12 Waste and value in urban transformation

Reflections on a post-industrial 'wasteland' in Manchester

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Introduction: place-as-waste

This chapter examines changing conceptions of wastelands, particularly in the case of former industrial districts of cities in advanced capitalist economies. It explores the historical development of the wasteland concept, as well as informal and formal reappropriations of 'wasted' post-industrial spaces, in processes of urban social, cultural, economic, and ecological change. In these ambivalent (Jorgensen and Tylecote 2007), vague (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995; Miller 2006; Barron 2014), and sometimes contemptuous (Armstrong 2006) sites, what is wasted in an urban wasteland, and to whom is this a problem? In exploring the discursive construction of place-as-waste, the dialectical relationship between waste and value becomes of central concern.

Among the most sustained considerations of so-called 'urban wastelands', and the process of wasting more broadly, has been the planning theorist Kevin Lynch (1960, 1972; Appleyard *et al.* 1964), particularly his final, posthumously published book, *Wasting Away* (1990). In this exploratory text, Lynch departs from prescriptiveness of 'good city form' and urban 'imageability' to appeal for the acceptance of wasting as a necessary social, ecological, and material process. To him, waste was:

> what is worthless or un-used for human purpose. It is a lessening of something without useful result; it is loss and abandonment, decline, separation and death. It is the spent and valueless material left after some act of production or consumption, but can also refer to any used thing: garbage, trash, litter, junk, impurity and dirt. There are waste things, waste lands, waste time and wasted lives.
>
> (1990: 146)

Lynch was primarily concerned with the 'wasting of place' in universal processes of wasting and decay, and specifically with how planning could accommodate the process of 'wasting well'. While there are limitations to normalization of waste and the prevailing political-economic relations that produce it, this process-based approach helps contextualize wastelands with the social production of space (Lefebvre 2009 [1974]). The quality of waste is

defined by circulation (Trotter 1988), and wastelands are a product of changing flows of people over ever-increasing distances, aided by fixed assets embodied in transportation and communication infrastructures (Harvey 1982; Graham and Marvin 2001). Understanding an urban wasteland means interpreting the changes in capital flows and shifting power geometries (Massey 2005) at global and local scales: rather than circulation of waste, this shifts attention to waste as a result of changing patterns and scales of circulation. Drawing from critical urban theory (Brenner 2012), this analysis requires a non-instrumental analysis of urban change that focuses on conflict rather than consensus.

This chapter seeks to explore how the flight of industrial capital from cities has generated the production and perception of urban wastelands. Proliferating in the *terrains vagues* (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995) of deindustrialization and fragmented spaces of infrastructure, wastelands are defined by their disorderly or unmaintained appearance, their functional or perceived underutilization, the anxiety they inspire (Picon 2000), and their economic underperformance (Di Palma 2014). Therefore, their wastefulness is defined, first, through an apparent lack of social or economic value and second, through the presence of waste matter, ruination, transgressive social behaviour, and 'wild' nature. As temporal as they are spatial (Stavrides 2014), wastelands demonstrate that waste is not only 'matter out of place' (Douglas 2002 [1966]) but, at a particular moment, places that do not matter. However, as these sites generally go overlooked and unmentioned, their classification as wastelands often occurs at the moment when development pressure makes reconfiguration profitable.

Wastelands have held an ambivalent position in the post-industrial urban imaginary (Campkin 2013): to urban planners, they may be a 'valuable strategic asset for localities' (Bowman and Pagano 2004), with the emphasis of increasing intensity of use and increasing a city's tax base. With public subsidy and increasing policy emphasis on urban densification (DETR 1999), these sites have become the most important locations for contemporary urban redevelopment (Berens 2011). However, imperatives for redevelopment and increased urban density are complicated by the fact that wastelands are being reimagined as unique habitats of urban biodiversity and aesthetic curiosity (Gandy 2013) and 'loose' public spaces (Franck and Stevens 2006), often defined by the intermingling presence of industrial ruins (Edensor 2005; Garrett 2013). Clearly, there are multiple *values* embedded in waste spaces (Gidwani and Reddy 2011), and economistic concerns for the valuelessness of urban wastelands often subsume social and cultural values (recreation, heritage, public space, shelter) and ecological value (which may be justified by cultural or economical values, i.e. 'ecosystem services') against economic value (embodied in exchange value of land and the potential profits of redevelopment).

To illustrate the conflicting values embedded in an urban wasteland, I focus on the former docklands of Pomona Island in Manchester, England. I aim to distinguish different discourses mobilized by various interest groups in relation to the current and future use of this superficially 'empty' site. This draws on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted between 2009 and 2012, semi-structured

interviews conducted between 2009 and 2015, and analysis of planning and policy documents from the 1980s to present. As I will argue, the mobilization of the term 'wasteland' in public discourse is a normative instrument, utilized to justify the reconfiguration and profit-making potential of a site and to de-emphasize any values that conflict with this goal. In short, it is a term that obfuscates as much as it reveals.

Waste+land: landscapes and land uses in a historical context

In terms of thinking of land as a category of waste, it helps to consider the mutually constitutive relationship between waste and value in classical political economy. Locke (1988 [1681]) saw the transformation of waste to usefulness (in the case of land, through cultivation or other 'improvements') as the defining moment of political modernity. Gidwani and Reddy (2011) argue that waste is 'indexical of the necessity for an ordering rule of property' (Gidwani and Reddy 2011: 1626) and that the concept of 'waste' is 'the specter that haunts the modern notion of "value"' (Gidwani and Reddy 2011: 1627), since it emphasizes inefficiencies, insufficient wealth generation, and unexploited resources. Both 'waste' and 'value' also imply moralized connotations and economic quantifications of wealth (or lack thereof), with 'value' performing as both a measure of economic output and a moral virtue of conduct. However, there is also a central contradiction to thinking of land as something tradable: it is, according to Polanyi, a 'commodity fiction' that is 'an element of nature inextricably interwoven with man's [*sic*] institutions' (2001 [1944]: 187), making its isolation and marketization 'perhaps the weirdest of all the undertakings of our ancestors'. In English agrarian history, the enclosure movement (Polanyi 2001: Chapter 3), offers insight into the contemporary image of, and discourse surrounding, urban wastelands.

The expropriation of commonly owned and managed pasture, or commons – famously pointed to by Marx (1990 [1867]) as an exemplar of 'primitive accumulation' – was largely justified through elites' claims that commons were wasteful due to their economic under-productivity. With the gradual enclosure of the commons, landed elites marked open fields and commonly held lands as waste ground, and by the early nineteenth century wastelands and commons were increasingly being characterized as mutually constitutive and interchangeable (Goldstein 2013). It was from this context that the term 'waste land', later 'wasteland', emerged. Di Palma (2014) points to changing land uses and landscape ideals in eighteenth-century England to emphasize that the visual orderliness of land became indexical to its appropriate management: wasteland was also becoming a recognized aesthetic category. To Di Palma, wastelands illustrate how 'anti-picturesque' landscapes have influenced shifting conceptions of beauty, sublimity, and the moralized economies of 'improving' uncultivated or common lands. In this sense, a wasteland is

> united not by what it is or what it has, but rather, by their absences.… The emptiness that is the core characteristic of the wasteland is also what gives

> the term its malleability, its potential for abstraction; a vacant shell, it lies ready to include all those kinds of places that are defined in negative terms.
>
> (Di Palma 2014: 3–4)

In this regard, the idea of the wasteland has long served as a useful rhetorical device for elites to present the rationalization and marketization of insufficiently productive land as a virtuous endeavour.

Waste – in terms of land use as well as environmental degradation – re-emerged as a central motif of nineteenth-century industrial urbanization, with Manchester as an archetypal 'shock city' (Platt 2005) illustrating the excesses of industrial urbanization (Mumford 1961; Hall 1998). As the first industrial city, Manchester was the subject of considerable political debate regarding emerging concerns of industrial waste and value. Waste was among the central foci of numerous international visitors to the city in the 1840s, including Tocqueville (1956 [1845]: 105), Faucher (1969 [1844]), and Engels (2009 [1845]). Tocqueville pinpointed the moral ambiguity of the city and its perceived wastefulness: 'From this foul drain, the greatest stream of human industry flows out to fertilize the world. From this filthy sewer pure gold flows' (1956: 105). Through industrial urbanization, wastelands proliferated as spatial by-products of the creative destruction of urban modernity (Berman 1988; Dennis 2008). To contemporaries, the waste of laissez-faire industrial urbanization was typically normalized, if regretfully, as an inevitable spatio-material by-product of economic progress (Joyce 2003). The externalities of industrialization would be tolerated in the name of progress with the mitigation of excesses and the separation of land uses leading to the professionalization of city planning, civil engineering, surveying, and other specialized fields focused on apportionment and management of land use (Hall 1998).

The rapid industrialization of Manchester, like other cities that followed (see Cronon 1991; Platt 2005), was enabled by coinciding revolutions in transportation infrastructure, which allowed for the colonization of north-west England's countryside and its connection to global circuits of trade. These same revolutions in transportation, communication, and the exploitation of cheap labour that established Manchester's industrial dominance played a major role on the city's deindustrialization since the Second World War, exacerbated by the decline of imperial trade relations as well as the decentralization of industry and housing ushered in by the automobile.

By the 1960s, industrial decay and abandoned terraced housing offered a mnemonic device for the decline of a way of life in northern England (Taylor *et al.* 1996; Crinson 2005). The results of globalization and decentralization on the urban fabric were proliferating swathes of wastelands encircling the commercial cores of cities, visually signalling economic neglect and an indeterminate future for (re)use (see HM Stationery Office 1963; Civic Trust 1964; RSA 1965; Barr 1969). Attitudes toward the disorderliness of industrial landscapes shifted from ambivalence to disdain as they became decreasingly productive (Barr 1969). An organizing motif of concerns about waste and deindustrialization has been

dereliction, the highly visual abandonment and dilapidation signalling the flight of industry and investment. An especially 'wicked problem' (Rittel and Webber 1973) for urban planners has been 'brownfield' sites: tracts of land whose previous industrial use has contaminated soil to the extent that redevelopment requires intensive remediation, often with considerable public subsidy. Nabarro (1980) identified three specific types of post-industrial urban wastelands in Great Britain, differentiated by the reasons leading to a site's disuse. These included land left over from slum clearance and urban renewal schemes, disused former industrial land, and sites left vacant by speculative landholders waiting for the moment when selling or redeveloping these sites would be profitable. While the phenomenon of speculative landholding was still in its nascent stages in the early 1980s, Nabarro's explanatory theory of urban wastelands offered a cautionary note: what appears superficially to be an abandoned plot may actually be the subject of significant 'hope value' on the part of investors (Ball *et al.* 1998: 34).

Property speculation has, indeed, become one of the central targets of Marxian geographical political economy since the 1970s: with private landowners treating real estate as a secondary circuit of capital, they have incentive to take advantage of the crisis of uneven development (Smith 1984) and place-specific devaluation through purchasing land as a form of investment. This, in turn, often aids or leads to widespread devaluation of fixed capital in inner city locales (Merrifield 1993). Through uneven development,

> capital attempts to seesaw from a developed to an underdeveloped area, then at a later point back to the first area which is by now underdeveloped.… Capital seeks not equilibrium built into the landscape but one that is viable precisely in its ability to jump landscapes in a systematic way.
>
> (Smith 1984: 198)

In this sense, an urban wasteland may be a frontier for the realization of the 'rent gap': after prolonged neglect, capital is attracted to urban land at the peak of its devaluation, when the difference between capitalized ground rent and potential ground rent becomes sufficient to redevelop a site in a 'higher' use. The rent gap theory offers limited explanatory function, but it effectively captures the spatio-temporal aspects of urban decline and renewal to illustrate the cyclical nature of capitalist investment and disinvestment. Reflective of Polanyi's 'commodity fiction' (2001), land is one such investment that can increase in value without any improvements being made or any productive use. For this reason, a wasteland may superficially appear abandoned, but may in fact be the subject of significant economic interest, as will later be demonstrated in the case of Pomona.

With speculative landholding of post-industrial sites, waste signals a different sort of underutilization and under-productivity: land and structures exist as an appreciating investment without their owners' maintaining any significant use value. Among the most common examples are surface-level car parks. In some cases, any commercial use may be avoided, as interim uses may complicate future plans for a site. This behaviour turns the idea of waste as economic

under-productivity on its head. This is not to say, however, that 'empty spaces' proliferate in contemporary cities. When the use and purpose of a site is indeterminate or vague and its owners are unknown or unacknowledged, it is common for members of the public (most likely proximate communities) to animate these sites with myriad informal uses (Groth and Corijn 2005; Carney and Miller 2009; Sheridan 2012). In other words, urban wastelands are often reappropriated as communal spaces for gardening, recreation, and play. Depending on who appropriates these spaces and how (artists versus homeless people, for example), these common uses may be encouraged or discouraged, and may have varying impacts on the market valuation of urban sites (or entire districts).

Theorizing urban wasting in the post-industrial city

Reversing or halting the wasting of urban space, as normative planning and design theory tends to reinforce, requires adaptation, maintenance, and rationalization of wasted, vacant (Bowman and Pagano 2004), or 'lost' (Trancik 1986) spaces. Taking this perspective for granted, Lynch's reflections on the passage of time (1972) and waste (1990) are based on the assumption that 'changes, when managed, are meant to lead to more desirable states, or at least to avoid worse ones', that 'underlying change is either desirable or inevitable' and that 'the problem [of planning] is to deal effectively with the transition itself' (1972: 190). This outlook, emphasizing the inevitability of wasting and the need for urban repair, has become dominant in urban planning and design theory (see, for example, Southworth 2001; Berger 2006). Even if we are to accept urban wasting and capital mobility as a naturalized cyclical process, this still raises the question of whether the managed reconfigurations of wastelands produce 'more desirable states', for whom, and through what process.

Beyond understanding who benefits from the rationalization of urban wastelands, which is clearly situational, we must consider that paradigmatic notions of ideal post-industrial urban landscapes are also in a state of transition. For example, strategies for redevelopment based on industrial heritage – where the industrial built environment is considered a culturally and economically valuable amenity – demonstrate that industrial landscapes within themselves may be considered desirable, and therefore, marketable (see Zukin 1995). Just as waste is recycled, the recycling of the industrial built environment is a driving aesthetic sensibility of post-industrial redevelopment (Campkin 2013) What constitutes a desirable landscape is not static, neither in its physical form nor in the type of sociality it engenders.

One question that arises from this scenario is as follow: how should planning and design processes manage urban wasting, and to what extent are wasteland redevelopment schemes a reflection of democratic participation? This question is one of the driving motivations behind alternative theorizations of the value(s) of urban wastelands, from Lynch and beyond. After decades dominated by the wholesale erasure of urban wastelands within a modernist framework, designers and urban theorists since the 1980s have expressed ambivalence toward

approaches that ignore the unique social values retained in supposedly wasted spaces (Solà-Morales Rubió 1995). The ideal uses of urban wastelands have arisen as a subject of considerable discussion in the design fields, particularly around their commonplace reappropriation as informal public spaces as a sort of urban commons. A more emancipatory tone is evident in Cupers and Miessen's *Spaces of Uncertainty* (2002), where the authors promote indeterminate spaces in Berlin, Germany as an antidote to the overdetermined, homogeneous, tightly regulated, and increasingly privatized urban public realm (also see Carmona 2010; Minton 2009). The authors critically reflect on the desire of architects to conceptualize urban voids – open areas without clear function – as an opportunity for design practice and meaningful reintegration within the fabric of the city: spaces to be 'colonized' (Van Dijk 1996). Furthermore, Loures (2015) finds that in post-industrial landscapes, designed-based approaches tend to be 'primarily focused on aesthetics, leaving society's other main goals to secondary status' (72). There is a clear instrumentality in designers characterizing leftover urban spaces as 'voids' in need of reclamation, considering that the reprogramming of post-industrial spaces is prime opportunity for promoting their professional practice. However, 'voids' clearly have value for those people who make use of them, whether through temporarily appropriation or longer-term squatting (Doron 2000). In this instance, the discursive connection to wastelands and commons is straightforward. Meanwhile, studies exploring perception of urban derelict land find that local residents accept leftover spaces as recreational areas and parklands, especially if they are accessible and are minimally maintained (Hofmann *et al.* 2012), suggesting that concerns over the appearance and unruliness of wastelands is foremost a preoccupation of designers and policymakers.

Looking beyond questions of human inhabitation, the (e)valuation of urban wastelands has become more complicated amidst increasing interest in urban biodiversity in planning, design, and policy. Precisely due to their neglect, leftover and liminal urban spaces have been demonstrated to foster much higher levels of species richness than traditional parks and public spaces (Rink 2009). This, in turn, has begun to influence urban policy, with urban biodiversity and green infrastructure (TEP 2008) considered an essential element in mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change (Hall 2013). Likewise, in Britain, the conservation establishment is increasingly acknowledging the unique biodiversity of urban wastelands (Baines 2012: xiii) and their integral roles in providing 'green infrastructure'. Economists and planners have indeed quantified the 'ecosystem services' provided to cities by their wastelands due to their role in carbon sequestration (Robinson and Lundholm 2012), maintaining a financial valuation of land use while questioning the assumptions embedded in traditional approaches.

The increasing appreciation of urban nature reflects not only a concern for sustainable development, but changing aesthetic tastes and ecological sensibilities: as Di Palma (2014) notes, cultural and economic evaluations of ideal landscapes are dynamic and intertwined. This could be observed in England as early as the 1970s, when the untamed frontiers of wild nature had come to define

deindustrializing urban districts. British naturalist Richard Mabey (1973) celebrated the 'unofficial countryside' found on the fringes of London, noting that 'the natural world is indifferent to … the clutter and ugliness … of our urban environments' (1973: 14). Mabey, and many of his naturalist followers, did not so much celebrate the dereliction and neglect of wastelands, but exalted the resilience of the flora and fauna that animated these sites. 'It is not the parks', he noted, 'but the railway sidings that are thick with wildflowers' (1973: 12). More recently, in *Edgelands* (Farley and Roberts 2011), two poets journey into the 'true wilderness', romanticizing unnoticed, in-between spaces such as gravel pits, landfills, and industrial parks along the urban fringes of north-west England. Along these lines, there is an emerging romantic sentiment toward post-industrial urban landscapes, with the affective affordances of disorderly and unmaintained urban spaces being increasingly celebrated (Edensor 2007, 2005; DeSilvey and Edensor 2013). Quite often this is based on the fascination of nature 'overtaking' the industrial built environment and the uncanny experience of modern ruins, a trend deeply embedded within the rising profile of 'ruin porn' (Millington 2013) and the subculture of urban exploration (Garrett 2013).

Jorgensen (2008) has mobilized the term 'urban wildscapes' to signify 'urban spaces where natural as opposed to human agency appears to be shaping the land, especially where there is spontaneous growth of vegetation through natural succession' (Jorgensen 2012: 1). Sheridan defines wildscapes as 'any area, space, or building where the city's normal forces of control have not shaped how we perceive, use, and occupy them' (Sheridan 2012: 201). Thus, the wildness in wildscapes refers to disorderliness both in terms of non-human and human appropriation of urban spaces that are seemingly outside 'normal forces of control', land use regulation, traditional forms of maintenance, and surveillance. We can see clear overlaps in the celebratory discourse on the socio-ecological reading of urban wildscapes and exaltation of underdetermined, 'loose spaces' (Franck and Stevens 2006) and 'spaces of uncertainty' (Cupers and Miessen 2002). The increasingly celebratory cultural attitude toward the naturalistic and aesthetic affordances offered by urban wastelands and intermingling industrial ruins helps to explain a gradual transition through which they are actively incorporated in contemporary landscape design aesthetics dominated by adaptive reuse and urban greening.

Clearly, regardless of how urban wastelands may be represented in planners' maps and redevelopment frameworks, they rarely exist as *tabula rasa* (Doron 2000). Beyond considering the merits of different design approaches to leftover industrial space, we might ask a set of more critical questions: when and where urban spaces are problematized as 'wasted', underutilized, or empty? How does this relate to the logic of capital accumulation through the discursive shaping of transitional urban sites? The following sections explore how one site in Manchester can inform some of these questions about waste and value in the contemporary post-industrial city. After establishing the relevant history of Pomona Island, I will focus on its contemporary representations in relation to its past and future uses.

Pomona: Manchester's infrastructural island

Manchester is often held up as a model of post-industrial urban renaissance (Peck and Ward 2002; Hebbert 2010), a transition often attributed to the municipal authority's strategic adoption of municipal entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989a), through promotion of property-led redevelopment since the 1980s (Quilley 2002, 1999; Ward 2003; Allen 2007; Leary 2008). Still, as much as the city has experienced a boom in commercial, residential, and retail development from the 1990s to the financial crisis of 2008, the legacy of deindustrialization is still readily apparent on the fringes of the city. Perhaps the most prominent of Manchester's wastelands is Pomona Island, straddling the south-west corner of Manchester at its border with Trafford and Salford. At over 20 hectares, Pomona remains one of the largest undeveloped sites in close proximity to the city centre, and one of the largest green spaces in the city. It has existed for decades as a 'dead zone' (Doron 2007b) on which new planning aspirations have been projected, though at face value it has remained a relatively 'empty' space.

Pomona is a residual space of considerable scale: it is completely delineated and dominated by the transport infrastructures. Even its status as an 'island' reflects successive layering of transport infrastructure: rather than being a geomorphic island, Pomona is an anthropogenic space more reminiscent of novelist J.G. Ballard's (1973) *Concrete Island*. The site's planning boundaries are defined by the Metrolink tram viaduct (1999) the Manchester Ship Canal (1894), and its Pomona Docks. The Bridgewater Canal (1761) also passes through the site, which is further cut off from Central Manchester by the Cornbrook railway

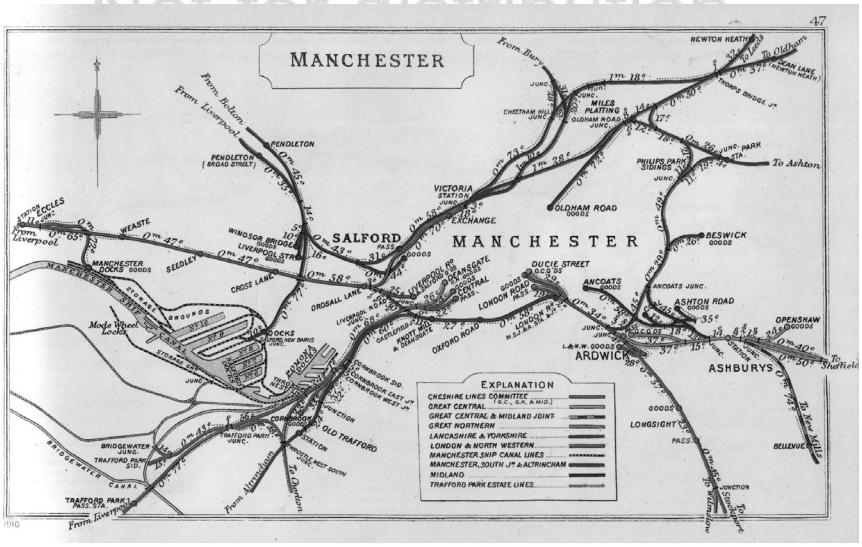

Figure 12.1 The infrastructural network of Manchester at the peak of its industrialization. Pomona Docks may be found just left and down from the centre of the image (image source: Railway Clearing House, 1910).

viaduct (1877) and the arterial (A56) Chester Road, both running parallel to the Metrolink viaduct. It attests to the 'splintering' effect of infrastructure (Graham and Marvin 2001) and the obduracy of infrastructural networks (Hommels 2005) that often serve to produce and define leftover urban spaces. Though the site's modern history has been defined by transport infrastructure, during the Victorian era it maintained the characteristics of a peripheral countryside, yet to be transformed into a space of transfer for the industrialized city. Pomona Gardens, which occupied the site from the 1830s, was a pleasure garden and orchard. By the 1860s, it had become the site of the Pomona Gardens Palace, an event centre that could accommodate more than 30,000 people. The Palace occupied the site until the anticipated completion of the Manchester Ship Canal led to the clustering of factories around the site in the 1880s, and it was ultimately shut down by an explosion at a chemical plant in 1887 (Flynn 2013). By that point, Pomona had fully been absorbed as a 'glocal' (Swyngedouw 2004) space of intermodal transport logistics: one need only look at the North American names of the Ship Canal's nearby basins (Ontario, Erie, and Huron) to consider the thoroughly global nature of this locale.

By the mid-twentieth century, the redundancy of the area's transport infrastructure was a testament to Manchester's slowing industrial metabolism. Between the 1960s and 1980s, the Bridgewater Canal and the Cornbrook Viaduct had become disused, and the Ship Canal quickly became obsolete due to its inability to accommodate new oceangoing container ships. By 1982 all of the Ship Canal's docks had been closed, with over 3,000 jobs lost (Salford City Council 2008).

For the following three decades, Pomona's future has been the matter of successive waves of speculation, interjected by prolonged periods of neglect. Upon the closure of the docks, the site was not completely abandoned, but overtaken by light industrial premises. Some of the docks were filled in, but the soil has remained deeply contaminated. Though disused lots on the site were increasing between 1982 and 1986 (Turner 1989), into the mid-1990s there were a variety of scrapyards, automotive repair businesses, and construction-related firms operating in the area (Conran Roche 1989). In the 1980s, in the era when municipal socialism still predominated local politics, Manchester City Council had earmarked this area as a site for industrial retention, and these plans had been slow to change due to a lack of development pressure.

However, aspirations to redevelop Pomona were heightened by the much-celebrated regeneration initiatives in the nearby district of Castlefield in the 1980s and 1990s. This former industrial district, also dominated by canal and railway infrastructure, was transformed by public- and private-sector actors into an Urban Heritage Park: a leisure and tourist destination focused on the consumption of industrial heritage (see Degen 2008; Leary 2011; Madgin 2010; Rosa 2014). Castlefield also became one of the sites where speculative capitalization on the rent gap (Smith 1984) could first be seen in Manchester, when local bookmaker Jim Ramsbottom began purchasing decaying warehouses for the price of salvaged brick and timber in 1982 (Parkinson-Bailey 2000: 289),

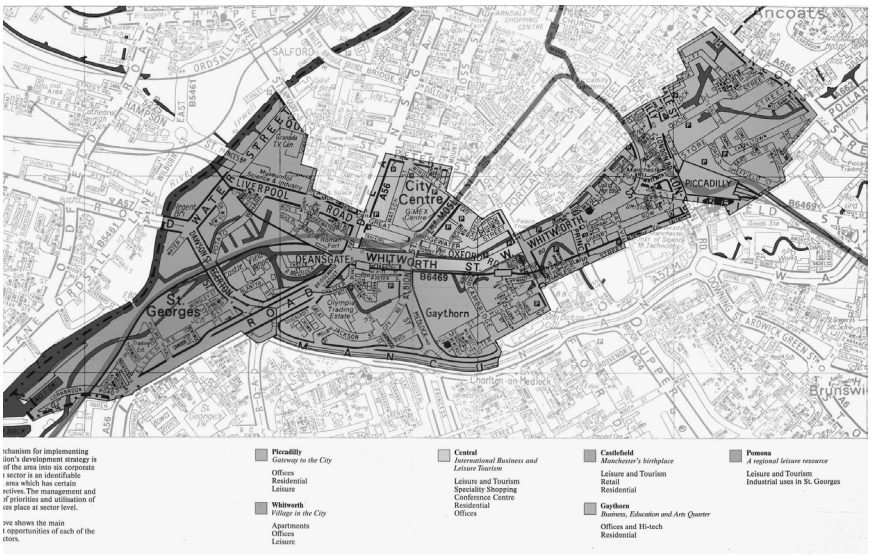

Figure 12.2 Map of the CMDC's remit area. Pomona is the area furthest to the bottom-left of the image surrounding the dock labelled 'No. 1 Dk.' (image source: CMDC, 1990).

with the intention of later developing the land. From 1988 to 1996, under the tenure of the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC), Castlefield's development as a heritage tourism and recreational destination was predicated on the displacement of 'low value' or 'bad neighbour' land uses – scrap yards, auto repair shops, timber merchants – to Pomona and adjacent Cornbrook. The continued existence of industrial usage of Castlefield conflicted with its new re-imaging as a musealized, post-industrial landscape.

The CMDC was an Urban Development Corporation designated by the national government to encourage commercial expansion in the Southern Fringe: armed with significant public funds and the power of compulsory purchase, for eight years this quango was able to supersede Manchester's city government in spearheading property-led development initiatives. Like Castlefield, Pomona was part of the CMDC's massive remit area, albeit the most peripheral and least invested site. Out of concerns raised by consultants to the CMDC that 'continuation of the existing uses would be likely to detract significantly from the ability of the former Docks area to attract new investment and businesses' (Symonds Travers Morgan 1996: 1), most of these industrial tenants were ultimately displaced and the site left almost completely vacant. As was common in the fringes of Manchester city centre under the tenure of the CMDC, the displacement of low-intensity industrial land uses – themselves cast as markers of wasteland – was a key element in a wave of 'environmental improvements' considered necessary to attract property-led redevelopment. For this reason, throughout the

1990s, additional scrap metal recovery and other light industrial businesses were denied planning permission to operate nearby. Removing all use value of a site was considered an improvement over maintaining land uses that were perceived as jeopardizing future development. According to a report produced for the CDMC,

> Although comprehensive redevelopment schemes have been put forward in the past none have come to fruition partly as a result of the site's 'hidden' location, difficult access, potentially high infrastructure costs and because regeneration resources have tended to be focused elsewhere.
>
> (Symonds Travers Morgan 1996: 17)

By that point, planning in Manchester was increasingly shifting from a role of land use regulator and manager to an active entrepreneurial agent, channelling investment and speculation onto prioritized sites (Quilley 1999, 2002).

Considering contemporary debates regarding the use and meaning of the site, it is notable that plans from Manchester City Council, the CMDC, and the English Tourism Board (1989) throughout the 1980s and 1990s aimed to re-establish Pomona as a regional leisure park, building on the success of Castlefield and the area's history. The CDMC had proposed to 'explore … the scope for creating a major landscaped area … which would capitalize upon the waterway links' (1989: 4.16), to create a 'vital green lung close to the city centre' (6.13). An ambitious document by the design firm BDP called the *Waterways Guide*, commissioned by the CMDC, envisioned a 'contemporary sculpture park with commercial leisure activity', including 'an extensive open area called City Park' (BDP 1989). Some infrastructure for this park was installed in the late

Pomona–
A Regional
Leisure Resource

There are two distinct parts to this sector: St. Georges and Pomona Docks. St. Georges is a run down mixed industrial area which requires environmental and infrastructure improvement. Pomona is a largely derelict dockland area, linking the Castlefield area to Trafford Wharfside and Salford Quays. Only part of the former docks is within the Development Corporation's area, the rest lies within the area of Trafford Park Development Corporation. The area is almost completely surrounded by water and currently has major accessibility problems. This site has the potential to become a major regional leisure park at the heart of the conurbation.

Figure 12.3 The newly installed landscape promenade along the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal at Pomona (image source: Development Strategy for Pomona. CMDC, 1990).

1980s, including a landscaped promenade along the Ship Canal including decorative lamps, benches, railings, and planters (see Figure 12.3), but its public access never came to fruition. The early 1990s saw few additional changes to the site. In 1993, most of the land at Pomona was passed on from the city of Manchester to Trafford, though the CMDC retained responsibility for the Pomona site (Symonds Travers Morgan 1996). By 1994 plans for Pomona had been shelved, with reports noting that 'the area remains much as it was at the beginning of the period' (Deas *et al.* 1999: 222). With the CMDC scheduled to be dissolved in 1996, the future of the site was unclear. Pomona was the district that had clearly received the least attention by the CMDC (Kitchen 1997: 141), to the point that it was entirely left out from their report chronicling their achievements (CMDC 1996).

The transfer of ownership of most of the Pomona site to Trafford was more significant than it might initially appear: the council of Trafford is heavily influenced by The Peel Group (formerly Peel Holdings), an infrastructure and property investment conglomerate with assets in excess of £5 billion headquartered in Trafford (ExUrbe 2013). Since 1987, Peel had become the primary landholder of the Pomona site, owning all but one small site operated by a scrap metal recycler, having acquired the properties of the former Manchester Ship Canal Company. Owning 15,000 hectares of land and water in the UK, with a portfolio valued at £2.3 billion (The Peel Group 2015), Peel is one of the largest privately owned property companies in the United Kingdom (Harper 2013), owning or developing nearly all canals and much of the canal-side property in greater Manchester. In this sense, the stalled public investment in the site and the indeterminacy of Pomona's future can be understood through exploring the property's ownership. Aspirations for creating parkland were quickly pushed aside. In interviews, local planners have suggested that Trafford would not be likely to express interest in creating a public space at Pomona, since its location would lead to use primarily by Manchester and Salford residents. None of this is at all clear to nearby residents or many of the site's users, of whom few are aware of council boundaries or, indeed, the fact that Pomona is no longer under the jurisdiction of Manchester City Council. However, it is far from a 'no man's land'. After all, as they describe their business model, 'our approach is primarily driven by planning and development opportunities – we retain assets as a complement to our longer-term strategic projects' (The Peel Group 2015: 4). Their company motto is 'determination, perseverance and patience'.

The construction of the Eccles line Metrolink tram extension, which passes through the site on a concrete viaduct and was completed in 1999, was anticipated to finally revalorize Pomona. With the island having been cut off from the rest of the city by transport infrastructure, another layer of infrastructure was expected to revive it. The line runs from Central Manchester on a previously disused Victorian-era viaduct through Castlefield to the Cornbrook interchange on the edge of Pomona, at which point it travels on a new concrete viaduct through Pomona Island, over the Ship Canal, and toward Salford Quays and Media City (two major flagship developments along the Ship Canal in Salford).

Much of the tram's path travelled to – and through – property owned by Peel, who provided funding for the Metrolink extension with the condition that the tram would offer direct access to the site (Symonds Travers Morgan 1996: 10). The end result was Pomona Station, along with the Cornbrook station, which occupies the edge of the site.

Reflecting concerns about Pomona and its environs' continuing existence as a wasteland, for years Cornbrook was used only for interchanges, despite the fact that it had been built as a fully serviced station. It was not until 2004, due to pressure from property developer Urban Splash, which had recently developed a number of apartments nearby, that a £250,000 'rescue plan' was devised by a working group composed of transport officials, police, city officials, and Peel instigated a number of modifications. At this point the area began appearing in the news media, cast as a problematic wasteland needing swift remediation. As the local media proclaimed, 'the lure of classy city apartments will rescue a white elephant'. Proclaiming the site a wasteland, the newspaper heralded security measures – such as installing CCTV cameras and lighting to remove the 'chance for strangers to hide in the shadows' – as well as a variety of aesthetic modifications to make the site suitable for exit and entry. These included the installation of fences around scrapyards to shield their 'unsightly views', cleaning brickwork, and cutting back vegetation (*Manchester Evening News* 2004). Meanwhile, the net effect of Pomona Station had been Peel's construction of one small office building, Adamson House. To this day, Pomona is the least used station in the entire Metrolink tram network (Stuart 2013), Adamson House operates at low or no vacancy, and Cornbrook station is used almost exclusively for transfer between lines.

In 2007, Peel gained planning permission to develop 546 apartments in five waterfront buildings (varying from eight to 16 storeys in height) on 1.7 hectares, including a marina. These plans were put on hold due to the recession. As part of their £50 billion Ocean Gateway plan, which encompasses much of Liverpool's waterfront and a 58-km stretch along the Ship Canal to Manchester, Pomona is one of 50 strategic points in Peel's waterfront transformation of much of north-west England, with an ambition to 'compete against the most well-recognized and successful waterfront cities in the world, such as Vancouver and Shanghai' (The Peel Group 2009: 38). A clear illustration of the financialization of real estate (Smart and Lee 2009), Peel is largely operated from the tax shelter of the Isle of Man, with 25 per cent of the company owned by Saudi-based Olayan Group (ExUrbe 2013). Still, despite its reinsertion into global circuits of capital and grandiose aspirations, Pomona largely exists in the same condition it had since the 1970s. As Figure 12.4 depicts, it is a blank space upon which future ambitions can be projected.

Figure 12.4 The Pomona site, as photographed from the roof of Exchange Quay in Salford, 2015 (image source: Robert Watson Studio).

Pomona Island as an accidental park: wastelands as temporary commons

> The most difficult wastelands to convert are those that are also occupied and used, however ineffectively, and where the attachments, interests, and activities of the occupiers are an intimate part of the conditions of the site. Coming to terms with those conditions and allowing for the users to join the process of waste removal and rebuilding are things we have not yet learned how to do well.
>
> (Lynch 1972: 234)

With the exception of a self-enclosed scrapyard and low-occupancy office building, Pomona is a vacant plot where nothing is supposed to happen. It is a non-place of transit and passage (Augé 2009). However, like most urban wastelands on urban peripheries, the site has a multitude of informal uses. Campo (2013) described how the Brooklyn waterfront in the early 2000s became an 'accidental playground' in the interim between industrial displacement and residential redevelopment. Much in the same way, Pomona has come to exist as an accidental park. Through observing the spatial practices observed at Pomona, the signs of human activity, and discussions with individuals who value this *terrain vague*, the following section offers a sketch of the site's heterotopic (Foucault 1998; De Cauter and Dehaene 2008) character. Whether or not the users of this space have

a formal right to be there, they have reappropriated it for their own uses and made a liminal site that is officially 'empty' into a temporary commons. However, all of this happens in the indeterminate interim between various stages of development. The site, which had seen industrial capitalism usurp its agrarian past, is now the subject of new forms of enclosure through the speculative restructuring dominated by finance capital.

Like other wasteland sites, landowners (Peel along with Network Rail and Transport for Greater Manchester) have made modest attempts to prevent trespassing, and as the site is largely defined by infrastructure, there are a number of barriers to entry. Despite some fencing, construction hoarding, and locked gates, pedestrian access has never proven difficult: one need only look for gaps in fences along the railway arches or broken gates. Peculiarly, one may enter the site from the Ordsall neighbourhood of Salford by the Woden Street Footbridge (1873), a remnant of industrial-era connectivity, which crosses the Ship Canal and offers easy access. It is the residents of working-class Ordsall who are among the most prominent users of Pomona, many of whom consider it an extension of their neighbourhood.

Amidst the layers of transport infrastructures, with plant and animal life flourishing in the spaces between them, are the materials signs of past and present human activities. Concerns over criminal and 'anti-social behaviour' are easily illustrated through a site survey, less through the frequency of observed activities than by the prevalence of waste matter. Of course, since there is only a

Figure 12.5 A 'desire line' created by the footsteps of users entering Pomona Island from the Woden Street footbridge. The railway viaduct may be seen to the left, and the Ship Canal to the right (photograph by the author, 2010).

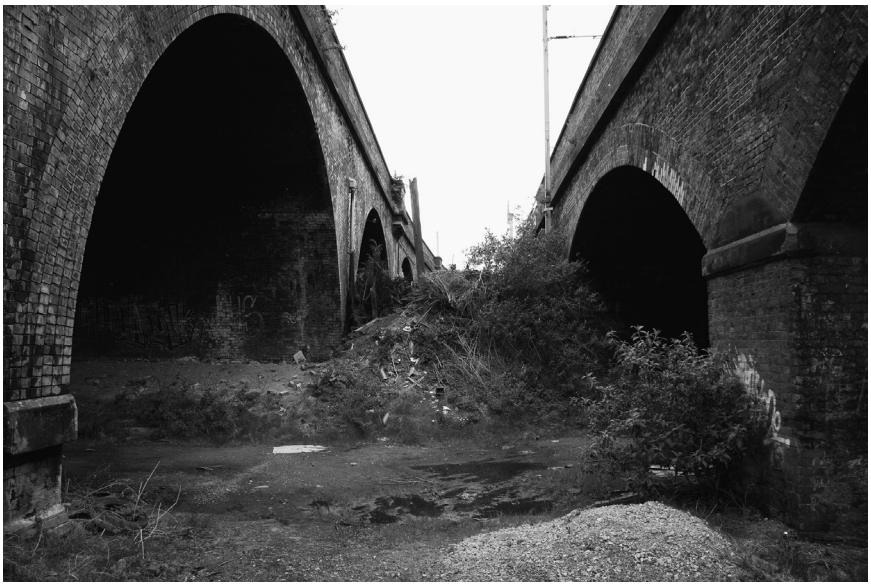

Figure 12.6 Passage through railway viaducts, signs of fly-tipping and proliferating flora (photograph by the author, 2010).

Figure 12.7 Railway arch shelter and entrance through slats of fence. New housing and abandoned factory in the background (photograph by the author, 2011).

minimal maintenance regime for the site, these materials accumulate over time. One matter of widespread concern is cable theft from the electrified railways, causing massive delays throughout the regional rail network. Piles of burned rubber indicate that cables are melted down at this site. On the rare occasion that the site is covered by local media outlets, it tends to be when an unidentified body is found or when a cable thief has fallen off a railway viaduct. On the site's perimeter, it is common to encounter piles of fly-tipped tyres, and abandoned motorcycles and cars are not uncommon. Graffiti dominates the walls and arches of the railway viaducts: the same structures that are sandblasted and floodlit in Castlefield as monuments to industrial heritage. Accumulated litter attests to the use of railway arches for sex acts, drug use, and drinking. While lack of surveillance drives justifications for security measures and enclosure, these efforts are haphazard.

Purely in terms of visual and material artefacts, the most apparent use of Pomona is as shelter for rough sleepers, particularly within the railway arches. This is certainly not something specific to Pomona, as residual spaces of infrastructure often serve as refuge for homeless people (Rosa 2014; Tonnelat 2008). The marginality of these makeshift dwellings are juxtaposed by their proximity to the chic flats of St George's. These shelters are shielded from view by hoardings that wall off the railway arches: on the side facing the street are advertisements for upscale housing. During daytime it is much more common to encounter the signs of rough sleeping – such as sleeping bags – than to encounter homeless individuals themselves: like formal parks, Pomona's nocturnal activities differ significantly from its diurnal character.

Still, overall the activities at Pomona differ little from activities in any public open space: the difference lies in maintenance regimes, policing, and other forms of governmentality. Among the more common activities observed have been dog-walking, jogging, and teenagers socializing. Less frequently one can observe people fishing, bird watching, bicycling, motorcycling, gleaning wild berries, taking photographs, and recreational boating along the canals. Like formally designated public spaces, it is a place for social mixing: Pomona Island abuts some of the most deprived districts in Britain, but also some expensive new flats. Repetitive access is clearly demarcated from various points of entry. Conversations with recreational users suggest that the site is popularly used as a park from a broad spectrum of neighbouring residents. Elsewhere, subtle signs of repetitive movement through this space are apparent in the 'desire lines' worn into untended grass (see Figure 12.5). This path through the grass leads to what has been nicknamed 'Ordsall Beach' (Pivaro 2008a). The *Salford Star*, an independent local newspaper, ran a satirical series on the 'Costa del Salford' (a play on the Spanish Costa del Sol) along the Ship Canal, lampooning developers' desires to exploit waterfront vistas (Pivaro 2008b). Beneath the tongue-in-cheek narrative is political critique centred on Ordsall residents' desire for parkland. At Ordsall Beach,

> the naturally occurring red sands … provide the perfect platform to watch … blackened waters feed into the Manchester ship canal. And under the

> arches [we] played and relaxed in the blistering sun, disturbed only by the 14.04 Altrincham to Piccadilly [train] hurtling above.… This place does feel like a people's beach, not fancy yet a true oasis of relaxation in the post-industrial deconstruction site.… For years we were denied what is the city's right, the river that runs through it! Now is the time to put it back where it belongs, in the hands of its citizens
>
> (Pivaro 2008a: 32)

(See Figure 12.9.) Threaded throughout the satirical feature was the implicit acknowledgement that temporary appropriation was a resistant but fleeting act.

Three years later, after completing my fieldwork, groups began emerging in Manchester based on individuals' enthusiasm toward Pomona. In 2011, the Greater Manchester Ecological Unit (GMEU), which operates as an advisory service for the ten Greater Manchester district councils, produced an ecological survey of Pomona Docks. The report suggested that the site be considered for selection as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) – a non-statutory designation that a site should be prioritized for nature conservation – based on its high level of biodiversity and cultural significance (Walsh 2011). However, as the GMEU report notes, in January of 2011 over 90 per cent of the trees and vegetation on the site were removed by the landowners, rendering the ecological survey moot. This clearance roused opposition, focused on the social and ecological significance of this supposed wasteland. Through online forums, a group of bird-watchers, architects, artists, ecologists, preservations, writers, political activists,

Figure 12.8 Man cycling along canal towpath, ducks in foreground (photograph by the author, 2011).

Figure 12.9 The *Salford Star*'s feature on 'Ordsall Beach,' shot at Pomona (image source: Pivaro, 2008).

Figure 12.10 Mature trees in 2010, prior to clearance (photograph by the author).

Figure 12.11 Pomona after clearance of plant life, 2014 (photograph by Stephen Smith, courtesy of the artist).

and urban explorers began articulating the values of the site. Local writer Hayley Flynn began highlighting Pomona and its historical significance on her personal blog (Flynn 2013, 2014b), and later in the *Guardian* (Flynn 2014a), calling Pomona the city's 'alternate countryside' and a 'serene wasteland' and exalting the 'beauty of the desolate' (Flynn 2014b). Flynn, along with a growing coalition of campaigners organized a 'seed bombing' and 'protest picnic' event in March 2014 to raise awareness of the biodiversity and historical character of the site, hoping to protect the site from impending development and maintain it as a vast, wild meadow. A common perception among campaigners was that Peel's decision of clearing of the site was a 'scorched earth policy' driven by concerns that for Pomona could be listed as an SBI, which could limit its development potential (Keeling 2014). However, since the Trafford and Manchester councils would ultimately have the authority to determine this status and Peel has been unwilling to comment, it is unclear whether this suspicion is warranted.

Also in 2014, filmmaker George Haydock directed a short documentary film entitled *Pomona Island*, inspired by his fascination that 'through the cracks of hyper-development and regeneration, here lies a totally unmanaged, largely unused and unnoticed area of land.… It just exists in a strange limbo between its former industrial use, and its inevitable destruction and future development' (interviewed in Flynn 2014b).

The current fascination with urban wastelands, ruins, and derelict urban spaces also adds an additional level of complexity to debates around the wastefulness and value embedded in Pomona. While Peel is cautious to acknowledge that there is any existing recreational or ecological value to the site as it currently exists, it is actually able to commodify the area's current decay to location scouts looking to shoot films or television shows. Through its website (filmandtvlocations.co.uk), The Peel Group leases the site to film crews, offering them exclusive access to an authentic post-industrial wasteland. In this sense, even when the site has no formal use, it still generates value for the landholdings company precisely because of its status as a wasteland.

The campaign to 'save' Pomona, or at the very least appreciate it as a precarious, temporal landscape, has also been savvy in harnessing the steadily increasing interest in Britain's urban wastelands, and in particular, narratives about biodiversity and the need for publicly accessible green space in Manchester. At this point, it remains unclear whether these activists will sustain their efforts to challenge the inevitability of the site's redevelopment, or whether these activities will simply celebrate the site's uniqueness in the face of its impending erasure. What is certain is that a central claim of these artists, urban explorers, and ecologists is that the site has significant value in its current state.

Use values, exchange values, and aesthetic values: what Pomona tells us about wastelands

The 'waste' in wastelands contains a dual meaning: an evaluation of the physical condition of a particular site coupled with the economic value it generates. The economically un(der)productive and informal uses of these spaces, often an expression of commoning (Caffentzis and Federici 2014), are often downplayed or ignored completely. The case of Pomona Island illustrates a number of points about the ambiguous and multiple meanings of urban wastelands.

Urban wastelands often tend to be defined as such when they are perceived to be serving as a barrier to property-led redevelopment: the outward expansion of a city centre, the 'reclamation' of formerly industrial urban waterfronts for luxury housing, and more generally, gentrification. In other words, a site becomes a wasteland within official discourses as a justification for its reconfiguration, much as the term 'slum' has often served to describe an urban neighbourhood slated for residential displacement and urban renewal (Gilbert 2007).

Di Palma concludes her cultural history of wastelands with a cautiously hopeful outlook toward the future of post-industrial leftovers:

> Wasteland bears witness to [our] actions; it is our conscience, our terrain of contestation. As a space of resistance, of challenge, and, ultimately, of possibility of change, wasteland has the potential to be the landscape paradigm for our uncertain and troubling times.
>
> (Di Palma 2014: 244)

With the wild popularity of New York's High Line (Lindner and Rosa forthcoming) – a linear park atop a disused railway viaduct – along with the new Tempelhofer Freiheit and Park am Gleisdreieck in Berlin, the aesthetic appeal and design possibilities for such post-industrial sites are evident. Clearly, understanding urban wasting is a process (Lynch 1990; Southworth 2001) is an essential step forward in understanding the spatio-temporal and ecological elements of urban wastelands. Still, there is a danger in (a) naturalizing the mobility of capital and labour that lead to disinvestment and obsolescence and (b) recognizing that the superficial celebration of wastelands and their affective qualities can be used as a tool for further property speculation (Loughran 2014). Furthermore, as much as architects and landscape designers increasingly celebrate the ecological, aesthetic, and affective values of urban wastelands, the case of Pomona illustrates the lack of agency that designers have. Even if they continue to successfully promote a wasteland aesthetic as a new trend in landscape design, it is a consensual partnership between landholders and local councils that will determine the future of the site.

At this point, the most radical idea for Pomona would be to leave it in its current state. Ironically, this has been the most consistent treatment of the site since the closure of the docks, yet its continuation as an open space has been completely foreclosed as a viable future. However, under the logic of neo-liberal planning, even if public support is behind maintaining an urban wasteland as a

communal space of natural conservation and recreational usage, it must be justified through commodification. The most common economic justification for such conservation is the encouragement of tourism, itself assigning economic value (Hall 2013). In this particular case, a small group of enthusiasts – varying greatly in interests but sharing an appreciation for Pomona – have begun to articulate an alternative vision for the site, based on values of ecological distinction, aesthetic richness, heritage, and the desire for a less manicured and regulated type of public space. 'Its wildness', according to a Pirate Party UK member and defender of Pomona, 'is for many a blessed contrast to the deathly dull of places like Spinningfield [a recent public–private development in Manchester]' (Kaye 2014). However, the unabashedly entrepreneurial city council of Manchester is vested in the transformation of the site into housing, despite the fact that this ambition conflicts with its alleged commitment to green urbanism. The city itself casts the area directly next to it, Cornbrook, as an 'intimidating' urban wasteland, disseminated through press releases ventriloquized by the local media (Williams 2014).

Pomona also emphasizes the fact that a site's dereliction or apparent neglect may belie, or even signal, significant economic interest. One needs look no further than the string of aborted masterplans to see that Pomona is the subject of considerable interest for large-scale redevelopment. The actions of Peel – particularly the intentional destruction of Pomona's well-established and biodiverse wildscapes – offer a unique dynamic. Their apparent concerns that continued non-intervention into the landscape would be 'unfair' to wildlife (personal interview with anonymous informant 2014), or that allowing wildlife to flourish could lead to a legal claim of its ecological significance, led to Peel taking a strategy of repeatedly uprooting the non-human life that has come to occupy the space. Beyond taking a stance of maintaining Pomona as an wasted and 'wild' urban void, Peel actively participates in its degradation.

Even as Pomona has a long history as a pleasure garden and was earmarked for the establishment of a public park in the 1980s and 1990s, all alternatives to dense, market-rate housing and commercial development on the site have been foreclosed without any sanctioned public dialogue. In Manchester, political antagonism and democratic participation in spatial governance have been replaced by a neo-liberal, post-political planning process focused on elite consensus (Allmendinger and Haughton 2012). With the majority of planning schemes occurring in Manchester occurring as a partnership between the city council and property developers, it is against the city's interest to entertain any alternative visions for the allocation and use of land in the city. Therefore, any real hope of contesting the plans to turn Pomona Island into an exclusive residential and commercial enclave could only occur through highly visible and vocal contestation in a supposedly post-political city.

There is an ambivalent politics of visibility within spatial practices that seek to emphasize the desirable, heterotopic qualities (De Cauter and Dehaene 2008) of urban wastelands. This is because, by the very act of making these sites visible, they could easily sow the seeds of destruction for any qualities

appreciated in that site: relative freedom, lack of regulation, or biodiversity. It is curious to wonder whether groups emphasizing the site's ecological and recreational values might simply be fuelling the 'rediscovery' of Pomona if they are unwilling to engage in a protracted and committed battle against the site's redevelopment. As Haydock's documentary emphasizes, the island's enthusiasts

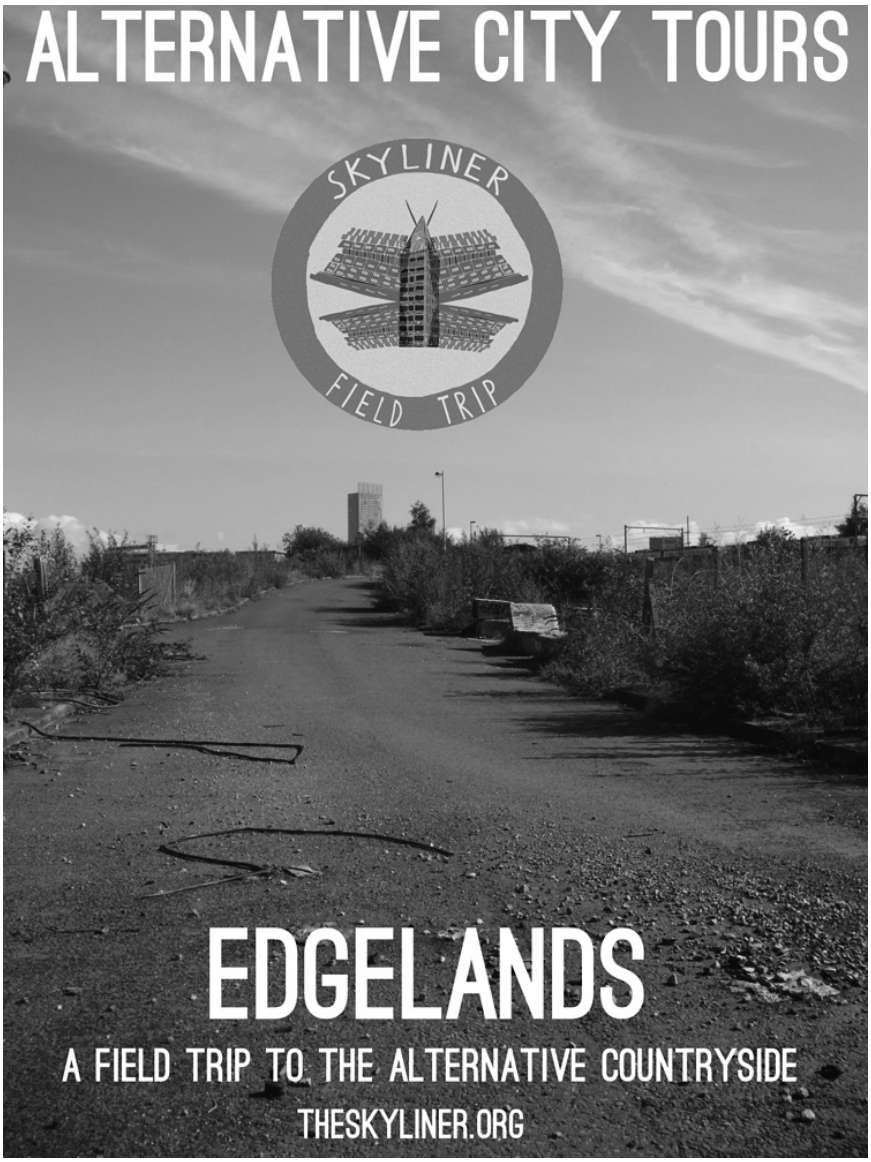

Figure 12.12 An announcement for a tour of Pomona led by Hayley Flynn, as posted on her blog *Skyliner* in 2013 (image source: Hayley Flynn).

have varying visions of what the site should be, and whether it should simply be appreciated in its temporary state or fought to conserve. The tactics of groups celebrating and appropriating Pomona as a post-industrial wasteland do not suggest that there is a concerted and organized effort to contest the eventual enclosure of Pomona. According to Hayley Flynn,

> my aim is to encourage the public to use it whilst they can, with a view to making developers consider the worth of wild green space, but I don't hold any hope that Peel would even consider that as a use. I just want it to be utilized by residents and dispel any fears people have of the area.
>
> (Personal interview 2015)

She says that it is 'begrudgingly' accepted that any public use will be temporary.

While it is unclear whether the actions of the ecologists, public space advocates, artists, and designers will have any effect on the development of Pomona Island, they demonstrate the fact that the site's value is precisely because it is *not* improved. If anything, the repetitive clear-cutting of the site produces a result that is, by many standards, a blight rather than an improvement. However, to Peel Holdings and to the municipal authorities of Trafford and Manchester, this is still an unwelcome criticism of the way that redevelopment occurs in the metropolitan area. Various forms of resistance call into question the assumption that the site is empty of all appreciation or use, or that it has value beyond its position as a staging ground for future construction. Treating a site as a blank space becomes complicated when wastelands themselves become appreciated and considered to be worthy of protection from future development. I anticipate that these tensions will continue to emerge as an important element of future political contestation around the enclosure of urban wastelands that, of course, were never valueless. This can only happen in the moments when the values of urban spaces are articulated outside and beyond the logic of capital accumulation. However, this will require a shift from the celebration and romanticization of (temporary) urban wastelands to active contestation around the presumed consensus of market-oriented urban planning.