

CLAS Lunchtime Seminar

Book Launch

Wednesday 11 October – 12:30pm

Room 204, CLAS, Alison Richard Building, 7 West Road, CB3 9DT

The Shifting Ground of Globalization: Labor and Mineral Extraction at Vale

Thiago Aguiar

Abstract

The shifting ground of globalization: labor and mineral extraction at Vale (Brill, 2023) describes the transformation of the Brazilian mining company, global leader in iron ore and nickel production and formerly state-owned, into a Transnational Corporation (TNC). It analyzes the effects of this process on the company's workers and unions, in Brazil and abroad, through ethnographic research in two of the countries where Vale has mining operations (Brazil and Canada), in places as different as Carajás, in the heart of the Amazon forest, and Sudbury, in northern Ontario. The book describes the company's union and labor relations strategy, which seeks the weakening and isolation of its unions in Brazil, and the restructuring of Vale's operations in Canada after the acquisition of Inco in 2006, which led to the longest strike in the North American country's private sector in 30 years (between 2009 and 2010). It also delves into recent changes in the ownership structure and "corporate governance" of Vale. After years of international expansion of the mining company, financed by state and parastatal funds in the governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (Workers' Party, 2003-2016), these recent changes led to the increased presence of large transnational investment funds in its shares. In dialogue with the theories of global capitalism, the book takes the case of Vale, the largest Latin American company in market value, as a telling example of the integration of Brazilian economy into capitalist globalization and its consequences for workers, communities, and the environment in the first decades of the twenty-first century - when many celebrated the BRICS and its companies as an alternative to neoliberal globalization.

Bio

Thiago Aguiar is a PhD in Sociology (University of São Paulo), visiting research fellow at the King's College London, postdoctoral researcher at the University of Campinas (Brazil) and associated researcher at the Centro de Estudos dos Direitos da Cidadania (Cenedic-USP).