

**Title:** Where Did Everyone Go? Social Movement Demobilization in Ukraine and Russia

### **Abstract**

Mass mobilizations are uplifting events. They can transform atomized individuals into active protesters who temporarily put aside their differences for the sake of a greater cause. However, we still know little about how, why, and when such mobilizations unravel, or what if any lasting consequences they have for civil society once they end. In this dissertation, I investigate the aftermath of mass movements by examining their demobilization periods and effects on civil society. This demobilization process involves a decline in both protest activities organized by social movement organizations (SMOs) and number of activists, combined with a reduction in the movement's societal resonance.

I first contend that SMOs are not necessarily leading the demobilization process; instead, demobilization usually occurs when rank-and-file protesters begin to leave the streets. Second, I argue that while SMO leaders cannot prevent demobilization from occurring, their choices determine which form(s) demobilization will take – radicalization, institutionalization, abeyance, and/or disappearance. These forms, in turn, have different implications for post-mobilization civil society. While disappearance and radicalization tend to yield negative outcomes, especially in terms of the movement's societal acceptance, institutionalization and abeyance may enable ongoing cooperation among former protestors and leave more resources for future mobilizations. However, as demobilization is an evolving process, the timing and interaction of these choices may also result in disunity, polarization, and marginalization. These arguments contradict the conventional wisdom that social movements are intrinsically productive, with each episode a learning process that helps to consolidate civil society.

I develop these arguments through a comparison of the demobilization processes of two post-Soviet social movements: the successful Ukrainian Orange Revolution (2004); and the Russian movement "For Fair Elections" (2011-12), which failed to meet its goals. In both countries, demobilization had unintended and problematic consequences for civil society, which helps to explain the subsequent evolution of the Euromaidan in Ukraine and the anticorruption movement in Russia. My approach combines process-tracing with protest event analysis, for which I constructed an original database of over 3500 protest events based on Russian and Ukrainian newspapers and wire reports.