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To cite this article: Dahae Lee (2020): Whose space is privately owned public space? Exclusion, underuse and the lack of knowledge and awareness, Urban Research & Practice, DOI: [10.1080/17535069.2020.1815828](https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2020.1815828)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535069.2020.1815828>



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Published online: 15 Sep 2020.



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# Whose space is privately owned public space? Exclusion, underuse and the lack of knowledge and awareness

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## ABSTRACT

Privately Owned Public Space/s (POPS) is a mechanism to increase provision of public space, particularly in densely built-up urban areas. The empirical work undertaken along the Teheran-ro in Seoul reveals that even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be exclusive or underused. This paper argues that the problem of exclusion and underuse of POPS is related to the lack of knowledge of POPS and of awareness that they are public spaces. The more they are known and perceived as public spaces, the more widely and actively they will be used. Hence, the paper adds further recommendations to the existing suggestions.

## KEYWORDS

Privately Owned Public Space; hybrid space; co-production; public space governance; public participation

## Introduction

Public spaces are important features of any vibrant and sustainable urban environment (Németh 2009). Public spaces include everything from traditional squares, to incidental urban spaces, to a range of new sorts of space that challenge our perceptions about what public spaces should be (Carmona 2019). No matter what form they take, high-quality public spaces offer huge economic, social and environmental benefits to their localities and communities (CABE 2004). As more and more public spaces are co-produced by different actors, new types of public space emerge. In fact, it is no longer easy to distinguish between public and private space. Instead, what we see is ‘hybrid space’ that encompasses different kinds of public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces (Nissen 2008). Among different hybrid spaces, this paper specifically looks at Privately Owned Public Space/s (hereinafter POPS).

The POPS programme was first introduced in NYC in the 1960s as a zoning tool. The programme has encouraged private developers to provide and manage publicly accessible spaces in exchange for extra floor bonuses (Kayden et al. 2000). The provision of POPS has become a popular mechanism ‘by which to supply publicly accessible space in light of strained municipal resources’ (Schmidt, Németh, and Botsford 2011, 270). While successfully increasing the total quantity of publicly accessible space, the quality of POPS has been called into question (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998; Kohn 2004). Two problems that are often mentioned in the literature are exclusion and underuse (Loukaitou-Sideris 1993; Kayden et al. 2000; Smithsimon 2008; Huang and

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Franck 2018). Several attempts have been made to increase the inclusiveness and liveliness of POPS, and solutions are often found in design aspects, i.e. the provision of essential amenities and high accessibility.

In an effort to provide public space in Seoul, a highly populated and densely built city with a population of over 10 million, a POPS programme was introduced and it is now a popular means of providing public space in the city. Whereas the quality of POPS in Seoul keeps increasing with the amendment of relevant laws, the problem of exclusion and underuse seems to be still present. This is evidenced by case studies in Seoul. Within the city, a case study area along the Teheran-ro was chosen for two reasons: 1) the area has a high number of POPS (20 in total); and 2) the area is part of mixed-use neighbourhood that is busy during both the day and night, full of people from different groups, such as office workers, pedestrians, residents and school children. The result of empirical work including field visits, observations, surveys and expert interviews shows that even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be exclusive or underused. The research indicates that the provision of essential amenities and high accessibility are not the only decisive factors. It adds other factors that should be considered to make POPS more inclusive and livelier.

### **Current trend in public space**

Public spaces are commonly regarded as traditional public goods; hence, their provision and management are considered as local government services (Oc and Tiesdell 1999; Webster 2007). Yet this approach has been challenged as the basic mechanisms for the provision and management of public space have changed during the last few decades, away from direct state involvement towards a greater role for other social agents in the private and community sectors (De Magalhães 2010). This phenomenon is labelled as co-production to refer to 'the sharing of costs, rights and responsibilities of public space among a wide range of stakeholders, ranging from the market to civil society and individual citizens' (Van Melik and Van der Krabben 2016, 140). It is about the redistribution of roles, rights and responsibilities; therefore, it is different from privatisation, which implies completely handing over responsibilities for the provision and management of public space to the private sector (De Magalhães 2010; Van Melik and Van der Krabben 2016). As a consequence of co-production, a wide range of new types of public space have been produced. The notion of hybrid space has emerged to reflect different kinds of public, semi-public, semi-private and private spaces (Nissen 2008). Among the different hybrid spaces, this paper specifically looks at POPS.

POPS are by definition hybrid spaces. They are owned and managed by private developers. Yet under the agreement with the local government, they must be open to the public and are required to follow certain regulations, not only to allow but also to encourage public use (Huang and Franck 2018). In other words, the government creates rights and determines the rules about how space may be used, while the market implements the plan (Van Melik and Van der Krabben 2016). Apart from the government and the market, the public are involved to a certain extent as well. In NYC, for instance, the public are encouraged to play a role in monitoring as they can easily submit complaints by making a phone call or filling out the complaint form. Yet their role is not limited to monitoring. People are engaged with POPS in several ways, often

through non-profit sectors. Advocates for Privately Owned Public Space and The Municipal Art Society of New York collaborate to invigorate new and existing POPS in NYC and, thereby, act as a broker between all relevant actors including city residents, employees, POPS owners, public officials, community board members, and civic activists (APOPS et al. n.d.). In this sense, POPS are public spaces that are co-produced by different actors.

POPS are no different than public space in the sense that they are publicly accessible and useable. They are places for people to gather and create a more enjoyable urban experience. Even though they are privately owned, unlike other privatised spaces, the city recognises the public's right to the space. Thus, people can access them, use them, claim them, and – to certain extent – even modify them (Lynch 1981; Carr et al. 1992). Due to the requirements imposed on POPS, they meet common standards for a public space. The provision of POPS was, in fact, the first experiment in which the public goal, i.e. delivering a public space, was achieved by private builders to meet planning and zoning objectives (Smithsimon 2008; Kayden et al. 2000; Whyte 1988). Since then, POPS have become a popular means of producing public space, especially in large cities where governments increasingly lack the budget, incentive or capacity 'to maintain adequate investment in this shared space' (Webster 2007, 95).

There are three reasons that best explain the global spread of POPS. First, this is a good way to get public space for free as the city does not have to allocate any of its land or its money (Wbur 2017). Second, POPS correspond to the pursuit of the efficiency of land use and make optimal use of available space possible. Lastly, as POPS are distributed throughout the densely developed areas, they can benefit citizens by providing space for relaxation and social interaction. Thus, they have 'great potential to play a significant role as urban oases' (Koo and Lee 2015). For these reasons, POPS are likely to continue existing, especially in densely built-up urban areas. Due to their significant rise, POPS have been a focus of writing for many years.

### **How to make POPS inclusive and lively?**

While successfully increasing the total quantity, the quality of POPS has been called into question (Loukaitou-Sideris and Banerjee 1998; Kohn 2004). In fact, most studies are dissatisfied with the accessibility and usability of POPS. The argument is that POPS are too exclusive or uninviting. The research conducted by Loukaitou-Sideris (1993) in LA suggested that specific types of occupants and types of activities were observed in POPS – most occupants were white office workers, coming for lunch. This study supported the exclusive character of POPS, as homeless people and other undesirables were completely absent. Indeed, exclusion has been a key point in the discussion about POPS and whether they can really be public spaces. Moreover, POPS are often criticised for being uninviting. The study by Kayden et al. (2000) demonstrated that only a few POPS (3%) were used frequently enough to be designated as destination spaces. Similarly, Smithsimon (2008) called most POPS in front of Manhattan office buildings barren as they were uninviting and, thus, underused. Also, Whyte (1988) wrote that POPS did not work well – 'certainly not well enough to warrant the very generous

subsidies given for them' (245). The question then arises of what are the reasons for POPS being exclusive or uninviting.

There are three reasons. First, studies show that certain management and design features make POPS exclusive (Németh 2009; Németh and Schmidt 2011). One of the components Németh (2009) found was the fortress environment, where access to POPS is obscured. For instance, POPS can be situated inside buildings with access only through guarded doors. In this regard, physical access as well as visual and symbolic access are restricted. These spaces are exclusive as they are intended for residents, tenants, and employees in building only. Also, it is interesting to note that such management and design features include not only under-planned but also over-planned spaces with superficial quality (Hwang and Lee 2019). Second, the breach of the contract between the government and developer – in other words, failure to provide required public amenities, leads to POPS being underused (Whyte 1988). Unfortunately, the requirements that POPS be physically accessible and provide amenities are not always met or enforced in reality (Huang and Franck 2018). In fact, a recent audit of NYC indicates that a little more than half (55%) of the 333 POPS inspected violated the requirements of the applicable Zoning Resolution. These violations include, among other things, restriction of public access through some type of fence or barricade; signage stating 'For Private Use Only'; a lack of required amenities; and restaurants occupying portions of POPS with tables and chairs (Stringer 2017). What is interesting is that those problems are not necessarily unintentional side effects of profit maximisation. After studying 291 POPS in NYC, Smithsimon (2008) concluded that POPS were intentionally made uninviting as developers 'wanted the space to be private, as private looking as possible, as private feeling as possible' (335). Developers provide POPS for private benefits and not because they like public space and want to serve the public. So, when the public start to use these spaces, they want it to be used as little as possible (Wbur 2017). Third, POPS are inaccessible when people do not know that such space even exists. Such a lack of knowledge in the general public function is a powerful means of both exclusion and underuse (Huang and Franck 2018). The problems of exclusion and underuse are not limited to POPS only. However, they are definitely at the core of the problem of POPS. In order to address the problem of exclusion and underuse of POPS, several strategies have been developed.

Often, solutions are found in the design aspect. William H. Whyte, who contributed to the city's comprehensive plan in 1969, received a grant to study the street life of NYC and other cities in what became known as the Street Life Project (PPS 2010). He was interested in discovering what particular design features encouraged people to use POPS. He found out that the plaza with the highest number of users had the most space suitable for sitting, the presence of trees and water, food, access to sun, protection from wind and a close relationship to the street. His study became the basis of the Urban Open Space amendment in 1975. In the hope of encouraging the use of POPS, NYC DCP required owners to provide amenities typically found in public parks (DCP n.d.). Indeed, since Whyte's research, researchers have paid considerable attention to which design and management characteristics encourage or prevent use of POPS. Further studies were conducted and they helped DCP to gain expertise in understanding the key qualities that successful public spaces have in common. In 2007, DCP came up with new design standards for POPS in NYC. The so-called Public Plaza Design

Principles emphasise two qualities: 1) the provision of essential amenities; and 2) high accessibility (DCP n.d.).

Scrutiny of previous research about POPS revealed that there are key qualities that make POPS, and public space in general, inclusive and lively. The provision of essential amenities and high accessibility are the two most important qualities. In the remainder of this article, it will be shown to what extent well equipped and highly accessible POPS fulfil expectations as public spaces.

## **POPS along the Teheran-ro**

This paper refers to the results of empirical work undertaken along the Teheran-ro in Seoul, the Capital City of South Korea, with a population of over 10 million. The city was heavily damaged by the Korean War between 1950 and 1953, then it saw rapid industrialisation after 1960. The city was rebuilt to cater for rapidly growing population. A POPS programme was first introduced in South Korea in 1991. It has become a popular means of providing public space, especially in Seoul, as it is too costly to acquire land, then provide and maintain public space in such a highly populated and densely built-up city. Hence, the city actively engages the private sector in providing public space in exchange for private benefits, i.e. guaranteeing building permits and giving incentives. Unlike in NYC, providing POPS can be compulsory. As a rule, if the total floor area of a certain use (i.e. cultural or assembly facilities, religious facilities, sales facilities, transportation facilities, business facilities, lodging facilities) in a host building exceeds 5,000 m<sup>2</sup>, POPS must be provided.

With 244 POPS (out of 1,587 in Seoul), Gangnam district has the highest number of POPS among the 25 districts in Seoul (City of Seoul 2017). In fact, until the early 1980s, this district remained the least developed area in Seoul. Yet enormous development has taken place since then, and today, it is one of the most affluent areas in the city. The high number of POPS in this district is due to the high density of high-rises. Teheran-ro, one of the main roads within the district, is characterised by a high concentration of high-rise buildings, and hence POPS. The case study area along the Teheran-ro was chosen for two reasons: 1) the area has a high number of POPS (20 in total); and 2) the area is part of a mixed-use neighbourhood. This means that POPS in this study area have great potential to perform as public spaces, not only for people from the host buildings but also for other population groups that are present in the neighbourhood.

The study area comprises four blocks with 15 buildings with POPS. Most buildings with POPS are for office use. As there are many office buildings both within the study area and in the neighbourhood, office workers are present during the day. Many pedestrians are found as well due to the nearby underground station. A large residential area is just behind the study area, hence there are inhabitants. Two types of residence are found here – there is an apartment complex with its own facilities, and then there is multiplex housing without its own facilities. Within the residential area, four schools are located for primary, middle and high school children. To sum up, it is a busy neighbourhood, both during the day and night, full of people from different groups.

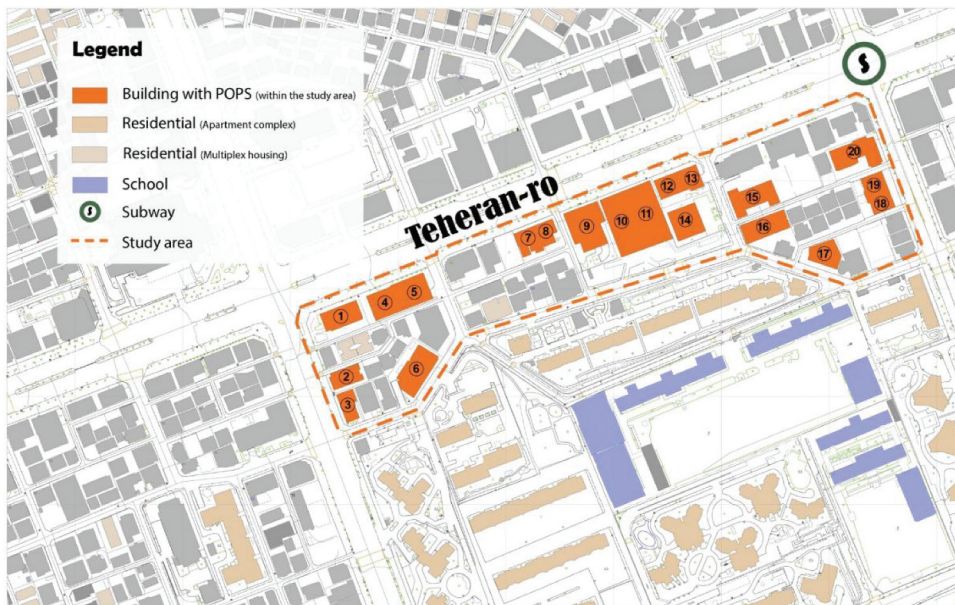
This research included field visits, observations, surveys and expert interviews. The first step of the research involved gathering information on each host building and its POPS, e.g. details on the owner of the building, size of POPS. Some of the information



came from the previous research on POPS in Seoul (Lee and Kim 2012), and some from the city's relevant database. During the summer of 2017, 15 buildings with POPS in the area were visited to analyse them further as regards two qualities, i.e. the provision of amenities and high accessibility. The field visits revealed that five buildings out of 15 divided POPS into two. Hence, altogether there are 20 POPS in the area (see Map 1). The next step was to conduct observations to see the types of occupants and the types of activities in 20 POPS. Hence, the number of people and their gender and age and the type of activities they were engaged in were documented. Notes and photographs were taken. The observation period at each site lasted five to 30 minutes depending on the number of occupants. Each site was observed several times during the weekdays and weekends between 7 am and 11 pm.

Findings from the observations showed dramatic differences in use; only four out of 20 were frequently used (POPS numbers 1, 10, 11 and 20; see Map 1). POPS number 1 is located at a crossroad. POPS numbers 10 and 11 belong to one host building. POPS number 10 is a resting place while POPS number 11 is a smoking place. POPS number 20 is located near the entrance to subway station. A survey with 68 actual occupants was carried out on these four POPS to gain a better understanding of their use. A survey on other POPS was not carried out due to the low number of occupants. A survey was also conducted in the neighbourhood to see how POPS are perceived and if they fulfilled their role as public spaces. The survey involved 93 pedestrians, 107 residents and 476 school children, as they are the ones constantly present and thus regarded as potential occupants of POPS.

The last step of the research involved semi-structured interviews with eight experts. Interviews were carried out with four public sector planners (one planner at city level and three planners at district level). One planner among them was responsible for POPS in the study area. Apart from them, one architect, one scholar in urban design, one



Map 1. Location of 20 POPS.

member of a non-profit organisation and one building manager were interviewed. The data from the field visits, observations, surveys and expert interviews were analysed and the results are shown in the following paragraphs.

### Why are POPS exclusive and underused?

The findings from the field visits to observe 20 POPS showed the extent to which POPS in the study area were equipped and accessible (see [Diagram 1](#)). Sixteen out of 20 POPS had space suitable for sitting; 18 had green elements; 13 had lighting; 12 had sun shading and 15 had signage indicating that they were publicly accessible spaces. In



Left: POPS 1



Right: POPS 3



Left: POPS 5



Right: POPS 9



Left: POPS 10



Right: POPS 11



Left: POPS 16



Right: POPS 20

Diagram 1. POPS in the study area.



many cases, POPS were both visually and physically accessible. Eighteen out of 20 POPS could be seen from adjacent streets; 13 were barrier-free. Only two had gates and were closed during the night. To sum up, green elements were commonly found in almost all POPS. More than three quarters had benches or other spaces suitable for sitting. Three quarters or slightly fewer had other essential amenities like lighting, sun shading and signage. Most POPS were visually and physically well connected. Most of them were open 24/7.

The reason why POPS in the study area, and generally in South Korea, are relatively well equipped and highly accessible is because the host building would not get a building permit otherwise. In South Korea, POPS is legally regulated, from their provision to maintenance. According to the Building Act of Korea, a Presidential Decree and Seoul's Ordinance on Building, if a developer builds a building in which more than 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> of floor space is used for certain purposes, he/she must provide POPS within the building lot. The mandatory area of POPS varies between 5% and 10% of the building lot, depending on the total floor area of the host building. The installation of POPS is regulated as well, e.g. the location of POPS, the minimum size of POPS, the minimum width of POPS, and a list of amenities that must be provided, such as signage. The Seoul POPS Installation Guideline gives further information on different types of POPS, in which cases they should be applied, and how. It also lists qualities that POPS must have in general as well as criteria for each type of amenity, including seating, lighting and signage.

As in NYC, the provision of essential amenities and high accessibility is considered the two most important qualities that POPS should have. The architect confirmed that:

*“Among other things, the focus is on accessibility of POPS when it comes to the building permit review. Even if a developer attempts to hide POPS from the public to make them private and exclusive, during the review process it is corrected. In some cases, the location of POPS is already predefined. Developers get incentives if they follow the requirements.”*

The reviewers will check if the requirements are met. Only then will developers get a building permit. Incentives are also given.

Findings from observations, the actual user survey and expert interviews suggest that even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be exclusive. Even though the neighbourhood is busy, both during the day and night, full of people from various groups, in most cases, if there were any occupants, they were office workers, coming several times during the day to take a rest, to smoke and chat with colleagues. POPS number 1 is a typical case, where other social groups were hardly present. In the survey, 92% of the respondents answered that they worked at or visited the host building. But there was one exception, POPS number 20, where the degree of variation by age and gender was high. The result of the survey reveals that the respondents are pedestrians, mostly using the POPS as a ‘hiatus space’ (Kaydenet al. 2000) for a brief stop only. The reason why POPS number 20 is largely used by pedestrians is because it is close to the entrance of a subway station. About half of the respondents answered that they used POPS as meeting places; 35% of them said it was their first time here. In general, homeless people and other undesirables were completely absent. Planner 1 admitted that:

“The main users of POPS in the area are office workers. Others are not really present”

Findings from observations, the actual user survey and expert interviews reveal that the even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be underused. During the interview, Planner 4 admitted that:

*“Whereas we (the government) can make sure that POPS are well equipped and accessible by regulation, it is daunting to encourage the use of POPS.”*

While most POPS in the study area are equipped and accessible to a similar degree, the number of users varies considerably between POPS. Sixteen out of 20 POPS are underused. Interestingly, POPS that are designated as non-smoking areas are even less used as office workers (the main occupants) did not come for smoking (one of the main activities). The most frequently used POPS are POPS numbers 1, 10, 11 and 20. POPS numbers 1 and 11 are frequently used by smokers. POPS number 10 is highly used by office workers for taking a rest and chatting, while POPS number 15 is actively used by pedestrians for a brief stop. All four POPS show the highest level of occupancy during the weekdays, during office hours, and particularly during lunchtime. What is striking is the result of the actual user survey on these POPS. Even though they attract many users, people tend to stay less than 10 minutes and the satisfaction is not high (see Tables 1–3). This is confirmed by observations, as people leave POPS as soon as their purpose for being there is fulfilled. So, putting everything together, the provision of essential amenities and high accessibility are not the only factors that are decisive. Even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be

**Table 1.** User survey on POPS number 1 (n = 24).

I came here just to use this POPS (no other purpose, e.g. visiting the host building).	8%
What is the purpose of use of this POPS?	91% smoking
How often do you use this POPS?	75% everyday
How long do you normally stay in this POPS?	100% less than 10 mins
How do you rate this POPS?	16% very good, 29% good
I know what POPS is.	33%

**Table 2.** User survey on POPS numbers 10 and 11 (n = 24).

I came here just to use this POPS.	25%
What is the purpose of use of this POPS?	70% taking a rest
How often do you use this POPS?	66% everyday
How long do you normally stay in this POPS?	66% less than 10 mins
How do you rate this POPS?	0% very good, 37% good
I know what POPS is.	12%

**Table 3.** User survey on POPS number 20 (n = 20).

I came here just to use this POPS.	45%
What is the purpose of use of this POPS?	60% meeting place
How often do you use this POPS?	35% for the first time
How long do you normally stay in this POPS?	60% less than 10 mins
How do you rate this POPS?	10% very good, 20% good
I know what POPS is.	20%

exclusive or underused. What are the other factors that influence the inclusiveness and liveliness of POPS?

The research further revealed two important facts. First, while conducting the survey and expert interview, it was found that POPS are not perceived as public spaces at all. In the first place, people do not know the term POPS. Only 5% of potential users answered that they know what POPS means (see Table 4). When it comes to actual users, it is slightly better; between 10% and 33% of them answered that they knew what POPS are. In general, the term is not popular at all. What is more, there is a lack of knowledge that there are many POPS in the neighbourhood and that POPS are there for people to use. Even though there are many POPS in the neighbourhood (and many of them are underused), between 40% and 80% of potential users responded that they thought there were not enough public spaces in the neighbourhood. Also, between 40% and 80% of potential users answered that they were unsatisfied with public space in the neighbourhood in general. Interestingly, opinions differ considerably between those who live in apartment complexes and those in multiplex housing. As residents of multiplex housing do not have their own facilities, e.g. playgrounds and sports facilities, they complained more about the lack of public space in the neighbourhood. Generally, it can be said that POPS are not recognised well, and if they are recognised, then they are regarded as someone else's space. A member of a non-profit organisation supported this view:

*“The public in the neighbourhood would not think they are for them to use. Rather, they would think they are for office workers only.”*

This perception was noticeable while talking with Planner 1 about a policy regarding the use of POPS. According to Seoul's Ordinance on Building, cultural or promotional events for residents may be held in POPS for up to 60 days in a year, provided that they do not hinder public use. The purpose of the policy is to promote use of POPS. Theoretically, anyone who wants to organise events in POPS can submit an application to the district office. While Planner 1 seemed not to be very well informed about the procedure, he said:

*“I guess you need approval from the owner. After all, you are trying to use his/her space. POPS are private property. We (the local government) would have to ask the owner as the space does not belong to us. We cannot just say: go and use it. I guess it would not be easy to get approval unless you plan a cultural event that would likely to benefit the owner, because it might have a promotional effect.”*

It is clear that both the owner and local planner regard POPS as private property and that it largely depends on the owner whether POPS can be used for various activities

**Table 4.** Survey of potential users of POPS.

	Residents (n = 107)	School children (n = 476)	Pedestrians (n = 93)
There are not enough public spaces in the Neighbourhood	41%	43%	82%
I am unsatisfied with public spaces in the Neighbourhood	62%	42%	77%
I know what POPS is	5%	5%	5%

rather than passively consumed. This explains why some building owners violate the law and use POPS for their own purposes.

*“It is natural that developers think POPS are his/her space. They bought the land, so why would they have to share it? They think that they have to give up their interest for others.”*

Planner 3 said. Interestingly, this perception is not limited to the owners of office buildings or commercial buildings. It also applies to residents, when POPS are created as a part of residential development. Planner 4 explained:

*“The primary violation is to privatise POPS, put up fences and use for private purposes. This is, in fact, even more remarkable, when POPS are created as a part of residential development. Those who live there perceive POPS as their space only and forbid others from using them.”*

Apparently, it is not just a problem of private developers. As this example suggests, there is generally a lack of understanding of POPS among people – whose space it is and what rights the public have.

Second, POPS is not really co-produced, as they should be. Planner 1 said that POPS are provided and maintained according to a legal basis and that no physical cooperation is needed between the public and private sector. Because POPS are considered to be private property, the government tries to keep its intervention to a minimum by conducting inspections or taking action in response to civil complaints only. Planner 2 explained:

*“It is difficult to cooperate with the private sector anyway. Only when something is compulsory, and there is a penalty would they listen to us.”*

Planner 3 confirmed that there is only a small degree of public involvement. One way it can happen is through the submission of complaints. Planner 4 as well as the building manager said that the public sometimes complain about smokers, but altogether it does not take place often. Planner 2 said that not all complaints can be handled:

*“Once, the public submit complaints, e.g. a certain POPS is blocked, we take action. But if somebody complains due to the lack of amenities and wants more, it is unlikely that we can handle it.”*

Another form of civic engagement might take place in an electronic database. There is a website where the public can get information on all POPS in South Korea and involve themselves to certain degree, e.g. by writing comments. Yet according to Planner 4, this system is not managed well.

While conducting expert interviews, it became clear that even among public sector planners, opinions differ. Some insisted that nothing much can be done as POPS are private property. Others, like Planner 4, seemed to be concerned about the problem of underuse of POPS and showed his willingness to look for solutions. While admitting the difficulty of encouraging use of POPS, Planner 4 said:

*“We (the city) are very much inspired by the situation in NYC, where the non-profit sector is hugely involved in activating POPS through several means. We are considering that as well.”*

Similarly, the scholar in urban design mentioned the potential role of different actors in the provision and management of POPS. According to his vision, the public sector creates a legal framework and ensures there are enough POPS. The experts give

Problems often mentioned in the literature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclusion of POPS</li> <li>• Underuse of POPS</li> </ul>	Existing suggestions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of essential amenities</li> <li>• High accessibility</li> </ul>
Further problems found in this research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of knowledge about POPS</li> <li>• Lack of awareness that POPS is public space</li> </ul>	Further suggestions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting the policy regarding POPS use</li> <li>• More engagement of various stakeholders</li> </ul>

**Diagram 2.** Problems with POPS, and suggestions.

guidance on how to make the best use of POPS. Lastly, the private sector and citizens are engaged, possibly through the non-profit sector.

*“It is important to identify the relevant stakeholders, and clarify the role of each actor. Then it becomes clear who does what. Only then, can POPS be successful.”*

To conclude, there is almost no collaboration between the public and private sector in regard to POPS at present. Citizens are not engaged either. A member of one of the biggest non-profit organisations in South Korea specialising in walking and placemaking acknowledged that although some members are aware of the problems POPS have, they are not engaged with POPS yet. But as the expert interview revealed, the city is starting to become aware of the potential role of different actors in the provision and management of POPS.

As the research results reveal, POPS are generally perceived as private spaces. The public sector perceives POPS as private property due to the legal status, and the owners think POPS are their spaces. The public do not know what POPS are and what rights they have regarding it. The lack of knowledge of POPS and lack of awareness that they are public spaces are related to the small degree of engagement with POPS and poor collaboration between relevant stakeholders. The fact that the public is less engaged with POPS explains why they do not know what POPS are. If they do not know about POPS in the first place, it is natural that they would not use them. Only specific types of people who spend time during the day in the host building (in our case, mainly office workers) use POPS for smoking, taking a rest or chatting. They consume the space passively. This explains the exclusiveness of POPS in the study area.

The problem of exclusion leads to the problem of underuse. Indeed, POPS are underused, especially outside office hours, as office workers are not present. Even during office hours, some POPS, especially POPS that are designated as smoking-free areas, are underused because office workers do not come for smoking and other population groups are absent. Hence, in order to solve the problem of exclusion and underuse of POPS, we first need to increase knowledge about POPS and change our awareness that they are public spaces. The more they are known and perceived as public spaces, the more widely and actively they will be used.



## Conclusion

As the city's population grows, so does the need for public space. However, in central areas where land values are high, it is too costly to provide and maintain public space. The case studies in Seoul show that the provision of POPS is a good mechanism to achieve both high quantity and quality of public space within a highly populated and densely built-up city. POPS have great potential to perform as public spaces, as they are distributed throughout the urban areas. They not only relieve congestion in city, but also benefit citizens by providing space for relaxation and social interaction. Yet not all POPS function very well or as they are supposed to. In fact, POPS have been criticised for being exclusive or underused. Previous studies suggest that successful POPS have two qualities in common: 1) they provide essential amenities; and 2) they have high accessibility. Attempts have been made to improve these qualities and to make POPS more inclusive and livelier. This research reveals, however, that even well-equipped and highly accessible POPS can be exclusive or underused.

Indeed, many of the POPS in the study area are well equipped and highly accessible, but do not function very well. POPS in the neighbourhood are exclusive and underused. Even though there are many POPS in the neighbourhood (and many of them are underused), the public in the neighbourhood look for more public spaces. It is clear that they do not function as public spaces in this densely built-up urban area, as they are supposed to. This paper argues that this is not due to the lack of amenities provided or inaccessibility; instead, it is, in the first place, due to the lack of knowledge about POPS and then the lack of awareness that they are public spaces.

Legally speaking, POPS is private property. However, they are a product of a contract between the public and the private sector. A developer does not offer this space for free; he gets benefits in return. POPS are certainly public spaces which the public have the right to access and use. Hence, more should be done than just improving their design. Two suggestions are made here. First, the city policy regarding the use of POPS should be promoted further by lowering the threshold for getting a permit. Currently, POPS is used by the owners of host building themselves. They submit an application and hold events on their own POPS to promote their businesses. It is important to make sure that anyone can submit an application and that they can easily get a permit as long as the event is harmless. This will help improve the awareness of the owner and of the public that POPS can be used by anyone for various purposes beyond passive activities. The public would also better understand where POPS are located in their neighbourhood.

Second, I recommend more engagement of various stakeholders with POPS. In fact, little has been said about the role of the stakeholders other than the government and private developers. As with public space in general, individual citizens and the non-profit sector can play a significant role as well. Engaging various actors would increase the inclusiveness and use of POPS as the public start to know what POPS are and what rights they have in regard to POPS. Through such engagement, they would feel more responsible and this might increase the quality of POPS as the public become more active in monitoring them. The more their demands are fulfilled, the more people will become involved, and the stronger the civic life will be. The establishment of a civic organisation could help further, as it would connect all the

relevant actors, encourage their engagement with POPS, and thereby promote the use of POPS.

The provision of POPS is a promising mechanism to provide high-quality public space, particularly in densely urbanised cities. A city's task in providing public space lies not only in securing sufficient areas but also in ensuring the right conditions for its citizens. In pursuit of efficient land use, it is essential to optimise the use of available space. If POPS are inclusive and accessible, they will be used to their full potential and this will change the citizens' experience of the city.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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