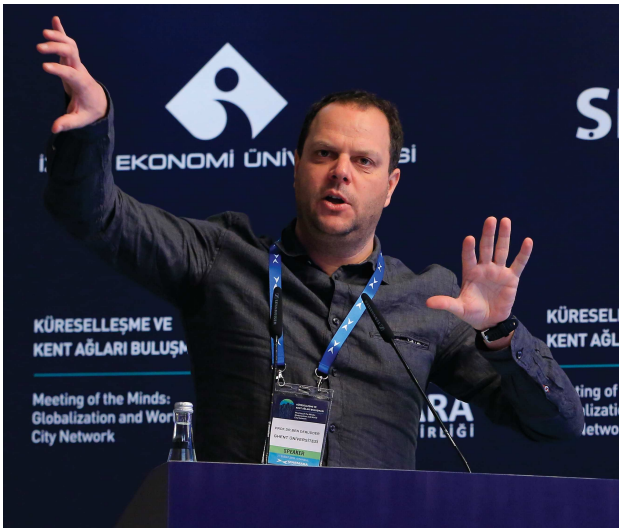
Global Urban Studies Program
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Network analysis of urban systems: potential, challenges, and pitfalls

Dr. Ben Derudder
(Universiteit Gent)

Thursday, Nov 1st

Psychology Room 230
4:00 – 5:30pm



What is he talking about?

When a network analytic framework is adopted, the urban system is abstracted into a 'network' in which cities are 'nodes' connected by 'edges' capturing the strength of inter-city connections. The promises of this approach mainly relate to the fact that various urban theorists have asserted the relevance of networks as foundational theoretical constructs. But, network abstractions can obfuscate: the complexities associated with 'nodalizing' urban space, and the associated silencing of some of the rich insights that can be gained from other abstractions. There are also potential pitfalls: whereas network analysis methods have been developed in sociology where nodes can be assumed to have agency, network analysis of city-systems seems prone to overreaching because cities hardly have this level of agency. The paper draws upon concrete examples from the 'urban network literature' throughout, and reviews possible ways to deal with challenges and pitfalls as to better harness the promises of network analysis.

Who is he?

Dr. Ben Derudder is Professor of Human Geography at Ghent University in Belgium. His research on world cities has appeared in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Urban Studies*, *Regional Studies*, *Journal of Transport Geography*, and *Environment and Planning A/B*, and he has (co-)edited four books on the topic. He has worked with the World Bank and economic development agencies in Abu Dhabi, Chengdu, Dublin, Milan and Sydney on how transport and infrastructure networks facilitate, and are facilitated by, transnational economic interactions between cities. From 2011-2014 he was also a Marie Curie Research Fellow, at Monash University in Australia.

This talk is sponsored by the Global Urban Studies Program (GUSP). Light refreshments will be available. For additional information, contact Dr. Zachary Neal (zpneal@msu.edu).