



**Fifth FINGEO Global Seminar**  
**EUROPEAN SPACES OF FINANCIALIZATION**

**28–29 May 2018**

**&**

**First FINGEO Spring School**

**30 May – 2 June 2018**

**Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels**

More info on FINGEO click [here](#).

**Local Organizers:** Manuel Aalbers (KU Leuven), David Bassens (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Reijer Hendrikse (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Michiel van Meeteren (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

**Advisory Board:** Sabine Dörry (LISER, Luxembourg), Gary Dymski (Leeds University), Karen Lai (National University Singapore), Martin Sokol (Trinity College Dublin), Dariusz Wójcik (Oxford University)

**Sponsored by:** EUFINGEO, the European Financial Geography Network (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, click [here](#)), The Financial Geography Research Network (Regional Studies Association, click [here](#))

**Overall organisational outline:** Two days of Global Seminar for a larger audience, four days of FinGeo Spring School for a selected audience of early career scholars.

**Location:** The Global Seminar and Spring School take place in Brussels: a city that harbours both the high promises and extreme disappointments of European integration, a financial centre in and of itself, and a place which remarkable urban fabric carries the signature of decades of commercial real estate and financial interests.

**Background and ambition:** For decades, Brussels has been the European hotbed fuelling financial integration, culminating in the inception of the Eurozone at turn of the century, and currently exemplified by a push for integrated capital markets. As unofficial capital of the EU, Brussels is a key regulatory node in shaping European and indeed global capitalism, having increasingly become a hotspot for corporate lobbying, housing a growing complex of private associations, consultancies, firms, roundtables and so forth, dedicated to influence the many diplomats and technocrats constituting the so-called 'Brussels Bubble'.

Over time, this regime has produced radically uneven socio-spatial outcomes, particularly in the Eurozone 'periphery'. Greece is the epitomic case of how the ongoing crisis of financialized capitalism, amplified through monetary union, can destabilize a country, effectively resulting in the handover of executive power and sovereignty to technocratic (creditor) bodies. Greece's fate, however troubling,

is but an extreme version of what is observable across the Eurozone and EU. Augmented since the crisis, it appears that limiting political manoeuvrability is a structural phenomenon, as member states are confronted with a structural loss of national executive authority, and judicial and parliamentary oversight. Instead, technocratic bodies like the Eurogroup and the European Central Bank (ECB) have increasingly filled the political vacuum. As a result of this increasingly 'financialized' regime, it appears that European banks and capital markets have recovered from the financial-cum-euro crisis, and are once again seeking ways to further enclose the EU/Eurozone in its value extraction schemes.

Last but not least, Brussels is also the fulcrum where much of the forthcoming wheeling and dealing around the latest financial sector challenges will play out: as Brexit is likely to have substantial consequences for the geographical organization of the European financial sector (and particularly UK banks), the Brussels' business services complex will be working overtime. But also the inroads of financial technology (FinTech) into the field of 'traditional' finance poses key questions to Brussels-based politicians, regulators and technocrats, some of which have clear geopolitical dimensions to it.

#### **Target Group and Application Procedure:**

**Global Seminar:** Attendance of the seminar is open to all after registration, but there is a selection procedure for paper presenters. The registration fee is 100 euro for the full two days, including lunch & refreshments. Potential paper presenters should submit an title + abstract of max. 250w to [david.bassens@vub.be](mailto:david.bassens@vub.be) and [manuel.aalbers@kuleuven.be](mailto:manuel.aalbers@kuleuven.be) by 15 January 2018.

**Spring School:** By application only. The registration fee is 250 euro and covers participation in both the two-day Global Seminar and the four-day Spring School, including lunch & refreshments. The targeted audience consists of Early Career Academics, i.e. Graduate/PhD students and postdoctoral researchers. While the focus of the Spring School is on financial *geography*, we actively seek to attract participants from cognate fields in economic anthropology, (heterodox) economics, economic history, economic sociology, international political economy, political science, etc.

Applicants submit a one page CV, a one-page motivation letter, and their (PhD) project abstract (250 words) to [david.bassens@vub.be](mailto:david.bassens@vub.be) and [manuel.aalbers@kuleuven.be](mailto:manuel.aalbers@kuleuven.be) by 15 January 2018. During the selection procedure, the organizers will pay attention to the individual academic qualities and motivation of the applicant. They will also seek to compose a well-balanced and diverse group in terms of gender, geographical background, and disciplinary training. We aim to bring together a workable group of Early Career academics. Selected candidates are expected to attend the Fifth FINGEO Global Seminar that precedes the actual Spring School.

Note that a limited number of bursaries will be made available for eligible participants of the Spring School. These are sponsored by the Regional Studies Association and cover up to 200 euro. Information on eligibility and applications via this form. Application deadline **15 January 2018** (please submit the form when applying for the Spring School).

**Fifth FINGEO Global Seminar**  
**EUROPEAN SPACES OF FINANCIALIZATION**  
**28-29 May 2018**

**Theme:**

The theme of the Global Seminar is ‘**European Spaces of Financialization**’. Organized on May 28 and May 29 in Brussels, the main intellectual drive for the seminar is to debate Europe’s multiscalar spaces of financialization, their production, workings, effects, and importantly, their alternatives. We want to understand the socio-spatial drivers of financialization that produce inequality, growing household indebtedness, and the privatization of public services and support structures in the face of austerity politics. Participants are invited to engage with the following financial geography themes: geographies of European integration, its offshore spaces and the wider state-finance nexus; the financialization of (non-) banking, finance and corporate enterprise; of boom-bust cycles; of politico-financial elites; of real estate, housing and households; geographies of sovereignty, austerity, resistance, debt, and so forth. Therefore we are both interested in the effects of financialization on states and markets as well as focusing on who and what drive further financialization of these spheres.

The program is structured around four dedicated keynote lectures of about 45 min + 15 min Q/A, each followed by a topical session with four papers. This allows us to accommodate up to sixteen presenting participants, although we want to encourage a larger community and the FINGEO spring school participants to be present. Moreover, the two keynotes from the First FINGEO dissertation prize will be accommodated on the Brussels seminar. The seminar will cover the following themes:

**(i) The financialization of governments, the public sector and states**

Keynote: Professor Bob Jessop, Lancaster University

In recent years a mounting body of work has emerged that empirically unpacks the financial entanglements and transformations of governments, state agencies, (quasi-) public institutions and their offshoots. Our first session builds on these contributions, in an understanding that states – through a multitude of functions – shape the very context upon which financial development unfolds. We are broadly interested in the latest empirical insights within this growing subfield of financialization studies, as well as emerging conceptual perspectives to make sense of the rise of finance in a growing set of public domains: how and why governments have been key accelerators of financialization; to what extent states have become financial subjects themselves, and how we should understand the ever-changing state-finance nexus in a financialized world.

*About the keynote: Bob Jessop is Distinguished Professor of Sociology at Lancaster University, United Kingdom. Bob has written extensively on a wide range of interconnected topics, such as regulation, governance and neoliberalism. However, Bob is arguably best known for his vast work centered on the state, on state theory and state transformations, including his popular ‘strategic relational approach’ to study the nature of states. For more information see:*



<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/sociology/about-us/people/bob-jessop>

## **(ii) Corporate financialization: banks, finance and corporations transformed**

Keynote: Professor Julie Froud, The University of Manchester

Our second session focuses on the global political economy of corporations – a space we broadly refer to as corporate financialization. Amongst others, we zoom in on the changing nature of corporate financing and profitmaking: of banking, and wider financial intermediation, in which so-called ‘non-financial’ firms increasingly perform all kinds of financial activities. The growing influence of financial motives and practices over business, with the rise of governance models maximizing ‘shareholder value’ as prominent example, remains one of the key spaces shaping financialization research. Global corporations have since become progressively interwoven with shadow banking, tax evasion and other practices defining the financial offshore world, inviting scholars to rethink the ways in which corporate financialization shapes up. From a European perspective, financialized corporate governance practices have typically been seen as something that belongs to Anglo-American capitalism. Although such a position is difficult to maintain, it begs the question to what extent corporate financialization shapes Europe.



*About the keynote: Julie Froud is Professor of Financial Innovation at the University of Manchester, United Kingdom. Julie has written extensively on financialization and strategy at the level of the global corporation, amongst others focusing on the narratives, numbers and cult(ure) behind shareholder value orientation and the rise of capital markets. For more information see:*

<https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/julie.froud.html>

## **(iii) The politics of financialization**

Keynote: Professor Andreas Nölke, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt

As a seminar organized in Brussels, it only seems logical that our third session zooms in the politics of financialization. Who are the actual (co-) producers of our financialized universe? Who benefits from more financialized markets and states, and who drive policy proposals and institutional change towards financialization, either on the EU level or within EU member states? Amongst others, this session will discuss geographies of lobbying, influence peddling, agenda setting, legislative processes and related political interests. The financial crisis and its (continuing) aftermath laid bare the excessive capture of politicians and regulators, with numerous political solutions or ‘fixes’ to solve the crisis, typically devised by private actors, merely replicating the very dynamics that caused it. Likewise, the ongoing push for integrated European capital markets will increase the likelihood of recurrent crises, rather than prevent it. Meanwhile, the ECB has steadily become Europe’s decisive political actor, increasingly assuming responsibilities of state actors.

*About the keynote: Andreas Nölke is Professor in Political Science at Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany. Andreas’ work centers on political economy, having written extensively on a variety of*



themes, such as corporate/transnational governance, international accounting standards, and varieties of capitalism. More recently, Andreas has engaged with the notion financialization, which he views 'the core problem for a social Europe'. For more information see:

<http://www.goethe-university-frankfurt.de/45472741/anoelke>

#### **(iv) The financialization of daily life**

Keynote: Professor Kavita Datta, Queen Mary University of London

The final session broadly focuses on the spaces shaping the financialization of daily life, in which financial calculations and rationalities increasingly nudge and shape social exchange and reproduction, progressively transforming citizens – students, patients, pensioners, households, et cetera – into financial(ized) subjects. This particular area within the financialization literature and debate is mostly, but not exclusively, shaped by cultural approaches, applied at the local level or micro scale. How and why are decisions about where, when and how to live, shop, work or leisure influenced by financial considerations? Amongst others, this both encompasses empirical work on the financialization of home and the housing sector, but also conceptual work on debt and its mounting sway over social life.

*About the keynote: Kavita Datta is Professor of Development Geography at Queen Mary, University of London, United Kingdom. Kavita has written extensively on transnational migration from the global south to the north, and in particular to global cities like London. Amongst others, Kavita is studying how migrant communities subject to financial exclusion carve out alternative spaces of financial intermediation. For more information see:*

<http://www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/staff/dattak.html>



## First FINGEO Spring School

30 May – 2 June 2017, Brussels

The First FINGEO Spring School aims to immerse Early Career scholars on site in the above-discussed complexity as a dystopian, yet equally empowering prelude to start unpacking the inherently socio-spatially uneven nature of financialization in Europe. The FINGEO Spring School offers an Early Career program aimed at advanced methodological training and reflexive peer debate that intends to aid the consolidation of an emerging global community of financial geographers. Therefore, the FINGEO Spring School offers an intense engagement with the particular research themes, theoretical perspectives, and methodologies that those studying the intricate relations between finance and space may encounter.

### ***Methods Master classes***

The Spring School will offer a 4-day program in and around Brussels. The **Keynote Lectures** from the Global Seminar will also serve as the backbone for the Spring School. We furthermore plan to organize **Master Classes** around a specific set of methodologies to “do financial geography”. Potential themes include methodologies to map cross-border capital flows, methodologies for elite research, methodologies to study social movements, methodologies to study financialization processes, etc.

### ***Reading seminar and discussions***

The keynote lectures and master classes offer different perspectives on financial geography that warrant further reading and debate in a number of **Reading Seminars**, which are prepared by the participants based on literature provided by the organizing committee.

### ***Peer review sessions***

The Spring School also offers **Peer Review Sessions** to present and discuss their own research, and we seek to challenge them to make empirical, conceptual, and theoretical linkages to the material offered throughout the program.

### ***Career Development***

The Spring School offers a platform for Early Careers to engage with senior scholars and seek mentoring as it comes to publication strategies, searching for funding opportunities, establish research collaborations, working across disciplinary boundaries, etc. A dedicated session will be organized to that end.

### ***Social events, visits and field trips***

Next to that, to fuel the debate, we seek to haul in empirical evidence by organizing a number of encounters with citizens, social movements, politicians, financial industry representatives, etc. through **Visits and Fieldtrips**.