




**Please cite the Published Version**

Kaaristo, Maarja , Edensor, Tim  and Warnaby, Gary  (2025) Creative responses to an informal space: the affordances of Pomona Island. *Urban Geography*. pp. 1-21. ISSN 0272-3638

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2025.2480932>

**Publisher:** Taylor and Francis

**Version:** Published Version

**Downloaded from:** <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/639529/>

**Usage rights:**  [Creative Commons: Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0](#)

**Additional Information:** This is an open access article which appeared in *Urban Geography*, published by Taylor and Francis

**Data Access Statement:** Data sharing is not applicable as majority of the study is based on secondary data.

**Enquiries:**

If you have questions about this document, contact [openresearch@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:openresearch@mmu.ac.uk). Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines>)

## Creative responses to an informal space: the affordances of Pomona Island

Maarja Kaaristo, Tim Edensor & Gary Warnaby

To cite this article: Maarja Kaaristo, Tim Edensor & Gary Warnaby (09 Apr 2025): Creative responses to an informal space: the affordances of Pomona Island, Urban Geography, DOI: [10.1080/02723638.2025.2480932](https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2025.2480932)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2025.2480932>



© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 09 Apr 2025.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 91






View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

# Creative responses to an informal space: the affordances of Pomona Island

Maarja Kaaristo , Tim Edensor  and Gary Warnaby 

Department of Marketing, International Business and Tourism, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

## ABSTRACT

Many former manufacturing locations have become sites of regeneration, dominated by the service economy. However, resulting developments are often criticized for homogenizing places. Focusing on Pomona Island, a current regeneration site in Greater Manchester, UK, this paper reveals how a range of specific place-based affordances have successively emerged over time, through periods of leisure, industrialization, dereliction, regeneration, planning (re)assignments and property development. The paper considers the main affordances – possibilities for action offered by the environment – of Pomona. We identify the key meta-affordance of islandness, and subsequently, the historical, recreational, sensory, and ecological affordances of the site. These, we argue, have stimulated a plenitude of creative forms and practices that highlight the value of such sites for city-dwellers and propose fertile resources for thinking about more progressive forms of urban regeneration. We contend that more attention should be paid to the potential that inheres in the multiple affordances of such interstitial spaces for urban planning and place management.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 March 2024

Accepted 10 March 2025

## KEYWORDS

Affordance; regeneration; islandness; dereliction; brownfield

## Introduction

Places are constantly becoming, characterized by fixity and flow, both “stabilized and assembled” as well as “undone and surpassed” (Sheller & Urry, 2004, p. 1) through changing, multiple intertwining trajectories. Under conditions of volatile capitalist expansion and contraction, many contemporary urban places are continually subject to a ferment of economic, social, and material transformations. Some spaces are left to decay, certain buildings are rapidly demolished and replaced, while other realms are left as “devalued capital” (Harvey, 1985), disused but ripe for future accumulation. Consequently, divergent affordances, the possibilities for action that an environment offers to an organism (Gibson, 1979) appear and disappear, opening and closing down opportunities for engagement, inhabitation and narration (Hudson, 2014, 2015; Ingold, 2018). Affordances

**CONTACT** Maarja Kaaristo  [m.kaaristo@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:m.kaaristo@mmu.ac.uk)

© 2025 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

are “functional and relational aspects which frame, while not determining, the possibilities for agentic action in relation to an object” (Hutchby, 2001, p. 444); in the case of humans, they offer a range of potential practices that are conditional on dispositions, abilities and intentions.

In this paper, we discuss the emergent affordances of the interstitial, derelict Pomona Island in Greater Manchester, and explore how its shifting affordances have prompted an effusion of creative engagements. An isthmus bounded by canals on either side, Pomona has been successively formed through processes of industrialization, urbanization and infrastructural development, deindustrialization and regeneration. The island has continuously shifted in function over the last 200 years, accommodating leisure and industry, becoming a wasteland and currently, a nascent waterfront regeneration site. Pomona is thus layered with numerous traces of past events, relations and materialities.

Our focus on affordances pays attention to how places are practiced, perceived, and represented according to their historical, material and environmental qualities (Ingold, 2000). To do this, we draw on a variety of primary and secondary data. Primary data collection consists of observations and photographs composed during site visits to the island since 2020. During each visit, detailed field notes were recorded, capturing observations on the island’s material characteristics, ecological dynamics, and (traces of) human activities. The photographs served as visual documentation, enabling further reflection on changes over time. Secondary data collection involves scrutiny of key policy and planning documents of owners and developers, the Peel Group, and Trafford Council, within whose jurisdictional area the island is located. We also inspect local and national media reports and archival material to gain historical context and insights into public and governmental perceptions of the site. Finally, we examine a range of literary and dramatic works, film and video productions, and tourist guiding to explore the broader cultural and symbolic significance attributed to the island. The data was input into the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 14 to facilitate thematic analysis process which allowed for coding of this varied data (fieldnote and document text, photos, videos) and subsequent identification of recurring patterns and themes which are reported below.

We first give a theoretical overview of the relationship between affordances and place, next, we trace the island’s changing uses from leisure to industry, from ruin to future residential uses. Subsequently, historical, recreational, sensory and ecological affordances are identified before we explore how these qualities have inspired diverse creative engagements. The paper concludes by foregrounding how unregulated affordances are replete with rich potential for creative practice, emphasizing the often-neglected values that inhere in much urban interstitial space.

## **The affordances of places**

Affordance theory focuses on the relationship between an individual and an environment, examining how physical environments enable specific activities. Stemming from the environmental psychology of Gibson (1979), it is applied in various disciplines including geography (Edensor, 2006), anthropology (Ingold, 2000), sociology (Hutchby, 2001) and others. Affordances are everywhere: “graspable objects, walkable surfaces, climbable slopes, throwable projectiles, catchable prey, edible food, habitable shelters, cutting or pounding tools” (Warren, 2021, p. 10). They are shaped by both

the environment's physical traits and the inhabitants' perceptions (Gibson, 1979), allowing people to interact with the world through their activities and skills (Ingold, 2018). Edensor (2006) focuses on the spatial dimension of affordances, defining them as potential actions within a space that either constrain or enable behaviors. Places therefore offer various affordances based on their materialities and configurations, the socio-cultural contexts within which they are encountered, and an individual's capabilities and intentions.

The concept of affordance is useful for explaining how perception and action are integrated. According to McConnell and Fiore (2017, p. 261), "being in a place means to perceive that place, and, to perceive that place requires action; purposeful movement grounded by interaction within that space". Further, affordances are relational and context dependent. To emphasize, they are neither specific attributes of the environment nor of the perceiving human or non-human animal but constituted by the "relations between the abilities of organisms and features of the environment" (Chemero, 2003, p. 189). Accordingly, integral to affordance theory is an understanding of the role of perception, behavior and cognition in how organisms relate to environments. Key aspects to consider include the inseparability and circular nature of perception and action and what solicits attention during perception (Gibson, 1979; Chemero, 2003). As such, affordance theories provide a different relational focus than other concepts about materiality. Ideas about material vitality for example concentrate on becoming attuned to the ceaseless becoming of material entities, and how consequently, we might become aware that the ever-changing material world is composed of things that are characterized by enormously diverse temporalities and durabilities. Barad (2007, p. 69) argues that as things with which we are entangled change shape and constituency, new potentialities also continuously emerge, yet in terms of practical human responses, such claims remain extremely vague. Actor-network-theory accounts focus on the relational agencies of the objects that are enrolled into particular networks of meaning and function. Things are conceived as "actants" capable of mediating with each other in a network (Latour, 2005). While useful in identifying these distributed, relational attributes, this flattened network ontology rather reduces the myriad potentialities that objects might possess, minimizing the sensory and creative dimensions of human engagement with materiality and space. In contradistinction, affordance theory focuses on how encounters with things, places and landscapes can generate a range of affective and imaginative experiences and inspire practices that develop over time or are enacted in situ and in the moment. In this account, the greater centrality of human agency in creatively responding to the material qualities of a distinctive, interstitial urban place make an analysis through the perspective of affordance theory particularly apposite.

Nonetheless, certain conceptual uses of affordance theory reveal limitations. First, some accounts tend to be too focused on the visual; however, it is important to incorporate the full range of sensory modalities in investigating perception and action in a specific environment. Second, a focus on how affordances are selected and used in complex environments, especially by humans, remains somewhat underdeveloped. Addressing this, we contend that we need to account for how social and cultural cues and contexts are modulated by attention and intention. While the material and physical characteristics of environments invariably facilitate or restrict specific embodied behaviors and actions, all human action and apprehension is also enmeshed within learned cultural, practical

techniques and conventions. As Kiverstein (2015) argues, affordances are intertwined with shared socio-culturally regulated practices, habits and beliefs, promoting modes of sensory perception and evaluation can thereby become “second nature” (Edensor, 2006). Yet actions and practices undertaken in response to particular affordances are also highly diverse, shaped by physical capacities, perceptions about risk, and cultural dispositions, enthusiasms and preoccupations.

This undergirds how we need to better understand the role of affordances in considering how social and cultural norms shape perceptions and practices, and how this might inform placemaking and place management. Indeed, such studies have increased in recent years (e.g. McConnell & Fiore, 2017; Kaaristo & Visentin, 2023). For instance, Raymond et al. (2017) suggest that affordance theory, with its focus on the direct perception–action processes that provide possibilities for action in the environment, can complement the attribution of meanings to places. A wider understanding of affordance theory, we contend, can critically investigate how practices and meanings can be productively fostered to enhance the co-creation of places, leading to a more sensory and affective sense of belonging. Here, we examine how the distinctive affordances of an interstitial space in Manchester have provoked a wealth of creative and recreational practices, and how this might inform a more progressive route to place development.

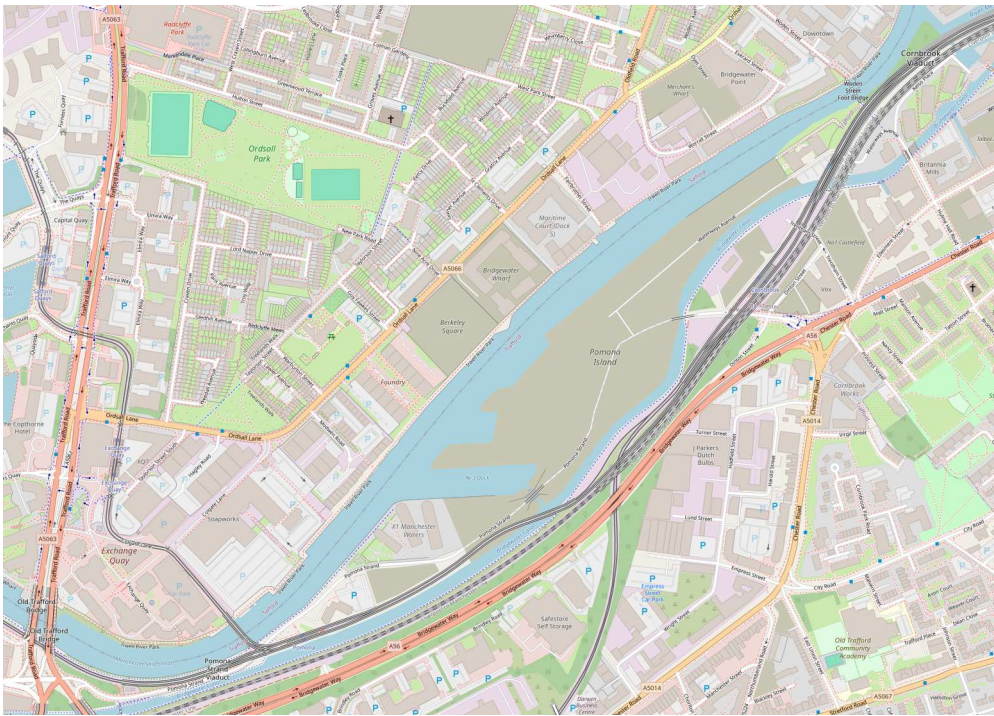
## **Pomona Island: historical development and changes**

Pomona straddles the borders of Manchester, Trafford and Salford and is situated between the Bridgewater Canal (opened in 1761), and the Manchester Ship Canal (opened in 1894) which merges with the River Irwell. This 15-hectare site, a short walk from Manchester city centre, has been turned into an “island” by transport infrastructures (Rosa, 2015) from different eras: the canals on either side, the Cornbrook railway viaduct (from 1877 and since 1999 used by the Metrolink tram system), and the A56 Chester Road/Bridgewater Way (see Figure 1). These linear routes currently bestow Pomona with the critical affordance of being difficult to access. As follows, we will outline the island’s variegated historical development from leisure space to industrial realm to a future area of housing. These assignments are not merely physical and material but also symbolic, ceaselessly emerging through human and non-human action. These changes reflect the interplay of various local and global forces, revealing how spaces and places are continuously reshaped and reimagined.

### ***From leisure space to industrial docklands***

The Cornbrook Strawberry Gardens opened in 1845 and were subsequently renamed the Pomona Pleasure Gardens (after the Roman goddess of abundance and fruitfulness). This became a popular leisure space, and included fountains, a panoramic painting of Paris, “classical works of statuary, an archery ground, maze, shooting gallery, gymnasium, magic bridge, camera obscura, cosmorama, flying swings, billiard room, pleasure boats, and concert room” (Leahy, 2007, p. 558). In 1875, the Pomona Palace was constructed – a grand structure with a 100-ft clock tower. Its concert hall, with an orchestra pit for 100 musicians, could accommodate 30,000 people. The gardens hosted diverse events including horse and dog shows, Roman chariot races, circuses, agricultural





**Figure 1.** Pomona Island in Manchester. Source: OpenStreetMap 2024. [openstreetmap.org/copyright](https://openstreetmap.org/copyright).

fairs, industrial exhibitions and political rallies. However, in July 1887, a huge explosion in an adjacent chemical works damaged the Palace irreparably and the following year, the gardens were permanently closed (Rebellato, 2020).

Following the construction and opening of the Manchester Ship Canal that transported raw materials and goods from Liverpool, the area transformed into Pomona Docks, part of the Port of Manchester that subsequently became among the world's busiest ports (Owen, 1983). Pomona docks were located in both Manchester (Dock 1) and Trafford (Docks 2–4). Unlike the docks in Salford (Docks 6–9; Dock 5 was never built), which received ocean-going vessels, Pomona docks were solely used by vessels sailing to English, Irish and continental European ports that carried coal, limestone, gravel, sand, clay, flour and corn cargoes (Richardson, 1996). A visitor recalled the scene in the 1950s (Gray, 1993, p. 95):

The main terminal docks [of Salford], with their bevy of large, modern, smartly-painted ships, possessed a certain air of romance, redolent of far-off places. By contrast, the smaller Pomona Docks lacked glamour, and latterly acquired a definite down-market flavour. Here were to be found the tramps of the coastal trade, often dirty ancient coal-burners, with grimy and chipped paintwork, offering a generally neglected appearance.

Historic maps and photos reveal large warehouses, including a two-storey warehouse on Dock 4 (Tracy, 1901), as well as some railway sidings (Trafford Council, 2019, p. 29). Like the sites across the Ship Canal in Ordsall, immediately north of Pomona, the island experienced a “period of relative spatial stability” (Hudson, 2015, p. 463).

By the 1970s, however, the growing redundancy of Pomona Docks as a transport hub signified Manchester's declining industrial base (Madgin, 2010). From 1960 to 1980, both the Bridgewater Canal and Cornbrook rail viaduct became disused. The Ship Canal, too, became obsolete, unable to accommodate increasingly large ocean-going container ships, and by 1982 all the docks in Port of Manchester were closed. Of Pomona Island's four docks, only Dock 3 survives; the others were filled in, one partially, producing the site's current spatial configuration (see Figure 1).

In 1974, the island briefly hosted Manchester's first ship nightclub (on a decommissioned passenger ferry), *North Westward Ho!*, with bars, dance floor and restaurant, but it was closed in the early 1980s (Flynn, 2014). A photograph from 1979 shows the continued presence of the four large warehouses (Figure 2). Subsequently, Pomona was gradually occupied by light industrial premises: scrapyards, car repair businesses and small construction businesses. Areal development plans from the 1980s designated the land for industrial usages, even though the number of disused lots were increasing (Rosa, 2015).

In the 1980s and 1990s, Manchester City Council and the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC) sought to attract new investment to nearby Castlefield, also a former industrial area (Madgin, 2010). Castlefield "slowly metamorphosed from a grey, industrial space into a whitewashed and landscaped leisure area, criss-crossed by canals" (Degen, 2008, p. 4). Many light industrial businesses located there were deemed incompatible with this new place image and decanted to Pomona (Rosa, 2015). Yet development aims for the island shifted once again, with plans in 1989 to re-establish Pomona as a leisure park to create a "vital green lung close to the city centre" and a "contemporary sculpture park with commercial leisure activity" (Rosa, 2015, p. 192).

Approval to demolish existing buildings was given in December 1992, along with permission for

"erection of nine buildings to comprise themed attractions, restaurants, bars, two night-clubs, souvenir shops, a five storey 200 bedroom hotel, a 5,000 seat arena, administrative and customer reception buildings, a monorail, a rocket ship attraction, provision of ancillary car parking and landscaped areas" (Trafford Council, 2015, p. 42).

The warehouses were demolished, but these ambitious plans never materialized. A landscaped promenade along the Ship Canal including decorative lamps and railings was constructed, but little else.



**Figure 2.** Pomona Island in 1979 (on the right in the photo) with four warehouses visible. Source: Courtesy of Greater Manchester Police Museum & Archives.



Slowly the area became vacant, taken over by grass and shrubs. In 1993, most of the land at Pomona passed from the City of Manchester to Trafford Borough, in a move that was, according to Rosa (2015, p. 193), “more significant than it might initially appear [since] the council of Trafford is heavily influenced by The Peel Group”, one of the UK’s largest privately owned property development and investment companies.

### ***From “edgeland” to regenerated residential space***

In the early 2000s, inspired by Castlefield’s regeneration, Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council identified Pomona Island as a priority area for improvement and regeneration (Manchester City Council et al., 2008). However, these plans remained unfulfilled and the site became an interstitial wasteland (see Figure 3), although the industrially contaminated soil has been subsequently remediated (Trafford Council, 2011, 2019, p. 29).

Around this time, the Peel Group became the site’s primary landowner (Shrubsole, 2019). Having acquired the properties of the former Manchester Ship Canal Company, they obtained planning permission to develop five waterfront buildings (between 8 and 16 storeys, providing 546 apartments) in the southwest of Pomona. The project was suspended during the 2007/2008 financial crisis, but in mid-2010s, the island’s development for residential and commercial purposes became part of the group’s “Strategic Waters” initiative “to regenerate and transform former industrial sites in unique waterfront locations throughout the UK to create stunning destinations where people can live, work, socialize and enjoy life” (Peel L&P, 2019, online). In 2015, permission was granted



**Figure 3.** Lingering dream of a canal-side walkway. Pomona Island in 2018. Photo credit: lowefoto Alamy Stock Photo.

to build an additional two buildings at the island's northeast end (Trafford Council, 2015, p. 38).

In its initial masterplan, Peel Group (2008, p. 20) describes the island as follows:

“There is no public realm to speak of within the Pomona Island site at present as a result of the cleared/industrial nature of the area. The space that does exist is utilitarian in appearance with an absence of any public open spaces and a lack of local character and identity.”

However, opposition to development disputed this characterization. A *Save Pomona*<sup>1</sup> campaign, including a petition of 1,598 signatories, unsuccessfully lobbied Trafford Council to reject the planning application. The petition highlighted Pomona's historical significance, the threat to wildlife, and the area's potential for green space for wellbeing, sustainable innovation and tourism.<sup>2</sup> In addition, 102 letters of objection were submitted by local residents to Trafford Council's planning committee, citing poor design, loss of open space, impact on ecology, heritage and archaeology, traffic and parking, impact on residential amenities, flooding and drainage, contamination, and a lack of public consultation (Trafford Council, 2015, pp. 48–52).

Planning permission was nonetheless granted, and Peel Group currently promotes the development to potential investors as “one the last remaining large scale regeneration opportunities located close to the heart of the city centre, [that] benefits from extensive waterfront views neighboring the world renowned Manchester Ship Canal”.<sup>3</sup> At the time of writing, two blocks at Pomona's southwest end and three at the northeast end have been completed and there is a permission for the construction of a further two blocks. 19 formal objection letters from nearby residents argue that Peel's planning application has made no effort to establish a mixed-use commercial and residential district, has blocked public access to the waterfront, and has failed to improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility, with priority focused on cars. Residents also objected to the lack of a master plan for Pomona Island, despite it being a strategic location in the regeneration of both Trafford Borough and Manchester (Trafford Council, 2019). Ruling that Peel Group's 2008 *Pomona Island Masterplan* is outdated, Trafford Council (2019, p. 31) too notes that without an alternative masterplan, the island could end up as a “piecemeal development ... rather than development in a comprehensive manner [and] that the site as a whole will not then deliver the infrastructure, community, leisure and other facilities and requirements set out in the [council's] Core Strategy.” The Council insisted that a new masterplan must include proposals for a new park and commercial space (Whelan, 2020). In March 2020, Peel Land & Property submitted a new masterplan to Trafford Council to replace the 2008 document, stating that “key public spaces such as the boulevard, Dock no 3 marina and the proposed park adjacent to Cornbrook tram will be designed in a way to promote the island as a destination” (Jon Matthews Architects, 2020, p. 33). As this project contained no provision for on-site affordable housing it was rejected by the council. Neither does the recently approved application from 2023; however, instead of the earlier proposed 5%, Peel have agreed to contribute 20% towards affordable housing elsewhere within Trafford (Whelan, 2023).

Since both completed housing developments are positioned at either end of the island (Pomona Wharf and X1), a large area in-between remains an informal commons that has continued to be temporarily appropriated by local residents despite having been fenced off by the landowners. Having outlined the historical development of this dynamic place, we now consider its current affordances.

## The islandness affordances of Pomona

As an informal space, Pomona offers elements available to perception that afford the enaction of a potential range of practices, “opportunities to different individuals, groups and non-humans who appropriate them in a variety of ways” (Hudson, 2015, p. 194). Above all, a kind of meta-affordance is constituted by the boundaries forged by watery and transport routes and the limited access this proposes. It is named – and experienced as – an island, separate from the city to which it belongs. Yet “rather than being a geomorphic island, Pomona is an anthropogenic space” (Rosa, 2015, p. 189), its boundaries defined by infrastructure. A view from the elevated perspective of a passing tram reveals an expansive sense of how it stands apart from the extensive, largely vertical waterfront developments that surround it. This dramatic contrast to the city beyond is intensified by apprehension of its horizontal prospect, relative quiescence and contrasting stillness. Key to these island affordances are the restrictions on lingering human presence apart from temporary activities while encouraging the undisturbed presence of non-humans, underpinning Gandy’s (2013, p. 1312) contention that “wastelands are ‘islands,’ in cultural, material, and political terms” that can challenge “the utilitarian impetus of capitalist modernity”. Baldacchino (2007, p. 166) furthermore asserts that islands “suggest themselves as *tabulae rasa*: potential laboratories for any human project in thought or in action”. As such, the “idea of the island can start, glow and grow in the mind like a beacon of possibilities” (Nicolson, 2007, p. 153) – potentialities exemplified below. The *islandness* of Pomona enhances its recognizability, offers representability, delivers sequestration from ordinary urban life and space, enhances a sense of place (Vannini & Taggart, 2013; Cavallo & Visentin, 2021), and provides the underlying basis for four further specific affordances discussed below.

### Historical affordances

Pomona Island’s rich history exemplifies Lynch’s (1972, p. 171) contention that urban materiality is characterized by the “accumulation of overlapping traces from successive periods, each trace modifying and being modified by the new additions, to produce something like a collage of time”. While no remnants of the Pleasure Gardens or earlier factories are perceptible, remains may be hidden in the ground as historical and archaeological potentialities. For despite extensive terraforming, a suspicion lingers that something from another time may lie beneath our feet. Desires provoked by such conjectures are reinforced by the knowledge that below an old tram line on the island, a network of service tunnels remained accessible to some adventurous urban explorers as late as in 2013<sup>4</sup>, although a building site now blocks the entrance.

On Pomona, “memory of the past and expectation of the future come together in the present” (Duarte, 2017, p. 37). Evident infrastructural vestiges include the adjacent Bridgewater Canal built to import coal from the nearby mines at Worsley, and the later construction of the Ship Canal that discloses the colossal quantities of goods and raw materials transported to and from the city. Historical fixtures are also present in the nineteenth century railway infrastructure that borders Pomona. Material reminders of Pomona Docks also persist: Dock 3 has been left unfilled, while Dock 2 is only partially filled, and several mooring rings and bollards remain embedded in the dockside stone.

These histories of waterside industry have been extensively represented; as we will see, they inspire some visitors to vicariously imagine the scenes they solicit. Other, more obscure traces of past usages have not yet been erased from the island, including rectangular industrial building foundations, asphalt car parking areas, crumbling bricks and large chunks of masonry. The more recent lighting infrastructures alongside the Ship Canal testify to the long-abandoned plan for an urban leisure park.

With no interpretation boards to offer any information, the scattered material remnants and expansive landscape foster an imaginative recouping of the past: the bustle and excitement of the crowds that crammed into the Palace, cargo-laden, horse drawn narrowboats slowly moving along the Bridgewater Canal, large seagoing ships arriving on the Ship Canal, the clamor of busy docks, with laboring bodies lifting goods and operating machinery, smoke belching from the factory chimneys and the grind and steam from the railway terminus. As at other derelict sites, visitors may indulge in creative speculation about the disparate fragments, juxtapositions and traces that remain, composing conjectural narratives about their provenance and imagining the scenes that they summon (Edensor, 2005).

### ***Ecological affordances***

Pomona also affords rich opportunities for non-human life forms to dwell, breed and feed. Farley and Roberts (2011, p. 145) could be writing about Pomona when they describe the informal “edgelands” (see also Shoard, 2000) they explore:

On a summer evening, stepping through a gap in the rusty corrugated iron and entering a well-established patch of wasteland is to enter an harbour of scents. As soon as wasteland has begun to collect pioneering plants, the insects follow, and where there are insects, there are birds.

The site has become an unexpected urban greenspace, a wildlife corridor that lures birds including lapwing, skylark, dunnoek, bullfinch, coot, moorhen, Canada goose and meadow pipit. A flora report identifies the presence of 33 biologically important species, including the rare bee orchid (Marsden & Walsh, 2016), yet the plant life has been destroyed several times by the landowners – allegedly because it was in the verge of being declared a site of biological importance (Flynn, 2014; Rosa, 2015).

The ecological affordances of the site – the grassland (though serially remediated), the lack of disturbance, and the waterways, even if formerly heavily polluted (Marsden & Walsh, 2016) – have made Pomona a space of entanglement, of the watery and terrestrial, rural and urban, human and non-human, organic and inorganic. There have been several calls to save the island as nature reserve.

Conservation biologists refer to urban spaces produced by the agency of non-humans as “open mosaic habitats” in preference to brownfield (Gandy, 2013, p. 1302). A rich “recombinant ecology” (Barker, 2000, cit. Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006, p. 555) emerges as remnant spaces of industry become host to various colonizing species, creating ecological “co-fabrications” and a unique “politics of conviviality” that accommodates both humans and non-humans (Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006, pp. 556–557). As a kind of wasteland that deviates from the managed aesthetics of urban parks and gardens (Gandy, 2013), Pomona offers both a flat, green vista beyond which the spectacle

of the regenerating city rises and a sensorially immersive realm in which a dense series of micro-habitats in which diverse non-humans may flourish and be experienced (see also Gandy, 2013). Pomona is literally an island of biodiversity that exceeds the ecological richness of more ordered, designed green urban spaces such as parks and gardens; yet it now “needs to be “cleaned,” “greened” and “regenerated” for the benefit of bourgeois and middle-class residents” (Kimari & Parish, 2020, p. 644).

### ***Recreational affordances***

On Pomona, the lack of surveillance and the dearth of passers-by allow numerous practices to take place without hindrance. Though all major access points to the island are fenced off by the landowner, the costs and practicalities of maintaining these barriers require continual vigilance. Steel fences have been bent out of shape to facilitate entry, enabling the creation of an unofficial park or “temporary commons” (Rosa, 2015) in which people share a common orientation to the affordances of the environment (Kiverstein, 2015) and can explore alternative modes of interaction, unencumbered by external oversight.

The island affords a number of respectable pursuits, albeit unsanctioned, including dog walking and meandering, running, taking shortcuts, having picnics and barbecues. The assiduous recording of botanical and animal life is carried out by hobbyists and bird-watchers. Urban explorers visit the island to (re)discover and experience the island before it is regenerated. Practitioners of more playful endeavors are also attracted to Pomona. Long stretches of tarmac afford a smooth surface for unrestrained roller-skating, skateboarding, and cycling. Teenagers gather to socialize away from the watchful eyes of grown-ups. The concrete struts of the flyovers, large concrete and stone blocks, and dilapidated brick walls provide unprotected surfaces for graffiti artists, with undisturbed masterpieces co-existing with tags and less finely wrought scrawls. In 2017, the island hosted an unofficial rave attended by around 150 people (Abbit, 2017). In addition, activities can take place away from the gaze of the CCTV or fellow citizens: drug use and sex are manifest in scattered material evidence.

At Pomona, playful behavior thrives, demonstrating the importance of non-designated spaces at which creative expression can take place without constraint (Stevens, 2007). In accommodating their desires and communal enjoyments, visitors reproduce place through “practical, creative, skilful engagement with its affordances ... by way of *making* use of whatever is at hand” (Vannini & Taggart, 2013, p. 227). Unlike the transitional reappropriations identified by Groth and Corijn (2005), these activities take place on the wing, lack any infrastructural architecture or supporting framework, and cannot lay claim to space for long. Nonetheless, Pomona affords opportunities as an unofficial playground in which pleasurable practices and creative innovation can flourish.

### ***Sensory affordances***

Playful practices amplify and exploit the multisensory affordances of Pomona Island. For to enter this space is to leave the typical textures, smells, views and sounds of the city behind, and experience a different realm in which the sensory is redistributed (Ranci re, 2004). Perhaps the most dramatic sensation is that of an expansive apprehension of



space: a spreading sky above a largely flat terrain colonized by low shrubs and wild grasses. On all sides of the island lie vertical structures – new and old residential towers, office blocks and the ever-present cranes – intensifying the sense of islandness.

This feeling of spatial separation sonically enhanced by the faraway thrum of traffic and the echoing sounds of construction which form a low accompaniment to the twitter of skylarks, the cries of waterfowl and the rustle of grass in the wind, as well as the intermittent, rhythmic thrum and squeal of passing trams. Sound artist David Birchall (2022, p. 16) lists the auditory elements of Pomona: “Wind coming down the Ship Canal activating plants, trees, bushes, rubbish • trams pass by in both directions • mechanical/crushing sound from scrap metal merchants • building/hammering on metal sounds from around half a mile away, from Trafford, Manchester and Salford building sites • traffic sounds • bird sounds • other users: bikes, talking, phones, music, motion running/footsteps.” As Tonkiss (2015, p. 308) claims, “stumbling across silence in the city ... can be like uncovering a secret”; this alluring quiescence also conjures up that which is now absent: the din of working docks and factories.

Against the extending flatness, various objects stand out that in the visual array of the city would meld inconspicuously within a more cluttered material array. This promotes a grasp of their sculptural, formal qualities. Numerous historical vestiges announce their presence: lumps of reinforced concrete, plastic poles embedded in the earth that may be there for soil remediation, collapsing mesh fences that divide up narrow pieces of land for no discernible reason, twisted steel rods, kerbs and paving, piles of rubble, extant brick columns and walls, tiles and car parks, the flooring of industrial units, dock bollards and ladders. They invite bodies to touch, lift, climb and rearrange them, and in their disarray seem to rebuke the often over-regulated, sterile qualities of urban arrangements elsewhere. As in other derelict settings, such objects may seem unclassifiable, partly because of their transformation through decay. Contorted into peculiar shapes, they attune onlookers to a continuously emergent aesthetics (Edensor, 2005). Similarly, the smells of the island are not controlled, with the aroma of green plants merging with the scent of rotting wood or dead animals in a mingling of the fragrant and the abject.

A key sensory island affordance of Pomona is generated by its proximity to water:

“Manchester, the liquid city, [is] irrigated by an invisible network of veins and arteries, buried, canalized, enclosed, cut off or hidden. New buildings arise along their banks, higher and tighter to them than ever before, deepening and darkening the urban ravines” (Fox, 2017, pp. 69–70).

In Pomona, the vibrant canal waters ripple or vividly reflect surroundings when calm, a bright sun causing them to shimmer, cloudy conditions producing a grey shine. An occasional narrowboat animates the water on the Bridgewater Canal, while ducks and geese create splashes upon landing on the Ship Canal. Especially striking is the point at which the two canals meet, as the water cascades down, gushing into the lock to allow boats to pass from one body of water into the other. A restaurant boat approaches the island from Castlefield, crew members open the lock gates, and the boat slowly enters the lock where it descends for about 15 minutes as the lock empties until the lock gates are opened to let the boat enter the Ship Canal. The antiquated lock walls are covered with slimy mud and moss, and whether on land, watching the spectacle, or as a passenger



on the boat, these intimate watery encounters intensify visual and sonic experience and provide a further sensorial distinction from familiar urban space.

## Representing and reimagining Pomona Island and its affordances

Having explored how visitors to Pomona are attracted by its island qualities, we now explore how attunement to these historical, recreational, sensory, and ecological affordances has generated an extraordinary range of more sustained creative engagements. Besides the imaginative and sensorial experiences and the exploratory and playful endeavors identified above, we discuss how dramatic, literary, filmic, architectural endeavors, ecological investigations and alternative tours have been inspired by Pomona and its particular affordances.

The island has served as an inspiration for a location in two recent fictional works. First, the island is the setting for Alistair MacDowell's play, *Pomona*, staged in the city's Royal Exchange Theatre in 2015 and by amateur theatre group Chorlton Players in 2022. Writing this play was motivated by the playwright's observation that nobody ever disembarks at the Pomona tram station, causing him to wonder what takes place there (Haydon, 2015). The play's main character, Ollie, is searching for her missing sister and keeps coming across Pomona, described by one of the characters, Zeppo:

It's an island. Concrete island. Here. Right in the middle of town. Strip of land with the canal on both sides. Tram tracks and train tracks and roads all surrounding it. There's one road in and out and it's gated at both ends. Nothing there but cracked asphalt and weeds. All overgrown. Street lights don't work. It's a hole. A hole in the middle of the city. Looks like what the world'll be in a few thousand years (McDowall, 2016, p. 318).

The access road is guarded by two characters who are unaware about why they are paid so generously to make sure that no-one may access the empty island, except for a van that appears from time to time. They know better than to ask. As the play progresses, it gradually becomes evident that something sinister is going on there and eventually, a dystopian human body-harvesting operation is revealed in the tunnels below the island. The scenes are non-linear in time (and come to a full circle by the play's end) and feature characters such as the writer H. P. Lovecraft's monster-god Cthulhu. The latter may simply be a role in a roleplaying game; alternatively, the underground hospital-prison underneath Pomona could be enacting Cthulhu's will (Rabey, 2018). The island becomes an enigmatic "liminal zone haunted by deceit, disguise and doubling, a place of gods and humans, blurred identities and tall tales" as well as a "post-industrial urban landscape, marked by dereliction and rewilding, uncertainly caught between the cultural and the natural" (Rebellato, 2020, p. xiii). During the time of the play's staging in Manchester, tours of the island took place in which participants were to learn about Pomona's "fascinating history, explore its nefarious underbelly, and uncover the stories buried, quite literally, beneath our feet on this concrete island" (Barlow, 2015, online).

Second, Pomona Island features in J. M. Hewitt's 2019 crime fiction novel, *The Quiet Girls*, which reimagines it as an almost inaccessible, desert island far away but still visible from Manchester. One of the book's characters, Harry, who suffers from depression, decides to illegally move his and another family to Pomona to start a new life. In the novel, the island is reimagined as only accessible by being transported by an experienced boater who must battle against the currents; it has no phone or internet signal, and no

means of contacting the outside world. Harry's wife, Alice, secretly pays the boatman to meet her on the island once every two weeks. The island is also reimagined as possessing a beauty spot, a hill with a 30 ft drop to the rocks and water below; a "true wilderness" where instead of cracking under feet the twigs would vanish "into a carpet of thick, slushy earth" (Hewitt, 2019, p. 103), very dissimilar to the actual space. Yet, it is simultaneously described as containing asphalt roads, concrete and graffiti, features more familiar to the actual Pomona (Hewitt, 2019, p. 238). In the novel, Pomona represents Harry's ultimately unfulfilled dream of living off-grid, away from conventional society. For Alice, however, the island becomes a prison in which she is never able to make a choice for herself. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that while running from danger to the island, everyone has also brought their demons with them, imagined as well as corporeal.

In an afterword, Hewitt (2019, p. 254) describes the island:

Today, the real Pomona is a wasteland of flora, fauna and concrete. The bridges and brick walls are a canvas for street artists. It is the shadow of industry, overtaken by nature and wilderness. Used needles and discarded sleeping bags lie side by side with the various species of wildlife, such as the brimstone butterfly, kestrels, lapwing, skylark. Fifty pairs of sand martins have been recorded, nesting in the dock walls; pochard ducks are listed, a species now on the globally vulnerable list. Proposals for several hundred new flats to be built on Pomona Island have been approved, construction has started. Soon, this hidden gem, this little oasis in the midst of urban city life will be gone, replaced by nineteen-storey high-rises, retail, leisure and commercial units, and Pomona will be no more. Manchester Waters – Pomona's new name – will be there instead. But the history, the stories, the graffiti and the photographs will remain, as will my own version of Pomona, within the pages in this book.

Besides these fictional, imaginative interpretations, emphatically inspired by its numerous affordances, Pomona's visual qualities have provoked creative engagements through video documentary and music. Filmmaker George Haydock's 14-minute documentary, *Pomona Island* (2014), evocatively celebrates Pomona's history and contemporary sensorial and environmental qualities, drawing on the diverse perspectives of academics from architecture and geography, a photographer, alternative tour guide and a member of a local heritage group. Haydock (2014, online) emphasizes that his primary intention was "to capture the essence of this unusual space, to glorify it, live with it and let it dwell for while". Only featuring footage filmed at Pomona itself, cinematographer Matthew Rowlands composes numerous lingering shots of wild plants and flowers, some dripping in Manchester's infamous rain, small creatures, remnant docksides, fencing and lithic debris, the underpass, passing canoeists, joggers, trams and boats, fast moving clouds, and scenic vistas of the city beyond. The film's original score is composed by Andrew Symcox and performed by the Insieme Quartet, their melancholy strings woven together with noises of passing trams. Following the credits, the film concludes with a list of birds and plants that have been found at the site. Similarly, an album *Pomona Itinerations* features performed recordings featuring sampler, voice and walking, made by sound artist David Birchall (2023) on the island, accompanied by a short film (Birchall, 2021).

In addition to professional creatives, Pomona also features in various amateur videos and documentaries, most often posted on the YouTube social media platform. Belonging

to the “citizen journalism” (Antony & Thomas, 2010) movement, these films could be termed *citizen documentaries*. While they typically follow traditional journalistic practices of editing and presentation and ensure high audio and video quality, they also offer a counterpoint to the selective topics and modes of presentation of traditional media. Martin Zero, a Mancunian YouTuber whose channel is subscribed to by more than 100,000 people, has produced a documentary-style video, *Manchester’s Lost Island of Pomona* (2018). Filmed during a phase when the island possessed thicker vegetation than it currently does, the video solely features Zero filmed at multiple locations, talking to camera about the history of the island, with over half the content focusing upon Pomona Palace. Following an aerial view of the island in the contemporary landscape and selective historical images, the video shifts to striking drone footage from high above and zooms downwards to focus on a linear tarmac expanse on which Zero is sitting in a large armchair, one thing amongst the shifting array of discarded objects that randomly appear on Pomona.

Zero’s video also includes footage from iconic social realist film *A Taste of Honey* (1961), an adaptation of Shelagh Delaney’s 1958 play. The sequence features a scene in which the main character, Jo, played by Rita Tushingham, is wandering around Pomona Docks, conveying a vivid sense of the industrial era, with evocative scenes of large ships, grimy waterside paths, cranes, dockside rail tracks and factories. True to its form as an interactive media, some of the YouTube viewers point out in the comments section that the footage featuring ocean-going ships is filmed at Salford Docks and Barton, not near Pomona. Following this sequence, Zero identifies a bollard at the water’s edge on Dock 3 and a chimney in a photograph from 1946. These extant fixtures underscore the transformation in the landscape between then and now. The video concludes with a final statement from Zero that chimes with prevalent desires:

Now that we know the history, there’s kind of a longing that we just want it to stay like this lovely, romantic island that’s being reclaimed by nature, with this wonderful, wonderful backstory.

An earlier, shorter video by Zero, *Pomona Island, Manchester: Wildflower Wilderness* (2017) focuses upon ecological qualities. Commencing with wide ranging drone footage and views of the island from a tram, many species of plants, some with visiting bees, are filmed during a successful, excitable quest to find poppies growing on some rough ground. These various blooms, Zero contends, exceed the limited floral presence of buttercups and daisies in the Mancunian places with which he is familiar, prompting his lament that this efflorescent oasis will be extinguished by future developments. The video concludes with a slow-motion sequence in which a heron flies along the Bridgewater Canal and footage of the opening of the Bridgewater Canal sluice gates that heralds the pleasing, noisy cascade of foaming water as the lock fills to enable passage to the Ship Canal.

In addition to these creative representational works, architecture, planning and design students (see for example, Lee, 2010) have used the island as a canvas to envisage alternative futures for the site, demonstrating further that Pomona serves as a space for numerous projections, re-imaginings and dreams. As part of a festival, Design Manchester 2016, a two-day workshop<sup>5</sup>, saw students devising sustainable plans and mini-monuments to various histories and features of Pomona, culminating in a publicly staged

exhibition event. One result was an illustrated, edited book, *Fruitful Futures: Imagining Pomona* (Cocchiarella et al., 2017) containing accounts by Manchester based academics, experts and other interested parties such as residents. Bringing forth diverse imaginaries informed by different perspectives, these authors present speculative scenarios for the island's future. Such representations suggest that the site could have always evolved otherwise. In brief accounts, planners, photographers, tour guides, filmmakers, landscape architects, poets, botanists and ecologists, artists, agronomists, activists, and postgraduate students reveal their experiences, articulate its values and propose their future visions. These include numerous photographs, a color walk, a sculpture, a musical composition, drawings, and site-specific lighting.

Further representations of Pomona are mediated for tourists. In addition to the commentary of the aforementioned restaurant boat, which seeks to conjure up the long-disappeared palace and gardens and the busy docks, other, more alternative tours have taken place on the island. These could be interpreted as representing the city in “a way that developers and city leaders typically do not want to project – that is, as a failure of industrial modernity” (Slager, 2020, p. 125). In accounting for her alternative tour around Pomona, tour guide Hayley Flynn explains its attractions:

[The Pomona Pleasure Garden's] success historically was that it was right near the city centre, it was somewhere to come and enjoy. And now it's kind of like a secret place to come and enjoy, where life has thrived despite the city (Haydock, 2014, online).

These interpretations suggest that the city can be (re)presented in divergent ways from conventional interpretations that focus on official forms of heritage and reified sites. Pomona has inspired such endeavors alongside a plethora of creative and practical engagements.

## Conclusion: the affordances of islandness

In this paper, we have sought to show how the distinctive affordances of an interstitial urban site, Pomona Island, has stimulated an array of practices and creative productions by diverse inhabitants of Manchester and Salford. Above all, Pomona's meta-affordance, islandness, affords a wealth of practices and experiences. Pomona constitutes a welcome realm in which to carry out a range of recreational activities, encounter histories, enter a divergent sensory realm and witness a shifting range of fauna and flora in a dense urban setting. Here, the city can be experienced otherwise. As in other urban settings, volatile economic cycles and shifting planning priorities have produced a derelict space that has been widely utilized by diverse visitors and temporary occupants. They have been stimulated into action and imagination by a range of specific, place-based affordances that have emerged from diverse historical processes: (de)industrialization, regeneration, dereliction, radical terraforming, planning assignation, property development and non-human flourishing. Pomona's historical layers and ecological qualities create a unique environment where past and present coalesce. The island's physical-historical landscape and material elements encourage embodied exploration, multifaceted recreational opportunities, sensory experience and an imaginative consideration of the island's varied pasts and speculative futures. We have especially focused on how Pomona's potent affordances have provoked an array of creative responses from filmmakers,

writers, tour guides and architects. It has also offered rich stimulations for the construction of alternative urban visions. As Gandy (2013, p. 1311) emphasizes, these imaginative practices can offer “a kind of radical cultural and political praxis” that can “unsettle the familiar terrain of cultural landscapes, designed spaces and the organizational logic of modernity”.

A key question arises as to why this fertile proliferation of creative responses and reimaginings has recently emerged? Perhaps it has come about during a period in which there is a dearth of informal spaces, extinguished under current processes of regeneration and gentrification across central Manchester in favor of serial, over-designed, over-regulated and functional spaces. As Cook and Ward (2012, p. 790) note, all over the world “cities appear to have been shepherded into line, the unknown rendered both knowable and comparable”, and where “urban complexity has been reduced to a series of numbers, stories, tables and images.” Pomona’s relative seclusion with the porous borders of semi-regulated access has resulted in a liminal state that affords a variety of recreational and spontaneous activities, as well as sustaining ecological niches and nonhuman habitats that unfettered by the prevailing rules and procedures of more regulated urban spaces. The discrete islandness of Pomona can serve as “an antidote to the overdetermined, homogeneous, tightly regulated, and increasingly privatized urban public realm” (Rosa, 2015, p. 185), that the site looks in likely to become. Besides these human possibilities, the island also possesses the attributes of a wasteland in which non-humans flourish when relentless maintenance and floral eradication are suspended (Gandy, 2013).

While various processes and uses, informal and formal, sanctioned and unsanctioned, have shaped this constantly fluid place, the next stage of its biography looks towards its reinvention as a mixed residential and commercial area. By giving the development a new name, Manchester Waters, the island’s rich history is relegated to the background, a void or a blank canvas for Peel’s Strategic Waters project to attract would-be buyers and residents, with the name Pomona only preserved as a tram stop. What might be lost because of erasing the rich series of affordances we have identified, both for everyday habitués and creative practitioners, by restricting access to the island? These erasures are also construed in the excessively romantic representations of interstitial sites, wastelands and ruins that emerge from a distanced gaze and culminates in the “ruin porn” (Lyons, 2018) through which such sites are aestheticised without social, political and historical context. However, as we demonstrate in this paper, such realms can host diverse recreational, sensory, historical, creative and imaginative potentialities that are inspired by specific affordances and thus repudiate any generalized romantic assessments.

The production of alternative narratives about Manchester (as evidenced by Dobraszczyk & Butler, 2020) demonstrates the need for a city to accommodate what de Solà-Morales (1995) calls a “terrain vague”, a latent space in which the absence of formal use can create a sense of possibility and freedom, of creativity, imagination and experimentation. In this light, Tonnelat (2008, p. 293) claims that it is “through a careful attention to these often invisible uses that urban design might renew itself, translating into its own practice some of the demands that such spaces give form to”.

Indeed, instead of conceiving realms such as Pomona as *terra nullius*, “their intricate topography of human structures and artefacts, natural growth and decay, could be treated as the basis for future site planning and design” that might critically question “the relentless production, reproduction, consumption (and destruction) of over-

programmed urban environments” (Jorgensen & Tylecote, 2007, p. 460). Pomona testifies to the benefits of “leaving certain things undefined and open for the future, space is provided for the co-existence of multiple activities and encounters” (Groth & Corijn, 2005, p. 522). The island’s various affordances foster a dynamic space in which history and ecologies intertwine, potentially offering a profound and personal embodied exploration of time and place. Incorporating such affordances into placemaking could promote a more interactive, engaging and meaningful connection between people and places.

By taking affordances seriously, placemakers could create environments that naturally encourage exploration, social interaction and personal reflection. This might help to achieve goals envisaged by real estate development but also create more open-ended, emotionally resonant places that invite residents to form deeper place attachments. By acknowledging the importance of material, spatial, environmental, historical, sensory and socio-cultural affordances, placemaking could help developments to be more inclusive, dynamic and reflective of their own complex historical and political narratives. As we have demonstrated in this paper, Pomona Island serves as an exemplary realm in which normative urban planning and design practices could learn how to do things otherwise, following the creative engagements of those whose imaginative endeavors are inspired by the multiple affordances that saturate this informal, interstitial urban site.

## Notes

1. <https://savepomona.wordpress.com/>
2. <https://www.change.org/p/peel-holdings-trafford-council-please-halt-the-plans-to-build-on-pomona-until-viable-social-and-environmentally-sustainable-alternatives-can-be-put-forward>
3. <https://peellandp.co.uk/what-we-do/placemaking/manchester-waters/>
4. <https://www.oblivionstate.com/community/threads/pomona-docks-salford-may-2013.5189/>
5. <https://designmcr.com/events/pomona-island-design-lab-opiso-city>

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

No funding was received for this research.

## Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable as majority of the study is based on secondary data.

## ORCID

Maarja Kaaristo  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2803-0418>

Tim Edensor  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4715-6024>

Gary Warnaby  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6696-6671>



## References

- Abbit, B. (2017, August 3). How I staged a huge free rave on Pomona Island to celebrate my birthday. Manchester Evening News. [www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/watch-how-staged-huge-free-13426863](http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/watch-how-staged-huge-free-13426863).
- Antony, M. G., & Thomas, R. J. (2010). "This is citizen journalism at its finest": YouTube and the public sphere in the Oscar Grant shooting incident. *New Media & Society*, 12(8), 1280–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810362492>
- Baldacchino, G. (2007). Islands as novelty sites. *Geographical Review*, 97(2), 165–174. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2007.tb00396.x>
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway. Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. Duke.
- Barlow, N. (2015, October 7). Manchester's Mysterious Island Pomona takes centre stage at Royal Exchange. Manchester Evening News. <https://aboutmanchester.co.uk/manchesters-mysterious-island-pomona-takes-centre-stage-at-royal-exchange/>.
- Birchall, D. (2021). Pomona 120121. Video. 6 min. <https://youtu.be/SU6Yxp3oKws?si=8CZIfM66B15XljRk>.
- Birchall, D. (2022). *Improvised itinerations: Performed recordings in urban interstice sites*. Master's thesis. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield.
- Birchall, D. (2023). *Pomona iterations*. Digital album. <https://davidbirchall.bandcamp.com/album/pomona-itinerations>.
- Cavallo, F., & Visentin, F. (2021). An island for everyone. *Shima*, 15(1), 206–224. <https://doi.org/10.21463/shima.107>
- Chemero, A. (2003). An outline of a theory of affordances. *Ecological Psychology*, 15(2), 181–195.
- Cocchiarella, F., Haley, D., & Ruiz Vargas, V. (2017). *Fruitful futures: Imagining Pomona*. Gaia Project. [https://issuu.com/livinginfutureecologies/docs/fruitful\\_futures\\_imagining\\_pomona](https://issuu.com/livinginfutureecologies/docs/fruitful_futures_imagining_pomona).
- Cook, I., & Ward, K. (2012). Relational comparisons: The assembling of Cleveland's waterfront plan. *Urban Geography*, 33(6), 774–795. <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.33.6.774>
- Degen, M. (2008). *Sensing cities: Regenerating public life in Barcelona and Manchester*. Routledge.
- de Solà-Morales, I. (1995). Terrain vague. In C. Davidson (Ed.), *Anyplace* (pp. 118–123). MIT Press.
- Dobraszczyk, P., & Butler, S. (2020). *Manchester: Something rich and strange*. Manchester University Press.
- Duarte, F. (2017). *Space, place and territory: A critical review on spatialities*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Edensor, T. (2005). Waste matter – The debris of industrial ruins and the disordering of the material world. *Journal of Material Culture*, 10(3), 311–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183505057346>
- Edensor, T. (2006). Sensing tourist spaces. In C. Minca, & T. Oakes (Eds.), *Travels in paradox* (pp. 23–45). Rowman and Littlefield.
- Farley, P., & Roberts, M. (2011). *Edgelands: Journeys into England's true wilderness*. Jonathan Cape.
- Flynn, H. (2014). *Edgelands. The palace that exploded and a whole lot of wilderness*. The Skyliner. <http://www.theskyliner.org/blog-1/the-pomona-palace>.
- Fox, E. (2017). My many Manchesters. *Landscape: The Journal of the Landscape Institute*, Winter, 69–73.
- Gandy, M. (2013). Marginalia: Aesthetics, ecology, and urban wastelands. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 103(6), 1301–1316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2013.832105>
- Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to perception*. Houghton Mifflin.
- Gray, T. (1993). *A hundred years of the Manchester Ship Canal*. Aurora Publishing Limited.
- Groth, J., & Corijn, E. (2005). Reclaiming urbanity: Indeterminate spaces, informal actors and urban agenda setting. *Urban Studies*, 42(3), 503–526. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980500035436>
- Harvey, D. (1985). The geopolitics of capitalism. In D. Gregory, & J. Urry (Eds.), *Social relations and spatial structures* (pp. 128–163). Palgrave.

- Haydock, G. (2014). Pomona Island. Documentary, 14 min. <https://vimeo.com/694502261>.
- Haydon, A. (2015, October 26). Alistair McDowall: "I spend a lot of time on the internet". Exeunt Magazine. <https://exeuntmagazine.com/features/alistair-mcdowall-i-spend-a-lot-of-time-on-the-internet/>.
- Hewitt, J. (2019). *The quiet girls. A detective Carrie Flynn thriller*. Bookouture.
- Hinchliffe, S., & Whatmore, S. (2006). Living cities: Towards a politics of conviviality. *Science as Culture*, 15(2), 123–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09505430600707988>
- Hudson, J. (2014). The affordances and potentialities of derelict urban spaces. In B. Olsen, & Þ Pétursdóttir (Eds.), *Ruin memories: Materialities, aesthetics and the archaeology of the recent past* (pp. 193–214). Routledge.
- Hudson, J. (2015). The multiple temporalities of informal spaces. *Geography Compass*, 9(8), 461–481. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12221>
- Hutchby, I. (2001). Technologies, texts and affordances. *Sociology*, 35(2), 441–456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/S0038038501000219>
- Ingold, T. (2000). *The perception of the environment: Essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2018). Back to the future with the theory of affordances. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 8(1-2), 39–44. <https://doi.org/10.1086/698358>
- Jon Matthews Architects. (2020). Peel Land (Intermediate) Limited. Manchester Waters – Pomona Island Final Draft Masterplan. [https://pa.trafford.gov.uk/online-applications/files/0E98FB5E47D1CB4494858BB29374C526/pdf/93779\\_FUL\\_18-FINAL\\_DRAFT\\_MASTERPLAN\\_PART\\_1-1114449.pdf](https://pa.trafford.gov.uk/online-applications/files/0E98FB5E47D1CB4494858BB29374C526/pdf/93779_FUL_18-FINAL_DRAFT_MASTERPLAN_PART_1-1114449.pdf).
- Jorgensen, A., & Tylecote, M. (2007). Ambivalent landscapes—wilderness in the urban interstices. *Landscape Research*, 32(4), 443–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01426390701449802>
- Kaaristo, M., & Visentin, F. (2023). Absence as an affordance: Thinking with (out) water on the inland waterways. *Cultural Geographies*, 30(1), 87–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14744740221100838>
- Kimari, W., & Parish, J. (2020). What is a river? A transnational meditation on the colonial city, abolition ecologies and the future of geography. *Urban Geography*, 41(5), 643–656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2020.1743089>
- Kiverstein, J. (2015). Empathy and the responsiveness to social affordances. *Consciousness and Cognition*, 36, 532–542. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.concog.2015.05.002>
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Leahy, H. (2007). Walking for pleasure? Bodies of display at the Manchester art-treasures exhibition in 1857. *Art History*, 30(4), 545–565. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.2007.00562.x>
- Lee, H. (2010). Pomona docks in transition. Master's thesis. TU Delft. <http://resolver.tudelft.nl/uuid:66b51bab-0582-4aeb-ad50-7c3e675b0dd4>.
- Lynch, K. (1972). *What time is this place?* MIT Press.
- Lyons, S. (2018). *Ruin porn and the obsession with decay*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Madgin, R. (2010). Reconceptualising the historic urban environment: Conservation and regeneration in Castlefield, Manchester, 1960–2009. *Planning Perspectives*, 25(1), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665430903421726>
- Manchester City Council, Salford City Council & Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council. (2008). *Planning guidance*. Irwell City Park. <https://www.salford.gov.uk/media/385577/irwellcitypark-planning-guidance.pdf>.
- Marsden, S., & Walsh, J. (2016). Pomona Island: ducks, docks and urban greenspace <http://stuartmarsden.blogspot.com/2016/04/pomona-island-ducks-docks-and-urban.html>.
- McConnell, D., & Fiore, S. (2017). A place for James J. Gibson. In B. Janz (Ed.), *Place, space and hermeneutics* (pp. 261–273). Springer.
- McDowall, A. (2016). *Plays: 1*. Bloomsbury.
- Nicolson, A. (2007). The islands. *Geographical Review*, 97(2), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1931-0846.2007.tb00395.x>
- Owen, D. (1983). *The Manchester ship canal*. Manchester University Press.
- Peel Group. (2008). *Pomona island masterplan*. Taylor Young.

- Peel L&P. (2019 September 2). First tower at X1 Manchester Waters tops out, bringing 75 exclusive waterside apartments to Central Manchester. <https://peellandp.co.uk/news-and-views/news/first-tower-at-x1-manchester-waters-tops-out-bringing-75-exclusive-waterside-apartments-to-central-manchester/>.
- Rabey, D. (2018). *Alistair McDowall's Pomona*. Routledge.
- Ranci re, J. (2004). *The politics of aesthetics*. Continuum.
- Raymond, C., Kytt , M., & Stedman, R. (2017). Sense of place, fast and slow: The potential contributions of affordance theory to sense of place. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 1–14. Article no: 285227. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01674>
- Rebellato, D. (Ed.). (2020). Introduction. In *Alistair McDowall, Pomona* (pp. viii–xxii). Methuen Drama.
- Richardson, N. (1996). *Tugs, barges and me by Jake Abram*. Richardson.
- Rosa, B. (2015). Waste and value in urban transformation: Reflections on a post-industrial ‘waste-land’ in Manchester. In C. Lindner, & M. Meissner (Eds.), *Global garbage. Urban imaginaries of waste, excess and abandonment* (pp. 193–218). Routledge.
- Sheller, M., & Urry, J. (2004). *Tourism mobilities: Places to play, places in play*. Routledge.
- Shoard, M. (2000). Edgelands of promise. *Landscapes*, 1(2), 74–93. <https://doi.org/10.1179/lan.2000.1.2.74>
- Shrubsole, G. (2019). *Who owns England? How we lost our green and pleasant land, and how to take it back*. HarperCollins.
- Slager, E. (2020). Ruin tours: Performing and consuming decay in Detroit. *Urban Geography*, 41(1), 124–142. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2019.1637194>
- Stevens, Q. (2007). *The Ludic city: Exploring the potential of public spaces*. Routledge.
- Tonkiss, F. (2015). Aural postcards: Sound, memory and the city. In M. Bull, & L. Balc (Eds.), *The auditory culture reader* (pp. 243–248). Bloomsbury.
- Tonnelat, S. (2008). Out of frame’ the (in) visible life of urban interstices—A case study in Charenton-le-Pont, Paris, France. *Ethnography*, 9(3), 291–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1466138108094973>
- Tracy, W. (1901). *Port of Manchester: A sketch of the history and development of the Manchester Ship Canal and formation and growth of (the Manchester) Cotton Association*. Hind, Hoyle and Light.
- Trafford Council. (2011). Further Council Response in Relation to MMIQ3.12 <https://www.trafford.gov.uk/planning/strategic-planning/docs/further-council-response-in-relation-to-mm iq-312.pdf>.
- Trafford Council. (2015). Erection of 11 storey building of 86 apartments and 10 storey building of 78 apartments [...]. <http://democratic.trafford.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=8875&ISATT=1#search=%22H36228%22>.
- Trafford Council. (2019). Erection of three residential blocks [...]. <https://democratic.trafford.gov.uk/documents/s31951/Agenda%20Item%206%20-%20Applications%20for%20permission%20to%20develop%20etc.pdf>.
- Vannini, P., & Taggart, J. (2013). Doing islandness: A non-representational approach to an island’s sense of place. *Cultural Geographies*, 20(2), 225–242. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474011428098>
- Warren, W. (2021). Information is where you find it: Perception as an ecologically well-posed problem. *i-Perception*, 12(2), 20416695211000366. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20416695211000366>
- Whelan, D. (2020 November 17). Pomona Island masterplan pushed back. Place North West, <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/pomona-island-masterplan-pushed-back/>.
- Whelan, D. (2023 October 26). Peel resubmits plans for next phase of Pomona Island homes. Place North West, <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/peel-resubmits-plans-for-next-phase-of-pomona-island-homes/>.
- Zero, M. (2017). Pomona Island, Manchester. Wildflower Wilderness. Video, 9 min. <https://youtu.be/nz7BzwamKms>.
- Zero, M. (2018). Manchester’s Lost Island of Pomona. Video, 22 min. <https://youtu.be/eqpYGxcFsJw>.