

# Chapter 1. Introduction

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## 1.1. Research objective, questions and methodology

Public spaces have been popular research topics. The large amount of international literature on public space suggests that there is a lot of knowledge on the subject; yet, there are areas that are relatively underexplored (Van Melik, 2008). The characteristics of public space in a transitional context is one such area. The lack of knowledge is regrettable as events that trigger the transformation of cities can occur anywhere, anytime and in any form. This research aims to investigate public space in a transitional context, specifically in relation to its provision and management, and in response to the following four research questions:

- What challenges does the public sector face in providing and managing public space in a transitional context?
- How does the public sector address these challenges?
- What do the outcomes of the respective planning instruments look like in reality?
- 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?

Two sites in transitional contexts were selected: Teheran-ro in Seoul and Mediaspree area in Berlin. At first glance, the two areas seem to have nothing in common, but they share experiences of radical transformation. Teheran-ro underwent a process of rapid urbanisation after the Korean War, while Mediaspree area also experienced radical change due to a programme of property

investment after the fall of socialism and the subsequent German reunification.

To answer the research questions, multiple sources of data and research methods (comparative analysis, document analysis, expert interview and site visit and analysis) have been used. Through such triangulation, this prevents the 'accusation that a study's findings are simply an artefact of a single method, a single source, or a single investigator's bias' (Patton, 1990, 470).

## 1.2. Significance of the research

The research makes three contributions. First, by researching public space in a transitional context, this book intends to inform urban planners and policymakers about the challenges they may face in terms of providing and managing public space in rapidly changing situations. Moreover, the research increases the knowledge of urban planners and policymakers about planning instruments relevant to privately owned public space/s (hereafter POPS). It is important to broaden such knowledge since POPS are, after all, produced and managed within the regulatory environment; as a result, their quality and use are directly affected by the instruments deployed. Policy recommendations drawn from the research results aim to improve planning practice. In addition to practical contributions, this research also adds to the body of knowledge on POPS in Germany. Although POPS are nothing new in the country, research on this topic has been largely lacking. Research on POPS is crucial since they are contested spaces; insufficient knowledge can negatively affect the members of the public who use them.

It is important to mention here that the aim is not to advocate POPS. My argument is, rather, that if private involvement in providing and managing public space is inevitable, as the cases in this book illustrate, it should take place in a proper manner. Increasing knowledge within the public sector about planning instruments relevant to POPS is crucial so that it can maximise the benefits and minimise the negative consequences of POPS.

### 1.3. Outline of the book

This book is divided into eight chapters (see Table 1.1). After the introduction, the international literature on the topic is reviewed in Chapter 2. The research methodology is described in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 attempts to answer the first research question by examining the challenges that the transformations of Teheran-ro and Mediaspree area brought about in relation to public space. Chapters 5 and 6 then present the findings in response to the second research question by analysing the specific planning instruments used for the provision and management of POPS in both cases. Chapter 7 investigates the outcomes of these planning instruments. Conclusions are drawn in the final chapter along with key policy recommendations.

*Table 1.1 Outline of the book*

Part 1: Introducing research topic	Introduction (Chapter 1)
	Literature review (Chapter 2)
	Methodology (Chapter 3)
Part 2: Exploring the provision and management of public space in a transitional context	Challenges of providing and managing public space in a transitional context (Chapter 4)
	Planning instruments relevant to POPS (Chapters 5 and 6)
	Outcomes of planning instruments (Chapter 7)
Part 3: Summarising the re- search results	Conclusions with policy recommendations (Chapter 8)

Source: Author's own table.

