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## Making the New Turkey

*Reconfigurations of state and citizenship in an Istanbul neighbourhood*

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## Chapter Seven

# Conclusion

Turkey, established as a secular modern state in the early 1920s, has undergone profound transformation since the AKP's rise to power in 2002 – a period often described as the making of a New Turkey. Through large-scale urban development projects and the reintroduction of religion into the public sphere, the party has advanced a post-secular vision of modernity that challenges the older secular-modernist paradigm. Scholarship on contemporary Turkey has produced important insights into this transformation, with well-developed critical literature highlighting the authoritarian, illiberal, and undemocratic processes and outcomes of AKP rule (Aslan-Akman, 2021; Çavdar, 2016; Gümüşçü, 2024; Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010; Lovering & Türkmen, 2011; Lüküslü, 2016). Yet, we still know relatively little about how pious popular classes experience, negotiate, and affirm the AKP's political project. In other words, despite authoritarian tendencies and constrained democratic participation, the question of how the AKP manages to craft and sustain consent – particularly among pious groups – remains underexplored.

To address this gap, I formulated the central research question of this dissertation as: *How are state and citizenship reconfigured in everyday spaces under AKP governments*? To answer this question, I developed a place-based approach that illuminates how the AKP's project generates new forms of citizenship and statehood in everyday life. Drawing on a Gramscian perspective of hegemony, I emphasised the generative aspects of the AKP's project and employed place-making as a conceptual lens to observe the emergence of new imaginaries of citizenship and the state. The Gramscian framework is particularly effective for understanding how political projects cultivate and sustain consent by establishing new forms of common sense around what it

means to be a citizen and how the state should be imagined. Place-making – conceived here as a relational and processual practice through which people shape spaces and are, in turn, shaped by them in terms of subjectivities, norms, and moralities – allows us to apprehend this generative process in its embodied, negotiated, and contested forms.

Each empirical chapter focused on a key thematic dimension through which the AKP advances its political project: (1) party politics, (2) religious education, and (3) gender norms. Across these chapters, I centred the place-based practices of AKP activists, *cemaat*s (Islamic civil society groups), the Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs), and residents. I demonstrated how these actors – sometimes in tension, sometimes in cooperation – contribute to establishing the AKP as a legitimate political authority and to normalising its post-secular vision as the common sense of the New Turkey. At the same time, I documented moments where implicit power struggles surfaced between different religious authorities, and where alternative understandings of pious womanhood were articulated – revealing significant divergences from the state's hegemonic vision.

In what follows, I show how each chapter addresses a different dimension of the research question. I then outline the theoretical and empirical contributions of the dissertation and reflect on how this research positions itself within existing academic approaches to the AKP. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research that build on the insights developed here.

## Reconfiguration of State and Citizenship

Across the chapters, I traced how place-making reveals the entanglement of three interrelated themes of the AKP's political project: (1) the fusion of party and state, (2) the embedding of religious morality in everyday conduct, and (3) the promotion of conservative Islamic gender norms. Together, these

dynamics illustrate the AKP's vision of statehood and its ideal of citizenship. Through the place-based practices of various actors, I examine how the party/state manifests itself as a political authority and how the contours of the 'good citizen' are defined through Islamic morality and gendered virtue. Drawing on the place-making practices of actors involved in the daily life of Kayaşehir, I demonstrate how residents engage with, reinterpret, and, at times, resist the political ideals of the AKP's project. My analysis has shown that these ideals are not only articulated by the state but are also lived, negotiated, and materialised in everyday spaces.

## The Fusion of Party and State

In Chapter 5, I examined how party politics became woven into everyday life through the place-based practices of party activists, the Muhammedi Cemaat, and residents. At the core of the AKP's post-secular vision is the conflation of the party with the state – a formation I refer to as party/state. This vision draws on modernist ideals to portray the party as the sole political force capable of defending the Turkish state against domestic and foreign threats, advancing national progress, and ensuring material development. Its post-secular character stems from the party's self-presentation as an accessible and emotionally responsive alternative to the bureaucratic distance of the secular state and from the Muhammedi Cemaat's framing of the AKP as a sacred protector of Islam within and beyond Turkey.

This party/state vision emerges through two key place-based sets of practices. First, local party activists work to render the party a familiar and caring presence by cultivating close ties with residents – what they themselves describe as 'being a good neighbour'. Through regular home visits, emotional support during crises, and participation in milestone events, the party inserts itself into residents' private lives both materially and symbolically. Second, Muhammedi Cemaat members reinforce the party's image as guardian of both Islam and the Turkish nation during weekly religious gatherings,

often hosted in TOKİ flats and basement meeting rooms. In these intimate settings, political ideals are disseminated from within the spaces of everyday domestic life.

These place-based practices translate the AKP's political authority into the lived reality of the party/state. In everyday conversations – whether on digital platforms such as WhatsApp or during casual encounters – I observed that many residents ascribed an almost sacred status to the party's vision and policies. This supra-political framing placed the AKP above critique and positioned any opposition as inherently harmful to both the nation and Islam, which had become tightly bound together in local political common sense. Although some residents openly challenged these ideals in group chats, the prevailing assumption that 'politics' is inherently divisive and detrimental was so embedded in daily life that even the dissenting voices often shared the same understanding of politics.

In sum, the AKP's post-secular vision of the party/state is sustained through the ceaseless place-based work of party activists and Muhammedi Cemaat members and through residents' everyday socialisation within these politically saturated environments. Over time, these practices have rendered the party's vision not merely persuasive but commonsensical – what hegemonic projects describe as the ethico-political unity.

Chapters 5 and 6 shift the focus of place-based practices from statehood to citizenship, highlighting the citizenship ideals of the AKP's political project. Chapter 5 focuses on the establishment of religious morality as the central conduct of citizens, while Chapter 6 reveals the gendered dimensions of this citizenship by examining the circulation of conservative Islamic gender norms.

## The Embedding of Religious Morality in Everyday Conduct

In Chapter 5, I examined the place-based practices of two religious authorities – the Diyanet and the Muhammedi Cemaat – in cultivating religious morality among Kayaşehir's residents. The post-secular character of this process is evident: piety, rather than secularism, has become central to the definition of citizenship in Turkey. The Diyanet's religious teachings and sermons, grounded in scholastic sources, adopt a modernist approach to religiosity that rejects certain long-standing traditional practices maintained merely for their assumed religious value. This effort to define the 'correct' practice of religion through reference to scholarly debate encapsulates a distinctly modernist understanding of faith. Unlike in the pre-AKP era, the Diyanet now presents itself as an umbrella organisation that encompasses all *cemaat*s. Although both the Muhammedi Cemaat and the Diyanet share the aim of cultivating religious morality as a key element of citizenship, they pursue this objective through different place-based strategies – differences that become particularly visible in their spatial practices.

The Muhammedi Cemaat sermons and educational activities often unfold within TOKİ apartment blocks, where spatial arrangements closely follow the Sunnah. These settings model the ideal Muslim household while the narratives circulating within them – centred on discipline and fear as essential to piety – instil the norms and affects necessary for cultivating moral selves.

By contrast, the Diyanet's sermons and educational programmes take place in semi-public venues such as mosques and conference halls. Their pragmatic spatial design, equipped with amenities for comfort, creates an open and hopeful atmosphere in which moral cultivation appears effortless. This ambiance, reinforced by the more horizontal relations between *hoca*s and participants, renders the figure of the good Muslim tangible in everyday practice.

Despite their differing spatial organisations, aesthetic styles, affective atmospheres, and pedagogical approaches, both the Cemaat and the Diyanet reinforce religious morality as the defining conduct of citizenship. In this sense, their distinct place-based practices complement one another in shaping the pious citizen. Yet, their relationship is not always harmonious. A place-making lens reveals how implicit tensions surface within this shared moral project. For instance, by establishing informal religious schools for children in TOKİ flats and basements – spaces beyond the Diyanet's oversight – the Muhammedi Cemaat challenges the Diyanet's authority through its own place-based practices.

Regardless of tensions between them, the Muhammedi Cemaat and the Diyanet's combined efforts demonstrate how piety is shaped by both collaborative and contested relationships between religious authorities – making it a defining feature of citizenship in the New Turkey. At the same time, their practices position Kayaşehir as a site of Islamic living – an urban landscape that accommodates multiple ways of inhabiting Islam. In this way, the 'pious generation' long championed by Erdoğan is shaped in tandem with the physical and moral formation of the neighbourhood.

## Conservative Islamic Gender Norms

Chapter 6 examined how conservative Islamic gender norms are formed, negotiated, and contested through the place-making practices of pious female residents in Kayaşehir. In many ways, this chapter extends the argument of Chapter 5: in a setting where religious morality is woven into everyday life, I shifted the focus to how gender norms take shape. Under the AKP governments, and for the first time in republican history, gender norms have been defined beyond secular ideals.

I approached women's varied performances of pious womanhood – shaped by their differing interpretations of Islam – as struggles over the AKP's

hegemonic vision of gender. In other words, the act of looking beyond the AKP's delineation of gender norms and turning to diverse Islamic sources to seek the 'truth' about gender reflects a claim to post-secular modernity. I argued that gender relations shaped by alternative understandings of pious womanhood reflect a post-secular modernity that contrasts with the AKP's conservative Islamic gender policies.

I traced three key moments in women's placed-based practices that reveal how conservative Islamic gender norms are embodied, negotiated, and contested: the formation of the first residents' network, the participation of 'non-conforming' women, and the emergence of alternative pious women's networks.

The first residents' network formed alongside the establishment of the estate as early women residents organised Quran meetings that reinforced pious sociality and consolidated neighbourly bonds. Over time, this group came to embody the 'established' female community in Kayaşehir, setting the standard for proper conduct – such as condemning cohabitation between unrelated men and women – which was policed through gossip and the communal gaze. 'Non-conforming' women, including divorced or single mothers, engaged with these networks more cautiously. Seeking belonging, they partially adopted dominant norms while subtly pushing their boundaries, striving to be seen as pious without abandoning their own ways of life. The creation of alternative pious women's networks signalled a clearer challenge to the AKP's conservative gender order. Women who found prevailing norms restrictive established new spaces – most notably Kayaşehir's women-only social media platform – where alternative forms of pious femininity could flourish. These spaces, inclusive of divorced and single mothers, enabled women to define piety on their own terms.

Taken together, these practices show that Kayaşehir hosts multiple articulations of pious womanhood – from the AKP's hegemonic vision of conservative gender roles to alternative forms that are rooted in piety yet distinct from

state prescriptions. While conservative gender norms remain central to the AKP's model of ideal citizenship, everyday place-making reveals subtle but meaningful challenges to this vision. It is within this gendered dimension of post-secular modernity that the clearest departures from the AKP's project emerge – even if not articulated through progressive feminist terms. In short, although post-secular modernity has been shaped by the AKP, pious women's everyday practices demonstrate how its ideals are reworked in ways that may unsettle the broader political project.

# Contributions to the Literature

This dissertation contributes to the literature on modernity and citizenship by presenting post-secular modernity as part of the hegemonic project of the AKP governments and by using place-making as a key lens to observe how this project comes into being in everyday spaces. In doing so, it brings together insights from geography, sociology, and anthropology to better understand how broader political projects are lived, negotiated, and contested in daily experiences. Below, I detail the dissertation's conceptual and empirical contributions.

## On Modernity

In the literature on modernity, there is a clear ontological divide: some approaches view modernity from a critical standpoint, while others adopt an alternative perspective. Critical approaches often emphasise the capitalist character of modernity as a political project and examine its multilayered exploitative effects on populations, reflected in growing inequalities based on race, gender, and class, among others (Asad, 2003; Mitchell, 2000). Alternative approaches, on the other hand, argue that Western modernity is only one form among many, and that alternative forms can be empowering and liberating (Eisenstadt, 2000; Deeb, 2006; Bracke, 2008).

My conceptualisation of post-secular modernity draws on both perspectives. I approach it as a particular political project of a government that promises its citizens material development without requiring them to adopt its secular connotations. In this sense, my approach selectively combines the two perspectives to examine post-secular modernity in a way that moves beyond framing it solely through increasing inequalities or as a promise of liberation from the colonial imposition of secularism. It focuses on the affordances of post-secular modernity, including the contestations it enables. As such, my approach brings a new perspective to both debates by highlighting its generative aspects – what it means to embody, live, and experience this political ideal in everyday life.

In the critical approach, modernity has consistently been understood as a capitalist project that seeks to subsume what lies outside it, exploiting it while preserving its otherness at the discursive level to assert Western capitalist modernity's distinctiveness (Asad, 2003; Mitchell, 2000). The key insight I draw from this scholarship is its view of modernity not as a natural trajectory for nations but as a political project of particular groups, whether colonial powers or Third World emancipation movements. While I agree with this scholarship on the capitalist character of modernity projects, I contend that this is not their only generative aspect. Alongside the capitalist organisation of labour relations, universal aesthetics of urban spaces, and aspirations rooted in consumption, modernity projects also promise national development and citizen welfare. Without disregarding the exploitative features of capitalism, I shift the lens towards these latter aspects. This move stems from the empirical context of the post-secular modernity project: for the first time in Turkish history, citizens were able to live in modern social housing, access health care regardless of their employment status, and attend public schools (including universities) free of charge (Yörük, 2022). Crucially, these material developments are reflected in the sustained support of the government by large segments of the population. In short, post-secular modernity not only strengthened Turkey's integration into capitalist markets but also brought substantive improvements in living standards for the lower classes.

In alternative approaches, modernity is not viewed as an exclusively Western property to be emulated but as a widespread process that can unfold anywhere through contextual articulations (Eisenstadt, 2000). Post-secular strands of the modernity debate show how various religious currents can inform modernity, thereby opening spaces where secular and religious groups can learn from each other (Habermas, 2006; Rosati & Stoeckl, 2016; Molendijk et al., 2010; Beaumont et al., 2020). What is particularly important for my conceptualisation is the possibility of articulating modernity beyond its secular forms. In other words, the ontological possibility of modernity beyond its secular connotations is the central insight I took from these debates. However, I argue that the normative dimension emphasised in much of this theoretical work emerges from contexts where religiosity appeals only to a minority of the population. By examining a post-secular form of modernity in Turkey, I introduce a religious-majority context into these debates. My contribution lies in showing how post-secular modernity – as a political project – contests the earlier secular modernity of the Kemalist era and defines new ways of being both a citizen and a state. Importantly, exploring this process in a neighbourhood where the majority of residents live pious lives allows us to see how people can be modern without adhering to secular connotations. These differences, which sometimes lead to negotiation and at other times to contestation, demonstrate that post-secular modernity, even when initiated by a government, can take on diverse forms on the ground.

A crucial finding that contributes to theoretical debates on post-secular modernity concerns the assumption of mutual understanding between secular and religiously modern ways of life. Contrary to theoretical expectations, post-secular forms of modernity in Turkey offer little room for mutual understanding for secular and religiously modern groups. As a political project, post-secular modernity was founded as a reaction to secular modernity; as an effort to displace it. In this sense, rather than fostering commonalities that might allow reflexive engagement, the two political ideals have become almost irreconcilable in each other's eyes. Instead of reflexive relations, what I found were 'in-between' ways of living that neither align with the AKP's hegemonic project

nor the secularist one. Each chapter demonstrates cases where residents live piously but do not fully conform to the AKP's political agenda. For example, Diyanet kindergartens had to include secular classes to attract residents, and many pious women live unorthodox Islamic lives that contradict the AKP's vision of gender. I understand these cases not simply as counterexamples but as dialectical implications of the secular and post-secular modernity projects. Put simply, many citizens may now live piously without abandoning modern life – a condition enabled by the AKP's project – but, in doing so, they also develop new ways of being citizens distinct from the AKP's vision.

I argue that this dialectical outcome becomes particularly visible through the lens of place-making. Whether one lives according to one political ideal or another, ways of living – through the organisation of space and the inscription of norms, morals, behaviours, and affects in relation to political ideals – are reflected in the making of places. However, this translation of political ideals into material environments does not always occur smoothly. In other words, people often discover that what they embrace at the level of ideals does not always fully align with the conditions of their everyday lives. I identify such moments as instances where different ideals collide with the practical conditions of living, leading to new configurations. In this sense, place-based practices bring us closer to the 'actually existing' realities of political ideals (Fraser, 1990), which rarely conform neatly to the imaginaries of a hegemonic project. For instance, the AKP's conservative Islamic gender norms – though dominant in Kayaşehir – do not always conform to the everyday practical realities of pious women. These norms are implicitly and explicitly challenged through women's place-based practices, which enact alternative forms of piety that diverge from the state-prescribed ideal.

## On State and Citizenship

My discussion of state and citizenship under a post-secular modernity project draws on two strands of scholarship: anthropological debates on

statehood (Sharma & Gupta, 2006; Koster & Van Leynseele, 2018; Lazar 2013) and substantive citizenship (Holston & Appadurai, 1999; De Koning et al., 2015). Following these literatures, I focused on the emotional, affective, and performative aspects of making both the state and the citizen in my research. Conceptually, I contribute to these debates by using place-making to uncover how these relational and processual aspects are realised in everyday life. Empirically, I examine actors and cases that have not been central to these debates and show how their practices convey particular understandings of the state and citizenship.

In the statehood literature, intermediary actors who connect the state and citizens – and thereby enable particular ideas of the state – have long been discussed (Lazar, 2013; Jaffe, 2015; Bryant, 2021). This scholarship often highlights the informal role of actors, ranging from criminal organizations to trade unions, in mediating relations between citizens and the state and shaping specific understandings of statehood. I consider party activists and religious institutions to be key intermediary actors in establishing the AKP as a political authority and shaping the party/state as a distinct understanding of statehood. These are not merely additional intermediaries within the existing literature but central figures in the AKP's post-secular modernity project who emerged alongside the party's rise to power. In other words, the AKP's political project does not rely solely on pre-existing intermediaries but has also created new ones.

The place-making practices of these actors illuminate how they render the AKP and the state as a unified entity, woven into residents' everyday lives. This effort to make the state both physically and symbolically proximate becomes particularly visible when analysed through the lens of place-making. I argue that the state acquires a dual character: it appears mundane and reachable, like a next-door neighbour, while simultaneously taking on a sacred dimension through its ambition to protect Islam within and beyond Turkey. Both of these associations – profane and sacred – are made possible by the sustained efforts of intermediary actors to engage with residents in their daily lives

and to remind them that the state is always in their service. Through these place-based practices, the party becomes inscribed as the state in residents' everyday lives – what I refer to as the party/state.

The literature on substantive citizenship often highlights the moral and performative dimensions of belonging, showing that citizenship entails more than formal membership (Holston & Appadurai, 1999; Staeheli et al., 2012; Askins, 2016; Kallio et al., 2020). Following these ordinary, emotional, and lived approaches to citizenship, I examined how two key features of the AKP's citizenship agenda – religious morality and conservative gender norms – are formed in and through place. I argue that, within the AKP's political project, the 'good citizen' is defined first and foremost as a pious individual who adopts conservative gender norms. Religious education and neighbourly relations in the neighbourhood constitute two crucial domains through which this good citizen is enacted as an extension of the AKP's political project.

In the domain of religious education, various institutions inscribe piety as the central conduct of citizenship through place-based practices, including the organisation of space, narratives of religious morality, and interactions between teachers and students. These practices not only help residents embody religious morality but also expose tensions around the authority of different religious institutions. By enabling a wide range of educational opportunities and religious sermons, these institutions transform the neighbourhood into a site where religiosity can be embodied through everyday spaces. Residents are not merely exposed to these spaces of religious learning; they actively and voluntarily participate in them. In this sense, the efforts of religious institutions to make these spaces attractive and engaging become crucial to cultivating piety as a modern practice – one grounded in the 'correct' knowledge of religion that, in their view, enables residents to move beyond merely traditional forms of religious observance.

In the domain of neighbourly relations, female residents create networks and friendships with their neighbours, delineating boundaries between

what are considered appropriate and inappropriate gender norms in the neighbourhood. I approach appropriate norms here as conservative Islamic gender norms and argue that place-based practices are crucial for their formation and circulation. At the same time, women's place-based practices also reveal contestations over conservative gender norms and the emergence of alternative models. In other words, while place-based practices contribute to establishing the ideal gendered citizen envisioned within the AKP's project, they simultaneously generate alternatives that are not fully aligned with it. This demonstrates that post-secular modernity, even when introduced as part of a governmental political project, may take different forms on the ground – some of which may stand in contrast to the government's gender policies.

Together, these place-based practices show that both particular ideas of the state and specific understandings of the good citizen are formed in tandem with the construction of the neighbourhood, encompassing both the built environment and everyday social relations. The new understanding of the state – as the party/state – does not end with the construction of apartment blocks, public declarations, or party programmes; it is continuously produced through place-based practices in daily life, reflecting both what Gramsci describes as the unfinished nature of hegemonic projects and his emphasis on the importance of everyday, mundane spaces where political ideals are enacted (Gramsci, 2000). Similarly, the state's citizenship agenda is not only expressed through new rights and policies concerning formal membership but is enacted in and through the neighbourhood's places. These place-based practices by party activists, religious institutions, and residents crystallise the state and the good citizen in embodied and affective forms that circulate, and at times are contested, in the neighbourhood.

My approach to place-making, understood as a relational and processual dynamic, contributes to debates on statehood and citizenship by emphasising not only how actors create places in which broader political ideals are reflected but also how new ideas and practices of statehood and citizenship emerge through everyday life in those places. In this sense, Kayaşehir

becomes a site through which new forms of statehood and citizenship are made possible.

## Contribution to Turkish Scholarly Debates

Although the AKP is one of the most widely researched topics in Turkish academia, the approaches remain largely limited in their scope. The dominant framework for studying the AKP is rooted in critical perspectives, particularly those emphasising social class. These studies have produced extensive knowledge on both persisting and newly emerging social inequalities shaped by the AKP's welfare, gender, ethnic, and urban policies, among others. Workers, women and LGBTQ+ groups, Kurdish people and non-Muslim citizens, and *gecekondu* residents have been the groups most affected by AKP policies and have been well represented in academic discussions – unlike in mass media, where only pro-government outlets can survive. In this authoritarian and undemocratic climate, academia has become one of the strongest remaining critical platforms.

Despite the richness of these critical approaches, studies that directly address the question of the AKP's long-standing public support remain limited. In other words, what makes the AKP appealing to a broad segment of citizens has been less thoroughly explored. When the AKP's support is problematised, it is often framed through clientelist relationships in which supporters are depicted as pursuing economic or symbolic benefits (Özet, 2019; Doğan, 2015). Likewise, the party's expanding religious agenda is frequently interpreted instrumentally – as a strategy to produce docile citizens and advance its neoliberal economic policies (Balaban, 2025; Çavdar, 2016; Kaya, 2015; Öztürk, 2016). Moreover, religious groups are often portrayed as homogeneous, even though, in practice, they exhibit significant internal divisions.

In this scholarly landscape – where the AKP's durability in power is often explained through class interests, where religion is treated primarily as instrumental, and where religious groups are portrayed as a single, unified entity – my research shifts the lens towards understanding what it means for residents to identify with AKP politics and religious currents without reducing their engagement to a pragmatic strategy for upward mobility. I show that support for the AKP is also tied to aspirations for a modern, pious life in which Islamic nationalism can flourish. In other words, I take residents' interactions with the party seriously rather than interpreting them solely through material or symbolic gain. I also take their engagements with religion seriously, revealing how some female residents challenge the AKP's conservative emphasis on religion through their unorthodox pious practices.

I argue that the effort to understand what makes the party appealing to the masses – analogous to Gramsci's analysis of how the Italian fascist regime mobilised the working classes – constitutes a crucial dimension of contemporary politics (Gramsci, 2000). In this sense, Gramsci's attention to the mundane domains of everyday life, where the 'common sense' of political ideas takes shape, provides a valuable framework for understanding why, despite deepening social inequalities, democratic erosion, and the coercive measures of the AKP government, many citizens continue to perceive the party as a legitimate authority.

## Implications for Future Research

The conceptual lens I employ to understand Turkey's political transformation from secular to post-secular modernity can also illuminate other contemporary political shifts taking place elsewhere. From socialist to post-socialist systems, or from left-progressive to right-illiberal governments, political landscapes have been transforming at different paces and through distinct trajectories on all continents. While socialist regimes in Eastern Europe faded long ago, the implications of this transformation have continued to shape

citizens' lives over time (see Burawoy & Verdery, 1999). The recent rise of right-wing, nativist, and illiberal governments – from Bolsonaro in Brazil to Trump in the United States – also carries the weight of long-standing resentments among citizens towards their states. What emerges, then, are radical shifts from one political pole to another, whose origins cannot be confined to the present and whose effects are likely to endure even after regimes change.

The conceptual lens of place-making developed in this dissertation offers an effective tool for making such political transformations legible through its focus on the processual and relational dimensions of everyday life. This perspective highlights how political change is reflected, negotiated, and contested in the spaces people inhabit. Put simply, the ways we create and inhabit places – both materially and affectively – are extensions of political ideas formed through long-term processes and in relation to others beyond ourselves. In this sense, examining place-making allows us to grasp the broader contours of political transformation.

Place-making is particularly useful in contexts where people are either unwilling or unable to articulate what it means for them to live under a given political regime. This includes authoritarian settings and societies marked by traumatic pasts, where places themselves often speak more eloquently than their inhabitants. For instance, Israel under Netanyahu and Russia under Putin are examples of authoritarian political landscapes in which we can grasp what it means to be a citizen by observing and participating in the everyday spaces of ordinary life. The ways people shape material environments and imbue them with meaning constitute place-making practices that reveal the common sense of political regimes: through the making and inhabiting of these places, certain norms, behaviours, and moral orientations become taken for granted. Examining these practices not only helps us understand how broader political projects are lived but also makes visible the latent alternatives embedded in the mundane details of everyday life.