# Review of: "Corralling a Chimera: A Critical Review of the Term Social Infrastructure"

Hyunji Cho[1]

1 University College London, University of London

Potential competing interests:  No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this article. I hope this novel method of Qeios, open review and discussion, will help us improve our knowledge.

The topic and general methodological approach are interesting. Indeed, the term social infrastructure is used in different ways in different fields. However, I think there are some areas to improve.

First, the objective of the study and its contribution are not very clear. I can see there are various uses of the term social infrastructure, but there is not a clear argument about what kind of issues might occur because of these diverse uses. It is not uncommon to find unclear terms even in academic works (social capital can be one of the examples), so merely reviewing the confusing uses of a certain term might not be sufficient as an academic contribution. Moreover,  the term 'social infrastructure'  seems confusing at the micro level but quite helpful at the macro level definition of the planning field. As you mentioned, there are physical infrastructures, including gray infrastructure/green infrastructure/blue infrastructure, and social infrastructure is used to define essential facilities to support citizens' social lives.

In the Abstract, it mentioned, 'we encourage scholars to use the definition centered on networking spaces. With this new focal point, we hope to better unify these fields and underscore the degree to which these facilities support critical connection-building processes across societies'. If this paper aims to argue this, you need to show that the uses of social infrastructure in different areas (e.g. health care and education) will hinder or blur the focus of connection-building processes across societies. It is not very convincing because, from the view of the planning field, education spaces, healthcare, and housing also provide opportunities to interact with people and provide a baseline for the decent social lives of citizens.

Second, the conclusions are less convincing because of this unclear definition of objectives. It says 'Without a clear, broadly accepted definition of the term, and with the high cost of standard gray infrastructure projects, the social benefits generated from networking spaces have often been overlooked.' We need to think about: 1. is it true that there is not sufficient attention on the networking spaces 2. is it because of unclear definition of the term. Although it may not be conducted under the terms of 'social infrastructure', but there are many existing studies about networking spaces. If you define networking spaces such as cafes, barbershops, restaurants, parks, gyms, recreation centers, community gardens, and dog walking trails, there are plenty of studies of 'third spaces' and 'contact zones'. If you want to compare the 'planning attention' for the social and gray infrastructure, the gap is primarily because of the ownership of the spaces.

Indeed, in urban planning, the public networking spaces such as community centres and community gardens are defined as community facilities, and social infrastructure is used rather than broader terms encompassing education and health and community facilities together. And other networking spaces such as cafes, barbershops and restaurants do not draw attention simply because they are private sector properties. Therefore, I do not think that defining social infrastructure as the narrower term of networking space will make social infrastructure (networking spaces) get a greater interest.

If I may suggest, critical reviews of the uses of 'social infrastructure' in the socio-political context will be necessary. For example, in which context does the use of the term 'SI' rise, and what was the political effect? Then this paper can justify the review's objective better. And I would suggest reviewing the 'SI' according to the field of study. As mentioned, 'SI' tends to be used as a neutral term in planning to describe social facilities in line with other infrastructures, but perhaps it might not be the case in other fields.

I hope my comments will be helpful. Please feel free to contact if you wish to have further discussion.