

Name of the student:	Nino Makhauri
Title of the thesis:	Towards More Participatory Governance? A Comparative Analysis of Georgia and Ukraine
Reviewer:	Tomáš Weiss

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

The thesis submitted by Nino Makhauri addresses the issue of public participation in post-Soviet countries, its evaluation and constraints. The thesis is embedded in an extensive literature review on the topic of public participation. The concept itself is discussed sufficiently and defined with the help of existing academic analyses. More importantly, the thesis shows clearly the prevailing ideas about public participation in the post-Soviet space and argues well why it is worth studying Georgia and Ukraine, the two cases analysed, in more detail. As such, the research objective is transparent and well argued for.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

Methodology is the weakest part of the thesis. It is there, rather well explained and described. But it stops short of being fully persuasive. The argument for a comparative case study makes sense, for example, but the comparison is not fully exploited. While there are some attempts to put the Ukrainian and Georgian cases next to each other and discuss them together, the result is rather two separate examples of a post-Soviet country introducing with better or worse results some aspects of public participation that have some factors in common. Similarly, the link between the theory and the empirics is discussed but is not fully developed. The individual factors are identified on the basis of relevant literature and make sense. But there is little discussion on how these factors can or cannot be studied in the real-world messy practice. A more thorough operationalisation would help the reader understand better the value and the limits of the presented analysis. Sources are treated in an appropriate manner. Automated plagiarism checks have been conducted and the resulting matches are the result of the fact that this is the second version of the thesis with the original version failing to pass the last academic year in Leiden.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

Despite the reservations mentioned above, the thesis arrives to interesting conclusions that enrich the existing debate on public participation in the post-Soviet space. The research objective is, in this respect, achieved, albeit partially. The conclusions link well with the data and derive from it. Higher persuasiveness of the conclusions is hampered by the relatively broad and open research question (which probably cannot be fully answered) and the lacking operationalisation.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The language is appropriate, sometimes maybe a bit ponderous. Academic standards are observed. The division of the list of references into separate types of sources complicates orientation – a simple primary/secondary sources distinction would have been sufficient. The author tends to use numbered lists often but these lists appear in the text without any clear visual separation, which complicates orientation in the text.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

The strong point of the thesis is its connection to the literature and the topic, which is not only academically relevant, but also practically important. The weak points are the broad research question and the lacking operationalisation of the research concepts.

During the oral defence, the following questions could be discussed:

- How do you evaluate the role of the EU in fostering public participation in Georgia and Ukraine? To what extent can public participation be supported by external actors?
- What does your research say about a distinct character of post-Soviet societies and their relation to public participation? Is there such a distinct character?

Grade (A-F):	C
Date:	Signature:
27/08/2021	