

# Interior Public Spaces. Addressing the Inside-Outside Interface

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**Keywords:** POPS; open city; Quito Papers; building interface; interior urbanism

## Introduction

Traditional public space in cities – streets, pedestrian zones, plazas – is commonly framed by surrounding buildings. The clear distinction between interior and exterior underlines the separation of the two realms – building and public space. Beyond this traditional setting, the urban landscape offers exceptions where this explicit differentiation is blurred, up to the point where the two realms collide. This work looks at this intersection point and its architectural and urban implications. The dissolution of the boundary between open and built space leads to the emergence of non-traditional types of public spaces, e.g. interior public spaces. The approach of these urban protagonists is mediated here through the analysis of an existing and entrenched model: Manhattan's privately owned public spaces. Six selected examples reveal the importance of the treatment of the physical interface between indoor and outdoor towards their appropriation as interior public spaces. The theoretical framework is set by Richard Sennett's debate on the open city that will gain additional relevance through the imminent publication of the Quito Papers.

The arguments of this work build up on relevant literature sources and lectures. The case studies have been analyzed in situ. Additionally, the present situation has been documented through an interview with two representatives of the Department of City Planning of New York.<sup>1</sup>

## A Call for the Open City

Umberto Eco's "Opera aperta" set an important milestone in the theory of openness. Eco introduces openness as a feature of the modern work of art that differentiates it from the traditional, classical one. He builds his argument relying on examples from fine arts and literature but also by integrating knowledge from mathematics and quantum physics. The open work is an unfinished work that "the author seems to hand [...] on to the performer more or less like the components of a construction kit."<sup>2</sup> Eco defines it further on as "work in movement" consisting of "unplanned or physically incomplete structural units."<sup>3</sup> Incompleteness is understood as an asset and not a flaw, as a window to a plurality of possibilities. Eco does not interpret modern art under definite, rigorous conventions, and he thus conveys to it a high degree of ambiguity. The value lies in the uncertainty of the spontaneous performance towards an unknown finale. Eco's "The Open Work", first published in 1962, set the base for further debates on openness in various disciplines. Beyond the open work of art, openness as a systemic property has been deployed in several fields of knowledge, such as social and natural sciences, computer science and planning.

<sup>1</sup> The interview took place at The NYC Dept. of City Planning, 120 Broadway, New York on the May 13, 2017. The participants were Sorana Rădulescu, Stella Kim (program manager of Manhattan's POPS) and Claudia Herasme (deputy director of the urban design office).

<sup>2</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

The concept had already resonated in N.J. Habraken's contribution to the 1960s architectural and urban discourse on open planning. His approach has evolved towards practical applications under the concept of "Open Buildings".<sup>4</sup> The Open Building theory and planning method distinguishes between a structural framework – the support – and the infills. Although it comprises all scales, from urban design to furniture design, the approach has strongly focused on architectural products — buildings. Fast-forwarding five decades, Jesko Fezer resumes three main instances of openness in planning:<sup>5</sup> one approach that involves the end-user in the design and building process, a second approach that anticipates future growth through extendable structures and a third approach that would accommodate changing lifestyles and patterns of use. Regarding the urban scale, Kees Christiaanse has also thematized the open city, not as a particular physical structure, but primarily as a set of values.<sup>6</sup> His open city is not a finite product, but an abstract model of an open-end process.

Richard Sennett's recent interests in the open city theory come as a synthesis of the above mentioned approaches and considerations. He exemplifies the difference between open and closed with the case of an experiment.<sup>7</sup> In a closed experiment there is a hypothesis that needs to be tested; the result is either true or false, it either confirms or invalidates the hypothesis; this leads to robust finding in a Boolean logic of values. In an open experiment, "you test something, you get distracted, you fail, you discover more problems..."<sup>8</sup> By undergoing the first type of experiment, the researcher already posits a closed question from start; the answer can only be "yes" or "no", the result is inert. The second type of experiment opens the way for unexpected outcomes and new interpretations. Sennett has been elaborating on these thoughts for over a decade within the concept for the Open City, emphasizing the attribute of "openness" in the contemporary discourse on the city. His approach draws an obvious parallel to Eco's thorough outlining of the open work but refers to the urban environment. The paper will further focus on the concept of openness in planning leaning on Sennett's considerations.

*The Attributes of Sennett's Open City. The Quito Papers as Normative and Theoretical Framework*

Eco's modern open work relies on "deliberate and systematic" ambiguity, the incompleteness of the "work in movement", and the controlled disorder. These features echo Sennett's interpretations of the open city system. Sennett understands openness as a system property of the physical environment. He formulates three basic principles for an open urban system.

First, he announces the need for porosity in the built environment by highlighting the distinction between the notion of border and boundary. The vertical limit, the trespass from one space to another and between parts of the city has to be mediated through ambiguous edges. Second, the quest for informality in the urban setting leads to the need for the incomplete form: the built environment understood as a non-linear process with a certain degree of indeterminacy. Openness does not imply a finite product — the result of an imagined idea — but a structure that allows constant revision, growth and adaptation. The imposition of form needs to be replaced by an evolutionary generation of it. The third premise for the open city has evolved slightly from first writings through to recent statements. In his text "The Open City",<sup>9</sup> Sennett mentions the uncertain urban narrative as the way of introducing indeterminacy in planning. The urban development as an open-end discourse retrofits from the experience along the process rather than aims at a solution. It attends conflicts and possibilities since it is not looking for clarity but for the freedom to act and re-act to the changing circumstances. It is a constant exploration with

4 Denise Morado Nascimento and N. J. Habraken. *Entrevista*, São Paulo, year 13, n. 052.04, Vitruvius, dec. 2012 <<http://www.vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/entrevista/13.052/4542>>.

5 Jesko Fezer, "Offene Planung", in *Urban Catalyst: Mit Zwischennutzung Stadt entwickeln*, ed. P. Oswalt et al. (Berlin: DOM publishers, 2013), 165.

6 Tim Rieniets, Jennifer Sigler, Kees Christiaanse, *Open City: Designing Coexistence. Catalogue Architecture Biennale Rotterdam* (Sun Architecture: 2009).

7 Richard Sennett at the *LSE Events | The Quito Papers: Towards the Open City* (London, 2017).

8 Ibid.

9 <https://lsecities.net/media/objects/articles/the-open-city/en-gb/>, November 2006, last accessed 04.06.2017.

no absolute answer. In recent talks, such as the 2017 LSE event “The Quito Papers: Towards the Open City” or the 2016 “Designing the Urban Age”, he mentioned synchronicity as a third attribute, understood as the means of providing both complexity and mixity. Synchronicity means breaking the tight bond between form and function. This bond disables spontaneous occurrences and excludes unexpected users, leading to a closed environment – a gated community. Instead, allowing for different activities to happen at once or within the same structure, can open the field for reinterpretations and react against the inertia imposed by formal and functional restraints.

Sennett’s vision tackles both the architectural and the urban realm. His theoretical debate found its climax as part of the Quito Papers manifesto (October 2016), unveiled the day before the closure of the Habitat III Summit on urban development and adopted in parallel to the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda,— the 20-year strategy initiated by Joan Clos as part of his work at UN-Habitat — was adopted by nearly 170 national governments. For the Quito Papers — the theoretical underpinning of the New Urban Agenda —, the group of four urban thinkers (Sennett, Sassen, Clos, Burdett) elaborated on the negative consequences of the Athens Charter for the European and American urban environment. Their manifesto builds on the belief that the charter, called the “wrong utopia”, had led to a closed system the consequences of which are traceable worldwide. They call for an open city system, as outlined by Sennett in his previous writings. While the New Urban Agenda, a 24 pages document that synthesizes the twenty-year strategy for the global urban future, sets the guidelines for a sustainable development in a broad sense, the Quito Papers firstly lean on past mistakes and conclude that all 20<sup>th</sup> century urban ideas are in crisis. If the Charter of Athens focused on cities of the future, the Quito Papers begin with the idea that the future is urban. They provide the intellectual framework for this ongoing process of urbanization.<sup>10</sup>

The Quito Papers will mark the large framework for research.<sup>11</sup> Sennett’s contribution on the open city provides most clues about the physical future of cities. When calling for synchronicity and porosity referring to the built environment, he suddenly challenges new urban and architectural undertakings. He sets the focus on the physical interface and advocates for ambiguous edges, where the distinction between inside and outside becomes blurry. Sennett’s discourse can be interpreted through the lens of *interior urbanism*.

### Interior Urbanism. A Strategy for the Open City?

The global future is indisputably urban, but what is the future of urban planning? Contemporary society is in need of new views and strategies in the context of the evolution of cities. From the 1980s onwards, urban settlements have found a relevant driving force in the revival of their inner-city areas. The advantage of this, as Sassen underlines, is the fact that “the usual urban form for centrality has been density, specifically the dense downtown.”<sup>12</sup> Density of people is an important catalyst for urbanity, liveliness and productivity. On the other hand, built density (measured as number of dwellings/m<sup>2</sup> or FAR<sup>13</sup>) does not create (a) city. It posits a new range of challenges when discussing the urban future, especially regarding the public realm. Within this broad framework, a growing community of planners and researchers has converged its attention to the topic of *interior urbanism*. Both researchers and influential practicing architects have become increasingly fervent about the imperativeness of urbanism conquering the interior. Charles Rice’s recent book is the latest addition to the literature on the topic.<sup>14</sup> It celebrates John Portman’s

10 Gregory Scruggs, *The Quito Papers: An intellectual counterpoint to the New Urban Agenda*, <http://citiscopescope.org/habitatIII/news/2016/10/quito-papers-intellectual-counterpoint-new-urban-agenda> accessed on the 17.05.2017.

11 UN Habitat is still working on the book “Towards an Open City. The Quito Papers and the New Urban Agenda”. It is expected to be published by the end of 2017.

12 Saskia Sassen, “Cities Today: A New Frontier for Major Developments”, *ANNALS, AAPSS* 626 (2009): 57.

13 More insight on the measurement of density in <http://densityatlas.org>. A project developed by a team of MIT faculty, students, and affiliated planners, architects and designers.

14 Charles Rice, *Interior Urbanism. Architecture. John Portman and Downtown America* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

atriums “encompassing the city’s exteriority within architecture’s spatial and organizational repertoire”.<sup>15</sup> Rice understands interior urbanism as a particular spatial effect revealed through architecture, encountered at the intersection of geometry and program, conveying the sense of being outside in an interior or being inside on the exterior.

Several representative protagonists of the contemporary architecture scene have regarded interior urbanism under the auspices of interior public space. Kjetil Trædal Thorsen’s (Snøhetta) statement “The Next Great Public Spaces Will Be Indoors” is very poignant: “in the layered systems of our cities of the future, we will need to focus on the public spaces that are found inside buildings — and make them accessible”.<sup>16</sup> The MONU magazine dedicated its 21<sup>st</sup> issue to the topic of interior urbanism, shedding light on it from different perspectives. The concept tackles the urban dimension of interior spaces, concentrating on their public component. Bernd Upmeyer, MONU’s editor-in-chief, recognizes the acuteness of the topic as an already present phenomenon:

“While our world is progressively becoming more urban everywhere, a process is on its way that seems to penetrate increasingly every part of our life and does not appear to stop at the thresholds of our buildings, but influences interior spaces, in particular public interior spaces, as much as everything else.”<sup>17</sup>

Such statements underline the assumption that interior urbanism acts primarily through the formalization of (interior) public spaces. For that, a deep understanding and confinement of the term “public space” — randomly used for any intervention of transforming or embellishing vacant urban areas — is required. This work will refer to the comprehensive research done by the European Archive of Urban Public Space on the understanding and formalization of public space.<sup>18</sup> Within this framework, one of the main contributors to the debate was Manuel de Solà-Morales. His vision, advanced by his 1992 seminal text “Espacios Públicos / Espacios Colectivos”<sup>19</sup> (Public Spaces / Collective Spaces), is that the main feature of public space is its urban quality, defined by a collective condition residing in its material presence. Collective spaces are not exclusively public or private, but both simultaneously, and post a broader, more timely definition for contemporary public spaces. The urban material, able “to express civic, aesthetic, functional and social meanings, is a basic concept when it comes to defining public space.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, the expectation of public space to only be outdoor seems obsolete.

### 21<sup>st</sup> Century’s Nolli Map

Based on the conviction that public interiors are able to create public spaces of similar quality as the outdoor ones, the discussion with Winny Maas on a tentative 3D Nolli map is setting a landmark in the discourse on interior urbanism. He argues that “the denser you are the more the role of the interiors makes sense and becomes active.”<sup>21</sup> There is no doubt that the denser urban structures become, the more the public realm is affected. Thus, it becomes essential to understand the mechanisms by which the public sphere can successfully penetrate the indoor world. Therefore, Maas introduces the notion of the 3D-Nolli plan:

15 Rice, *Interior Urbanism*, 4.

16 Kjetil Trædal Thorsen, “Opinion: The Next Great Public Spaces Will Be Indoors”, <http://www.metropolismag.com/interiors/opinion/the-next-great-public-spaces-will-be-indoors/> last accessed 4.05.2017

17 Bernd Upmeyer, “Interior Urbanism”, *MONU. Magazine on Urbanism* 21 (2014).

18 The CCCB in Barcelona holds a collection of texts on the city and urban issues that the institution has been engaged with through lectures and exhibitions since its very beginnings. Furthermore, the European Prize of Urban Public Space is organized within the framework of the CCCB’s larger, permanent and multidisciplinary program on cities and public space.

19 Manuel de Solà-Morales, “Espacios Públicos / Espacios Colectivos”, *La Vanguardia*, Barcelona, 12.05.1992.

20 Manuel de Solà-Morales, *The Impossible Project of Public Space* (2010), <http://www.publicspace.org/en/text-library/eng/c006-l-impossible-proyecto-de-l-espai-public>, last accessed 16.08.2017.

21 Beatriz Ramo, Bernd Upmeyer and Winny Maas “3D Nolli – Interview with Winny Maas”, “Interior Urbanism”, *MONU. Magazine on Urbanism* 21 (2014), 40.

"Nolli becomes obvious when you go, for example, to New York, where the lobbies are part of the streetscapes [...] I think that the Nolli map is not completely updated to account for the current possibilities, because it is two-dimensional. It does not talk about height and it does not say anything about the role of the façade."<sup>22</sup> Beyond a mere two-dimensional, black and white representation, the 3D-Nolli map would add a spatial translation of the complexity of the built environment.

Nolli's map of Rome is becoming once again the reference point. Pier Vittorio Aureli elaborates on the significance of Nolli's *Nuova Pianta di Roma* in the third chapter of his book, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*. Unlike his predecessors, Nolli marked for the first time the distinction between the figure of architecture (architectural form) and the ground of the city (urban mass). "The blackened sections indicate the parts of the city that were adaptable to change and reform, while the architectural *poché* indicates parts that were more fixed."<sup>23</sup> Architectural space seems inert, unable to trigger urban change. In the figure ground representation, architecture is granted the formal definition. The continuous ground of urban space is the negative of the internal composition logic of the built mass. The urban net — the adaptive and changeable realm — extends and penetrates the building mass whenever this becomes possible. It is a constant negotiation between black (*poché*) and white. In such a mono-tone representation, how can we re-trace the fine separation line between the two realms?

At this point, Sennett's thoughts on porosity — the first asset of an open city — highlight the same issue. Referring to the built environment, Sennett claims that "designing the experience of passage from place to place",<sup>24</sup> especially regarding the transition between interior and exterior, has been a great challenge for planners. The vertical limit is to be enhanced towards a place of potential, development and conflict, rather than of obstruction. He exemplifies the possibility to achieve porosity by describing the difference between boundary and border. While boundaries mark a clear limit between two mediums, borders generate opportunities of mixture and activity. The border is understood here as an easily penetrable membrane that both enables trespass and filters flows. The relevance of the border/membrane condition is of special concern for the public realm. The porosity enables public space to flow freely and pass from street to interior in a sequence of different instances completing the joint between city and building. This brings us back to the consideration of the interior public realm and to a disciplinary edge situation. Maurice Harteveld signals this possible polemic in his broad research on interior public spaces and tries to clarify the urban design versus the architectural design role. He recognizes that the contemporary western cityscape already offers numerous examples of interiors as active and rightful constituents of the urban life and urban structure. "In everyday usage, being in the city most often means that interior public space cannot be avoided."<sup>25</sup> Thus, Harteveld calls for the conscious acknowledgement of interior public spaces as valid components of the urban public realm and as vibrant generators of urbanity.

### *Interior Public Realm in the Open City*

How could interior urbanism address the requirements for the open city and overcome the breach between the realm of architecture and urbanism? Learning from previous examples, what strategy would enable the outdoor public sphere to penetrate the indoor? Especially recalling Sennett's demand for porosity, do interior public spaces hold a DNA of the open city?

The porosity is achieved through the thorough consideration of the vertical edge — the transition area between realms. In a contemporary interpretation of the Nolli map, grey tones are needed,

22 Ibid., 41.

23 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 109.

24 Richard Sennett, *The Open City*, <https://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/UploadedResources/The%20Open%20City.pdf>, last accessed 14.05.2017.

25 Maurice Harteveld, "Public Interiors: Urbanism or Not?" (paper presented at II International PhD Seminar: Urbanism & Urbanization, Barcelona, Spain, 2005), 219-230.

as the permeability of the built structure is imperative. The public realm penetrates the walls of architecture, and building interiors become part of the public network. The close relationship and inter-determinacy between public realm and built structures is maximized on the ground floor, as the strict delimitation between building and street becomes subject of reinterpretation.

Thus, the concept of *interior urbanism* acts as a mediator between theoretical claims and physical implementation. Nevertheless, as in the case of any new label put on a phenomenon, it lacks a formal definition. This work addresses the need to define this additional typology of public space, understood as a promising alternative to the traditional form, as it implies an important shift in the perception, understanding and conception of public space. This research looks at an intriguing model, that is believed to hold the clues for the formulation of the alternative public space: the privately owned public spaces (POPS). What started as a normative compromise solution in New York has increasingly allowed the traditional public sphere to penetrate buildings and conquer the interior.

### Interior Public Spaces – The Model of POPS

When density becomes overwhelming, the provision of open space becomes luxury, and new attitudes are demanded. Privately owned public spaces (POPS) represent a specific category of public space, introduced for the first time in the 1961 Zoning Resolution of New York City. The Department of City Planning recognized the need for the provision of more public space in highly densified commercial areas of Downtown and Midtown, so it developed an interesting negotiation mechanism with the private sector — the real-estate investor and developer.

The term “privately owned public spaces” is in itself an oxymoron. Even in the Quito Papers,<sup>26</sup> the urban thinkers are critical of the forces of the private sector incising into the public apparatus. Joan Clos accuses the (free) market of not being a good urban planner: “The private owner doesn’t understand that the provision of public space is good!” Sennett underlines these statements, arguing that protecting public realm means resisting the privatization of public space, while the neoliberal economy has modified the notion that “the public” belongs to the public. His call for an open city comes as a reaction to these forces trying to re-write the laws of the city to the detriment of public space. Indeed, private speculative interests do not usually match with the altruistic desire to provide democratic spaces for the population. Nevertheless, all these forces act concomitantly, in different proportions, in the apparatus of the city. This work will not discuss the political or economic implications of the POPS phenomenon; it is a matter that requires another type of debate. The focus is set on the characteristics and potential of this specific urban tool for the enrichment of the public realm. Can POPS be understood as a valid urban design strategy addressing Sennett’s latest recommendations? Could POPS successfully address aspects of the open city, such as the porosity of the built environment?

Manhattan’s privately owned public spaces have been widely documented by Jerold Kayden. First, his book *Privately Owned Public Spaces: The New York City Experience* represents a thorough research into the state of the art in the year 2000. Then, his “Advocates for Privately Owned Public Space” Organization joined the Municipal Art Society of New York to develop the *apops.mas.org* website, which follows the ongoing evolution of the city’s POPS.

#### *History of POPS*

New York pioneered the birth and implementation of POPS with the 1961 zoning resolution. Due to rigid volumetric prescription of the previous regulation, the urban form had resulted highly predictable: skyscrapers occupied almost 100% of their site within the Manhattan grid and had several setbacks (“ziggurat” or “wedding-cake” formations). The 1961 released zoning resolution added a maximum bulk limitation in form of the FAR (floor area ratio). FAR has

26 “Designing the Urban Age Talk” (Quito, 2016).



since been a highly effective regulatory device, an essential urban indicator and parameter. The goal of the proposed regulation was to ensure access to light and air on street level despite the skyscrapers' considerable height. Beyond confining the streetscape, the skyscrapers' dimensions generated complex underground situations, a maze of corridors, connections and subway entrances, deprived of natural light. The approach of the new regulation was positively oriented: incentive zoning was introduced. According to Kayden, the incentive zoning supposed a positive deployment of public policy instead of a punishing one. It provided a bonus, usually in the form of additional floor area, in exchange for the provision of a public amenity or affordable housing.<sup>27</sup>

Within the framework of incentive zoning, this work will further focus on one important object of trade: the provision of privately owned public spaces. POPS were introduced as a new type of normative character — located on private property yet physically accessible to the public-at-large — that defined a new spatial typology. POPS emerged as a bonus device, a negotiation asset. Out of the intention to improve the street life in densified and congested areas of Manhattan, in an environment where the driving force is the private sector, any mean for negotiation seemed beneficial. The bait for the private developer was additional FAR, translated into immediate increased financial benefit. In exchange, the investor had to offer spaces for public use on own property while agreeing to further manage and maintain them. The first categories introduced in the regulation were plazas and arcades.<sup>28</sup> Between 1968 and 1973, five new categories of POPS came into existence: elevated plazas, through block arcades, covered pedestrian spaces, sunken plazas and open-air concourses. This work specifically looks at one category: the covered pedestrian space — the culmination of the progression from street to interior.<sup>29</sup>

In 1970, the City Planning Commission approved a zoning amendment for the covered pedestrian space, defined as “an enclosed area directly accessible to the public from an adjoining street, arcade, plaza, court, yard, pedestrian mall, or other covered pedestrian space which is a part of the public pedestrian circulation system”.<sup>30</sup> It was the first indoor space responding both to urban requirements (connection to adjacent circulation paths, accessibility, amenities) and architectural needs (furniture, lighting, materiality, entrance situation, space dimensions), serving both for circulation and as public destination, supported by public amenities (shops, restaurants, cafés etc.). The mechanism created an interesting cycle: more built density would bring more people who would enjoy and vitalize the extra public amenity offered in exchange. It seemed a self-sustaining *perpetuum-mobile*. However, by the 1980s, an obvious decay of many of the bonus-spaces became visible. As W. Whyte<sup>31</sup> recognized, “in an ill-conceived effort to reduce ‘pedestrian congestion on the streets,’ the planners were bonusing people away from the streets”.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, his argument was not against the typology of atriums (covered pedestrian spaces) but against the fact that their disposition drained the vitality of the street. The internalization of public space can result beneficial, especially for the developer who attracts users inside his building. Thus, in Whyte's opinion, the typology was valid but did not need to be bonused.

The case of New York has become paradigmatic in the provision of interiors with the claim to be public. These spaces are hosted by the building structure but are simultaneously growing out of the street. They are often designed by the architecture team of the host-building (in some cases with the additional implication of a landscape or urban designer). The interior POPS — a hybrid between an urban plaza and a building lobby — create a special form of publicness. As Maurice

27 Through until the present time, incentive bonuses have been granted for the provision of privately owned public spaces, visual or performing arts spaces, subway improvements, theater preservation, fresh food stores and affordable housing (Inclusionary Housing Program).

28 Jerold S. Kayden, *The New York City Department of City Planning and The Municipal Art Society of New York, Privately Owned Public Spaces: The New York City Experience* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), 11.

29 William Whyte, *City: Rediscovering the Center* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 242.

30 City Planning Commission Report, CP 21138.

31 William Whyte was commissioned the study of POPS and the reasons for their apparent decay. Within the framework of his Street Life Project, he started observing and mapping how they worked.

32 Whyte, *City*, 245.

Harteveld recognizes, the zoning resolution achieved to provide an incredible number of indoor and outdoor public spaces with new acceptations.<sup>33</sup> It is undeniably remarkable that, in a clever approach, incentive zoning catalyzed the emergence of these new characters on the billboard of public spaces. Their validation came in time through the acceptance by the public. Indoor areas in particular needed to become endorsed through use in order to rewrite the urban narrative and become part of everyday urban life.

Today, Manhattan counts some 530 POPS in 327 buildings and, despite revised rules and stricter requirements, negotiations continue within the dynamic urban device of incentive zoning. The area of Midtown concentrates the highest number of POPS (99 in Central Midtown and 77 in East Midtown). Forty-three of these POPS are covered (interior) pedestrian spaces. The city has triggered a huge, widespread network. Kayden refers to it as a “decentralized Central Park.”

The primary aim of POPS was simply to sanitize the city and provide light and air. Unconcerned with the actual use of the spaces, the city was merely asking for free space. After learning from failed examples and following the changes in the patterns of use, the current design objectives pursue open and inviting connections to the sidewalk, accessibility, quality seating and vegetation, and insurance of safety and security.<sup>34</sup> In 2007, all previous design regulations for outdoor POPS were updated and synthesized into one outdoor plaza designation: “the public plaza”. The regulation for covered pedestrian spaces applicable for bonus has not changed since their approval in 1970 and only refers to their size (a minimum area of 3,000 sq. ft. [278,7m<sup>2</sup>]; a minimum width, at any point, of 20 ft. [6,1m]; a minimum height of 30 ft. [9,1m]), the required uses (small stores and cafés, occupying the maximum feasible frontage, while banks, loan offices, insurance offices or similar office type uses are prohibited), illumination (natural light is preferred), maintenance and opening hours (7AM to midnight), physical obstructions, furnishing and equipment (planting, landscaping, ornamental fountains, statuary, outdoor furniture, sitting areas, kiosks, works of art, light wells etc.).

#### *Learning from the Mechanism of POPS. Potentials*

Beyond W. Whyte, several authors have expressed their concerns regarding POPS through the years. Jeremy Németh offers an overview of different critical approaches of bonus spaces.<sup>35</sup> One concern regards security issues, as owners prioritize security over social interaction, leading to cases of social exclusion. Furthermore, bonus spaces are not legally forced to tolerate free speech, religious activity or unmediated political expression, discouraging truly democratic expression. Further critics refer to the commodification of these spaces, prioritizing consumption and addressing only a privileged minority of the society. Indeed, we are looking at non-traditional forms of public space, new typologies that still need to formulate their complete set of characteristics.

Nevertheless, the interest of POPS lies primarily in the established mechanism that proved to be moldable and adaptive in time. It started as an attractive bonus policy and evolved towards an urban strategy for the physical enhancement of the public realm. Incentive zoning shifted the focus away from the rigid, form-giving master planning. It provided room for the unexpected, formally unplanned urban evolutions, and rewrote the laws for the ground level. Moreover, I argue that this tool set the ground for what could become a happy marriage between building and the public sphere towards achieving a higher degree of porosity. The porosity of the built environment can be reached by getting buildings to become more public through actively considering the public realm. At this point, incentive zoning becomes more than a barter, and POPS are more than just a compromise solution.

33 Maurice Harteveld, “Bigness is All in the Mind”, *Oase Journal* #71 (2006): 114-133.

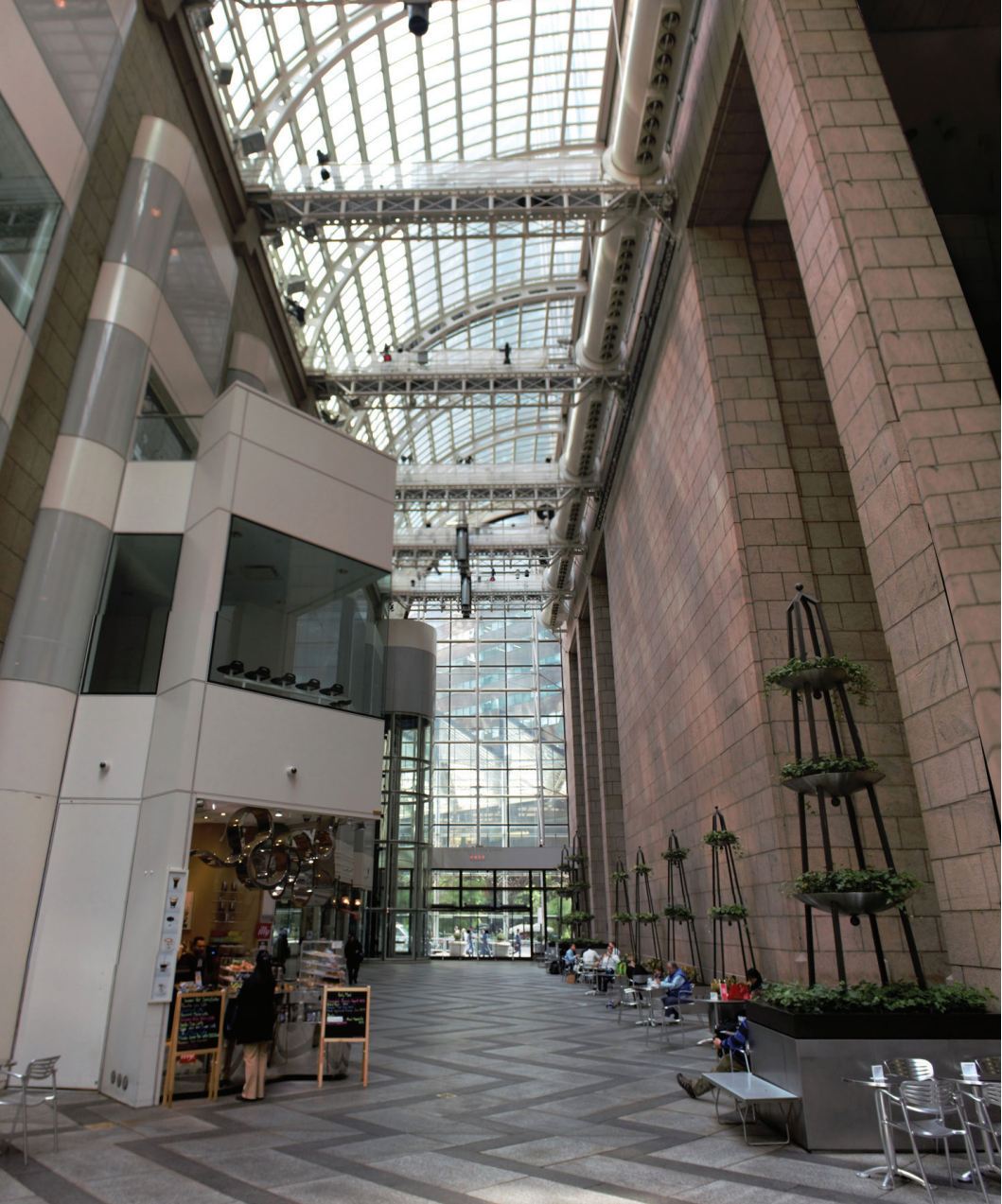
34 <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/districts-tools/private-owned-public-spaces.page>, last accessed 26.04.2017.

35 Jeremy Németh, “Defining a Public: The Management of Privately Owned Public Space”, *Urban Studies* 46, 11 (2009): 2463-2490.









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Fig. 01: POPS on 60 Wall Street.

Fig. 02: POPS on 100 William Street.

Fig. 03: POPS on 180 Maiden Lane.

Fig. 04: POPS on 120 Park Avenue.

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Fig. 05: POPS on 550 Madison Avenue.

Fig. 06: POPS on 590 Madison Avenue.



Secondly, the process of validating interior public space as an urban feature — physical entities with a morphological and functional contribution to the urban realm — is essential for the current approach of this work. “Instead of fearing a transgression of the public, we could also accept the shifting boundaries between the public and the private — they have been shifting continuously through history — and find new ways to define public space.”<sup>36</sup> It is a process of re-tracing and blurring the separation line between the urban and architectural realm. POPS give clues on finding the contemporary blueprint of the Nolli map towards reinterpreting the joint between the horizontal street realm and vertical building structure.

Despite criticism, there are some renowned examples of covered pedestrian spaces, which have been performing positively in their urban and architectural surrounding, and that users have engaged with. The work selects six case studies — three in Downtown and three in Midtown Manhattan — and looks specifically at their connection to the street. Due to their location in the dense commercial and business districts, the main public is comprised of office workers and the most intense use happens at lunch hour. Even if these mono-functional districts have grown very mixed, the POPS are still being acknowledged and used. The three analyzed covered pedestrian spaces in the business district of Downtown are located on 60 Wall Street (Fig. 01), 100 William Street (Fig. 02) and 180 Maiden Lane (Fig. 03), the other covered pedestrian spaces in the commercial district of Midtown, on 120 Park Avenue (Fig. 04), 550 Madison Avenue (Fig. 05), 590 Madison Avenue (Fig. 06).

### It All Comes Down to the Interface

When talking about “the space between,” Stephen Bates refers to “the ambiguous spaces and thresholds between private rooms and the public realm.”<sup>37</sup> He enumerates a set of architectural elements that contribute to the transition between the city realm and the domestic realm: courtyards, passages, porches, lobbies, balconies etc. These elements enrich the city streets with layers of semi-public spaces and mediate between the public and private realm. They belong both to the architectural world — the host building — and to the street onto which they open. They define the edge, contribute to the character of the city and determine the way we experience it. They are private gifts to the public city. They are all constituents of the interface between the public and the private realm.

The term interface refers to a common area of two realms, a place where independent systems meet and interact. In this sense, the term is similar to Sennett’s understanding of borders as “the zones in a habitat where organisms become more inter-active, due to the meeting of different species or physical conditions.”<sup>38</sup> The built structures in an open city system call for these membrane-like interfaces in order to allow the public realm to penetrate and contaminate them, extending the network of public spaces. Solà-Morales also refers to the perimeter as a limit, a boundary, a separation. He highlights an important prerequisite that ensures the quality of public spaces: “Good public space has no limits, or the ones it has are undefined, multiple, oscillating. [...] Watch those perimeters! They are both main theme and baptism of fire of urban quality.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the continuity and spatial affiliation is essential as their own identity is subordinated to the urban whole. The physical interface is responsible for the permeability at the joint between building and street, and is materialized through architectural means.

When analyzing the created bonused spaces in the case studies, their hybrid nature becomes obvious. The interior public spaces hold a mix of urban features and the lobby-like architecture of an office tower. The cladding of floors and ceilings indicate an interior “living room.” The

36 Maurice Harteveld, *Interior Public Space. On the Mazes in the Network of an Urbanist*, Book 3, Chapter 4 (Delft University of Technology, 2014), 165.

37 Stephen Bates, “The Space Between”, in *Ground Floor Interface*, Wüstenrot Stiftung (eds.) (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 179.

38 Richard Sennett, *The Public Realm*. <http://www.richardsennett.com/site/senn/templates/general2.aspx?pageid=16&cc=gb>, last accessed 4.08.2017.

39 Manuel de Solà-Morales, *The Impossible Project of Public Space*.

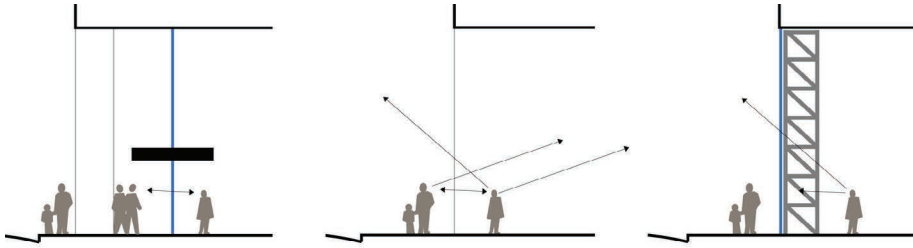


Fig. 07: Sections of POPS.

furniture (moveable chairs and tables, benches) relates to an open space situation as the same moveable furniture is used for outdoor parks and plazas. The vegetation mimics the street planting. The entrance apparatus to private areas is spatially reduced and lifted to the first floor, generously opening the ground floor to public use. Certain amenities such as a café or a kiosk make a direct reference to the very popular food trucks parked along the sidewalks. The overall perception of these spaces reaches beyond that of a building lobby. Their material presence underlines their urban affiliation. A more adequate term to characterize them would be that of an urban lobby.

The transition from the exterior space to the interior urban lobby is paramount for the definition of these interior public spaces. The interface to the street holds the key to a successful implementation of the POPS. Their mere presence renders a caricaturesque representation of urban space, detached from its surrounding, if they cannot become natural enhancements of the street-level. They would be mere spaces for public use instead of urban public spaces. Once again, the border/boundary differentiation gains importance. Towards a porous environment with ambiguous edges, the materiality and formalization of the interface becomes fundamental. The purpose of interior public spaces should not be to internalize flows and drain the vitality of the street, but to enhance the public realm when needed (in highly dense and crowded areas).

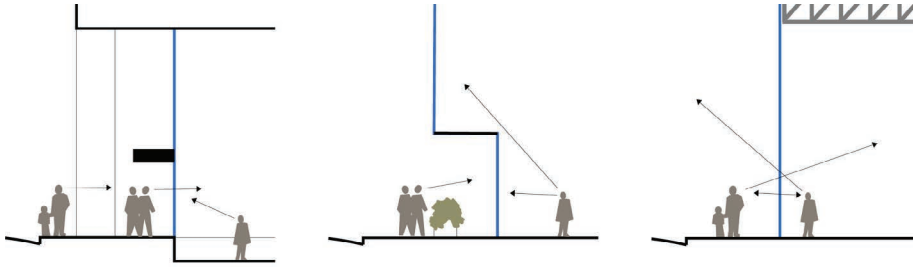
The NYC zoning regulation already recognized the importance of the interface when introducing the covered pedestrian space type in 1970. As do the planners at the Department of City Planning, who revise and assess on every project submitted design. The zoning resolution dedicates a paragraph to the requirements of the access to a covered pedestrian space:

“For the purpose of ensuring prominent public attention to the covered pedestrian space, the openings at the face of the building for entrances to the covered pedestrian space shall be at least 20 feet [6,1m] wide, 30 feet [9,1m] high and unobstructed for a depth of 30 feet [9,1m], except, where the covered pedestrian space is air conditioned, the openings at the entrances may be partially enclosed. Such enclosure at the entrances shall be transparent in nature, commence at a height not less than eight feet [2,4m] above the floor level at the entrances, and be set back from the face of the building at least 12 feet [3,6m]. Air curtains are permitted but shall be located at a height not less than eight feet. Such entrances are permitted to be fully enclosed only for that portion of the year between October 15 and April 15, provided, however, that such space is readily accessible to the public between 7:00 a.m. and 12 midnight or on a schedule suitable to meet the public need.”<sup>40</sup>

First, the work looks at the physical characteristics of the interface of the six case studies. How can the physical vertical edge be reinterpreted towards an opportunity for exchange and communication? The materiality of the separation skin can radically influence the permeability of the interface. The case of 100 William Street reaches the maximum of permeability. With no facade, the broad entrance situation is not shifting the scale dramatically and allows for a similar reading of the space as the street. The office building reveals the façade (thermal envelope) of its four lower floors only after accessing the covered public space that acts as a forecourt. In the case of 590 Madison Avenue, the glazed curtain wall façade allows for transparency and visual contact both from the enclosed space as from the street. The POPS is showcased in an inviting way. The

40 Zoning Resolution Article VII: Administration. Chapter 4: Special Permits by the City Planning Commission, 74-84.





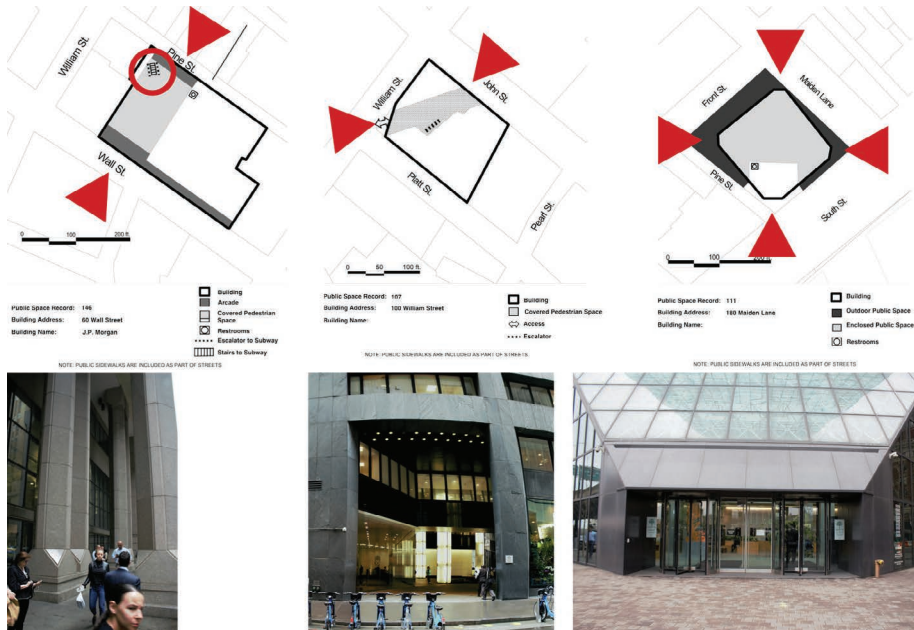
glazing of the roof reveals the urban dimension of the surrounding high-rises. 180 Maiden Lane opts for a curtain wall façade with a three-dimensional substructure. This impedes the direct approach of the interface and creates a physical censorship. Although transparent from the inside, the façade is reflecting on the outside and relatively repellent for the observer on the street. The generous public space hosted beyond the envelope remains concealed. Thus, bi-directional transparency between the adjacent interior and exterior spaces is essential. Furthermore, see-through situations can add to the urban experience. Covered pedestrian spaces that allow for visual connections beyond their limits — the opposite of a *cul-de-sac* situation — are better embedded in the street network. This is the case of 100 William Street, 60 Wall Street, 590 Madison Avenue, and 550 Madison Avenue. As Claudia Herasme, manager of the Department of City Planning, recognizes, visibility is a pre-requisite: “you want to see and be seen, feel safer and be part of the entertainment... You want to be part of the bigger picture!”<sup>41</sup> (Fig.07)

When dealing with a thermal envelope, entrance doors become the connection between the exterior and interior realm. The dimension, position and type of the entrance device can easily shift the experience from an urban to an architectural scale. The analysis shows that all five cases reveal design failures regarding the formulation of their access; except for 100 William Street which is not an indoor space. The notion of “indoor” already suggests the mediation through a domestic device. Indeed, the POPS are accessed through conventional building doors. Swing doors are often paired with a set of revolving doors. Even if the spaces are serviced through several entrance points (at least two), the punctual nature of these access situations resembles a funnel that hinders the natural augmentation of the public sphere. In some cases, such as 120 Park Avenue or 180 Maiden Lane, the entrance doors are framed, reducing them to an architectural threshold between two realms of very different size and scale. The flow is interrupted, especially in the case of revolving doors that imply decelerating and changing the pace.

Secondly, the question of what the interface is mediating is an essential one. The interior space beyond the street is suddenly dedicated to the broad public, and not solely to the users of the building (who often need to pass a control point to access the private floors). Thus, numerous actors need to be drawn inside: the amenities become attraction points. The spaces lose dedicated uses and adopt a more generic definition. They then become colonized by public functions that can easily be housed within the structure: cafés, restaurants, shops, sitting areas, exhibition areas etc. Instead of a scenography exercise, real urban spaces arise. (Fig.08)

The spaces in themselves act as an interface mediating between the horizontal and vertical dimension. They rewrite a Nolli-like map of white urban forces fighting to penetrate the black architectural form. They mediate between the speed of movement on the street and the rather static condition imposed by a building structure. In some cases, such as 550 Madison Avenue, the space acts as a shortcut between the bordering E 56 and E 55 streets, but also as the opportunity for a quiet pause. It is a space that announces the lobby to the office building. In the case of 180 Maiden Lane, the interior space merges the urban functions of the public area with the entrance to the office floors by elevating the latter on the mezzanine level. In the case of 120 Park Avenue,

<sup>41</sup> Interview conducted with Claudia Herasme, Deputy Director - Urban Design Office, and Stella Kim, Program Manager - Privately Owned Public Spaces, at The NYC Dept. of City Planning, 120 Broadway, New York on the 13th May 2017.



the entrance to the office floors is spatially separated from the public space. The POPS does not filter the flows of the building's users and renders as a distinctive, isolated add-on. Furthermore, the design of the space reacts to the slope of the street by lowering the interior level to connect evenly on the side of E42 street. The level difference emphasizes the interior/exterior difference and brutally separates the two spaces.

Interior POPS are less to be read through their spatial structure with architectural means, but need to be understood as virtual accumulations of intensity and activity. They become connectors and attractors in the dynamic urban realm. They are then, as in Eco's open works, "not just as a conglomeration of random components ready to emerge from the chaos in which they previously stood and permitted to assume any form whatsoever."<sup>42</sup> Rather, they are nodes generating new synapses within the urban network, mediating between the horizontal dimension of the street and the vertical dimension of the building. Interior POPS are a rightful constituent of the open city.

## Conclusions

In their comprehensive exploration on multilevel metropolis, Yoos and James recognize that "the radicalization of the architect as author shifted the focus of urban development away from the concept of public space and towards the quasi-public spaces of private development."<sup>43</sup> This being the status quo, the necessity arises to turn an apparently parasitic relationship into a symbiotic one. Rather than rejecting the process, the potentials of the new equation need to be levered. The Quito Papers have already spread their influence through public lectures. The book publication is due by the end of 2017. As this manifesto synthesizes the seminal work of its four authors, it is considered to become a strong guideline for future urban development and thus, the broad framework of the present work.

This paper interprets openness as a property of the urban built environment. It searches for a way to incorporate the requirements formulated by Sennett — porosity, indeterminacy and mixity

<sup>42</sup> Eco, *The Open Work*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Jennifer Joos and Vincent James, *Parallel Cities: The Multilevel Metropolis* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2016), 15.



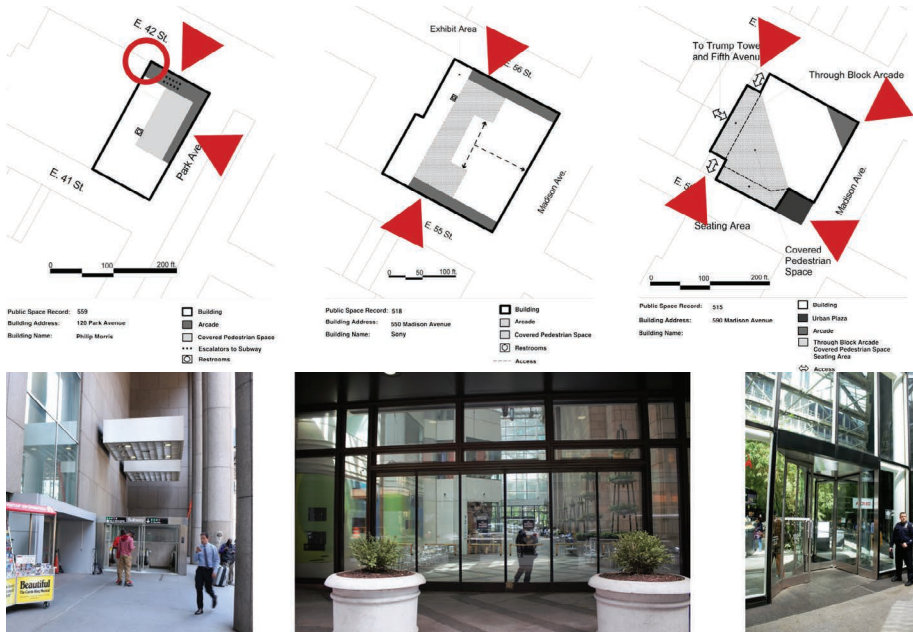


Fig. 08: Ground Floor Sketch and Entrances (opposite and above)

— into planning procedures, and to translate them into the architectural vocabulary. In this new composition of elements, public space acts as the catalyst. As we learn from Sennett, the key to an open system lies precisely in the elements that destabilize it and avoid predictable outcomes. Similar to Eco's features of the open work, the urban environment in an open system requires a degree of indeterminacy and an open-end narrative. Buildings and public realm can dilute the clear separation line and eventually merge. When the two disciplinary realms of architecture and urbanism collide, a place of potential emerges. It is the place of grey tones that would complete the contemporary (3D) Nolli map. Interior urbanism is not about artificially replicating city functions in the interior of a building, but about extending the public realm beyond the façade of a building. It is a continuous network sustained by a fluid trespass of borders, enriching the urban experience. As Solà-Morales underlines, "public spaces will be just that when they construct the combined system of urban space and not merely a closed work. When they are defining elements of a model of the city without perimeters, rather than zero elevation architecture."<sup>44</sup>

The enhancement of the public sphere through POPS has proved to be a persuasive approach in highly dense and congested urban areas. It is a formula that validates the existence of interior public spaces and rewrites the relationship between building and urban space. The interior public realm renders as a legitimate constituent of the open city. Nevertheless, it totally depends on the physical connection to the adjacent, already consolidated urban space. The aim is to find means to enrich the urban, public experience.

POPS are a direct product of incentive zoning. I consider incentive zoning an urban strategy that offers an opportunity to provide new forms of public spaces and change the paradigms. This win-win approach, incubated in New York, has since been adopted in numerous other North American cities. Dense Asian cities, such as Hong Kong or Singapore, have imported and adapted their own version of POPS. The existence and potential of POPS in Europe will be examined in further works. The shift from the public sector towards private ownership, the increasing levels of density, and the changing patterns of public life in the European metropolis justifies this further research.

44 Manuel de Solà-Morales, *The Impossible Project of Public Space*.

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