

Dan Lanier-Vos

Assistant Professor of Sociology and Ruth Ziegler Early Career Chair in Jewish Studies
University of Southern California

“No free gifts: philanthropy, investment, and the production of Irish and Jewish national attachments in the United States”

Abstract:

My talk presents a new approach to the study of nationalism. Rather than treating nation building as a process of identification with an imagined community, I treat nation building as a practical organizational accomplishment. Given that the nation is not homogeneous or bounded, the key organizational challenge for nation builders is setting up mechanisms that allow heterogeneous groups to cooperate and develop lasting national attachments. I will demonstrate the utility of this approach by examining comparatively the mechanisms that the Irish and the Zionist national movements created in order to raise funds from their compatriots in the United States in the 1910-1920s and 1940-1950s, respectively. Instead of assuming that diasporas in some sense belong to the nation, the book examines the difficulties that arise in the encounter between national agents and diaspora communities, and pays close attention to the socio-financial mechanisms devised to allow different groups to cooperate and make up a nation.

Bio:

Dan Lainer-Vos is an Assistant Professor of Sociology and the Ruth Ziegler Early Career Chair in Jewish Studies at the University of Southern California. Using insights from Science and Technology Studies and Economic Sociology, his work examines encounters between national movements and diaspora communities to understand how diverse groups negotiate their position in the nation. His dissertation won the Robert Merton Prize from Columbia University and the Theda Skocpol dissertation award of the historical comparative section of the ASA for 2009. Lainer-Vos is currently revising parts of his dissertation into a book and is writing an article on the construction of Zionist attachments in a Jewish American summer camp. His articles appeared at Theory and Society, Mobilization, and Sociology Compass.