This thesis explores the urban landscapes of the two major cities in post-Soviet Kazakhstan: Astana and Almaty. Analysis of their urban architecture, organization of public spaces and toponymy provides information about the identity and the identification of the country in the twenty-first century. The main sources for this research are the texts produced by geographers, graphic representations (mainly photographs and postcards) and several textbooks on the “History of Kazakhstan”.

The primary research questions include how historical and political change (mainly the transition from Soviet to national in 1990s) influenced the urban landscape, the role of the urban landscape in construction of national (self-) identification, and what symbolizes "Kazakhness".

From the temporal point of view, the study attempts a diachronic comparison of Soviet and post-Soviet Kazakhstan. From the spatial point of view, the analysis of the urban landscape in two cities located in different parts of the country with different history and geography helps to see different, heterogeneous territories which are part of one country. Astana is the capital of Kazakhstan, a city with the sharpest contrasts between “past” and “contemporary” style of architecture and construction. During the Soviet period, it was a peripheral agrarian city; in 1997 it became the capital of the entire country. Almaty - Kazakhstan's largest city, former capital, a place with a unique landscape and microclimate (it is wedged in a mountain valley), has retained a special status as one of the main cultural and business centers of Central Asia.