

Bruno Silva Santos, 2025

University of Edinburg, Social Anthropology

Abstract:

*Zoonotic Divergences: Humans, rats and micro-organisms in Guarani-Mbya villages of Jaraguá Indigenous Land (São Paulo/SP, Brazil)*

The different sub-groups of the Guarani indigenous people inhabit a vast territory in South America, stretching across Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil. In Brazil, most of the Guarani population live in the South, Southeast and Centre-West regions. The Jaraguá Indigenous Land (TI Jaraguá), inhabited by the Guarani-Mbya subgroup and the field site of my research project, is located within the city of São Paulo, the largest metropolis in the Southern Hemisphere. The 532-hectare indigenous territory where around 700 people live is surrounded by densely inhabited neighbourhoods and very busy highways, so the urban space, its dynamics and its inhabitants are a constant presence in the lives of my interlocutors. Among the many negative effects of the proximity between village and city, the Guarani complain about the large population of rats that live in the villages. In urban centres, rats are the main reservoir of leptospirosis, a zoonosis caused by *Leptospira* bacteria, and TI Jaraguá has recorded a couple of cases of the disease in recent years, including the death of a child as a result of this zoonotic infection. The main objective of my research project is to understand how health and disease issues associated with rats are experienced and understood by the Guarani-Mbya in their daily lives in the villages in the midst of the metropolis. I argue that understanding human-rat relations and health and disease issues among the Guarani-Mbya people can provide an insightful and critical indigenous perspective on the ecological, social and environmental issues embedded in the process of urbanisation in Brazil.