

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

The Global Foreign Aid Network 1960-2016: Sticky Ties, Donor Darlings, and Aid Orphans

Dr. Liam Swiss
Acadia University

This presentation analyzes the evolution of the global foreign landscape as a social network of ties between countries over a more than 50-year period from 1960-2016. First, it will present a longitudinal description of the changing contours and scale of the evolving network of bilateral (country-to-country) aid ties over time using social network analysis techniques to model ties between countries and among other actors in the aid sector. Second, it will examine the prospects for analyzing this evolution through multivariate modelling of the factors that shape the network, including: sticky ties between donors and recipients; the rise of donor darling countries suddenly receiving aid from a number of donors; and the marginalization or exclusion of so-called aid orphans from the network. Finally, the presentation will conclude with an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of using social network analysis to achieve a relational understanding of foreign aid.

Liam Swiss (he/him) is Professor of Sociology, and Head of the Department of Sociology at Acadia University. His research examines foreign aid, global development, the politics of Canadian aid policy, and gender equality. His published research has appeared in journals such as the American Sociological Review, Social Forces, Social Science Research, and World Development, among others. He is the author of the book The Globalization of Foreign Aid: Developing Consensus (Routledge 2018). He is a two-time former President of the Canadian Association for the Study of International Development, and in 2026 is Past-President of the Canadian Sociological Association.

**Friday, February 27th, 2026
2:30 p.m. in McCain, #1116
All Welcome!**