

The Memory of Abandoned Places

Olga Divišová

University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, České Budějovice, Czechia

e-mail: odivisova@pf.jcu.cz

This paper is based on the theoretical part of the doctoral dissertation *Traces of Abandoned Places* and explores abandoned places as carriers of cultural memory rather than merely as objects of physical decay. Abandoned places are often associated with loss and the passage of time. At the same time, they preserve traces of human activity and represent an important part of cultural heritage. The paper examines urban exploration (urbex) as a way of understanding abandoned places beyond their physical deterioration, focusing on its historical development, ethical principles, and relationship to the aesthetics of ruins. The theoretical framework draws on philosophical and art-historical concepts, including the aesthetics of the picturesque and the sublime, Georg Simmel's interpretation of ruins, and the changing perception of abandoned architecture from Romanticism to the present. It also considers selected approaches to cultural heritage and collective memory. The paper argues that urban exploration is not only a means of documenting abandoned sites but also a way of preserving the memory of places that are gradually disappearing from the landscape. By recording their visual form and historical context, urbex contributes to a deeper understanding of their cultural value and highlights the importance of abandoned places as witnesses of historical change.

