2
Berlin 1896: Wilhelm II, Georg Simmel and the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung

Ausstellung is nich, wie meine Herren Berliner sagen.
(Wilhelm II to Chancellor Leo Graf von Caprivi)

1896 wurde Berlin zur Weltstadt. Bis dahin war es nur eine europäische Provinzstadt. Die Markscheide bildet die Gewerbeausstellung im Treptower Park.
(Eduard Spranger)[1]

For a long time, Germany's role in the global exhibition networks was extraordinarily complex. Until the opening of EXPO 2000 in Hanover on 1 June 2000, it was largely overlooked that no universal or international exhibition comparable to those in London, Paris and most other West European capital cities had ever been held in Germany. Over the course of the nineteenth century, Germany participated with its own sections in exhibitions held in London (1851, 1862), Paris (1855, 1867), Vienna (1873), Melbourne (1888–89), Philadelphia (1876) and Chicago (1893), but did not take part in the two Paris expositions of 1878 and 1889. Moreover, with the exception of the Viennese Weltausstellung of 1873, no world exhibition proper ever took place in Germany or a German-speaking country. Thus, with the arrival of EXPO 2000, the only event of a similar scale, the long unnoticed and for the most part ignored Berliner Gewerbeausstellung (trade exhibition) of 1896, held on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the German Reich, aroused new public and academic interest, with its status suddenly upgraded from a 'would-be world exposition' to a direct precursor of the mega-event in Hanover.[2] Yet the Berlin trade exhibition can only be understood properly if situated in the context of the so-called *Ausstellungs-* or *Weltausstellungsfrage*, the German exhibition question. Under this heading, politicians, businessmen and self-proclaimed experts debated fiercely for over 35 years, from the late 1870s to the early 1910s, whether an international exposition should be organized in Germany, preferably in the capital, thus following the example set not only by Great Britain and France but also other great powers such as the United States. In the course of this debate, not only did they make (and dismiss) one proposal after another; they also scrutinized the medium's possibilities and limitations, its role

and function in public life, its direct and indirect results and benefits as well as its general future development. Why did this much-desired international exhibition never materialize? And was this debate as pointless, ineffective and inconclusive as it prima facie seems?[3]

Why never in Germany?

Undoubtedly, numerous trade fairs, national, regional and municipal exhibitions of different sizes, scales and lengths were held in nineteenth-century Germany, both in Berlin, Munich, Düsseldorf, Hanover and elsewhere; for instance, an Allgemeine Deutsche Gewerbe-Ausstellung zu Berlin on the occasion of the *Zollverein*'s tenth anniversary in 1844, and a second, much bigger and more successful trade fair in Berlin-Moabit in 1879. While the former was held in the rooms of the armory, featuring more than 3000 exhibitors and attracting 270,000 visitors between August and October 1844, the latter took place in an area situated between the Lehrter Bahnhof, Alt-Moabit and Invalidenstraße, and would afterwards be called an exhibition, 'so fresh, sweet, charming as a young bride'.[4] Open from May to October 1879, this 'young bride' attracted fewer exhibitors but had more than 2 million visitors. Yielding considerable profit, it proved exceedingly successful in boosting local merchants' and industrialists' self-confidence and gave rise to the *Stiftung der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung im Jahre 1879*, referred to as *Vereinigung von 1879* (Association of 1879), a non-profit union of exhibitors formed in its immediate aftermath. 'It is, in the history of exhibitions, possibly a unique phenomenon', a contemporary critic noted in retrospect, 'that the Berlin exhibitors of 1879, even today, after 12 years, are unanimous in their grateful recognition of this epoch-making success for Berlin as an industrial city.' In addition, there were also regional exhibitions in Germany. Some of the wealthier southwestern regions such as Württemberg or Baden, but also Saxony in the east, had introduced industrial fairs early in the nineteenth century. With the first general industrial exhibition held in Württemberg in 1812 and a *Zentralstelle für Gewerbe und Handel* founded in 1848, exhibitions here were subject to a level of centralized coordination unthinkable in a national context.[5]

Yet, although a national exhibition tradition had been tentatively established, international expositions were a different matter. Sources disagree as to when the question of whether such a grand-scale event could be organized in the German capital was first posed, and when it developed into a full-fledged public debate. Arising in the aftermath of the Parisian Exposition Universelle of 1855 and taken up again on the occasion of the next French exposition in 1867, the *Ausstellungsfrage* became increasingly acute after Germany's national unification in 1870–71 and its subsequent attempts at great-power politics. Controversies about the Viennese Weltausstellung of 1873, especially the German self-representation at the American Centennial International Exhibition held in Philadelphia three years later, and its non-participation at the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris, intensified the debate towards the end of the decade. In the following years, the *Ausstellungsfrage* reappeared almost as a matter of course with each such subsequent event, and remained a controversial issue well into the twentieth century.[6]

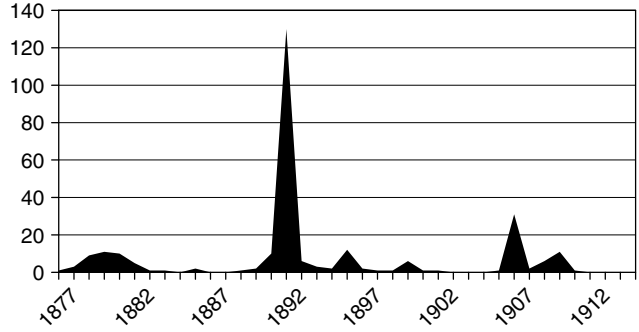

Figure 2.1 Three phases of debate: number of publications on the German *Ausstellungsfrage* (exhibition question) between 1877 and 1914

A simple tabulation of the number of newspaper and journal articles published on this question between 1877 and 1914 reveals three particular phases of this debate. As Figure 2.1 shows, the *Ausstellungsfrage* was discussed intensively from July 1878 through to April 1882, with 41 articles; in 1891 and 1892, especially from June through to December of the latter year, with more than 140; and, third, from the second half of 1907 together with a brief reappearance in April 1909, leading to a final controversy in 1910 and encompassing 52 articles altogether.[7] Over the course of these 35 years the question was discussed most extensively in 1892, with the Gewerbeausstellung of 1896 as its indirect consequence. In time the overall tone became far less sharp, and the opinions expressed more uniform. The arguments of both advocates and opponents grew increasingly codified, morphing eventually into an ever-wider, yet largely repetitive, debate.

In all of these three phases, several Berlin-based associations of businessmen and industrialists were major driving forces: the already mentioned *Vereinigung von 1879* under the chairmanship of →Fritz Kühnemann; the *Verein zur Beförderung des Gewerbefleißes für Deutschland* (Association for the Promotion of Trade Activities in Germany); and, more prominent, the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* (Association of Berlin Merchants and Industrialists), also founded in 1879 and presided over by the Jewish banker and economist *Geheimer Kommerzienrat* →Ludwig Max Goldberger (Figure 2.2), one of the leading protagonists of the German exhibition movement. Having sold the bank that he had inherited from his father to devote himself exclusively to charitable and non-profit making work, Goldberger had been elected president in 1891 and was to remain in office for the next ten years. He soon began to advise high government officials such as Chancellor Leo Graf von Caprivi (1831–1899). While the *Stiftung der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung im Jahre 1879* had been founded with precisely the purpose of organizing an international exposition in Berlin, the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* already established in the winter of 1879–80, the first year of its existence, a commission intended to campaign and prepare for an international exposition in Berlin.[8]

As shown in the following section, while the first attempt failed in 1882 because of Chancellor Otto Fürst von Bismarck's (1815–1898) personal

Figure 2.2 Ludwig Max Goldberger (1848–1913), long-time president of the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller*
Source: Courtesy of Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller, Berlin.

objections as well as a general lack of support on part of the government, a second attempt, ten years later, was abandoned due to Kaiser Wilhelm II's brusque intervention, after the entire planning process had been postponed several times, and in order to avoid jeopardizing German industry's participation in the World's Columbian Exposition 1893 in Chicago. What remained possible was the Gewerbeausstellung, held in Treptower Park in 1896 and the focus of the later sections of this chapter, reduced to an 'extended Berlin trade exhibition' and often considered only a remnant of the original, more comprehensive, but finally abandoned exposition project. It is against this background that the exposition's status as a 'would-be world's fair' must be discussed. The central question is whether the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung was actually a success (since it did eventually take place, despite various setbacks), or, instead, a failure (because, technically speaking, it was in the end simply a trade fair assembled by some local businessmen). Any answer depends on the perspective and context in which the exhibition is discussed, that is, either bottom-up, seen as a privately organized fair and the largest ever held in Germany, versus top-down, as an imperfectly realized, largely downgraded version of what had been intended as a much grander international mega-event.[9]

The first phase of failure: 1878–82

Why did all projects fail? Before turning to the Gewerbeausstellung itself, the aforementioned three phases of the debate (1878–82, 1891–92, 1907–10) must be addressed, including an analysis of the numerous elaborate, though never realized, architectural proposals advanced throughout. The first stage lasted for almost four years, from July 1878 to April 1882. Identifying its precise origin proves difficult, but it was clearly triggered by both the so-called *billig und schlecht* (cheap and nasty) scandal caused by German products' putatively poor quality at the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876 and the government's controversial decision not to take part in the Parisian Exposition Universelle two years later.

The scandal was caused by Professor →Franz Reuleaux, an engineering expert and exposition veteran, who had been appointed official German commissioner for the Philadelphia 1876 world's fair. Reuleaux stirred up huge public controversy when he reported that Germany had suffered a severe blow at the American exposition. According to him, the fundamental principle of Germany's industrial production was *billig und schlecht* – cheap and nasty. Much to his own surprise, Reuleaux's report sparked a storm of outrage in the German press, reflecting deep unease and widespread embarrassment, and prompting accusations of having insulted the entire nation. What proved decisive, however, was not so much his diagnosis per se (the justification for and relevance of which is difficult to ascertain anyway), but rather the ensuing debate itself. Reuleaux's formulation of 'cheap and nasty' not only dominated and polarized the entire controversy, it also became a catchphrase remembered for decades after the scandal itself, synonymous with the severe 'moral' international defeat of the 'young' Germany, afterwards to be avoided by any means necessary. This expression colored exhibition standards for years to come. Minister of Commerce Ludwig Brefeld (1837–1907) would still evoke this *alte, harte Wort* (old harsh comment) 20 years later in a speech delivered on the occasion of the closing ceremony of the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung on 15 October 1896, contrasting it with the 'Made in Germany' label, the mark which, though introduced by the British parliament in 1887 in an effort to protect its domestic market against foreign goods (Merchandise Marks Act), had yielded counterproductive results.[10] The second factor, Germany's non-participation in the Paris exposition two years later, was politically motivated. Enemies in the recent Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), Germany and France were divided by nationalist ideologies and conflicts between their respective political systems, monarchism and republicanism. Historians have taken this as a sign of how extreme ideologically determined elements of foreign policy had become by the late nineteenth century: close collaboration in the field of culture and public representation seemed out of the question. Yet German visitors to the Paris site felt that a German section was obviously lacking and wondered what it would take to create an exposition that could compete with the French achievement. The plan of holding an international exhibition in Berlin almost seemed to suggest itself.[11]

The first concrete proposals to organize such a Berlin exposition were made in the fall of 1879, when two architects, Walter Kyllmann (1837–1913) and Adolf

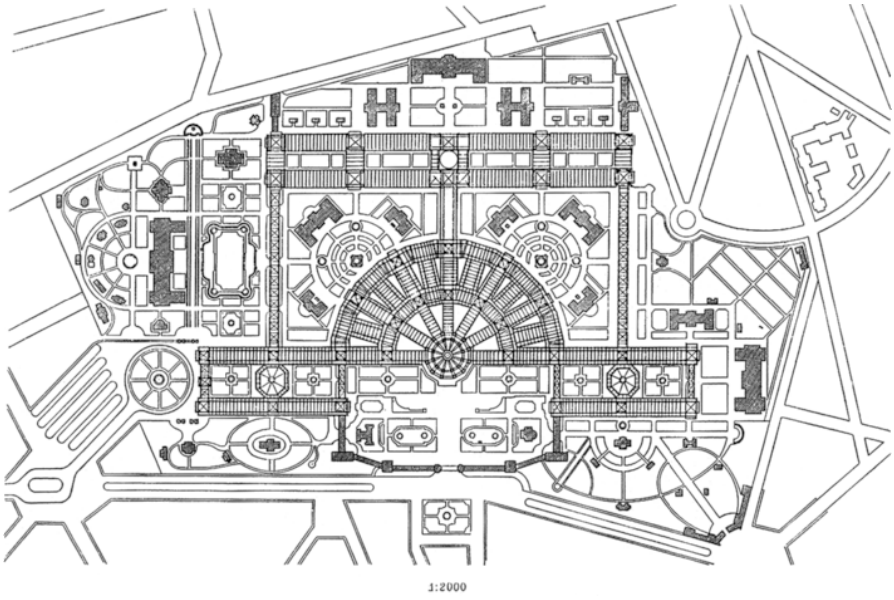

Figure 2.3 Plan for a *Weltausstellungspalast* (world exhibition palace) in Berlin, 1879
Source: Messel, 'Ausstellungsbauten', 508.

Heyden (1838–1902), presented their study for a semi-permanent exhibition building in Berlin as part of the annual exhibition of the Academy of Arts (Figure 2.3). The proposal was based on, and attempted to synthesize, exhibition models first developed in Paris 1867 (an ellipse with concentric and radial streets) and Vienna 1873 (a fishbone system with a central rotunda) in a new, semi-circular layout with 'national streets' and a monumental cupola building. Even if details remained to be discussed, the issue was clearly established as a matter for public debate. 'It was the intention of the artists to simply propagate the idea', the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* commented, 'in this they have been singularly successful and should be given great praise.' Understood as a reaction to Reuleaux's severe condemnation, however, the attempt at international rehabilitation was widely criticized as too little too late.[12]

The issue achieved official status when the *Deutscher Handelstag*, the union of chambers of commerce and trade associations, raised the question of holding an exposition in Berlin during its general assembly on 21 November 1879. An inquiry among its industrial and corporative members yielded ambiguous and paradoxical results, revealing just how divided opinions were. On the one hand, the inquiry showed a largely critical and reserved attitude toward the entire medium. 'The initially wide-spread enthusiasm for exhibitions has died down in the meantime', the *Handelstag* stated, 'so that one thought one could abstain from participating in the last Paris exposition.' On the other hand, no willingness was expressed to give precedence to any other nation as possible host for the next universal exhibition. Eventually, the *Handelstag* passed an agreement to approach the government

officially in order to ensure that the necessary political pressure was exerted. They would support the project only on the condition that a German exposition project be linked to an international agreement on the future regulation and organization of universal exhibitions. Furthermore, the *Handelstag*'s overall position remained somewhat reserved, as the discussion itself was the result of pressure created from without, in response to the fear that other governments might soon announce their respective exhibition plans for the coming years and thus render a German project impossible. In the end, however, it left no doubt that if such a mega-event was to be held in Germany, Berlin would be the only suitable venue because it 'offers all these qualities and conditions which are essential for an exhibition city, and even if there are other more suitable places in Germany they would gladly give pride of place to our imperial capital'.[13]

An unexpectedly fierce national debate flared up, its precise subject matter at times unclear. There were a number of issues at stake: Should an exposition be organized in Germany at all? If so, where? In the capital or in one of the competing big cities, such as Hamburg or Munich? If such an exhibition were to be held, should it be international or national? Positions varied enormously. Fritz Kühnemann, the aforementioned organizer of the 1879 Berlin trade fair and another prominent member of the German *Ausstellungsbewegung* (exhibition movement) until his death in 1917, did not rule out an international exhibition, but he campaigned aggressively from 1886 onward for repeating a similar, exclusively national event, though on a much grander scale. Others, including Reuleaux, argued just as intensely for an international exposition. Describing the importance of such enterprises in international economic competition, Reuleaux demanded that a German universal exhibition be organized as soon as possible. According to him, expositions formed a central feature of modernity and were likely to continue to do so, such that the organization of an international exhibition was in the national interest. If Germany decided not to proceed, others would step in: 'Our time is the time of world exhibitions, they will not soon disappear. If we do not take the initiative, other nations will do so, in fact they are doing so without asking us and will, in an unexpected fashion, sharpen their knives in order to compete with Berlin.'[14] Yet a third faction focused on more pragmatic aspects, including the exposition's potential venue and its possible repercussions on the capital: Could such an event give proof of Berlin's status as a world city? Would the capital profit from it – or was it all made utterly impossible by Berlin's provinciality, its innate lack of attractiveness and its remote geographical position? Could an international exposition finally promote the new German capital – 'a settlement advanced to a city of millions and imperial capital of formerly Germanic farmers and Wendish fishermen', to quote Karl Scheffler's famous 1910 dictum – to the status of a genuine and globally recognized metropolis?[15]

It was on this *Hauptstadtfrage*, the capital question, that critics denounced the *Ausstellungsfrage*, together with the entire plan. Henceforth, these two questions would always be closely connected; one could not be solved without the other. Among the numerous opponents was the ethnographer and Hamburg-based museum director →Karl Lüders, who published a number of articles vehemently denying the question's presuppositions. He feared the incalculable expenses

implied in such a risky enterprise. According to Lüders, Berlin lacked the necessary flair to attract foreign visitors, and any exposition could not compensate for its absence. Generally, his criticism was perceived as being so harsh and unjustified that it at once provoked a number of indignant reactions. It was instantly rejected by Albert Brockhoff, for instance, who replied to Lüders' pamphlets in great detail, arguing that a process of national concentration as well as cooperation was urgently needed in the German exhibition system. When no agreement could be reached on whether the planned exposition should be national or international, a joint meeting of all interested parties including the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller*, the *Verein zur Beförderung des Gewerbefleißes*, the *Architekten-Verein* and many others met on 17 June 1881 at the City-Hôtel in Berlin. A vote was taken after a fierce and heated debate with a majority of delegates declaring that the exhibition should be international rather than merely national.[16]

In January 1882, the question was debated in parliament. Asked to take an official stand, Secretary of State Karl Heinrich von Bötticher (1833–1907) cited a certain 'overproduction in this field' and explained that the government had come to the conclusion 'that one should not insist on new exhibitions' because 'the advantages of a country, in which the international exhibition is to be held, would not stand in a reasonable relation to the great expenses incurred.' In the end, Bismarck intervened personally, ensuring that the question was not further discussed. Thus, the first phase of debate came to a sudden halt, due to an official decision by the authorities taken mainly in view of the precarious economic nature of an enterprise with seemingly incalculable expenses. Needless to say, the private businessmen and merchants involved were deeply disappointed, disagreeing strongly with the government's half-hearted reasons.[17]

Although still officially unsolicited, there were, even at this early stage, a number of fairly detailed projects in the works for a German world exhibition. One of them proposed that a huge artificial mountain should be constructed as the exhibition's general leitmotiv and 'great attraction' in an otherwise excessively flat landscape (Figure 2.4). Surrounded by a ring of exhibition buildings and a circular railroad line, the building of such a mountain was to be combined with the development of an entire new civic area, including artificial lakes and railroads. Thus, the project's realization was not only seen as promoting general development to the great advantage of Berlin, but also as constituting a major challenge to German engineers and architects. Since the mountain, together with a lookout tower to be erected on its summit, was to be higher than the Eiffel Tower, it was also meant as a step towards further inter-urban, inner-European and inter-exhibitionary competitiveness. 'At the end of the nineteenth century nobody would dare to suggest that the realization of this plan was impossible', the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* commented benevolently, 'especially since those costs would hardly exceed those incurred by the Eiffel Tower and the Grand Machine Hall seen in last year's exhibition.' Yet the project was indeed never realized: the entire plan was abandoned, along with that for the projected national trade fair, the Deutsch-nationale Gewerbeausstellung zu Berlin im Jahre 1888, to be held in Treptow. Anticipated competition with the upcoming Paris exposition of 1889, the fourth to be held there, dissipated any existing support for the endeavor.[18]

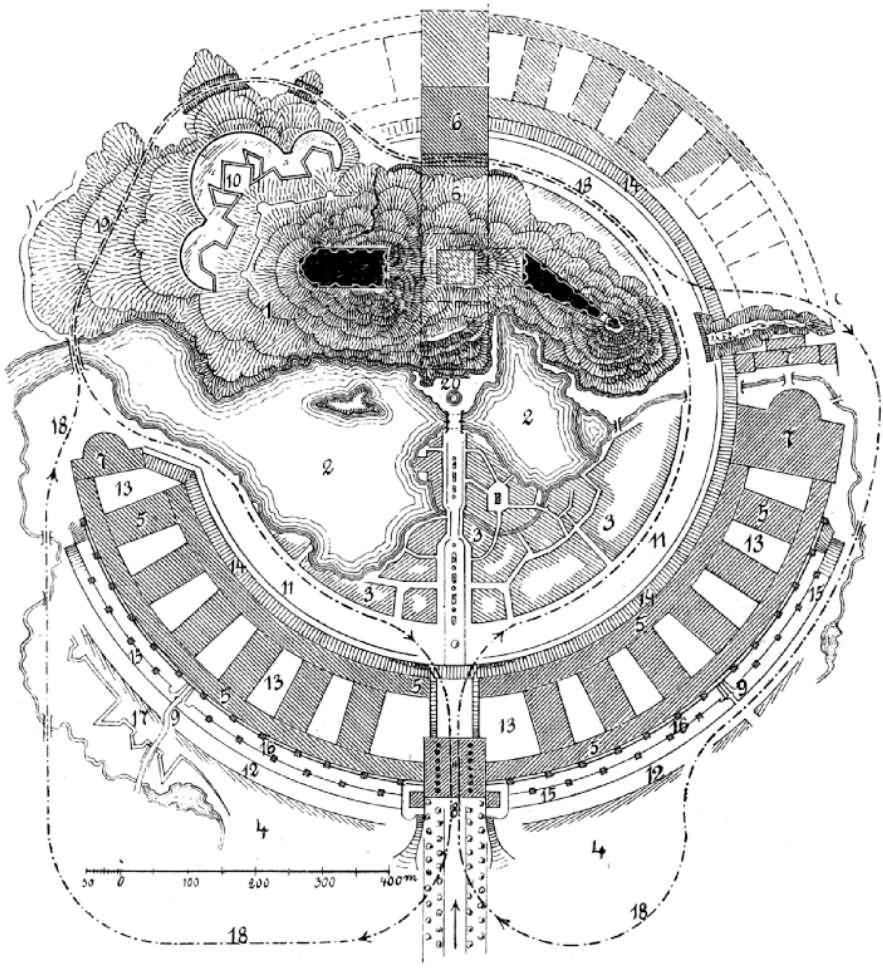

Figure 2.4 Sketch for the arrangement of a world exhibition in Berlin, including an artificial mountain, various lakes and a 'never-ending railroad'
Source: *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 24 (4 October 1890), 481.

The second phase of failure: 1891–92

The second phase of the debate, from 1891 to 1892, proved the most heated and controversial of the entire *Ausstellungsfrage*, eventually but indirectly leading to the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung. After long and complex internal discussions, the

Prussian *Verein zur Beförderung des Gewerbefleißes* issued a new resolution in April 1891 for a universal exhibition to be held in Berlin before the end of the century, and sent an official declaration to the chancellor to that effect, supported in its efforts by the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* and the *Vereinigung von 1879*. This time, ten years later, the previously aloof *Handelstag* also voted in favor after a survey of all German chambers of commerce yielded an overwhelmingly positive result. On 15 January 1892, it issued an official resolution that the next world exhibition should be held in Berlin to ensure that German industry would profit from the attendant advantages in trade and business. Aiming to draw the government's attention to the matter, they hoped to win its indispensable political, financial and organizational support for the project.[19]

However, in addition to public disputes and a dizzying number of pamphlets, declarations and resolutions issued by the different bodies involved, at this stage there were also a number of concrete projects and partially developed schemes. In May 1892, approximately one year after the second phase of debate had begun, a competition organized by the *Architekten-Verein zu Berlin*, a dignified association of Berlin-based architects founded in 1824, invited proposals for a universal exhibition to be held in Berlin in 1896 or 1897. This competition had two tasks: to find a suitable location for a possible universal exhibition, ideally located not too far from the city center, and to develop provisional outlines for the layout of the potential site. Given Berlin's specific urban situation, the former of the two tasks, the so-called *Platzfrage*, presented an enormous challenge to the participating architects. As the British *Builder* commented from abroad, 'the Prussian capital has no natural site for an exhibition within its area such as Paris can boast of. […] A conveniently situated site will be most difficult to find, and when found the monotony of Brandenburg's dusty plain will have to be diversified by artificial means.' Aware of this difficulty, the official project description did not indicate any further specifications and requested proposals to be submitted by 5 September 1892.[20]

The competition aroused much interest. Twelve complete proposals were received by the deadline, only two of which were within a 3.5 kilometer radius from the Royal Palace, taken as the city's center, and indicated on the specially issued map by a circle (Figure 2.5). Seven selected various sites between the historical Grunewald and the Anhalter Bahnhof to the west, one proposed using a part of the Tempelhofer Feld, a huge drill ground in south Berlin, and two selected different areas of Treptower Park in the city's south-east. As was to be expected, some architectural journals complained that the *Platzfrage* had generally proved insoluble.

The two award-winning designs by architects Thomas Köhn, Cremer and Wolffenstein, and by Paul Hentschel were characterized by detailed proposals, carefully adapted to the city's potential. The first project (Figure 2.6), entitled *Verlorene Liebesmüh* (Love's Labors Lost), proposed a combination of two different venues – one a larger, more urban and better developed site at Witzleben around the Lietzensee in west Berlin's Charlottenburg, and an additional smaller, more rural site only four kilometers away. The main venue was to feature a machinery hall, somewhat reminiscent of the British Crystal Palace, together with a huge dome, and was planned as a permanent exhibition building; the smaller site was to include

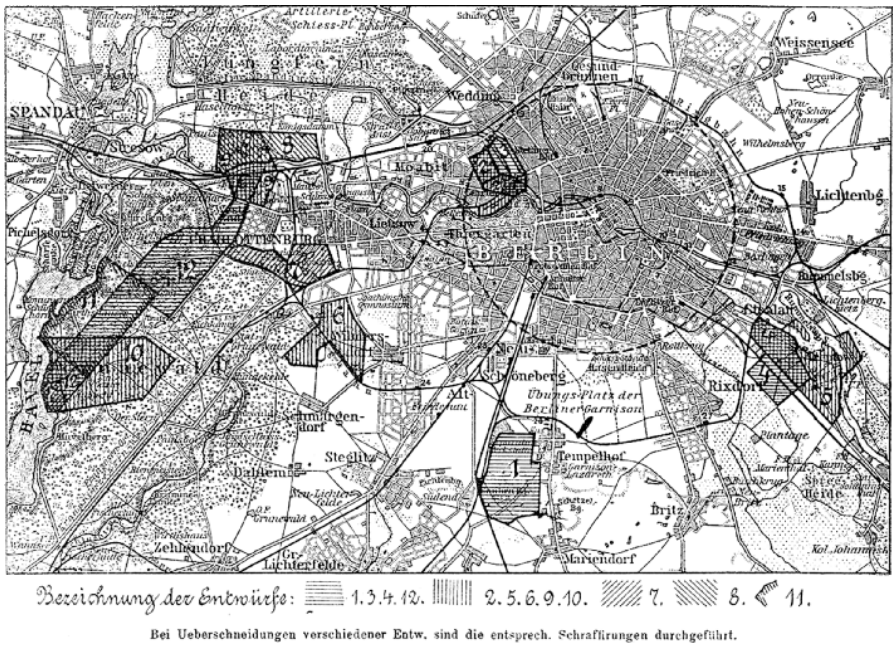

Figure 2.5 Map indicating the 12 submitted proposals for a world exhibition to be held in Berlin, 1892. The circle indicates a 3.5 kilometer radius around the Royal Palace in Berlin's center
Source: 'Die Preisbewerbung um den Lageplan einer in Berlin zu veranstaltenden Weltausstellung', 549.

several stretches of water that the architects considered essential. The two areas were to be connected by a small railroad especially built for this purpose. Although it suggested a less clearly defined structure in Berlin-Moabit on the banks of the river Spree, the second project (Figure 2.7), called *Fromme Wünsche* (Pious Hopes), won the competition mainly because its architect, Paul Hentschel, had found a site in the city's center, which the *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung* immediately acclaimed as not only 'one of the most beautiful exhibition facilities imaginable in Berlin' but also its particular version of the Parisian Champ de Mars. Yet, whether the required area would actually be available for such use remained uncertain.[21]

In the interim, however, the Kaiser's final negative verdict, made public three months after the bidding but only five weeks before the deadline, had disposed of the entire controversy. Some participating architects hence chose ironic, melancholy titles such as *Verlorene Liebesmüh*, *Fromme Wünsche* or *Behüt Dich Gott, es hat nicht sollen sein* (It was Not To Be, oh Lord) for their suddenly superfluous and now almost certainly never-to-be-realized projects. Others tried to conceal their disappointment by creating overtly nationalistic names such as *Deutschland, Deutschland über alles* or *All-Deutschland*. Although there was no hope of realization, the organizers were still not entirely satisfied with the competition's results and considered the *Platzfrage* unresolved. As Berlin's urban growth continued,

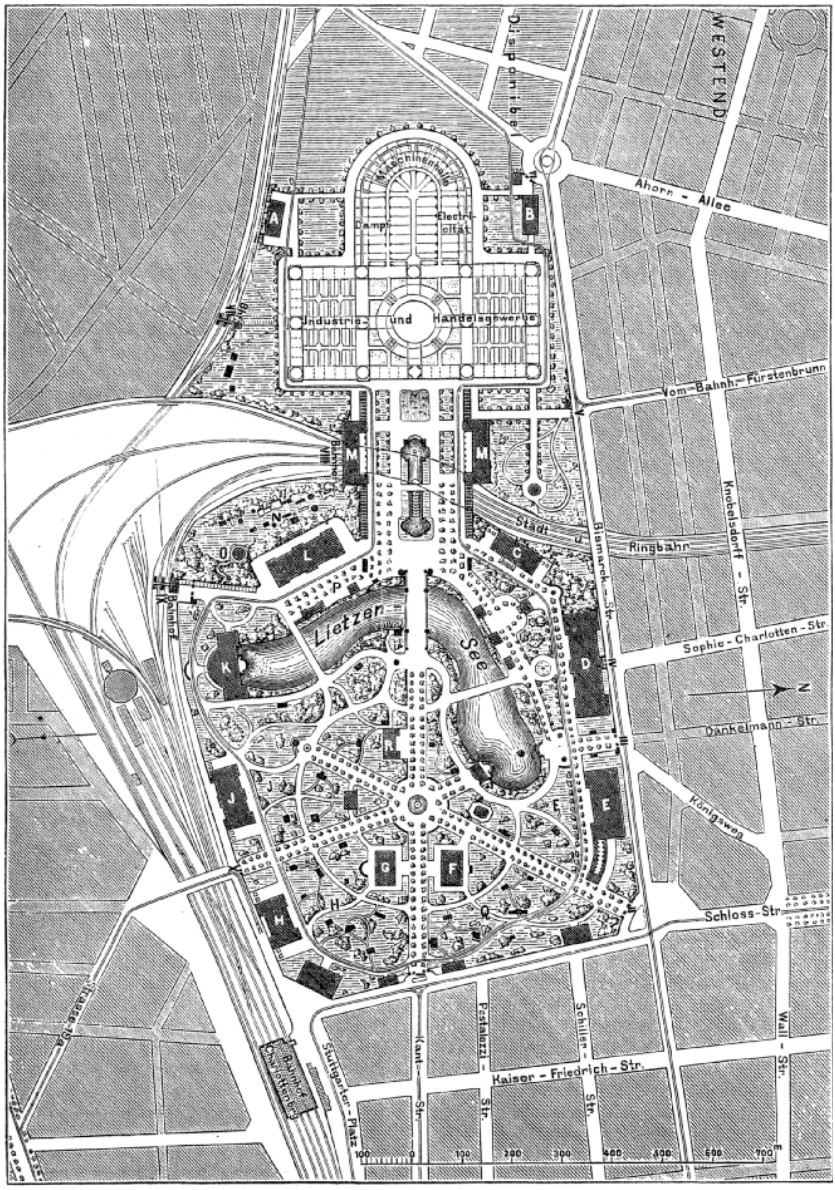

Figure 2.6 Competition for a world exhibition to be held in Berlin: proposal *Verlorene Liebesmüh* (Love's Labors Lost)
Source: 'Preisbewerbung um den Entwurf des Lageplans für eine Weltausstellung in Berlin', 485.

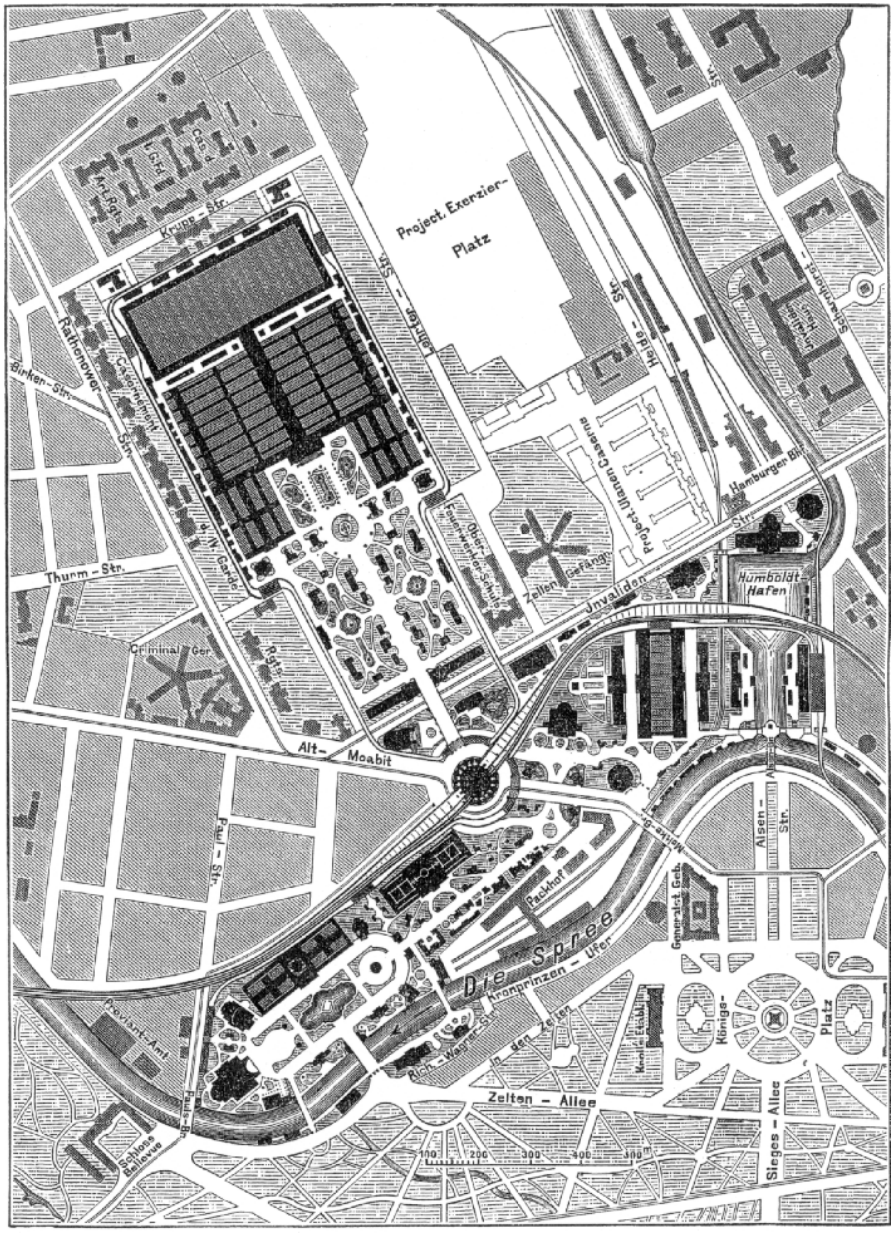

Figure 2.7 Competition for a world exhibition to be held in Berlin: proposal *Fromme Wünsche* (Pious Hopes)
Source: 'Preisbewerbung um den Entwurf des Lageplans für eine Weltausstellung in Berlin', 502.

they warned, finding a suitable site for a German international exhibition would become even more difficult, even in the near future.[22]

Around the same time, in early 1892, a self-proclaimed *Comité für das Weltausstellungs-Terrain im Norden Berlins* (Committee for an Exposition Site in the North of Berlin) had commissioned yet another, never-to-be-implemented, scenario for a Berlin world exhibition. Historiographically, such unrealized projects and exposition plans are of interest precisely for their 'pre-factual' character. It is revealing which components and ensembles were considered so obligatory and constitutive for an international exposition that their inclusion was thought a must, regardless of possible restrictions, special local conditions or specific problems of realization. Thus, the historian gains insight into conceptions of how the exposition medium was supposed to function, for elements included in such proposals were obviously considered indispensable.

For the project proposed by the *Comité*, a vast area of 340 hectares adjacent to the Plötzensee in the city's northwest had been selected, far larger not only than the later chosen venue in Treptow (120 hectares) but also more spacious than any previous European exposition, and, supposedly within walking distance of both Tiergarten and Wedding, much closer to the city center.[23] A panoramic view, originally published in a propaganda booklet, conveys an impression of the projected venue's enormous dimensions, with its dominating, 500-meter tower whose artistic debts to the French original were more than obvious (Figure 2.8). Only three years after the erection of the *Tour Eiffel*, the incorporation of such a tower was already considered an obligatory component of each exposition, determined by the international competitors' previous success and largely dictated by the latest fashion in exhibition design. Even an otherwise skeptical supporter such as Stefan Reiländer insisted on the construction of such a monument, if only to outshine the Eiffel Tower. 'Such towers are certainly becoming fashionable', he declared, 'and will be the hallmark of every world city.'[24]

A second, more detailed map of the same scenario (Figure 2.9) illustrates the planned spatial arrangement of pavilions, ensembles and various 'attractions'. Along a double axis, crossed only by the still existent Seestraße, were lined additional constructions. At an estimated cost of 40 million marks (Berliner Gewerbeausstellung: *c*.16) they included a Palace of Industry and Applied Arts, a Pavilion of Electricity, a Machinery Hall as well as an illuminated fountain containing an aquarium and surrounded by gardens and lakes. Neither could a 20-meter high statue of the Kaiser nor a Women's Palace possibly be omitted. Roughly a fifth of the entire area had been reserved for pavilions to be built by the participating foreign nations at their own expense. Since their design and implementation could not be anticipated in detail, the authors declared, these foreign sections had been sketched in only roughly. From a bird's-eye view they, in fact, seemed to disappear entirely in the panorama's upper-left corner, melting into the horizon.[25]

Although their precise societal impact is difficult to ascertain, concrete and detailed scenarios such as these played a central role in the increasingly widespread public debates that marked the second half of 1892. Seven patterns of argumentation, three in favor and four against a German exposition, can be isolated from the

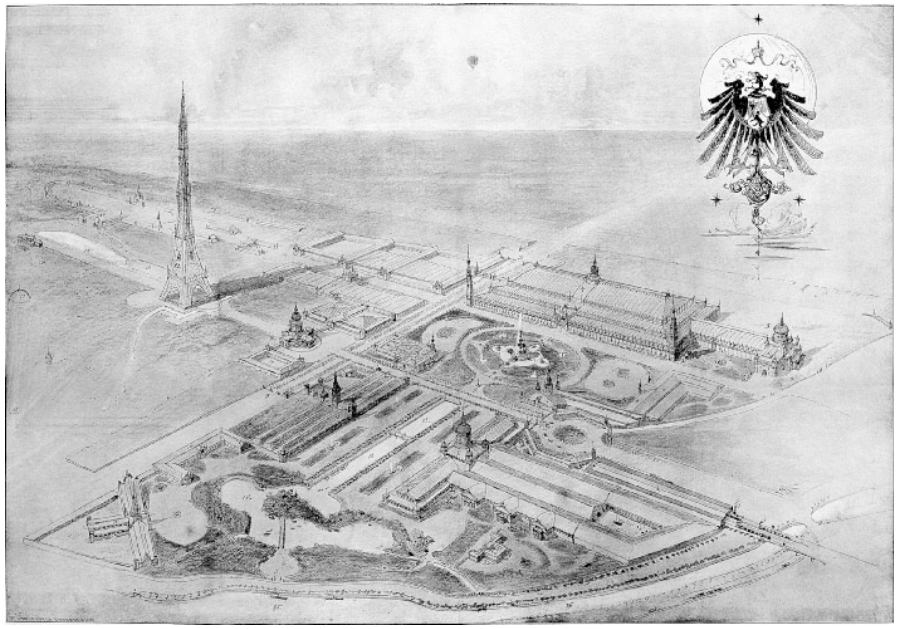

Figure 2.8 Northeast-oriented panorama of the projected exposition site in north Berlin, with the Spree at the bottom, 1892
Source: Courtesy of Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120 MfHuG, E XVI 2 Nr. 13 F, vol. 2, 150.

extensive press coverage. While not specifically limited to this phase of the overall debate, they were articulated most vehemently during the second half of 1892.

1. A vast majority of partisans and protagonists argued that Berlin's turn to invite the world had arrived. Having been welcomed as a guest at numerous expositions before, it seemed high time for the 'great German nation' to return the invitation and act as host itself, Franz Reuleaux, →Hermann Grothe and others agreed. 'We have long enough been guests at foreign expositions that we are now obliged to play host', a member of the *Verein zur Beförderung des Gewerbefleißes* succinctly summarized the argument: 'To constantly sponge on others is unworthy of the German nation' (*Being a Host Argument*).[26]

2. This line of reasoning was further extended in 1891–92. Now the gesture of playing host was frequently described as a 'national duty', a 'matter of decency' (*Anstandspflicht*) or an 'international obligation'. Soon, however, it became unclear whether one felt beholden to the world or to one's own position in it as an imperial power striving for international recognition. →Julius Lessing, director of the Berliner Kunstgewerbemuseum, summarized this argument, adding an imperial slant, when he stated that a world exhibition formed a part of Germany's recently gained world stature, and another sympathizer proclaimed that a German exposition constituted

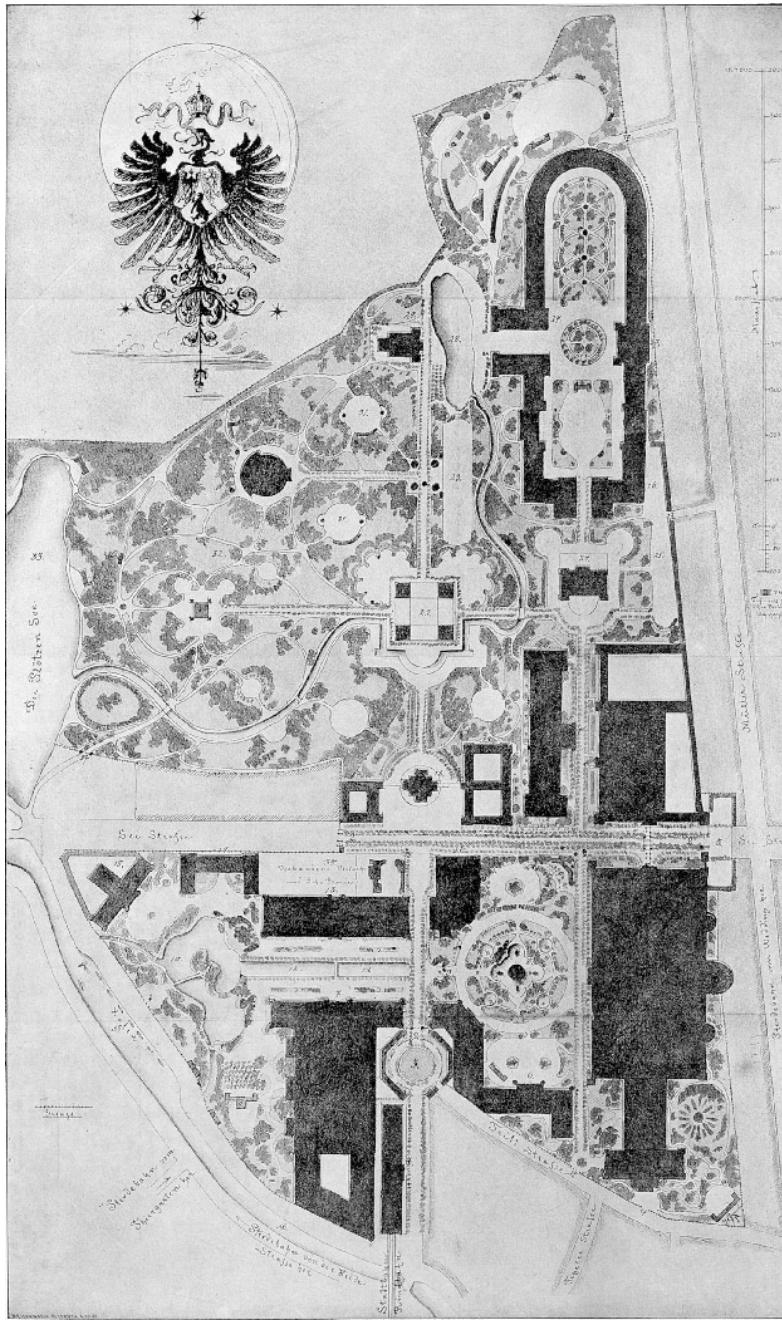

Figure 2.9 Northwest-oriented map of the projected exposition site in north Berlin, with the Plötzensee on the left, 1892
Source: Courtesy of Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, I. HA Rep. 120 MfHuG, E XVI 2 Nr. 13 F, vol. 2, 137.

'both a just demand and right of the German Nation'. Here, the standard metaphor of expositions as an arena for peaceful competition among the nations was taken literally. The hosting of an international exhibition was considered a matter of national prestige, a status symbol, and a welcome means to reinforce the nation's place in the international hierarchy. Thus, it became more a matter of enhancing one's own image than of returning hospitality – and the organization of an international exposition the perfect instrument for its implementation (*National Duty Argument*).[27]

3. Executing such a plan, its supporters assumed, would unleash centripetal forces and directly affect the German capital by elevating Berlin to the much-desired status of a genuine metropole. Resolving the pressing *Ausstellungsfrage*, they argued, would be tantamount to putting an end to the equally troublesome *Hauptstadtfrage*. Berlin would finally have the long-awaited opportunity to prove 'on the spot' and demonstrate vis-à-vis the world its newly gained status as a world city, especially in comparison with Vienna, London and Paris. 'We can […] now boldly vary the former phrase "Berlin will soon become a world city!"', exclaimed one commentator, expressing a new urban self-confidence that still required public, and especially international, backing, 'and instead proudly state "Berlin is a world city!"'. Another expressed the hope that only by 'holding international *cercle*' would Berlin be able to 'dismiss old prejudices against the former Wendish fishing village', 'discard the remnants of its former *petit-bourgeois* past' and at last begin to 'feel itself as a world city'. The organization of such an exposition would bring nothing less than the process of national unification to its symbolic conclusion, confirming Berlin's position as Germany's capital (*Learning to Feel Like a World City Argument*).[28]

Such self-positioning and self-assurance in the context of the competing West European capitals seemed unavoidable, yet public confidence remained tenuous. On the one hand, the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago planned for 1893 and the 1900 Parisian Exposition Universelle proved two of the most significant points of reference. While the former was in a state of preparation, the latter was publicly announced on 13 July 1892, during the most heated phase of the German debate. Having organized an exhibition in Paris every 11 years since 1867, France assumed its natural right and legitimate claim to hold another in 1900, and so asserted that the German initiative was meant simply as an insult. German propaganda, in turn, betrayed some strong anti-French and, in particular, anti-Parisian sentiment. It accused the French faction of a fait accompli, fearing that they would strive to make world's fairs an exclusively French institution and thus Paris the 'permanent center of the economic world'. Suspecting political calculation to be the main objective, some newspapers even spoke of a concerted *Überrumpelung* (surprise attack), going as far as to declare this the first clash between the two nations since 1871 with serious political consequences.[29] The importance of these points of reference during the whole lengthy decision-making process shows how significant other, more established focal points in the global exhibitionary network had become by the end of the nineteenth century, and the pivotal role played by inter-urban competition.

The opponents argued structurally in very similar ways:

4. The first and foremost argument, presented with ever-increasing frequency from the 1880s onwards, was that the entire medium had become out-dated and a particular type of 'exhibition fatigue' had set in (*Ausstellungsmüdigkeit*).[30]

5. As expositions became both more frequent and less useful, opponents argued, more and more efforts had to be taken to guarantee their effectiveness. As expenses increased, more and more visitors would have to be attracted in order to cover all the additional costs. One critic went so far as to call expositions an altogether exorbitant and excessive luxury. 'Their present day form', he wrote, 'makes them seem as a superfluous luxurious passion, which only an industrial and strongly trade-oriented community, accustomed to fluctuations and equipped with the necessary mental elasticity, can put into practice with real conviction.' Thus, one major argument against such an exhibition was, time and again, that the expense was far too great for the participating nations and exhibiting industries (*Expenses versus Effects Argument*).[31]

6. Critics not only feared inflationary effects on the local economy of Berlin, but they also argued that the new German capital was simply not ready to be a world city and could not compete with its international counterparts. The *Reichshauptstadt* would not attract sufficient numbers of foreigners, thus increasing the danger of suffering financial deficit even further. In 1879, Karl Lüders, one of the most outspoken opponents, had already expressed such objections very clearly. 'We believe', he wrote, 'that Berlin is less attractive to the foreign visitor than Paris, London and Vienna, and that it is probably the first industrial, commercial and political capital of a not particularly wealthy Empire yet not a comparable center of world traffic [*Weltverkehr*].' Opponents often pointed to the Viennese exhibition of 1873 and the disastrous effects it had had on both local hotel prices and the real estate market, giving this as a warning example (*Inferiority Argument*).[32]

7. Last but not least, opposition against a centrally organized German world exhibition invoked a familiar theme within the tradition of German federalism: provincial fear. The idea of a German universal exhibition held in Berlin was deeply troubling to the provinces, whose criticisms →Georg Bobertag, a former mayor, in turn ridiculed as 'petty jealousy and the unfortunate [and] still influential prejudice against the "hydrocephalic" city of Berlin [*Wasserkopf Berlin*].'[33] Supporters of this argument attempted to turn the tables by describing the frequently held provincial and regional fairs as being one virtual, but already existing and highly successful 'decentralized national exposition'. In addition to a universal central and international exhibition in Berlin, they suggested, various specialized fairs should be held in Hamburg, Berlin, Munich, Leipzig and Mainz. Thus, they anticipated one of the major planning elements of Hanover's EXPO 2000, namely decentralization and conceptual inclusion of the entire national territory. 'Therefore we intend', one advocate affirmed as early as 1892, 'to turn the *whole* of Germany into an exhibition terrain with Berlin as its focal point.' Reminiscent of a short story

by Jorge Luis Borges in which a map on a scale of 1:1 is drawn, the medium and its subject matter would have conflated and become identical (*German Federalism Argument*).[34]

All of a sudden, and much to the surprise of all parties involved, the heated and emotionally laden debate came to a second, if temporary halt in the fall of 1892. A laconic note published in the official *Reichs-Anzeiger* of 13 August 1892 meant an abandonment of the *Ausstellungsfrage* and all connected plans and projects. The Kaiser had decided, the note read, that the plan for an international exposition in Berlin was not to be pursued any further, at least not on the Empire's part. A notorious personal letter written on 20 July 1892 and sent to Graf von Caprivi, Bismarck's successor as Chancellor, gives further details of why Wilhelm II was so strongly opposed. 'The glory of the Parisians robs the Berliners of their sleep', the Kaiser wrote, 'Berlin is a great city, a world city (perhaps?), consequently, it must have its exhibition. […] However, Berlin is not Paris. Paris is the great whorehouse of the world; therein lies its attraction independent of any exhibition. There is nothing in Berlin that can captivate the foreigner, except a few museums, castles and soldiers.' Excluding any possible contradiction, Wilhelm II's arguments culminated in the apodictic statement: 'I am against this exhibition because it will bring very serious trouble to my fatherland and also to the city itself! […] There ain't going to be no exhibition, as my Berlin friends would put it.'[35] Further personal correspondence between Wilhelm II and Caprivi shows that the Chancellor himself was, at this point, no longer as firmly opposed to an exhibition project as he had been previously; yet his attempts to convince Wilhelm II failed. As a consequence, the final decision *not* to hold a German international exhibition must be attributed exclusively to the Kaiser.[36] The various partisans and advocates, including the architects and engineers engaged in the 1892 architectural competition, could not conceal their great disappointment at what they considered a mistaken decision that spelled both professional defeat and, indeed, national misfortune, even if they did not dare to contradict the Kaiser openly. 'Vain hopes, vain efforts!', they mourned: 'The plan for a German world exhibition now rests in its own coffin, and considering the opposition it has aroused it is hardly likely that present-day citizens will ever experience its resurrection.'[37]

The third phase of failure: 1907–10

For better or worse, the architects erred. Shortly after, new plans were made, and the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung of 1896 was their direct outcome. Yet, as Figure 2.1 above shows, the *Ausstellungsfrage* never vanished completely from public print discourse. A decade later it became once again a subject of controversy – and remained so, intermittently, for a number of years, re-emerging from March to early May 1907, with a brief resurgence in April 1909, and a final flare-up in 1910. Although this latest round of initiatives provoked yet another round of reactions, rekindling the old controversy, both the protagonists involved and the arguments exchanged remained very much the same as before, as did the results.[38]

There was no lack of prominent supporters. As in 1879 and 1892, one of the most outspoken remained Ludwig Max Goldberger, now president of the newly founded *Ständige Ausstellungskommission für die deutsche Industrie*, and joined by many influential writers and politicians such as →Hermann Hillger, Martin Kirschner (1842–1912), then mayor of Berlin and later foreign minister, and Chancellor Gustav Stresemann (1878–1929) who publicly expressed his support for the lingering project in a parliamentary debate.[39] The dispute gained momentum, reaching its climax in the summer and fall of 1910 when Germany's successful performance at the Brussels Exposition Universelle et Internationale of the same year inevitably revived the question of organizing a similar event in Berlin.

The Kaiser's negative verdict and explicit unwillingness eventually put an end to the entire, seemingly intractable, controversy. After a long silence, Wilhelm II expressed his views on this matter anew, ironically enough during an official visit to the Brussels exposition. His opinion had hardly changed since 1892. According to the Kaiser, Berlin lacked three essential requirements: a suitable site, the necessary financial resources for such a risky and cost-intensive enterprise, and the general attractiveness for potential visitors and foreign tourists. One of the newspapers quoted one of Wilhelm II's statements verbatim:

> The average Berliner, the Kaiser explained, works overmuch and thus has no time to visit exhibitions. He might possibly sacrifice his Sunday for such a dubious pleasure. But also fewer visitors would come to Berlin as they did to Paris and Brussels. Berlin lies outside the usual route for world tourists, and all attempts to turn Berlin into a city of foreigners [*Fremdenstadt*] such as Paris will fail, simply due to its geographical position.[40]

Like the architects and engineers in 1892, writers and journalists such as Siegfried Lilienthal – publishing under the pen name →Fritz Stahl – could hardly conceal their disappointment and interpreted the Kaiser's second denial as a rejection of the entire exhibition medium. Wilhelm II seemed to endorse, and even prefer, German provincialism to cosmopolitan localism.[41] Although the issue was subsequently raised several times, including by Adolf Hitler in the late 1930s after the successful 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, never again in the course of the twentieth century was the German *Weltausstellungsfrage* so widely and controversially discussed.[42]

In the end, how does one explain Germany's domestic absence from the nineteenth-century *Ausstellungszirkus* (exposition circus)? On the one hand, this absence is surprising and counter-intuitive. Numerous examples show that Berlin's newly gained status as capital was directly reflected in both representative architecture and the visual arts soon after the national unification of 1870–71, for instance with the construction of the new government quarter along the Wilhelmstraße on one side of the Brandenburg Gate, the nucleus Königsplatz on its other side, and the Reichstag and Siegesallee inaugurated in 1894.[43] On the other hand, the very existence of such initiatives proves that the seemingly obvious reference to Germany's federal structure or, in a global context, its comparatively marginal

position as an imperial power, by no means suffices to explain its remarkable absence from international expositions. Though numerous attempts were made, none succeeded, a phenomenon that can be explained by varying configurations of four different factors.

Initially there was, first, a certain disinterest and indecision on the part of the government, and later among industrialists who became increasingly skeptical and hesitant as well. The economist, journalist and prolific world's fairs critic → Alfons Paquet, for instance, laid the blame exclusively on industry for the failure of the plan in its second and third phases, and other observers, such as the physicist and writer Emil Arnold Budde (1842–1921) agreed. 'The Berlin world exhibition', he wrote in 1908, 'has been shelved for the time being, because the great majority of German industrialists do not wish to become involved.'[44]

Second, the unresolved and highly controversial problem of financing such an enterprise could not be settled, together with the largely unanswered question of liability in case of financial loss. The exhibitions held in Vienna 1873 and Paris 1889 had suffered considerable financial deficits and were taken as severe warnings.

Third, there was not only fierce international competition with other potential host cities and their respective exposition projects, but also questions of how to strategically anticipate their respective claims. In 1882, for example, a similar, yet never realized Italian exhibition project had been announced for Rome for 1885–86 to which the German government wished to give priority. Ten years later, in 1892, with Germany's participation in the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago the following year already decided upon, the probable competition with Paris for a *fin-de-siècle* exposition was another much-debated topic.[45]

Last but not least, Wilhelm II's personal aversion and scornful attitude, coming into play after his accession to the throne in 1888, is the single factor which not only proved decisive but is also the most difficult to explain. As a young successor to the throne, Wilhelm II had visited the expositions in Paris in 1867 and in Vienna in 1873 with his parents. As to his personal motives for rejecting all proposals for a comparable project to be organized in Berlin approximately a quarter of a century later, only vague – and not entirely satisfactory – speculation is possible. While both a mutual disinclination and a certain amount of tension between him and the capital itself have long been recognized by historians, Wilhelm II may have feared intuitively that a successful international exhibition in Germany would represent and celebrate the civic achievements of the *Bürgertum* and the German Empire rather than himself – and would, therefore, redirect public attention away from him and empower his 'enemies'. Yet, once the realization of the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung as an alternative privately organized event had been decided upon, he found no difficulty in taking over official representative functions, for instance during the opening ceremony, thus instrumentalizing the spectacle in order to promote his own grandeur.[46]

Labor, water and the site

Seen in this light, the official guide's brief remark, 'the strong desire to host a major exhibition in Berlin was not at all new', seemed something of a euphemism. Due to a constant downgrading of size and scope – from an international to a national, from a national to a local, from a universal to an industrial exhibition – the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung of 1896 had 'one of the most remarkable prehistories which had ever preceded such an enterprise', as the *Deutsche Bauzeitung* aptly commented.[47] Many of the project's supporters were dissatisfied with this development. In the eyes of the world, they feared, Germany had suffered yet another self-inflicted defeat. A national exposition would share all the shortcomings of an international one, but feature none of its advantages, Prussian historian →Hans Delbrück worried. 'The national exhibition shares in common with other world exhibitions the danger of becoming overloaded and may succumb to the temptation to dazzle the visitor, in fact, even to mislead him', he wrote: 'On the other hand it also lacks the merits of preceding world exhibitions: their impressive size, their glamour, the strong contrasts, their informative scope, their attraction for the foreign visitor, who should, in fact, also get to know and admire Germany.' Such a striking discrepancy between ambitious plans and actual events was gleefully registered abroad, for instance in the French press. 'The Exposition currently open in Berlin', noted the *Revue de Paris* with a certain condescension, 'is neither universal nor even national but purely local. Berlin had dreamed of something else', and the *Figaro* proved even more forthright when calling its planning nothing less than a 'gigantic fiasco'.[48]

When the German government publicly declared its definitive withdrawal from all exhibition proposals, thus expressing the Kaiser's final verdict, the *Verein zur Beförderung des Gewerbefleißes*, the *Vereinigung von 1879* and, above all, the *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* intervened, declaring the organization and realization of the Berlin trade exhibition as the only feasible alternative. At a public meeting in April 1891, its members had already passed an official resolution for an exposition to be held either in 1895 or 1896, which was to be as international as possible. A year later, on 6 April 1892, a further, more detailed resolution openly demanded that there should be a 'discussion about the exhibition question in Berlin and in the whole Empire without further delay, and a guarantee issued and signed in due time'. A letter to this effect was sent to Chancellor Graf von Caprivi. In his somewhat reserved reply, dated 3 June 1892, Caprivi avoided giving a definite statement by referring the *Verein* to the forthcoming Chicago exhibition, and asked its members for their support, 'so that the dignified and successful representation of Germany on American soil should not be impaired by the new project in Berlin'.[49]

However, with the government's negative decision taken and made public in August 1892, such a move had suddenly become inappropriate. Holding a universal exhibition was now completely out of the question. A turning point was reached at a public meeting on 10 November 1892, in the course of which Goldberger gave an impassioned speech restating the *Verein*'s arguments for the vital importance of

such an enterprise. Goldberger made it clear that a more extensive, Berlin-based trade fair now remained the only solution and feasible alternative. His arguments emphasized the mutual benefits for the projected exhibition and for Berlin, giving the city the chance to demonstrate its newly won position to a global audience: 'Berlin has much to show to the world and that is precisely what we are aiming at!', he proclaimed.[50] In a circular letter and a pamphlet following the assembly, members of the *Verein* left no doubts as to their motives and objectives. Openly criticizing the government but not mentioning the Kaiser, they explained their reasons for supporting a reduced version of the original project while still striving for something grander:

> Since the Reich's Government had refused to proclaim and de facto to ensure a world exhibition in Berlin in this century, we have now set ourselves a more modest aim. We had to admit that to achieve this we would have to limit ourselves to a project that could be realized without government support. And this is: a major trade exhibition in Berlin. […] We are all of the opinion that we would prefer a German to a Berlin exhibition. Therefore we have made it clear, for both the experts and also for those who will be affected practically, that we are expressing our support not for a Berlin exhibition, but for an exhibition in Berlin.

Thus, they did not conceal their disappointment, and even invoked an unusual legal construction which would allow national and international exhibitors to participate with their own exhibits if they operated a local branch in Berlin, no matter how small or insignificant.[51]

Even after the decision for a local, privately organized trade exhibition was made, public controversy did not end. The planning stages continued to be beset by problems of logistics and location. Again, it was the *Platzfrage* that was most vehemently discussed in the immediate run-up to the exposition. 'The choice of location for the Exposition was difficult', the *Revue de Paris* observed, downplaying the affair.[52] The search for a venue had been narrowed to two sites, one to the west around the Lietzensee lake in Witzleben, and the other to the southeast in Treptower Park. While the western area was identical with the site chosen for the *Verlorene Liebesmüh* project, Treptower Park had also been under discussion for some time, though it was situated outside Berlin's municipal area proper and was distant from its center.

Given Berlin's continual westward expansion and the attendant construction, the *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung* predicted that a site in the east would have to be selected out of sheer necessity, despite its obvious practical disadvantages. In the end, the journal was convinced, it would only be possible to use public or state-owned property. This ultimately proved correct, although at first the better developed Witzleben site was selected. In the late 1920s, a permanent exhibition center would later be erected there, with the Berlin radio tower, the *Funkturm*, as its central landmark. Yet at this point the terrain was still under private Jewish

ownership. A self-proclaimed *Komitee der Aussteller und Interessenten der Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896* (Committee of the Exhibitors and Other Interested Parties in the Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896) quickly formed, objected to this decision, organized a fund-raising campaign with anti-Semitic undertones, and succeeded, with support from the press, in having the decision reversed in favor of the Treptower Park site, despite evident disadvantages, including its 'considerable distance from the centre of the capital', as even *The Times* observed.[53]

On 26 April 1894, the Berlin municipality finally decided to make Treptower Park available at no additional cost, but on the guarantee that it be completely restored to its original condition after the exhibition's closure. While the state confined itself to building a new railroad station close to the exhibition venue, the City of Berlin allocated a guarantee fund and contributed a subsidy of 300,000 marks to cover general costs. Infrastructural changes undertaken for the Gewerbeausstellung thus included the new Ausstellungs-Bahnhof (Figure 2.10), which contributed to the extension of Berlin's so-called *Ringbahn*, a tram route surrounding the entire city that first opened in 1872, as well as the widening of pre-existing streets, the creation of six new landing places on the banks of the

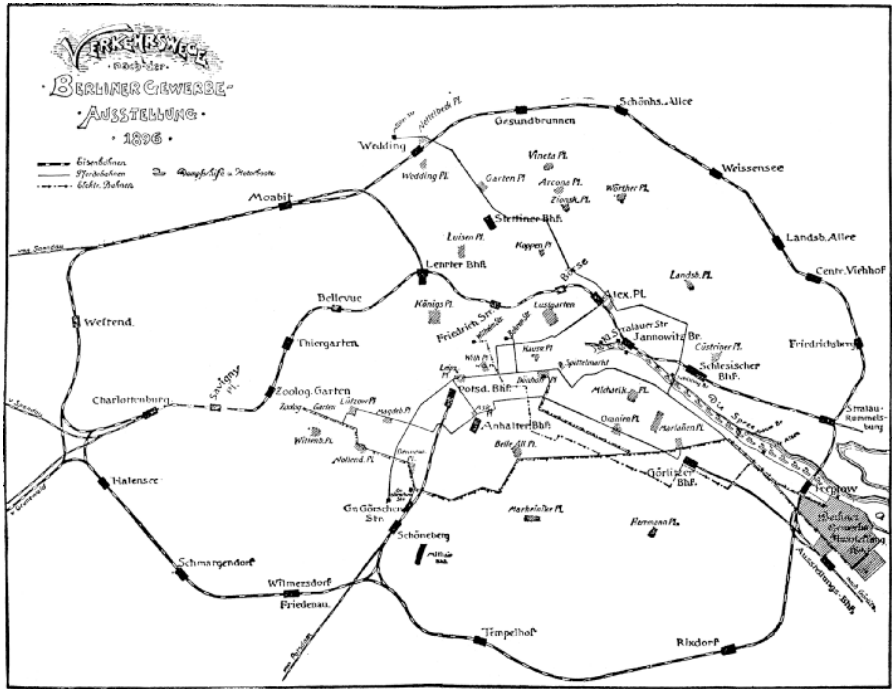

Figure 2.10 The site of the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung in relation to the metropolis. The exposition is located in the bottom right-hand corner of the map, in the southeast of the city, just beyond the Ringbahn
Source: *Illustrierter Amtlicher Führer*, 2–3.

Spree and a circular electric tram for transport within the venue. Traversing the entire site in only 24 minutes, this direct precursor to the moving sidewalks or *trottoir roulant* featured in the Paris exposition of 1900 would prove especially popular with the exhibition-going public. A so-called *Stufenbahn* was built to transport visitors from one part of the venue to another. In this and other, particularly organizational, aspects, this entirely privately sponsored exposition constituted an exact counter-model to the state-financed Parisian Expositions Universelles – something French commentators could scarcely believe.[54]

Already in the first half of the nineteenth century, Treptower Park, situated on the banks of the Spree, was a popular place for weekend excursions. Between 1876 and 1888 it was redeveloped in the style of an English landscaped garden to become a so-called *Volkspark*, a public municipal park, with numerous trees. Its enormous size, approximately 120 hectares (1.5 × 0.8 km), made it the largest exhibition venue to date, barring the 1893 exposition in Chicago. Since the organizers were contractually obliged to restore the park later to its *status quo ante*, all buildings and pavilions were to be removed and the especially built *Neuer See* (New Lake), a former playground, filled in once the fair had closed. Thus, except for a huge telescope, the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung was restricted from leaving any urban legacy, another indication of its uncertain position within the global exhibitionary network. Nor did it establish a specific Berlin exhibition tradition or generate a *lieu de mémoire* comparable to the London Crystal Palace (1851; 1852–54 re-erected in Sydenham, 1936 burned down), the Viennese Rotunda (1873–1937), the Parisian Champ de Mars with the Eiffel Tower (1889–), the Empire Stadium in Wembley (1923–2000), or the Brussels Atomium (1958–). In fact, if the present-day site has lost little of its symbolic character, this must not be attributed to the trade exhibition but rather to the site's subsequent fate: Here, at exactly the same location, after 1946 one of the largest Soviet war memorials in Germany was constructed for 13,000 fallen soldiers. Its shape follows the former lake's contours, with the central mausoleum-hill of the memorial area, marking the burial place of 200 Red Army soldiers and complete with quotations from Stalin, located where the main restaurant of the trade exhibition had been. Thus, as a site Treptower Park is firmly established as highly symbolic of various – and differently connoted – phases of Berlin's urban history. Just like the exposition itself, it must be read as yet another symbol not only of the 'haunted city' of Berlin but also of its own contested identity, rife with inner conflicts, and as a gesture towards the city's attempts at modernity, in competition with its European counterparts, as well as Berlin's highly politicized urban landscape.[55]

Although construction was not yet complete, the exhibition opened, with the Kaiser and his wife in attendance, on 1 May 1896 with a grand ceremony, another recurrent ritual of all exhibitions. Even the French press could not but express a certain admiration, calling it a 'splendid visual': 'Berlin has maintained its pride', the commentary continued, 'there could be no greater pomp on display to open a universal exposition.' Thereafter, it was to remain open for 165 days, until 15 October 1896, featuring the displays of almost 4000 exhibitors and attracting almost seven and a half million visitors, at a general admission price

of 50 pfennige. On average, this translated into 41,000 visitors per day instead of the expected 55,000. Such comparatively meager figures were largely attributed to unfavorable weather conditions as it rained on 120 of these 165 summer days. Nevertheless, a visit soon became a social obligation and the exhibition *the* event of the season, as numerous observers, critics and journalists agreed. Active interest on the part of the Berlin public was evident. Already after the first week, the *Vossische Zeitung* reported that everybody 'simply has to visit the exposition; whoever has not been there, will be regarded as hardly entitled to exist; he cannot join into the conversation at his usual seat in the pub, and he will be looked at critically by his sons and daughters whom he has not yet given the opportunity to see the spectacle in Treptow.'[56]

For mundane organizational matters, a responsible *Arbeitsausschuss* was created, chaired by Fritz Kühnemann with Ludwig Max Goldberger and Bernhard Felisch as vice-chairmen. Together they formed the exhibition's central controlling body – 'a kind of triumvirate', as the *Revue de Paris* commented – supported by a large *Geschäftsführender Ausschuss* (executive committee) consisting of numerous local dignitaries. With the Kaiser's consent, Prinz Friedrich Leopold von Preußen took over the general patronage, while the politician Hans Hermann Freiherr von Berlepsch (1843–1926), at that time Prussian minister of commerce, became the exhibition's honorary president. The predominant architects were →Karl Hoffacker, →Hans Grisebach and →Bruno Schmitz. Both Hoffacker and Grisebach had designed parts of the German section at the world's fair held in Chicago three years earlier, and were thus considered experienced experts for this particular type of ephemeral architecture.[57]

The *status quo ante* clause in the contract constituted a major difficulty for landscape architects and garden designers. 'Although the site is highly attractive because of its proximity to the Spree and its fine park, considerable difficulties concerning the buildings necessary for the exhibition have arisen', the official *Centralblatt der Bauverwaltung* stated. For this reason, the proposed schedule had to be altered several times. A planned north–south axis was never realized. Eventually, the site's geographical limitations came to dominate its architectural development, rather than vice versa. 'So, here, the basic plan was based on the park's design, quite in contrast to the usual procedure of initially developing the architectural project, which in this case had to be adapted to a massive, yet flowing intake of visitors, and thus giving a first idea of the general effect, and then adding the garden grounds to round off and enhance the created image', commented the *Berliner Tageblatt* with apparent astonishment.[58]

In the end, the most important buildings and sections were lined up along a west–east axis, leading from the main building to the *Neuer See* as the site's central pivotal point, and the main restaurant together with a water tower on its other side, and continuing to the 'Theater Alt-Berlin' (Old Berlin Theater) and the retrospective section *Alt-Berlin* (see Plate 1). Some additional buildings, such as a palace for chemistry and optics and another for fishery and foodstuffs were located further north. The City of Berlin occupied its own pavilion, located beyond Treptower Chaussee, just behind the chemistry building, with recently opened

public buildings such as swimming pools and hospitals, as well as school programs and a wide array of administrative activities presented to the interested public in the form of models, diagrams, photographs, maps and illustrations. All told, some 300 smaller structures and pavilions were erected on the site (Figure 2.11).[59] There were, additionally, three feature sections which did not form part of the main grounds but were each set apart by a street: a huge colonial exhibition in the east (10 ha), an adjacent amusement park featuring an automatically functioning restaurant, and a privately run *Sonderausstellung Kairo* (Special Exhibition Cairo; 3.4 ha). Thus, further to the east and the south, the educational mission gave way to entertainment and exoticism. The entire site was enclosed by a tall wooden fence, separating it visibly and unmistakably from the surrounding city.[60]

The so-called *Hauptgebäude* (Main Building) formed the nucleus of the architectural composition and housed the main exhibits. In this respect, the Gewerbeausstellung was clearly not in accordance with the latest developments in international exhibition design. While all early expositions, starting in 1851, had been characterized by the attempt to present all exhibits in one building – thus subjecting them to a single unifying scheme of classification – by the mid-1870s, this encyclopedic mode of representation had been replaced by a national principle. After similar experiments at the Parisian Exposition Universelle of 1867, with national pavilions serving as the headquarters of the foreign participants, and at the London International Exhibition five years later, it was decided for the first time at the Philadelphia exhibition of 1876 to allow participating nations to each erect their own separate pavilion in lieu of a huge, common palace. Two years later, in 1878, this 'pavilion principle' or 'pavilion system' was successfully adopted in Paris, resulting in the construction of the so-called *Rue des Nations*, which, by 1900, not only formed an integral part of subsequent expositions, but was also one of their main attractions. This characteristic feature could not be implemented in Berlin for the simple reason that no foreign nation participated.

Although the criticism was often made that the huge *Hauptgebäude* (400 × 200 m) had its back turned to the city center and opened up towards the east rather than the west, local conditions did not allow for any other solution, with this the only site within Treptower Park both spacious enough and free of trees. There was also much consternation that no such grand effect, comparable to the Champ de Mars in Paris, had been achieved. Professional journals, however, considered its unifying purpose and centripetal function fulfilled, lauding it as the fair's *pièce de résistance* and focal point of the entire Berlin exposition, producing 'a unanimous voice of great and unlimited praise'. The *Deutsche Bauzeitung* seemed likewise content with the site's general layout. 'We may consider the exposition with justifiable pride. It has become a shining example of excellent planning and considerable persistence', one of the critics noted laudatorily a few days before the actual opening. If the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung did have a feature which could be considered its *clou*, it was undoubtedly this *Hauptgebäude*, 'the focal point of the whole', as the official guide put it – which itself could also be seen as another attempt on the part of the organizers to engage in an international and inter-urban competition by engaging

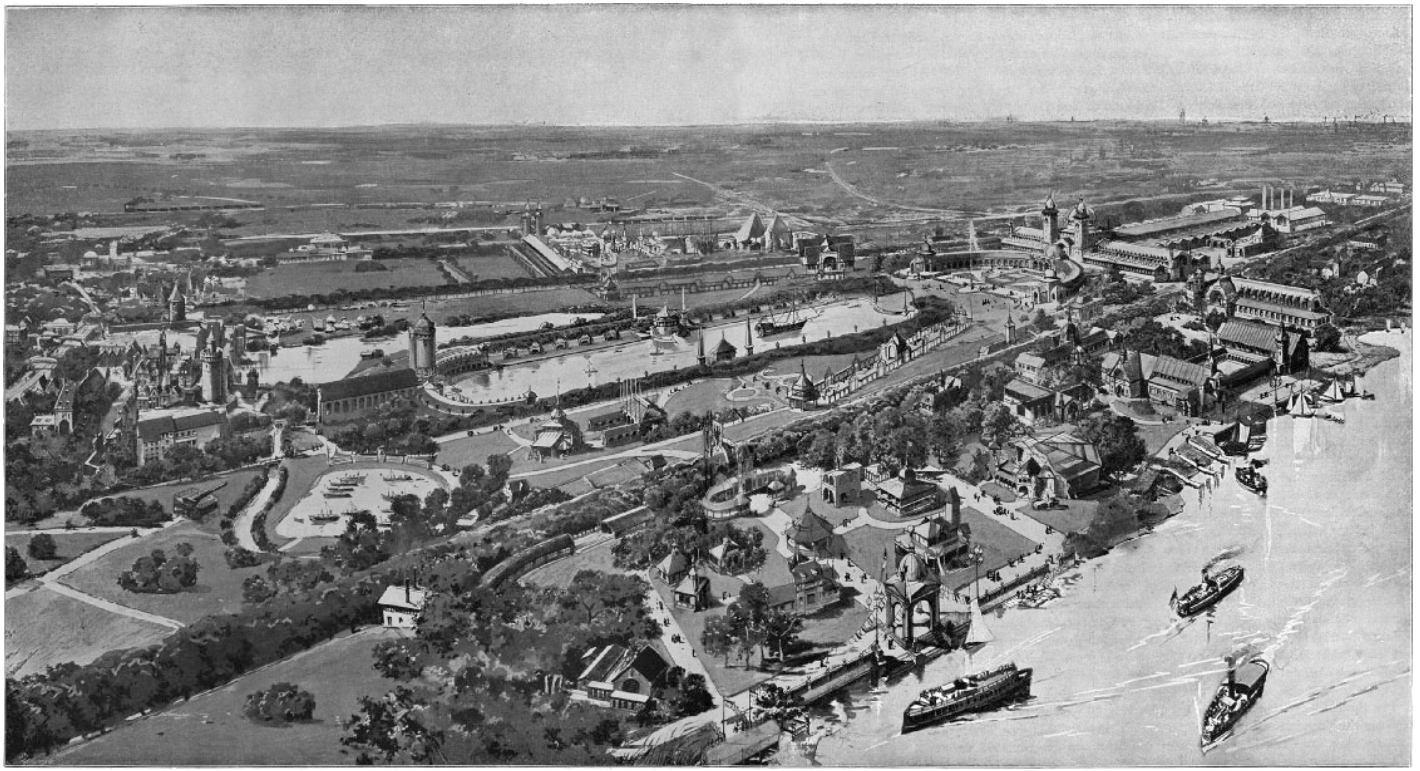

Figure 2.11 Panorama of the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung from a bird's-eye view
Source: Lindenberg, *Pracht-Album*, 8–9.

self-ascribed forms of modernity, which had long found other forms of expression elsewhere.[61]

Tellingly, however, there were still a number of literally inbuilt references to previously held international expositions. The semicircular shape of the building's main entrance, for instance, reminded numerous visitors and foreign observers of the Parisian Trocadéro Palace, erected for the 1878 Exposition Universelle, while in other parts of the building large structural elements of one of the halls built for the Exposition International d'Anvers of 1894 had been recycled. Transnational imports and direct references were not limited to the physical components of buildings: entire sections were modeled after successful foreign examples, such as the *Sonderausstellung Kairo*.[62]

Two additional themes were featured in the exposition's general conception: 'labor' and 'water'. Since the first constituted one of the central notions of any *bürgerlich* sense of self-understanding, the entrance to the main building was decorated with a verse from Friedrich Schiller's ballad *Die Glocke*, 'Arbeit ist des Bürgers Zierde/Segen ist der Mühe Preis!' (Labour is the citizen's adornment/blessings are the reward for all his efforts). Critics found apt architectural expression of the celebration of labor in the main building, deeming its cupola hall so impressive that it could even compete with the Parisian *Dôme central* built for the Exposition Universelle of 1889. Similarly, on the occasion of the exhibition's extravagant opening ceremony, the *Vossische Zeitung* predicted its success by calling it one of the finest results of German labor and diligence: 'The trade exhibition in Berlin will win a place of honor in the history of German labor, German diligence.'[63]

'Water', the second theme, was expressed not only in the inclusion of the Spree, the construction of various ponds and artificial lakes, the incorporation of the pre-existing *Karpfenteich* (carp pond), a pavilion exclusively devoted to fishing, but above all in naval shows. A gigantic, 88-meter long replica of an imperial steamship reaching into the Spree, the *Kaiserschiff Bremen*, which also contained the Kaiser's private room for when he visited the exhibition. 'One of the special features of our Berlin exhibition', one commentator noted, 'is that it has such an outstandingly maritime character.' In a similar vein, the *Karpfenteich* was used for spectacular performances by the exhibited colonial 'natives'. Yet again, behind this special and intentional emphasis on water there was also a reference to another earlier international exposition, the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, where Chicago's Lake Michigan had been incorporated into the exposition venue in a comparable manner.[64]

Pleasures of the metropolis

All three feature sections – the colonial exhibition, *Kairo*, and *Alt-Berlin* – were concentrated in the southeastern part of the Treptower Park venue, with the first two spatially secluded from the exposition's main venue by pre-existing streets. All three, including the amusement park and the *Alpen-Panorama*, were privately organized enterprises and constituted almost self-contained smaller exhibitions in themselves. Yet, while each functioned according to its own principles and stood

in its own specific trans- and international exposition tradition, they also formed part of the main exhibition complex, and were hence all perceived and discussed in the same context.

If the trade exhibition as a whole was a privately organized enterprise, realized without official state support, the *Kolonialausstellung* was again independent.[65] Originally suggested by a number of export companies, its prehistory was equally complex and characterized by various, largely organizational, conflicts including financial difficulties. The composition of the organizing body changed several times. Semi-official representative institutions such as the *Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft*, an influential lobby group founded in 1887, remained reluctant in their support at first until eventually deciding to endorse the project.[66] However, and somewhat ironically, the government eventually chose to play a more active role only in the colonial section, with the Foreign Office defraying at least a part of the expense, because of the obvious possibility to instrumentalize the section for political and propagandistic purposes. The *Kolonialausstellung*'s special status was further underlined by the fact that it formed its own section in the otherwise rigid classification system of 23 groups and numerous subgroups, strictly applied to all other exhibits on display in the entire exposition. As a consequence, an *Arbeitsausschuss* had been formed in February 1895 with →Hans Hermann Graf von Schweinitz as chairman, and industrialist Karl Friedrich Emil von Beck and lawyer Franz Imberg as vice-chairmen to serve as the section's own organizing committee and central controlling body. The noted German imperialist and long-term editor of the *Deutsche Kolonialzeitung*, →Gustav Meinecke, was persuaded to author a popular guide to this particular section and afterwards to edit the voluminous official report. Additionally, the colonial exhibition allowed companies *not* based in Berlin to participate, and had its own patron, Herzog Johann Albrecht zu Mecklenburg-Schwerin (1859–1920), one of the presidents of the *Kolonialgesellschaft*.

In order to gain public support and to achieve as wide a participation as possible, the committee made an appeal in May 1895 in a number of different newspapers, hoping to stimulate participation by colonial departments, interested industrial circles, the authorities, representatives of the sciences and the large number of experts on Africa and thus 'to awaken interest even in the most remote circles of society'.[67] Given that Germany had acquired its first colony only 12 years earlier, the *Kolonialausstellung*'s official aims were threefold: first, to reduce public ignorance about the colonial cause; second, to appease and convince its political critics; and third, to document Germany's imperial efforts and global ambitions. Colonization was legitimized not as a *mission civilisatrice*, but rather as a domestic, national and cultural duty of considerable significance for the future of the home country and its position in the global order. 'The nations in Europe who are major powers […] are also colonial powers' served as the legitimizing slogan.[68]

The colonial exhibition was divided into two separate sections: an ethnological section, located south of the carp pond and *Alt-Berlin* that included a number of so-called native villages representing the diverse German overseas possessions, and, further east, beyond Parkstraße, a second, more science- and commerce-oriented

Figure 2.12 Layout of the colonial exhibition that formed part of the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung. Situated at the southeastern ends of the exposition grounds, it adjoined *Alt-Berlin* and the amusement park
Source: Arbeitsausschuss der Deutschen Kolonial-Ausstellung, *Deutschland und seine Kolonien*, 369.

section featuring more than 300 different companies and associations (Figure 2.12). The latter – the more 'serious' but 'actually less interesting' section, as one observer commented – contained six huge halls, including the so-called *Kolonialhalle*, a machinery hall, as well as a two-storied, wooden *Tropenhaus*, in which the Foreign Ministry's colonial department displayed its various activities at home and abroad through diagrams, photographs and numerous sample products from the colonies. At its center stood an enormous globe, two meters in diameter, representing all the widely distributed German possessions. After the exhibition's closure, the entire pavilion was to be re-erected in Togo, a German colony since 1884.[69]

Thus, the section's overall structure was literally a dichotomy: on the western side displays of the timeless, 'original' state of the colonies; on the eastern side, exhibits of the various instruments and institutions founded and maintained by western powers, in particular Germany, with the aim of intervening, altering and eventually 'improving' the colonies' 'untouched' nature. 'It should not be overlooked that the natives still live in the Stone Age', the official report reminded its readers. While the more serious section was, ironically, located next to the amusement park, the 'native houses' bordered directly on *Alt-Berlin*. Contemporaries noted this physical proximity and instantly recognized an imagined historical connection. 'It is a very strange coincidence that the colonial exhibition is located in the immediate neighborhood of "Old Berlin", considering that the Grand Prince-elector had already created a significant Brandenburg colonial possession in Africa', a critic noted.[70]

With a total of more than two million visitors, each of whom paid an additional admission fee of 50 pfennige (later reduced to 30), including 26,587 schoolchildren who entered for free, the *Kolonialausstellung* proved one of the most popular sections of the exposition. On 13 September 1896, for instance, this part of the Gewerbeausstellung was seen by 120,362 visitors alone; only 9000 of the total

number of visitors on that particular day decided *not* to include it in their grand tour of the exhibition grounds. Such overwhelming interest on the part of the fair-going public was directly attributed to the numerous 'natives' on display. For many, it was their first chance ever to encounter non-Europeans. 'The natives themselves awakened, of course, the greatest interest among the visitors', the official report noted retrospectively with a certain satisfaction about an initially contested decision, 'for the "savage" had never before been so tangibly brought to the public's attention.'[71]

Sources disagree as to the exact number of indigenous people imported from locales ranging from Cameroon (a German possession since 1884), to Togo (since 1884), to New Guinea and East Africa (since 1885). Between 60 and 100 persons were put on display over the course of the five and a half months.[72] While all were required to live and work on the premises, often in self-built huts, some of them also found accommodation in a reproduction of the *Quikuru*, an East African fortress modeled after the *Quikuru qua Sike*, which German colonial troops had conquered during an uprising in June and August 1892 under the command of Graf von Schweinitz, now chairing the organizing committee. Their exhibitionary function was obvious: to provide the ensemble with a degree of authenticity otherwise unattainable. 'It was the intention', a journalist explained, 'to present the visitor of the colonial exhibition with a number of settlements *in natura*, which are characteristic of our main colonial territories, and to inhabit these settlements with human material from the colonies themselves.'[73] Even Wilhelm II appeared impressed by the special performances with which the exhibited indigenous people welcomed him and his wife on the opening day, and they spent considerable time in the colonial exhibition during their visit. 'In the "Quikuru" East Africans performed war dances, which the spectators watched with interest for quite a long time', a report described the scene: 'Then followed the rowing contests on the carp pond. Togo negroes were also given the opportunity to show their war dance, while the Cameroonians welcomed their Emperor with a loud threefold "Hip, hip, hip, Hurrah!".' Curiously, despite his continuous opposition to any kind of German international exposition, Wilhelm II did not have any difficulty in officially participating in this and other events organized as part of the Gewerbeausstellung, presumably because it augmented his own visibility and contributed to his public image.[74]

While a considerable number of smaller colonial exhibitions had been held in Germany before, none was as large and comprehensive as this, the officially entitled *1. Deutsche Kolonialausstellung*. 'With this image of the tropical colonies', it was noted, evoking a clear contrast between the savage purity on display and the surrounding metropolis with its modern civilized life, 'the natives infused this picture with a vivid colorful life. They transferred an element of natural wildness and simple culture to the heart of the world city with its refined manners, fashionable people and proud splendor. Precisely such contrasts, for the first time presented so clearly in such a relatively small framework, made the exhibition so fascinating and attractive for everybody.'[75] While such inanimate exotic exhibits had been a main characteristic of all European expositions since 1851, a decisive shift in both quantity

and quality could be observed in the 1880s. Before the first distinct 'native villages' (*village indigène*) were annexed to the Parisian exposition of 1878 and the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, these *Völkerschauen*, that is short-lived, commercially oriented and privately organized touring exhibitions featuring 'exotic human beings', had been held on a regular basis in almost all European countries from the 1860s onwards. The first German *Völkerschau* took place in 1874. Soon, the displaying of 'natives' from a wide range of colonized cultures became a standard feature of the evolving exhibitionary networks.[76] 'I wish to emphasize especially', a German journalist wrote in 1896, reminding his readers of the existence of similar ensembles staged elsewhere across the world, 'that such exhibitions have often been held in such an exemplary way and have thus lost their novelty. This includes the world exhibition in Antwerp in the year 1885, the colonial exhibition in London [1886], the world's fairs in Chicago [1893] and Melbourne [1888–89] and various other exhibitions', thus highlighting the clear, if somewhat obscure situatedness of the *Kolonialausstellung* in the international exhibitionary network and its inherent reference system, of which average German consumers were largely ignorant. From a contemporary functionalist perspective, exhibited 'natives' were put on par with visiting royals, as both attracted the desired throngs of spectators. 'This type of attraction has long been an essential element of modern exhibitions', another commentator noted laconically, 'crowned heads or distinguished foreigners from exotic and fabulous countries attract the masses.'[77]

For more than half a century both *Völkerschauen* and ethnographic ensembles as part of international expositions were inextricably linked to the career of the Hamburg-based animal trader, entrepreneur, impresario and zoo founder →Carl Hagenbeck.[78] From the early 1870s onwards his company gradually established itself as the uncontested market leader in the trading of exotic animals, remaining so for some decades. This position allowed Hagenbeck to develop a plethora of other activities meant to complete the range of products his firm offered and which included importing 'exotic' people from overseas for exhibition purposes. While *Völkerschauen* were periodically held in all big cities in Germany up to 1932, similar events were found elsewhere – in France, for example – until the early 1940s.[79] Often, entire ensembles of exotic representatives were put together, sometimes even several times a year, and sent on carefully organized tours throughout Europe and even beyond. Thus, in one of the earliest of these groups, organized by Hagenbeck himself, 15 Nubians from Egyptian Sudan performed in 1877–78 in Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden and London. Later tours would include both more participants and more diverse countries of origin. Although such a statement cannot be verified, the organizers of the 1896 trade fair repeatedly congratulated themselves for having assembled the largest and most comprehensive German colonial exhibition to date. According to them, never before had so many 'natives' of so many different origins lived for such a long time together in Europe. However, a lengthy medical report listing numerous cases of illness gives a bleak impression of how difficult the actual adaptation process was. Two of the exhibited Swahilis died of pneumonia and meningitis respectively, and were buried in a Berlin cemetery.[80]

The organizers considered the inclusion of a colonial section a functional necessity for the entire exposition. The *Kolonialausstellung* was intended to provide the event with a veneer not only of authenticity, but also internationality and cosmopolitanism that would otherwise have been lacking. For that reason, A. Haarmann, president of the chamber of commerce in Osnabrück, had suggested incorporating a colonial ensemble into the as yet unplanned German world exhibition as early as 1892. Given his amalgamation of cultural and political arguments operating on national, international and colonial levels, Haarmann is worth quoting at length:

> What gave the Paris expositions an international and in a sense an exotic flair, were mainly the ethnographic and colonial sections, which afforded an almost unlimited display of exotic sites and pompous processions. If we consider such ingredients an absolute necessity, nothing prevents us from vividly presenting the life, the conditions and the products of the German protectorates, together with the necessary help of our colonialists in foreign countries to give the German national exhibition a touch of internationality. All this should satisfy the public's need for sensation. The inclusion of the German protectorates would additionally afford welcome possibilities to awaken general public interest in our colonial ventures within all levels of our society.[81]

Thus, while the desire to imitate, compete with and outdo Paris was the external incentive for incorporating the colonies, political and propagandistic reasons provided the internal incentive. Moreover, an exclusively colonial section was considered essential if the exposition's merely national scope was to be transcended. The final report fully adopted this argument when stating *ex post,* and not without considerable pride, that 'by including the colonial exhibition the usual framework of a *Berlin* exhibition was considerably exceeded.' Even if the original aim of organizing a German Exposition Universelle had not been achieved, the incorporation of a colonial section ensured that the fair's local and national limitations were transcended.[82]

One of the most unmistakable references the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung made to other nodes within the western exhibitionary networks was the 'Egyptian special exhibition' *Kairo*, modeled directly on the successful Parisian structure, the notorious *Rue du Caire*, an integral and exceedingly popular section of the Parisian Exposition Universelle of 1889 that had claimed to reproduce authentically an entire street of medieval Cairo in the midst of modern Paris. The 1896 Berlin version took the form of a comparable, commercially oriented 'best of' selection of the Egyptian capital's oldest sections, temporarily inhabited by some '500 Egyptians of the various races', and including a 38-meter high replica of the Cheops pyramid (Figure 2.13) as its supreme feature. Although enlarged, diversified and conceptually altered in comparison with the French original, 'Kairo in Berlin' derived its basic forms and representational principles from the Parisian prototype.[83]

Kairo, 'this magical creation from the Orient', as it was hailed in the official guide, consisted of four distinct sections devoted to Old Egypt, modern Cairo, a

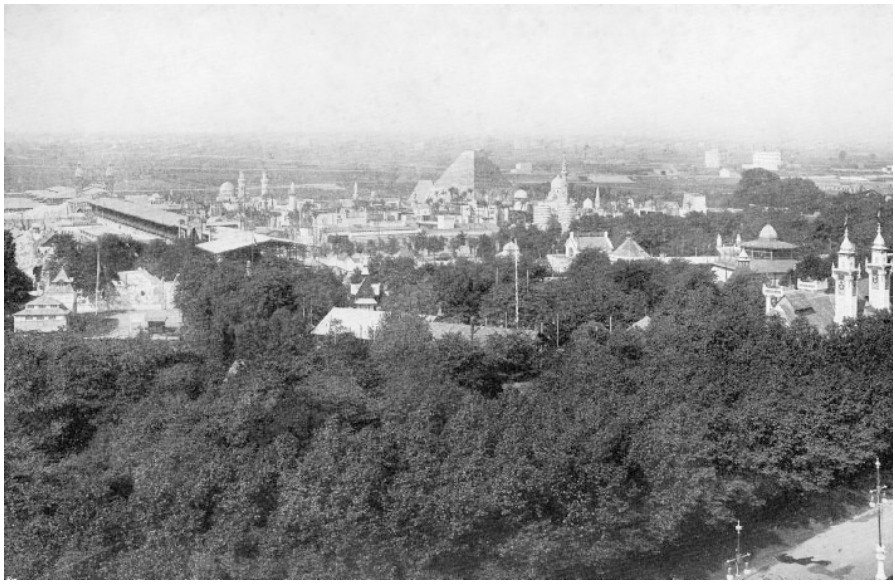

Figure 2.13 The special exhibition *Kairo* with its towering pyramid from a bird's-eye view and with Berlin just visible in the background. The elongated building on the left is the railroad station built for the exposition
Source: Courtesy of Landesarchiv Berlin, F Rep. 290-09-01, Nr. 61/5348.

town square, and a huge arena for enacting scenic spectacles such as camel and horse shows, in addition to a number of 'native villages' and settlements inhabited by several hundred indigenous Arabs and Bedouins complete with a harem, a hotel, two restaurants and various souvenir shops. The putative authenticity of such vistas was reinforced by the numerous dioramas incorporated into *Kairo*. The organizers sought not only to recreate the essential features of the entire cityscape, but also to 'transplant the pulsating life of Cairo' into imperial Berlin. While the first three sections adopted a topographical approach, the last was ethnographic in character. Thus, though its representations were based on the same kind of domesticated alterity and exoticism as in the colonial sections, here this was accomplished in a much more contextualized and historicized manner. The basic question of whether such a genuinely French import could make sense in a German national environment remained, yet the conceptual *mélange* went still further. As a French journalist discovered when investigating the personal background of *Kairo*'s Arabic inhabitants, they were far less 'authentic' than assumed, coming from Damascus and speaking, to his astonishment, the 'purest French' which they had studied in Beirut, and were now learning English.[84]

Quite aptly, the section's special feature, the pyramid, was only half erected, allowing the visual illusion of its wholeness to be solely perceived from the perspective of the exhibition grounds, a veritable *trompe l'œil*. Functioning only from

within the venue, it was essential that the visitor-cum-viewer adopt the correct position if this vista was to be perceived at all and the illusion maintained. Made entirely of painted cement rather than solid rock and held together by an iron framework, the pyramid was hollow, containing a burial chamber complete with two mummies. This Potemkin village fulfilled four distinct functions: First, the pyramid contributed to the entire section's overall 'reality effect' (Roland Barthes), burnishing its veneer of authenticity. Second, it offered a background illustration for the spectacles enacted daily in the arena directly in front. Third, it served as an unusual – though functional – exposition building, providing space to display some of the items most commonly associated with ancient Egypt. Finally, since its visitors could use an electric elevator in order to reach the top, the pyramid offered an unusually spectacular, panoramic view over site and city alike, thus offering a literal overview of both. 'The Pyramid', the official guidebook described, 'can be climbed by an electric lift, and seen from its height one has an fascinating overview of Berlin as well as the entire Treptower Park with its exhibitions halls.'[85]

Although a private enterprise, the assembling of *Kairo* was actively supported by the Egyptian government, both materially and financially. The official guide vacillated between describing the section and Egypt itself, effectively blurring the boundaries between the two. It suggested following a fixed itinerary through the grounds, using replicas of various historic gates, temples, graves and sculptures all reproduced at half their actual size as an opportunity for learning about Egyptian history and geography. The program offered both a virtual tour down the Nile, 'with all its remarkable features and splendid remnants of a remote past', as well as a written introduction to contemporaneous Arabic society and culture. This little guidebook, an amalgamation of distinct topics, historical and present, domestic and distant, culminated in the inclusion of a German–Arabic dictionary at its end, thus completing the blend of subject matter and *in situ* tourism. *Nolens volens*, the guide transformed the more than two million visitors into potential travelers in both space and time. In order to survive, visitors were encouraged to acquire at least a basic knowledge of Arabic.[86]

Professional critics were only too aware that sections of this kind had formed integral parts of previous expositions, and they mockingly criticized such *Ideenarmuth* (lack of originality). Yet, when limited to a German context, *Kairo*'s openly orientalist style and its contribution to the exposition seemed both original and appropriate, eliciting, therefore, much praise from other critics: '[Bruno] Schmitz has […] produced the tone of the foreign, fairy-tale elements typical of such short-lived phenomena and which, in its singularity, has an exceptional impact on our senses; it is not by chance that "Kairo" is an essential accessory of our exhibitions.'[87] Prominent visitors such as the liberal politician →Friedrich Naumann agreed. He deemed *Kairo* especially successful, describing the escapist experience of entering into an utterly different culture and remote world in itself. 'Under the pyramids, in the shadow of palm trees and minarets and the Arabian cry: "Baba, Baksheesh!" ("Sir, please give me a tip!"), we feel we have completely left our familiar cultivated Europe', he wrote after a visit. Likewise, the German

engineer and writer →Max Eyth seemed pleased by what he saw. Reflecting his divergent impressions after a visit to Treptow, Eyth noted in his diary on 10 July 1896: 'Exhibition. Alpine meadow. Colonial exhibition. Sea battle. – "Kairo" quite good, as a picture. Somewhat overloaded, of course, but in many ways perfectly "true to style".'[88]

The fact that this particular means of expression originated elsewhere by no means hindered the section's success in a different national, cultural and social context in which it appeared new and innovative. Despite its success, however, behind the scenes not all ran smoothly, thus disrupting the colonial order so carefully staged and enacted. In fact, none of the professional observers even hinted at the massive problems that arose with the indigenous population and allegedly 'refractory staff', resulting in a number of fistfights and leading to violent conflicts, in which the excessive consumption of alcohol seems to have played a decisive role. Having become homeless after their dismissal, these 'brown sons of the desert' applied for temporary political asylum, intending nevertheless to return to their home countries as soon as possible.[89]

'Reminiscent not of foreign countries, but of foreign times', *Alt-Berlin*, the third feature section, marked a dramatic contrast by evoking a domestic past.[90] To integrate retrospective ensembles and to juxtapose them with the slightly older colonial ensembles, was, in 1896, a comparatively recent development. First introduced in London in 1886 and repeated at an exposition held in Manchester the following year, so-called old villages such as *Old London*, *Vieux Paris*, *Vieil Anvers* or *Alt-Berlin* had, by the turn of the century, become a standard inter-exhibitionary feature and an indispensable element. Although politically controversial, the practice enjoyed a certain degree of familiarity and widespread acceptance in the second half of the 1880s: In 1884, the Esposizione Generale Italiana held in Turin included a replica of an entire medieval castle, in 1886 the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London featured a so-called *Old London Street*, and for the 1889 Parisian Exposition Universelle, a symbolic replica of the entire Bastille was constructed. In the aftermath of these three exhibitions, the 'retrospective principle' was developed and popularized at expositions in Bremen (1890), Antwerp (1894), Amsterdam (1895) and here in Berlin (1896), and subsequently in Brussels (1897), Paris (1900), Liège (1905) as well as London (1908, 1911). While the concept of enticing visitors into a virtual journey in space had been present, implicitly or explicitly, since the mid-nineteenth century beginnings of the exhibition medium, 'traveling in time' as a complementary feature was added only later.[91] Such a development must be seen as further evidence of the increasing process of differentiation of the entire medium and its specific language, in which self-reference became more important than adapting to the particular socio-political context.

In 1896, the ensemble no longer consisted of a small subsection or merely a single street as in Turin or London, but comprised an entire, self-contained small city on an area of approximately 4.5 hectares, erected on the eastern banks of the carp pond and designed by the renowned architect Karl Hoffacker (Figure 2.14). Unlike the colonial section and *Kairo*, 'Old Berlin' formed part of the exhibition's main venue. Its central importance within the overall conceptual framework can also be

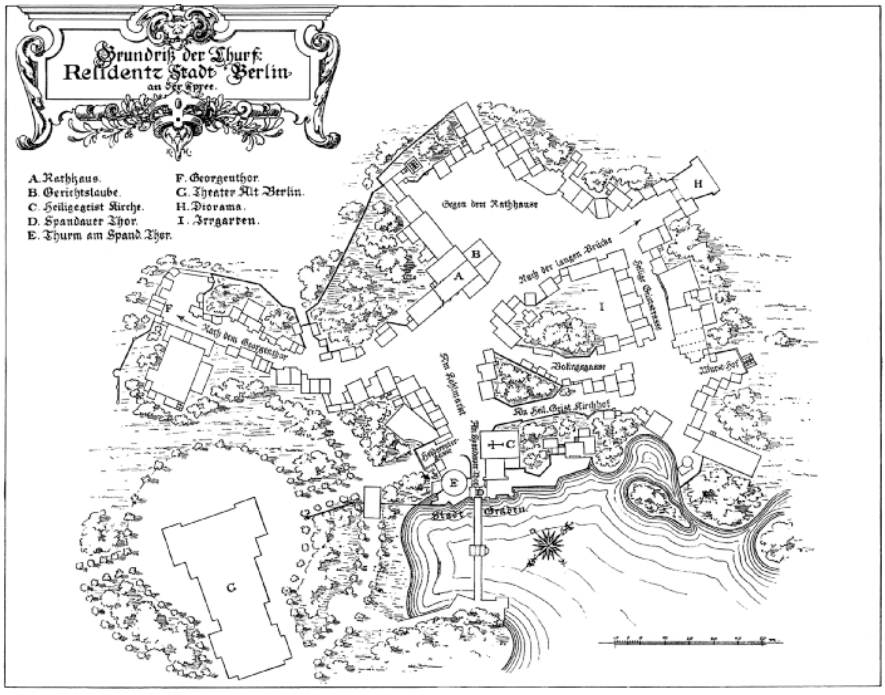

Figure 2.14 Southeast-oriented ground plan of *Alt-Berlin*, located along the exposition's central west–east axis and adjacent to the colonial exhibition
Source: Rapsilber, *Offizieller Führer durch die Spezial-Ausstellung Alt-Berlin*, 88–9.

deduced from the fact that *Alt-Berlin*'s site, including the 'Theater Alt-Berlin', was situated along a direct prolongation of the exposition's central west–east axis and was, thus, in line with the main building and the new lake. Its function as a contrast was reinforced by its placement directly bordering the colonial exhibition. A retrospective section of this size had not been foreseen in the exhibition's original concept, and was added only later when the fair's overall layout had to be altered because of the limitations placed on the site. When the non-profit making *Verein für die Geschichte Berlins* (Society for the History of Berlin) found it impossible to finance the creation of *Alt-Berlin*, a commercially oriented syndicate was formed, with the Society remaining responsible for the section's 'artistic' management. Additionally, it also provided many of the exhibits and, with the help of its members and their personal collections, organized a historical section of its own.[92]

Alt-Berlin was entirely surrounded by high merlon walls, with only two entrances, and featured numerous historic structures such as two gates, the 'Spandauer Thor' [letter D in Figure 2.14] and the 'Georgenthor' [F], a museum, a chapel 'Zum Heiligen Geiste' [C] containing a special exhibition of more than 200 pieces of Berlin memorabilia, a town hall [A], a massive round tower as its 'true symbol' [E],

and a number of restaurants which soon proved both popular and lucrative. The structures, especially the monumental 'Spandauer Thor', were meant to be a historical counterpoint to the fair's modern main building. In addition, there was a huge diorama [H], a historical maze of Dutch origin where 'spectators could turn into actors' [I] as well as the already mentioned theater [G], where scenes from Berlin's urban past were reenacted by more than 500 participants. Altogether, *Alt-Berlin* comprised some 120 structures. According to official numbers, almost 1.8 million tickets for *Alt-Berlin* alone were sold in the course of the six months during which the exhibition was open, making it and the colonial sections the most profitable of the entire exposition.[93]

Despite being an overall success, *Alt-Berlin* was not untouched by conflict. Already in the run-up to the exposition, the *Verein für die Geschichte Berlins* had complained bitterly that commercial interests were taking precedence over accuracy in some of the historical reproductions staged. It was widely criticized that some of the lease-holders had disfigured the historical house-façades with huge 'modern' advertisement posters to increase profits.[94] Although the entire exhibition tried all possible ways of convincingly demonstrating Berlin's self-perceived modernity as a newly established world city and to position itself in a Europe-wide framework, such modernity swiftly proved very unwelcome when it appeared in unsuitable places and without the approval of the authorities. *Alt-Berlin* functioned on a time- rather than a space-related mode of representation. The second half of the seventeenth century, roughly from the 1650s onwards, had been selected as the broad historical reference point to which, in one way or another, all historical reproductions and re-enactments had to relate – the time of the end of the Thirty Years' War and the legendary *Großer Kurfürst* (Grand Prince-elector) of Prussia, and before Berlin's transformation into a fortress. In flowery language that echoed the section's historicity, an architectural journal explained why this period in particular had been chosen:

> Gates, circular walls and fortified towers, winding streets and lanes, the market with the town hall and courthouse, the Dutch windmill, all the cozy picturesque houses and cottages of the Berlin patricians and farmers, with their oriel windows and little towers, weather vanes, their flights of steps and little, almost hidden summerhouses, all these have reappeared, leading us back to times when the life of our ancestors passed tranquilly. Yet, the same times contained the seeds of the great prosperity which this modest, medieval little town was to achieve in the course of the centuries.[95]

Perceived as a historical watershed, the mid-seventeenth century allowed for sufficient distance in time to evoke a sense of unfamiliarity, yet was not too remote to have no direct historical connection and hence relevance.

Alt-Berlin's concept was for visitors to enter a time warp from the moment they set foot on the site, and from there to undertake a journey through time (Figure 2.15). For this reason, its over 500 employees were obliged to wear historical costumes. 'Every day', an announcement read, 'between 1 and 11 o'clock, there will alternately

Figure 2.15 View of the 'Spandauer Thor', the architectural *clou* of *Alt-Berlin*
Source: Courtesy of Landesarchiv Berlin, F Rep. 290-09-01, Nr. 61/5325.

be choirs and music, parades and tournaments to entertain the spectators so that they really feel transported back into the seventeenth century', and the official guide spoke likewise of 'an utterly different world' and 'times long past' into which one would feel transported.[96] Professional observers agreed, going so far as to call this multiple contrast (past vs. present/here vs. there) the central aim of the entire section: 'Artistically and artificially, its main effect is to take the visitor back in time, in which in contrast to today, the life of the individual flowed like a tranquil stream whose murmuring was hardly audible to the neighbors and seldom broke its banks. Today, all this is quite different, and Old Berlin will make its visitors aware of such contrasts.'[97] The explicit and deliberately chronotopic character was more than evident. Yet there was an additional, escapist motive besides the intrinsic lure of the past: *Alt-Berlin* seemed to allow the visitor to flee from the 'sober realism of today' (*das Nüchterne der Jetztzeit*) into a more glamorous and less troubled past.[98]

The reception was mixed, and the opinions expressed by no means homogenous. A number of German observers lauded *Alt-Berlin* precisely for this past-oriented, chronotopic character and extolled its authenticity. 'It is very satisfying', the architect and expositionist →Franz Jaffé commented in the *Berliner Neueste Nachrichten*, 'to meet a more or less exact description of Berlin at that time […]. Living in this modern monster, Berliners rarely find occasion to think back to their forebears', thus evoking a contrast to the surrounding metropolis and its garish

modernity. Another observer also noted with appreciation, that 'when strolling through these very dignified streets, one is forced into a historical frame of mind', almost literally echoing the official guide's instructions.[99] Other, mostly foreign, critics however, better informed about recent developments in international expositions, proved less benevolent and altogether more disapproving. Referencing similar retrospective ensembles in different European cities and thus accentuating *Alt-Berlin*'s lack of conceptual originality, a French journal, for example, showed little enthusiasm. It also criticized the apparently arbitrary way in which the organizers had chosen objects and exhibits for the different displays:

> Since the success a few years ago in Turin of a Middle Ages village, and in Paris in 1889 of the 'Bastille and Rue Saint-Antoine', every exposition thinks it should offer its visitors something analogous. 'Old Anvers' provided the charm of the Belgian exposition in 1894; Prague in 1895, and Cardiff and Rouen right now are endeavoring in their local exhibitions to flatter the public taste for this kind of resurrection of the past – and Berlin has followed these examples. But 'Old Berlin' is much less successful. […] The reconstructions of 'Old Berlin' and of 'Cairo' are adaptations or imitations of what has been done elsewhere.[100]

What seemed innovative and effective within a local or national setting, proved much less so when seen in a larger, transnational context, even if this particular feature had been further developed in Berlin. Thus, *Alt-Berlin* contributed, though unintentionally, to the medium's historical process of differentiation in general.

Wilhelm II versus Georg Simmel

As is the case with every exposition, the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung's reception, or rather its consumption, is difficult to ascertain. There were (and still are) as many ways of reading an exhibition, both historically and today, as were presented in its numerous sections and subsections, buildings and exhibits, both official and unofficial. There can be no doubt, however, that it left a deep and lasting impression on the Berlin public which had never experienced anything so spectacular. The number of letters and postcards – themselves 'tangible reflections of an ephemeral past' – sent from the venue may serve as a valuable indicator of the mega-event's popularity: According to official calculations, almost one-quarter of the 7.4 million visitors wrote altogether more than two million letters and, most often, sent picture postcards directly from the venue itself, for the purpose of which 200 different varieties were issued and 20 special letter boxes installed in the grounds.[101] The historian can only speculate about the innumerable messages and greetings, opinions, observations and comments originating from, expressed about and communicated through the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung.

But there is further evidence for its absolute, if transitory, socio-cultural centrality during the summer of 1896. The influential journalist, drama critic and raconteur → Alfred Kerr, for instance, reported extensively on the Gewerbeausstellung in his letters regularly published in the *Breslauer Zeitung*.[102] Apart from numerous acute

observations, his letters convey a sense of the enormous excitement the exposition caused within Berlin upper-class circles well before, throughout, and even after the grand event. In the summer of 1896, the Gewerbeausstellung was clearly *the* talk of the town: 'At present, everything seems to revolve around the exhibition', Kerr diagnosed, 'all Berlin is under the spell of one idea and one destination: Treptow. The exhibition attracts visitors [...] as if by magic. With every visit, one discovers new sections where one is quite content to linger.' Public opinion seems to have overlapped to a considerable degree. It is remarkable, though, the extent to which all this was carefully orchestrated and arranged by the Ausstellung's official Pressbureau and Propaganda-Bureau, created exclusively for the purpose of orchestrating public opinion. 'There has never been so large a local exhibition nor, in its contents, one so significant as the Berlin Trade Exhibition of 1896', Goldberger himself concluded after the fair's closure in October 1896, and continued: 'It is indeed considered one of the major world exhibitions and really deserves this somewhat extravagant claim. The world press has reported enthusiastically on the marvels to be seen in Treptower Park, and even less enthusiastic critics had to admit that here one encountered a place of great import.' A collection of official press releases, now housed in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and consisting of pre-written articles, ready for print, which the Pressbureau placed at the disposal of various newspapers, raises far-reaching questions about the authorship of the material traditionally used to analyze patterns and processes of reception and appropriation. The widespread usage of such pre-formulated material by editors and journalists may help to explain the significant overlap of 'official' and publicized opinions, and the relative absence of critical coverage in the media.[103]

Yet, even if criticism was thus muted, some critical analysis did emerge. Given the enormous repercussions of this local mega-event, it is unsurprising that sociologist Georg Simmel published his seminal article on the Berlin trade exhibition in *Die Zeit*, a weekly Viennese newspaper. This brief and little-known essay represents, in its lucidity and conciseness, one of the best analyses of any exposition. Whereas the text's theoretical qualities and conceptual statements relevant to other exhibitions were discussed in the introduction, here Simmel's argument about the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung, and the specific role he ascribed to its host city, is relevant.[104]

In Simmel's complex analysis, the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung served as a prototype laboratory of modernity, an experimental theater and testing-ground for Berlin's new position as a world city, a genuine metropolis. Among the seven theoretical and one historical argument Simmel advanced concerning the role, function and importance of expositions in modernity, two specifically apply to the Berlin fair. Though Simmel's other six arguments relate to different expositions, it is noteworthy that he developed these generic arguments in response to the Gewerbeausstellung, a largely national trade exhibition, which he nevertheless discussed as if it were a world exhibition proper, without differentiating between a universal and a purely local exposition.[105] In Simmel's analysis, the inherently paradoxical character of the Berlin event is revealed only in his conclusion. Having argued that each world exhibition created a 'momentary center of world

civilization' where the intrinsic 'shop-window quality of things' is exposed – and which thus *nolens volens* elevates the surrounding city to an actual world city – Simmel raised doubts as to Berlin's status vis-à-vis other West European capitals. Could the *Reichshauptstadt* really compete with metropolises such as Vienna, London and, above all, Paris? Simmel categorically rejected such a possibility. In spite of its unprecedented urban growth and the promise of the exposition itself, Berlin could never equal Paris, nor keep pace with the international standards set there. The German capital had undoubtedly been transformed into a world city, yet not on the Parisian scale. Simmel did not resolve the question of the exposition's complex success or failure so doggedly discussed by most other observers. Rather, he projected the problem into the future when the exhibition's aesthetic impulses would, hopefully, have had sustained effects on the exhibiting city. In quite an unexpected way then, Wilhelm II's and Georg Simmel's respective assessments were similar. Both ascribed a largely uncontrollable but fundamentally globalizing potential to the exposition medium. However, while Wilhelm II feared the globalization of vice, Simmel cordially welcomed the arrival and spread of that type of visualized consumer culture, cosmopolitanism and condensed urban spaces that were, for him, linked inextricably with modernity.[106]

Simmel's powerful interpretation and brilliant analysis was confirmed by other less eloquent but equally prominent critics who argued along similar lines, using city and nation, consumption and cosmopolitanism as interpretative tools and argumentative elements to contextualize and thus to make sense of what they perceived at the Treptow site. One observer, for example, felt overwhelmed by his sublime experience, describing an imaginary sun rising from the Treptow venue, stretching its beneficial rays all over both Berlin and his beloved German *Heimat*. 'I saw', he commemorated raptly, 'all these proud buildings, with thousands and thousands of visitors from every corner of the world, I saw how they were all filled with admiration and quite happy to take out their purses to buy as many of the splendid treasures on offer as possible, and I had the feeling that this exhibition radiated a glow that warmed all Berlin, and in fact, spread over all our German fatherland.'[107]

Other prominent critics – all of whom have already appeared in the course of this chapter – included Julius Lessing, Franz Jaffé, Friedrich Naumann, and Franz Reuleaux. The first, museum director Julius Lessing, for instance, drew a careful distinction between the huge success of the exhibition in the eyes of the normal fair-going public, and the doubts he, as a serious critic, expressed, especially concerning the seemingly haphazard and unrepresentative choice of exhibits. Mediocrity was the inevitable consequence: 'Everywhere mediocrity abounds, […] pettiness dominates', Lessing lamented. That the Gewerbeausstellung had achieved the popular success it clearly did, could not, he felt, be attributed to its creative, conceptual originality or the superior quality of its displays, but rather reflected the overwhelming demand for spectacle on the part of the Berlin public. The exposition succeeded to such an extent because the metropolis had for many years been longing for this type of event.[108]

Another prominent commentator, Friedrich Naumann, regularly reported from the exhibition venue for a self-edited journal entitled *Die Hilfe*, just as Franz Reuleaux had done for the *National-Zeitung* 30 years earlier. Fully aware of the exhibition's representational significance, he did not deem it trifling or ineffectual, in fact quite the reverse. Rather than 'the world itself', Naumann pleaded for the Gewerbeausstellung to be read as a 'shop-window of the industrial world' – thus choosing the same terminology as Simmel – where nothing less than a substantial 'part of the future' would be decided. Since 'all historical times, landscapes and types of business' had been assembled and condensed here in a clearly delimited and well-defined site, nowhere else could one gain such profound insights into 'modern labor'. The role of the visitors and spectators grew from the encompassing and comprehensive character of this carefully staged and consciously enacted scenario, he suggested, proclaiming: 'The prime task of the visitor is to see! Here you have to drink with your eyes.' While many of his unsystematic and often detail-oriented observations remained impressionistic, Naumann still aimed to comprehend the exposition in its totality and to analyze its meaning for and within a wider social context. Asked whether the Berlin trade exhibition had appealed to him, Naumann pithily responded, 'generally speaking, yes', but then continued more critically, challenging the question's legitimacy, and highlighting instead the exhibition's character as both commerce- and consumption-oriented:

> Basically, the question whether the exhibition has given pleasure either to me or anybody else, is quite insignificant. What does it matter whether I enjoyed it or not? An exhibition is not like a Sunday boat trip which has no other aim than simply to entertain. The exhibition intends to be business on a grand scale and must be judged as such.

Consequently, Naumann made it clear that he wanted the exhibition to be understood principally in its effects on the world economy and hence in a global, capitalistic context, declaring it a 'parade of capitalistic production'.[109]

Considering the event from a broader, albeit somewhat condescending perspective, foreign correspondents generally remained more reserved. Having covered the various turns of the *Weltausstellungsfrage* in great detail, *The Times* of London limited its reporting to two largely favorable articles, while the *New York Times* deemed the Gewerbeausstellung 'not an impressive fair'. According to the already mentioned anonymous and surprisingly well-informed French critic, the exposition could have succeeded as it did only within a German environment; in an international context it had little unusual to offer. It was only because the inhabitants of Berlin were not used to better projects – more elaborate, far grander – that they could enjoy themselves here so well. Thus, a critical view of the general provinciality of the German metropolis was transferred to the subjective realm of its visitors' experience. Cut off from the outside world, their pleasure and amusement was seen as final proof of the city's insurmountable belatedness and lack of sophistication. 'In truth, Berlin has a certain prestige in the rest of Germany', the critic

explained. 'So possibly the Industrial Exhibition of Berlin is drawing Germans, but this is not absolutely certain. It is unlikely to attract foreigners. Berlin is not a city of pleasure.' 'Berlin is a large, populous and thriving city, and, if not beautiful, at any rate massive enough to deserve the name of a *Großstadt*', *The Times* agreed, 'but it still lacks that indescribable something which would entitle it, in company with London, Paris, and some other capitals, to recognition as a *Weltstadt*.'[110] If international expositions derived a large part of their representational quality and appeal not only from the intrinsic temporal tension between transience and permanence, but also from the constantly varying interplay between different spatial-geographical – global, national and local – constituents, the decision for an exhibition limited to Berlin, rather than the world, resulted in a clear shift towards the latter of these three elements – a characteristic feature which Simmel, accordingly, chose as the central point of departure for his entire analysis.

In the end, is the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung accurately described as a national success but an international failure? This much is certain: The exhibition was subject to – and, in fact, accurately mirrored – Berlin's insecure status as a would-be global city. 'It is difficult for the Berliner Gewerbe-Ausstellung 1896 to find the right measure', conceded the official catalogue with regards to the difficulty of placing the fair in its appropriate context, with Wilhelm II betraying the same lack of confidence when he added the tentative '(perhaps?)' to his 'Berlin is a great city, a world city' in the afore-quoted letter. In retrospect, the organizing *Verein Berliner Kaufleute und Industrieller* showed itself far more satisfied with what had been achieved, calling the exhibition a 'commercial and moral success of which we have every reason to be proud'. 'We may say […] that the Berlin trade exhibition of 1896, despite its limitations as a local event mainly aimed at German industry, achieved in terms of effect and importance the status of a world exhibition that does not fear comparison with many of the previous expositions, as regards the scope and value of its display.' The organizers' endeavor to make the Gewerbeausstellung appear as a somewhat reduced world exhibition was shared by consumers and critics alike. Some even considered it superior to *any* universal exposition previously held, since it had 'exceeded almost everything hitherto […] displayed at world exhibitions', as an important German architectural journal concluded. Given the initial discursive context of the *Weltausstellungsfrage*, from which the project originated, such an argumentative rhetorical maneuver was unsurprising and is perhaps best understood as a self-fulfilling prophecy.[111]

Yet the organizers' official position remained unavoidably contradictory. Although they never tired of repeating that the Gewerbeausstellung could count – possibly not *de jure*, but certainly *de facto* – as a world exhibition, they nevertheless labeled it a 'trial run', a 'final rehearsal' or a 'test case' that was necessary before the next 'logical' step, the organization of a German universal exposition, could be taken. Berlin had just 'passed the final test' which would justify a later world exhibition, the argument went. Again, there was significant agreement between the organizing bodies and the public. Press and critics alike agreed on the exposition's precursory character: greater things were yet to come. On the occasion of the exhibition's closure in October 1896, the *Vossische Zeitung* drew a historical parallel

to the 1879 exposition, declaring that 'the exhibition of 1879 was a preparation for that of 1896. The trade exhibition of 1896 is a forerunner of the international exhibition which Berlin will and must hold in the near future.' Strategically downplaying the exhibition's financial deficit, writer Alfred Kerr concluded his final letter on the trade exhibition by anticipating a future German world exhibition: 'And yet: what does a paltry million matter?', he wrote: 'It has been found from other sources, and we have in turn been afforded quite remarkable sights. The trade exhibition is dead: long live the coming world exhibition!'[112]

Judged by the standards set by international expositions held in London, Paris, Vienna and elsewhere, the Berliner Gewerbeausstellung was unquestionably a minor event, even if it tried very hard to position itself within various trans-European networks. Yet, in a national and specifically local context, its central importance and long-lasting psychic effects can hardly be overestimated. Its role and function in what historian Heinz Reif calls the process of 'innere Reichshauptstadtbildung' (creating a capital city considered worthy of the German Empire) were of great significance. The same holds true of the entire debate surrounding the *Weltausstellungsfrage*. 'At this point, Berlin consciously became aware of itself', a souvenir volume reflected. Soon, this was taken as the final proof that Berlin had, at long last, achieved a genuine *Weltstadtphysiognomie* (physiognomy of a world city), putting it on a par with global cities such as London or Paris. However, the moment proved fleeting, giving rise neither to a Berlin exhibition tradition nor leaving any direct legacy. Just a few days after the Gewerbeausstellung's official closure on 15 October 1896, a newspaper marked its demise with a melancholy air, hailing 'the enterprise that, in the course of the whole summer, had become the hallmark of Berlin'. Soon after, its structures were completely dismantled, leaving far fewer material traces on the urban fabric than other expositions. Indeed, it was precisely this fleeting dimension, oscillating between permanence and transience, which Georg Simmel considered central to the so-called *Ausstellungsprincip*.[113]