Adolescents' Perceptions of Spiders in Sao Paulo's Peripheral Neighborhoods: Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Environmental Education—From Local Environmental Forums to Minimal Environmental Units (UMAs)

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This research explored how the presence of spiders in homes in São Paulo's peripheral neighborhoods can promote environmental education in elementary schools, linking the topic to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Starting from the idea that nature has been erased from urban daily life, the study sought to reframe these animals as learning opportunities. About 336 students were surveyed to understand their relationship with nature and spiders. Based on data, the board game "Teia da Vida"(Web of Life) was developed, tested on a case group while another served as control. Results showed the game's effectiveness: 79% of students learned more from it than from lectures, and 78% gained understanding of spiders' ecological importance. As a follow-up, a Local Environmental Forum was held with 30 students from 7 schools in Vila Andrade neighborhood from Sao Paulo, Brazil.. There, they identified local issues and created Minimal Environmental Units (MEUs): one for community waste management in alleys and lanes, and another transforming the school into an environmental reference center, adressing SDGs for territorial challenges. This research shows that marginalized urban areas hold potential for sustainable solutions when education starts from residents' realities.

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