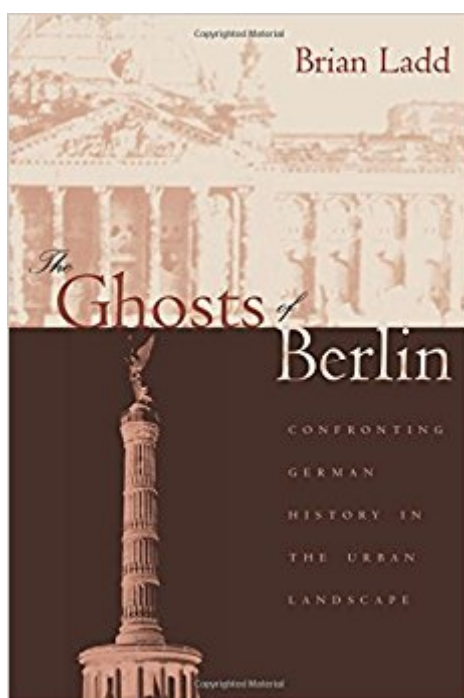


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# The Ghosts Of Berlin: Confronting German History In The Urban Landscape



## Synopsis

In this compelling work, Brian Ladd examines the ongoing conflicts radiating from the remarkable fusion of architecture, history, and national identity in Berlin. Ladd surveys the urban landscape, excavating its ruins, contemplating its buildings and memorials, and carefully deconstructing the public debates and political controversies emerging from its past. "Written in a clear and elegant style, *The Ghosts of Berlin* is not just another colorless architectural history of the German capital. . . . Mr. Ladd's book is a superb guide to this process of urban self-definition, both past and present." —Katharina Thote, *Wall Street Journal* "If a book can have the power to change a public debate, then *The Ghosts of Berlin* is such a book. Among the many new books about Berlin that I have read, Brian Ladd's is certainly the most impressive. . . . Ladd's approach also owes its success to the fact that he is a good storyteller. His history of Berlin's architectural successes and failures reads entertainingly like a detective novel." —Peter Schneider, *New Republic* "[Ladd's] well-written and well-illustrated book amounts to a brief history of the city as well as a guide to its landscape." —Anthony Grafton, *New York Review of Books*

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ladd (*Urban Planning and Civic Order in Germany, 1860-1914*, Harvard Univ., 1990) approaches the new Germany and its handling of memory in an interesting manner. Memory, Ladd points out, also extends to the urban landscape. The leaders of the new Berlin have begun massive architectural projects to restore the capital to its former greatness. To build this future, however,

they must see the past. Can a new Berlin be built on the ruins of Hitler's bunker, asks the author? Ladd covers a number of architectural features in Berlin and the many political controversies arising from its past. For example, what should be done about the Berlin Wall? Ladd makes the point that Berlin's buildings are indeed some of the ghosts haunting the city. A valuable addition to academic libraries. ?Dennis L. Noble, North Olympic Lib. Sys., Port Angeles, Wash. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Digital edition.

With erudition, insight and restraint, Brian Ladd ... carries off the dangerous task of analyzing architecture and urbanism in the once and future capital of Germany in terms of its horrific political past. He convincingly argues that architecture embodies ideological meaning more powerfully than other artifacts of a society. -- The New York Times Book Review, Martin Filler --This text refers to the Digital edition.

In this dated history of Berlin, the author posits the idea that buildings, statues, ruins, and architecture in general matter. Yes, they do. Places like the Berlin Wall, the Reichstag, Hitler's chancellery, Prussian palaces and street names reveal a lot of about the citizens of Berlin. Especially in how these places' history and present and future are debated. I am reminded of the phrase that nothing is as dated as yesterday's vision of the future. So while this book excels in recapping the history of particular sites, especially the debates about reconstruction, the book itself is hopelessly out of date. A lot has happened in Berlin in the past twenty years. And some of the debates of the book are settled. This book needs a serious update to reflect the landscape of Berlin in the 21st century. The author does a good job of injecting the voices of the debate into his story at the beginning of each of the chapters through the use of quotes. But he also has a tone and a pessimism that is a bit off-putting, especially when he states "Politicians and architects who want to put to rest the ghosts of Berlin are probably doomed to failure." I disagree. Vehemently. The author should go to Berlin today in 2016 and see if still agrees with that statement of his. Still, there was a lot of good material and the author captured a snapshot of a time now long past. Thankfully. I am quite happy that the Berlin of the 21st century is a dynamic city that is once again capturing the imagination of the world.

Provides a great insight into the history of Germany and its architecture. Was required to buy it for my foreign study abroad class and ended up greatly enjoying it. Lots of great insights and extremely in depth view on the significance of Nazi architecture and its current impacts. Additionally my Host

mom loved the perspective it provided and enjoyed reading it. Not too long of a read and excellent chapter divisions. You get a lot of information for a fair price.

Brian Ladd brings forth a wonderful treatise of just how Berlin is transforming itself after its reunification after the Cold War. I can think of no other city in the world carrying as much baggage as Berlin. Ladd's approach in dealing with the ghosts of Berlin is to give a history lesson as to the specific areas and neighborhoods within the city limits. In doing this the author deals with the architecture of the city. He explains how certain areas developed and how the architecture of those areas came to be. The historical significance of structures is explained by Ladd. He explains structures that had political and historical significance even they no longer exist. Such was explained at the beginning in explaining the Berlin Wall. From that point on, Ladd delves into Old Berlin with its palaces and Medieval Berlin with The Nikolai Quarter. He goes onto explaining the significance of The Brandenburg Gate with its rich history and how the structure has changed and been rebuilt several times. Such famous structures dominant in late 19th century and early 20th century from The Reichstag, The Mietskaserne and the development of Potsdamer Platz bring forth arguments in Berlin as to rebuild these areas as they were or not to do so. Hence the Berliners are at a quandary as what to do about their history. Should Berlin rebuild as of old or wipe the slate clean with a new and different Berlin. The arguments become more intense especially with such structures brought forth during the twelve year rule of Nazi Germany. Many Berliners want all presence of old Nazi structures to be gone forever. However there is an argument that Berliners must never forget the misdeeds of their heritage. These are difficult arguments which must be eventually brought to a head. Ladd explains the ruins of post WWII Berlin and what was destroyed and how East Berlin differed in its architectural development from how West Berlin dealt with rebuilding. When I was stationed in Germany in 1970/71 I went to Berlin three times. Not only was I in West Berlin but as a soldier I had access to go to East Berlin. What I saw startled me. In West Berlin you saw new infrastructure everywhere. New roads, new buildings with current technology were prevalent throughout West Berlin. West Berlin was a ray of sunshine amid the darkness of surrounding East Germany and East Berlin. Once you crossed over at Checkpoint Charlie into East Berlin, you saw the drabness of the color gray. There was no sunshine! Buildings were scarred with shrapnel indentations and the roads resembled the Ho Chi Minh trail on all side streets. Ladd explains some of the attempts such as Stalinallee which was developed to impress the West. However in all reality most of East Berlin resembled ghetto areas of slums which were barely adequate and was in stark contrast to West Berlin. Ladd also deals with the monuments so

prevalent both in East Berlin and West Berlin. Arguments are detailed as to what should be retained and what should be destroyed. Heavy and meaningful arguments come from both sides. This shows to us the quandary when dealing with the ghosts and the history of this city. Ladd shows a city in transition, which truly shows to one and all just how flexible and forward looking are the people who call Berlin their home. This is a haunting book which deals with a city trying to move onto the future with a careful eye on the past. Great read!!

Fine history of a complex city.

Having just moved to Berlin I wanted a reference that was more than just an overview of what occurred here. This book gives me a real sense of the underlying history behind the city that I walk through every day. I live in an apartment that was once in no mans land before the wall came down. Reading about the wall and the Berliners sometimes surprising attitudes toward it (I want my wall back!) gives me a sense of perspective I can draw on when talking to locals who have lived through all the amazing changes to the city.

I read this book in preparation for a trip to Berlin. The book is well-suited for this as it provides historical and geographical context for the city as it covers many sites that a tourist will check out, along with many others. A compelling story about Berlin's built environment and how the city's various previous incarnations haunt it. Only drawback is that it was written in the 1990's, and is now in need of a sequel.

I agree with the other reviewers who praise this book as a great combination of history and architectural guide. Even if you don't plan to visit Berlin, the book is excellent in showing how choices about monuments and architecture have larger symbolic value in expressing a culture, and for Berlin the question of what "culture" to express after World War II is especially fascinating. This book is especially valuable in conjunction with an actual visit to Berlin. I fortunately discovered it on during my time in Berlin and was able to download it to my Kindle. (I wish I had known about it beforehand, and I didn't see it in Berlin museum bookstores.) This is a must-read book for anyone visiting Berlin, anyone with a strong interest in the city, or anyone interested in how choices about an urban landscape express the values of a culture.

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