Historical Network Research Conference 2014

Ghent University, Belgium, 15-19 September.

This conference and specialist course follows up the Future of Historical Network Research (HNR) Conference 2013 and aims to bring together scholars from all historical disciplines, sociologists, other social scientists, geographers and computer scientists to discuss the emerging field of historical Social Network Analysis. The concepts and methods of social network analysis in historical research are no longer merely used as metaphors but are increasingly applied in practice. With the increasing availability of both structured and unstructured digital data, we should be able to analyse complex phenomena. Historical SNA can help us to cope with the organization of this information and the reduction of complexity.

Conference

We invite papers from ancient to contemporary history, which integrate social network analysis methods and historical research methods and reflect on the added value of their methodologies. Since most historical data is unstructured, we seek innovative ways to derive, mine or prepare this kind of data (historical and literary texts, images, …) for SNA. Social scientists or computer scientists working with historical sources or longitudinal perspectives are also welcome. Topics could cover (but are not limited to) the following strands:

- The spatial dimensions of networks; the role of transport in social interaction, on spatial distance and compensation by alternative proximities, and on the use of spatial analytical techniques in quantitative network analysis.
- Relational approaches towards collective action; for instance transnational or global (social) movements, dynamics of contention, etc.
- The history of science and knowledge circulation; including the dynamics of citation networks, policy networks, discipline formation and relational approaches towards scientific and intellectual movements.
- History of elites; for instance the meaning of kinship, political elites and policy networks, (trans)national elite formation, global elites, cultural elites and consumption, etc.
- The role and organization of historical economic networks established by economic actors in the broadest sense, including networks of individual entrepreneurs, business elites, cities and states. We invite case studies of domestic networks, long-distance trade networks, networks created by migration, patronage networks etc.
- Use and abuse of distant reading practices and the promises of 'big data' in literary and cultural history.
- Historical networks and theory: assessments of the theoretical and historiographical foundations of social network analysis in historical and sociological research: a relational turn, paradigm or a method?
- …

Confirmed keynotes: Claire Lemercier (Sciences Po, Paris), Diane Cline (George Washington University) and Emily Erikson (Yale University)

To propose a paper, panel, or poster, please email hnr2014@ugent.be **by May 10, 2014**. Proposals should take the form of a 250-words abstract accompanied by a short CV; in the case of complete panels, proposals should consist of an abstract and short CV for every panelist together with a short CV for the chair (if different). The conference is free for presenters. The admission fee for other participants is 35 Euro/day without dinner.

Conference locations: Ghent University (workshops) and Ghent City Museum (http://www.stamgent.be/en, conference).

Specialist course / pre-conference workshops

The modular workshops will seek to provide as much practical skills and knowledge as possible. The 3-hour workshops can be followed as part of an intensive course (15 hours), but each workshop is designed to stand on its own. Specific prerequisites can be found on our website, but no previous experience with the software and tools for historical SNA is required. The fee for participation in the workshops is 75 EUR/day. We take registrations on a first come first serve basis, so if you are planning to (or thinking about) attending, it is best to register early at www.ugent.be/hnr2014.

A general introduction in SNA: the main concepts and the basic techniques of social network analysis (3 hours)
Monday, 15/09/2014, 14:00-17:00, Marten Düring (UNC Chapel Hill)

In this introductory workshop session the main concepts and the basic techniques of social network analysis will be explained and discussed. Hands-on examples will be provided to demonstrate use cases of research projects and analytical methods such as notions of network and statistical methods will be introduced.

Preparing your dataset for network analysis: a general introduction (3 hours)
Tuesday, 16/09/2014, 10:00-13:00, Mark Depauw, Yanne Broux and Silke Van Beselaere (KULeuven)

This workshop discusses some of the general principles of how to structure your database for Social Network Analysis. What kind of fields you need? How do you deal with reduplication of information of a specific category, e.g. when someone has two names? Is the 'best' database structure always a complicated relational database? Or can you opt for a 'simple' flat file instead? We also look at to what extent the available data need to be manipulated further to be used for Social Network Analysis, in Gephi or in UCINET.

From text interpretation to data to networks: a two part workshop on data extraction and visualization of historical sources (3 hours)
Tuesday, 16/09/2014, 10:00-13:00, Marten Düring (UNC Chapel Hill)

How does one extract quantifiable data from text? How can we bridge the gap between the depth of hermeneutics and data analysis? How can we systematize text interpretation? The first part of the workshop will address these questions and provide hands-on experience with the extraction of network data from a narrative through the use of methods developed in qualitative data analysis. This second part of the workshop will build on the data extracted during the first workshop and will provide participants with the technical skills to use entry-level software tools to visualize and explore social networks.

Extract, disambiguate, link: enriching your unstructured (meta)data with Open Refine (3 hours)
Tuesday, 16/09/2014, 14:00-17:00, Seth Van Hooland, Max De Wilde and Simon Hengchen (Université Libre de Bruxelles)

Instead of traditional methods of close reading, consisting of manually reading and interpreting a very limited corpus, cultural heritage institutions are increasingly experimenting with natural language processing to allow distant reading practices by end-users. Named-Entity Recognition (NER) is one of these methods, which can help end-users to navigate through large volumes of data, facilitating social network analysis, etc. This workshop will provide first-hand experience with OpenRefine, an Interactive Data Transformation tool (IDT) and several extraction services, using freely available datasets.

An introduction to social network analysis with UCINET (9 hours)
Tuesday, 16/09/2014, 14:00-17:00, Wednesday, 17/09/2014, 10:00-13:00, 14:00-17:00, Bruce Cronin (University of Greenwich)

This workshop will introduce participants to the use of UCINET, a comprehensive package for the analysis of social network data. Participants will learn to manipulate, analyse and interpret network data. Social network analysis methods include centrality measures, subgroup identification, role analysis, elementary graph theory, and permutation-based statistical analysis. In addition, the package has strong matrix analysis routines, such as matrix algebra and multivariate statistics. The most common social network analysis measures will also be discussed. Netdraw (a visualisation software associated with UCINET) will also be presented.

Gephi data modeling and network visualisation (9 hours)
Tuesday, 16/09/2014, 14:00-17:00, Wednesday, 17/09/2014, 10:00-13:00, 14:00-17:00, Clement Levallois (EMLYON Business School)

The workshop will lead participants from absolute beginners to advanced skills in Gephi within three sessions: 1. Basics, 2. How to get data into networks, advanced functions, 3. Time and Space. Gephi is one among many tools available for visualizing networks. After finding out when the use of Gephi makes sense, we will go though a basic workflow: from importing a dataset to a complete visualization. Then we will go through the experience

of creating datasets: how to go from "tabular data" to a network that we can explore in Gephi. Finally, we will learn how to create dynamic network visualizations with Gephi and how to work with spatialized networks.

Provisional Programme:

	Monday 15	Tuesday 16 - Workshops	Wednesday 17 - Workshops	Thursday 18 - Workshops	Friday 19 - Workshops
Morning		- Data preparation - SNA - Node XL	- Gephi II - UCINET II - Sci2 I	Conference	Conference
Afternoon	Historical SNA: A general introduction	- Gephi I - UCINET I - Open Refine / NER	- Gephi 3 - UCINET 3 - Sci2 II	Conference	Conference
Evening			Public lecture reception	Conference dinner	