

Abstract

This dissertation looks at how critical juncture events shape and are shaped by place-making in public spaces. Using the democratic breakthrough events of the Revolution of Dignity (or Euromaidan) in Ukraine and the Velvet Revolution in Armenia, it views critical junctures as major political events that have the power to produce a lasting legacy. The case study cities, where place-making is observed, are the capital cities of Ukraine and Armenia— Kyiv and Yerevan respectively.

The dissertation uses the incorporated comparative method to assess how critical juncture events trigger institutional change in urban policy-making regarding place-making in public spaces. Specifically, it focuses on the key actors involved in democracy-building and place-making initiatives, i.e., the state, civil society, and transnational actors. Different aspects of these cases – Soviet legacy in urban planning, civil society formation patterns, urban activism, and revolutions – serve as the grounds for comparison. The dissertation starts by presenting the urban movements that contributed to revolutions, gradually expanding to incorporate the state and transnational actors. It traces the involvement of those actors throughout all the stages of critical juncture events with a particular focus on place-making. The dissertation uses three sites selected within each of the two case study cities of Kyiv and Yerevan as examples of the involvement of specific actors. The incorporated comparison allows me to view cases as part of wider processes that surround them and to learn from one case to the other.

Based on qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, as well as on content analysis of strategy documents and newspaper articles, the dissertation concludes that the urban component is present at all the stages of critical juncture events. Public spaces reflect and interrogate the transformation of relationships among different actors involved in democracy-building and place-making throughout the critical juncture events. Furthermore, these actors and their place-making activities are often influenced by global connections and flows of international aid.