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## **Cooking research stories: the *Mundaréu* podcast<sup>1</sup>**

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### **A world of stories to tell**

“Does your mother understand your research?”. This question circulated on social media at some point in 2020, bringing to light the controversial and complicated relationship between the scientific knowledge produced at the university and its understanding by non-academic people. Some people defended the public importance of knowledge that is produced and paid for with taxpayers’ money. Others tried to explain that, in the collective of scientists, some degree of specialization is necessary and that it is not always possible to translate the details of scientific research to a lay audience.

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<sup>1</sup> Mundaréu is produced by Daniela Manica and Soraya Fleischer, and is available on the main players and on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, @mundareupodcast, <https://mundareu.labjor.unicamp.br/>

*Mundaréu* was born from this discomfort between wanting “our mothers to understand our research”, and that we can also legitimize and defend this type of knowledge that has been so fiercely attacked in recent years: Humanities and Social Sciences, and, in particular, Anthropology. We intend to defend a type of science that is done together with people, with the most diverse types and groups of people. The more diverse, the better. Anthropology is born from the perception of human diversity.

*Mundaréu* was born from the desire to use more accessible language, to reach more people and to show how an anthropologist can become a teacher, write articles, have a *Curriculum Lattes* and give lectures. It was from the desire to hear less and less “*Wait, anthropo... what is that?!*”, that we created, in 2019, a podcast to disseminate and popularize what the field of Anthropology studies, does and produces. Since then, we’ve released two seasons and two series, with a total of 30 episodes, and counting. Here, we will talk about how *Mundaréu* is conceived, but the production process can be known in more detail in another article we wrote (FLEISCHER; COUTO, 2021).



Daniela Manica and Soraya Fleischer in front of the Labjor/Unicamp building, after recording one of the episodes. Author: Daniela Manica.

This was a project that emerged from the meeting of several women. Soraya became a fan of podcasts when she needed company to face the treadmill and physical exercise. It was almost at the same time that Daniela joined Labjor, where she met Simone Pallone de Figueiredo, who coordinates *Oxigênio*, one of the first experiences in scientific dissemination via podcast in Brazil. She also met Bia Guimarães, who interviewed her for an episode of *Oxigênio* (called “Estranha célula das entranhas” – Strange Cells of the Entrails), and Sarah Azoubel, who had also returned from the US excited about this media. Bia and Sarah created *37 Graus*, which is an exquisite narrative podcast that we are huge fans of, and they continue to tell stories “with one foot in science”, as they say.

With the support of these women, and the entire infrastructure of Labjor at Unicamp, the Department of Anthropology at UnB and funding agencies such as CNPq and FAPESP, we managed to air *Mundaréu*. It was a very beautiful (and laborious) process to think of a name, logo, website, script, editing, participants, format. And it continues with the presence of many people, such as the students of Social Sciences, Education and Music who join (or have already joined) the *Mundaréu* team – Ana Noronha, Arthur Ulhôa, Bruno Campelo-Pereira, Camila Pissolito, Fernanda Andreia Andrade, Hugo Virgílio, Irene do Planalto, Janaína Aleixo, Lucas Linardi Carrasco, Melissa Beviláqua, Milena Peres (and Julia Couto, Luísa Nascimento, Nicollas Douglas de Souza Pereira, Rosânia do Nascimento and Vinícius Fonseca). And also the anthropologists and their interlocutors who come talk with us in the episodes.

This was the case of Nashieli Rangel Loera, whom we invited to participate in the fourth episode of *Mundaréu*, “Lona, Luta e Andorinhas”, aired in March 2020. And she invited Irineu Pereira, one of the main rural activists with whom she has spent a lot of time together with in the recent years in the west of São Paulo. Nashieli Loera is an anthropologist and professor at Unicamp. She has studied the following topics: “social processes and territorialities, spatialities and temporalities, forms and languages of collective social demand and their relationship with the State”. This is how she presents her expertise in the introductory text on her *Curriculum Lattes*.

In a scientific article, the abstract explains that she intends to understand “the social mechanisms that allow the production and implementation of land distribution policies in the State of São Paulo” (LOERA, 2015, p. 57). And she opens this same article with the following sentence, “In Brazil, land occupations and

the setting up of camps organized by movements are a way of claiming social demands from the State, in this case, expropriation of land for the purposes of agrarian reform” (*ibid*, p. 27).

She does research themes as peasantry, family farming, rural violence in the State of São Paulo. This is perhaps how the organizer of an academic conference would introduce Nashieli, before she delivered her lecture. These are all ways to explain what she’s been up to in the last few years.

On the one hand, a more general public may come across unusual words, such as “social processes”, “territorialities”, “social mechanisms”, “peasantry”. On the other hand, all these explanations are panoramic, broad and perhaps make it even more difficult for this same audience to imagine how, in practice, she does all this. In *Mundaréu*, by listening to Nashieli and Irineu, we want to know how they do Anthropology. We listen to their stories about how they met and how, over time, they produced this science together.



Daniela Manica, forcing a *selfie* with Soraya Fleischer, Nashieli Rangel and Irineu Pereira, in the recording of episode 4 of *Mundaréu*. In the background Octávio Augusto, piloting the Radio da Unicamp studio.

Author: Daniela Manica

## What are the ingredients of *Mundaréu*?

### People

Science, research and work only happen because there are a lot of people behind it. A book, a class or a lecture does not materialize overnight. Podcast too, of course. We need to know the people behind the scene. People are the first ingredient in this recipe.

In the university, researchers are presented through their *Curriculum Lattes*, which is the official platform that gathers information about institutional affiliation, undergraduate and graduate training and advisory, research carried out and in progress, publications, participation in the media and at events. In journals and books, academics are presented briefly in a few lines, with a limited number of words. At events, they are presented (or present themselves) in a few minutes, before the conference starts.

At *Mundaréu*, we present Nashieli as a Mexican anthropologist who has been working in Brazil for many years. She did research on the rural world in Mexico during her undergraduate course, then on the rural world in Brazil in her master's and doctoral degrees. She has been working with this theme since she was very young, she has spent decades understanding agrarian conflicts, poor distribution of land, struggles and social movements for more rural justice.

We also learn about Irineu's life and work trajectories. Born in the State of Alagoas, he moved as a teenager to help on his family farm in the State of Paraná and at age 18 he moved to work in the city of São Paulo. His jobs were in the big industry – rubber, pneumatics, textiles and communications – and he soon joined a labor union. From there, it was a leap to learn about the struggle for the right to grow one's own food. In the Landless Worker's Movement (MST), Irineu got to know the rural São Paulo and ended up camping under the black tarp for many years on the roadsides in the Pontal do Paranapanema region. And, after facing a lot of meetings, demonstrations, many gunmen, shotgun points, negotiations in notaries and government agencies, he and his family were duly settled in a land that had been, for a long time, in the hands of a single owner who did not produce, and did not pay taxes.

So, this podcast episode starts with introducing both characters. Our intention is to humanize this social scientist and this social movement scientist. We learned that they have migration, moving, circulation in common. And, after traveling the world, both find themselves in the State of São Paulo. We get to know the Anthropology made by Nashieli and Irineu, entering by the backyard and the kitchen, not the sidewalk, the porch or the living room. *Mundaréu* usually opens its episodes remembering that it is people who make science, it is their personalities, anecdotes and choices that build research themes, that write up the results found. We want to show how research is produced.

Meeting the people who make science is not a very common practice in science. ABNT, for example, which governs much of the way we must write, format and publish our articles, requires that the names of authors, in the References that are listed at the end, only carry their initials. So, for those who do not know the researcher, they will not know, for example, that “LOERA, N.” is a female author and not a male author. Fortunately, on the last page of Nashieli’s article, we find: “She is a professor at the Department of Anthropology and a researcher at the Center for Rural Studies (CERES) at the State University of Campinas” and not just “Department of Anthropology”, “CERES” or simply “Unicamp”.

Many scientific areas, Social Sciences as well, roll their eyes at texts not written in the third person, which make the text generic and “impersonal”, to the point we cannot know who, in fact, is writing. Nashieli avoids writing “as shown”, “the hypothesis of this article” or “something will be analyzed here”. Throughout her article, we highlighted the ways she prefers to conjugate gender, number and degree:

**As I have shown** in other texts (Loera, 2010, 2011 and 2013), camping time can have different meanings, all of which refer to the context, the situation, as well as the positions that people occupy in that particular social world. (LOERA, 2015, p. 29)

**My hypothesis** is that the time spent in camp, as a mechanism for selecting families in the world of land occupations, has been constituted in the relationship with the State bodies in charge of the expropriation of land, and it is in the dynamics of this relationship that it is being shaped by the move-

ments themselves, and it takes on other meanings. (LOERA, 2015, p. 30)

On this occasion, **I will ethnographically analyze** the dynamics of organization and configuration of camps led by the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) in the region of Pontal de Paranapanema, western part of the State of São Paulo, the region with the highest number of landless camps in the State. (LOERA, 2015, p. 31)

We are taking advantage of Nashieli's article to show how her writing subverts the conventional pattern of scientific language. And similarly, in the podcast, we explore other ways of talking about science. The microphone, and the voice itself, give body to the scientist. It is no longer possible to maintain the idea of a scientist without gender, color, history. The presence and spontaneity of the conversation reinforce our focus on a situated science, in which we talk about a certain place, which marks and is marked by that person's position in the world. The voice comprises the expression of the speakers emotions, when telling about their research stories. In live recorded audio media, there is no way to disappear behind beautiful and flowery words, or an ABNT rule or the initial letter of your name. In *Mundaréu*, we experience a science made in the heat of the moment, and we want precisely to reinforce this beat of life, of the encounter and of the relationships that are created from there.

## **The places**

This is the second important ingredient of *Mundaréu*. In the episode "Lona, luta e andorinhas", Nashieli describes what she saw at the camps. For example, the size of the plants told her how long people had been there, living on the side of the road, waiting for a piece of land to be demarcated. There was no electric light, so people listened to battery-powered radios, made a fire to warm up at night, made a circle to chat. The children were always present, playing, taking care of pets, calling the researcher to meet their grandmother or introduce an uncle who came to visit that Saturday.

When she tells us about the spaces of a camp, we can imagine where she arrived, walked and circulated through. We can imagine the way the anthropologist approached people, presented her research and checked if they could talk for a

bit. Nashieli must have asked about the names of plants she saw growing near the kitchen, about what news came on the radio. She agreed to sit with the children, listen to their singing and jokes. She spent time with them, gained confidence and also answered their questions about her own family, her children and her foreign accent from Mexico.

The students from Unicamp, who always accompanied her around the place, may have asked questions about relatives who came only on weekends, and where they came from. And with that, they would begin to understand how kinship relationships could unite different camps. Perhaps they noticed that, in some tents, the family slept late and understood that, the night before, they had been on the security schedule of the camp, dividing the many tasks around there. And in this house, it would be more appropriate to arrive in the afternoon, to help wash the lunch dishes, to have a coffee on the porch (instead of arriving in the early morning, when the family would be tired and sleepy).

Describing places, rhythms and also the roads traveled is one of the most common practices in Anthropology. We value the details, we mention colors and smells, we remember who we talked to and what subject we followed. All this also helps to translate where, how and with whom we do our research. This is all about the methodologies of our scientific area.

In the episode, we also hear Nashieli and Irineu talking to each other. He tells how he was invited by her to teach her students at the university. She tells how she was called to help pick vegetables in his garden, make daily visits to the camps, find out about new babies or whoever was sick. These invitations come and go, there is a two-way question style and also coexistence. Both have visited each other's worlds. If she spent seasons at the camp and later at the settlement to do her research, at the time we recorded this episode, he stayed at her home in Campinas to commute easier to the *campus*, and the studio. Places expand from the side of the road to the university and vice versa. All these places are populated by people, anthropologist and interlocutors, their questions and ways of carrying out their research. While we heard about these places in the podcast, we also learned how they were visited by Nashieli and Irineu, by Unicamp students and agrarian reform activists. The conversation in *Mundaréu* recollects a bit of the prose that happened before, in other spaces and with many more people. And so, we get to know where and how this Anthropology took place.



## The relationships

In our scientific texts, we often explain about the lives of others, we bring excerpts of verbatim transcripts, we analyze these ideas against others that we hear from other people, in other corners. Talking “about” or “of” another person is the narrative form most commonly found in articles, books, classes and lectures in Anthropology. But we want to tell these stories in yet another way: we want to tell them **together with** this other person. The goal is to talk about relationships, this third important ingredient in our podcast.

In *Mundaréu*, when we bring together anthropologist and interlocutor, first of all, we open space for both of them to narrate about the experience of anthropological research. Second, it will no longer be the anthropologist who will tell us what the interlocutor told him, but the person him or herself that is present in the studio, and will be able to tell his version and in his or her voice how he met this researcher, where they went and what they talked about. We listen to Irineu, with his accent from Alagoas, Paraná and São Paulo, pausing a sentence just in time to create a tone of suspense, and win our sympathy. We hear Nashieli’s voice, its timbre and rhythm, then we hear Irineu’s voice, his humor and laughter. One after the other, in a dialogue with so many sounds, so much diversity of stories. The way of talking, the atmosphere given to the sentence, the kind of emotion we hear in the voices, all this resonates the relationship between the two.

In the podcast, we use less passive voice, less past tense. There are fewer information brokers or mediators, but stories told by the people who lived them together. There is room for a story to be told by one and complemented by another; for it to be started by one and taken along a different path by the other; for the story to receive different versions, even discordant or contradictory among them. It is as if Irineu was also making notes and additions to Nashieli’s article or, when listening to her lecture at a seminar, he interrupted her and added more details, or updated her on something that happened after she left the settlement.

Bringing these two characters into a *podcast* is shaking up the way we’ve been doing and publishing our research. It is thinking of Anthropology as a science that is also read and evaluated by the people who populate the world that makes this form of science possible. And betting that another science is possible, different from the one that uses a language, a text size, a form of publication (expensive

and inaccessible) exclusively produced and aimed at other scientists to read and consume. Of course, Nashieli also wants to be read and known by fellow anthropologists at Unicamp and other Brazilian and foreign universities. But, above all, she wants Irineu, his wife Silvana, his teenage stepson and all their companions to know what she is thinking about agrarian reform. And she also wants to know how they think their thoughts can become clearer, can gain strength.

But these frank and mutually critical conversations inside *Mundaréu* are not new for those pairs who have been doing this for a long time before, as is precisely the case with Nashieli and Irineu. They only agreed to come and talk to us because they were very comfortable in this place of horizontal conversation, complementary learning, mutual and collective growth. The researcher receiving questions back from the person with whom she does the research does not frighten or destabilize Nashieli because, in her fieldwork with Irineu and his colleagues at the campsite or the settlement, this already frequently happens. She does not produce a kind of science closed off to disagreements or adjustments. Her Anthropology is dialogic, permeable and this is not very common in our area or in other areas of science.

In fact, in the episode, she said that she has a habit of delivering, sending and sharing what she writes about this community. At a certain point in the research, she took the book she published and gave it as a gift to several of the settlers (LOERA, 2014). After that, on an occasion of conflict, when a lady had her “camping time” questioned, threatening that she had the right to a plot of land, it was precisely Nashieli’s book that gained use. The lady found her name and photograph in Nashi’s book, revealing exactly how many years she had been under the black tent by the side of the road. A book is an expected and valued research result in the scientific community of which Nashieli is a part, but for Irineu’s community, the book has gained many other meanings.

We show in the episode that if Nashieli does research, Irineu and his rural companions do too. She writes articles, publishes books; they carry out surveys of unproductive lands, keep updated the frequency of who is camped, who works and who “scores”, that is, who meets the necessary conditions for claiming the right to land. Observing reality, reflecting and talking about it are scientific procedures performed by both.

## **But how does an Anthropology podcast talk about Science?**

With *Mundaréu*, we want to discuss the obstacles and possibilities for the dissemination of Anthropology. On the one hand, we are living a moment when the Humanities seem to be constantly questioning its way of doing research, of relating to people during research and, afterwards, of writing about all this. On the other hand, issues related to health crisis and Biological Sciences have been in the foreground for a long time. Defining what counts (and what does not) as “science” and as “technology”, what are the parameters for evaluating scientific work, how the allocation of resources will be made and, often, defining the research agendas in a close engagement with the market and, therefore, with capitalism.

In the last two centuries, the Social Sciences have been framed by guidelines of the Natural Sciences and, in the case of Anthropology, also of colonialism. Anthropology is a discipline that has been constituted in different ways in its different national matrix. In Brazil, we learn about the French, English and American way of doing Anthropology. It is a scientific area focused on the study of “others”, of “otherness”, in the technical jargon of the area. At the beginning of Anthropology, based on Euro-American traditions, this “other” was incorporated by the peoples originating from the European colonies (indigenous people in the Americas, African people and people from the macro-region of Oceania). People that today constitute, for the most part, the “global south”, the “tropics”, what has been called the “third world”.

In the last 50 years, this “otherness” has expanded to other human groups, but still “others” in relation to the “civilized white man”: women, blacks, Amazonian, poor, urban and peripheral populations and, as in the case of Nashieli’s research, rural and peasant populations. More recently, we started to dare in a movement of reversal of these colonial hierarchies and we also started to study systems of power: state, industry, market, biomedicine and Science themselves.

Anthropology produces passionate philosophical questions, such as: “what constitutes ‘humanity’?”; “how do myths and rituals work?”; “how are State-less people socially organized?”; “from what categories do people understand the world?”. Initial works, turning from the 19th to the 20th century, were based on epic narratives of the displacement of those European scientific men to the recesses of the tropics, where they spent a lot of time (years, even) isolated, living

with these people, learning their language, writing it all down and then organizing those ideas into a long and detailed form of writing that we call “ethnography”.

If, on the one hand, some of these experiences were “ordered” from the colonizing countries, with the explicit purpose of better knowing in order to better dominate; on the other hand, with the consolidation of the area, Anthropology ended up gaining more autonomy and produced, based on other priorities, hundreds of ethnographies. These works register the questions and problems that arose from these encounters, about those populations that were being studied and also for the anthropologists, in relation to themselves and their societies of origin.

Anthropology is science because it is urgent to expand the meaning of science. We understand science as an organized and collective form of knowledge production, open to changes and contestations, as long as they are shared by the constituted collective. This science is a type of practice – fascinating and absolutely necessary – that involves a basic and fundamental movement, a leap that the human species has managed to take, and to record, especially in writing, which implies a conversation with the world.

An interested conversation that tests, experiments, asks, but above all, that waits and depends on the answer. And the answer does not come from himself or from some authority to whom the scientist responds, but from how the other responds. This other may be a leader of the agrarian reform movement, a community of people camped by the road, a potato planted there, a pesticide, a virus, an atom – or also the anthropologist herself, who is invited to participate and respond questions in a podcast episode. It’s not a monologue. For us, recognizing this is the only possibility for a science in the 21st century, which is up to the challenges that we, our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to face.

We have inherited a very problematic scientific legacy from our ancestors, which participates in a colonialist, extractivist, genocidal, ethnocidal, racist, sexist, capacitist, fatphobic society. This society, supported by science itself, usually looks at “nature” as a resource, as a raw material to be appropriated; looks at native peoples as the inferior and indolent beings; looks at the Brazilian people, mostly african-indigenous, as “weight”, “cost” and “problem”, and not as power or strength.

This society has developed horror and fear of any group of people who raise their voices and question the historical violence of landowners, traditional families or owners of local power. We are both ashamed of that heritage. We know that we have a heavy legacy and we also have an enormous task ahead of us, if we want to still sustain this violent science fiction that is the Brazilian State. Brazilian science, unfortunately, colonized, dependent and absolutely unable to see itself in this global geopolitics that deprives us, has confirmed the structures that produce profit, land and food for the few, while producing social inequalities, suffering and death for the many.

### **Other sciences are possible**

We're from another crowd that thinks they can do better than that. We have to be able to do better than that. Although we are not alone, we are still a minority, often silenced. Because the Natural Sciences have always been in the foreground, dictating the rules of what is "science" and "scientist" against what they consider "quackery" or "pseudoscience", defining what is true and what is myth/false/lie. And they generally propose science as technoscience, which generates innovation and products to be inscribed in the consumer market. They even defend that seeds, water, land and even the scientific articles themselves are capitalizable intellectual property. Therefore, we are always affirming that scientific articles – now also scientific podcasts – be free to access, come in an understandable language, and be available to everyone, especially taxpayers (since in Brazil science is basically produced with public money) and interlocutors (like Irineu and his colleagues, who have taught Nashieli so much).

We have invested so much in *Mundaréu's* format because it communicates this vision of science, which we are defending. We assume that science is something that is produced by many people, and always from an encounter. In the case of Anthropology, this encounter frequently (although not exclusively) takes place **between people, places and relationships**, as we showed earlier, based on the example of our fourth episode, "Lona, luta e andorinhas". How did Nashieli and Irineu meet? How does research in rural contexts happen? How to tell the stories of anthropological science?

Our option, considering the heavy legacy and heritage that our area carries, was to bring an anthropologist and her research partner. We intend that our interviewees tell us their life and encounter stories. And that interlocutors can talk about what they thought of the interaction, the presence, the research relationship that was established with those anthropologists who did the research **with** them (and not **about** them). What is between “with” and “about” is not a minor difference. Talking about the other person at a distance, without that other person being able to give any opinion, reflects a kind of science that objectifies, that de-subjectifies this other. It is a science that reinforces power relations, that does not recognize the humanity of others, that does not anticipate that this other person thinks, asks and criticizes, but simply receives and responds.

In *Mundaréu*, we propose another type of meeting and listening, and we try to produce another Anthropology, as so another way of doing science can emerge. Of course, there are limitations in our choice, but we are trying to endorse a model of science that refuses the sole authority and exclusive holder of the truth to the researcher. People want to feel confident and secure when an anthropologist or any other scientist arrives planning to do research. We need more shared meanings, meanings all over, not just to be included in the *Curriculum Lattes* or accounted for by the graduate program at that researcher’s university. Authoritarian discourse – from science or from a single scientist – is not disseminating disinformation, it is producing false information to destroy alliances that aim to transform power structures and the proliferation of fear. Our idea is different, we want to win hearts and dispute meanings that are shareable.

Our intention is on producing a human science that is open to possibilities of contestation or validation. With *Mundaréu*, we are trying to show how the scientific “fact” in Anthropology is **made**. We want to know the ingredients and recipes that constitute the food of anthropological research, what sustains and strengthens their bodies, through people who cook together in a research process. Pull up a stool, sit down and exercise critical listening and dialogue.

“Information” is not something that circulates unilaterally, from top to bottom, from the outside to the inside. Information is something new, that transforms, that produces difference because it changes all the common directions of producing knowledge. It is from the piece of ground in Pontal do Paranapanema,

from the pots on the wood stove, from the handful of organic veggies, from the flowers in the window that Irineu and his family showed Nashieli what it was like to camp, settle, produce and guarantee the right to exist. It was this world, known closely and with careful coexistence, that flooded the texts, classes and lectures of this anthropologist from Unicamp. It was in the continued conversation that what counts as “scientific data” reached her, that Anthropology became possible.

If we still want to save something from the ruins that will remain of the university and of Brazil at the end of this ghost train in which we find ourselves in this very challenging period, it will not be without building and strengthening alliances with people and with the beings, lands, rivers, forests and things that make up, inhabit, and sustain our existences. It’s work for a bunch of people, for a *Mundaréu* of people. Let’s go?

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Access the *Mundaréu* podcast page on Rádio Kere-kere here

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