



# IRS Spring Academy 2023

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## Investigating Space(s): Current Theoretical and Methodological Approaches: Part 6 – Spaces of Financialisation and De-Financialisation

### Call for Applications

The Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and the Georg Simmel Center for Metropolitan Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HU) invite doctoral students and junior researchers to submit applications on the topic "Spaces of Financialisation and De-Financialisation"

- ▶ Join us for a stimulating event in Erkner and Berlin from 23 to 26 May 2023

### IRS Spring Academy 2023: Spaces of Financialisation and De-Financialisation

Since the last decade, the term "financialisation" has become increasingly popular in academic research as well as in public policy debates. By highlighting the role of financial actors and logics in shaping urban development, it depicts how housing, land, and inhabitants are treated as assets. Moreover, it drives attention to emerging social inequalities, urban segregation, and sustainability concerns.

Within the growing body of research on financialisation, the entrance of institutional investors in residential housing markets has gained notable attention. Numerous studies have documented the rise of global corporate landlords in variegated cities and housing markets. At the same time, it has been shown that financialisation is highly path-dependent and materialises itself differently in each socioeconomic context. As a consequence, managing homes as assets deciphers into the development of a variety of strategies that aim at constantly generating novel financial values. Thus, while financialisation may be operationalised via rent increases or diversifying investment portfolios, recent research also points towards different management strategies, as well as a growing importance of digital innovation and accounting techniques. Moreover, investments in green and sustainable real-estate projects increasingly attracts financial attention and is further encouraged by the changing macroeconomic background and the energy crisis.

At the same time, housing expenses are on the up and gentrification, displacement and a lack of housing affordability is witnessed in cities around the globe. This situation has stimulated housing campaigns in numerous agglomerations who claim a right to housing and demand active de-financialisation of the housing sector. Echoing this, housing affordability has climbed at the top of the agenda for numerous municipal governments. A variety of policy responses and initiatives aim at tackling housing affordability and de-financialise housing affairs. However, the potential for housing de-financialisation is yet unclear. As housing financialisation is attached to policies arranged in different state scales, the role of trans-scalar networks in policy making in housing (de-)financialisation still remains under scrutiny.

### Locations

Leibniz Institute for Research  
on Society and Space  
Flakenstraße 29-31  
15537 Erkner

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
Georg Simmel Center for  
Metropolitan Studies  
Unter den Linden 6  
10099 Berlin

### Organisers

Georgia Alexandri  
Matthias Bernt  
Andrej Holm

### Contact

For inquiries please contact  
Stefan Lindemann

- ▶ [springacademy@leibniz-irs.de](mailto:springacademy@leibniz-irs.de)
- ▶ [leibniz-irs.de/springacademy2023](https://leibniz-irs.de/springacademy2023)

### Twitter and Mastodon

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In other words, while financialisation has fundamentally altered housing in many agglomerations, recent years have also seen initiatives which aim to limit its impact, search for alternative ways of housing production and consumption, or even "de-financialise" housing stocks held by corporate landlords. These initiatives are, however, based on very different policy ideas, they work in variegated institutional environments, and are politically contested. Consequently, the relation between financialisation and de-financialisation emerges as a new field of empirical research and conceptual inquiry.

The Spring Academy will focus on these emerging challenges and contradictions. It is aimed in particular at PhD students and early-career researchers whose work centres on one or more of the following topics:

- ▶ The key characteristics of financial investors as housing landlords, their management practices and business models.
- ▶ The link between platform operations, digitalisation and housing stock restructuring.
- ▶ The link between housing financialisation and short-term rental activities.
- ▶ Real estate projects for the production of ecological, sustainable or the decarbonisation of housing.
- ▶ Financialisation as a "lived" process: personal and household strategies in dealing with financialisation as an embodied process.
- ▶ The implications of financialisation for socio-spatial inequalities (e.g. through gentrification, downgrading, or displacement) and gender inequalities.
- ▶ The role of corporate landlords in influencing housing policies across state scales.
- ▶ The diversity of local policies dealing with the implications of financialisation for local housing markets.
- ▶ Social movement housing mobilisation, challenges to financialisation and strategies for housing de-financialisation.

The Spring Academy at the Leibniz Institute for Research in Society and Space is organised in collaboration with the Georg Simmel Center for Metropolitan Studies at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. It will create a forum of discussion amongst PhD students and Post-docs as well as housing financialisation researchers. The venue will take place at the Leibniz Institute for Society and Space in Erkner and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 23-26 May 2023. Experts from different scientific backgrounds will offer in-depth theoretical understandings on actors, dynamics, policies and processes of housing financialisation. Moreover, practical knowledge on methods will be offered in dedicated workshops where invited speakers will share empirical experiences and challenges. Participants will develop a thorough and profound understanding of financialisation processes and receive methodological stimuli that will help them decode and defy challenges in individual projects. A triggering Spring Academy programme will be accompanied by field trips, social events, and evening activities in the vibrant city of Berlin.





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## Application

This call for applications addresses doctoral candidates and early post-doctoral researchers from Political Sciences, Social Sciences, Geography, Planning and Economics. Participants will be selected according to their academic qualification as well as the suitability of their current research project to the topic of the IRS Spring Academy 2023.

Applications must include:

- ▶ a motivational letter (1–2 pages),
- ▶ your CV, and
- ▶ a short description of your current research project, e.g. abstract of your dissertation incl. name and affiliation of your PhD advisor(s).

We can only accept applications in electronic form. Please send your application via email to: [springacademy@leibniz-irs.de](mailto:springacademy@leibniz-irs.de)

**This call for applications closes on 28 February 2023.**

Applications will be evaluated jointly by the organising team from IRS and HU. Selected candidates will be informed at the end of March 2023; enrolment for the IRS Spring Academy will take place until the mid of April 2023.

## Participation

In order to foster in-depth discussions and reflection as well as extensive opportunities for establishing and consolidating networks, both among each other and with leading international scholars, a maximum of 25 participants will be admitted to the IRS Spring Academy.

Tuition fees will not be charged. Meals, snacks and drinks during the event are included, as well as one evening reception and one dinner.

Participants are required to organise accommodation and make travel arrangements themselves and to cover these expenses.

Applicants who a) cannot receive any funding from home institutions and for whom b) travel and accommodation costs would prevent participation, may receive a scholarship.

There is a limited budget served for participants in need. In the case of strong demand, scholarships will be divided between eligible candidates. Scholarships can only be granted to cover travel and accommodation costs.

If you wish to apply for a scholarship, please briefly explain your situation and indicate the amount that would make your participation possible.





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## Goal and Programme

The overarching goal of the IRS Spring Academy is to enable junior researchers from Political Sciences, Social Sciences, Geography, Planning and Economics to identify relevant research gaps, to encourage them to use a spatial perspective in their analyses and to learn from leading experts in the field about theoretical approaches and innovative methods for empirical work. Participants will have the opportunity to present their projects in paper pitch formats and to access leading experts for one-on-one consultations. We therefore cordially invite doctoral and early postdoctoral researchers to join us for an interesting programme to discuss their own research with internationally leading scholars and their peers.

The IRS Spring Academy combines well-tried and proven formats such as lectures and seminars with less common formats such as doing-research workshops, paper pitches, or academic speed dating. It offers various possibilities to exchange ideas, to discuss current concepts and methodological approaches, as well as to getting feedback on one's own research projects from leading scholars in the field. A preliminary outline of the programme can be found below.

## Keynote Speakers (in alphabetical order)

### ▶ Prof Dr Manuel B. Aalbers | KU Leuven/University of Leuven, Belgium

Manuel B. Aalbers is professor of Human Geography at KU Leuven/University of Leuven (Belgium), where he leads a research group on the intersection of real estate, finance and states, spearheaded by a grant from the European Research Council. He is a world leader in housing financialisation research. He has published extensively on financialisation, social and financial exclusion, neoliberalism, mortgage markets, the privatisation of social housing, neighbourhood decline and gentrification. He is the author of "Place, Exclusion, and Mortgage Markets" (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011) and "The Financialization of Housing: A Political Economy Approach" (Routledge, 2016) and the editor of "Subprime Cities: The Political Economy of Mortgage Markets" (Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). Besides his university position, Manuel B. Aalbers works as associate editor of the "Encyclopedia of Urban Studies" (Sage, 2010) and editor-in-chief of geography journal TEGS. He is also on the board of the journals *Urban Studies*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Belgeo*, *Tijdschrift voor de Volkshuisvesting and Geografie*.

### ▶ Dr Desiree Fields | Berkeley University of California

Desiree Fields is Associate Professor of Geography and Global Metropolitan Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. From 2022 to 2025, she is also co-director of Global Metropolitan Studies. Her research revolves around how financial processes and digital technologies are shifting the terrain of the housing question in the 21st century. Through approaching housing as a domain of critical inquiry, she builds insights on transformations of markets and market power, and the new challenges in policy and politics they generate. She is handling editor for the journal *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, and she is on the editorial board of *American Association of Geographers Review of Books*, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *Regional Studies*, *Regional Science*.





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## Lecture Series & Organisers (in alphabetical order)

### ▶ Dr Georgia Alexandri | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

Georgia Alexandri is postdoctoral research associate at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS). Her research interests focus on the processes that restructure cities and transform societies. She has extensively researched the process of gentrification, displacement, and housing financialisation, with a regional emphasis on the cities of Athens, Madrid and Barcelona. She has collaborated as a researcher in projects funded by the EC, and she was the beneficiary of an individual Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellowship funded by H2020. Furthermore, she led the transdisciplinary project "Contested Cities Athens" on urban studies, ancient Greek drama and displacement. Her research is published in international high impact journals and recently she received the 2020 best article award from the journal *European Urban and Regional Planning*.

### ▶ PD Dr Matthias Bernt | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

Matthias Bernt is the acting head of the research area "Politics and Planning" at the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and adjunct lecturer at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research interests cover urban and housing studies, with a particular focus on governance issues. He published extensively on these themes, including both monographs and peer-reviewed papers in international journals. Recently, Matthias Bernt has published a ground-breaking monograph "The Commodification Gap. Gentrification and Public Policy in London, Berlin and St. Petersburg" (Wiley, 2022) which introduces a novel concept for the comparative study of gentrification. Beyond academic work, Matthias Bernt has been active in policy-advice around housing issues in Berlin, both with parties, administrations and grassroots initiatives. He has served as Book Review Editor for the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* from 2014 to 2021 and as a board member of RC 21 and as deputy speaker of the Urban and Regional Sociology Section in the German Sociological Association.

### ▶ Dr Sabine Dörry | Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) & University of Luxembourg

Sabine Dörry is a Senior Research Fellow at the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER) and an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Luxembourg. She is interested in developing alternative ways of analysing the global financial system, particularly the relational nature of complex local production systems of finance in the world's leading financial centres. In her recent research, she focuses on the way blockchain technologies alter the defining mechanisms of residential real estate transactions. Sabine is a board member of the FINGEO Network, the Global Network on Financial Geography, where she is also editor for the network's working paper series and editor of *Articulo – Journal of Urban Research*. She has also worked as a consultant and academic expert for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ), the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) amongst others.

### ▶ Dr Andrej Holm | Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Andrej Holm is a senior researcher at the Department of Urban and Regional Sociology at the Institute of Social Sciences at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research focuses on changes in social housing systems, the instruments of housing policy and the structures and dynamics of local power relations. He has been researching housing policy and socio-spatial changes in Berlin for more than 20 years. He has researched in-depth the processes and conditions of gentrification in Berlin, the connection between the rental housing market and social inequality, the failure of the administrative





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assistance systems in the case of forced evictions and the effects of the privatisation of large public housing stocks. In addition to his academic work, he advises and supports initiatives, social associations and grassroots movements that advocate for a social housing policy and seek for practical housing alternatives beyond market conditions.

## ▶ Prof Dr Oliver Ibert | Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space

In July 2019 Oliver Ibert took over the position of the director of the Leibniz Institute for Research on Society and Space (IRS) and Professor of Socio-Spatial Transformation at the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg. From 2009 to 2019 he was professor of Economic Geography at the Free University of Berlin. In 1991 he started to study the topics Geography (major), German Literature and Political Sciences (both minor) at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg and obtained his master's degree in 1997. In 2002 he acquired his PhD at the University of Oldenburg and in 2009 he completed his post-doctoral habilitation thesis at the University of Bonn. In summer 2014 Oliver Ibert was a visiting professor at the Department of Political Sciences at the University of Toronto and in autumn 2018 he was a Hallsworth Visiting Professor at the Department of Geography at Manchester University. He is a member of the editorial board of "Raumforschung und Raumordnung | Spatial Planning and Research" and acts as a spokesperson of the working group "Concepts of Crisis" as a part of the Leibniz Research Alliance "Crises in a globalized world". Since 2021 Oliver acts as spokesperson of the Leibniz Research Network "Spatial Knowledge for Society and the Environment – Leibniz R".

## ▶ Prof Dr Michael Janoschka | Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Michael Janoschka is Professor of Regional Science and Head of the Institute for Regional Science at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology. His recent research focuses on a critical analysis of the transformation of housing markets, in particular under the conceptual umbrella of financialisation and sustainability; social and economic processes in cities that lead to the displacement of vulnerable households; conflicts over the use and appropriation of (urban) spaces; new practices of urban and regional governance, generated particularly by local citizen initiatives; innovative participatory, visual and audio-visual methods for urban and regional research. For more than 20 years, he has been researching mainly in Southern Europe and Latin America, and more recently also in German cities (especially Leipzig). He has led as PI several research projects funded from the European Union, and currently he is the scientific coordinator of the interdisciplinary research network CONTESTED TERRITORIES, funded from 2020 to 2024 with a 2.46 M € grant from the European Commission.





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## About the IRS Spring Academy

The IRS Spring Academy is a yearly format similar to a PhD summer school but, as the name suggests, taking place in spring. It is an international and interdisciplinary format that provides spots for 25 participants, typically doctoral students but also post-doctoral researchers in the early phase of their careers. The overarching aim of the IRS Spring Academy is to support qualification projects which seek to explore the spatial dimension of societally relevant topics. In particular, we seek to stimulate debates at the intersections of disciplines and seek to promote academics who wish to conduct research with a spatial perspective. The IRS Spring Academy is dedicated to stimulate conceptual debates around a spatial perspective and to support new methodological knowledge that is required to conduct the related empirical investigations. Moreover, the IRS Spring Academy is a brokerage event that supports participants to build up personal networks and it provides feedback from acknowledged seniors for researchers at the early stage of their careers.

Each IRS Spring Academy will take four intensive days of collaboration, discussion and exchange. The programme combines different elements and thereby offers plenty of opportunities to debate conceptual issues and methodological challenges as well as to engage in a critical, yet constructive and supportive dialogue.



## Preliminary Programme

	TUESDAY   23 May 2023   ERKNER (IRS)	WEDNESDAY   24 May 2023   BERLIN (HU)	THURSDAY   25 May 2023   BERLIN (HU)	FRIDAY   26 May 2023   ERKNER (IRS)
9:00		Time for Individual Consultations	Welcome <i>Talja Blokland</i>   HU	Paper Pitch III
9:30			Paper Pitch II	
10:00			Coffee Break	Coffee Break
10:30				Parallel Doing-Research Workshops
11:00		Co-Teaching Seminar on the Housing Situation in Berlin <i>Matthias Bernt</i>   IRS <i>Andrej Holm</i>   HU	Public Keynote II <i>Desiree Fields</i>   University of Berkeley	I <i>Sabine Dörry</i>   LISER and University of Luxembourg) II <i>Michael Janoschka</i>   Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) III tba
11:30				
12:00				Closing Panel
12:30		Lunch	Lunch	Farewell
13:00	Opening Address and Welcome <i>Oliver Ibert</i>   IRS			
13:30	Academic Speed Networking	Field Trip from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin to Kreuzberg	Parallel Doing-Research Workshops I <i>Sabine Dörry</i>   LISER and University of Luxembourg) II <i>Michael Janoschka</i>   Karlsruhe Institute of Technology) III tba	
14:00				
14:30	Paper Pitch I			
15:00			Panel Meet the Editors and Reviewers	
15:30	Coffee Break			
16:00	Public Keynote I <i>Manuel B. Aalbers</i>   KU Leuven		Free Time in Berlin	
16:30				
17:00				
17:30	Reception at IRS			
18:00		Panel Discussion De-Financialisation in Practice: Learning for and from Berlin		
20:00		Dinner		