

## **Of bats, viruses, humans, trees, and chickens: Multispecies relations and the limits of knowledge**

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Social scientists and (post-)humanists have recently located knowledge production beyond the limits of the human in thinking about how insects, dogs, forest animals, plants, and other creatures produce ways of knowing that significantly affect social and material relations. Research with indigenous peoples in South America has been the focus of many of these formulations, including Philippe Descola's return to animism, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism, and, recently, Eduardo Kohn's extension of semiotics and relationality beyond the human. This presentation traces a complex interaction between vampire bats, viruses, trees, cows, chickens, and dolphins that proved fatal to some 38 residents of a rainforest in eastern Venezuela and defied diagnosis for over a year in 2007–2008. Rather than tracing an opposition between an indigenous cosmopolitics versus a 'Western' naturalist or biomedical perspective, I examine how two indigenous leaders recruited a healer, a nurse, a non-indigenous doctor, and the author – along with animals, viruses, and media technologies – to unravel these complex multispecies relations, diagnose the cause of the epidemic, and deliver a report to national officials and journalists. Here the 'ontological turn' itself takes a number of turns in exploring how knowledge moves along the borders of ethnic inequalities, social movements, forms of state power, and amalgamations of professional logics even as it travels across species.