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Researching the Global Financial Class

Findings from Frankfurt and Sydney

Paper presented to the Third ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna (Austria), July 12, 2016

Global Financial Class Working Paper Series #04 | July 2016

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CLASS WORKING PAPER SERIES

The Global Financial Class Working Paper Series publishes current research reports from the DFG research project „Global Financial Markets – Global Financial Class“ (project number: NE 475/4-1) at the Department of Sociology at Goethe University Frankfurt.

In contrast to existing research, which regards the processes of globalization and global class formation as driven by transnational organizations and/or migration, we locate the basis for these processes in the communalities produced by the social embeddedness of the market. Following arguments made by the New Economic Sociology and the Social Studies of Finance, markets are structurally, culturally, cognitively and politically embedded in social networks, calculative and communicative practices and political struggles. From the perspective of Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, we argue that these forms of embeddedness translate into specific forms of economic, social and cultural capital, and that cultural and cognitive embeddedness produce a common worldview (doxa) and habitus of market actors. Thereby, for their intrinsic global nature, financial markets would produce a global class.

We investigate this via narrative interviews of financial professionals and a comparative ethnography of the financial centers Frankfurt/Main and Sydney. Due to their similar role and rank in the system of global financial centers, and their different national economic backgrounds, these two cities serve as "critical cases" for investigating the thesis of a Global Financial Class.

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Citation: Hofstätter, Lukas; Hohmann, Marco; Neckel, Sighard; Petzold, Conny (2016): Researching the Global Financial Class. Findings from Frankfurt and Sydney. Paper presented to the Third ISA Forum of Sociology, Vienna (Austria), July 12, 2016. Global Financial Class Working Paper Series No. 4. Frankfurt a. M.: Goethe University (<http://www.fb03.uni-frankfurt.de/50162178/publikationen>).

ISSN: 2365-3078

All contributions of the Global Financial Class Working Paper Series are available online at:
<http://www.fb03.uni-frankfurt.de/50161532/gfm>

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Abstract: This working paper gives insights on a theoretical perspective on class formation in the context of global financial markets and presents first empirical findings regarding the formation of a global financial class. It draws on numerous encounters with financial professionals that were interviewed in Frankfurt (Germany) and Sydney (Australia). As a preliminary conclusion from those investigations on a micro-perspective, we state that acting on the market creates a sense of global sociability, whereby organizations only play a secondary role. Careers in finance follow internationally homogenized pathways. This process of global class formation is taking place prominently in global financial centers. Therefore we link the level of investigation on a micro-perspective (experience of financial professionals) with global city life and the fabric of the city. This results in empirical findings on a meso-level from an ethnography of the social and professional urban environment of finance in the two global cities. Symbolic struggles engraved in the built environment of Frankfurt and Sydney are traced and discussed against the background of every-day-practices of aspiration in the financial districts investigated.

Keywords: Globalization – Finance – Pierre Bourdieu – Symbolic Power – Transnational Capitalist Class – Global Financial Class – Global City – Aspiration

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I. Research question and theoretical perspective

Sociological enquiries into class and those into globalization relate somewhat strangely to each other. While the research on class had a resurgence in recent years, most notably through the work of e.g. Atkinson, Piketty and Saez (2011), Piketty (2013), or Volscho and Kelly (2012) on the rising inequality in OECD Countries over the last 30 to 40 years, the literature on globalization took from its beginnings a rather ambivalent stance towards class: Globalization, in its utopian formulation, held the notion of overcoming class as a category of inequality through creating affluence (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1996, Beck 2000) and subjecting everyone equally to the “meritocracy” of the market. In its more critical formulations, sociological theory of globalization sees global markets as a new, economic structure, which generates inequality, however, not along lines of class, but rather by disrupting existing social orders, thereby “randomly incarnating capitalists” (Castells 2000: 505) and doing away with traditional social hierarchies.

Theories of class on the other hand, remain firmly within a stance of “methodological nationalism” (Wimmer/Glick-Schiller 2002) and have incorporated globalization only as an exogenous factor increasing pressures on national labor markets. The idea of global or transnational classes remains marginal. The reason for this lies in methodological problems on the one hand, and a fixation on the state as the arena of political articulation of classes on the other.

The methodological argument against global class formation is the prevailing difference in the distributions of income between OECD- and developing countries (Milanovic 2011). While this indeed renders “grand class maps” such as Wright’s (1997) or Golthorpe’s (1992) unusable, the lack of engagement of class analysis with the working of the global economy also abandons an area of enquiry inherent to class analysis: The question of how markets actually work. Class theory from its beginnings with Marx and Weber has always served as an important platform for the analysis of the actual economic process, from which a critique of the overly clean models of neoclassical economics and its normative blind spots could be mounted (e.g. Wright 2015). By abandoning class as a category of analysis on the global level, the important insight that economic processes are social processes, produce communalities and inequalities and are inseparable from “society”, gives way to economically and technologically determinist views of society; sociology in other words, gives up on some of its core areas of expertise.

With our project we aim to fill this gap by looking at how global markets actually create communalities among market participants, and whether these communalities actually can be described as a

process of class formation. This focus on markets as instances of global sociation sets our approach apart from, firstly, the research paradigm of the “transnational capitalist class” (TCC) (Cox 1987, Robinson and Harris 2000, Sklair 2001, Carroll 2010, Heemskerk 2011), which is based on the organizational structure of global corporations and international bodies of governance, and secondly, from studies of “transnational professionals” (Weiss 2005, Nowicka 2013), who pursue international careers as highly skilled migrants, thereby creating a transnational social space. While for the TCC-approach the expansion of global markets is a result of the political project of globalization, which in turn reflects “objective” economic interests of capital accumulation, the transnationalism-approach treats global markets as a “backdrop” for the life-world of migrants. In that, both approaches again externalize the market, and separate the social and economic aspects of the process of class formation. The result is that global markets are regarded as a black box, without looking at what exactly is going on within them.

Instead we put the market “front and center” again by following arguments from Economic Sociology. Their main insight is, that markets are structurally, culturally, cognitively and politically embedded in social networks, calculative and communicative practices, and political struggles (Zukin and DiMaggio 1990).

We connect the perspective on financial markets as embedded social structures with Pierre Bourdieu’s (1985) understanding of class and inequality. For him, different endowments in various forms of capital assign positions within the social space. These capital endowments are put to work on fields, where they are “trumps” in the competition over certain goods. The exact way these trumps work is defined by the rules of the field, its *illusio* and the *praxis* of interaction. In turn, what these rules are and how they are enforced within a field is subject to permanent struggle among the contestants. Once a certain composition of capitals and a corresponding *praxis* is stabilized, people with a certain position on fields form a specific mode of thinking and incorporate these modes in a class habitus. A social class sensu Bourdieu therefore is not only defined by similar life chances and similar capital endowments, but also by the common *praxis* and shared worldview (“*doxa*”) of the class members. By employing the cultural class concept of Bourdieu, we aim to avoid economic determinism, and to understand the economy as a specific form of culturally defined social exchange.

Our idea is that - understanding the market as a field - these attributes of groups correspond with the four basic forms of embeddedness (see Figure 1), that Sharon Zukin and Paul DiMaggio (1990) distinguished: structural embeddedness with social capital, cultural embeddedness with cultural capital,

political embeddedness with the doxa of a group and the illusion of the field and cognitive embeddedness with the habitus and praxis.

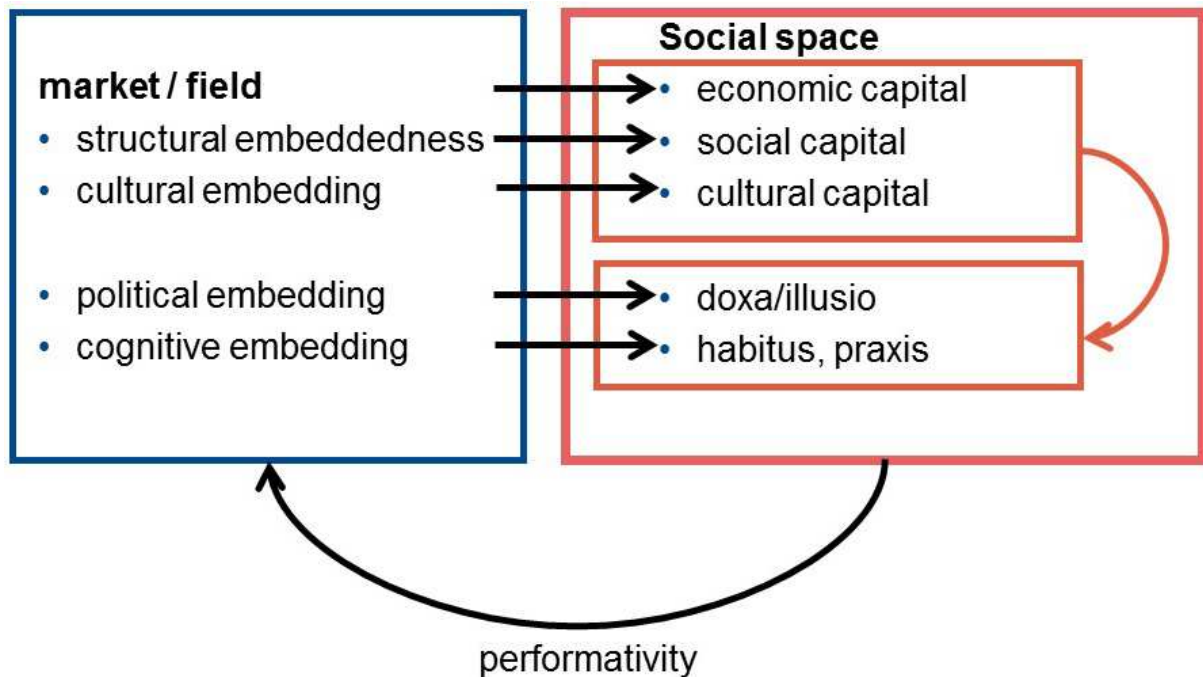


Figure 1: Properties of Embeddedness and Class

Thereby, these forms of embeddedness produce what Erik Olin Wright (1997) calls "communalities" as a basis for class formation. In difference to the other approaches on global class, this allows to see these social communalities not as a superstructure build on the base of the economic, but as an integral part of the financial market itself. In this sense, the financial markets are part of the global social structure.

As our field of research we decided to focus on global financial markets, more specifically investment banking, since they are at the forefront of the globalization process. Not only was their deregulation in the 1980's the driving force for establishing the economic flows we now see as the core of globalization, also their internal dynamic – for instance linking various other markets in order to diversify risk (Windolf 2008, Shiller 2003), or their continuous communication structure along the opening times of globally dispersed stock exchanges (Knorr-Cetina/Brügger 2002) – makes them a critical case of a global market. This makes the group of financial professionals that operate on these markets in our eyes the most likely candidate for forming a global social class. As Windolf (2008) and Folkman et al. (2007) have pointed out, this group of actors also occupies a very specific economic position: they are not the owners of the capital they control. By separating the de-jure ownership (ownership re-

mains with the original investors) from the decision on investments, their trading practices and the financial instruments they control render them “owners without risk”. While technically an employed “service class”, they fulfil important “capitalist” functions of command and control over the economy without having to take actual entrepreneurial risks. Also not being managers themselves, they fall through the analytical “cracks” of classic class maps.

In turn, this class becomes an anchor for what the social studies of finance call the performativity of the financial markets (MacKenzie 2006; Ho 2009): It grounds and protects the cultural rules that govern how valuations and exchanges on the market are undertaken in the social sphere as a part of a group-specific knowledge and identity.

Just as markets do not exist in a vacuum, but are, through their embeddedness, tied to physical places (Sassen 1991, 2005), processes of class formation occur in distinct geographical locations. Just as the working class in the 19th century developed in specific industrial cities, forming their specific social character (Thrift and Williams 1987), a global financial class would form in the financial centres of contemporary “global cities”.

2. Research Outline

For our project, we chose Frankfurt and Sydney as our research sites, because these cities are financial centers of comparable size and rank, they have distinct local histories and operate within differently structured national economies, making them critical cases for our investigation (c.f. Hofstätter and Petzold 2015).

Our project proceeded along three lines of inquiry: From a macro-perspective, we examined the institutional configurations of the financial markets in Frankfurt and Sydney, and their relations to the global level (see Hofstätter and Petzold 2015). On a meso-perspective, we conducted an ethnography of the social spaces formed by the global financial class in both cities (Hofstätter et al. 2015), followed by a qualitative interview study of prospective members of this class, giving us a “micro-perspective” on the individual level.

For this contribution, we will focus firstly on the relation between the career structure of financial professionals, their movement through financial organizations and the functioning of financial markets, and secondly, on results of our ethnographic research in the social spaces of the global financial class.

3. Financial Careers, Organisations and Markets

Our interview sample consisted of 30 Interviews from both cities, and was purposefully constructed to capture 3 cohorts of financial professionals – recent entrants to the field, established professionals and a cohort at the end of their career – as well as mirroring different areas of activity (trading and product development, mergers and acquisition, portfolio management and analysis) in both financial centers.

3.1. Pathways into finance

The entry phase into the field of financial markets shows a process of international homogenization. While traditionally pathways to working in finance had nationally specific forms – the “bank apprenticeship” in Germany, and elite schools in the Anglo-Saxon context, and local elite networks in both cases, recruiting today generally happens through assessment centers. This practice widens the pool of possible applicants, reflecting the intention of investment banks to create “diversity” among their employees:

[T]he way that we recruit as an organisation [is that] we have a fairly rigid interview process- it's a reasonably strong and comprehensive interview process. Right the way through from a HR process, and obviously through the business unit. And it's comprehensive in that there's typically lots of interviews and then at the end of that or toward the end of that process, we also put our people through a psychometric test- psychometric analysis, which is personality and I guess as well as EQ and IQ. And that test together with the interview together with the experience, I guess, is the totality that makes up the decision. But, yeah, we obviously have quite a diverse population; both gender diversity, racial diversity. Obviously geographically quite diverse and the population mix looks different all over the world.

(CEO Investment Bank, Sydney)

This is, on the one hand, reflective of the global nature of the business, which appears as self-evident to actors in the field, and it's also a way of underlining the image of “openness” of finance. However, the effects of this diversity appear to diminish over time. A former board member of a big German

bank goes so far as to say that working in global finance “wears down” cultural differences to the point of creating “global citizens”. For him, this found its most poignant expression in the fact, that

“...in the end, there is only one language, English. If Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt writes a memo for someone in Frankfurt, they write that in English”.

(Board Member and former Trader, Frankfurt, translation LH)

Another aspect of the hiring practices we found is that despite the barrage of testing in assessment centers, the final decision remains to be based on “cultural fit” with the world of finance. For instance, one banker described his hiring practice the following way:

“[...] I assume the qualifications are the same throughout. [instead of looking at qualifications] I ask myself, could I sit with them at the same desk for the next five years. You know, would I have them to my house, you know, just how do I feel about that?”

(Former Managing Director, Sydney)

This resonates with studies conducted in the US by Caitlyn Zaloom (2006) or Lauren Riviera (2012), who found cultural matching as the core factor in the hiring decisions of investment banks.

3.2. Education and Training

A second contributing factor in creating a global class is the educational pathway: While national academic titles such as MBAs or PhDs are important cultural capital for a career, their role for work practices is less important. These skills get taught through global educational programs such as “Certified Financial Analyst” and others, which are offered by globally active private institutions from within the field of finance. These programs set “best practice” models globally, thereby homogenizing work practices, and decouple the financial field from the national education systems (McKeen-Edwards and Porter 2013: 79ff).

3.3. International secondments

A third point concerns the typical career structure: In a quantitative survey we found that 65% of the board members of the biggest German banks and 50% of the board members of the biggest banks

worldwide outside the US listed some form of international experience in their CV – a percentage significantly higher than in studies of other economic sectors (Calabrese et al. 2015).

While numbers about the total percentage of financial professionals going abroad during their career are hard to verify, international secondments were in our interviews presented as a standard requirement for career advancement. As one Analyst from Frankfurt described:

“[...] if you start here in Frankfurt, because most offices are small here, at some point you move offshore. Usually London, that’s where most get sent to. Simply to broaden your network, and in order to learn something, because in Frankfurt the business orientation is very general. In London, because it is so big, you focus for half a year or a year on a specific sector [...] and when you return, you are a specialist”.

(Analyst, Investment Bank, Frankfurt, translation LH)

A former managing director from Sydney presented this process as part of the training on the job, highlighting the role international secondments as an instance of learning:

[...] normally it's a two or three year training programme. You start as a associate, and move to an analyst, for three years. Er, you're sent to headquarters or somewhere overseas to complete your “studies” so it's like a post-MBA intensive.

(Former Managing Director, Sydney)

International work placements not only acquaint financial professionals with other countries and cultures, they also serve to build international social capital that acts as a conduit for information about market situations and career opportunities. And these are readily exploited: on average, we found that our interview partners had 3 or more employers during their career, with up to 8 in some cases.

3.4. The role of organizations

The relatively high rate of change in jobs is on the one hand an expression of the high organizational volatility of the financial business itself: regional engagements of multinational banks are opened,

closed, bought, sold and outsourced at incredible speed, depending on the opportunities the respective local market has to offer. Simultaneously, this creates a specific relationship between financial professionals and their organizations: Instead of organizational cohesion, we found that financial organizations mainly serve as a means for individual goals of their members. This is readily acknowledged even by a CEO, saying

“...wherever you are: in New York, or in the US or in Asia, in Europe...you guys on the ground are close to the opportunities...you know it's an organisation which cherishes opportunities and wants you to create opportunities, makes you account for those opportunities, it wants you to prosecute those opportunities with integrity obviously, right! And then if you sort of succeed, the organisation is set up to reward you [...] in a sense the organisation is saying "have whatever aspiration you like, create an opportunity out of it, be accountable for it...”

(CEO Investment Bank, Sydney)

This kind of opportunity-seeking behavior has been described by Olivier Godechot as “internal entrepreneurship”: Instead of organizational discipline, what counts on financial markets is entrepreneurship. In this manner financial professionals not only take advantage of the resources firms provide, but also reorganize their organizational surroundings to serve their means. This relegates the role of the firm to being a gatekeeper and access point to financial markets, where their employees are hired with the promise of making money for themselves.

A preliminary conclusion we draw from our interviews therefore is, that it is indeed the acting on the market, which creates sense of global sociability, whereby organizations only play a secondary role. Careers in finance follow an internationally homogenized pathway, from recruitment to education and training, to organizational roles, which set the field of global finance apart from national institutional arrangements. Career paths in and across financial organizations become thereby performative for the market itself, enabling global transactions by serving as instances of cultural harmonization as well as informational and financial conduits across borders.

4. The Global Financial Class and its urban social spaces

In addition to in-depth interviews with financial insiders, our research approach is grounded in ethnographic inquiries in the professional and social environment of financial actors in global cities. Our field studies in the financial centers of Frankfurt and Sydney followed the consideration that the process of the evolvement of communalities in ideas of financial professionals, their shared cultural and cognitive capitals and similarities in career patterns are not detached from material foundations. On the contrary, they are embedded in the fabric of the city, their formation and use taking place in various sites in financial centers. Class formation is tied to the infrastructures and specific socio-cultural communities in financial centers. We argue that, as much as the industrial centers of the 19th century were home to a new working class, the formation of a global financial class is bound to the urban environment of global cities. In the following part of this paper we examine the dimensions in which a global class of financial professionals represents itself in the city and how these symbolic struggles structure the urban environment.

The presentation of our findings of the ethnographic field research starts with an overview of the topography of financial industry in Frankfurt and Sydney (section 4.1.). In this section we argue that the allocation of financial business follows a specific symbolic order of global financial centers. In section 4.2., we broaden the concept of symbolic order by tracing the global, representative and sustainable imaginaries in the built environment used by financial actors to exert symbolic power. In section 4.3 we identify the practices of class formation taking place in this setting.

4.1. Spatial and symbolic order of the financial industry in Frankfurt and Sydney

Frankfurt and Sydney differ in their respective spatial extent. Frankfurt constitutes a city of rather compact size, with just 700.000 inhabitants in an area of 250 km², it represents a small metropolis. Sydney in contrast stretches over an area of 12.000 km² with a population of almost 5 million people. In geographical terms both cities rank in different categories, but they nevertheless qualify for a comparison in regards to the spatial allocation of their financial industries. As financial centers they share specific similarities in urban structure.

Both cities are characterized by a contrast of dense inner-city financial centers - home to the head-quarter functions of national and international financial capital – and satellite commercial zones lo-

cated in the periphery. Those peripheral locations spread into the region, in the case of Sydney constituting a business belt called *Global Corridor Sydney* (see Figure 2) that encloses the inner-city Central Business District (CBD). Back-office services such as IT departments, call centers or accounting departments are outsourced to these peripheral locations, creating a fragmented spatial pattern.

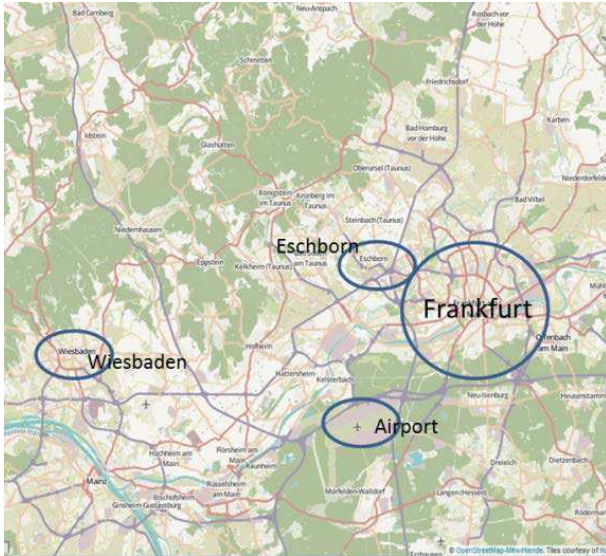


Figure 2: The Metropolitan Region of Frankfurt am Main

(Source: open street maps, modified)

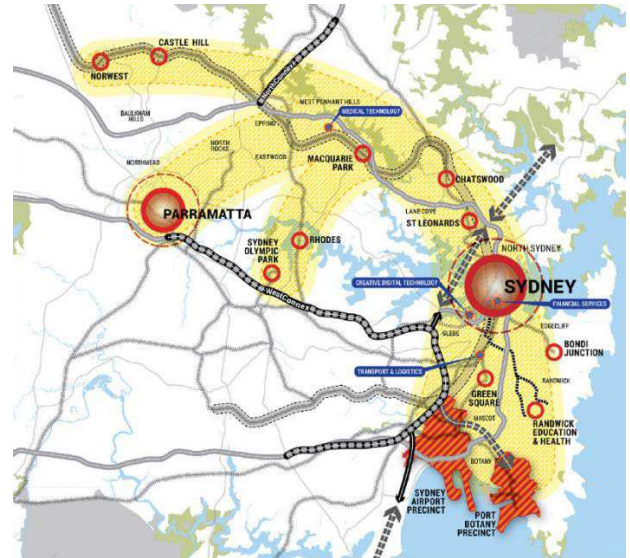


Figure 3: The Global Economic Corridor, Sydney

(Source: New South Wales Government (2014), p. 45)

Some of these satellite hubs in the periphery have successfully attracted global players or core industries and connect globalized economies of finance. Nevertheless, the financial center called *Eschborn* (see Fig. 2), home to the German Stock Exchange *Eurex*, one of the top three derivate exchanges worldwide, has not really made international headlines. Likewise, *Parramatta* (see Fig. 3), a suburb 25 km from Sydney CBD, which is currently being promoted as the second CBD of Sydney, is still unknown in the popular discourse on global finance. This tendency to be sidelined as peripheral locations, in contrast to the inner city financial hubs they are catering to, is based in the lack of symbolic appearance and reputation of places like *Eschborn* or *Parramatta*. Financial centers are still clearly divided into the prestigious locations of industry headquarters in the central business districts and the satellite hubs in the wider metropolitan area.

It is the image of the skyline that entails symbolic meaning and is prerequisite to be appropriated the status of a global financial center. Therefore, the appearance of architecture is being given emphasis in evaluating the formation of global financial centers. Architecture and city images are involved in symbolic struggles over the perception of world. In fact, symbolic power (expressed in built environ-

ment) is the power of *world-making* (Goodman 1978; cited by Bourdieu 1989: 22), in the sense that performing an imaginary can have the effect of creating reality in a process of cognition and recognition.

Architecture, built environment and symbols cannot create a reality out of nothing. On the contrary: symbolic efficacy depends on the degree to which the vision proposed is founded in reality. The performative creation of a specific city image has all the more chance of succeeding the more it is adequate to the realities. *Parramatta* and *Eschborn* are illustrative examples of failed “world making”, at least until now. The promotion of *Parramatta* as Sydney’s *Dual CBD* (New South Wales Government 2014: 45) as well as a “Finanzplatz Eschborn” (financial center *Eschborn*) is unconvincing, as long as a confident use of global symbols in the urban environment is missing.

In comparison, the composition of the skyline architecture in the centers of financial cities is key to exercise symbolic power. The following section outlines three strategies of financial actors used to allocate symbolic capital and to succeed in symbolic world-making. These are the performance of a global imaginary, the acts of its representation, and the performance of pioneering sustainability.

4.2. Tracing global, representative and sustainable imaginaries in headquarter architecture

Financial firms construct or rent the highest and most spectacular office buildings in the most expensive areas of the urban centers. The economic consideration behind this, it is often argued, is the inclusion in local networks to profit from knowledge spillover effects and the reduction of information transaction costs (Storper and Venables 2004). These arguments rest on limited empirical evidence (Ghosh et al. 1995, Quiggin 2006). However we want to focus on the symbolic aspect of financial centers, where the built environment in the shape of huge, prestigious and hyper modern skyscrapers is used to perform a global imaginary and mark the global status of cities that aesthetically emulate the prototypes of global cities such as New York or Hong Kong.

Global Players in the financial industry promote themselves by creating landmark architecture in the heart of the central business districts. As a demonstration for business partners and competitors, firms thereby mark their economic power and transnational importance. This motivation merges with strategic interests of city authorities to be recognized for governing over a prospering global city.

A good example provides *Barangaroo*, a newly constructed extension to the financial district in Sydney. Located on the site of a former harbor, it expands the city's financial district westward. This significant ex-industrial site became available only few years ago for waterfront redevelopment and created the unique possibility for "the biggest multibillion dollar urban development in Sydney for several decades" (Johnston und Clegg 2012: 284). "It is anticipated, strategically, that Barangaroo will support the expansion of Sydney as a global business center attracting large multinational organizations, especially financial ones, to its high-rise commercial buildings" (Johnston und Clegg, forthcoming). Three office skyscrapers named *International Towers Sydney* (see Figure 4) on the foreshore form the core of *Barangaroo* and accommodate national and international financial firms, such as *Westpac Banking Corporation* and the multinational banking holding *HSBC*.



Figure 4: International Towers under construction, October 2015, Barangaroo, Sydney

(Photo: Marco Hohmann)



Figure 5: Barangaroo and Financial Quarters in Sydney City Center

(Source: google maps, modified)

What could have been prime waterfront public space has been sold to the gains of real estate developers creating landmark architecture that serves first and foremost one purpose: the architecture incarnates the global imaginary of financial industry and in this sense exercises symbolic power.

Since demonstrating wealth and economic power is not only addressed to a financial community but to a wider society financial actors also execute acts of representation, traceable in the urban environment in both inner-city financial districts of Frankfurt and Sydney.



Figure 6: Commonwealth Bank, Martin Place, Sydney

(Photo: Sardaka (Author), CC-BY-3.0, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:\(1\) Commonwealth_Bank_Martin_Pl.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:(1) Commonwealth_Bank_Martin_Pl.jpg))



Figure 7: Euro-Skulptur, Willy-Brandt-Platz, Frankfurt

(Photo: Conny Petzold)

Historically, the headquarters of Australian banks formed a cluster of historical buildings around *Martin Place*, a central square of historical value in Sydney center (see Fig. 5). Together these historical buildings, such as the original headquarters of the *Bank of New South Wales* (today *WestPac*), or the commercial buildings of *Commonwealth Bank of Australia* form a representative ensemble, which contrast with the modern high rises that dominate the nearby “investment quarter”.

On *Martin Place*, former headquarters of the banks are preserved as “living museums”, presenting pieces of Australian history while still housing functional branches. Thereby, the banking industry establishes linkages to one of the most valuable symbolic assets: historical heritage. The invocation of the nation in these practices does not contradict with the idea of globalism, since the Australian society is collectively perceived as an immigration country of global diversity.

This is different for the German case, where the invocation of the Nation cannot be separated from the historical burden of the Holocaust. Therefore financial actors aim to perform their symbolic sta-

tus in aligning with the idea of the European unification to demonstrate their globalized position. Proofs can be found in public space in the city center of Frankfurt, where a sculpture representing the founding member of EU (see Fig. 7) has been sponsored by financial firms. This Euro-sculpture occupies a prominent place in the city center and can be understood as an example of an act of representation.

The third mechanism which can be identified as a mean to accumulate symbolic capital by financial actors is the performance as being a pioneer of sustainability. Sustainability has become a central concept of innovation in western societies and therefore cannot be absent in the endeavors of financial industry to be recognized as economic leaders. Several examples of “green buildings” can therefore be found in the financial districts of Frankfurt and Sydney. The headquarters of *Commerzbank* as well as the so-called *Westhafen Tower* in Frankfurt, or, in the Sydney case, the whole financial district of *Barangaroo* are being promoted as showcases of environmentally friendly building technology. Architects outbid each other with environmental awards (e.g. *Green Building Award Frankfurt for Commerzbank-Tower; Green Star Rating for Tower 3 at International Towers Sydney*). Sustainability has therefore become an asset in symbolic struggles.

The three examples of performing the global imaginary, executing acts of representation and acting as pioneers of sustainable industry illustrate that the built environment of finance in general, and the headquarter architecture of city centers in particular, provide a landscape through which symbolic power is articulated. Symbolic struggles are very much interrelated with the creation of places that entail symbolic meanings. Against this background the global class formation processes is discursively and aesthetically bound to a reinterpretation of urban landscapes as global, representative or sustainable places.

4.3. Practices of aspiration

The symbolic capital of the global financial class is not only reflected in urban arrangements and architectural properties of a skyline, but also through social practices within these places and within other typical practices of global city life: Social practices of the global financial class are not bound to trading floors, or office-buildings. The symbolic power of world-making can be divided into different forms of social practices and the logics of social spaces. This logic of practices reaches from exclusiveness on the one end, to social permeability on the other, with each set of practices defining specific social spaces. From the view of ethnographic research, this logic can be casually described within



Figure 8: Establishment Bar in Sydney on a working day evening in October 2015, frequented by a research team from Frankfurt

Photo: Sighard Neckel

the offices of Sydney's financial industry.

the terms of accessibility: exclusive zones or places can – if at all – only be entered with difficulty; zones or places of social permeability, on the other hand, are accessible to everyone. In between those two – exclusiveness and social permeability – can be located another social praxis: the praxis of aspiration.

For example, the *Establishment Bar* in Sydney is an after-work hotspot for financial professionals and it is located on George Street – just 2 blocks from Martin Place – so it is surrounded predominantly by



Figure 9: Establishment Bar, George St., Sydney

Source: <http://barcentral.com.au/venue/the-establishment/>

Establishment Bar is run by the very successful Merivale Company, which owns more than 50 restaurants, bars, pubs and hotels in Sydney that are oriented towards a similar user group. And Merivale knows their clients, as Establishment is paradigmatically designed for the needs of a certain everyday social praxis of financial professionals: a social praxis of aspiration: Aesthetically dithering between eccentric and classic, the venue is kept clean, bright, vast, and open with high ceilings – allowing to observe colleagues, and also to show oneself.

Like lots of these places, it is not exclusive in the sense of requiring club-membership, and usually there is no entrance fee. Nonetheless there is a high degree of homogeneity in places like Establishment derived from an aura of professionalism; a formal 'work'-professionalism that is extended into these 'informal' places and that is adapted for practices of everyday life. Financial business is not just limited to offices or banks, for that matter. Boundaries between work and leisure are fluid. For example, employees can be seen carefully listening to their bosses, nodding from time to time to express their agreement. Important people are dressed explicitly more elegant and are being surrounded by the members of their 'royal household'. Objective, or structural features of the professional world do not disappear, status and power relations are maintained at every moment and they step out of offices and skyscrapers to fill in parts of global city culture.

From a class-perspective it is important to note forms of symbolic capital and their articulation – through architecture as well as through the collective social practices of aspiration. And regarding the power of world-making this symbolic capital has spillover-effects for urban planning as well as collective practices of aspiration for the global-city-lifestyle of a global financial class. And this aspiration, again, is an affective enchantment, or an implicit (or maybe as well even an explicit) approval of the symbolic order defined by the global financial class.

5. Conclusion

In this contribution, we have outlined how Bourdieu's field theory can be used to conceptualize class formation on a global scale, and have also presented preliminary empirical findings supporting our claim of the formation of a global financial class.

Our examples of career structures, symbolic power in the built environment, and aspirational social practices demonstrate that this process is not limited to the "shop-floor", but spills out into the urban environment and everyday life. The anchoring of the communalities of the financial class in global markets does not allow for it to be contained by organizations, nor does class formation occur only behind closed doors: The cultural forms of this class define not only the working environment of financial professionals, but through symbolic struggles in global cities, such as Frankfurt and Sydney, the material power of the world of finance is doubled as symbolic power in and over society.

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