps crossed our path, of course, but amidst spontaneity and experimentation, we gradually found our best rhythm.

Navigation on sound waves took place with irreverence. With our different tones of voice, we deviate from the standards established by rules in Times New Roman 12 and space 1.5. We move towards non-academic worlds using some concepts from the Social Sciences in an accessible way, anthropologizing more ears. In such a polarized moment, marking positions means advancing a little in the trenches. We add a little flea behind our ear, a dilemma, a new perspective to the universe of possibilities in which our listeners circulate.

This way, we share and provoke reflections without losing the touches of lightness necessary for life. So, what are you waiting for? Go to your favorite platform and press play...

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Access the Kata Conversations *podcast page* on Radio Kere-kere

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