

Chapter 3. Research design and methodology

This chapter serves as an intermezzo between the theoretical and empirical parts of the book and elaborates on the methods employed to answer the four research questions presented in Chapter 1. The aim of this research is to investigate public space in a transitional context, specifically in relation to its provision and management. For an in-depth analysis, cases were selected based on two criteria: first, areas that have undergone radical changes, and second, areas that have since faced high development pressure. The reason for the second criterion is that areas with high development pressure are likely to change more rapidly due to high interest. Cases were sought especially in Seoul and Berlin for reasons of practicality: I have prior knowledge of both cities and the language skills to obtain the requisite data and subsequently produce high-quality qualitative research. Indeed, both cities fulfil criteria as they have a history of rapid change and high development pressure as the capital cities. Finding an appropriate case within both cities involved several steps. First, I read the relevant literature to identify possible cases in both cities. I then asked experts in the field to recommend cases. Having identified several possible cases in both cities, I screened these by way of site visits. Finally, Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area were selected.

Four research methods are used in case study research: comparative analysis, document analysis, expert interview, and site visit and analysis. In this study, multiple methods and sources of data are used for triangulation. Triangulation, first advocated by Todd Jick, allows for verification of results: 'The convergence or agreement between methods [...] enhances our belief that results are valid and not a methodological artifact' (Jick, 1979, 602). The specific methods used are explained in the following sections.

3.1. Comparative analysis

In recent years, there has been a revival of comparative methods and an ever-growing body of comparative studies (Krehl & Weck, 2020), including in urban and regional planning. Thus, it is important to conduct comparative research in a conscious manner. As Booth (2011) argues, ‘the very first question that we need to confront is why we wish to undertake comparative research at all’ (14). Recent studies have suggested two general reasons: ‘the furtherance of explanatory and predictive theory, and the understanding and transfer of policy from one country to another’ (Couch & Fraser, 2003, 7). Similarly, Faludi and Hamnett (1975) put forward three generic purposes for comparative planning research: the advancement of theory in planning; the improvement of planning practice; and the harmonisation of planning systems. Tilly (1984), meanwhile, distinguishes four types of comparative analysis based on purpose:

- Universalising comparison involves the use of comparison to develop theories
- Individualising comparison contrasts ‘a small number of cases in order to grasp the uniqueness of each case’ (82)
- Variation-finding comparison seeks to ‘establish a principle of variation in the character or intensity of a phenomenon by examining systemic differences between instances’ (82)
- Encompassing comparison ‘places different instances at various locations within the same system on the way to explaining their characteristics as a function of their varying relationships to the system as a whole’ (83).

Among these four types of comparative analysis, this research falls under individualising comparison. It contrasts planning instruments used for POPS in Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area and their outcomes (see Table 3.1) to grasp the uniqueness of the instruments used in each case. In fact, special characteristics can often only be seen in comparison. By examining two cases in depth, this study aims to broaden existing knowledge on the topic. Moreover, it aims to improve practice by informing policymakers on alternative policy approaches in case their cities encounter similar problems.

Table 3.1 Subjects of comparison

Category	Subcategory
Regulation of the provision of POPS	Zone, facility (building), location of POPS, type of POPS, number of POPS, dimension of POPS, signage, other amenities, indoor POPS, incentives
Regulation of the management of POPS	Maintenance of POPS, financial support, inspection of POPS, infraction proceedings, use of POPS
Outcomes of regulation	Maintenance (degree of cleanliness, provision of amenities, practice of control), accessibility (degree of physical and visual accessibility), inclusiveness (degree of types of activity)

Source: Author's own table.

International comparative urban research is challenging as each case is located in its unique historical and cultural setting; hence a number of literature that involve the comparison of global cases were carefully reviewed to set a framework (see e.g., Couch et al., 2003; Rubin, 2020). As shown in Table 3.1, this research focuses on how the public sector regulates POPS and with which planning instruments. This involves, on the one hand, regulation of the provision of POPS, including their location and type. On the other hand, public space requires some form of management after provision (Carmona et al., 2008; De Magalhães & Carmona, 2009). This applies to POPS as well, thus, regulation of the management of POPS is also examined. Management of POPS comprises five different aspects. First, it refers to maintenance and the implied routines that make POPS useable, clean and safe. This also ensures that the amenities within POPS are kept to desired standards. Second, management involves securing financial resources for said maintenance. Management also includes inspection (third) and infraction proceedings (fourth) to check whether POPS comply with arrangements. Fifth, management incorporates how POPS should be used and how conflicts between uses should be resolved. All these aspects regarding regulation of the provision and management of POPS are partly drawn from the preceding study by Park and Yang (2016). It should also be noted here that while analysing documents, further aspects were added to cover the full spectrum.

Lastly, the outcome of regulation of POPS provision and management is compared based on three criteria – maintenance, accessibility and inclusive-

ness – taken from the literature review. A number of POPS in both Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area are studied for comparison.

3.2. Document analysis

Document analysis refers to ‘a systemic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic material’ (Bowen, 2009, 27). Here, documents were used as sources of information for the empirical research. The first step of the research involved gathering secondary data from, among others, academic literature, legislation and planning documents related to the cases (see Appendix A). Document analysis was chosen for four reasons: (a) documents provided background information as well as historical insight into the cases; (b) they suggested questions that needed to be asked as part of the research; (c) they provided relevant research data; and (d) they provided verification of findings from other data sources.

One advantage of document analysis is accessibility since many documents are in the public domain. However, they often do not have sufficient detail to answer specific research questions. Hence, document analysis was used here in combination with other research methods, as described in the following sections.

3.3. Expert interview

In addition to document analysis, semi-structured interviews with key actors were conducted because ‘people are important data sources who have [...] knowledge and who can report on what happened, and why it happened’ (Farthing, 2016, 201). Interview questions were designed, and respondents were selected and invited to the interview. In most cases, I contacted interviewees directly. For instance, I approached planning officers who are either responsible for POPS in Teheran-ro or Mediaspree area or who have sufficient knowledge of the relevant planning instruments. Researchers were selected based on their previous authorship of research studies on POPS in South Korea or Germany. In some cases, interviewees also suggested other names to contact. In total, 17 interviews were conducted: 16 face-to-face interviews and one written interview. Thirteen interviews out of 17 were conducted in Seoul; the remaining four took place in Berlin. This is partly due to the high number

of documents available on the Mediaspree area. Interviews were conducted in Korean in Seoul and in German in Berlin.

Interviewees included planning officers, an architect, researchers, a building manager and an activist (see Appendix B). The key participants confirmed the findings and provided additional data that could not be found in the documents. For instance, planning officers whose daily routines include implementing planning instruments for POPS in Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area explained which planning instruments had been used where and why. Other planning officers coming from other districts or cities explained more about the planning instruments for POPS per se. An architect, a building manager and an activist from an NGO were also interviewed to hear their experiences of creating and maintaining POPS. Researchers gave a piece of advice for conducting an empirical research in Seoul and Berlin. To respect confidentiality and anonymity, the names and positions of respondents are not shown.

3.4. Site visit and analysis

Site visit and analysis is a method dedicated to the study of a specific site (White, 1983). To better understand the planning instruments employed in both cases and their consequences, POPS were visited, analysed and evaluated. Four key dimensions of the publicness of public space were drawn from the literature review: ownership, maintenance, accessibility and inclusiveness. Ownership is not considered in this research since all of the selected POPS are privately owned. For the remaining three dimensions, an empirical model through which POPS can be evaluated is established (see Table 3.2). This model is hence based on a multifaceted interpretation of public space.

As already elaborated in the literature review, maintenance involves cleanliness, provision of amenities and practice of control. Whether a space is clean can be experienced, for example, through provision of adequate waste-collection facilities and the clearance of litter, fly tipping or fly posting. Provision of amenities, and how wide-ranging these amenities are, is also decisive. In turn, practice of control refers to the purpose of this control rather than its mere presence. As discussed in the literature review, the presence of control itself does not reduce the publicness of public space. Thus, what is examined is whether the practice of control aims to prevent anti-social behaviour only; if so, it is seen positively.

Table 3.2 Operationalisation of a model for evaluating POPS

Criteria	Indicator	Scale		
Maintenance	Degree of cleanliness	1=low	2=medium	3=high
	Degree of provision of amenities	1=low	2=medium	3=high
	Degree of practice of control	1=high	2=medium	3=low
Accessibility	Degree of physical accessibility	1=low	2=medium	3=high
	Degree of visual accessibility	1=low	2=medium	3=high
Inclusiveness	Degree of types of activity	1=low	2=medium	3=high

Source: Author's own table.

Accessibility is about both physical and visual accessibility, which can be measured through the presence of a gate or fence, for instance. Another crucial factor is whether a space has barrier-free pavements or is well connected to the adjacent street. Lastly, inclusiveness considers whether various activities can be accommodated so that a space can be used by all, regardless of gender, age, race or disability. It is also dependent on the other two criteria: the better POPS are maintained and accessible, the more likely they are to attract diverse groups. The size of POPS is also important: the larger the POPS, the more likely it is to accommodate different uses.

Each indicator has three discrete scales. This model does not represent an improvement on the models of measuring the publicness of public space introduced in Chapter 2, but is intended as a pragmatic research tool for this research.

The research concentrated on four locations in Teheran-ro and four in Mediaspree area (see Appendix C). POPS in Teheran-ro were selected from three blocks near the Seolleung underground station. When selecting POPS for detailed study, I aimed to incorporate a wide range of POPS both in terms of year of their creation and type. Hence, POPS from 1999 to 2010 were selected. Four types of POPS out of the five identified in the Seoul POPS provision guidelines (City of Seoul, 2015) were selected. These include pedestrian space, garden, plaza and pioti/sunken. POPS in Mediaspree area were selected according to the availability of explanatory statements due to the amount of information provided. In other words, areas that have established a B-Plan were selected.

POPS in Teheran-ro were visited several times in June 2017 for analysis according to the three aforementioned dimensions. Notes and photographs were taken. Each site was visited several times on weekdays and on weekends between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. POPS in Mediaspree area were visited three times – in November 2017 plus May and July in 2018. Notes and photographs were taken; the latter are presented in Chapter 7. At this point, it is important to note that the number of people shown in the photos does not signify whether the POPS are actively used. In most cases, I have purposefully used photos where either no one is present or no faces are recognisable due to the issue of portrait rights and privacy.

It is also important to note that I measured the quality of POPS as physical spaces and not necessarily how they are used in reality. Given that the quality of a space is certainly related to its use, I assumed that the better POPS are maintained, accessible and inclusive, the more they will be used. That said, I was aware that certain spaces that are poorly accessible and less equipped may be even more actively used than fully designed and programmed spaces. Also, spaces may be experienced differently by users depending on their gender, age, and so on. However, such matters lie beyond the scope of this research. Nevertheless, when visiting each POPS, I stayed for five to 30 minutes to gain some personal impressions on how the POPS were being used – this may partly flow in the evaluation, especially for inclusiveness. The scale from one to three is by no means an absolute figure here; for example, three points in cleanliness does not mean that a POPS is absolutely clean. It should be understood as a relative figure when comparing the outcome of POPS planning instruments.

3.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, the formulated research questions were translated into practical instruments that can generate answers (operationalisation). Multiple methods and sources of data are used for triangulation. Table 3.3 illustrates which method is used for what purpose. This chapter also described each of the methods employed, gave justification for why each was used, and explained how it was used.

Table 3.3 Research questions and methods used

Research questions	Methods used	Chapter
What challenges does the public sector face in providing and managing public space in a transitional context?	Document analysis	See Chapter 4
How does the public sector address these challenge?	Document analysis Expert interview	See Chapter 5 and 6
What do the outcomes of the respective planning instruments look like in reality?	Document analysis Expert interview Site visit and analysis	See Chapter 7
What implications does the research provide for cities undergoing rapid transformation and facing high development pressure, and which are looking for ways to engage other stakeholders, including the private sector, in public space provision and management?	Comparative analysis	See Chapter 8

Source: Author's own table.

Before moving to the next chapter, I would like to address the limitations of this research. First, there is an imbalance in the presentation of the information, especially in Chapter 7. This is mainly due to the different amounts of accessible information. For instance, the documents called explanatory statements for Mediaspree area provided a large amount of information for each case of POPS in the area on which I could elaborate. However, no such documentation exists for POPS in Teheran-ro or in South Korea in general. As a result, a gap in terms of the amount of information available on each POPS was identified. Although I tried to close this gap by carrying out more expert interviews in Seoul, I have to admit to inconsistency in parts. From another viewpoint, this point illustrates the difference in characteristics between planning instruments used in Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area: while planning instruments are used case-by-case for POPS in Mediaspree area, meaning each POPS has its own story to tell, this is not the case in Teheran-ro, where the same regulation is applied to all POPS.

Another limitation is that the evaluation of POPS may have been influenced by my own subjective feelings. As an example, how I perceived a sense of control may be totally different from the perception of others. Whether smoking is allowed is another example; whereas smokers see permission positively, non-smokers are against it. What is more, personal impressions can easily be

affected by factors such as time of day, seasons and weather. Nonetheless, the site visit and analysis helped me to understand and interpret the uniqueness of planning instruments in both cases more effectively, as well as their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Lastly, given the limited number of case studies, the findings cannot be generalised. However, the intention is not to generalise but to identify uniqueness of planning instruments. The findings provide an initial overview of planning instruments that are relevant to the provision and management of POPS in each case and support the development of a number of key recommendations in the field.

