

- *Economic transformation – Global city – Urban geography*

**Elmar Kulke**(Berlin)

## **Berlin – German Capital and Global City?**

*Berlin – deutsche Hauptstadt und Global City?*

With 9 Figures and 1 Table

Immediately after German reunification many politicians and economists expected Berlin to experience fast development and within a few years to return to its position of primate city of Germany and be once again one of the important players in the global network of cities. On April 13th 1990, the German newspaper “Die Zeit” stated, that Berlin would become a “magnet-city and a political-economic-cultural supernova”. A prognosis calculated that the city’s population would grow from 3.4 mill. at the time of the reunification to 6 mill. in the year 2010. It was thought that many enterprises would relocate their headquarters to Berlin and that the agglomeration advantages that the city had experienced before the Second World War would be re-established. In reality Berlin has had to face many economic problems over the last decade. More economic activities have been closed down than new ones established and the number of inhabitants has not increased. The unemployment rate of Berlin, more than 16% in 2003, is higher than in any other large West-German city. This article describes the historical functions of Berlin and the driving forces and results of the economic transformation process following reunification; it discusses the extent to which Berlin has in the past and is today fulfilling economic and political functions as a Global City; and, in addition, it documents particularities of the spatial developments that have led to a unique urban landscape.

*Summary: Berlin – German Capital and Global City?*

Before the Second World War Berlin was the dominant metropolis of Germany and one of the most important economic agglomerations of the world. During the period of the division of Germany Berlin lost many of its central functions. With reunification many people expected that Berlin would become one of the high-ranking global cities. This

article shows the importance of Berlin before the Second World War, the deformations during the separation period and recent changes in economy and spatial structure. It can be seen that the city has severe economic problems; only in the service sector Berlin fulfils functions as a national capital but even in this sector the city does not act as a global city. In terms of spatial structure Berlin has a unique landscape formed by the transformation process.

*Zusammenfassung: Berlin – deutsche Hauptstadt und Global City?*

Vor dem zweiten Weltkrieg war Berlin die herausragende Metropole Deutschlands und einer der weltweit wichtigsten Wirtschaftsräume. Mit der Teilung verlor die Stadt viele ihrer zentralen Funktionen. Nach der Wiedervereinigung wurde erwartet, dass die Stadt an ihre ehemalige Bedeutung anknüpfen und wieder zu einer Global City werden würde. Der Beitrag dokumentiert die ehemalige Bedeutung und die aktuellen wirtschaftlichen und räumlichen Veränderungen. Es wird deutlich, daß gegenwärtig wirtschaftliche Probleme dominieren und nur in Teilgebieten des Dienstleistungssektors sich national bedeutende Funktionen herausprägen; als Global City kann Berlin noch nicht bezeichnet werden. Daneben weist die Stadt eine spezielle durch die Transformation geprägte Raumstruktur auf.

*Résumé: Berlin – capitale allemande et métropole mondiale en même temps ?*

Avant la deuxième guerre mondiale, Berlin était la métropole dominante de l'Allemagne et l'un des espaces économiques prépondérants au niveau mondial. La division de la ville entraîna la perte de nombre de fonctions centrales. On s'attendait à ce que consécutivement à la réunification elle renoue avec son poids d'autrefois et qu'elle retrouve son statut de ville mondiale. L'article documente son importance révolue ainsi que les récentes évolutions économiques et spatiales. Il apparaît que les problèmes économiques sont aujourd'hui au premier plan et que des fonctions d'ordre national n'émergent que dans certaines activités tertiaires. Berlin ne peut pas encore prétendre au qualificatif de métropole mondiale. En outre la ville affiche une structure spatiale spécifique caractérisée par le processus de transformation.

*Prof. Dr. Elmar Kulke*, Geographisches Institut, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Unter den Linden 6, 10099 Berlin, Germany; [elmar.kulke@geo.hu-berlin.de](mailto:elmar.kulke@geo.hu-berlin.de)