



2006

## *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality.* Tim Edensor.

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### Recommended Citation

Leighninger, Robert (2006) "*Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics and Materiality.* Tim Edensor," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 33 : Iss. 2 , Article 21.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol33/iss2/21>

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uneven and at times repetitive. Nevertheless, the book contains many valuable contributions. Some of the chapters discuss the legal basis for health and human rights and these will be particularly useful to those who are not familiar with the issues. Other are forward-looking examining, for example, the role of human rights in cloning and genetic manipulation. Some of the chapters present country case studies designed to examine the interaction of health and human rights. These chapters present very concrete examples of the need for a human rights perspective when addressing health issues such as maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS and the role of health professionals in executions in the United States. The chapters dealing with the teaching of human rights in the health education, and the measurement of human rights will be of particular value to social policy and social work researchers. This book is an essential resource for anyone interested in the interface between human rights and social welfare, and it should be widely consulted.

Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Space, Aesthetics, and Materiality*.  
New York: Berg, 2005. \$28.95 papercover.

Tim Edensor believes that most of us see industrial ruins as places which have outlived their usefulness and become dangerous eyesores. He sees them in a far more positive light. They are not only a useful commentary on the failure of the promises of capitalism, but also a source of many unexpected benefits. Ruins offer shelter to homeless humans, sanctuary to animals whose natural habitat is being destroyed, stage sets for post-apocalypse movies, and playgrounds for adventurous children and adults. They are salutary counterpoints to the homogeneity, predictability, and control that the rest of the built environment imposes upon us. They embody the memories of past struggles, accomplishments, and defeats of the people who once moved within these spaces. For the student of social welfare, industrial ruins catalogue many deficiencies and needs in modern society. If they didn't exist, we would either have to invent them or alter the system that uses them as safety valves.

Ruins also offer opportunities for adaptive reuse and

historic preservation. On this, however, Edensor is ambivalent. He says it is "cranky" to nurture decay, but gentrification serves parasitic developers; and preservation, because it is selective, falsifies history. Too often, the "heritage industry" promotes "memory drenched in masculinised ideologies." "Expert" interpretations brush aside diverse individual memories that may well conflict but still provide a truer account of these places. Edensor overlooks the fact that these folk remembrings are often the sources of the masculinised ideologies in the first place. He might take a look at the folk vs. expert accounts of the Alamo or Culloden Moor.

There are certain contradictions in the argument. Ruins may indeed offer a critique of the "capitalist myth of endless prosperity," but are they critiques of capitalism? If capitalism did not provide ruins, Edensor would not be able to write this worthy celebration of their manifold contributions to our quality of life. One might argue from the evidence of this book that capitalism is a fruitful dialectic of order and disorder, monotony and diversity.

If one sees ruins as ugly and dangerous places without use or value, this book will be an eye-opener. If one already has some appreciation for their pleasures and lessons, it will seem twice as long as it needs to be. There are a few too many rants against commodification, laundry lists of artifacts, and rhapsodic descriptions of the sights, textures, smells (and risks) of strolling through ruins. The basic arguments, which are not all that complicated, are repeated several times. The prose makes it seem even longer, strewn with complex sentences, rambling paragraphs, and overwrought words like proformativity, scopie, hideosity, mediatisation, alterity, and affordances. Innocent nouns, verbs and adjectives are tortured into service as other parts of speech. Foreground, used as a verb, is a favorite; something is foregrounded almost every third page. Repetitive or not, this book raises important issues and, for some will provide a revolutionary perspective. One needn't read every word to get the point, and the point is well worth getting.

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