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Nomadic and domestic:

dwelling on the edge of Ulaanbaatar,

Mongolia

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Geography

by

Joel Eric Miller

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Nomadic and domestic:

dwelling on the edge of Ulaanbaatar,

Mongolia

by

Joel Eric Miller

Doctor of Philosophy in Geography

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Michael Curry, Chair

The *ger* districts, so named for the traditional felt tents that are still prevalent in the domestic landscape of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, retain a connection to their nomadic heritage. But those who dwell here are now removed from the pastoral production systems of the countryside as they struggle to establish a place for themselves at the edge of the city. This dissertation first locates the place of the ger districts between the countryside and the city, then delves into how land within the ger districts is subdivided for settlement. With the nature of access to land established, the investigation turns to ethnographic methods of participant-observation and semi-structured interviews combined with architecturally-based research into the visual and material culture of the built environment. The aim is to better understand residents' quotidian practices of constructing and inhabiting peri-urban neighborhoods of informal housing. Conclusions find that ger district residents are finding their own way forward through strategies that transform domesticity into economic and social participation. The transmutation of mobility, from a nomadic past toward an urban future provides a unique model for academic understanding of self-built housing areas as well as the more generalizable practices and policies concerning settlements in an increasingly urbanized world.

This dissertation of Joel Eric Miller is approved.

John Agnew

Lisa Kim Davis

Nancy Levine

Michael R. Curry, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

Dedicated to the families of the ger districts who sheltered an itinerant witness.

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INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Dwelling on the edge of the ger districts; open pasture still crested the hills of Ulaanbaatar in 2000.

The *ger* districts,[1] so named for the traditional felt tents that are still prevalent in the domestic landscape of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, retain a connection to their nomadic heritage. But those who dwell here are now removed from the pastoral production systems of the countryside as they struggle to establish a place for themselves at the edge of the city. In entering into a study of the ger districts, what I had hoped to discover was a form of household inhabitation different from that which is generally experienced throughout much of the rest of our sedentarized world; one that recognized a value in vernacular architecture because the construction had been carried out by the residents themselves with their particular attunement to contemporary Mongolian life. What I found is that the overall trend was not intentionally toward a form of architecture that did something different—not an architecture that was domestic yet retentive of some culturally distinct form of the nomadic history of the denizens who had settled after lives of peripatetic herding. Rather, nomadism was a mode of production, encompassed in a pastoral lifestyle that many of these families wished to relegate to their past. What is occurring in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar is only the latest stage in an overall scheme of modernization at the cost of no longer relevant traits of pastoral nomadism. The continuance of certain aspects of nomadism, from the homes they occupy, to their diets, to the symbolic forms they continue to extol, were past practicalities with attendant values they wished to retain toward their future, but a future that also demanded new and different practicalities. The intent of most homebuilders has been to align their homes with a set of urban norms—Malkki's (1992) 'sedentarist metaphysics,' as addressed

[1] 'Ger districts' (гэр хорооллол, *ger xoroolol* or *ger khoroolol*) has become the most common label to the informal, unplanned areas of Ulaanbaatar, however the moniker is itself unofficial. Each neighborhood or area has a name reified in common parlance by such usages as stops and terminal destinations listed on buses, and street signage on ger district paths and dirt roads. Retroactively introduced in recent years, these form a nascent address system—though at-home mail-delivery, a primary use of address systems elsewhere, is not used here, nor is the system tied to any wider scheme of navigation (cf. Curry 2005). But the ger district names used in common parlance have no political standing. Rather, the city is divided into quantified subsections, a legacy of Soviet planning during Mongolia's Socialist era. Ger districts were never recognized distinctly, but the system has expanded to integrate these areas as they coalesce. While the Russian term '*microraion*' has been phased out—used haltingly by an older generation—the autochthonous term is *xoroo (*alternately *khoroo,* from хороо), which are further subdivided into *heseg* (хэсэг). While each of Ulaanbaatar's nine named boroughs (дүүрэг or *düüreg*) generally retain static boundaries (only a few major revisions have occurred since the Soviet plan was implemented), their xoroo subdivisions are more malleable. Xoroo are numbered, but can be areally expanded, subdivided, or have their boundaries manipulated to politically balance swelling populations or territorial annexations. In this text, xoroo and other numbered areas retain their Mongolian form, thus III-r/IV-r ('IIIrd/IVth') in core microdistricts and 25-r ('25th') in ger districts, where '-r' is the ordinal indicator derived from дугаар, *dugaar*.

in the literature review of chapter 1, below—that lacks an account of their own nomadic histories and experiences. But the reality is that such histories and experiences creep into every aspect of the lives of ger district residents, including the construction of their own houses. The symbolic cultural forms attached to the former mode of production carry forward as relics caught by inertia.

The built environment of the ger districts is not solely the functional spaces of residential living, however. The ger districts are also a record of the lives lived by inhabitants, layered with meanings from divergent sources. That such a large proportion of the ger districts retain the active use of ger might, on the one hand, be testament to the continuing influence of at least the idea of a pastoral nomadic system of production in the recent lives of those who have since moved away from the steppe. On the other hand, another form of inertia at work is that of poverty. Because of the unique role of pastoral nomadism in Mongolia, the rural migration into Ulaanbaatar occurs with many distinctions from other places in the world that are also rapidly urbanizing,[2] but the familiar trend of poverty remains as a principal propellant of sedentarization. Of the push factors, loss of livestock, whether due to lack of vegetation on overgrazed land, desertification, harsh weather events, or ineptitude on the part of the herding family, such loss remains an impoverishing condition difficult for a family to climb out from even with the move to the city. The ger takes on many symbolic functions, in addition to its practical reality: as a reminder of the family's status as refugees from the countryside, yet also as an image of their Mongolian pastoral nomadic heritage. So the story of nomads inhabiting the urban periphery is a complicated tale of people emblemizing nomadism, while at the same time

[2] Three models that drive the sedentarization process have been proposed (Salzman and Sadala 1980, 11): the first, "drought and decline," results from climactic change that decimates livestock herds, forcing nomads into other forms of economic productivity, namely finding jobs elsewhere, such as the current phenomenon of rural-to-urban migration; the second, "defeat and degradation," can be either at the hands of other nomadic tribes, which are closed systems that produce winners who take over resources and losers who must turn to alternative resources for their livelihoods, or can be at the hands of sedentarist governments in programs for forced settlement; and the third, "failure and fall-away," where on an individual basis an individual can no longer subsist and must seek other options. A fourth notion, "succeed and surpass" occurs when nomads have been so successful that the weight of prosperity either slows them to a standstill, anchoring them to a place, or they use their wealth to negotiate settlement; Shahrani's (2002) study of the Wakhan corridor comes to mind as an example, where the khan of the Kyrgyz used his wealth to resettle his kinsman in Turkey after the Soviet invasion of their native corner of Afghanistan. But with any of these models, Salzman suggests that should conditions change, these nomads would readily recross the threshold from settlement back into renomadization: "nomads on the waiting list" (Salzman and Sadala 1980, 13).

attempting to escape their past as they hope to chart a viable future that indulges the very modernization that pastoral nomadism has only moderately resisted. The goal of living in a modern, functioning home is a powerful dream, but also one that many of the residents of the ger districts have so far fallen short of attaining. Even ger occupancy, while retaining a resemblance to the ger of the countryside, has become transformed by settlement in the urban context. While the external shell remains, the internal usage is transformed by such modernizing forces as continuous access to electricity: whereas televisions or compact washing machines only require electric supply while in use (so were capable conveniences for steppe nomads with even intermittent access to diesel generators, car batteries, or wind-powered turbines), refrigerators are often a new, urban phenomenon for many rural-to-urban migrants. Refrigerators and deep freezers demand a continuous and even supply of power (at least in summer months) to be of any use, so have proliferated in ger only with the onset of settlement. With refrigeration capacity, access to a wider array of food items suddenly becomes possible. Yet in purposeful complement, access to fresh meat and dairy products then diminishes with the departure from active pastoral nomadic systems of production as a family geographically removes itself to the city. Settling, even while continuing to inhabit a ger, provides access to the services of urban life but also rapidly transforms daily existence; a transformation that will go beyond the material environment in which the settled nomads reside, but one that does nonetheless leave its signature on their material environment.

Ulaanbaatar's ger districts, when they are considered at all in public policy or academic study, are too often treated as monolithic places, where social, environmental, economic, and infrastructural issues apply collectively. Such issues dominate the research and policy agendas because they portray the condition of the ger districts as dire, because these become issues applied to the largest plurality of ger district residents, or because, cynically, these are the issues that most impact the policy-making and academic elites who do not live in the ger districts, but might be affected by how issues of the ger districts spill into the core urban areas, where they get noticed. If one of my goals has been to learn from the unique ways people in the ger districts build and use their material environment, another aim is to return this knowledge that others in the ger districts might also find their way forward. The lessons offered by those who are succeeding here are an

important contribution that too often is overlooked as the ger districts become problematized according to their general (and yet very real) needs. The overarching trend is important to planning for the future capacity of serving the needs of ger district residents, and of continuing to integrate the ger districts into the overall scheme of Ulaanbaatar as a single, functioning city. But it is also important to recognize that the diversity of aspirations of the inhabitants span a spectrum of needs, many of which require more appropriate political, legal, economic, social, health, educational and other mechanisms with direct impact on lives in the ger districts.

The dissertation begins with a review of literature upon which to build this research. Chapter 1 is devoted to assembling and assessing previous research in four main fields of study at the intersections of architecture, geography, anthropology, and Central Asian studies. The chapter proceeds from general concepts of mobility to the more specific mobilities enacted by nomads (including the settlement of nomads) to issues of nomadism and settlement particular to Mongolia. The use of vernacular architecture in the processes of settlement and inhabitation aligns with each of these fields.

Transitioning from previous research, section I moves on to provide context on the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar through two investigations of the land. Section I encompasses two chapters. The first part, chapter 2 works theoretically through Mongol divisions of the landscape between the countryside and the city, providing an opportunity to define how nomads operate in the countryside, what factors propel rural-to-urban migration, how the city has functioned historically, and the role of the ger districts. This section argues for considering the ger districts as a new kind of place opened within the Mongolian landscape, between rural and urban. With chapter 3, practical divisions of the landscape are then explored. Using the emerging history of land law, this section tracks how residents of the ger districts are able to gain rights over the land they occupy using the laws. Mongolian land law as it pertains to the urban landscape of Ulaanbaatar has been intended to provide proscriptive guidance to those constructing the ger districts. But the manifestation of these written ideals into built form has been the result of minor forms of negotiation and resistance on the part of those residents of the ger districts and even some dwellers of the urban core areas who advantage

themselves of the law. Paralleling the evolving legal system, residents find extralegal strategies to gain access to ger district land.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present field research and together comprise section II. Each chapter uses a different set of methods, to different effect, and to obtain different results. Viewed in unison, these three chapters portray different aspects of the ger districts through different contingents of ger district residents.

Chapter 4 uses specific information collected from one hundred fourteen families dwelling in both fixed dwellings and in ger, spread across four distinct areas of the Ulaanbaatar ger districts. The information was collected through a survey form: I discuss the reason for using such a data-collection method and how the survey was implemented. But I also address the failings of this method, in terms of both its implementation toward my research situation as well as the inherent, structural issues in the survey format and the results it provides. With shortcomings addressed, this chapter does determine a role for the collected data, as they might work in concert with information gathered according to the methods of each of the two subsequent chapters. With the broadest brush stroke, the survey paints the ger districts in a somber palette of migrants from the countryside who have largely excluded themselves from participation in the larger networks of contemporary Mongolia—both the rural and the urban. They inhabit the ger districts as a place between these two other, more traditionally recognized realms, but have mostly struggled in defining their role and purpose. Their identity, as well as that of the place they inhabit, continues to be defined by elites of the urban core.

Turning away from the broader statistical image of the ger districts, chapter 5 gains from methodological insights from the survey to engage fourteen families in interviews, unstructured and with greater depth. Here too, I identify the benefits and drawbacks to the interview method and the results it produces. In acknowledging that the cohort of interviewees is biased toward those whom I selected primarily because I was attracted to the complex domestic structures they had built or were in the process of building, however, I present this chapter as a counterpoint to the previous chapter's baseline. The interviewees on whom I focus this chapter are the exceptional cases, those for whom the place of the ger districts is not just a resource for them to construct their current identities, but where they believe they are fabricating their constituent

participation in Ulaanbaatar's future. In relaying specific details from the cases of three families, I approach the optimistic potential of the ger districts for a small, but important segment of denizens who hope to continue to prosper here.

Having explored the baseline of ger district inhabitation through the survey, and some positive peaks among the interviewees, chapter 6 returns to the struggle of a single family. This family does have the potential to thrive in the ger districts, and may be on the verge of doing so, but in character they seem to adhere more closely to the many families encountered during the survey than they do to the few encountered through interviewing. When I first met the family, they were still living in a ger, but they slowly accumulated the resources necessary to complete a house. In the time I spent revisiting the family, they manage to complete the house, by which they can draw a number of social, cultural, and economic benefits. Their way forward remains uncertain, as many of the social and environmental ills that outsiders have used to define the ger districts as a whole remain burdens for this family. However, following cues similar to those offered by the exceptional families, this family is finding its own ways to thrive in the ger districts, offering some hope to the majority of ger district settlers who must still find opportunities to join the social and economic advantages of living in and around the edges of Ulaanbaatar.

I conclude with a summation of ideas learned, particularly on ger district residents who follow through the land law to acquire land usage rights to build not just their homes, but their place in the urban economy and society. Furthermore, I offer directions for further research on how such families, as well as the ger districts as a whole, play a role in the momentous shifts of contemporary Mongolia. In presenting the different registers in which the inhabitants operate, I hope to not only chisel fissures into the ger districts' monolithic presence, but to also find a new image around which we might address its role in contemporary Mongolia.

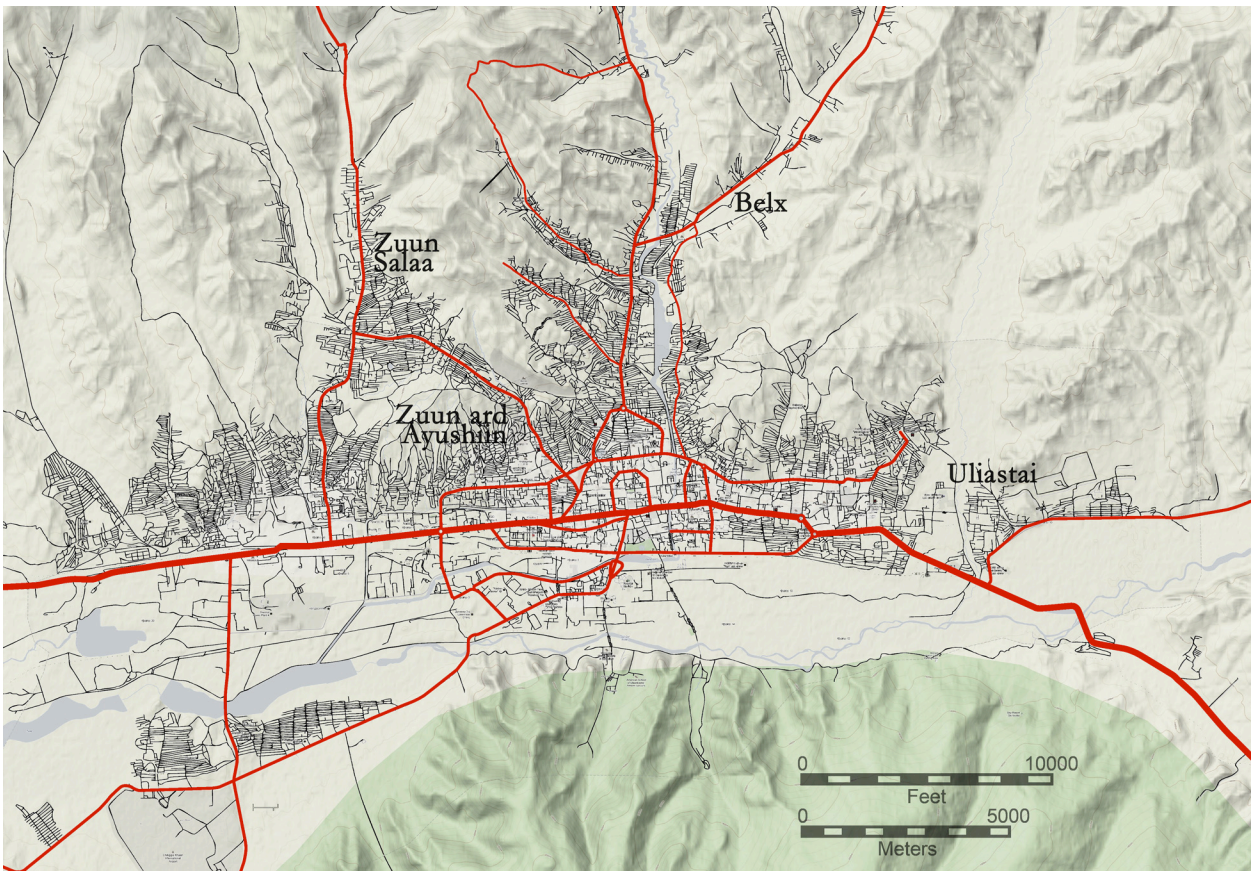


Figure 2: Overall plan of Ulaanbaatar. Primary and secondary roads are in red; capillary tracks seine apartment blocks and ger districts. Labels locate four neighborhoods where fieldwork was conducted. Source: Matt Zebrowski, cartographer, UCLA Department of Geography.

Chapter 1: Foundations for research on settlement and housing

In reviewing literature relevant to the overarching topics and arguments of this dissertation, this chapter engages four disciplinary areas: geographers have provided discourse on mobility studies, anthropologists have studied the settlement of nomads, Central and Inner Asia regionalists have assembled an historiography of Mongolia, and architectural historians have built an approach to the vernacular housing situation in settlements akin to Ulaanbaatar's ger districts. I have structured this chapter as a set of categorical relationships moving from the general to the particular. From the broadest theoretical discussion of mobility, the category becomes refined by the particular case of nomads, then in turn narrowed to focus further on the predicament transforming Mongolia's nomads into ger district residents. This parallel trend, from mobility to its loss is the story of the settlement of nomads. So too is it an opening for examining dwelling in place through vernacular architecture. Architecture in this context integrates with geography through the composition of the built landscape, but so too does it depend on the ethnography of the people who build their houses and dwell within. These disciplines and subjects necessarily entwine, forming the foundation upon which I build this dissertation.

From mobility to nomads

A paradigm of 'new mobilities' has sought to recharacterize processes of cultural, political, and economic developments in places, especially those transformed by modernization (Sheller and Urry 2006b, Merriman et al. 2008). Having mobility, lacking it, denying it of others, images of mobility, imagining mobility, the mobility of resources, the mobility of capital, mobility as capital, mobility and immobility in bodies, things, places—all of these and more themes come into play according to the new mobilities paradigm. Curiously, the literature on new mobilities in geography takes little account of any previously existing mobilities—the ones that are being transformed and updated according to the new paradigm. (Traditional mobility, as used in this discussion toward Mongolia, is the pastoral nomadism that provides impetus for movement across the landscape, whereas new mobilities will become relevant toward the settled, former nomads, who look to education and economic participation as the mobilizing forces of their future.) The grounding of theoretical models occurs in a variety of cases brought to bear by Cresswell (2001; 2006), Urry (2000), and Larsen, Urry,

and Axhausen (2006), but none engage with any form of mobility that predates modernity (however one sets the clock for modernism's onset). Cresswell submits briefly to the term 'nomad' (1997), but for a chapter that exercises a theoretical stance prior to engaged and grounded case studies.

Cresswell circumscribes his subject with a definition for mobility that takes in a broad array of forms of movement (2006, 2). Movements are subdivided only in a 'coding' process that makes certain mobilities nomadic and others tourism and still others micro-geographical (though see Larsen et al. 2006, for dissimilarities between Cresswell and their own expansive objectives in the mobilities turn). However, mobility is not simply movement. The defining characteristics should also encapsulate (or possibly reside solely in) an *ability* to move. In the eliding of potentials—and the denial of such abilities—Cresswell assumes the conscious observation of mobility as a socially constructed act. Mobility transcends places (Cresswell 2006, 3), which have their own structures, hierarchies, and qualities. On Cresswell's terms, mobility would contribute to the discourse of place, not space. One moves from place to place (after Cresswell's mentor, Yi-fu Tuan, per his (1975) "Place: an experiential perspective"), rather than within space. It is here that one might catch on to Cresswell's agenda (in Merriman et al. 2008), which is a re-exertion of place not only over space, but also over such iterations of place as placelessness (Relph 1976) or non-places (Augé 1995), which came about through the movements between places. If Cresswell is not himself using new mobilities to frame the concurrent development in cultural geography, the one regarding landscapes—both in the naïve sense of Jackson (1980; 1984; 1994), and the scholarly attuned versions of Cosgrove (1984; 1985; with Daniels 1988), D. Mitchell (Cosgrove 1996), Olwig (2002) and other participants in their dialectic argument (the subsequent chapter will discuss in more detail their bearing on Mongolian landscapes)—some of his more wily fellow travelers have attempted to co-opt the mobility argument toward their own, non-representational agendas (Merriman et al. 2008). Only Bender (with Winer 2001) receives homage for her role in mobilizing landscape through the recognition of power and place (ibid.).

Larsen, Urry, and Axhausen (2006) propose a model of multiple mobilities present in contemporary quotidian interactions. While on the one hand the model explicates numerous potentials for evaluating the world according to their mobility paradigm, they may on the other hand have expanded the mobility term

beyond reasonable usefulness. Inclusivity avoids the critique of favoritism toward a particular set of networks and interactions, but risks the opposite critique, of diluting a theory and thus rendering it a synonym for the very broad condition of modernity. But mobility is hardly a modern phenomenon.[1] In the broad terms of the authors, mobility has always been part of our interactions in and with the world. What devices the authors might highlight in order to better prosecute their case might be the *shifts* of mobility, rather than mobility's mere presence. The volume does manage to present mobility as a method, as a categorical system of movement, and as a concept. In proposing mobility as a methodology, the authors have associated their approach with that of a distanciated objectivity unlike, for example, the political ramifications and inherent power discrepancies Cresswell brings to the use of mobility as an idea. The methodology of mobility is actually not defined. Rather, existing methodologies are redefined according to a mobility paradigm so that two forms of ethnography are considered for their mobile qualities (ibid., 6): one in which both the researcher and the subject move along a similar trajectory (perhaps the ethnography of a researcher living among nomads, the homeless, or business travelers), and the other an ethnography where the researcher moves about among a more fixed population of research subjects (suggesting nearly any traditional ethnography of a researcher entering, moving about, and then leaving the field to write their findings from multiple positions—inside and outside the research subjects).[2] The categorical division of mobility, for which much of the authors' fourth chapter (ibid., 47-62) is given to explicating, is the most problematic attempt by Larsen et al. to define the field of mobility studies, as it is also the most expansive redefinition of the subject. Whereas the mobilities methodology merely expands on a few existing methodologies (namely, ethnographic ones), their

[1] "Everyone's on the move, and has been for centuries: dwelling-in-travel" is the response of Clifford (1997, 2), for whom the concern is not mobility *per se*, but the placing of ethnography. After Geertz (1973) recognized that anthropologists study *in* village—poignantly addressed by Kervanto Nevanlinna (1996)—Clifford expands, "and increasingly they don't study in villages either, but rather in hospitals, labs, urban neighborhoods, tourist hotels, the Getty Center" (1997, 21). This dissertation takes shape in the latter three sites, with Ulaanbaatar's urban neighborhoods being the 'field', hotels being intermediation between yet proximate to the 'field', and the Getty Research Institute as a physical retreat from, but by no means discontinuous with the 'field'.

[2] While the previous footnote holds here as well, a more significant variation on this second form of a mobility methodology is again offered in Clifford in a quip that, "'cultures' do not stand still for their portraits" (1986, 10). As such, we might recalibrate the mobility methodology to recognize cultural morphology as an inherent mobility of ethnographic research.

mobilities taxonomy recasts all movement as part of some grand mobile project. Traditional mobilities—including all of nomadism, migration, travel, tourism, refugee studies, homelessness—form only the first division of physical travel. Physical movement is then reserved for trade, goods, and things (possibly breeching materialism's paradigmatic reordering of the world). Imaginative travel (in books, films, photographs and other forms of media), virtual travel (through the internet and something that is more interactive than fixed media but not quite as embodied as physical travel), and communicative travel (mail, email, telephone) each receive their own categorizations, though seem to really be varying shades of the same mediated experiences. Riffing on 'space-time compression' (ibid., 81), the mobilities of technology here indeed contract geographic space in practical use, but so too do they conversely allow for jumping to vaster geographic scales, thus expanding spatially in the same instant that space is also contracting. Conceptually, the ideas verge most closely to an engaged understanding of mobility in everyday (meta-) practice. Notions of 'network capital,' or its re-expression as 'mobility capital,' are conceptual yet suggestive of a strategy (possibly even a methodology) for evaluating observed conditions. Mobility capital, when spent effectively, begets greater mobility capital as its return. The example given (ibid., 94) relates the generic case of a student reared in a system of moving to university will redouble his investment with a more mobile lifestyle and post-university career. Even more simply, the worker with enough mobility capital to buy transport (a car) will have greater access to better paying jobs that in turn will provide greater social mobility. Raymond Williams' similar and appropriate phrase "the logic of a new nomad capitalism," though attempting to denounce an all-consuming, globalized superstructure, has found popular following among social scientists who, rather than tearing down the macro-economic players, wish to achieve similar ends by enabling a mobilized base in the micro-economy (Williams 1989, 124; in Noyes 2004, 160; also referenced by Urry 2000, 128; and Cresswell 2006, 34). Mobility capital is a convertible currency capable of being traded through its effective spending with more traditional currencies of wealth and power.

The use of nomadism, as a conceptual stance and as an appealing label, though not necessarily as a studied practice, divides Cresswell (1997) from the depths of anthropologic literature concerned with ethnographies of nomads, concerns over sedentarization processes, and understanding of pastoral nomadism as a system.

What the term does do is tie geographic theory to earlier theoretical positions of mobility from beyond geography, particularly the seminal nomadology of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). Deleuze and Guattari theorize systems operative in the world, and do so with an agenda in mind; a politics of power underlies the probing of potential alternative systems to existing 'State' structures. A romanticized nomadism—and theoretically clean form that lacks the gritty and banal details of actual nomadism—is used within their theoretical framework to outline the logic of being nomadic, operating in nomadic space (or the space generated by nomads operating in their own particular ways), and the implications of being outside Statedom. Is there really a nomadic organization of space (Johnson 1978)? or a nomadic set of cultural values (Campi 1996)? or are these outside perceptions imposed as a post-hoc fallacy; because nomads behave this way, this must be nomadic behavior? Unrealistic visions of the nomad are rampant, and in danger of eclipsing actual issues of nomadism.

Yet simply using an unrealistic version of nomadism does not make theories irrelevant, even to actual nomads. And simply being theoretical about nomadism—using the conceptual nomad to advance a political agenda—does not necessarily leave political conclusions irrelevant to actual and practicable nomadism. Real nomads may get in the way of theory, but theory need not always get in the way of real nomads, whose issues could benefit from the theoretical attention. Deleuze and Guattari find some grounding in various ethnographic inspirations. Their citation for Milovanoff (1978)[3] leads to an issue of *Les Nouvelles Littéraires* soaked in nostalgic images of shepherds leading their flocks, in which Pierre Bonte declares a Marxist perspective, 'à la conception du nomade comme dissident de ces Etats' (1978, 20). Cresswell, antagonized by McDowell and Rycroft (1996), returns to this theme of mobility as a form of political and cultural dissidence.

[3] "Even the elements of [the nomad's] dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them," write Deleuze and Guattari of nomadic domiciles. Milovanoff had described how "the Larbaâ nomads, on the border of the Algerian Sahara, use the word *trigâ*, which generally means road or way, to designate the woven straps serving to reinforce the cords holding the tent to the stakes.…In nomad thought, the dwelling is tied not to a territory but rather to an itinerary. Refusing to take possession of the land they cross, the nomads construct an environment out of wool and goat hair, one that leaves no mark at the temporary site it occupies.…Thus wool, a soft material, gives nomad life its unity.…Nomads pause at the representation of their journeys, not at a figuration of the space they cross. They leave space to space.…Woolly polymorphism" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 380; translation of Milovanoff retains their ellipses, ibid. n49). Though the authors extend their metaphor into nomadic space, "the consistency of a fuzzy aggregate" (ibid.) accurately imagines not the smoothness of the steppe, but the self-built city of dingy white felt.

But none do so in the protracted form of the anthropologists investigating nomadism (discussed below). If Deleuze and Guattari are inspired by ethnography, they miss their most appropriate chance at grounding their theory; the anthropologist (and former soldier) Ekvall arrives at ideas that parallel those of "1227: Treatise on nomadology—the war machine," but does so after years of fieldwork and missioning among Tibetan nomadic horsemen on the plains of Amdo, Tibet. Two of Ekvall's articles (1961; 1964) on martial training and force mobilization articulate the relevance of concepts later put forth by Deleuze and Guattari toward establishing alternative systems of power and authority.

Theory may roam 'smooth' spaces, but nomads do not. If Deleuze and Guattari reduce to smoothness the spaces outside of State authority, it is because their theory's resolving power breaks down and vision becomes blurry at the scale of nomads moving about a landscape that is highly articulated to the knowledgeable or trained user. While even Humphrey had once argued toward the smooth, vectoring 'path' of the nomad (2001, 62), she has since recanted in deference to observations of local knowledge that ties trajectories to very specific needs for grazing livestock. The browse of goats and graze of sheep and cattle is foremost to the pastoral nomad reading landscape as a bio-topography, where hills have sunnier and shadier sides with differing distributions of grasses, specific plants thrive in the cooler or more moist streambeds that cross the terrain; each different plant is necessary in the complex survival calculus of feeding animals specific plants at specific times of the year so as to build fat storage or not deplete pasturage that will be relied upon in a subsequent season. Ethnography can root out the knowledge, habits, or instincts ingrained within the habits and training of the nomad. For example, where the landscape reveals to the untrained eye only a vast and sandy terrain, the ethnographer observing the pastoral nomad negotiate an evening's campsite witnesses a trained expert select a specific position for the tents, for the animals, for the campfire, and other positioned spaces of temporary settlement. The nomad reads sand colors for beneficial qualities (reflection or absorption of heat, for example) to animals and camp activities, and the ethnographer reads a human-to-landscape relationship with particularities unavailable to the theorist (Banning and Köhler-Rollefson 1992, 186). In the contest with reality, theory is not being prosecuted without reason. While Deleuze and Guattari use theory to establish their model for a politics of resistance, such fundamental misreadings of nomads (or

of landscapes) have real, political consequences. Continuing the discussion of such minutiae as sand coloration, in Inner Mongolia such distinctions are diminutive but telling details implicit of the political control of territory. Williams discusses the "contrasting use of the Chinese term 'huang' (waste)…because the Chinese phoneme 'huang' can mean both 'yellow' and 'desert.' From [a Chinese] perspective, local rangelands are both aesthetically unpleasing and agriculturally useless," whereas Mongolian herdsmen regard white sand as infertile, but discern the full potential of yellow sand for sustaining pasturage, and thus a territory with which they may reliably maintain a foothold against encroaching Chinese agriculturalists (1996a, 678).

The struggle of actual nomadism has been recognized by Noyes (2004), even as he argues for an approach that might be otherwise read for its support of new mobilities. While arguing the theoretical implications of Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology, Noyes is himself versed in the tribulations and tragedies the nomadic Herero of Namibia were subjected to under German rule of Southwest Africa. The case presented by Noyes (2000) verges on an important differentiation between old mobilities (Herero as nomads) and new (the modernizing project of German colonialism) but does not present the case under the rubric of 'new mobilities'.

Similarly, editors Alexander, Buchli, and Humphrey (2007) position contributor Baldayeva's study against the backdrop of urban anthropology, after Low's (1999) edited volume consolidated this subfield. Two works cited by the editors, Stephenson's (2001) *Street children of Moscow* and Lemon's (2000) look at gypsies in that same metropolis (*Between two fires*), are posed as the responses of people who resist weakly. They live in the post-Socialist shadow of the Soviet Union, where living space has crumpled beneath the weight of "collapsing urban infrastructure" (Alexander et al. 2007, 12). Gypsy-living and homelessness might be seen here as strategies, but Baldayeva's chapter has the potential to propose a new conundrum, that of different mobilities in splintered friction with each other, all within the wound of the 'collapsing' post-Soviet city. With editor Humphrey's extensive work among Mongolian nomads and her experience in a farming collective in Buryatia, both before and after the Soviet implosion (Humphrey 1983; 1998), it is surprising that Baldayeva's work is not cast according to the various modalities of mobility it could potentially highlight. The

question that could arise among the Buryat Mongols, who valorize their own nomadic traditions in response to the reforging of post-Soviet identity: 'what does homelessness look like amid a nomadic society?' The moment and place are saturated with potential for amplification among dissonant waves of movement. But no crescendo comes to pass. Rather, a deadening effect of differing mobilities cancel each other, leaving in their wake a set of urbanized former nomads with neither the skill set to succeed in the urban economy nor the access to traditional, pastoral means of production.[4] Urbanization here is taken as a precondition and no place is left for an older form of mobility to creep in from the countryside.

Mongolia's pastoralists are moving from the countryside to the city. How they transmute traditional mobility into newer formats (economic and educational gains are their goals[5]) has implications not only for the former pastoralists but also for the urban citizenry. Retaining momentum as they switch between modes of mobility makes for an elegant poetics, but the actual transition has been more difficult for the former nomads to realize.

[4] Baldayeva expressly notes that of her research subjects—not a sampling, but the entirety of the known homeless population of Ulan Ude—only four of 203 people belonged to the Buryat ethnicity, one was of a different minority, while the 'remaining' 198 others were of the dominant Russian ethnicity (Alexander et al. 2007, 158). The negative correlation between the homeless population and a traditionally nomadic populace might be interpretable as an inability for disparate mobilities to operate in the same cultural space. (Ulaanbaatar, with its predicament of street children and homeless alcoholics, might prove another laboratory for testing this idea, as nearly all came from families who were nomadic within the past century). What Baldayeva does contribute in her research is a different kind of division in homelessness. Less a condition of the homeless themselves than in the consideration given to them by other urban dwellers is the perceptual and imaginative distinction between *bichi* and *bomzhi* homelessness. The *bichi*, a Russian acronym referring to the romanticized freedom of the intellectual elite, is contrasted with the other acronym, *bomzhi*, of the dispossessed (see also pages 186-7 of the subsequent chapter, same volume, by Humphrey on *New subjects and situated interdependence after privatisation in Ulan-Ude*).

[5] Less aspirational forms of mobility have entraped some migrants to the city. Homelessness, as in the Ulan Ude case above, has been an issue in Ulaanbaatar as well. The homeless gather on Ulaanbaatar's streets in summer months, but under the streets in the steam tunnels during the brutal winter nights. In the early post-Socialist years, the city was infamous for the growing ranks of children living in the tunnels.

Nomadic immobility

Nomadism has advanced as a research subject only since the later twentieth century with the definition set by Dyson-Hudson (1972) becoming a generally accepted framework.[6] The literature on nomadism that most concerns this project is the work that places nomads on the brink of—or plunged into—settlement. Settlement and the sedentarization process have been addressed in various timeframes, from the deep past (Ucko, Tringham, and Dimbleby 1972; Rosen 1988; 1992; 1993; 2003; in various arguments with Finkelstein and Perevolotsky 1990; Cribb 1991; Barnard and Wendrich 2008), to the historical (Herodotus [440 BCE] 1987; Salzman and Sadala 1980; Barfield 1989) to the contemporary (per below). Perspectives also differ, depending on the various fields involved in the study of the sedentarization process, from anthropologic observers (Shahrani 2002, who witnessed sedentarization of Kyrgyz in eastern Turkey as an unintentional byproduct of massive geopolitical fracturing of Afghanistan's borders—the nation's own delineation a product of the Great Game/Tournament of Shadows—following Soviet and Chinese revolutions) to policy makers or NGO advocates who, despite good intentions, become passive proponents in government-sponsored development schemes (Dinero 1994; is singled out below, though many more projects reify settlement schemes in the name of poverty alleviation).

The various conceptions of sedentarization are important to understanding the processes at work in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar. Sedentarists and sedentarized nomads are not necessarily the same thing, but both represent potential outcomes of settlement processes. One area that may require further theorizing, however, is whether a continuum exists that places sedentarized-nomads between sedentarists and nomads. The continuum suggested here is different from those of Cribb (1991, 17-20), where 'pure' nomadism or sedentarism simply terminate the unrealized polar extremes, or Khazanov (1994, 19-25), where the six gradations include not only half steps (nomadic, semi-nomadic, semi-sedentary, sedentary) but also special cases (*yaylaçilik* alpine pasturing or occasional distant pasture husbandry). Both Cribb's and Khazanov's

[6] The later twentieth century development of the field being described as a third stage of nomadic historiography in Khazanov (1994, 9-10), after late nineteenth century miscues, addressed below, and early twentieth century innovations in ethnography.

models are useful in comparative analysis across cultural groups. But what needs consideration is within a single nomadic society how, over time, a portion or the whole of a group will sedentarize or renomadize. As Noyes (2000) points out, though nomads may physically come to rest, and ostensibly sedentarize for a period, they may continue to be regarded as nomads. To be answered by such consideration is, at what point when a nomadic group settles are they no longer termed nomadic (either by outside characterization or by self-identification)? With the interdependence of terms from the strict definition, nomadic and pastoralist, can a sedentary group that neither moves nor herds remain characterized as nomads?

The sedentarization of mobile peoples has been an objective in a number of development projects for reasons that range from the well-intended, such as the bringing health or education facilities to people long neglected such social services, to less-than-beneficent, such as exerting political or economic control (Weissleder 1978; Swidler 1980; Salzman and Sadala 1980; Prussin 1996; Chatty 1996; Chatty and Colchester 2002). The goals of development have rarely been kind to the viability of nomadism, but tracing out the roots of the conflict brings us back again into the early genealogy of the social sciences, with geography playing its role at various moments. Through a process of scientism, early social thinkers applied as literal in the social sciences those conceptual metaphors from physical sciences, typically biological, regardless of the accuracy of the ideas even prior to their stray from 'hard' science. With an idea that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, Ernst Haekel correlated interspecies proto-forms but incorrectly formulated biologic laws. Had it remained within biology, this error alone was reparable, but it became compounded with the metaphoric transference of recapitulation theory into the sociological realm by theorists such as Herbert Spencer. Similarly, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's evolutionary theories of the early eighteenth century were, through the filter of Moritz Wagner's biogeographical speciation, transferred to human geographic dispersions by the anthropogeographic notions of Friedrich Ratzel. The combination of environmental determinism and notions of linear human progress found its embrace in such authorities as the German political establishment, where it led directly to detrimental effects for such nomads as those of Germany's colonial holdings in Southwest Africa (Noyes 2000). A third and popular lineage leading from the biological to the social began with Darwin's evolutionary speciation, but was somewhat misapplied by Lewis Henry Morgan in his

ethnographic kinship studies. Morgan's work, read closely and closely misread by Karl Marx for socio-economic history, was recapitulated by Engels in *The origin of the family, private property and the state* ([1884] 1942). Though these mythologies of societal origin have since been on the wane in most academic thinking, the ideas continue to metastasize to other portions of the academic body less capable of mounting evidentiary challenges. The real danger is when, as in the case of German colonialism in Southwest Africa or, apropos to the Inner Asian focus here, Stalinist schemes for Soviet Asia (Scott 1998) and Mongolia (Sokolewicz 1982), these ideas find their way into the development agendas of State sponsors of territorialism.

While Dinero (1994) argues for a more effective enticement for nomads to settle, his position exposes a tension between improving the circumstances of inevitable settlement processes of nomads and preserving mobility in some form, which leads to the further instability of predicting whether the preserved mobility might be modernized or anachronous, improved or degraded. The mentality of international development projects already assumes a benefit in sedentarism that must merely be maximized in order to provide (convince?) nomads—Bedouin in the case explored by Dinero—of greater economic potential in the modernizing, sedentary mode of living and working. Development is a term that dually belies a positivist belief in historical progress, as well as a reliance on late nineteenth century notions of development as a singular history of humanity's progress. That progress is still popularly influenced by Marx's misguided quasi-history (per above), from hunter-gatherer society, through pastoral nomadism, toward early agrarianism, middle feudalism, and later industrialism. As such, Dinero, though portraying his study as a championing of the welfare of nomadic peoples, submits to Cresswell's (2002, 15-18) 'nomadic metaphysics'—Cresswell's term itself being a weak inversion of Liisa Malkki's (1992) seminal 'sedentarist metaphysics,' an ascribing of identity in rootedness. Such a thesis runs counter to recognizing (or establishing, as the field of development seeks an active role) a viability for nomadism.

A counter trend since the 1990s has been policy-oriented work such as the Dana Declaration, which links nomadic people to their habitats in an effort to conserve both lifestyles and the environment in a totalizing picture of ecology. One proponent has been Dawn Chatty, whose research among similar populations of Bedouin takes a tack opposite to that of Dinero. She links the State sedentarization process not only to the

destruction of a culture or operative mode for people, but to a larger network of environmental degradation. The moral or political danger in aligning people and their environment, of course, is not dissimilar to the dilemma of environmental determinism; it equates 'natives' with nature, robbing nomads of agency even as the Dana Declaration advocates for political recognition of nomadic rights. Furthermore, the revisionist view that nomads coexist in 'natural balance' with their environment is one that would be unrecognizable to nomadic peoples themselves. Rather, it is a position that plays better with donor far removed from the environments where nomads are forced to operate.

While most literature addresses the processes of sedentarization, one notable moment, particular to Mongolia in the immediate shadow cast by the collapse of its Socialist system, looks at the reverse case. Bruun (1996) tracks what seems like a retrograde epiphenomenon of renomadization among previously sedentarized urban Mongolians. In his view, the settlers of the ger districts would still be considered nomads—that the traditional forms of mobility have not been lost to them. Other conjectures of renomadization have been put forth; Glatzer (1982) submits the question: if so many nomads are settling, why are there still nomads? to which he answers, they *must* be renomadizing. While the sentiment behind these studies is appreciated—that traditional production methods can not only continue to be relevant, but even advantageous in contemporary Mongolia—it does not necessarily hold up to the larger trending of modern migration patterns. Doebler's (1994) research on rural-to-urban migration occurred just as Socialism was falling away and Mongolia began a social, economic and political realignment in the wake of Soviet collapse. Statistically, urban migration increased in the post-Soviet period of the early 1990s and continued to accelerate through the *zud* years of 2000-2003, and again in 2009-2010.[7] But the qualitative examples Bruun cites nicely document a minor countercurrent of the tumultuous reorganization of production possibilities for some herders during the general economic reformation after the Soviet collapse in Mongolia that bridges the

[7] Zud refers to harsh winter conditions: usually some combination of snowfall that is especially heavy, begins earlier than usual, or continues into the spring longer than usual. Any of these factors reduce animals' consumption rates as they seek grasses through the snow. Another contributing factor of zud is lower precipitation levels in summer, adversely affecting the growth of grass. Without the accumulation of grasses into the autumn, animals may not fatten sufficiently. Their calorie reserves will deplete at a time when their energy demand is greatest.

usual rural-urban divide. The rural-urban division in Mongolia is somewhat alleviated by two factors. Because the in-migration from the countryside is so recent, it has created an urban population with strong ties to rural regions where kin remain in the field. A national identity also operates, preserving the sense of Mongolianness as autochthonous to pastoral settings, driving many city dwellers to take their summer recreation returning to the countryside to re-ingest rural products in their diet, to maintain nomadic traditions in an urban setting (a point that could use better exemplification when discussing the intricacies of Mongolians and their living spaces), and to visit relatives who remain in the pastoral economy and setting (Bruun 1996, 93). Though Socialist development schemes saw pastoralism as counter to achieving modernity for the state, Bruun notes that an ideological shift has preserved pastoralism as crucial to both the future economy and to the reconstituted national identity (ibid., 99). In the greater division of labor between urban and rural Mongolians, those who remain in (or return to) a pastoral herding economy symbolically fulfill one commitment to national identity for even their city-dwelling compatriots.

Moving beyond an Inner Asian frontier

Mongolia's portrayal in much of the literature is not simply based on what Mongolia is but also on what it is not: it is not China. Mongolia is not only not China, it is portrayed with geopolitical boundaries in mind as an anti-China positioned across a northern frontier from the civilized Chinese state. The contrast of Mongolia's operative system, nomadism, with the sedentarism across the Inner Asian frontier belies a 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki 1992) on the part of Mongolia's primary researchers. In a struggle of center-versus-edge, even to those who specialize in its study, Mongolia is perennially an edge.[8] The historical interaction is presented at the scale of vast nations operating across the whole Inner Asian landscape. An historiography of these ideas would begin with Lattimore (1940) and quickly pass over to Barfield (1989), but an earlier genealogy (outlined by Gaubatz 1996, whose thesis depends on frontierism) would trace back to

[8] The position of Mongolia in regards to funding agencies—as reifying of a State's view of geopolitical boundaries as exists in academia—vacillates between East Asia (meaning China, South Korea, and Japan) and Eurasia (as understood to incorporate anything from Eastern European to Russo-centric post-Soviet states to the broad post-Socialist sphere of influence that might categorize Mongolia with such places as the Caucuses or Afghanistan). The mobility of cartographic territoriality shifts according to state-sponsored purposes (Ludden 2003).

Frederick Jackson Turner (1920) in his 1893 reconsideration of American manifest destiny in light of the then recently 'closed' frontier. Inner Asia's frontier operates mostly by an 'outer frontier strategy' that positions the nomadic hordes as both potent and potential: potent as invaders who would wreak havoc upon China's borderlands; but ever potential, as they gain more from threat and the treaties that threat brings than they do from actual raiding. As such, they are able to negotiate favorable trade compacts (via military detente) with the centralized state of the Chinese emperor. By this hypothesis comes about the sub-hypothesis, that strong centralized states on one side of the membrane will produce a mirrored effect; a strong China will mimic itself in a temporarily, highly organized system of governance among the nomadic tribes—a 'shadow empire.' The inverse of this condition—weakness on the primary side of the frontier—produces decentralization and, for the nomads, a condition of 'inner frontier strategy' whereby tribes clash with each other and vie for domination of minor markets, trade routes, and targets to raid (Barfield 1989; for the operative process of 'secondary-state formation,' see Price 1978).

Since Lattimore's (1940) *Inner Asian Frontiers of China*, the reference point was set for other titles to follow: (Barfield 1989) *The perilous frontier: nomadic empires and China*; (Jagchid and Symons 1989) *Peace, war, and trade along the Great Wall: nomadic-Chinese interaction through two millennia*; (Gaubatz 1996) *Beyond the Great Wall: urban form and transformation on the Chinese frontiers*; and even a title offered by an insider (Bulag 2002) *The Mongols at China's edge: history and the politics of national unity*. Frontierism seems to have turned ironic in the last mentioned title—Bulag's previous work (1998) disassembled the nation-state amalgam with the reality that China's northern border could not do anything but bilaterally bleed with Mongolian identity—but there remains a last outpost of the earnestly projected image of Mongolia-as-last-outpost; travel literature promoting the wide-open grasslands and timeless culture receives its due in contemporary tourism studies (Tavares and Brosseau 2006; Buckley et al. 2008).

Absorbing the compelling imagery of a Great Wall has become part of the game for dividing Mongolia from China in many of these titles. Yet the frontierism is played out further in works that attempt to distinguish a material and spatial divide between Chinese, written of here as wall builders, and Mongolians, who are suspicious of walls that disrupt the open mobility of the steppe (Williams 1996a; Humphrey 2001).

According to the generalities of frontierism, position inside or outside of a wall (or even *the* Wall) takes on the characteristics of 'barrier' for Chinese, but of 'way' or path for the Mongol (Humphrey 2001, 60). Williams (1996a) focuses on walls and enclosures and their perceptions by Chinese and Mongols. But another piece from the same year (Williams 1996b) parlays the perceptual differences into political and environmental situations in order to indict the systematic enclosure of grassland as precipitating environmental destruction and indigenous economic collapse. Williams' arguments don't entirely square with those of Humphrey and Sneath (1996), in whose edited volume some chapters promote enclosure as a strategy for maintaining viable grasslands for pastoralists. While both Williams and Sneath (1998) generally attack the concept of a 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968) by pointing out the failings and abuses of grassland enclosure, they actually bolster a model for the grasslands that Hardin himself only intended as metaphor. Chinese government policy, which took Hardin at his word and attempted to avert the 'tragedy', instead precipitated it by failing to recognize pre-existing divisions of pasturage rights (Sneath 1998; also noted in late Qing era records of Mongolian and Chinese land disputes in Serruys 1977; 1978). Here is where the legitimacy of cultural difference to landscape has its most prescient argument, for without tangible markers and divisions of landscape, Chinese policy and Mongolian practice lack a common language for managing common (though not always commonly accessible) land. Whether with Great Walls or with barbed wires, divisions of land move beyond metaphor to be wielded for ground truth when lives and modes of operation—nomadic and sedentary—are staked on use of this landscape.

The frontierist approach to the Inner Asian landscape, while helpful for modeling certain conditions, is also responsible for a number of misperceptions of nomad-sedentarist interactions. Foremost, it establishes, on either sides of such a line, two opposite and homogenous conditions. For the Chinese-Mongolian frontier, this has often been seen as State versus tribal political organization, agrarian versus pastoral production systems, and literate, historical culture versus ahistorical barbarism. (Scott (2009) parlays 'barbarism' on China's southern limit into a theory that repurposes the frontier into a zone of escapism from centralized political control—a notion that might equally apply to the barbarians of the north). The notion that on one side of the divide there has always been a cohesive state—China—is a simplification that does

not bear out historically. Northern and southern Chinese political and cultural entities have often been in greater opposition to each other than has a unified Chinese entity faced an Inner Asian frontier. In fact, Chinese political entities from warlords to emperors have frequently allied with or purchased the allegiance and services of various tribes in campaigns of expansion into other Chinese-speaking territories, for the suppression of internal rebellions, or against still other foreign powers (Barfield 1989). Momentous internal wars, both civil and feudal, have taken greater tolls than have sporadic tribal incursions. Furthermore, frontiers establish political realities that are not necessarily reflective of overall historical trends. Recognizing the Great Wall or particular cities as China's frontier, as has been done by Gaubatz (1996), denies both contemporary reality (beyond this imagined frontier, Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria have all been actual or *de facto* portions of previous Chinese states, and all are within the current China) and historical shifts of territory (for example, with the reversal of terms across the Inner Asian frontier, much of China spent a century as the province of a much larger Mongolian empire).

Terminologies for Inner Asia are part of the negotiation between symbolic meaning and actual territory. 'Inner' assumes various nuances depending on where in the landscape it is applied. 'Inner Asia' has become an English-language convention that adopts Mongolia as its center, as opposed to other locales suggested by Central Asia (amalgamating distinct Russian entities 'Middle Asia,' Средняя Азия or *Srednaya Azya*, and 'Central Asia,' Центральная Азия or *Tsentralnaya Azya*) or the 'Middle State' (China, as 中國 suggests). Surrounding the Republic of Mongolia, Inner Asia includes two Russian republics—Tuva and Buryatia—proximate to Mongolia and with significant and historic Mongolian populations (though overlooked is the non-contiguous, yet Mongol-populated Republic of Kalmykia), and the Chinese autonomous region of Inner Mongolia which, despite its name, geographically orbits the independent Mongolian state. The Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region is the contentious territory in which, or sometimes around which, the Inner Asian 'frontier' is drawn by differing nationalists, irredentists, and scholars (Bulag 2002a; Burensain 2004; Huhbator 2004). Mongolian terminology for the geographic entity, *Övör-mongol*, delineates land through terminological definition, yet at the same time manages to exploit the inconsistency of definition to exert political meaning. The *'övör'* can be translated either as 'South' or as 'Inner' (South Mongolia/Inner

Mongolia) though neither usage precedes the 1947 absorption of the territory by the Chinese Communist Party (Huhbator 2004). *Övör-mongol* had been crafted to serve as a neutral term that reflected the meaning 'in front of,' as the Mongolian cartographic sensibility stems from the lived landscape in which south-facing is the frontal direction. The landscape here is inherently an embodied spatiality, especially from the domestic perspective as a Mongolian orients his or her dwelling with the entrance facing southward; ger abide by this custom and fixed dwellings attempt to do so whenever possible or not inconvenient. For the Mongol, landscape terminology compasses an entire cosmography that is lost upon Han Chinese neighbors (Evans and Humphrey 2002).

The polarity of a frontierist approach to territory denies the actual situation, which might better be modeled as overlap, dualism, or hybridity. Overlap presents two (or more) distinct entities infringing upon the same place. Duality presents a place that exhibits characteristics of two entities, but does so distinctly. Hybridity presents a singular place, but one that integrates the qualities of each of two (or more) entities. Bulag, whose personal negotiation of culture as a Chinese citizen of Mongol ethnicity from the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, researches culture (or cultures) tied to landscape (or landscapes) in this liminal zone between China and Mongolia (1998; 2002b). Kervanto Nevanlinna (1996, 36) raises the thorny distinction between 'culture' and 'cultures'. But one has to ask, is culture an entity of which one is a member? Does such an entity compare with, clash with, segue with, or bump up against another entity? Or, is culture a singular field upon which its participants have a variety of relationships—either bleed one into the other or clash, creating cultural shear, but remaining within the confines of the field? Julian Thomas poses a similar question of whether we may accurately speak of cultural landscape or cultural landscapes in his response to Humphrey (a mentor to Bulag) regarding the contest for Inner Mongolia (Bender and Winer 2001, 181; Humphrey 2001).

The current issues of nomad-sedentary interaction still play out across vast stretches of the open terrain of the grasslands, and they do involve macro-political fault lines, however the site of these interactions is discreet. One such place where nomadism and sedentarism remain in dynamic tension is the quotidian spaces of peri-urban Ulaanbaatar; within the compounds of people dwelling there and even within the homes they

are currently building (Denel's 1996 title is apropos: *Our war with houses is the fiercest of all*). If, as contemporary geographic arguments contend, the struggle of modernity is mobility replacing sedentary place, a visit is necessary to where the diffuse battle lines might be drawn most taught. And such a visit to the war's front would necessarily take one deep into the home fronts of the ger districts that outflank Ulaanbaatar on all but its southern exposure.[9]

That Mongolians are an urban population as much as a rural one has been a statistical footnote to numerous studies that are explicitly focused on the inhabitants of the steppe—the steppe being the appealing place to study Mongolianness, as it is this landscape that impresses the country into the geographical imagination of places in the world. But little recognition has been given to Mongolia's urban denizens, who were, behind the scenes, responsible for diverting national identity into a rural image; the pastoral nomad standing in not only for the prototypical Mongolian, but the landscape on which the pastoral nomad rides as the place for enacting normative Mongolianness. Only in the past decade has urban Mongolia become recognized as the place behind all power, authority, and decision-making over what occurred in the Mongolian countryside—the countryside being the receiving end of the power dynamic. With the work of authors contributing to Bruun and Narangoa's (2006) *Mongols from country to city*, the urban space of Mongolia finally gained recognition as the primary driver of Mongolia's political, economic, social, and cultural environments. Furthermore, urban Mongolia has also become recognized as the figure behind the mirror that had long reflected the rural landscape as the true heart of the country. As the mirror dissolves, the harsh light has come to expose Ulaanbaatar, against its own wishes or desires, as the place where Mongolia and Mongolians are actually located.

But even this dichotomy, between the rural and the urban, misstates the conditions in a dichotomy not unlike the frontierist approach. For though the urban realm may be the true seat of authority in terms of

[9] Ulaanbaatar's southern edge had long been defined by the Bogd Khaan Uul, a sacred mountain and the dominant topography of the area at the foot of which the entire city sits. Though the Bogd Khaan Uul had been set aside as national park land, encroachment into the valleys that form Ulaanbaatar's southern front has been a result of high-end developers. Rather than the ger districts that have expanded the horseshoe of Ulaanbaatar on all other sides, along the foot of Bogd Khaan Uul, Ulaanbaatar's most expensive real estate is creating the opposite type of enclave, based on expense and exclusivity.

population size, financial clout, and political control, the concentration of each of these terms is diverse. Financial clout and political control are not dispersed evenly throughout the population, nor is the population concentrated within the city. There is a landscape between the urban center and the countryside that plays a unique role in shaping the contemporary city and country. As an internal frontier presses on Ulaanbaatar, understanding how the view of landscape is used and considered in a Mongolian context begins to distinguish urban from rural, and within such a distinction, how the landscape of the ger districts opens up as a zone of contact. It is the use of the landscapes of the ger districts that allows for such a place to open for Mongolians.

Vernacular architecture: nomadic and domestic

The landscape at the edge of the built core of Ulaanbaatar now serves foremost as a place for dwelling. Dwelling, for the peri-urban resident, is an active and continuing process of constructing one's own home and, as explored later, exerting occupancy over a parcel of land that supports the functions of the home. The housing that has arisen around the built core of Ulaanbaatar is a unique vernacular that is particular to the conditions under which these structures have been built, occupied, and continually remade through the adjustments necessary to keep a home current to everyday use.

Before turning to the particulars of the dwellings that have arisen at the periphery of Ulaanbaatar, existing literature on vernacular architecture reveals a historiography of housing forms that can serve both the nomadic heritage of the Mongolian families that are moving to the ger districts as well as the domestic role played by vernacular architecture in the structuring of the occupants. The study of vernacular forms of architecture—particularly the home—has become a minor sub-discipline within architectural history and theory developed mostly in the past few decades since it was popularized by Rudofsky (1964) and the attendant exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Researchers on vernacular environments cluster around a few organizations that range from academic, such as the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments (IASTE), to applied practice, often for conservation purposes, such as the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (see Lowenthal 1985,

387). Primary contributions to the field (Oliver 1969; 1975; 1997; 2003) have tended toward surveys with different schemes of taxonomy, based on such categories as materials, usage, geographic region, landscape phenomenology, climactic demands, or combinations of these criteria. Such encyclopedic work has been buttressed by broad arguments seeking to define the field (Bourdier and AlSayyad 1989), attain general characterizations (Turan 1990), and maintain vernacular's relevance to contemporary conditions (AlSayyad and IASTE; 2001a; 2001b; 2004; and Roy 2004). Much of the research into vernacular housing that deals with social schemes—as opposed to the vast array of studies solely evaluative of architecture from a formalist view—while addressing larger theoretical issues, has tended toward detailed studies that are either regional in scale or directed at a specific housing type and its occupation (e.g. Kervanto Nevanlinna 1996; Varanda 1996; Vellinga 2004). Studies from regions beyond Inner Asia are most relevant when they study housing types that deal with conditions similar to the ger districts. Self-built or informal housing that also contributes toward the (self-built) urban environment has been a common theme through squatter communities, shanty towns, and slums around the world, from Turkish gecekondu settlements to Brazilian favelas (Kowaltowski et al. 1996).

Aside from the token references to the yurt in the more encyclopedic of surveys, the regional approach to vernacular housing has long excluded Mongolia, despite the accumulation of such forms of housing over the past century.[10] But the Central and Inner Asian vernacular housing as a whole offers some parallels worth explicating, as the settlement of nomads has been a common theme for many of the places of the region. Some particular works that should be distinguished here (Asatekin 1989, on Ottoman-style sixteenth and seventeenth century townhouses; Birkalan 1998, on gecekondu; Denel 1996, on modern apartment blocks) investigate built forms from the pan-Turkic region that most closely informs Inner Asian vernacular traditions. While much of the interest in regional vernaculars has been from scholars well outside the culture in question, Turkish architectural historians have shown great interest in Anatolian vernacular construction.

[10] The value of authenticity seems to be tied to autochthony for the building form, material, and technique of its construction when setting the rubric for determining what is vernacular. Authentic housing in Mongolia has meant the ger of the pastoral nomad, to the exclusion of ger used in the semi-settled context of the ger districts, much less the other forms of architecture that have arisen in the ger districts.

Though not necessarily insiders to the traditional environments of Anatolia, modern-trained Turkish researchers maintain proximate connections with the Turkic culture in which such vernacular housing has arisen. With Turkey's recent, rapid, and ongoing modernization, the redefinition of existent material culture according to the discourse of 'tradition' assists in the continuing construction of Turkish identity. Houses are a reflection of complex cultural, political, and economic equations within a society. Whereas large-scale tract developments, government housing programs, and even private single-family home constructions all reflect the complex equations of finance, law, and culture that structure our relationship with the material/built environment, they are primarily indicative of large-scale trends. The self-built gecekondu, with its immediacy to materials and the culture of its builder, operates at the scale (or resolution, when engaged in the optical act of viewing) of the individual, and is thus able to reflect these complex equations of financial, legal, and cultural position within a single dwelling. Each shanty can then synecdochically reflect the trending of the whole. Eldem's (1984) atomization of the Turkish house into disparate rooms separated by sofa spaces launches a line of enquiry into how such rooms are used. The development from nomadic yurt to sedentary house, using the single-room *oda* as basic building block of the Turkish dwelling, as asserted by Küçükerman (1991) and Günay and Birkan (1998), gains some traction with Birkalan's (1998, 74) study of use patterns. The ethnographic evidence points toward usages similar to multi-functional rooms in traditional houses, while more modern house rooms take on prescribed functions. "The transformation from the old house to the new house is not complete in gecekondu houses," as they often sustain some of the previous countryside life, though injected into the newer domestic paradigm of urban living (ibid., 75). Similar uses of space have been tracked even in the municipality-built housing block, or *belediye sitesi*:

> These flats, now referred to as units, are still products of another culture, and people have tended to use them in ways they have been accustomed to. These would always have a guest room kept closed that often constituted about a third of the usable spaces to be opened only when guests came. The family spent most of their time in a small bed room which they would use very much like the 'sofa' of the traditional house.…Since the guest room is more of a status symbol in which the showing off of family heirlooms, pictures of grandparents and uncomfortable furniture, the unifying character became its useless size and discomfort. For the occupants, these buildings represent more of an attempt in forced adjustment into a foreign setting, rather than their willing acceptance. After a few generations, for the children and the grandchildren, these environments become a matter of fact. (Denel 1996, 77; citing Ulusu 1990, 218-224)

The working paradigm for both Denel and Birkalan is the origin of Turkic architecture in the mobile yurt. Such domestic landscapes run mythically through Turkic notions of house development, but the reality is more clouded. Lacking a true archaeology of the Turkish house, the similarities of formal and functional attributes remain tantalizing but circumstantial. Such genealogies of Turkish culture arising in nomadism have been dismissed as discontinuous, eighteenth century agenda of recasting Turkish historical identity through material trappings. But even invented traditions can retain more than simple symbolic meaning when they fulfill a need opened by new conditions or situations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1992, 237). In the case of the gecekondu, legitimacy has been retroactively bestowed upon both the individual dwellings and the entire concept through the enacting of Turkish land laws that reflect the social desire for retaining Turkey's (mythic) nomadic heritage. Protections for 'night-built' housing (literally, or more poetically in Ray (1997), "brewing the tea by morning") are established in the 1966 Gecekondu Law, № 775 and the 1984 Gecekondu Amnesty Law, № 2981 (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements 1996). Mongolian legislation has similarly attempted to codify the cultural value of national nomadic identity into land law (Sneath 2002; 2004; 2006; Upton 2005), though practically this has had very limited impact for reasons ranging from weakness of the central government in its capacity for collecting tax revenue, erratic legislation by lawmakers attempting to secure their political bases, and the influence of external advisors seeking to secure land ownership claims in order to promote capital-intensive development; mining interests, USAID, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank each have played a role in the latter issues. The nomadic origin to Turkish material culture, mythic or real, and its relationship to the landscape, as a term of both real property and of the urban setting, could serve as a premonition of future questions, challenges, and possibilities for Ulaanbaatar's ger districts.

While culturally and linguistically related to the better studied pan-Turkic region of Anatolia and Central Asia, Inner Asia has been the focus of few studies by architectural historians. One example with regional ties is Szabo and Barfield (1991), who map house-type diffusion patterns (as per below) to Inner Asia's varied topography. Their volume, *Afghanistan: an atlas of indigenous domestic architecture*, uses maps to register dispersion patterns of different architectural types, with ethnographic links to the dominant cultural groups in different

regions of Afghanistan. Photographs and drawings not only sketch out the visual image of architectural typologies, but illustrate spatial relationships in plan and in section, and explain construction techniques and material components of these structures using axonometric and cut-away diagrams. Organizationally, dwellings are treated according to formalist and constructivist distinctions. Regional identities accumulate, while distinct regionalist edges dissolve in maps that present various styles overlapping geographically. While the atlas affords equal weight to both mobile and sedentary dwellings, few other works of this nature take interest in the nomadic dwellings. Most work on Inner Asian vernacular housing tends to look only toward the settled edges of the region, such as the Himalayas (Pruscha 1975; Harris 1998; Knapp 2003, though concentrating instead on Central Asia, the chapter by Sobti titled 'Inner Asia' retains affinity). Arriving from anthropology, Humphrey (1974) set a precedent for the unsedentary steppes with her look into the Mongolian ger (later teased upon by her and Evans 2002, writing on concrete tourist ger in China). Taking mobility of the domicile as a theme, a few researchers have made surveys of pastoral nomadic housing strategies (Faegre 1979; Andrews 1997), including an archaeological deep history of the yurt (Stronach 2004).[11] But each of these works treat the nomadic home as a pure idea, uncomplicated by the realities of interaction with adjacent or immediate urban environments, or, as per the Turkish townhouse[12] and gecekondu examples above, the sedentarization of the home itself.

Where living space and built form intersect describes the two substantive overlaps of architecture with the social sciences, particularly in the subdisciplines of social/cultural anthropology and cultural (or human) geography. While both geography and anthropology concern themselves with cultural values embedded in material—architecture being a principal structuring substance for other artifacts of our living, our culture, and our relationship with the world—here materiality is first addressed in association with geography. The

[11] A more recent route of inquiry by archaeologists (Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2007; Wright et al. 2009) begins to discern early forms of individuated settlement on the eastern edges of the Eurasian steppe, reflecting earlier work on Neolithic settlement that once defined archaeological arguments over western terminus of the steppe (e.g. Ucko et al. 1972; Tringham 1972; 1995; 2000).

[12] The traditional Ottoman or Turkish house plays a recurring role in the extensive literature on vernacular housing by Turkish scholars (often referenced under key terms *şehir evi* or *sıraevlere ait ev*).

materialist discourse considers architecture as object (Buchli 2002; Tilley et al. 2006), but is answered by other strains within cultural geography that address the place of buildings—both their physical location in the landscape but also the phenomenological place delimited within the material framework (Norberg-Shulz 1980; Tilley 1994). Rural landscapes bespeckled by a diffusion of dwellings and building types according to the palimpsest of migration and settlement patterns occupies a central strain of cultural geography that evolved from living with and looking at the American landscape (Lewis 1970; Meinig and Jackson 1979; Jackson 1980; 1984; 1994; Upton and Vlach 1986; Groth and Bressi 1997). JB Jackson recognized that "there is a school of cultural geographers which believes that the dwelling is not only the most important element in the landscape, but is the key to understanding all other elements in the landscape: the social order, the economy, the natural resources, the history, and culture" (1980, 117). But for a discipline in which space and place are debated conceptual terms, the intricacies of actual places and spaces of dwelling occurs at a scale that may be reduced beyond geography's broad reach.

For anthropology, the study of architecture arises contemporaneously with the early genealogy of the field itself, in Lewis Henry Morgan's investigations first into *Ancient society* (1877; see also Engels [1884] 1942), then more particularly with *Houses and house-life of the American aborigines (*[1881] 1965). Morgan has been an accepted starting post for a number of genealogists tracing the literature of architectural anthropology (Turan 1996; Buchli 2002; Moore 2004; Vellinga 2007).

Turan, whose own (1990) edited volume seeks a definition for vernacular architecture (with such contributors as Rapoport, Oliver, and Denel), uses his review for the *Journal of Anthropological Research* (1996) of Prussin (1996) and Egenter (1994) to trace out the genealogy of architecture in anthropology. In establishing contemporary researchers on the anthropologic end of the architectural spectrum, Turan parallels Humphrey (1976; 1988), who twice reviews Oliver's work (1975; [1987] 2003) for the anthropologic press. The anthropologic approach to dwellings Turan tracks back to Morgan. However, where she takes up the lineage within architectural history (or mythology) is the mid-nineteenth century work of Gottfried Semper ([1863] 2004)—his *Style in the technical and tectonic arts, or, practical aesthetics* established the generative ideas of an architecture that served a primitive, ancient man—and to the ideas of E.E. Viollet-le-duc. Rykwert (1972)

maps Semper's mythology of *bekleidung* and Laugier's primitive hut into an historiography of architectural origins which could be read for the eighteenth and nineteenth century approaches to linking human cultures and the environments such earlier cultures built.

Similar to Turan, Moore (2004), in his review for *American Anthropologist*, pairs Amerlinck's (2001) edited volume (which includes Rapoport and Egenter—both of whom the reviewer dismisses for claims he finds unstudious and outlandish, respectively) with Marchand's (2001) disciplined participation in/study of Yemeni minaret builders. Moore too establishes his trail with Morgan in the late nineteenth century, but continues through Levi-Strauss' problematizing of the house in ethnographic work.

Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995), followed by Gillespie (2000), more thoroughly interrogate and respond to Levi-Strauss' theories about the house in an effort to carry scholarship forward into contemporary anthropologic practices. Whereas Levi-Strauss subsumed the house relationship to kinship studies, Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995, 19; in response to Levi-Strauss 1987, 152) take a position that is both anthropocentric and spatial:

> At some level or other, the notion that houses are people is one of the universals of architecture. If the house is an extension of the person, it is also an extension of the self. As Bachelard reminds us, the space of the house is inhabited not just in daily life but also in imagination. It is a 'topography of our intimate being', a 'felicitous space' with protective and comforting associations, a rich and varied poetic image which 'emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul, and being of man, apprehended in his actuality' (xxxii, xxxi, xiv)…but there are surprisingly few anthropological explorations of this identity between house and self in non-Western societies. (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 3; Bachelard [1964] 1994)

From the human occupied center, the authors position the house not as a surrounding shell of material, but as phenomenologically viscous substance in which symbolic actions receive haptic response: "the space that surrounds a house is also an extension of the personal space of its occupants.…Intimately linked both physically and conceptually, the body and the house are the loci for dense webs of signification and affect and serve as basic cognitive models used to structure, think and experience the world" (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 3).

Kervanto Nevanlinna (1996, 19) interjects place into the meta-history of architectural anthropology. The locale has influenced studied cultures, but is rarely the culture studied: "Geertz has illustrated the marginality of the built environment: 'The locus of study is not the object of study. Anthropologists don't study villages (tribes, towns, neighborhoods…), they study *in* villages.' (Geertz 1973, 22; for related comments on urban anthropology, see e.g. Fox 1975, 59ff)."

Vellinga (2007), following upon Turan and Moore in reviewing multiple works from the cross-disciplines of anthropology and architecture, expands upon materiality as a subject where the disciplines intersect. Vellinga is well studied in Carsten and Hugh-Jones, as well as the Levi-Strauss texts upon which those two authors build their ideas. The difficulty of Vellinga's approach, however, is in taking the strictly materialist line of argument. Treating the house as a material thing alleviates some of the deeper discussion of home, with its cultural contingencies of occupation or inhabitation, while still attaching the symbolic meanings presented externally to (outside the space of) such structures. But it is specifically the spatial dynamics of the house, and its place in the larger landscape of its inhabitants, that makes the home uniquely interesting to both architecture and anthropology (and of course geography).

In architectural anthropology, mobility comes into play when the ethnographic subjects are mobile. Though the Inner Asia specialist Humphrey would be best positioned to address anthropologic approaches to architecture in a region of nomads and sedentarizing practices, her review, *No place like home in anthropology: the neglect of architecture* (1988), sounds the call for other researchers to take up this work. While such research has yet to take hold in Inner Asia, two Africanists (Blier 1983; Prussin 1989; 1995; 1996), working in landscapes similar to those of Mongolia, provide excellent parallels to the type of work for which Humphrey calls. To Prussin, it is a lack of topographic features in a steppe landscape that brings about proscribed uses of space in relation to the home. Topographic cues have ceded their importance in defining the shape of home space to cultural generators: directionalities for male and female space; creation of sacredness and profanity in relation to the hearth; frontalities; and cosmographies which are then embedded in the fabric of the home itself (Prussin 1989, 151; after Leach 1976, 54; though Leach, an outsider to the steppe landscapes he considers, does not read the same topographies that may present themselves to the knowledgeable nomad). Both Blier

and Prussin are interested in the house as the material incarnation of symbolic and cosmologic principles; and both begin, like Carsten and Hugh-Jones, with an anthropocentric view of the material and spatial relationship. Unlike the 'new mobilities' addressed above, the mobility concepts put forth by Blier and Prussin are grounded in ethnographic observation. It is an unprompted comment from an interviewee that asserts, "Houses are like humans. The reason I say they are like humans is that before, when we were migrating, we had our houses, and they followed us. When our ancestors would move, they took their houses with them. Now the ancestors are dead…and the houses stay" (Blier 1983, 375 n18). Settling the home becomes a complex negotiation between economic need, social practice, political voice, and cultural symbolism (Carsten and Hugh-Jones 1995, 109). Mobilizing the home takes all of this plus the energy to overcome inertia, putting a house at rest into motion.

For the steppe nomads whose homes will come to rest at the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, the reverse is not the case: the energy of inertia is not transferred into some potential for later kinetic release. Of those who stagger from the countryside into the ger districts with their few possessions after what may have been a calamitous winter—animal stocks lost to zud or traditional pasturing grounds lost to stronger neighbors—few families have the energy or capacity to engage such concepts as new arrangements of material and cultural dwelling. For these families, many summers will pass before they are in a position, financial or otherwise, to consider altering their immediate dwelling environment, let alone accumulating the cultural capital to initiate such personal and material transformation with perspicacity. When they do begin to consider their position, they will begin where most of the settlers of the ger district begin, by understanding the landscape into which they have arrived. This is a pragmatic undertaking, so chapter 3 will expand on the process new arrivals to the ger districts encounter. Before delving into the details of settling, however, I open the next chapter with more details on the countryside from which nomads derive, the city of Ulaanbaatar where they craft their future, and the ger districts in which they will reside.

SECTION I: DIVIDING MONGOLIAN LAND AND LANDSCAPE



Figure 3: South-facing ger on the steppe and on the street (above, Bulgan aimag; below, Ulaanbaatar's III-r/IV-r microdistricts) in 2000.

Chapter 2: Rural, urban, and the ger districts between

As a whole, this section considers how land becomes divided in Mongolia, both conceptually and then in practice. In the conceptual sense, Mongolians partition the landscape between the countryside and the city, and eventually the ger district as a place in between; this will be the focus of chapter 2. Chapter 3 will explore the pragmatics of how land becomes divided in real terms as part of Mongolia's post-Socialist drive toward privatizing real property through land laws. The peri-urban landscape is created through legal concepts, but implemented through practices that only partially parallel the law. The focus of chapter 3 is on how a family in the ger districts might actually go about gaining rights to access and build upon land and eventually use that land to participate in urban social and economic life. It is important to establish how such a place as the ger districts came about in the Mongolian landscape. Within this demi-chapter, the conceptual divisions of land are divided according to the common Mongolian dichotomy, between the countryside (хөдөө or *khödöö*) and city (хот or *khot*). I argue here that the ger districts are a new kind of place that has opened up in the landscape between the city and the countryside. I acknowledge that ger districts in fact predate much of the built core of Ulaanbaatar, but accommodate their revised role in the urban/rural dichotomy as conceptions of the landscape have changed in recent decades.

Landscape and the countryside

The dualistic division of Mongolia, between the city and the countryside, valorizes the rural forms of pastoral nomadic inhabitation of the land. But it is not a notion that began in the countryside. Rather, the idea of the countryside is a thoroughly urban notion that valorizes the countryside as the place of true Mongolianness. The countryside is well-suited to such viewings, as it matches even the most naïve iteration of the landscape aesthetic, as derived in the Western tradition through art and art history—a pervasive horizon by which to reference and organize the space of the land and the activities upon its surface. The aesthetic landscape is the departure point through which an historiography of the subject begins its divergence into academic consideration. Kenneth Clark's (1949) transmutation, *Landscape into art*, served as the platform from which landscape could be revisited through various inter-related disciplines, as Foucauldian substantiations of power and inequality breached the discussion of purely aesthetic notions. Art histories

such as Alpers' (1983) *Art of describing*, researching the Netherlandische shift from overtly religious subject matter toward the landscapes that emerged from Amsterdam and Delft art markets, began incorporating ideas of capital formation, the emerging power of the middle classes, the mercantile networks being built by Dutch naval authority, and a raft of other socio-political issues—many that involved arguments familiar to a social science discipline like geography—that had previously remained beyond the art-historical discipline.

At the same time, Denis Cosgrove, who had had an interest in landscapes along both the aestheticized lines of art history—professing an early taste for John Ruskin and his late nineteenth century English landscape visions—as well as the inhabitation and making of places through cultural geography, re-established landscape studies with a critical approach. Cosgrove claimed influence by both David Lowenthal's (1975; 1985) emplacement of memory in landscape, but also by the left-leaning connections of class and land drawn by Raymond Williams (culminating in the infamous enclosure laws), both of whom reconfigured aesthetics as less a matter of taste than of the political, economic, and social conditions. Williams' (1973) own distinctions between *The country and the city* could inform contemporary Mongolian ones. While maintaining that landscape had an aesthetic component, Cosgrove placed those aesthetics as representational of the conditions operating within the landscape. His *Social formation and symbolic landscapes* (1984), and *Prospect, perspective, and landscape* (1985), revised the history of the middle-Renaissance, fusing radical aesthetic transformations in art (the perspectival systems introduced by Giotto for rendering the built forms of townscapes and landscapes) to similar skill sets of surveyors out in the physical landscape, defining boundaries of cultivated lands to effect their transfer and trade according to the emerging systems of capitalism and market economy, as feudal estates were carved up and sold into the new system of land organization. The opening lines of *The iconography of landscape* (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, 1), "A landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings," renewed landscape studies as a viable means of exploring not just the forms of the land itself, but also the cultures attached to specific "surroundings." The same phrases would also become the platform upon which critics would build their own, ongoing backlash to Cosgrove's view of landscape.

Power relationships with the land, especially in his primary work *Landscape and power*—and Cosgrove's maintaining ties to the aesthetics of landscape—were the basis for W.J.T. Mitchell's attack on mere symbolic landscapes (1994). Mitchell pushes home the point that though the latent aristocracy, and not the actual field workers of the Po River valley, may have invented the landscape 'idea'—perspectival and from on high—and the new systems that followed on from such an invention—capitalist and market-driven—the peasantry that had worked the land by this landscaping process was forced into alienation from the very soil they had beneath their fingernails. Though not built around the critique of aesthetic notions, Don Mitchell as well began investigating power and labor relationships with the land, including in his *The lie of the land* (1996) an opening scene that projects the visual impact of the California landscape as it lies below a viewpoint from a pass in the Sierra Madre—beautiful and bountiful—but then quickly changes scale to examine the labor practices and the laborers who themselves made the land. He takes issue with Cosgrove and a number of other cultural geographers for being fast and loose with the idea of landscape, while missing out on the real connections to how landscapes are actually made by the cultures to which they become symbolically attached (Jackson et al. 1996).

The *making* of landscape constitutes the primary line of attack that follows against the aesthetics of landscape. Kenneth Olwig continues the reaction against representational landscape two decades after the 1980s work of Cosgrove and Daniels. Seeking yet another history to stand in distinction to Italian, and generally southern European landscapes, Olwig's setting and outlook are northern European, relying on the low-laying lands between northern Germany and southern Denmark (Friesland, the stem of the Jutland peninsula) to make his case (2002; 2005). Here, where the aristocracy never gained ascendance, and despite its best attempts, royalist projects at land redistribution (into their own fold, primarily) often failed against a system that Olwig presents as proto-democratic. Composed of an organized citizenry with a representative politics (the *Thing* assembly, per Heidegger's 1971 "Building, dwelling, thinking"), the landscape is quite literally made, carved from the marshes and tidal flats of the region. Tom Mels (2006) offers a synthesis of Olwig and Cosgrove, attempting to change the dialogue from representation versus physical making, into representation of the physical making, by discussing the placeness of landscape in the Dutch sixteenth

century period that initiated this discussion on the historiography of landscape studies in the northern European context. But Don Mitchell's discontent with unengaged theory remains a standing critique for cultural geographers skimming the surface of landscapes in cultural contexts outside their own.

Engaging as foreign a landscape as the Mongolian countryside might present to a non-Mongolian researcher requires an approach that does not look simply to aesthetics, but to how Mongolians themselves engage with land. Caroline Humphrey takes several different tacks on the Mongolian landscape, investigating it as a social phenomenon (1995), as political space (2001), and as physical entity (with Sneath 1996). Leaving aside the physical embodiments of landscape, as investigated according to precipitation averages, grassland degradation, and other factors that indeed have impact on the perception of the land, the studies that remain entirely in the social-cultural sphere better parallel the work of geographers in Western contexts. "Contested landscapes in Inner Mongolia: walls and cairns," (Humphrey 1996) strikes a tone similar on land that falls within the familiar sphere to that covered by D.M. Williams (1996a; 1996b). The desperate situation for nomadic pastoralists in the grips of Inner Mongolia's enclosure movements of the 1980s and 1990s provides little ambiguity of symbolic structures or theoretical landscapes, but subscribes wholly to Don Mitchell's critique for uncovering power structures where they are rooted in the land. Working historically, Henry Serruys (1977; 1978) uncovers a history of struggle in the Mongolian landscape, as the late Qing dynasty vies for stability amid the multilateral battles for control between various Mongol princes, Mongol peasants, and Chinese agriculturalist settlers. Humphrey's view of the religious landscape differs from that model. The imagined landscape, according to Humphrey's investigation on religious components of Mongolian society, "seethes" with everything from faintly sensed spirits to fully-articulated personages and demi-gods envisioned walking about (1995, 141). Such a landscape escapes Western conceptions, but fully integrates with Mongolian attitudes.

Between urban and rural Mongolians there remains little cultural difference in the values placed on the landscapes of the countryside. The khödöö signifies valorized qualities such as strength, resourcefulness, and a straight-forward character. Yet each of these qualities, while possibly truistic generalizations of rural Mongolians, stems from urban Mongolians' popular conception of the city as a degraded and degrading place

(even as they otherwise embrace urbane lifestyles). Urbanity's association with the foreign, with power, and with trade stand counter to the Mongol self-image, breeding such vices as (respectively): subjugation, corruption, and a cut-throat lack of hospitality (Sneath 2006, 144).[1] The rural becomes not only a mode of operating, but a repository of symbolic Mongolianness—self-reliance, honesty, generosity—not only for the herdsman, but as a standard for all Mongols. The opposite danger is also present here, as objectification of nomads cuts both ways, for holding them up as an unbroken lineage to the past also means holding them down as irrelevant to Mongolia's future. "Rather than seeing herders as specialized livestock producers, historically linked to sedentary economies and dependent on exchanges with the national society, post-independence Mongolian governments have tended to ethnify the herder population as cultural relics of the past" (Bruun 2006, 171).

The characterization of the countryside occurs not so much in the countryside, but in the urban space by Mongolia's elite, often through the image presented to outsiders through such media as travel literature (Tavares and Brosseau 2006; Buckley et al. 2007) or such "spectacles of state" (Adams 2010) as the annual independence day celebration bound up in the trappings of Mongolia's traditional Naadam festivities of countryside (martial) sports: wrestling, archery, and horse-racing.[2] Promoting the landscapes and rural livelihoods of Mongolia's countryside captures imaginations of foreigners and urban Mongols alike. If Mongols and tourists prioritize khödöö over khot, so too have scholars. Scholarship on Mongolia has long abided the popular imagination by engaging in studies of nomads and the countryside, meanwhile serving

[1] Bulag notes that terminologicially, the old word for trade, *ariljaa* was replaced by *hudaldaa,* which derives from 'cheating,' as places of trade—cities—lost their association with the Mongolian past by becoming zones where Chinese traders operated. Urbanity was coded in morals as much as it was in ethnicity or occupation (Bulag 2006, 57).

[2] Adams (2010) places national identity-making within the context of Anderson's (1983) 'imagined communities' and Hobsbawm's (1992) 'invention of tradition', but bundles these two ideas, which each allow for symbols to have mobile meanings that are reassigned their signification depending on the instrumental needs of those elites who benefit from their manipulation, as modernist in outlook. In opposition, she places national identity as deeply rooted in the particulars of a culture's historical development (based on Smith 2004). Adams' outlook is distinctly toward those of the modernists, for she believes she is not looking for "identity per se, but rather its contemporary reinvention" (2010, 12). She distinguishes (along Foucauldian approaches to power and governmentality) "national identity as constitutive of power rather than an instrument of power; national identity constitutes its subjects, both institutions and individuals" (ibid.). So while elites might consciously emit symbolic forms for shaping identity, they are also structurally capable of only a limited range of tactics, as evinced by the larger culture in which they are embedded.

urban interests simply by ignoring what happens in Mongolia's cities. Only in the past decade has Ulaanbaatar become legitimized as a Mongolian place worth studying, with much of the impetus provided by the migration of nomads from the countryside into the city. Researchers followed, first with smaller studies (for example, Janzen et al. 2005), soon followed by a major edited volume: Bruun and Narangoa's (2006) *Mongols from country to city: floating boundaries, pastoralism, and city life in the Mongol lands*, opened Ulaanbaatar as not just the base from which researchers worked but also where they stayed and what they studied. The timing of these volumes was nearly right, as the Mongolian population passed a threshold in the early part of the twenty-first century from being predominantly rural to becoming majority urban.

The early twenty-first century was marked by a large influx of former nomads into Ulaanbaatar, in successive, summertime waves (NSO 2002; 2003). While some researchers had been excited to see Mongol renomadization in the early post-Socialist years (Bruun 1996), this countervailing trend was short lived and largely a result of two factors: desperate times in urban areas in the wake of losing Soviet support for the Mongolian economy and the decollectivization of herds by apportioning animals to citizenry (nearly) regardless of skill or capacity at pastoral nomadism. Rather, the predominant trend was rural-to-urban migration, which accelerated markedly between 1999 and 2003. These were the winters during which zud conditions rolled around various parts of the countryside. There are two fundamentally different ways of looking at the zud years straddling the new millennium. Donors and international aid agencies, as well as many academic researchers (Janzen 2005, Sneath 2006), recall the tragedy of families who lost their livestock, and thus their viability for independent livelihoods. Some herders, however, reflect a more blunt (though possibly self-serving) view that the losses affected the most vulnerable not by chance, but because those persons were unskilled in animal management. Underlying this viewpoint were the politics of the decollectivization process. Equal distribution of decollectivized animals meant that some herds ended up in the hands of those whose skills may have been sufficient during the temperate years, but incommensurate with the tasks of caring for herds under marginal conditions; who had little knowledge of the intricacies of plants and the living landscape; and who had already overgrazed or (greedily, in these opinions) relied too heavily on more profitable cashmere goats (Chinese buyers were paying a premium for cashmere to serve

Western apparel markets, but goats can contribute to desertification by eating grass down to the roots). The removal of such stock-keepers not only benefited those who retained their herds through the zud, as the argument goes, but ultimately benefit the ecology by allowing over-grazed lands to recover. The net effect was that over several successive years, khödöö refugees flooded into a city unprepared to accommodate them, causing the rapid extension of the ger districts.



Figure 4: Undifferentiated to interlopers, the planarity of the steppe has led to theorizing of nomadic space as a composition of trajectories. Nomads discern variations in soils, slopes, and vegetation as they mobilize across living landscape.



Figure 5: Legal regimes of ownership rights demand a precision for locating urban sites that differs from the customary spaces of the steppe. Surveyors set their theodolite base station by Dasganii ovoo (left), in a system that reaches beyond Mongolian bounds to embed itself within international standards of place marking. The spatiality of urban elitism is defined culturally, however, with a compass in Sukhbaatar Square that conflates the nation's center with its capital (right; running text at its edge recounts Ulaanbaatar's previous names).

Locating the city

Ulaanbaatar is popularly (and officially) considered to have been founded in 1639 as Өргөө (*Urguu*, 'the tent-palace' but informally known as Да Хүрээ, *Da Khuree*, the name of the monastery) at Shireet Tsagaan Nuur, several hundred kilometers to the southwest of the current city. The 'city' at this time was a collection of tents where resided the newly crowned boy-king, Zanabazar, into a position that merged political leadership with spiritual ascendancy (a polymath, Zanabazar is still considered a genius of artistic achievement and linguistic and scientific scholarship). Despite the promulgated mythology of Zanabazar, this narrative for the city bears the hallmarks of a post-facto revisioning of the contemporary metropolis with a pedigreed origin story. This is not to suggest that the ceremonies coronating Zanabazar in a new religio-political leadership position were not deemed significant in their time. However, even as the national capital became resident with his geographic position,[3] nothing of the transformation suggested the genesis of neither Mongol urbanization nor sedentarization. The proto-city often changed locations (at least forty recorded times, per Sanders 2003, 332) and occassionally changed names. The current leadership of Ulaanbaatar promotes this historical chain to Mongolia's past eras and distant landscapes, with popular references to some of the previous incarnations of the city proclaimed from billboards in the city square, adorning the marquees of businesses, and spoken of as official history: in 1651 the settlement complex was referred to as Номын Өргөө (*Nomiin Urguu*, 'the palace of books' or 'palace of ceremonies,' possibly for the use of sutras in Buddhist rituals), from 1706 as Хүрээ (*Huree*, variously translated as 'monastery' or 'encampment,' but still signifying 'encirclement' today), which became modified in 1778 to Их Хүрээ (*Ikh Huree*, 'the great encampment') but was known informally as Эсгий Хот (*Esgii Khot*, 'city of felt'), and 1912 as Нийслэл Хүрээ (*Niislel Huree*, 'the capital encampment') (Ganhuyag 2002, 914). The most recent name change, in 1924, was to Улаанбаатар (*Ulaanbaatar*, 'the red hero'), a Socialist revisioning of the city that followed upon the 'brave hero' sobriquet awarded to the revolutionary leader Sukhbaatar in September 1922.

[3] Political capitals have been mobilized in other historical traditions beyond the nomadism of the Eurasian steppe. Mughal emperors (Sinopoli 1994) or continental regents (Kantorowicz 1957; Ginzburg 2001, 64-6) have each been stalked by capitals that were detached from any specific site within their territories, but rather, were tethered to the peregrinations of their respective heads-(and bodies)-of-state.

In the decades before Mongolia expelled its Qing overlords, the city that would become Ulaanbaatar played multiple roles. Though the city was neither a political capital for the collapsing Qing empire (the governor's seat was several hundred kilometers west, at Uliastai) nor strictly a military garrison, it had both of these aspects for the Mongols as here resided their own politico-religious ruler, the Bogd Khaan (the eighth reincarnation of Zanabazar).[4] A conurbation of Tibetan Buddhist lamaseries and temples (Gandan on the hill to the west, Dambadarjaa in the north, and various other clusters on the plain in between) became pilgrimage sites, attracting visits from nomads into the region seeking healing, redemption, and spiritual ease. A center for mercantile activity formed atop a low escarpment to the east that served as a Russian concession for tea traders while a Chinese market filled with products and animals traded between nomads and caravaneers.[5] There was no singular city in all of this, but a collection of various and competing proto-urban forms.[6]

[4] Military garrisons and political administrative centers founded by the Qing became places of Chinese mercantilism, whereas lamasery and temple towns served Mongol market needs, as encouraged by the Mongol banner aristocracy who served the Qing, but attempted to maintain Mongolian identity through separate trade centers (Bruun 2006, 10). Ironically, it was in these ecclesiastic towns, where young novitiates with access to education became reform-minded intellectuals, that the nascent Communist political parties first opened offices (Sneath 2006, 148). With the eventual imposition of Marxist anti-religious doctrine, the ecclesiastic anchors around which the towns formed were destroyed or desecrated, while the towns were themselves repurposed toward the Socialist urbanized hierarchical power structure of provincial and county seats (*aimag* and *sum*), completing the transition from a feudal to a modernist division of the landscape. So while nineteenth century (and earlier) urbanization was fueled by commerce, it was only under twentieth century Soviet influence that power and authority migrated from the rural steppe into urban centers (Bruun 2006, 16).

[5] The final locating of the city where it is today may have been for the Mongol ruler to assert taxes on the market established along a trade route passing through the Tuul River valley. Known as the *măimàichéng*, the trade zone was not so much a place as a place-between. From the gates of Kalgan, China, to the frontier at Kyakta, Russia, traders saw the Mongolian landscape foremost as an impediment to the transfer of tea and other luxuries from China to Russia. The măimàichéng was the neutral meeting ground for traders from each respective country. In pragmatic terms dictated by the landscape, the măimàichéng was an entrepôt for offloading tea from the camels that plied the Gobi desert to the south, before loading onto the horses that could continue north through the grasslands and taiga.

[6] Bultrode (1920; often catalogued under her fellow interloper and eventual husband's name, Gull) catalogues internal divisions of the landscape between Mongol lamaist precincts and lay areas, the măimàichéng, and the Russian concession.



Figure 6: Southeastward view from Dasganii ovoo (early twentieth century, detail). Source: Ulaanbaatar Urban Planning Office.

The urban fabric that supported these multiple and varied interests was equally heterogeneous, with a fixed housing stock reflecting both Russian and Chinese forms, as exposed in an early twentieth century photographic panorama from atop the hill of Dasganii ovoo (above Geser süm, which was also built in the early twentieth century). *Xashaa*[7] were known to cover the hill of Gandan monastery (and still do, as the oldest existent ger district in the city) as well as surround other pilgrimage sites, forming the temples' support precincts. Much of the Selbe valley between these foci, including around the former *talbai*,[8] had an assortment of housing until the new, Socialist scheme for the city wiped the slate clean. The ger xashaa,

[7] Alternately transliterated in some literature as *khashaa* (from хашаа), xashaa literally means 'fence,' but is commonly used now to refer to the yard or compound enclosed by a fence in the ger districts.

[8] The 'meadow;' the land on which annual festivities and public Lamaist rituals took place was eventually consolidated as the void bounded by new edifices of the state: Sukhbaatar Square. *Source: Ulaanbaatar Urban Planning Office.*



Russian cabins, and Chinese courtyard houses were universally razed to make way for an idealized, Socialist city, with international notions of modernity—orderly, legible, sanitary, and controlled.[9] Inherently mobile, ger and their owners had the capacity to move out of the way of the Socialist bulldozers, cropping up again at the edges of the newly designated urban core to become the first ger districts in the contemporary sense—no longer the definition of Mongolian urbanization, the ger districts became for the first time peripheralized.[10]

The first 40,000 units of Socialist-designed housing, commonly written now as '40K,' though still pronounced in Mongolian as *duch-myank*, were built in the early post-war period of the 1940s and early

[9] Scott (1998) introduces the concept of "authoritarian high modernism," with Soviet models of Socialism in mind. Tammaru (2001, 1342-3), however, sees a distinction between modernization *per se* and Socialist modernization in a project to categorize urbanization in formerly Socialist states. Up to a point, Socialist urbanization follows patterns familiar to cities everywhere: first, the population must be concentrated in the city, often through rural-to-urban migration patterns, although the specific push and pull factors might vary. Second, the development of forms of employment that demand a separation of workplace from residence shapes the character of various urban zones, even without any formalized zoning controls. Thirdly, Tammaru defines suburbanization as both common and necessary. In distinguishing Socialist urbanization, Tammaru asserts that centralized planning toward industrialization is what creates an urban plan that resembles modernization, but functions differently. Socialist urban planning also gives rise to a distinct suburban phenomenon. Because centralized planning structures the city for industrialization rather than for an innovative economy, Tammaru points out the resulting weaknesses when the command economy collapses. The exclusion of non-laborers from housing propagates a different kind of suburb, one with a potential for vitality, but this vitality is locally contained, interacting less with the urban center. When suburban vitality falters, suburbs stagnate as they remain insulated from the larger urban (and thus national) economy.

[10] The ger districts had been designated a transitory urbanism, but the characterization of 'transitory' has shifted significantly in the past few decades, especially since the collapse of Socialism (Sneath 2006, 158). The Socialist mantra of urban planning recognized the ger districts as a transitional stage of material forms (though the ger districts preceded both Socialism and much of Ulaanbaatar's planned form). Socialist planning for Ulaanbaatar assumed the unruly scheme of agglomerated *xashaa* would eventually give way to the ordered aesthetic of Soviet blocks, cardinally oriented around courtyards and children's playgrounds, checkering the civic landscape. Xashaa denizens would relocate into apartments, which could provide such services as electricity, centralized steam heat, plumbing (in some instances supplied hot water), and sewerage. As the ger districts preceded Socialism, and as rather than abating they increased in area during Socialism's tenure, so too did they remain after Socialism's demise. Any centralized scheme for the conversion of the ger districts also died at this time, but not the notion of the ger districts as a transitory form of urbanism. Rather, the transitory term itself transitioned from the 'high modernist' formal aesthetic (Scott 1998) to an intangible sense of urbanity that would find its manifestation in free market reform. Ger district denizens would realize that their past self-reliance was no longer a temporary measure while they awaited government intervention. Rather, this was a morality for the new market-driven economy. The built form of the ger districts would quickly manifest the individuality of its denizens and each of their economic positions, as diverse forms of housing arose. The centralized planning office still intends infrastructural supplies (electricity, heat, plumbing, and sewerage) and services (schools and clinics), but the greater impact might be such legal structures designed to regulate land use and settlement patterns.

1950s.[11] These blocks asserted the Soviet planners' scheme for a city that removed the monasteries of the lamas and courts of the Bogd Khaan from retaining a central role. As a square fronting a peoples' governmental meeting hall, Sukhbaatar Square became the principal focus of the reconfigured city, with the 40,000 units of housing filling out the flanks. The units, typically with three rooms and a kitchen (sometimes with bath and toilet *en suite* either combined or in two separate rooms—counted and still referred to today compounding the Russian number and Mongolian case ending нолний өрөө, *nolnii öröö* or 'zero room'—or if without *en suite* then with facilities off the stair well to be shared by facing apartments across the landing). These units were generally arrayed in four story buildings that consisted of multiple double-loaded stair towers. Three or more entrances each led to their own stair column, with the two (or sometimes three) apartment entrances sharing each of the landings, stacked four stories high.[12] While the public buildings became recognizable landmarks in the urban landscape, for most residents they were only a foreground to the vast background of residential blocks that actually comprised and shaped the city: lacking a cohesive system for home addresses, the landmarks served as the principal means of explaining urban navigation (i.e. "the building behind the sports palace, second stair entrance, third floor, apartment on the left," were the directions that once guided a visitor to an unknown apartment—building number and apartment number might be provided in Arabic numerals, the stairwell and étage in Roman numerals). Main avenues, including

[11] In 2011, as the 40K re-entered wider public consciousness in recognition of their sixth decade, renewed interest in these buildings has been attributed to their solidity of construction, in contrast to later periods of building that used pre-cast panel components. Between the 40K era and the current construction boom, nearly all fixed housing could be characterized by pre-fabricated, high-modernist (Scott 1998), high-occupency high-rises. Similar in design to the tower blocks that made their debut across the former Soviet Bloc, they are referred to in Mongolian as 'assemblage' apartments (угсармал, *ugsarmal*). All officially sanctioned housing until the end of the Socialist period was government housing, and nearly all of it was large-scale assemblage blocks. It would be another decade and a half before large-scale projects were again initiated, but in the post-Socialist era it would be only private developers that could raise the capital for such large-scale additions to the housing stock. In wealthier areas such as Zaisan or along the Selbe stream floodplain by the US and Laotian embassies these complexes are green-field developments, whereas among the 40K and the Socialist ugsarmal much development is infill. The filling in of previously unbuilt spaces within the quadrangles that once served as playgrounds and parks has led to Ulaanbaatar's densification, but also a more haphazard seine of roads and access paths that now obfuscate the clarity of the Socialist era scheme.

[12] Calculating between 24 and 36 units per building would require approximately 1200 to 1600 buildings to achieve housing for 40,000 families. Amid the nebulous quantitative miasmas of Socialism, such monikers as the 40K were more aspiration than realization. Yet propagandic handles stuck, becoming part of the city's popular geographic toponomy.

the current high streets, were spatially defined by their abutments of 40K buildings. These buildings have since become commercialized in the market economy, with additions that push their ground-level apartments out toward the street and reverse the logic of the private stair-tower entrances by creating public entries for shoppers entering from the street, allowing the modern city to evolve according to contemporary, and internationally comprehensible commercial standards.



Figure 7: View west over Gandan ger district of the new III-r/IV-r microdistricts (left) from the Magjid Janraisig süm. Source: Ulaanbaatar Urban Planning Office. Bichel, the last large-scale housing project under Socialism, displaced a ger district that had formed in the late Socialist era on the hillside behind (i.e. north of) the III-r microdistrict (right).

The ger districts between

The term 'ger districts' is the most commonly used reference to the informal settlements that comprise much of the areal portion of Ulaanbaatar, filling the flatlands around the urban core, pushing into valleys east, north, and west of the city, climbing the steeply graded hillsides. Terminologically, ger districts are not explicitly referenced as 'slums'—the relationship with such a term would be complicated by the ger itself being at the very heart of Mongolian conceptions of domesticity—but implicitly, the ger district clearances during the Socialist and post-Socialist periods imply that such areas are counter to the goals of modernity and social progress. As with most discussion of slums, the concept is primarily imposed by external visions of these areas—and in many cases by those experts attempting to 'manage' or 'solve' problems associated with the ger districts. The discourse of ger district issues, which typically encompasses a host of intertwined social, economic, and environmental problems, presumes a geographical locus. The placement of such issues does

two things to distinguish the social and spatial aspects of the ger districts: first, it presumes that the ger districts are a place distinct from the other spaces of the city, and second, that the issues of the ger districts are distinct issues of (though impacting upon) the urban core. Policy-oriented discussions include: poor air quality due to the particulates introduced through the burning of coal and firewood in the numerous stoves that serve as kitchen and heating to ger dwellers; the health risks to lungs, especially for children, due to the particulates[13] as well as the communicability of respiratory disease through population densities unfamiliar to an otherwise steppe-dwelling populace; the lack of piped water supply and sewerage, thus improper hygiene, sanitation, and risk to ground water supplies; the destabilizing of terrain as inhabitation denudes hillsides of vegetation and increases erosion; the construction of home sites with little regard for engineered foundations and dangerously close to flood channels; the abuse of alcohol that leads to thuggery and violence against women and children, as well as men; and a number of other ills associated with poverty and decentralized, unmonitored urban growth. All of these issues indeed exist in the ger districts. Furthermore, many of these issues are justifiably specific to the ger districts. While I do not wish to reify perceptions of the ger districts as solely problematic places—I will conclude with the opposite view—an argument toward regarding this as a different kind of place not only fits an intellectual agenda, but is justified in the role that the ger districts continue to play in Mongolia.

Though the urban realm may be the true seat of authority in Mongolia in terms of political control, financial clout, and cultural hegemony, that Ulaanbaatar also concentrates the majority of the population means that authority even within the greater metropolis is distributed unevenly. An internal frontier presses

[13] Outside experts, not only from foreign non-governmental organizations, but even Mongolian scientists who are not from the ger districts, see air pollution as one of the chief detriments of ger district living, as well as a threat by the ger districts to the rest of the city. One NGO has set up a billboard with live updates on such things as sulfur-dioxide content—a byproduct of burning high-sulfur coal—and various sized particulate is sourced from four air-quality monitoring stations scattered around the central portion of the city. The numeric readings are associated with a set of green, yello, and red lights to warn of dangerous levels air-quality levels. Even warm, summer days when coal is used solely for cooking (not heating) tend to produce a steady illumination of red lights. Ger district residents, while not necessarily disagreeing with the scientific findings, remark that they prefer where they live in a ger district because they feel the air is clean in comparison to the city. Their answers align with the experts only in agreeing that air in the city core is indeed polluted. They may or may not dispute that the ger districts contribute to (or are predominantly responsible for) the pollution, but in interviewing residents, the better air quality of the ger districts relative to the rest of the city validates their move to a xashaa.

on Ulaanbaatar, dividing the city's core from its suburban or peri-urban zones of the ger districts. The ger districts are administered as part of the city as much as are any of the more built up core areas of the city, but the political issues affecting the ger districts are different from those of the high-rise zones. Culturally, the ger districts have access to the institutions and networks of the urban core, but ger district constituents each retain strong connections to far-away home *aimag* ('province') where things are done differently. Economically, the ger districts are excluded from both urban and rural benefits alike, while retaining many of the fiscal problems of each realm.

The ger districts occupy a place between rural and urban, with multiple and overlapping interests in each. Different analogies might be used to further detail such a model: that the ger districts can be theorized as a contact zone, where the rural and urban meet; that they are a refuge from either the rural or urban; that they are a place where the rural creeps into the urban or vice versa. Suggesting that they are a distinct place in a tri-partite division of the Mongolian landscape, into countryside, city and ger district does not deny the inviolability of these categories. In fact they are highly mutable. As Mongolians begin consider the ger districts as a place different than the countryside and different than the city, possibilities will expand for this landscape as having not only its own needs, but also its own possibilities.

The construction of the Socialist housing schemes, as noted above, effectively created the ger districts as a different kind of place than had previous existed in Mongolia. While ger districts have never been central to the built form of the urban landscape—nuclei tended to be ecclesiastic, mercantile, military, or administrative (Campi 2006; Sneath 2006; both in Bruun and Narangoa 2006)—they had long been the material manifestation that allowed for densification on the otherwise sparsely populated steppe. With their peripheralization under the Socialist scheme, they no longer functioned as effectively at an agenda of urbanism as did the new high-rise blocks. Rather, the ger districts became the isolated last stand of the dispossessed, a narrative which undergirds current conceptions of their dire functionality. Should they become recognized not only for their faults but also their benefits to Mongolian society as a whole, a transformation of the idea of the ger districts can be actualized in that they would become a desirable place to live, work, and build a family's future. In engaging the research for this dissertation project, while much of

the difficulty of ger district life is still on view (as chapter 4 makes clear), so too are the transformative possibilities already becoming available (my goal in chapters 5 and 6). As a place that is neither urban nor rural, the landscape between can find new economic functions or incubate new forms of land use: xashaa can become places of employment[14] that depend neither on pastoral nor on centralized economies even as they continue their mission of fulfilling a housing need.

Mutability

Even as I argue for considering the ger districts as a different kind of place in the Mongolian division of the landscape, it should be recognized that Mongolians easily move between boundaries in the short term. Urbanites and ger district residents alike invariably spend at least some of their summer holiday in the countryside, either in camps a few hours beyond municipal limits or returning to the ger of family in distant provinces. It is also common for members of the same extended family to be spread across different modes of living, with some siblings inhabiting apartments, others choosing xashaa, and some remaining or returning to the countryside. In cases where a family stretches between the two modes of inhabitation, there is even greater flexibility. Apartment dwellers might frequent their family's xashaa to pick up vegetables, repair or wash their car, or spend a weekend in the more open space of ger district land. Similarly, the indoor plumbing of an apartment can be useful for doing laundry or showering, so a xashaa-dwelling family member might often stop by just for such instrumental purposes (though socializing and sharing news are also part of the dynamics.)

The calculus of deciding where to live, with factors such as cost, convenience, and culture as independent and floating variables, may never cross the divide between the ger districts and apartment life for many urban residents, but there are many families do decide between these different forms of living. Family members with whom I stayed in the central city traveled to the ger area once or twice per week, often solely to eat with

[14] District employment offices, which are the primary collectors of employment data then aggregated by the National Statistics Office, saw a collapse in both employment and seeking-employment numbers in the early post-Socialist period in the formal sector. But a study of the same period placed almost a third of all economic activity in the informal sector (Anderson 1998, 10). Follow-on studies have varied on what part of overall activity is in the informal economy, calculating anywhere from slightly less than the one-third figure to more than two-thirds (Morris 2001).

the family and see their nieces. Their counterparts from the ger area came once or twice each week to the apartment, but for more utilitarian reasons. The youngest sister, who was taking language classes nearby, would stop into the apartment after class while awaiting friends in the neighborhood, to wash up, to use the internet, or to relax for a short while in a place other than home. Her visits were never her sole purpose in coming into the city, but they were visits of convenience. Some years, however, she spent a significant time living in the apartment, as it was nearby her high school. The convenience was still part of the equation, for she was required to be in classes from early in the morning, but so too was her overall lifestyle suited more toward urban living while attending school regularly in the city.

Cost-of-living as a barrier to accessing apartment life is a theme witnessed in survey responses (chapter 4), but when seeking answers to the question of mutability, conversations with many ger district residents frequently turned to values—a qualitative topic that escaped the metrics of the survey data. T— was the bluntest: "maybe the money isn't so important, just this work I like doing." Economics enter the picture in that she must work for her living, but that she can work at home, surrounded by her husband, daughter, and other family members, outweighs the comforts of apartment living that come at other greater costs. A similar sentiment ties together housing choice with lifestyle for B—. She had moved to a ger district after she and her husband gave their apartment to their son. Her husband had been awarded the apartment late in the Socialist era as a reward for his productivity. Sitting in this apartment now, she looks around at it and says, "every year my son says he will buy another apartment and give this one back to us." I ask if she would move back to the apartment and away from her xashaa if that happened, but she says she would not, explaining, "in an apartment, what is there to do but stare at the walls? In my home [a ger on productive agricultural land in the ger districts] I can go outside and I can work."

P— has been tempted to leave his apartment for the ger districts. He remains unsatisfied with available housing options in the city. Though he could probably afford to buy an apartment and alter it to his liking or to build a house of his own design, he continues to not own property. Ironically, he is currently charged with a major commission in determining ownership and distribution of real property—a national database to be compiled by government registrars at the urging of donor funds from the American-backed Millennium

Challenge Account. Aware of the recent change in land law, P— has considered taking possession of up to one-third of an hectare (based on the number of members in his family, a wife and three children), but as a thoroughly urban denizen, he has not been excited to move his family to the ger districts. This too might be seen as further irony, as P— has been a champion of determining a better future for ger district construction methods and materials. He has led an effort to quantify environmental conditions in the ger areas—monitoring exterior air conditions (temperature and humidity) and quality (pollution by coal particulates and other respiratory hazards) to compare against interior conditions in xashaa housing and ger. All of this had been to measure the efficacy of existing building insulation and eventually mitigate the effect of poor construction technique: the reasons behind thermal bridging, moisture entrapment, accumulation of heating fumes or smoke, and other construction-related environmental conditions. So P— is not unfamiliar with life in the ger districts. But his housing choice, even from the position of a knowledgeable agent within a system built of legal, economic, and social redirection, reveals that a gap remains between potential and realizable goals. Beyond pragmatism, values (and possibly a cultural inertia—though this is more difficult to distinguish) compete as mechanisms guiding the decision of those who might or might not leave the city for the ger districts.

In the reverse of P—'s situation, leaving the core to take up housing in the ger districts can also be a decision of values over economics. A woman, moderately educated but working in the service sector at moderate wages, identified the cost saving as one of her motivations for leaving her apartment and moving to a xashaa. But she claims this was not her primary reason. She emphasized her values over the pragmatics of financial gain, for her intention was to start the business in the ger district to which she had moved. There she had the larger support structure of her extended family, which had not coalesced around her during her apartment life but, she feels, only came together upon moving to a xashaa where they had the space to all be together. Though the family had staked their land prior to the rule change, they had in fact settled on much more than the previously allotted .07 hectare (land allotments and laws are expanded upon in the next chapter). Under the revised rules they would likely be able to legitimate their larger claim (we spoke in 2009; I have not been in contact with her since the 2010 adjustment to the law). Her family was also in the

advantageous position, having not only flouted the earlier rules restricting the amount of land, but in having done so on the front line of urban expansion in Uliastai where, with a number of children having been recently been born into the family, she could legally register even more plots contiguous with their existing land. The business which she had long intended to start she could now do so on her own land. It would be a private school for children in the neighborhood. The school would eventually have to compete for students against a municipally funded program in a building that would be built on public land controlled by the Bayanzurkh district. She would have a several years' head start on any municipal program, which would only be added to the neighborhood once the population became large enough to warrant a new school building, when the necessary funding from the city was in place, and with the bureaucratic hurdles surmounted. By building a private school on functionally private land, she could capitalize on the spatial value of her holdings while also meeting ostensibly public needs for schooling neighborhood children. All of her and her family's xashaa would currently be legitimate under the land law revision, but none of this would have been possible without having initially breached (or at the very least, loosely interpreting) previous land law. Legal divisioning of land is explored in the next chapter.

Conclusion

If the ger districts are to find a legitimate place for themselves between existing conceptions of urban and rural, they too will require some understanding of how they came to be made. Cosgrove (1985) had suggested that the idea of landscape was bound up in the same ideas that allowed painters to render geometrically constructed perspectival pictures of the landscape, surveyors to geometrically bound and quantify parcels of land, and merchants to buy, sell, and trade land in much the same way as they bought, sold and traded goods. In weak mimicry of Cosgrove's example, the top-down partitioning of ger district lands occurs through laws constructed at Mongolia's political center, is supported through the similar complements of surveyors and cadastral maps, but is achieved on an individual level by each xashaa builder. This last point aligns better with Olwig's viewpoint, that the idea of landscape was not designed at the upper echelons of a hierarchy of well-capitalized mercantilists; rather it was forged in the hands of an egalitarian circle of those

who resisted feudalism from its edges. Evidence for such a reformation of ger district land also exists (to be referred to later, in chapters 5 and 6 and the conclusion). Existing academic frames for the idea of landscape generate the range of possibilities for looking to the ger districts, but do not answer whether residents' capacities for transforming their land into a cohesive place within the Mongolian outlook that could recognize the ger districts for their own advantages between countryside and city.

Turning away from the conceptual placement of the ger districts in the overall Mongolian landscape, the pragmatics of acquiring individual parcels becomes most relevant to ger district residents themselves. How residents gain access to and usage rights over ger district land is the next piece in progressing toward an understanding of how residents might themselves bring about a revision of Mongolia's ger district landscape. The story of dividing land parcels is necessarily tied to other changes that have been occurring in Mongolia since the dissolution of the Socialist state, particularly the concept of ownership, as manifested in legal structures. In the next chapter, the recent history of Mongolian land law is explored, as are the pragmatics of residents who use the laws to their advantage.



Figure 8: Settled landscape at Ulaanbaatar's fringe is reflected in differing viewpoints, engaged from the ground and distanciated from above.

Chapter 3: Evolving land law

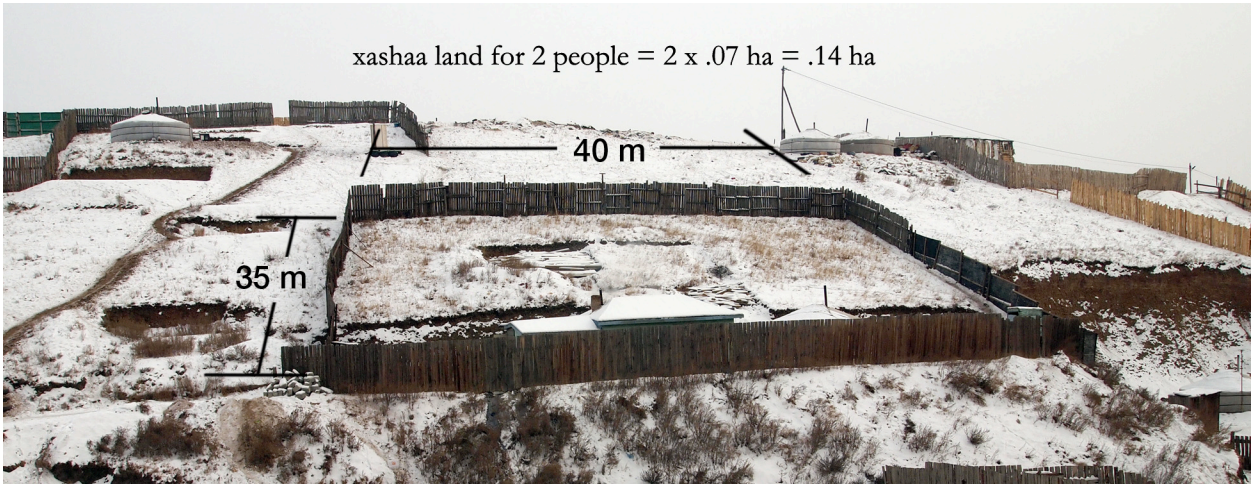


Figure 9: Pacing land enclosed by a xashaa.

In this chapter, I pivot from the theoretical division of Mongolian landscape, between the countryside, city, and now ger districts, to examine how land in the ger districts is practicably partitioned through the legal formation of urban spaces. The series of laws pertaining to control of land have only been adopted since the collapse of Socialism, so in practice, the whole legal system remains inchoate as it evolves. This recent history provides the context for understanding intangible factors that affect the physical manifestation of the ger district since the collapse of Socialism. Mongolia's pre-Socialist divisions of land through customary, political, and ultimately legal mechanisms have been explored in their nascent forms by Sneath (2003; 2004) and Upton (2009). These apparatus remain at large today for the partitioning countryside land, as used for the pasturage and range of Mongolia's nomadic herdsmen (Fernandez-Gimenez and Batbuyan 2004; Murphy 2011).

The evolving relationship between the land and the law that governs its use—at least in official terms—is a story to parallel Mongolia's transition from the centralized controls of Socialism to the market forces of capitalism. Though various regimens for delineating the land through law were instituted well before Mongolia's adoption of State Socialism, the centralization that occurred under the governance of single-party rule altered all previous systems. But with the weakening of centralized authority, especially in the late Socialist era, the system for legally designating land was also weakened, resulting in a more general reliance on the earlier systems of customary tenure for usufruct rights to the land. The effort to return Mongolia to a statutory system of land tenure parallels other developments of the post-Socialist economy and society. With

the collapse of the political order of Socialism in the early 1990s, including the government and party that had upheld the Socialist ideals, for both better and worse over the preceding seven decades, the clear sense had been a turning of the nation to embrace the same very system that had long served as the Socialist government's antagonist: western-styled capitalism. The turn to the West for inspiration, but also for practical guidance, seemed inevitable at the time (World Bank 2003; 2004). It also proved to be an embrace that would be fully realized within the two decades since the Socialist collapse of early 1990s. But there were also moments—now since abandoned—when it seemed Mongolia might have found some middle path, inspired to move in a more western direction, but retaining autochthonous principles for use of the land that carried a vestige not of Mongolian Socialism necessarily so much as Mongolian nomadism. The example that was held up in many of the Central or Inner Asian states left in the wake of Socialist collapse was that of Turkey (though not least due to a politically motivated wave of pan-Turkism or, in the case of Mongolia, a sense of Altaic affinity). Turkey, invoking its own legacy of a nomadic past (though this might arguably be only mythic), periodically set aside provisions for temporary inhabitation within an otherwise Western set of land laws. These laws of squatters rights have assumed an autochthonous Turkish label—the gecekondu laws (Payne 2002; United Nations Centre for Human Settlements 1996).

Mongolia in the late 1990s appeared to be developing a set of appropriate laws that might have been most appropriate to, and even inspired by the ger districts, which had yet to blossom into the large scale settlements that they have since become. But enacted use of the land negotiates between culturally appropriate response to the law and the evolving land law itself. While the evolution of successive laws have played out according to the advice of international, development-minded agencies, this process has been faulted for a neo-liberal approach to property rights by those seeking to retain previous gains in equality for the city's lower social strata, the rural-to-urban migrants (Davis 2006; United Nations Human Settlements Program 2003); but supported for their inducements toward innovative vitality by neoclassical economists (Skeldon 1997; Neuwirth 2005, 151-173). The use of the land is evolving, sometimes in dialectical complement to the law, but other times according to parallel schemes. The law and how people use the law reflect one another, but rarely move at similar paces.

In the legislative imagining of the land law, or at least in the rhetoric that surrounded it, the principal beneficiaries of this legal system were meant to be the herders, displaced from the rural countryside, who had few other options as migrants to the urban setting. While this assumption is largely correct for many of the families that do take up residence in the ger districts, it is important in understanding the potential future directions of the ger districts to distinguish among these residents their differing backgrounds, motivations, and expectations in ger district settlement. The phenomenon of settlement patterns in the ger districts was significant enough that it could not likely have been halted by legal mandate; remembering that the ger districts actually predate the built core of the city. The legal code instead attempts to insert a measure of legal control into a process that was occurring regardless of the law and was otherwise entirely self-organizing.

Settling laws

The landscapes that comprise 'the countryside'—nearly all of the landscape beyond the narrow bounds of Mongolia's capital and few industrial or provincial towns—remains held by the national government for local use according to a system of pasturage rights. Access to rural land retains a strong resemblance to traditional pastoral nomadic systems of land use (cf. Murphy 2011). Revisioning the post-Socialist land laws might have followed one path, to take customary rights into consideration. But the contemporary results—both in the letters of the law and the circumnavigatory tactics of those who use the law—might be bound up in the early process of Mongolia's emergence from the Soviet shadows.

The remaking of the relationship between the law and the land began with the drafting of the Mongolian National Constitution, adopted in early January 1992 by the State Ikh Hural (in official English translation, however the original Mongolian document of the constitution appears with the latent Socialist name for its enactor, The People's Great Assembly: Ард Их Хурал). The constitution is composed of seventy articles, divided thematically among six chapters. ARTICLE 16, which guarantees an array of rights and freedoms, comes under the second chapter, "Human rights and freedoms." This chapter gathers sequentially those articles that concern the role of the individual in the Mongolian state. CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE 16, PART 3 of the Mongolian Constitution reads in its entirety:

> Right to fair acquisition, possession, and inheritance of moveable and immoveable property. Illegal confiscation and requisitioning of the private property of citizens shall be prohibited. If the State and its bodies appropriate private property on the basis of exclusive public need, they shall do so with due compensation and payment. (State Ikh Hural 1992)

While this seems to clearly establish a western model for the coming privatization of property, there is also, within the bounds of ARTICLE 6, a counter provision for maintaining a relationship with the land that resembled the State ownership of all land during Socialism as well as the pre-Socialist model of land controlled by the pre-Socialist apparatus of government: feudal lords, the lamaseries, and the Qing-appointed governors. PART 1 of ARTICLE 6 reads, in whole: "The land, its subsoil, forests, water, fauna and flora and other natural resources in Mongolia shall belong exclusively to the people and be under State protection." State ownership, on behalf of the people, is first established as a norm. Only from this, in the second through fifth parts of ARTICLE 6, is carved out the spaces of privatization: "2: The land, except that given to the citizens of Mongolia for private possession…shall be the property of the State." "3: The State may give for private ownership plots of land, except pastures and areas under public utilisation and special use." ARTICLE 6 establishes State control of land, carving an exception for privatization, but then from privatization carves another exception for State control again of any land used according to Mongolia's pastoral nomadic tradition or for any other public need. Mongolia in this period following the end of State Socialism, even in its most developed and most Westernized urban areas, seems poised for finding a unique relationship between the people and the land as defined by law.

Two years later, the first detailed terms are written out for how this relationship between people and land will be negotiated. First, the introduction of the 1994 Civil Code reaffirms the ideas of land ownership in CHAPTER 7, though ARTICLE 87 of the code limits the terms by restricting ownership only to Mongolian nationals. But then the 1994 Land Law sets the terms for the private sector not as ownership, but as a limited term leasehold. An initial lease of sixty years may be extended for another forty years by a private, Mongolian citizen (for non-Mongolians, the terms are five years, with an ability to extend by five years). These terms initially apply only to urban areas, not to the countryside, though the terms are extended to aimag and *sum* ('county') centers in 1995 under Resolution 143.

By the late 1990s, this early flurry of legislation begins to gather more substance toward its implementation, including the creation of links to other parts of Mongolian law and practices of governance. A 1997 Law on Registration of Immovable Property demands an accounting of what lands are in whose hands, which leads to the 1999 Law of Cadastral Survey and Land Cadastre. Once the question is asked of who owns what land, the practicalities of actually documenting such would seem to demand definition. Where landscape and legal definition of its individuation meet is in the cadastral survey.[1] Furthermore, one purpose for the State to track who owns what is to then be able to collect tax on the land. In 2000, the Law on Immovable Property Tax is unveiled. In the first decade of Mongolia's post-Socialist transition, an idea of private use of the land is actualized through mechanisms that tie landscape into the legal codes, but also the fiscal workings of the government.

The subsequent decade would alter the equation further, this time not only looking to the West for models, but coming under direct influence of both consultants and donor organizations, including USAID, The World Bank, and The Asian Development Bank. An updated version of the land law and a law for setting the limits of Mongolian citizenship ownership of land were both adopted in 2002. On the one hand the laws addressed issues that reflected the Socialist and pre-Socialist eras by establishing structures by which herders could collectively use pasture land (under ARTICLE 66, PART 3), it on the other hand introduced measures that could re-orient Mongolian society toward capital-development through personal accumulation of land rights. The use of land was no longer retained solely in its physical form, but also now as a fiscal presence. Private citizens could sell or trade land rights or use their rights to a particular property as collateral in other forms of economic exchange.

The 2002 laws instigated a fundamental tension between liberalization and the problems instilled by decentralization. This tension, and the way it would play out, would have a great impact on the form of

[1] The cultural geographic idea of landscape, following in the early argument of Cosgrove (1984; 1985), is bound up in this very meeting, between the sciences of quantifying the space of the land and the arts of envisioning place in representational form. That Mongolia should revisit such issues is a return to the era in the western tradition when landscape was 'invented' as a place where economic activity embraces new legal forms to produce the new social spaces of post-feudal class.

Mongolia's principal city, Ulaanbaatar. Devolving the process of granting certification for land to the nine düüreg governors incentivized sprawl, as this also grew the political base of each district. One xashaa owner, B— confirmed that she was able to expand her xashaa beyond the .07 hectare limit through an appeal to her borough governor, thus allowing more of her family members to also settle in the same area.[2, 3] The process may have been altered since 2002, for the current system of land registration only involves the regional district of Ulaanbaatar through its local xoroo office for the purposes of acknowledging residence, but not for the further steps (outlined below) of actually gaining legal certification to the land. This limiting of district control may be a product of the 2007 Land Fee Law, which indeed limited ownership and control on the part of registrants. Only those with proper registration in the geographically appropriate administrative region could then register land in their own name.[4] The rights of citizens to settle peri-urban land became codified at .07 hectare per family (after 2010, per individual citizen) in Ulaanbaatar, but in aimag capitals and sum centers areal amounts were set at .35 hectare and .50 hectare respectively. These larger increments acknowledge several factors—that more land would remain available in settlements of the countryside, but that Ulaanbaatar would necessarily agglomerate at a higher rate and thus demand denser settlement. But in aimag and sum centers, the potential for retaining some portion of a reduced herd of livestock is also accommodated through larger land apportions. On the one hand, this might incentivize settlers in aimag and sum centers not to move up the settlement-ladder by which many families end up in ever larger urban centers but with ever smaller plots of land. On the other hand, it would seem to encourage stock-holders to leave the steppe, as settlement in initially smaller settlements would not come with many penalties for jettisoning the

[2] A re-strategizing of land ownership would subsequently take hold after the 2010 shift in judicial interpretation of the land laws, altering the old equations.

[3] The governor of the düüreg may even be one of the largest land holders, according to rumors traded by neighbors at the districts northern fringes. A large house protected by a wall surrounding a plot of land thirty times the size of a typical xashaa stands nearby to where they live. According to one older woman who herds her and her neighbors' cattle on the hillsides adjacent to the property, the house belongs to the governor, but she rarely sees it occupied. The house is equated with dacha usage, while taking advantage of xashaa land laws.

[4] For urban residents of Ulaanbaatar, this has become dependent on confirmation from the xoroo office, but also the only role the xoroo office plays in the process.

pastoral nomadic lifestyle—one could have semi-urban services while still keeping ones' herd. But familiar pattern is still induced of nomads settling in more minor settlements steadily moving up to larger and larger settlements, before arriving in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, often through the extended networks of family members who had previously made the scalar jumps.

That such rights to land settlement and use were provided on a per family basis seemed to reflect the traditional importance of the *ail*. The ail was a family unit size that was important prior to the Socialist period, as the system of dividing pasturage land was based on families. This is not to say that the family unit was an inherently perceived value per se, but in practical terms, the ail was functionally the unit in which families were able to best exploit the environment for pastoral nomadic production. In the Socialist period, scholars have posited that collectivization succeeded (at least the second time it was implemented) in the Mongolian context because it so closely resembled the indigenous system already used whereby stock-owning families herded together in self-governing structures (Humphrey and Sneath 1996, 3-5). The chief adjustment during Socialist collectivization, then, was not in the mechanisms of interaction between families, nor in their use of the environment, but only in the State ownership of the herds and the centrally-planned role of the collectives within the larger economy. That the ail retains an important role in conceiving the relations of people to landscape is the proliferation of place-names that rely on ail in the vernacular landscape. For the moment, the building-supplies market retains its name as 100-айл (*Zuun-ail*, though it is comprised of an area settled by well over one hundred families). Should the '2020 Plan' for Ulaanbaatar succeed in redeveloping Zuun-ail as a high-rise zone,[5] citizens' mental maps of the landscape may adjust to a new vernacular, as previously occurred in Bichel xoroolol, or the Zuun-ail name may be retained anachronistically, as have happened with Sapporo and Sansar districts.[6] In further elaboration of the relationship between the family

[5] The municipal plan for adding one hundred thousand new units of housing stock is itself referred to not by the number of apartments, but by the number of families it will house: '100 мянган айл'. For its part, the '2020 Plan' adopted in 2000, having few portions of its intentions implemented by the 2010 halfway point, is sometimes referred to (unsardonically) as the '2030 Plan.'

[6] Though conceived as the XIII-microraion during a Socialist period dominated by Russian influence, the opening of the first Sansar ('star' or 'cosmos') Department Store recast the surrounding neighborhood as the informally-named Sansar district in real-estate listings, on bus maps, and in people's mental maps. The name persists, despite the Sansar chain

and the land is an anecdote by Purev-Erdene, who has attempted to translate for his students in Ulaanbaatar the concepts of urban planning he studied in Japan. He has been unable to find an equivalent for the term 'neighborhood' that carries the same social, areal, and place-based complexity. The use of xoroo or even xoroolol too often assumes a politically bounded zone, without conveying any sense of place or character, nor of the people who might inhabit that zone. Conversely, the use of *ail* can presume the people aspect, but is often misconstrued to mean either an immediate neighbor (but not the many who might make up a neighborhood) or, within a larger neighborhood, only those people with whom one is kin-related (rebuffing the geographic component of neighborhood). In the countryside, a collection of families that share the same resource will often have some kinship tie, as designated within the term *xot-ail*.[7]

Though the *ail* remains a culturally significant part of the use of land in the ger districts, there was a question of the constitutionality of guaranteeing .07 hectare of land on a per-family basis. The rupture occurred between the culture of defining land use according to the family but operating within a legal system

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having opened stores throughout the city. Sapporo refers to the area around a roundabout along Peace Avenue at the southwestern corner of the X-microraion (or 10-r xoroolol using post-Soviet naming conventions). Though popular recounting of the place name varies, Sapporo refers to a now defunct Japanese restaurant—owned by a transplant from Hokkaido or a Mongolian who had returned from Hokkaido—or a small shop offering Japanese products. The original shop or restaurant disappeared long ago. The Sapporo place-name persists in the destination-advertising exclaimed by bus ticket-takers and micro-bus hawkers (the roundabout at Sapporo being one of the city's primary transit hubs). Vernacular place names frequently find their reification in the place-utterances necessary to making public transit function. Such sedimentations of language forge the link between popular speech and eventual acceptance as official places on the map of the city.

Bichel xoroolol (the 'microscopic' microdistrict), on the other hand, is a place-name that only came into common usage once the apartment blocks were constructed in the early 1990s. Previously, the area was a ger district known familiarly as the 500-*ail*. The head of one of the approximately 500 families forcibly displaced for the construction of Bichel is among the very few people who retains the emplaced memory of the long displaced name. This reference and the story of his forcible displacement without compensation came to light when, during an interview, he was asked why he had moved to his current ger district from another similar area. He mentioned that a number of places in the city were referred to by the number of families living there (400-*ail*, 50-*ail*), but had been erased from the popular imagination when redevelopment wiped out both their physical presence and their toponymic place.

[7] The xot-ail, 'хот-айл,' term was used in the Socialist period as a way to designate the collectivization process for families that remained nomadic on the steppe rather than settled on a collective farm. But it is also from this notion of family groups sharing resources which is derived from хот, *xot* or *khot*, for 'city.' When pressed further on appropriate terminologies for expressing neighborliness, Purev-Erdene further rejected *ail xorsh*, айл хөрш, as it connotes neighbors within the same compound or xashaa, again insinuating a familial connection. Rather, he eschews any use of *ail* but keeps *xorsh* in the compound *xorsh orchin*, хөрш орчин, suggesting a 'neighboring habitat or environment' as it delineates a broader geographic area.

where the constitutional guarantee is toward individual rights. While CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE 16, PART 3 addresses property, both moveable and immoveable, it is with ARTICLE 14 that the property owners' rights are concerned. ARTICLE 14, in its first and second parts, defines ownership rights as something possessed by the *individual*, rather than the *family*. While land laws until this point had guaranteed usage rights based of (in Ulaanbaatar) .07 hectare per family, a further revision in 2010 changed the terms to .07 hectare per individual. Under this revision, a family living in a ger district consisting of four individuals,[8] including children of any age, was entitled now to .28 hectare with only the nominal one-time fee for registering the land and an annual tax liability (for which they have so far remained mostly exempt).[9]

[8] In our housing survey in the ger districts, a xashaa had an average of 4.1 family members, with 'family' potentially composed vertically from members of three generations or laterally across siblings and spouses. This relatively low number is, however, an average, as in many xashaa only a single pensioner was living or a couple with a single child, while in others as many as a dozen members might crowd into a home. In our study, the average remained consistent when controlling for ger-dwellers versus house-dwellers and long-term urbanites versus those who had once been nomads. The 4.1 statistic is also consistent with National Statistical Office data of family size for Mongolia overall (NSO 2011).

[9] An annual tax liability of 0.6% of the cost of the land is offset by an amendment to the 2004 Immoveable Property Tax Law, as outlined by the legal firm Anderson and Anderson LLP: http://www.anallp.com/land-law-of-mongolia/. The land valuation is determined using both set and variable factors. As of 2007, Ulaanbaatar land has a fixed value of US$36 per square meter. But the valuation of any given parcel might range from this full amount down to 10% of this US$36 amount. In a complex formula as calculated by ALAGaC (2007; Газрын харилцаа, геодези зураг зүйн газрын бүтэц) for an undistributed poster under the banner of "Mongolian land law," a .07 hectare parcel (equivalent to 700 square meters) in Ulaanbaatar could have a valuation between US$2520 and US$25,200. A tax liability of 0.6% would set the potential burden between US$15.12 and US$151.20. Of this amount, according to the 2004 Immoveable Property Tax Law, because it is urban property used for domestic purposes, the property users are exempted from 95% of the tax burden, thus would owe between US$0.76 and US$7.56 in annual property taxes. The amount at the lower end of the spectrum is the equivalent of round-trip bus fare from the ger districts to the city center. How much of even these token amounts are collected annually is not distinguishable in available land revenue data, however the overall amount brought in for the most recent year in the data (2006) is US$12,624,560. Even at the highest tax rate, there are not enough xashaa to provide municipal coffers the aforementioned amount, meaning much of the reported revenues—if accurate—must be from taxed commercial land, leaving domestic sites invisible in the generation of municipal revenue. As municipal budgets stood in 2011, tax revenues fall short of Ulaanbaatar's budgetary responsibilities.



Figure 10: Much of Zuun Salaa is now part of the 25-r xoroo of Songinokhairkhan düüreg, with its own administrative office (right).

Facts on the ground

The process of registering land now requires multiple steps carried out in multiple locations, which shift scale from neighborhood xoroo office to city-wide offices for land and real-estate. The process begins in the xoroo office. For the purposes of tracing this process out, I began my investigation of the land registration process in the xoroo office of Zuun Salaa (Songinokhairkhan düüreg, 25-r) where live many of the families I interviewed, as reported below in chapter 5, and also lives the family whom I observed over a longer duration as they built their own house, as reported below in chapter 6.

The Songinokhairkhan düüreg 25-r xoroo office was established in 2007, when the xoroo was carved from the original 9-r xoroo. In 2011, Songinokhairkhan had 32 xoroo which in total contained 213 heseg (eight heseg fell within the 25-r xoroo). The cellular dividing of xoroo was initially established according to the relatively slow expansion of fixed dwellings in the core urban areas, which allowed a xoroo to grow to approximately 6000 inhabitants before part of the land would be reapportioned into a new xoroo. The population boom in informal settlement areas such as the 25-r xoroo represents (the 25-r is entirely composed of xashaa dwellers) forced a recalibration of the system so that a single xoroo accumulated first 10,000 inhabitants and then 12,000 inhabitants before a new xoroo would be formed. The 25-r is rapidly approaching that most recent figure for subdividing. At the close of 2010, the population was counted at 10,720 persons, but within six months (the most recent tabulation is for the end of June 2011) that figure had

expanded to 10,856. But this is only the known figure, as it is calculated on the official registrations that provide citizens with the recognition they require for voting, obtaining sanctioned employment, registering children for school, and similar interactions with government-documented endeavors. There is potentially a sizable population that escapes all metrics. (An informant who has lived in the area for over a decade and knows many of the families estimated that the population since 2004 had added 50%, becoming "overcrowded," in his words). The 10,850 individuals are spread among 2286 families or xashaa; the resulting calculation of 4.75 persons per xashaa is significantly higher than the 4.1 persons per xashaa calculated from results of our survey in the three other regions: Belx, Uliastai, and Zuun ard Ayushiin. The lower, 4.1 calculation is consistent with twenty-first century statistics for urban areas as calculated by the National Statistical Office of Mongolia (NSO 2011; this fluctuated a great deal through much of the twentieth century, per NSO 2002), in which case 4.75 persons per xashaa (or per family, in the metrics of the NSO) might be indicative of an area growing due to greater influx from the countryside.[10]

The xoroo office serves the community in the quotidian capacity of registering inhabitants, but also in the process of registering land. The land registration process is a multi-step progression through layers of a bureaucracy spread throughout the city (each bureau charged with administering distinct and differing portions of land rights ownership), but it begins at the local xoroo office. To register a parcel of land under one's own name, one must first establish legal residence in the same jurisdiction as the land. While it might seem paradoxical to establish residency on land that is not yet legally recognized as habitable, open land at the expanding edge of the city is nevertheless already part of a xoroo. Similarly, the process begins more-or-less from scratch, as one makes a claim to living in a xoroo by writing such a claim on a blank sheet of paper. A

[10] In contradiction to this possibility, however, most interviewed households in Zuun Salaa had migrated from other areas of Ulaanbaatar. The few interviewees who indicated having moved from the countryside had done so many years or even decades earlier and tended to be limited to households consisting of just two people; a typical example is set by one older couple who wished to relocate to Ulaanbaatar because their children had come to the city for educational opportunities. The children had remained urban due to their post-educational careers, so the parents eventually left the countryside and 'retired' to a ger district; this retirement being a product of their selected circumstances—no longer wishing to face the rigors of the countryside, they had selected to be near their children and grandchildren, but had few skills that would allow them to remain productively employable in the urban environment. Building a home in the ger district allowed them to maximize both their modest amount of savings as well as their limited skill set.

resident, starting from a blank sheet of paper, can write a statement claiming to live in a particular place. This is the informal nucleus that then becomes formalized through the successive kernels of notarizing the document—the claim passes into legitimacy by being stamped by the notary (a visitor to Ulaanbaatar able to read the Cyrillic signage might be struck by how many offices of notaries have proliferated throughout the city)—and having the xoroo office recognize the statement as officially valid. Though a notary will charge a fee of 1500-2500₮, there is no charge made by the xoroo office. Once accepted by the xoroo office, residence is established. On paper, this transformation occurs abruptly, however less formal systems bridge between unofficial and official status. For example, my own registration with a xoroo office in the Gandan ger district (a necessary step toward my registration at a national university) involved phone calls by the xoroo office to a known member of my host family. The transfer of information through this informal network was sufficient to supplement a note I and my host had written out and I had had notarized. Taken together, the 'evidence' allowed me to establish residency in the xoroo. For residency-seekers, the informal networks run deeper, as they may have occupied this land already for some time. If the settler has more recently arrived, he or she may be transferring their residency from another location.

Once residency is established, one has the legitimacy of place to then seek legitimacy and legal protection for that place where one resides. Notifying the municipal land office about the intention to settle a particular parcel is the next step in the process. Rather than prescribe the land that may be settled—a challenge due to the open range of potential sites as the city grows outward—the land office establishes proscriptive rules for settlement based on broad notions of safety, such as flooding and fire risks. Parcels that may not be settled, according to land office rules, include those in occasional streambeds and run-off channels, where flash-flooding can occur after a heavy rain event. The land under high-tension power lines is also prohibited from settlement. Instances of a xashaa violating one or the other of these rules seem common in practice, but whether or not these parcels have official permission and the legal backing of registration is still in open question. For a settlement of xashaa in an area that becomes marshy or even flooded (though not flash-flooding) in years of heavier spring snowfall or summer rain, a worker in the xoroo office had suggested that authorities would force the settlers to move, though how such a move might be enforced was not clear.

Several years earlier, in 2007, I had raised a similar question while walking through another ger district with a foreign expert, M—, who served as the architect for a non-profit foundation building schools in the ger district. A developed home site with a large house sat almost beneath a high-tension line and with a 'for sale' sign painted across the gate. I asked whether it might not be a legal property, M— said it's possible that it is still legal—a path between that xashaa and a neighbors runs directly beneath the power lines, so the home may have escaped being designated as directly beneath the power lines—but it would nevertheless be difficult to sell. The market, in this case, might be the self-righting mechanism for adjusting a situation where the law had been otherwise skirted.

While maps might suffice for determining legal and illegal areas for building, municipal land officers apparently make site visits, though this can either be on a case-by-case basis or for visiting a multi-parceled area in a single, extended visit. The fee for this, as told by various land holders who have been through the process, is approximately 40,000₮. The fee is meant to cover the cost for sending a land officer into the field to check on the land in question. How this occurs was disputed between a registry official and the registrants in the office at the time. A registrant claimed no officers actually make rounds in the ger districts, instead relying on maps in the office. The officer, who admitted that field visits were neither her responsibility nor that of her department, disputed the dismissive claim, however, defending the land office as being efficient and resourceful in meeting overwhelming demand. Site visits, she said, were not made on a case by case basis. Rather, a land officer will make periodic visits to an overall area, noting necessary updates, though sequentially these will be after-the-fact.

After establishing residency with the xoroo and then suitability with the land office, the third general stage in the land registration process requires delimiting the parcel in question and determining that this land is not already registered to another person. The real-estate office, also a municipally operated entity, is the final filter for determining the status of a parcel, as it is also the ultimate issuer of the certificate of tenure. In order to make its determination, however, several other pieces of information must be in alignment. The real estate office claims that they are sometimes able to determine land ownership solely by consulting maps or plans they have of the city, but often, as reported by several interviewed registration-holders or seekers, a

cadastral survey is needed. This is to determine the bounds of the land but also to resolve that no other pre-existing claims coincide with the parcel in question. Previously, only state surveyors determined all boundary lines. The public surveyors' office, however, like the land office, is understaffed for the demand for cadastral services. Similar in operation to the land office, a public cadastral surveyor might methodically work his way across the landscape of the city, visiting one area at a time to efficiently work the landscape into divisible parcels, using modern instruments and relying on a single, established base station. On hilltops that emerge from the ger districts of the city, one might often come across a surveyors' assistant staffing a telemetric base station, connected wirelessly to the surveyor marking off the landscape below. But as demand for a cadastre has long since outstripped the capacity of the public survey office, a registrant may more likely hire a private surveyor to work on a case-by-case basis. The private surveyor is contracted by the land holder: several different informants reported the cost is 40,000₮ within the city (one person, whose family was required to have a cadastre undertaken well beyond city limits, reported a cost of 100,000₮, though this price included significant travel time on the part of the surveyor).

Once the land boundary issue is resolved, the real estate office also determines the initial cost (if any) and the annual tax liability associated with the land, based on its size, physical constraints, and position in the city (see footnotes above, related to 2004 Immoveable Property Tax Law). Currently, a one-time fee of approximately 30,000₮ is assessed for issuing a certificate on up to .07 hectare per household member. For land areas above .07 hectare, based on the size of the parcel, a one-time fee is supposed to be assessed in addition to the annual tax liability. Payment of these costs is made not to the real estate office itself, but through a private bank that holds an account of the municipal real estate office. Establishing a transfer from the payee to the real estate office account might require additional steps, sometimes again involving a notary. But once proper documentation records payments, the real estate office is able to finally issue the certificate of tenure. Certificates are issued for a set length of time—typically fifteen years at the moment, though in the past this has varied, with one person reporting holding a certificate for thirty years. In the first decade of post-Socialist land law reform, the initial impulse had been to offer tenures of sixty years, renewable for an additional forty years. Under the current rules, regardless of the length of tenure granted by a specific

certificate, upon its expiration, the certificate holder may apply for a new certificate without having to return through the entire process. A certificate fee (reported as approximately 30,000₮) is required to be paid for the first issuance and may be required again for the re-issuance, though this will depend on rules in place at the time the first certificates come due. It was explained by a worker in the registration office that the fifteen year duration of certificates was just a legal control, as reissuance can occur on a much shorter time frame for a number of reasons, including if the initial land holder dies and the rights to the land are inherited by a family member, the rights to the land are sold to a new landholder, or the rights are transferred within the family but to be registered under a different name (a case that has become common for reasons outlined below).

In theory, the process has the clarity of orderly progress from one stage to the next, but like any process steeped in bureaucracy, legibility is sacrificed by both parties in the actual practice of registering the land. The registrant is seeking to move through the process in the shortest amount of time or for the least amount of money, so is sometimes willing to take shortcuts at the expense of money or time. For the offices involved, the motivation is often to more complex, as they are required to conduct their work but are often faced with a workload beyond their capacity. Corruption, expressed as a rampant problem by many interviewees, can fuel the bureaucracy as official interference can lead to unofficial payments for services that bypass hindrances. Even in official dealings, negotiation is undertaken by both sides over any number of issues.

The decision to enter the registration process is itself not undertaken without some negotiation of one's circumstances. More frequently, a parcel might be occupied for years before a family is willing (or able to afford) to proceed through the official processes of registration. Or the registration process itself can occur over many years (as one family mentioned having taken a decade from start to finish). The official amounts listed above approximate the amounts as listed by informants and interviewees in the xoroo office itself. But these do not take into account other amounts, usually paid under the table and of potentially significant denominations, to expedite the bureaucratic hassle of the registration system. No one suggested actual figures on what the unofficial amounts might cost, but a few informants suggested it was highly dependent on the situation, the motivations for registering, the means a registrant had at his or her disposal, and the motivations of the officer with whom they might be dealing.

H— detailed a situation in which the negotiations initially worked against her family in their pursuit of registering a parcel of land. Having already occupied the site for a significant time prior to initiating the registration process, the family established residency, conducted the necessary cadastral survey, and registered the land with the equivalent of the xoroo and sum offices (this took place outside Ulaanbaatar so the aimag and sum offices replaced the municipality in the process). Each of these steps required significant amounts of time and some investment of money: the cadastral survey alone cost them 100,000₮. But the cadastral survey alone was only the first, rather weak step in exerting their right to legal protection. A wealthier and more politically connected person neighbor, however, contested the claim in order to acquire the land himself. By paying bribes to local officials, the neighbor was able to legitimate his claim, establishing the necessary legal standing to eventually be issued a certificate for the land. Because no paper trail preceded his recent acquisition, family of H— had no recourse of historical or customary claims. The process was never clear cut, as the family of the informant describing the story was not simply pushed off the land nor out of the way. Rather, a subtle negotiation was made with the family by way of the same local officials suspected of having accepted the neighbors bribe. The official urged them toward, and eventually cut through bureaucracy in their own acquisition of an adjacent piece of land. Eventually, this adjacent parcel was deemed sufficient (or even preferable) by the family. A new cadastral survey was made, some of the previous processes were repeated, and they were eventually issued a thirty-year (instead of the more typical fifteen-year) certificate for occupation. By raising objections but ultimately backing down from a more protracted fight over the original piece of land, the family believes their unofficial recompense was the provision of a longer term of leasehold on the adjacent land. This longer lease offsets some of the former instability, as they intend to improve the land for economic purposes. Having the longer lease, they feel, gives them reassurance that their investments will be profitable in the long term.

One ger-dwelling family living up the hill from the xoroo office, in the upper reaches of the neighborhood (though outside the bounds of the 25-r xoroo; their land remained in the 9-r xoroo when the 25-r broke away) illustrated the conceptual benefits and shortfalls of establishing legal protection for their land. The family had settled here after having moved from Govi-Altai aimag. The parents had followed their children,

who had come to Ulaanbaatar for high school and business school. Settling in this xashaa a decade earlier, their experience exposed the graduated levels of legal protection for a dwelling site. They indicated they had previously established their possession of the land through a cadastral survey, but only recently registered their land with the xoroo office. With registering, they also undertook demarcating a more established boundary through the building of a wood fence. The legal protection alone did not seem to allay their concerns for possession as much as did the creating of facts-on-the-ground, through the more tangible protection of the fence. Little other effort for altering the land was apparent, nor had they added any significant constructions to complement the ger that was their housing, but they did have a clear notion of how they would build the xashaa fence. Thin planking with the uneven edging of scrap material made clear that the wood was of low quality and relatively cheap. But the family insisted on presenting their fence as nicely as possibly, which meant sawing the uneven excess that protruded above the top rail. A wall across the dirt road from their xashaa was, unusually, built from concrete block and, even more unusually, topped with embedded shards of broken glass. When I suggested that the unsawn boards could provide a similar security for the top of their fence, the idea was dismissed as unaesthetic; they plan to paint the fence, as much for an image of their boundary as for the weather-treating of the wood. Admittedly, someone wishing to enter could simply just come through the gate or, or almost as easily break through the thin boards of the fence without much difficulty. The boundary was only a presence in the sense that it was visible, as it provided little real security physically. But its real virtue may have been in rendering the legal boundary manifest.

> Heretofore, the discussion has involved three different levels of possession of Mongolian land:[11]
>
> газар ашиглах—*gazar ashiglax* is to use land or place with the sense of improving and profiting from its use, but without ownership or the ability to direct ownership of the land. The land remains the property of the State, but may be used for the contracted period of time;
>
> газар эзэмших—*gazar ezemshix* is to own or possess land or place with the ability to benefit not only from the areal quality of the land, but also from the products of the land: usufruct rights; and

[11] Legal implications for foreign businesses wishing to invest or operate in Mongolia are the purpose of a guide produced by Anderson and Anderson LLP: http://www.anallp.com/land-law-of-mongolia.

газар өмчлөх—*gazar ömchlöx* as full proprietorship of land or place, with an ability to buy and sell the real property.

While the notion that land might be bought and sold, in practice, on the one hand, the rights to the land are what have often been transacted between buyers and sellers. But any confusion on the part of ger district residents may also be offset by the tactics by which people skirt having to fully interact with the laws. End runs around bureaucracy have near term advantages in establishing one's claim to land by establishing 'facts-on-the-ground'—in the scramble for acquiring land in the hemmed in reaches of the ger district this tactic can be an important one for establishing perimeters first and justifying them later—but many of those who best understand the system are the very same people who rely least upon it for their daily needs. The educated elites from the urban center are best able to use the legal system to their own advantage in acquiring land that they may never occupy themselves, but simply leverage for later advantage (selling, trading, or establishing dacha-style retreats from their apartment life). According to a representative from the Ulaanbaatar Urban Planning Office, the expressed belief of the city is that more than 93% of households in most ger districts have registered their land. However, in the field, where registration offices remain busy accommodating new registrants, indications counter such optimism. While it might be that current land registration is primarily now conducted on behalf of those who have more recently moved to the city, a lateral survey conducted across several of the ger districts turned up only a small percentage of households that had moved into the city within the previous few months. Meanwhile, the spokesperson had herself registered parcels of land on behalf of her husband and infant child—family members who shared her apartment near the city center. With foreknowledge of which parts of the ger district would next receive updates and retroactively installed municipal services (electricity, water, paved roads), she was able to select for her family members some parcels that would soon rapidly increase in value. With little intent to leave her urbane lifestyle, her advantageous use of current land law will likely be for monetary profit rather than the need envisioned by the law. Meanwhile, for those who most need these laws to gain a platform by which they might also enter urban life, strategies for exploiting the law are also rampant, becoming informal tactics of resistance and compensation.

In the nomadic society to which Mongolians still associate themselves, the traditional 'weapon of the weak' (Scott 1985) has been their mobility. A notion that nomads resist by fleeing the controls of a centralized authority in fact contradicts the twentieth century history of Mongolia and on whole this concept over-simplifies a society where a herdsman is deeply imbricated with his place in a specific landscape (ties that are invisible to or easily overlooked by an outsider). But the process of resisting or compensating in regards to land law might be viewed as a reversal of Scott's thesis, that it is the settler in the ger district who resists weakly by taking advantage of the legal mechanisms by which land is distributed to the people of Mongolia. If counting the number of xashaa that exceed even the relatively lax proscriptive rules is beyond the capacity of municipal regulators, an opposite measure, tabulations of noted infractions of land law have found: building "without any license or permission thereon," (permission presumably is derived through registration) is responsible for 45% of all violations of the land law; assembling more than .07 hectare per family (under the pre-2010 regimen) accounts for 30% of violations; and illegal transfers of land or alterations of land use (presumably a zoning misuse) comprise 15% of violations of the land law (Chinbat 2004a, 17). In a 2002 study, a third of those who had settled in the neighborhood of the study site had not registered. For most of the unregistered, the most common reason cited was their lack of official documentation from the county in which they were most previously registered. Many moved to Ulaanbaatar without permission, so were unable to change their place of residence. A smaller percentage cited the cost of registration, the confusion of the bureaucratic process, or simply not knowing where to even begin the process (Chinbat 2004b; citing Janzen et al. 2002).

The Urban Planning Office of Ulaanbaatar estimate of registration rates exceeding 93% provoked a similar discussion with one of the most senior officials in the Ministry of Roads, Buildings, and Urban Construction, who privately conceded that that was too optimistic a figure from the municipality. He noted that the latest extension to the rules allowing fee-free registration is set to expire in May 2013, but he predicted that date might be extended by legislators seeking to shore up votes in their districts—an indicator that politicians on the ground know large proportions of their districts are comprised of undocumented settlers. The planning office optimistically looks to the May 2013 date as a bookend that could finalize the

shape to the city, providing a definitive boundary to the sprawl. With an unabating flow of newcomers to the ger districts, their 93% registration rate seems neither likely nor static. Even among long-standing residents of the ger districts with whom we spoke during the survey and interview processes (per chapters 3 and 4), many indicated they had only recently registered their land. Our survey numbers indicate 78% of respondents had registered their land (the rate shifts to 80% if including interviewees). In more established areas, such as Bayangol's 10-r subdistrict, the registration rate of householders did meet or slightly exceed the Urban Planning Office's figures. But in outer districts of Bayanzurkh, the percentage of householders who had registered their land (including those who rented land from others) was only about 73%. The amorphous shape of Ulaanbaatar has stretched well beyond the clarity imposed during the Socialist era, but its composition is yet to be settled.

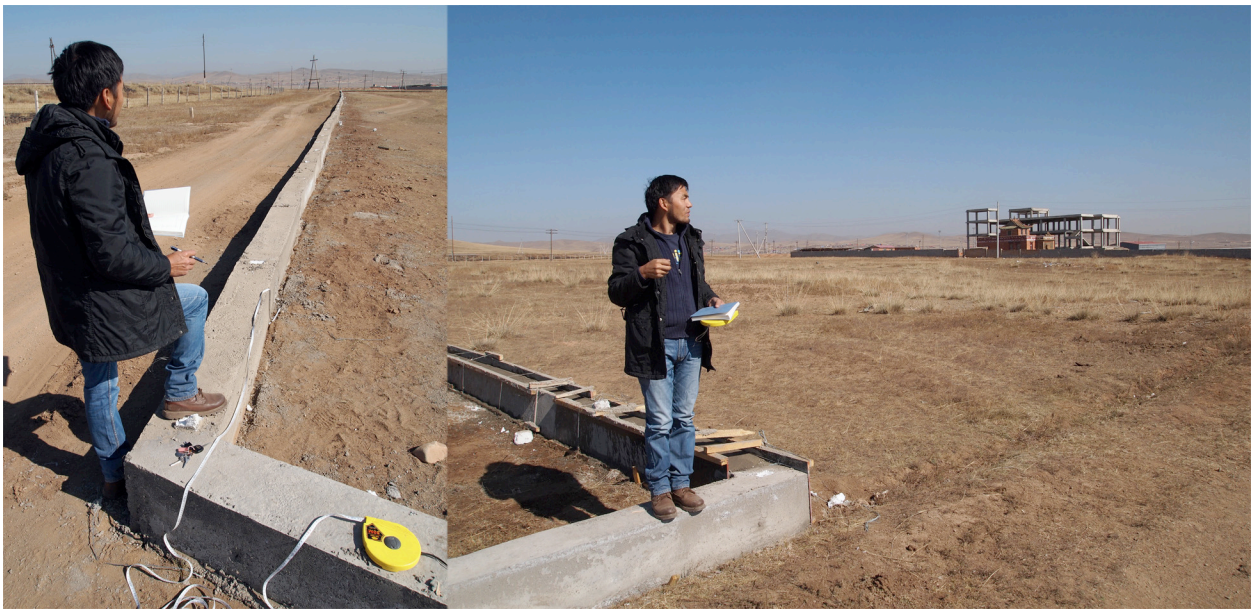


Figure 11: Anticipating new development twenty-two kilometers from the present city center, S— documents his recently acquired land. Though he lives in an apartment in the urban core, he may use this land for agriculture until its value sufficiently increases.

Conclusion

The laws that govern the making of peri-urban landscape have evolved over the two decades since the end of Socialism and the creation of ownership regimes. The steps for an individual or family to establish rights of use of land are multiple and negotiable, even when law circumscribes the necessary proceedings. Procedures as set forth by land law provide a proscriptive boundary, but adherence requires a set of

negotiations: with officials and sometimes with neighbors of bounding xashaa. This track of negotiated practices largely parallels the one set out by the legal mechanisms of land acquisition, however, it runs with greater latitude to legal adherence for land acquisition. The broader track is the one followed by many families, in order to acquire more land than they might be legally entitled to or to acquire a more advantageous parcel or set of rights than is set forth in the legal codes. In some cases, the broader path leads to wholesale extra-legal acquisitions, but is mostly used more modestly to gain more favorable land acquisitions than might be provided in the land law.

The ambiguities embedded in current workings of land acquisition, between the law and its practice, have so far worked to meet each actors' interests. For the government charged with regulating the system, enacting property regimes that incentivize development fulfills an obligation to constituents in the ger districts who rely on access to land, as well as to such outside advisors (and lenders) as USAID and the Asian Development Bank. By remaining proscriptive, few resources are expended on oversight or enforcement. Meanwhile, ger district tenants gain a foothold into the economic system of the city without excessive oversight of their activities. Furthermore, by having rules in place (however casually defined they might be), ger district residents also gain some security not only in their own access to land, but also in preventing more powerful interests from overwhelming land markets or swallowing their small-holdings.

Mongolia's post-Socialist transition toward sedentarization follows a similar trajectory to the one devolving land ownership rights toward individual citizen. Expanding ownership regimes, in combination with the overall trend toward settlement, may be one of the best opportunities for the ger districts to gain distinction, but how this eventually plays out will depend on whether legal structures remain negotiable and how those negotiations continue to occur. The deployment of domestic schemes for capturing terrain occupies the subsequent section, comprised of three chapters based on fieldwork in the ger districts.

SECTION II: APPROACHING GER DISTRICTS



Figure 12: Informality has coalesced into more regularized forms in a few longer-established ger districts; above Nisekh in 2009.

Chapter 4: Surveying general housing conditions



Figure 13: Surveyees answered questions about both the tangible and intangible composition of their housing. The survey sought information not only on their current situation, whether a ger or fixed dwelling, but also of future intentions for their home, neighborhood, and family.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general image of ger district conditions in a broader overview before delving into the views from specific neighborhoods or even from within the world of a single family. This general survey is meant to provide context for the more emplaced views of ethnography. What this survey also manages to accomplish, however, is to provide a tone that differs from subsequent chapters. Whereas later chapters will adopt the more hopeful future of the ger districts that interviewees tended to convey, this chapter tends to match in tone those previous studies (by governmental statisticians, environmentally-minded NGOs, and by religious missionary groups) that portray the Malthusian ills of the ger districts. To be sure, these latter views are indeed accurate to conditions for many ger district dwellers. Even as the survey presented in this chapter upholds some of the stereotypical characterizations of the ger districts, I intend to also offset such views in subsequent chapters with more detailed views of the place.

So the second major benefit of engaging the survey process, as portrayed in this chapter, is that the methods used here also proved a catalyst for re-engaging other forms of research and reconsidering results from ethnography: interviews and participant observation. In conducting the survey, methods and insights were also gained toward the ethnographic operations reported on in subsequent chapters.

Available survey data

Since the collapse of Socialism and the rapid expansion of the ger districts, surveys have become a tool increasingly relied upon for assessing rapidly unfolding social demands in Mongolia's ger districts—often for public health situations, but including those impacted by infrastructural components (Sigel 2010; 2012; Erdenekhuu 2011). A congruent block of survey work on architectural materials, forms, and environmental conditions in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar in the early 2000s was conducted by a small pool of Japanese and Mongolian architectural experts. Funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and under the auspices of the Mongolian University of Science and Technology (MUST), the pool generated a number of inter-related articles from a constellation of researchers working together during a period of JICA interest in the ger districts (Imaoka 2007; Ishikawa et al. 2007; Kato et al. [2007]; Kushiya et al. 2007). Each of these individual studies involved overlapping research, but was pulled together in a two part series (Sugimoto et al. 2007; followed by Kawagishi et al. 2010), following on from similar JICA methods employed for studying residents living in the planned portions of the city (Hasegawa et al. 2004; Kawagishi et al. 2005a; Kawagishi et al. 2005b). The ger district work uses specific neighborhoods as case studies to learn where various residents come from: whether they have moved from the countryside, from another city or town, or from Ulaanbaatar—either another ger district or from the urban core (Kato et al. [2007]). These researchers have also been curious about how knowledge for construction has been conveyed to the owner-builder, whether outside help was sought in construction, and how professional that assistance had been. This work was done by human survey. Other components of the study have relied on environmental sensors to collect temperature and humidity levels as a comparison of efficiencies in materials and in construction techniques, squaring off fixed dwellings against ger. While ger display good technical responses to measurements, the

studies' teleology is to create more efficient fixed dwellings. With that end in mind, their follow-on phase of work has been to create a handbook of standardized 'best' practices to instruct builders in material efficiency for better environmental performance of the dwellings they build. Reducing heat-loss has been a goal not only for building-technology engineers, but also for NGOs working in the ger districts on a variety of issues with differing but related goals. Reducing heat-loss has the exponential benefits of reducing the percentage of family income that must go toward fuel, reducing the particulate pollution (sulfurous, soft coal is Mongolia's largest domestically excavated fuel supply, but also the bane of urban air quality measures), reducing the impact of particulates on human health, reducing the individual and collective costs toward respiratory healthcare. While the over-arching goals of the JICA/MUST work remain influential in the community of non-governmental organizations active in the ger districts, the handbook of construction practices has yet to find circulation and wider-scale implementation among home-builders. Furthermore, as the economic situation for more ger district residents develops, allowing for construction knowledge to become increasingly concentrated in an emerging pool of more-or-less professional builders,[1] the current opportunity for these practices to inform standards of construction is passing. However this work by the JICA/MUST has been helpful in establishing parameters for investigating architecture in the ger districts.

The survey method

To establish a general picture of current conditions in the ger districts, a lateral survey across over one hundred households was executed. The survey, which included both material realities of ger district housing as well as such intangibles as the expectations of ger district residents, was adapted from a survey model used by my partner in the survey method, Dr. Jean-Martin Caldieron (Department of Architecture, Florida Atlantic

[1] The expertise of professionals is concentrating construction knowledge, but such knowledge is being more broadly broadcast as a greater number of ger district residents afford to build houses. Even as information diffusion broadens, the filter through which knowledge passes continues to constrict as the construction sector becomes ordered by specialization. An online market such as barilga.mn is one driver of specialization. Though only one of the interviewed families hired their contractor through the website, that contractor was able to gain visibility through the project and subsequently hired to build a next door neighbors' house. In the offline, word-of-mouth circulation of ger district contacts, the buildings themselves serve as a contractor's best advertising. But both on- and offline awareness contributes to the overall professionalization of the construction field.

University). Earlier variations of this survey, conducted in Spanish, had been used by Caldieron in slums and colonia of cities around the Caribbean and in northern South America (Caldieron and Imura 2000; Caldieron 2011). The format for Ulaanbaatar retained questions that were of importance to Caldieron's cross-cultural comparisons of Mongolian housing to other regions (Caldieron 2012), but was modified in two ways. First, existing questions were modified to accommodate the particular conditions of ger district housing, including the materials, usages, and ownership conditions; and second, additional questions unique to Mongolian settlement in the ger districts were inserted. The survey instrument then consisted principally of two types of questions, each calibrated toward a differing purpose: those useful in making cross-cultural comparisons and those that could be comparative within the Mongolian locale. The questions, analyses, and results addressed below are primarily concerned with the latter set of questions, those which develop the distinctions on Mongolian nomadism, settlement, and the place of the ger districts. While this work momentarily resists comparison to other places, it builds a picture of internal divisions within Ulaanbaatar, both inter- and intra-neighborhood to establish an overview of Mongolia's ger districts.

As the survey instrument grew more complex, however, so too increased the complications of implementing the survey, interpreting the resultant information, and establishing clear conclusions. I will address below the potential problems of relying on this tool, as well as further considerations for the methodology as a whole. While the relative unreliability of the lateral survey in and of itself might jeopardize the accuracy of an overview picture of the ger districts—and I will argue that this methodology, which has been core to previous studies of the ger districts, does lead to a lop-sided view—when combined with other data-collection methods, the survey assists in providing a fuller picture of the ger districts.

The survey, as a broader picture, works best in conjunction with other methods that convey greater detail and nuance to the lives of ger district residents. The purpose, then, in engaging in a lateral survey across multiple neighborhoods is twofold. First, a sweeping view of ger district housing stock and the lives generally lived in such housing is encompassed, using the broadest brush strokes. Secondly, I was interested to see whether differences that seemed apparent on the surface—certain areas of the city having more fixed dwellings or ger, relative affluence of outlying districts that might have once been dacha retreats, availability

of construction materials differentially influencing the material form of certain neighborhoods—was borne out in the narrow statistics of the survey. As neighborhoods were selected for the deployment of the survey forms, a characterization of differences by area should have been and was statistically discerned.

The term 'lateral' is used in characterizing this survey, which takes place across several ger districts of the city. In contrast to a longitudinal survey, the data were collected over the brief span of days, with the portions related to any one neighborhood collected in a single day. Resembling a cross-sectional survey, our data are collected within the designed and distributed survey instrument; no outside data were used in the primary analysis. For later comparison, related data from the National Statistical Office and by previous researchers were used, with alignments and contradictions noted in the analytic section or the conclusion.



Figure 14: Homeowners were generous in answering questions, with some providing further information outside the survey's confines. A family in Uliastai (right), unable to complete the housing survey, was just setting up their house (hastily before rain clouds swept in overhead).

Considerations for the survey

One common difficulty of the survey method is lack of access to surveyees. Surveyees, especially in their own homes, may not be willing to respond to outsiders seeking information about their living conditions or housing intentions. While this had been a personal worry in designing the survey instrument, in practice I was surprised to find the ease with which access was granted by the nearly all surveyees approached. Of one hundred fourteen attempted surveys, only two people declined to take or answer the instrument. Furthermore, one of the discoveries of the process was a general willingness to answer questions beyond the

range of the devised answers—a discovery that would lead to more appropriately developing the data-collection methods of in-depth, semi-structured interviews.

While my own unfamiliarity with the methods of surveying may have impacted the design of the survey instrument, the surveyees' relative comfort with answering the questionnaire eased the process. Submitting information to a survey is not unfamiliar to most ger district dwellers, or Mongolians in general. We were informed in a conversation between one of our first surveyees and a facilitator that government and non-government organizations have each come around in recent years collecting data. Under state-enforced Socialism, modernization campaigns habituated citizens to rounds of visits from experts (nurses or health workers, for example) as quotidian practices of even private home life were socially re-engineered. Progress measurements in such campaigns also demanded visits into domiciles for follow-up monitoring or enforcement. Whether or not the reported statistics held much accuracy has been debated (cf. Doebler 1994), but nonetheless, statisticians had a deep reach into even the very homes of the populace. The hierarchical reporting structure of the Socialist era did not allow one to avoid such inspections; as a relic of such social engineering, the populace remains relatively unperturbed by such random visits of interlopers to their communities and homes (Stolpe 2008, 59-84).

To address any contemporary concern for privacy, names were not collected for any individually identifiable survey instrument, nor in the subsequent fourteen interviews that form the core of the semi-structured interview methodology of chapter 5.[2] The IRB exemption covers data collection methods for interviews and participant observation (as discussed below, in the subsequent chapters), while built into the survey instrument is another informed consent statement (see appended survey instrument, appendix B). Information collected with the lateral survey is handled consistent to the statement provided to the UCLA Office for Protection of Research Subjects under HS 07-2007. The identifiers we did use, for both the survey and the semi-structured interviews, were solely a sequential series of numbers to identify the count and

[2] Per the Institutional Review Board statement filed with the UCLA Office for the Protection of Research Subjects: HS 07-2007 exemption claim, protocol 07-264 (see appendix A). The project meets TITLE 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations, PART 97.101(b), as submitted to the U.S. Department of Education during the funding process of the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, 2010-2011.

ordering of the survey instruments themselves, but this numbering sequence had no correspondence with surveyees or interviewees, nor with their identifiable location. Photography of people and homes was always at the consent of the homeowner. Few homeowners declined photographs of their homes—the image making was generally a single or a few photographs of the overall home environment, exterior or occasionally interior. Photo taking was generally discreet but never done in secret. Many homeowners did decline to have their personal image captured, usually out of pride of appearance and being 'unready' for their portrait, but generally more interested in having photographs taken of their children, possibly because the children are considered an appropriate subject for the sake of posterity or because photographing children seemed a more socially acceptable activity in the space of the image-making attached to our survey distribution and collection. The concept of capturing images of people in quotidian settings was one of the more difficult notions to translate, as photography was generally treated as an official rendering—in family portrait or for requisite documentation purposes. An interesting corollary of the photographic process will be discussed in chapter 6, as it pertains to the participant-observation form of data-collection methods.

At each stage of the survey process—from conceptualizing the question, to writing the question, to translating the question, to having a respondent understand and accurately respond to each question, to tabulating the responses, to analyzing and interpreting the results of the response tabulations—the margin of error has the capacity to compound. Not each stage of the process is equal in contributing to the margin of error, but at each step there are potential vulnerabilities that give a researcher reason for caution in relying too heavily on quantified data. In our experience, the greatest vulnerability is in translating not just the written form of a question, but also its conceptual meaning. In a number of answers, we have been able to determine post-facto an imprecision of language that resulted in confusing many of the respondents, resulting in muddied pools of answers. For that reason, we have steered our interpretations toward data that clearly distinguish trends.

Once the district and neighborhood was selected, a set position was established. From this initial point, all xashaa are approached for survey potential. The completed surveys then reflect all xashaa within a given area, minus those xashaa where no adult was home or where the present adults declined to participate in the

survey. Homeowners or other resident adults who were home and were willing to participate (see informed consent section below; canvassing was conducted primarily on weekend days, however the Zuun ard Ayushiin survey was conducted during the work week) were asked to fill out a questionnaire. There was no facility on the part of the homeowner nor on the part of the survey conductors to leave questionnaires for later submission in the homes or ger that were found locked or otherwise unoccupied at the time of the survey. Of the approached households that met our minimum criteria, having an adult household member available to fill out the survey, only two households refused to participate outright, while three others had not completed the questionnaires by the time of retrieval; in all three cases because they were too busy: two families engaged in manual labor and the third were erecting the family ger. Another three distributed surveys went uncollected as the respondents were not at home or had otherwise become unavailable by the time of retrieval; their surveys were not included in our ultimate count.

Several introductions into the survey process were not random: as framer of the survey, I selected which neighborhoods would be surveyed and both Caldieron and I had to decide where the process would begin within these neighborhoods. The street layout then guided the progression of the survey. With each home-owner or representative, different levels of engagement may also have influenced the survey. While selection of any given answer may not have been influenced by the surveyors on behalf of the surveyee, the degree of earnestness with which a respondent took the survey may be a result of such engagement. In administering the survey, we occasionally were called upon to clarify questions in the survey for some respondents. Furthermore, a few surveyees were unable to read the survey due to issues with either eyesight or, in one case, illiteracy. In such situations, a facilitator on our survey team helped by reading the questions and recording responses.



Figure 15: Water stations are common public gathering places where we met locals (left), though most surveys were distributed xasha-by-xasha along the unpaved paths of the ger districts. A facilitator (right) helped clarify questions and record responses while building rapport.

Selection of survey sites

Potential sites for conducting the lateral survey were an outgrowth of a number of sites I had initially considered for ethnographic research during initial visits in 2007 and months of early reconnaissance in 2008-2009. While Zuun Salaa was ultimately selected for the ethnographic and for the interview phases of data collection, due to the established point of access (numerous members of an extended family with whom I eventually established rapport), several other regions of the city remained of interest. Each of the considered areas of the city had characteristics that were known anecdotally prior to our survey, but to which I had hoped to provide more methodically-acquired data. The intention of selecting a number of different areas around the city was to use broader brushstrokes to paint a portrait that interpolated between ger districts. While the data collected about specific areas are recognized to not necessarily represent un-surveyed parts of the city, by reading between neighborhoods, an overall picture of the city does emerge from the data.

For selecting the sites, the goal was to select according to general parameters based on access to the urban core areas, with the accepted hypothesis in mind that the ger districts had grown concentrically outward, though allowing for beneficial topography to provide more readily settled plots of land:

> First, a site where inhabitation has been established for a decade or more, with different houses displaying differing levels of equity, both financial investment and emotional attachment. A neighborhood with a number of larger fixed structures already in place, with a greater proportion of

middle-income earners, closer to the central city might prove indicative of citizens with a longer-term commitment to the area or the financial capacity to buy into such a place;

Second, a place at the other end of the spectrum, with proximate open land still available, which could encourage further settlement in the near future, perhaps in the span of this research project. Such sites are more likely found in less ideal locales: closer to drainage washes or high-tension towers, or further from established bus routes and informal commercial areas, often at the furthest reaches of the urban periphery;

Third, a neighborhood that may be in some stage of transition, switching from temporary occupation to more permanent constructions. Also moving toward the edges of the city, such sites would have been occupied already for five-to-ten years, but have begun to be developed by the municipality only in the last three-to-five years.

Such a tripartite scheme, dividing the ger districts into concentric rings based on access to the built core of the city, has been used to correlate ger districts with employment access and costs of living (Choi 2012, 131-133; using statistics garnered from the National Statistical Office in a 2008 survey of socio-economic conditions in urban households).

The initial search for sites was conducted primarily on foot from the termini of public transport routes during a two week scouting visit in 2007 and over several months of initial language study in 2008. While the ger districts are organized politically, much of this structure is invisible at the superficial level to the outsider. In the initial scouting period, before I had acquired knowledge of the invisible political boundaries, I was forced to negotiate the physicality of the ger districts. To manage the amorphous shape of xashaa neighborhoods in my reconnoitering walks, I relied on dividing the districts according to two kinds of vectors. The first vector type uses public transport routes, as many sub-districts are served by only one or two public bus lines (e.g. Bayanzurkh bus lines three or twenty to the terminus at Belx, or the nine or twenty-three lines that ran to Zuun Salaa on different trajectories through the city). The other vectors that provide both access across the ger districts as well as visual reference to my relative location, are high-tension power lines. Roads of a gradient usable by public buses often run at the foot of ger district slopes, parallel and just above washes.[3] Power lines, on the other hand, tend to cross the landscape without regard to street grids,[4]

[3] Xashaa construction is forbidden in washes and potential flash flood areas for obvious safety concerns. While many wadis along which heavily trafficked roads run are often filled by trash, in more peripheral sections of washes, because of

instead taking their suggested vectors as straight lines between power plants in the southwestern area of Khaan Uul District and various outlying industrial islands in the northern foothills around which the ger districts have created recent urban infill. Rather, the settlement patterns must adapt to existing high-tension lines, allowing them corridors of operation, which benefit pedestrian access below by keeping land free of obstructive fencing.[5] The power lines skim across topography, hovering in mid-air, remaining visible from a distance, and keeping a clear path beneath. Bus lines are indeed used as navigational tools, especially in directing outsiders; if power lines are used locally in way finding has not yet been determined, but will be a

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the concentrations of moisture, grasses grow higher, denser, and more vigorously. These areas then become prime grazing pasturage for urban livestock.

[4] Straddling a saddle of Songinokhairkhan, an electrical tower delivers high-tension lines into the valley of Zuun Salaa before crossing the opposite hills to supply power to the northern reaches of Ulaanbaatar.



[5] A path is kept generally accessible beneath high-tension lines in a Chingeltei ger district, but occasionally infringed upon recently arrived settlers who, knowingly or not, challenge the 'rules' of an informal plan.



question for me to ask of informants. Such uses of paths and vectors for nomad navigation have been part of a larger and more theoretical discussion, addressed below.

Three sites were selected in established ger districts. As a ger district, the distinction was that homes were self-built or commissioned by the property holder, the layout had not been previously planned (although each neighborhood we visited would have some degree of services provided by the city retroactively), and that the area remained undeveloped by large-scale projects. Also implied by the term 'established' is that the ger district was a recognized part of the city of Ulaanbaatar. While all three selected sites continued to add new residents, staking new plots of territory on an ongoing basis, all three were recognized as ger districts by the wider Ulaanbaatar population.

The initial site selected, Belx, was chosen for the numerous new constructions, as well as the varying types of residential occupancy (from recently settled to long-term residency, from ger to fixed houses). A linear survey canvassed a hillside from top to bottom in a generally straight line. Sites more recently settled were on the upper slopes of the hillside, while less recent and more developed sites lay at the lower reaches and in the flat areas adjacent to or more easily accessible from the main road.

At the second site, in Uliastai, a specific zone was defined; all homes within this area were canvassed. Without a hillside or main road to create clear delineations between more recently settled and longer inhabited sites, however a hierarchy of settlement became discernible in the process of the survey. As much of Uliastai lays in soggy flood plain, areas with less distinct run-off patterns tend to pool water. Longer-term dwellers have known to avoid these areas for construction, but more recent transplants may have yet to experience a heavy precipitation year. The wetter land is also more attractive to those who have more recently come from the countryside with livestock, favor these areas as not only is the land more accessible and available, but the marshy ground tends to grow more abundant ground cover for grazing their animals.

The third site, Zuun ard Ayushiin, was selected for its proximity to the planned zones of the city. Rising on a hillside just above the III-r/IV-r microdistricts, the survey was conducted following the main street (which follows the main ridgeline). Following the road up to the peak, surveys were distributed to each xashaa with an adult present at the time of the survey, on a weekday afternoon.

Material constructions

The survey form we used collected information for assessing both the tangible composition of ger district housing, such as the materials used, the availability of kitchen facilities, and the composition of the house according to rooms and facilities; as well as the intangible attitudes of home owners and their families. While this project gains mostly from the data collected about the latter, intangible composition of the ger districts, the material incarnation of the place is also useful toward this project. Using the survey for data collection on material components of houses remained useful toward this project for three reasons: the information gathered through our survey could be checked against previous survey work for a comparison of findings; the questions about material composition were more comprehensible, especially in cultural translation to our target surveyees, so could bridge the skepticism of homeowners toward our survey until rapport could be established for further questions about less tangible subjects such as their attitudes and expectations of their lives in the ger district; and the results of the material findings became indicative of individual access to materials for home improvement and more importantly, the growing capacity of professionalization in the construction of the ger districts, from home-owners to builders, to the venues where information is shared between such groups. The materials, including their availability through contemporary markets, add depth to the picture of people building out their homes and neighborhoods.

In material terms, the results of the lateral survey may be compared with the previous work of the JICA/MUST team (all JICA/MUST statistics per Kato et al. [2007]). Whereas the JICA/MUST data show the prevalence of wood in construction (composing 91% of walls and 90% of structural support), our study found that wood was used in two-thirds of structures overall, but once we separate out the responses for ger dwellings (in our format, these were listed as wood-based structures but under the separate heading of 'traditional materials'), the percentage of edifices using wood as the principal structural material drops to 44% as brick becomes a more important material component, used in 39% of houses. The JICA/MUST data identify brick as being the main material in only 8% of houses. Our information does not contradict the JICA/MUST findings. Rather, in the half-decade that has elapsed between our surveys, it seems more likely that the availability and pricing of these materials has adjusted radically, as has the social acceptance and

knowledge for handling brick, which had not been a prevalent material even for more formal building construction until more recently, as professional crews learned to erect high-rise buildings on construction crews that might include bricklayers from China, where such construction is common.

The prevalence of log construction has dual roots in the Russian forests to the north (see appendix D). Firstly, the images of Russian dacha and Siberian cabins have long flooded the domestic imagination for fixed dwelling construction. The housing stock of Russian merchants in the nineteenth century became not only the models for, but the actual homes of Mongolian elites in the twentieth century. But even the less affluent image of the Siberian cabin, with its deep eaves, second story balcony, constructivist protrusions of joined logs at building corners, window boxes for flowers, and gabled windows emerging from the roof, has long influenced the self-built aesthetic of the ger districts. So secondly, the availability of such materials has influenced the Mongolian home builder; Mongolia serves as a transshipment zone for Siberian timber that eventually makes its way for export through Chinese warm water ports to the south, so supplying Mongol material markets is a small siphon on this much larger trade.

In many of the homes, the logs are half-timbered, used only as exterior covering but providing a relatively flush inner surface. The inner surface is, indeed, not the interior to the home, but sits against the inner framing or at the very least insulation, which is then sandwiched by interior wall board. This is not to suggest that logs are merely a surface feature applied decoratively, for they have both insulating and waterproofing value, and are a good surface for standing up to the deteriorating effects of both the ultraviolet rays in a thin atmosphere, as well as wind-driven sand, freeze-thaw cycles, and other factors of the harsh environment.

Though commercial construction is more often being conducted—at least for infill walls—using steel stud, to undertake such construction in the ger districts would remain a challenge. While even wood construction might demand a connection to electricity to power tools for cutting, much of the wood work is done at a single location on site, with the wood members cut before moved to where they will be installed. Steel construction could do something similar, but since the metal members need to not only be cut, but also installed with screws or welds, efficiency demands running power throughout the construction site.

Furthermore, with the climatic extremes, the gains from hollow-walls would be lost through the thermal-bridging that steel structural members provide.

Like log construction, bricks offer a number of benefits as an exterior material. Similar to logs, they handle exterior conditions relatively well. They are also relatively inexpensive (though not nearly as cheap as concrete blocks), and easily assembled as there are numerous bricklayers available (many such laborers are to be found residing in the ger districts. Also, few structures rise more than a single story, almost none surpassing a second story, so even a novice brick layer can assemble the exterior walls to a house without too much compounding of error as would become unsuitable for a taller structure.)

A homeowner in Belx, who proved instrumental in helping us contact her neighbors for furthering our survey, was also forthcoming in her own experiences of building a house. She had hired a contractor to build her home. Though she stipulated that the house should be brick, it was eventually built from concrete to save money (there is some discrepancy in her story whether she agreed to the concrete construction or the contractor did so without her initial consent). She is unhappy with the result, and wishes to have portions of the house either covered in brick or rebuilt using the material, stating that in winter the concrete is too cold whereas brick is a warmer material.



Figure 16: A ladder to the roof (left) was erected by the son-in-law of the homeowner Zs-8, who was helping with some chimney repairs while visiting his parents. The son had initially moved to Ulaanbaatar for the better educational and work opportunities. The parents, who had been living in another ger district in Dornod aimag, followed once their grandchildren (the children of this son—they also have an unmarried daughter who preceded them to Ulaanbaatar) were born. They prefer living in the ger districts due to the lower cost, but also prefer the freedom of having their own home. The husband is still able to do home repairs, but prefers to assist while letting his son lead the work. The upper

ladder remained affixed to the roof and was there when I subsequently would pass this home. The attic of N— (right) stores materials and tools, though most of them had simply been left there when he last worked on his roof. He does not yet have any plan for finishing or otherwise inhabiting the attic cavity, but says it might be something to reconsider in a few years.

Another comparison, with a different interpretation, is available in comparing roofing materials. At the time of the JICA/MUST survey, 70% of houses were protected by tar paper while corrugated metal covered only one quarter of houses. Our own findings, just five years later (though not in the same neighborhoods) was a more equitable division, with the more expensive metal used on nearly as many roofs (40%) as the cheaper but less durable paper (42%). Tar-paper, unrolled and tacked into place using exposed wood strips—the disadvantage of wood strips is that they retain moisture, allowing snow or ice to accumulate. Furthermore, because tacking penetrates the tar membrane, moisture can be transmitted through the surface to the underlying wood structure. Some alleviation of problems might be due to the heaviest rains falling only in summer months, when surface tar might be otherwise more pliant from solar radiation, self-healing roofing gaps (whereas winter precipitation is relatively light, consisting mostly of a thin, dry snow, therefore not able to exploit the drying and cracking that might occur during the cold months). Rather than just the mere familiarity with or availability of corrugated metal as a roofing material (it had long been available and the cost differential has either not changed much or it has gone up), it would seem that homeowners may be looking toward the material choice with posterity in mind, as they build their houses more substantially. The use of brick, as noted above, would also support this conclusion.

Beneath the roof, the attic cavity, whether insulated or not, tends to be uninhabitable space. In the recently completed house of N—, he has not yet found any use for this space, not yet even for storage of household items. Some extra materials from the house construction are kept there, though even these are not so much stored as leftover in place. This space is only reachable by ladder from the outside. Nearby, in the home of A—, the second floor is better integrated into the house, both aesthetically and practically. On the practical side, whereas the house of N— makes no accommodation for access, A— has a built-in ladder (the ladder takes the place of what had been designed to be a steep stairway). Aesthetically, the second floor is integrated into the design of the whole house, with a deep balcony beneath the overhanging roof and projecting window gables. But here too, the second floor remains unused. The family, including two small

children, is well settled on the ground floor and has yet to use the upper story as occupied space. That the design incorporates features for the second floor says more of the generative logic for the house than for its actual uses. The house of A— was commissioned and built by a professional builder from a speculative plan that takes for its inspiration the Russian dacha and, more distantly, the rustic retreat of a mountain chalet.6 Bookstores in Ulaanbaatar typically have a section (or at the very least several racks in the more prolific smaller bookstands within grocery markets) devoted to spec-house design, though the bookstores themselves are a fairly recent form of commercial establishment that accompany newly built shopping plazas, malls, and department stores; none of which are located in the ger areas, but have proliferated in new shopping zones adjacent to some of the more established ger districts. Presumably, those interested in and able to afford these more expensive designs are not the more impoverished and recent settlers who have arrived in the ger districts after being pushed from the countryside by environmental and economic conditions, but existing urban denizens who intend to relocate to the ger areas specifically for the ability to build their homes there. A— was raised in an apartment for his early life, but now is more comfortable on the land his parents had previously registered. His parents have since settled onto another piece of land about a half kilometer away in the same neighborhood.

Intangible constructs

Reading between the material and immaterial compositions of the ger districts, the former is useful toward comprehending the latter in that material components of xashaa housing indicate the choices available to homeowners; their concerns with status, comfort, provision for their family, and future stability; and their financial capacity for purchasing from different types of material markets. Knowledge of material availability and how to apply such materials in construction and the handling of such materials is part of the circulation within the ger districts of ideas about housing, including the social pressure that valorizes fixed housing for those who participate in ger district life. Transactions of such information occur constantly among family,

[6] In the architectural vernacular inspired by places as diverse as the Tyrol and Bhutan, rugged A-frames are made an appropriate environmental response to the specifics of living conditions by Pruscha (1975), or more generally in the phenomenological landscapes of Norberg-Schulz (1980).

neighbors, or even occasional acquaintances one might encounter, for example, at the local water-filling station or mini-market as the available public spaces for serendipitous interaction.

While understanding the material elements of this survey was a goal primarily for my colleague, Caldieron, my purpose in compiling these elements here is twofold: first, this allows the data collected in our survey to be compared against previous work by JICA/MUST; and second, using the information on material elements, I am then able to divide the data internally, to compare, for example, the responses of ger dwellers against those of fixed dwelling inhabitants, or any number of other internal divisions which the responses on materiality allow for then comparing other questions of less tangible phenomena.

Satisfaction in housing

Counter to the overwhelming appropriateness felt by most owners of houses, ger dwellers generally feel their home is not an acceptable living situation for their families. Even as the 'ger districts' term emphasizes this landscape as uniquely comprised of the felt tent that is a symbol of core Mongol values, actually dwelling in a ger falls short of the norm ger district residents have established for themselves—to build a house. Ger dwellers were generally dissatisfied with their living situation (question 21), whereas satisfaction rates for conventional home owners in the ger districts shift significantly upward; they are generally satisfied with their homes. For identified ger dwellers in the survey, minor dissatisfaction was the single response for the plurality, 35% of respondents, while another 29% were rather dissatisfied and 16% very dissatisfied (the extreme dissatisfaction rate nearly matches the entirety of those expressing some satisfaction, while only one ger-dwelling family noted that they were extremely satisfied with their current housing). While most are individually optimistic that their housing situation will improve (question 25), as a whole they are less optimistic as a group than those who are already living in fixed housing. Conversely, just over half of identified fixed house dwellers responded to being satisfied or very satisfied with their house. Many expressed mild dissatisfaction, but only two respondents were very unsatisfied with their fixed dwellings (though it was beyond the metrics of the recorded responses in the survey, one of these homeowners provided why she so displeased with her house. She had contracted a builder to construct her home from brick, but because of cost discrepancies he had built with concrete block, which is far colder in winter. When

she can afford to rebuild in brick she will do so). House owners have not only gone further to realize satisfying goals, but also hold greater financial and emotional investment in the product of their investments, as well as their place in the neighborhood and more generally in the ger districts.

Furthermore (in regards to the previous question, 21), ger dwellers looking toward a future different than their current situation tend to be singularly focused on their desire for a fixed dwelling to replace their ger, which a narrow majority found inadequate for their families (while fixed dwelling were overwhelmingly considered appropriate for the families of their owners, per question 30). The degree to which such families have a strategy in place for attaining their goal of acquiring a fixed dwelling or acquiring the necessary resources (materials, expertise, and capital) to construct a house was not determined by our survey, however the strategy of the family observed in chapter 6 offers one such route to advancing home ownership in the ger districts. Those already living in fixed structures are plainly more focused on improving their existing house, neighborhood, or living situation, though the specific improvement goals are more disparate. For their own homes, many homeowners are looking toward improving their access to water and other municipal services (though not necessarily to sewerage, per responses to question 26), while in their communities they are most concerned with improving general safety (from criminal activity) and access to public transportation. At the neighborhood level, trends were roughly similar for ger dwellers. Their ties to the neighborhood might do not seem any more tenuous than those of fixed residence dwellers, as both groups responded that they overwhelmingly like their respective neighborhoods (question 24).

With respects to overall satisfaction with the ger districts, the picture drawn by both house and ger owners is more ambivalent. While those living in ger wish to upgrade to a house, and those already in houses have clear goals in mind for improving these dwellings, a majority of respondents would upgrade to an apartment in the urban core if they were able to afford one (question 28). Just over half of the respondents would prefer to move to an apartment, while less than one quarter would prefer to remain in the ger districts (one quarter either did not respond, or noted they did not know); these percentages were the same for ger dwellers and house dwellers alike. When combining these data with responses to a previous question, which asked the question more pragmatically (question 27), we have a measure of whether the family intends to stay with their

current housing situation. The combined answers of ger and house dwellers were: 49% marked yes, 34% marked no (14% marked that they did not know).[7] For ger owners, such a response was not unexpected, for in many ways they had the lesser commitment to the ger districts and the lesser stake in seeking the ger districts succeed as a whole. For homeowners, though, the question remained of how to rectify the higher satisfaction rates with their contradictory continued desire to move to an apartment. Purev-Erdene offers that there remains, even among the fixed-dwelling owners, an inherent instability in the land tenure system for ger areas. While self-sufficiency may not just be a hallmark of ger district residents, but a characteristic seen in a generally favorable light throughout Mongolian culture, the isolating nature of self-reliance can leave a neighborhood as less of a collective political force than merely as a collection of individual xashaa dwellers inhabiting adjoining spaces. By Purev-Erdene's reading, any area has the potential to be targeted for planned development.[8] Instability of land tenure weighs on xashaa dwellers, particularly for those geographically nearest to the already developed portion of the city. These regions are most ripe for future development and incorporation into the expanding urban core, including future connections to water, sewerage, and heating infrastructure. Such areas, while on the one hand carrying benefits for the residents (a direct benefit through access to services or an indirect one through the increased value of their property), the areas slated for development may alternately bring further instability, as residents are displaced and home sites demolished to make way for developers.

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[7] This was our most significant departure from the JICA/MUST results, which registered on a similar question the reponses of: 73% yes, 5% no, and 22% did not know (Kato et al. [2007]). For a confidence level of greater than 95% on the opinionized responses in our survey of 112 respondents and 14 interviewees (estimating a population of 400,000 or 100,000 households) the interval of ±8.75% is outpaced by the more than 20 point difference between our study and that of the JICA/MUST survey.

[8] Purev-Erdene may be sensitive to these issues for his work is focused on Bayanzurkh's Zuun-ail area, which has already been notified of intended redevelopment. Though framed by the city as eminent domain styled slum clearance, locals see corrupt politicians doing the bidding of developers. Memories remain of the Socialist era, when those who lost their xashaa to redevelopment schemes were given no compensation. Interviewee Zs-6 recounted his expulsion from the Tavuin zuun-ail in the late 1980s as the Bichel housing block arose. Any promise of an apartment there evaporated and no compensation was given, so he became one of the many xashaa owners to disperse for another ger district. The irony for Zuun-ail is that it is the primary market for supplying independent builders and home owners with construction materials (Kato et al. [2007], in which Purev-Erdene is the Mongolian researcher, determined Zuun-ail as the primary supplier for 83% of building materials).



Figure 17: Ugsarmal, the assemblage housing blocks of the core city, remain a desired housing type for those who subscribe to a 'sedentarist metaphysics' (Malkki 1992). The imposing fortress of Bichel (right), the last public housing project initiated under state Socialism, displaced at least five hundred families in a slum clearing project, but few of those families were later awarded apartments.

Overlaps of place

Our survey respondents were nearly evenly divided between those who remained in ger and those now living in fixed dwellings in the ger districts. Fifty surveyees indicated inhabiting houses, forty-eight noted they lived in ger, and sixteen either did not provide sufficient data to determine their house type or their answers were contradictory (dwelling types were cross-checked for consistency against provided responses to material types and number of rooms, however families with multiple ger within a single xashaa might note a number of rooms in their response). For the ger districts surveyed, we found that the nearly even divide between ger and fixed dwellings corresponds to National Statistical Office tabulations for Ulaanbaatar as a whole, but metrics for the ger district are indistinct in provided tabulations.[9]

[9] Data provided by the National Statistics Office suggest a different divide, with fixed dwellings housing nearly a third more families than do ger in Ulaanbaatar. While collection methods for NSO surveys are not published with their findings, the NSO does not recognize ger districts as separate zones within an overarching urban designation, making ger districts that much more invisible to urban policy makers. Rural and urban statistics are counted separately, but Ulaanbaatar is listed as entirely urban with housing data that first segregate ger from all fixed housing and only then, within the fixed housing category, recognize apartments distinctly from individual, detached houses. What is not accounted for within the numbers that represent single, detached housing is the percentage of these that are developer-built settlements in new, upper-income neighborhoods as opposed to the self-built houses in xashaa of the ger districts (for statistics collected during census-counting years of the twentieth century see NSO 2003, 132; since the end of Socialism, see NSO 2011, 90. Additional results may be filtered from overall housing data listed in NSO 2001).

Of those living in ger, approximately one third more had previously been nomadic than those who had not been nomadic in their lifetime, whereas for house dwellers, only one fifth more indicated the opposite, that they had never been nomadic over those who had once been nomads (the question, 5.2, was phrased toward identifying any personal history of nomadism, as evidence suggested many urban residents had only been so when they were children). The trend is clear: ger are the purview of those who grew up living in ger at some point in their lives, whereas fixed dwellings are more likely to be occupied by those who were already urbanized—either because they already possessed the economic capital to invest in a fixed dwelling or due to better acculturation with a settled lifestyle. The link with past inhabitation of the pastoral nomadic system carries forward into the present. More contemporary ger dwellers claim nomadism in their past than do residents of fixed dwellings. While the relevance of the past in contemporary housing selection is not surprising, what such results seem to indicate are not a steady path from a nomadic past to a more settled present. Rather, the ger districts seem to be a zone where two different modes of dwelling are superimposed, even as they share numerous links with each other that allow inhabitants to transition from one mode to another. That the transition from a ger to a house is constantly taking place does not negate the idea that these two forms of housing exist on differing tracks. Nor is their distinction negated by the adjacencies of ger and fixed-dwellings, even within the same xashaa. From interviews with those who have traded their ger for a fixed home, many had only been temporary ger dwellers, having moved to the ger districts with the intention of building a house. What might be more curious about these residents is that they even selected to move into a ger temporarily. But the ger, as an accepted part of the local landscape, became a viable option for saving money on apartment rent in sufficient amounts that they might strategize their move into a fixed dwelling from the start of their ger district foray. Whereas for those who have moved into the city from the countryside, on the surface they might appear to be in the same type of temporary dwelling situation as their neighbors, but their opportunities for constructing a fixed dwelling are limited by both finances and culture. Financially, their urban exposure might have limited their chance at employment and wage-earning, especially in contrast to urbanites who might have moved to the ger district to save the money they might otherwise have spent on apartment rent, or even those from the ger districts who saved money by hitherto living in the

xashaa of other family members. Culturally, the more recent migrants from the countryside might be less familiar with urban institutions; not only those that might allow for employment or knowledge of material acquisition, but even such standard tools as bank loans, upon which many urban residents depend for attaining the next step upward in urban quality-of-life. Several interviewees (in the subsequent chapter) noted the use of bank loans for being able to make the necessary material purchases to commit to house construction, but even for more modest acquisitions, such as a car or seed money (literally, for those who are starting to farm) which might allow for eventual accumulation of profits to be spent on upgrading housing.

Even as the land is settled in a pattern of agglomeration, with each new xashaa abutting previous land claims, the claimants are arriving from dispirit locales—the countryside, the urban center, or another part of the urban periphery. The differing backgrounds tend not to be supplanted by a move to the ger districts. Rather, the background tends to portend a differing urban future for each of these types of inhabitants. The landscape of the ger districts is then composed of those who continue the inhabitation of the countryside, but interspersed with those who have made the ger district an extension of their urban inhabitation. Though no single dwelling has the easily discernible signature of its inhabitants' background, as a whole, ger dwellers of the past are more likely to remain the ger dwellers of the present and of the near future.



Figure 18: Surrounded by ger district on all sides, a new complex arises on land cleared of xashaa. Optimistic for local residents, I asked at a nearby xashaa if the complex would provide housing. The owner replied sarcastically that no, it must be the development of a corrupt official. Eventually signage and tenants appeared: the apartments are reserved for officers of the border patrol agency and their families. Walled off from the surrounding ger district, a painting rendered on the single entry gate promulgates a mythology. Municipal plumbing flows here, though not to the surrounding homes.

Conclusion

A clear majority of respondents would prefer to move to an apartment from their ger or house (61% of those who responded to question 28, this percentage is maintained even when isolating either the ger-dwelling or house-dwelling groups. It is also a clear plurality, with the 'yes' respondents outweighing the 'no' respondents more than two-to-one, the remainder responding they were 'uncertain'.) While there are both government-backed and developer-driven apartment complexes creeping into various portions of the ger districts, these structures are tied into the familiar urban services, including running water, heating, and sewerage. The insinuation of the respondents would be easy to understand as a desire not only for the conveniences of apartment life, but also the clarity and order that apartment blocks impose on urban life. Furthermore, being able to jump on to the ascending platform of economic value associated with apartments, effortlessly elevating one's economic prospects with the rise of the property market as a whole, is another of the intangible rationales for the high response to apartment ownership among those who do not currently own or cannot afford an apartment. But I would hope to suggest that such a response rate is less a measure of perceived benefit of apartment ownership than it is a measure of the current cultural norm established by the apartment-owning segment of the Ulaanbaatar population. Apartments are the most visible, external symbol of urban modernization. Families with relatives in apartments are offered first-hand views of modern convenience. Urban citizens are frequently exposed to advertisements on television, in flyers, stuck into magazines or on public billboards to the interiors, models, and planning designs of new, luxury apartments in the Zaisan or Bayan-Mongol areas of the city. Yet those who live as comfortably in houses have been eclipsed by the normative view that beholds the apartment as the apex of urbane living. Houses that more discretely occupy the wealthiest districts are rarely publicized. More visibly accessible to the ger district dwelling population are the houses that fellow residents construct in the ger districts. These houses approach the apartment lifestyle in their level of built-in convenience, but are also mostly indistinguishable from simpler houses on their exteriors, much less so from beyond the bounds of a xashaa.

The potential to transform the ger districts into not only more habitable space, but into a desirable space for the majority of its residents does not necessarily lay in their demolition and replacement of tracts of

xashaa, but in a broad investment by multiple actors in multiple overlays of the existing ger districts. Investment by the municipality in infrastructural improvements and services is an often cited need for these areas. The lack of a tax base in the very areas that require such extensions of services has been one of the impediments to more government action, but this formula is changing as wealthier homeowners build their homes in diverse parts of the city, including areas that are overwhelmingly ger-inhabited. While regimes of liberal ownership policy have transformed the ger districts into a viable, and growing, form of urban landscape, there is little reason liberalized ownership cannot be supplemented by such further responsibilities as generated by a tax commitment. Such a tax commitment, which would allow for a sustainable level of collective return back into the ger district, could equal the notion of conscientiousness that land-use rights instill in a population still unused to being responsible for the overall urban environment. Local responsibility for neighborhood improvements has been rising through various cooperative efforts, from micro-loaning to micro-credit institutions, which function as voluntary approximations of a tax base for pooling funding for improving a community's resources. The advancement of ger district quality-of-life issues should become its own rising spiral, attracting greater investment and stability for those who choose, rather than are relegated, to live in these areas.

This survey has identified the overall trends for living in the ger districts, however, the goal of including individual cases, particularly those exceptional cases that offer alternatives to the current typical conditions of ger district life, is to change the overarching dialog about the ger districts. Rather than dwelling on the majority of conditions, by highlighting tangible possibilities, a map is provided for imagining a different direction in which to guide the growth of the ger districts.

Limits of the survey

The survey method effectively and rapidly establishes a baseline for comprehending the material and immaterial composition of the ger districts. The results are largely in keeping with the results of similar research projects, such as the annual living conditions data compiled by the National Statistical Office and the survey on housing by the JICA/MUST team. By administering the survey with a form specifically designed for

our research, we were able to achieve greater granularity in the data, isolating responses according to answers while juxtaposing different categories.

Notwithstanding the clear benefits of having conducted the lateral survey, however, analysis of the results proved disappointing on two different registers. First, the results painted a depressing image of a housing situation in which much of the population was portrayed as trapped. Without recourse to the economic production potentials of either the steppe or the city, the ger districts became not so much a refuge as a last resort. Most residents of the ger districts, per the responses they provided us, were left wishing for a better housing situation but unable to achieve such a state by their own means, nor were they able to leave their present housing due to economic constraints. This familiar picture was one thing we had hoped to dispel by providing contradictory whirlpools and back-eddies within the data. The second level of disappointment was that this was already a familiar story, as told by other professionals who concern themselves with ger district settlement issues. That the ger districts were economically disadvantageous to their denizens did little but reify their problematic role in Mongolia as a whole. If their own inhabitants were harmed, the existence of ger districts could be of little benefit to other urbanites. Worse still, the economic position played into urban fears of the social and ecological threats these regions posed to the other, built parts of Ulaanbaatar. But the benefit of having conducted the survey was as much in insights to the process of interacting with ger district residents in collecting the data as it was in re-affirming an overarching picture that I would strive to then pull apart through other methods. While the survey instrument was itself not necessarily a clear set of communications—neither to the surveyee nor from them—what it opened was a different potential for communicating more directly through a process of informal interviews. In the subsequent two chapters, using qualitative information provided by interviews with and observations of ger district residents, a more detailed and complex view of the ger districts comes into focus.

Chapter 5: Interviews with exceptional cases



Figure 19: A new dwelling is constructed on the expanding edge of the already distant-edge neighborhood of Belx. While Belx had once been a remote community for dacha-style weekend homes for urban denizens, the more recent expansion of the ger districts brought Belx into the urban fold. But now homeowners such as the one who had this house built are bridging the divide between dacha and ger district. With modest financial means to have this house professionally built, the owner avoids many of the characteristics of typical ger district xashaa. Furthermore, his motivations for moving here do not align with those of most of his neighbors. In choosing to live here, his future will track with those of his xashaa-dwelling neighbors.

Within the larger context of the ger district dwellers, who are generally characterized according to the findings of the survey of the previous chapter, as economic refugees from either the difficult situation of the countryside or from the high costs of living in the urban core, this chapter recognizes a different kind of ger district resident. For the most part, the people presented here selected to move to the ger districts because they believe it is the best place for them to advance their social and economic prospects. Unlike the broader population, who faced dwindling options for advancing their housing status, the interviewees of this chapter present a case for the favorable use of the ger districts, selecting their housing here to exploit the advantages of law and land to their economic and social advantage. While this group deriving advantage from their ger district situation remain numerically small relative to the swelling population at the edges of Ulaanbaatar, they are significant in setting an example to policy-makers and to their neighbors alike for presenting ger district inhabitation as an advantageous place from which to rebuild housing options, livelihoods, and the larger urban economy.

Much of the literature and outside expert view on urbanism in Mongolia, particularly work that focuses on the ger districts, concentrates heavily on the former condition—the desperation and poverty, the Malthusian depletion of resources, the harm such inhabitation causes to the environment, public health, and the social fabric of both the ger district residents and urban core dwellers affected by the pollution, crime, and other ills of the ger districts. Analysis of our lateral housing survey in the previous chapter leads to many of the same conclusions. In agreement with outside experts, from municipal ministries, to non-governmental organizations, to academicians, we found much of the population of the ger districts desirous of, but unable to achieve fixed housing solutions. Of those surveyed who had managed to construct or afford for themselves a more substantial residence in the ger districts, the majority claimed an even greater preference for the fixed, apartment dwellings in the urban core.[1] However, reading deeper into the survey data highlights an influential subset of homesteaders who are transforming the idea of the ger districts into an advantageous place not only as a living environment for themselves, but also as a place with productive potential for Mongolian society as a whole. Moving from the wider-scaled housing survey into more detailed ethnographic work—semi-structured interviews and participant observation—a different picture emerges. The ger districts introduce a new relationship between people and their place in Ulaanbaatar's urban scheme, becoming one of the primary components in the transformation currently remaking Mongolian society.

Interview methods

The research plan for participant-observation included an interview component, so as to be more inclusive of other home owners and their families. Adding detail to observations of one main host family

[1] Asking (per question 29) about what prevents them or their household from leaving the ger districts, respondents who had expressed a desire to leave (per question 27) selected as their greatest hurdle to moving out of the ger districts the simple cost of apartments (one third of those who responded positively to whether they wished to move subsequently chose cost of apartments as the main hindrance. The next highest ranked reasons, that apartments are not part of the Mongolian tradition and that apartments lack necessary space, were each selected by only 15% of respondents). The lack of affordability prevents lower income families that had not already established a toehold in the urban core (particularly during the transition period when Socialist properties were being sold to residents) from gaining ownership of this limited housing stock. But a turn or return to the pastoral countryside is also beyond the limits of most families, as the threshold cost for becoming viable in a pastoral system of production is high. Families that lack the financial resources for purchasing an apartment would necessarily lack the start-up capital for attaining a viable herd. So those who enter the ger districts have few channels by which to subsequently leave.

seemed crucial to expanding the picture to engage the ger districts as a whole. While on many occasions I was able to ask questions of my host family during the participant-observation research (per chapter 6), my success at interviewing ger district dwellers outside the principal family was limited. Despite the time spent living in a ger district, access to other people initially remained elusive. Overcoming limits to conducting the interviews depended heavily on insights gained during the survey process (from chapter 4), where access to individuals for the relatively lighter interaction of fulfilling a survey form, was socially more accepted. Whereas completing a written survey bypassed the awkward social circumstances of talking to ger district residents, the interviews demanded a greater level of interaction and social acceptance in speaking to me, as a researcher, with less mediation by such things as a survey form. I outline below how the problem of access was largely overcome. But before launching into the particulars of the methodology, I outline the general system of interview methods with which I was working.

Entering as an outsider

Techniques for conducting ethnographic-oriented interviews have been a long-standing practice in the Social Science fields of Anthropology and Sociology. In this project, I rely on insights for refining the ethnographic interview as developed by Spradley (1979), particularly with regards to forms of questions asked and ways of approaching questions. Informants' illumination of usages, rather than definitions (ibid., 81), are vital in connecting and synthesizing the data from interviews with observation of daily practice from the participant-observation research. Learning by way of the repetition of doing assumes adopting local knowledge as socially proscribed, but the caution of etic knowledge acquisition is that it requires testing against emic users to determine the scale of the information's validity. The test is not whether or not etic knowledge is per se valid—the assumption is that it is valid, but only scope must be determined—whether such knowledge is applicable at the width of an entire cultural group or narrowed to the single individual from which the knowledge is acquired. Two examples might best illustrate this distinction: I was sent to carry a bulky and heavy item together with another individual. How to do this carrying was learned wordlessly by obvious gestures of the other person while we were in the act of picking up and carrying the item. Sent to retrieve water, two of us carried a filled aluminum canister by each taking one handle and lifting the item

between us. But in order to not be pulled into each other by the weight of the container, one person stretches a stiffened arm across to brace against the others' shoulder. This became a common way I understood to interact with whomever I had to share a burdensome load. Furthermore, on a daily basis, as people carried water, or large boxes, duffle bags, auto parts, lumber, grain sacks, or any number of other items through the ger districts, I quickly learned that even strangers will assist a lone person in the street. The common understanding between two Mongols is toward a social responsibility for assisting someone carrying a heavy load, and this understanding is manifested through a common pragmatics of stiff-armed bracing. On the other hand, in 2009, I was watching a member of my host family as she was cooking food over the electric burner in her former dwelling (she has more recently moved back into a ger). She customarily poured a small amount of water into the pan below the electric burner. It struck me first as a potentially dangerous practice, but I later came to assume this was somehow a culturally specific way of preparing food. I had recalled seeing other family members—the mother with whom she resided and the sister who lived nearby and commonly cooked there as well—do the same (the only other person I had seen prepare food on that stove up to that time was a sister-in-law who resided in the urban core but occasionally came to visit). But another visitor to the residence—not a family member—observed this occur one time while he was visiting and wondered aloud why water was being poured into an electric stove; my host replied sheepishly that some milk tea had boiled over, so to avoid the acrid smell of burned milk, she poured water over the blackened pan below the burner. While both etic forms of knowledge acquisition remain valid, the scope of the observation on carrying bulky items is appropriate culture-wide in Ulaanbaatar and probably throughout the countryside as well. The use of water in the lower pan of an electric cook stove is narrowed to the observed individual and a few members of her family (though perhaps others in the ger districts also use this technique).

Whereas Spradley's theoretical stance had been tied to a methodology that depended on retaining native linguistic structures, as I was already operating between the Mongolian and English languages, some defining and synthesizing was required impromptu and in the field. As such, my practice of ethnographic interviews benefitted from considering the concerns of Clifford (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and Emerson (et al. 1995) on positionality. My etic position as not simply an outsider to the ger districts, but one who learns from

emics who themselves make errors of judgment or operate outside of cultural norms (those willing and interested to talk to a foreigner might already be a self-select group). But I also operate as a rational being among rational beings, so even as we each deviate from wider social norms or make simple errors, we have some capacity to recognize such deviations in each other and each other's culture (Obeyesekere 1992; cf. also Sahlins 1995; Geertz 1995).

While interviews were generally open, there were questions I worked into the discussion based on the hypotheses of this dissertation. Some questions woven into the interview included understanding how the interviewee considers their future in the ger district, and how he or she considers their home in the ger district: whether such a home implies permanence, settlement, how the ger district might be a different form of living than previously (or continuous with previous lifestyles/livelihoods). Appropriate to those who themselves did the construction were questions about how they performed the tasks, who was involved, and what decisions they had to make as the house was being built. However, having the flexibility to adjust the interview according to the role of the interviewee paid dividends as well with those whom I had not expected to interview, those homeowners who had hired contractors rather than build themselves. It was through these people that I learned about the nascent construction industry as a field that may emerge as part of ger district life with the strongest connection to economic activity that transcends any particular neighborhood. (This point will be addressed below in regards to the second case).

The questions of the study were meant to accommodate self-reflection, asking whether the respondent's view of the study in which they were participating fit their overall needs and perceptions of the ger districts. Toward better understanding of their position, a self-reflective set of questions asked of the interviewees what they think of the research I was doing and the questions I was asking. This was meant to aid in better tuning my methods as I conducted the work, as well as creating an appropriate format for dissemination among the subject community at the end of the work. However, these questions met stiff incomprehension. Questions that were meant to change the relationship from a one-way gathering of information into a two-way discussion risked an overall collapse in the briefly established rapport. So long as I provided an impetus for the conversation in the form of questions, respondents structured their role in the conversation as providers

of considered responses. Without the drive of new questions on my behalf—whenever, in the interest of reflectivity, I questioned aloud whether my own study would be useful to their living situation—respondents became uncomfortable with a study where the value of the entire enterprise might be put at risk by the primary researcher.

Approaches from the survey process

An unexpected result of the survey method had little to do with the survey per se, but provided a significant advance to the interview process: the survey opened a channel of access to many otherwise reticent homeowners and ger district residents. In the process of distributing surveys, surveyees would ask questions or offer comments about the survey: frequently clarification about phrasing in the survey instrument, but occasionally surveyees would raise questions about the larger project and its goals, lacunae they felt important to fill us in on, dissections of meaning, or other concerns. While not many respondents were interested in talking further, those who were served as excellent sources of supplementary information. Because access is one of the more difficult hurdles of ethnographic or interview methodologies, the rapid identification of willing interviewees became one of the chief purposes in extending the survey into the Zuun Salaa neighborhood, where I intended to conduct discussions with residents. Though the research approach had turned toward semi-structured interviews, a distribution of survey forms was still used as an entrée into discussions with willing participants.

Whereas the multiple stages of forming and implementing the survey tended to compound errors, from conceptualizing, formulating, translating, answering, and analyzing responses to questions, the semi-structured interviews had a self-righting mechanism. Questions that could potentially veer off track were dropped in the flow of conversation, as the line of questioning followed from the lead of the interviewee.

Limits of the interview method

As with all ethnographic fieldwork, access into the culture can be an impediment. Overcoming reticence is difficult in any observation or interview situation, but particularly so in Mongolian culture. I have been fortunate to have gained access to ger district communities in the past, and would hope to continue interacting with the informants with whom I have previously worked. Having gained trust over the course of

several visits and many years, I was able to use my existing connections to expand my data-collection into a larger pool of informants through three different channels:

1. Geographically-based networks form among proximate residential neighbors. Such networks do not include all households, but often form out of specific necessity, such as the recent trend in micro-saving collectives established as grass-roots efforts for participatory improvements by neighborhoods

2. Kinship systems have traditionally been a primary structure of organization and communication among nomads. However a recent development of this system is that it has become skewed in the sedentarization process, with some areas drawing increased settlement from a single kinship group—often with one member positioning him- or herself and drawing other family members to that same neighborhood.

3. Other social networks are built by colleagues from the workplace, from school, or from former Socialist institutions.

Once access was established, I was able to build rapport. While the access bar tends to be higher, the subsequent rapport seemed to come more easily. Steps toward rapport-building can be achieved during the participant-observation phase, as familiarity allowed a greater level of comfort with my presence in the research site. My practical knowledge of construction methods also provided a basis for common rapport to develop with those who were in the process of building and with those in the building trade.

To accommodate the subtleties involved in interviews and discussions about topics such as culture and perceptions I used a facilitator who made introductions and generally provided verbal translation. This generally occurred in the real-time rapport of a conversation, but typically we debriefed after leaving the home of an interviewee. The facilitator filled me in on both the more detailed terms and matters that I had not understood from the conversation as well as providing some of the cultural background context. Audio recordings of some discussions were made, but stripped of identifying information of the interviewees, and deleted after translation or transcription. The intricacies of Mongolian language remained one of the obstacles in the free flow of conversations as vocabulary frequently stretched beyond my range. But the true benefit of the facilitator was in providing a conversational zone in which interviewees felt comfortable to provide details of their lives and views to a foreign researcher. The facilitator bridged this gap.

Addressing the concerns of research ethics and the protection of human research subjects, this project required the participant-observation of inhabitants of ger districts in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Additionally, I conducted unstructured interviews with particular informants selected for their familiarity in constructing self-built housing in these neighborhoods. While a definition of adulthood may be culturally relative, in this study, due to the need to focus on those persons with the decision-making capacity for altering or building the home, children and the generally disadvantaged were necessarily precluded from study. However, children even of a young age were active participants in operating the daily necessities of their households, tasked with cooking, cleaning, caring for siblings that were still younger, retrieving water or fuel, building fires, building construction, planting, harvesting, and numerous other activities. And they could frequently be at the center of a family's attention. For all of these reasons, children were not excluded from the collecting of general or background information, nor were they excluded from photo taking. Often, it was the children who were thrust before my camera lens by a proud parent. A prepared document of informed consent in Mongolian (both Mongolian and English informed consent scripts are appended to this proposal), stating the overall project, its goals, potential risks, and protections taken against those risks was prepared and available to all participants. Surveyees were informed in writing, on the survey form itself, of how the survey would be used. The initial paragraph of the form informed surveyees of their freedom to not answer the survey. The first question asked whether or not they were capable of completing the survey. All involvement by participants in the survey, interview, and observation methods of data collection was voluntary and confidential. The risks of participation are minimal, with no participant having experienced any consequences of having answered questions, engaged in discussion, or associated with me in the time I was conducting fieldwork. Personal data have not been retained beyond the usefulness of the interviews. The only meta-use I foresee is in continuing the story of the interviewee from a previous session, but this has not been relevant to findings within the study itself. Names and identifying data are not pertinent to the analysis or conclusions of this study, though for consistency, informants referred to within the text retain their labeling throughout (e.g. an informant of the common Mongolian name Bat might be referred to in the text as B— or by another,

random letter, but he would retain this letter reference throughout the dissertation text. However, another informant of the common name Bold might also be referred to as B— or another consistently used letter).[2]

Selecting research subjects

Of particular interest in addressing questions of design, material, and technique were those who had constructed their own homes or the homes of other ger district dwellers, as well as those involved more generally in the building trades as builders or suppliers. Unlike the survey, where we attempted to render an accurate picture of the general conditions of the ger districts and those who live there, the interview subjects were sought out foremost for their attachment to active building. Xashaa where houses were under way or looked recently completed became a focus for finding those not only interested in changing their future housing situation, but those who were actively manifesting material results of their housing ambitions. Selecting subjects whom I would interview was an informal process that developed as I approached each individual and spoke with the person about my research. Those who became interviewees were already a self select group characterized by the twin willingness to take progressive action in building their house and to be proud enough of it to wish to speak about it to an outsider. My initial forays through the ger districts, in scouting for houses under construction, was also a process of allaying fears and curiosities about my presence and my eventual queries. As this study began to look for novel expressions of practice by each individual studied, rather than uniformity of responses across the group (particularly those who stood out from the baseline of the lateral survey), interviews for this project were conducted with voluntary subjects selected not only for their experiences living as decision-makers in their own housing choices, but those who could serve to others as examples of what might be accomplished in the ger districts.

[2] Consistent with Mongolian usage of only a single, given name, I have not rendered any surnames. Mongolians tend to use patronymics (a father's name rendered in the genetive case) rather than surnames (although clan names are beginning to function much like surnames), but inconsistencies abound: a wife might take either her husband's patronym or even his own name in the genetive case; a child might commonly use a matronym, especially if estranged from the father; or descendents of a well-known personage might employ that patronym as a quasi-surname. I rarely knew informants beyond their first name (and even then, more commonly by their nickname than by any registered name); even with close friends I often did not know by which form of surname or patronym they qualified themselves informally, let alone on official documents.

Three exceptional cases from interviews

The results of the lateral housing survey had been doubly disappointing: not only was its picture a gloomy one—of economic stagnation in a landscape inhabited by refugees from the rural and the urban spheres alike, with all the concerns for overstretched resources and environmental degradation as suggested by the neo-Malthusians—but also, on our part, the research had not brought to light a new or different perspective on the ger districts than the 'experts' had proposed. We had merely reaffirmed previous and simplistic stereotypes of the ger district through a statistical view. Furthermore, the flaws of the process of surveying—flaws particular to our survey as well as structural flaws that inhibit the general value of relying on a survey instrument that must translate between two languages but must also translate an elite, outsider concept into the kind of language that is then interpreted by insiders—led to a reconsideration of the semi-structured interview process.

From semi-structured interviews of fourteen households, varying perspectives were presented. Several interviewees did fit a similar narrative as the lateral housing survey exposed, however they were a minority of the viewpoints we encountered. One householder, Zs-2, had spoken answers that generally aligned with the statistical results of our survey. We encountered and spoke with an older man curious as to why we were surveying the ger districts. He stopped us on the dirt road as he was descending from his xashaa toward the water station where his daughters (or grand-daughters) had gone ahead to retrieve water. In the time we were talking, they returned, pushing and pulling up the slope of the dirt road the cart loaded with two containers of water. Two younger children also came up, spending some time in his orbit before continuing on to their home. He moved to this xashaa eighteen years earlier from another xashaa in Ulaanbaatar. His previous home site was either much nicer or better located, but at the time, needing money, he strategically sold it and moved here. He found this site through a listing in the classified section of a newspaper—the house on the site had already been built at the time he had moved here. Whether intentional or not, maintenance on the house had been difficult and demanding; the man indicated being unhappy with having to put more money or work into the home. His demeanor telegraphed the unagitated negativity he would convey in his answers to interview questions—a weariness with the neighborhood, both the social neighborhood as a place occupied

by fellow xashaa owners and the political neighborhood as administered by officials he felt were inept and unhelpful.

For the most part, in the interviews conducted across Zuun Salaa, the interviewees started from a distanciated position of providing the type of response they expected we (in our capacity as presented to them, as academic professionals assessing the issues of the ger districts) might wish to hear. But over the course of the discussion, divergences from the expected narrative of economic and social depression in the ger districts eventually led the conversationist to voice more optimistic motives for wishing to remain in their neighborhood. The most frequent comments invoked the freedom of the space to do as one pleased and a nostalgic (and ironic) idea of breathing fresh air, as if the ger districts, in denial of their urban woes, were a meteorological continuation instead of the countryside. The irony here is that in the dominant narrative of neo-Malthusian woes, air quality is among the chief indicators of poor quality of life.

In this section, I focus instead on the positive qualities as expressed in three cases of homeowners who are exceptional from the base narrative, as each of the three outline not only their satisfaction with xashaa life, but express distinct and detailed purposes for living in the ger districts. I also include here a pre-case, the family from Belx who participated in our lateral survey, but whose enthusiasm for their home allowed us to engage in further explorations, launching the interview methods. Altogether, the cases below are the exceptions that do not reflect the capacity of most families nor home sites to advance their futures solely through the advantages provided by being located in the ger districts. However, what they do reflect is a strong trend counter to the dominant narrative of the ger districts as a place of social and environmental ills. As exceptional cases, are not representative of the ger districts, but establish what possibilities reside in the ger districts for meeting domestic needs. Furthermore, in a number of these cases the added component of a work or money-generating business contributes to the role of these home sites in the future outlook for their owners. For many of these forward-thinking homeowners, the space or the actual land of the xashaa becomes the capital in their equation of success. Controlling the rights to a portion of the land gives them a place not only to build their house, but also capacity for using land for some economic production potential. In nearly each interview in which a family noted the prospects for their improving their future, the land of

their xashaa played a distinct role in reaching that future. How land might be used toward production varied: for some, simply having the space within their xashaa was sufficient to set up a store for selling items (Zs-7 has a store selling construction materials, throughout the ger districts people build kiosk-style windows into the actual fence), for others, the space is usable as production space (Zs-9, as detailed below in case two, fabricates shoes and women's fashions from her new garage, while Zs-10 uses his land to operate a woodworking studio), but for many, it is the land itself that is used for growing trees and plants for sale and growing fruits and vegetables for both their own consumption and for sale (Zs-1, Zs-10, and the family of N— in chapter 6 all engage in agricultural production using the land they have acquired through the land registration process). While the three cases below offer the best examples of how families might best use the land of the ger districts, and they are the minority of ger district home owners, evidence on the hillsides of the ger districts suggests they are far from being the only ones who see a bright future in the ger districts.

A pre-case exposes exceptions

At the outset of the lateral survey, an encounter with a homeowner in the Belx neighborhood provided the first incidence of someone whose story was not easily captured in the scripted survey responses, nor in the quantifiable data of previous pictures of the ger districts. Belx survey respondent B-2, according to our survey collection ordering, defied the statistics we would eventually compile. Furthermore, his forthrightness in displaying his home and discussing his personal story distinguished out interactions with him from what would become our more typical interaction with respondents. Though neither the pattern of statistics nor of such interactions had begun yet to emerge at the time we had met this respondent—we were still very early in our collection phase—this this homeowner already stood out and our rapport with him became a model for the interview phase of research. In fact, it was in reflecting upon the informative relationship with this homeowner that led me to eventually develop the methodology developed here for approaching and interviewing subjects. On the flip-side of this relationship, however, it must also be noted that the forthrightness of this interviewee was also a recurring characteristic of those who were most willing to share their housing achievements. Such interviewees, the ones who provided the most information on how they had accomplished such housing situations for themselves, were a self-selecting group who represented only

one echelon of ger district residents. But none-the-less, their stories are an important contribution to understanding the full range of possibilities in the ger districts.



Figure 20: The ceiling, wired for eventual lighting elements, had been designed to recall the toono crown of a ger—an element that remains a matter of fact for his ger-dwelling neighbors. The blue khutag, hung from a toono, would normally welcome a family into their new ger. This transference into use for new fixed housing is not a recent phenomenon—many owners of new houses in the ger districts or even those who have recently purchased or refurbished an apartment in the city would retain this usage of the khutag. Other elements of their new home have less to do with tradition than with the urban comforts to which the owners had already been accustomed. The house is modest—no bigger than the apartment they left in the city—but they are pleased to employ the same comforts now relocated to the openness at the edge of the city, where this family intends to regain their contact with the landscape.

B-2 was the sole resident of the Belx area whose house most closely resembled a Western-styled dwelling. The house's resemblance included formal components, such as a front stoop leading to the main door, an attached garage around to the side, windows looking out from the living room; material uses, such as the brick, vacuum windows, concrete foundation (the material list also included insulating styrene in some of the concrete and brick work and a metal roof); but most importantly the familiarities extended to some of the unseen systems of the house, including a hot water heater scheduled for installation in the garage (which, unusually, was attached to the house) and a septic tank with a run-off field. While no municipal water supply was possible to this remote area, nor was the drilling of a well likely on the upper reaches of the hillside, the house was none-the-less prepared for running water, which would likely require trucking in. The owner informed us that the septic system would be emptied every two to three years through a service company that operated in Ulaanbaatar ("large orange trucks" was how one might identify them, according to the owner). That a septic servicing company was even in operation was one of the more surprising findings learned from

the interview with the owner. The idea for the tank was first proposed to the owner by the house's experienced contractor—this home was one of very few surveyed that solely employed an experienced builder for its construction.



Figure 21: Concrete blocks will be used to construct a wall (xana) instead of the typical and more permeable wood fence (xashaa).

This house, with its formal elements, materials, and systems displaying their differences to most of the other, self-built homes and especially to the Mongolian ger, exposes the notion of how relevant the built space of the home is to its occupation and use. The owner and his wife lived much differently and had a different attitude toward their home than most of the other with whom we spoke. Enjoying their position on the hillside, with a sweeping view of the valley, but also of the open grass hill above, they intend to live in this house for a longer term. They have built rooms that will serve specifically as bedrooms when they hope to have their children and grandchildren stay when visiting. The living room is also a devoted space (although could likely host overnight visitors as well) with a television at the head of a sitting area, but the entire arrangement fitting the configuration of the open space. This is unlike the more typical phenomenon in houses and apartments, which tend to have closed rooms with a doorway at one end. The closure of the typical room allows for a configuration similar to that of the Mongolian ger, where some sitting areas might be placed against the wall, while the family photos, television, and any other object of attention would be placed at the far end of the room, either on a wall or in a corner opposite the wall where the entry to the room would be located. The living room in this house was positioned off to the left of the entry into the

house, flowing directly into the relatively open yet dedicated kitchen space. The seating formed a ring for retaining social space between any potential guests, while still directing attention toward the television flat against the western wall of the home (like all traditional homes, this house still maintained its main entry in the middle of the south wall, so the door opened out to the south).

Case 1: Realizing a house from an image

The house of Zs-1 now stands framed out in wood, but with clear intentions already manifested in the prepared site work, and in the explanations given by one of the women who lives in a ger within the xashaa. The current impediment to their progress is the money to buy bricks—at about 180₮-190₮ per brick, the family estimates spending about 1,400,000₮ for about 7000 bricks.[3] The metal roofing they have already purchased, but will not erect until they can proceed with the enclosure of exterior walls.



Figure 22: Foundations and framing are inspired by a Canadian house seen on television. A son learned to use computer-aided drafting software with enough proficiency to lay out a design more advanced and requiring more forethought than most ger district houses.

The intentions for the ultimate form of this house are both clear and concrete. The woman, and later her brother, referred to an area already dug for storage (presumably for cold items such as root vegetables, as they intend to resurrect their vegetable garden). The house currently sits on the site where they had formerly grown the bulk of their vegetables (lettuce and sunflowers were still rising from a portion of the garden plot.

[3] In passing by the house in winter, a few months after the interview, the family had subsequently purchased bricks and begun to erect the outer shell.

A nearby chicken coop was empty, while a small greenhouse was momentarily filled with rigid foam intended for insulating the future walls of the house). The displaced garden will then move to the central area of their compound, sitting above an area that will contain a black-water tank for the toilet (grey-water may be channel back to the garden portion or other areas of the site, or be reused for toilets). A supply tank for water, with an enclosed pump, will be installed along the northern boundary of the xashaa. Water supplies were at first suggested to be delivered by truck, but later clarified to be hand-delivered in containers from a water supply station quite near the xashaa entrance. Also a distinction was made briefly, but not elaborated upon, between water clean enough for drinking and water than might supply the conveniences of the enclosed toilet and showering facilities. Locations for each of these systems have been clearly laid out and require only their proper manifestation once funds become available to the family.

The plans are not only expressed in the minds of the family of builders (the husband and son of the interviewed woman are the two responsible for construction), but had previously been laid out on paper by the son—an unusual step for ger district houses built by owners untrained in construction. Though he does not have any experience with architectural design or drawing, the son learned to use a computer program to draft intended plans for the house. Both the son and the husband had minimal experience previously in carrying out construction, but had worked together to build a house for a third party in the vicinity of Dambadarjaa (west of Belx). That previous house was of much simpler design and construction, but provided a platform for then attempting the much more complex design of their own home. The most significant influence on the current house plan—in part responsible for the greater complexity but also the greater future comfort of their home—was an image of a house the family had seen on television. That house, whether it was built in Canada or in Mongolia but as a demonstration by Canadians is unclear, was featured on a television program explaining how to build a house from wood. Indications are that the house was built in Canada for a Canadian television program, as they explained that they believed the Canadian climate was similar to their own, but they were also unfamiliar with one demonstration house erected in Ulaanbaatar as part of a British Colombia wood-industry initiative for promoting wood construction. The wood this family has so far used to frame the house was purchased at the Hangai zakh (a large market for

wood located along one of only two main roads connecting Zuun Salaa to the rest of Ulaanbaatar). The wood framing already articulates a profile of the house with symmetrical protrusions of upper-story window bays, among other features of the front façade. Though still difficult to determine what the overall aesthetic of the house will become, influences may extend beyond the house they saw on television, to include Russian domestic architecture and the vernacular of some of the larger homes in the ger districts (which may share some of the same Siberian, Nordic, or Alpine aesthetic influences).

Their interest in energy efficiency was brought up in the context of a 'Green Plan' (ногоон төсөл, *nogoong tösöl*)—although it was not clear whether their interest in this program was solely for the offer of environmentally conscious technological innovations, the cost savings such technologies might offer (they referred to the 'smokeless stove'), or other incentives offered by the program. They looked into the smokeless stove idea, something other educated families had mentioned but somewhat dismissed due to unfamiliarity or cost, and remained interested in the idea but had been unable to find where they might purchase such a stove. They had not heard of GiZ, a German NGO working on stoves and other energy-efficient resources, but were aware that similar programs did exist.[4] Either they had already bought or were

[4] Shortly after this interview, another model of high-efficiency stove began wider-spread appearance in the ger districts. Manufactured in Turkey on behalf of the American-initiated Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), they were referred to alternately as 'American' or 'MCA' stoves in addition to the 'smokless' moniker. Relatives of the family profiled in chapter 6 eventually acquired one such stove in the winter of 2011. Such American-based NGOs as Habitat for Humanity have been distributing the stoves at 10% of cost (the MCA subsidizing the other 90%), building interest for the devices in the ger districts. GiZ has been critical of the devices, as they undercut the market for their own stove, with the intent of manufacturing stoves entirely in Mongolia with local labor fabricating from wholly Mongol-mined materials. In the longer term, the as yet to be released German-designed stove might become a more standardized model in the market—the Turkish/American program will phase out after completing distribution in 2012 or 2013. GiZ critics of the American models note that children can easily be burned by the exposed walls of the stove, though a 2011 study by Tseren-Ochir found that even with traditional stoves, as typically sold in Narantuul Market, Mongolian children have a high rate of suffering burn injuries. Over 25% of children under five years of age suffer some form of burning, with more than half afflicted by scalding (Tseren-Ochir et al. 2011). Ger district owners of the new stove note that the efficient burn rate does lower the amount of coal they use—possibly to as little as half—but they complain that the even temperature is too low for cooking. They do note, however, that they anyway cook on an electric burner, using the stove primarily for heating and secondarily for keeping food hot. This usage aligns with municipal goals of reducing reliance on stoves for cooking by providing discounted electric rates to the ger districts around the time of evening food preparations. The switch away from standard iron stoves is reminiscent of the initial encouragement to begin using those same closed iron stoves in the mid-twentieth century. At the time, the open braziers that had been in use in ger for centuries were deemed detrimental to health, as the smoldering embers released their smoke directly into the ger before drifting upward toward the open crown. Containing the fire to a stove and smoke to the stove pipe was one of

already committed to purchasing a smaller but regular cast iron stove at one of the main markets for such items (either from the nearby Kharkhorin zakh or from the main market at Narantuul, where such building products tend to be concentrated).

Case 2: An energy efficiency autodidact develops his neighborhood

From outside the xashaa, the house of Zs-10 already looked different. The house also looked vacant. None of the usual clues of occupancy—a door propped open or at least ajar, a few windows open, or smoke rising from the chimney—left us apprehensive of finding an owner at home. At the next xashaa to the left, there was the sound of the chain to the gate being undone (the gates of both xashaa were tall and opaque), so we waited for a person to emerge. The man seemed apprehensive of our survey, but said that he would be off to the market across the way and answer questions when he returned. I too was apprehensive, as, after numerous interviews with half-hearted interviewees, I was hoping to find someone who seemed more interested in engaging in topics about which I felt I had not yet adequately addressed. Though I had imagined the owner of the neighboring house to be such a person, rather than knocking at the other gate, I waited patiently for this man to return from the market. Of course he would prove not only to be the owner of the neighboring house, but also its intelligent and interesting builder as well. When he returned from the store, he still seemed reticent of the survey, asking some questions about its purpose and about my interests.

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the progress-through-hygiene campaigns of the Socialist government (Stolpe 2008); the current agenda for more efficient stoves follows this tradition.



Although he gave away little in facial expressions, he did invite us into his xashaa, which had only a wire fence separating it from the neighboring xashaa with the towering white house. He began to explain the story of its construction, leading us toward the entrance that punctured the north-facing wall.



Figure 23: An energy-sensitive scheme integrates the stove and pishin wall but thermally isolates the exterior through interlocking rigid insulation panels that envelope the mass of the exterior wall from both outside and inside.

One of the more thoughtful and thought-out houses to have been visited in the course of the survey was a project that consciously planned to engage energy efficiency. Using passive solar techniques, particularly a composite, 'thermal wall' system, the builder-owner has been able to achieve comfortable internal environmental conditions with a minimum of active heating. Even when required to actively heat, the house used very little coal in a stove that is also an energy-efficient system (the Russian *pishin* system of venting an iron stove through a serpentine cavity in a masonry wall. The smoke transfers its heat into the thermal mass of the wall for further, steady distribution into the house. Unlike the 'thermal wall' construction, however, the pishin is much more commonly used in ger district homes.) At the time of the interview, in early autumn, a week's cold spell had been somewhat alleviated by several moderate days. But inside the house, although the owner indicated he had not used the stove in some time, the ground floor temperature was adequate and the upper floor was quite warm and comfortable. By the owner's claim, the downstairs temperature could be maintained between eighteen and twenty degrees centigrade, while upstairs could easily reach thirty degrees without active use of stove. Even as daytime temperatures the previous week had dropped to just above

freezing (and nighttime temperatures had remained below freezing), the house sustained ten degrees centigrade without any use of the stove.



Figure 24: The significant proportion of the southern and eastern façades subsumed by glazing permits passive solar gain.

The exterior wall system relies on fifteen centimeters thick, rebar reinforced, poured concrete walls. The thermal mass of concrete is what allows the house to store both passive solar energy and active internally generated heat. The thermal mass is isolated from the exterior environment by interlocking panels of rigid foam insulation, five centimeters thick. External insulation, according to literature on deploying 'thermal wall' systems, allows the heat stored in the wall to radiate into the house once a temperature differential is reached. On the house of a neighbor, on which this builder has assisted by bringing his knowledge to bear, the exterior is covered in ten centimeters thick panels of rigid foam insulation. But on the house he himself built, the 5cm outer insulation is matched by five centimeters of interior insulation. Because the core of the composite wall is concrete, he insists that both exterior and interior layers are necessary to isolate the significant thermal mass. The goal of the wall in his system is not so much to store the heat as to isolate the interior environment from the exterior. He points to a similar deployment of this system in cold climates, mentioning Alaska and Canada, as hot ones, such as Arabia and Qatar, where the only difference is a reversal of cool interiors being isolated from hot exteriors. So long as the climate is sufficiently dry, there is little opportunity for heat (or heat loss) to bridge between the two, isolated environments.

But passive heating then depends on creating a greenhouse effect with sufficient glazed openings in the otherwise isolating walls. Eight vacuum windows achieve this—four on the south-facing wall, four on the east-facing (two on each level on each wall). Altogether, the eight windows cost 1 million ₮. North-facing windows are omitted; very few houses in the ger districts ever have even one north-facing window for obvious and overlapping reasons—a northern window would provide only heat loss without any potential for passive gain, it would be more exposed to the wind that often comes out of the north, and traditionally ger do not open to the north. When asked about west-facing windows to take advantage of afternoon exposure, which is particularly warming, the builder's reply was cultural rather than technical—the neighbors on that side drank too much, making them disorderly in person and in property. In contrast, one of the most noticeable things about the house when first approached, even from outside the xashaa, is its Spartan simplicity and order. Formally, it rises as a shear, two story structure topped by a metal roof. The windows are regular, being aligned with each other, both vertically and horizontally on the east and south faces. The north face is punctured only by an entry door and a garage door. Unusual for even the houses that have garages (and furthermore, garages adjacent to the house) this house integrated the garage into the overall plan, including the isolating envelope of the exterior.

Furthermore, what sets this house apart is that it was not built for the own family's occupancy. Rather, it was built as an experiment for learning how to later construct his own house but also as a speculative venture for raising the necessary finances to build his own house. Cost-wise, it has been an expensive venture. The innovative construction methods were responsible for a high construction cost of 15 million ₮, whereas a more typical house of this size—sixty-six square meters—he estimates would have cost about 6 million ₮.[5] He had initially planned to build the house from brick, but became dissuaded from the material after hearing news of the devastation in the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan. It reminded him of the damage suffered in the

[5] A similarly sized home of sixty-six square meters, built to 'foreign standards,' would potentially cost on the order of 40 million ₮. A resident foreigner, D—, who used the services of a professional builder, cited to me a typical construction cost of US$500 per square meter for the more substantially constructed house with modern amenities, such as indoor plumbing; connection to municipal steam, water, and electrical service; proper foundations; and sufficient and appropriate insulation for Mongolia's climatic regime.

masonry 40K buildings in Ulaanbaatar resulting from a 1967 earthquake. Another option he considered using included *palk*, the Russian loan word for dressed log construction, made from 15 cm x 15 cm timbers at four or six meter lengths, but ultimately decided on concrete for its thermal massing.[6] He intends to sell the house and xashaa for 25 million ₮, realizing enough of a profit to construct his own home by similar methods.

The builder has lived at this site in Zuun Salaa for twelve years. He mentioned that his work is as a biology teacher in high school. But prior to this work and moving to this site, he had lived and worked in construction in Czechoslovakia in 1989. His work was constructing large-scale infrastructural projects—subterranean water supply systems—he nevertheless returned home with an interest in construction and a belief in the progressive power of technological solutions. He is the second respondent to have mentioned a government or municipally-backed Green Plan. He also hopes to one day power all the electric needs of the house with a four meter square solar panel, which he deemed of sufficient capacity. When I raised the objections of others I had met who were disappointed in the power output of their solar cells, the builder dismissed those solar cells as poor-quality Chinese manufacturing. He claimed that a good, Japanese engineered solar panel would last five hundred years, and even if it only lasted one hundred or eighty, it would already be enough (although this did not address the sufficiency of wattage a solar panel might

[6] His neighbor he advised to employ another wood material handled similar to palk, known as *ishbal*. Ishbal, measured at 15 cm x 25 cm x 2.75 m, are former railroad ties from the Mongolyn Tömör Zam (MT3) railsystem that have since been replaced by concrete ties along some sections of track.

provide).[7] His interest in green technology extended from his expertise in biology, and he had moved to this site in Zuun Salaa specifically because he intended to raise plants—the proximity of a stream bed indicated that the water table was more easily reached when drilling a well for irrigation. His well went down eight or

[7] The rhetoric at a sales event on Sukhbaatar Square (below left) matches independence from an urban infrastructure that is notoriously lacking in many ger districts with the 'freedom' of pastoral nomadism. As the dark glass City Hall looks on, a vendor promotes solar panels, a wind turbine, and a satellite television dish with a banner proclaiming this as the home of "the twenty-first century herding family." In the course of conducting the survey, I came across few home owners who had invested in solar panels. In two cases, the homeowners' attitudes toward the technology was cynical—that their 'investment' had cost much more than they saved in electricity charges, with the resulting energy production was insufficient to their needs. In Uliastai, I spoke with one ger-dwelling resident (U-46) who had a solar panel mounted to an adjacent pole within the xashaa (below right). He immediately turned negative, gesticulating toward his car as if the cost were comparative, but extended the smallest finger of his hand (the gesture for bad, муу).



The other xashaa (or more likely, dacha) owner unhappy with his solar electric panel was also reticent to answer questions of ger district housing (Zs-13 of the Zuun Salaa interview canvas). In an area of high and sometimes multiple, well-finished walls and fences, this substantive house stood along a row of several large and elaborately finished dwellings along a dirt track at the base of the Songino escarpment. Each house had relatively well-landscaped areas within the xashaa, including patches of fenced grass, laid walkways of brick or stone, and fountains (inactive or dry), indicating not just the wealth of the owner, but possibly the use of these houses primarily as dacha rather than as dwelling. Closed windows and the lack of smoke at a time of day when dinner preparations should be underway furthered this impression. The man was dismissive of research of the ger districts, remarking that if one is concerned with living conditions, "an apartment is better." When asked about the solar panels attached above the door on the south-facing façade, he remained cynical but replied amusingly, "only for a computer; not enough electricity."

The positive response I received about owning solar panels came from an older woman, a friend or distant relative of my host family, who lived a half kilometer north of this wealthy neighborhood, also along the base of Songinokhairkhan. Her employment was tending her cattle and the cattle of others; she lived at the urban edge in order to drive stock up into the hills for grazing. But she was beyond the reach of even recently strung power lines, though ironically not far from the high tension lines that marched from Baruun Salaa over a saddle of the Songino ridge. Because she was off the power grid, the solar panels provided her only source of electricity. Her energy needs were simple—heating and cooking would invariably be fueled by her nearly limitless supply of cow dung—so she was pleased with the simple solar panel.

ten meters, rather than the fifty meters he thought might be necessary on a hillside.[8] He had planted fruit trees, raised German-type strawberries in a greenhouse he had built, and grew other vegetables. A pile of cucumbers he had grown were being stored in the shadow of the pishin on the upper floor of the house. The greenhouse was wall-to-wall with broad-leaf strawberry plants, though he said the strawberries themselves were all consumed by his children. A garden plot was filled with Mongolian strawberries and other fruits and vegetables. The xashaa was also dotted with black currant, seabuckthorn, and other berry-bearing bushes. He had attempted to qualify these bushes and some trees he was growing for some type of compensation under the Green Plan, but was turned down as the trees did not fulfill the terms of the plan.

In general, Zs-10 held a deep disdain for officials, particularly when it came to the subject of building in the ger areas; he backed his views with numerous examples of corruption, nepotism, and malfeasance. But he also believed that the ger districts should be developed and he offered more than just thoughts on how this should occur; small-scale, private home builders should take the initiative to build the ger districts, as he believed programs that offered subsidies or even technical assistance would end up wreaking more havoc (through corruption) than benefit for the ger districts. To this end, he has made his own expertise available to his neighbors, and many have taken up his offer. He has become an unofficial consultant on two nearby houses, each of which has incorporated a few of his ideas on construction.

Next door, owner Zs-11 has installed exterior rigid foam insulation (ten centimeters thick) to isolate the thermal mass of the house from the exterior climate after consulting with Zs-10. Unlike his the reinforced concrete house of his neighbor, though, Zs-11 built his house from *ishbal*, the pre-dressed rail tie construction (per footnote on the MT3, above). Unlike woodframe construction, there are no hollow spaces in the walls, as the wood provides solid thermal massing. The wood retains less heat storage capacity than concrete, but also less transmission into the interior and less potential drainage from it. Interior walls are coated in plaster,

[8] Well digging typically costs US$100 to US$130 per vertical meter dug (as of 2011). For agricultural use, one only needs to go as deep as the water table. But for human consumption, much of the upper water table in the ger districts is polluted by the leaching of pit latrines. Those involved in well drilling claim that a depth of over forty meters is necessary to access safer drinking water—at a cost of at least US$4000, though even at this depth the water remains untested for contaminants.

leaving only the exterior surface covered in insulation. Also, unlike its neighbor, this house is not heated with a pishin. Rather, an iron stove, modified from those typically found in most ger district homes, is equipped to heat water that is then piped through the house to heat it through a conventional radiator system. The stove is outside the main house, but still protected from the exterior by being located in an entry vestibule. This modified stove is manufactured a small foundry or workshop not far away, in the Bayankhushuu area adjacent to Zuun Salaa. The cost is considerably higher though, running 400,000₮ to 600,000₮ (a regular stove can run from 40,000₮ to 120,000₮ depending on the size). The water is driven through the copper piping by a small electric pump (presumably on the return side of the stove, as hot water emerging from the stove would otherwise damage the pump). Unlike a stove attached to a pishin, which burns slower and cooler over a longer sustained period, this stove must burn hot. As such, the stove pipe is straight and vertical, allowing greater oxygen flow through the single combustion chamber.



Figure 25: A stove in an ante-room heats the house with flow-through plumbing. Exterior rigid insulation ten centimeter thick isolates the mass of the house, which is primarily built from reused railroad ties.

The exterior of the house was completed during the summer building season, but professional builders were still working on completing the interior with Zs-10 providing direction only on issues that of energy efficiency for the exterior. The exterior is finished with what appears to be a skin-coat of cementitious material adhered with an embedded plastic mesh—all to provide some protection to the relatively exposed rigid foam panels. Over this, a layer of dark green paint makes the house generally less distinct than, for example, its stark white neighbor, but remains a novelty among house colors in the ger districts. The color

was apparently chosen by the owner as a reminder of the iron factory (or iron smelter) where he worked in Korea. The factory buildings (or possibly the delivery trucks) were painted in this hue. The owner's family is young, so it seems likely that the finances for building this home may have come from his savings from working in Korea.



Figure 26: Of the canted window sill at the south east corner of the house (upper right), the owner proclaimed, "it's a new design!"

With Zs-10, we also visited another house on which he was consulting. Home owner Zs-12 was confidently raising the second floor of his house using a double thick exterior wall of brick with reflective thermal insulation sandwiched between that and yet another interior layer of brick. It is a direct inversion of Zs-10's principle, which would concentrate the mass between isolating layers of insulation. Zs-12 takes advice from his energy efficient neighbor, but is more selective of which tips he actually incorporates into his house. This has been a theme of his personality and it is being manifested in the house he is building for his family. Though generally rectilinear and horizontal in construction, as bricklaying is conventionally carried out, the sills of an upper story pair of windows cant upward toward the corner of the house. When asked why this was so, the owner, who was still laying new rows of bricks atop the highest part of the upper story, jovially replied that "windows are always horizontal, but this is a new design!" Only the lintels were in place above each of the windows, but it was clear that this design element demanded customized efforts in construction technique, including the careful cutting of bricks to effect the proper angle for this window.

Case 3: The professionalization of construction

In the time they have been together, the Zs-9 couple struggled to make a home for themselves. But their outlook is bright, for they feel they are on the cusp of having the home they have been patiently working toward. Until five or six years ago, they lived in an apartment, but always rented. Then, with the government provision of .07 ha, the couple decided to move to Zuun Salaa, where they were able to fence off land and erect a ger. The husband earned a good salary as an engineer, and eventually went to work for Oyu Tolgoi (an internalized brain drain—rather than leaving the country for better paid work, talented Mongolians are seeking employment in the lucrative gold and copper mining sector—that has captured an educated work force through competitive salaries, but may also be propagating 'Dutch disease' by effectively outcompeting salaries for all other economic sectors), but his employment was a double-edged sword. He was earning money toward their future home, but his times at home were brief as he was required to spend weeks on site at the mine. His wife remembers being afraid during this time, as she was alone in the ger area with their recently born daughter. His wife, though herself born into a herding family in the countryside, became educated and urbane as a fashion and shoe designer. She recalled the depressing and fearful days of living on her own in the ger district while her husband was away. Presumably with enough money saved, however, they were able to hire a professional builder. While the interviewees mention that they gained their own knowledge of what kind of house and even what contractor they wanted to hire from a website dedicated to small scale construction in Mongolia,[9] they hired someone who had already been known in this neighborhood for his previous work. The husband felt that his work interfered too greatly with the construction of their

[9] Romanized as www.barilga.mn for internet use, the company appears as Барилга.мн in advertising signage on the street and banners promoting an annual trade show. A magazine on home construction, supported by advertising for both materials and services, is also published under the same title. The annual Барилга.мн exposition of builders, building products, and home designs has been a recent introduction to the market, but has materialized the online marketplace, which already is used as a primary point of knowledge and meeting place for homeowners and residential contractors. The advertisements as well as the distribution of magazines to newsstands (which are becoming commonly associated with the mid-level shopping malls of Nomin or Sansar) occur in the built center of the city rather than in the ger districts. Though the market for this type of construction is in the ger districts, the advertising locations might be based on the audience with access to the urban center—both those living there but considering building their own home in the ger districts and those from the ger districts who commute to the center because of their (better-salaried) jobs. On the other hand, the structure for implementing an advertising strategy seems to exist in the city center, but not yet in such organized fashion in the ger districts.

house, so he left his job (his wife was assuring in noting that as an engineer, his talents would always be in demand by the rapidly expanding mining sector, so another job would be possible when they were ready for him to return to work). The house is nearing completion and the family has begun to move some preliminary items into the house.



Figure 27: A designer by training, the owner has already installed in the attached garage her workshop for designing women's fashions. A second floor was a late addition to the scheme, but the owner and her husband are pleased with the decision, as they expand their family.

The house is seen not just as the culmination of their journey toward a home. It is also viewed as a work which will be in progress for some time, as the wife recounted her many goals for both the house and for the land of their xashaa. She also incorporates the house into a larger, holistic goal for their future life, which includes its use as a workshop for her own continuation of work. As a designer of clothing, handbags, shoes, and costumes, she had imagined having an upstairs room as a studio for her work. Initially, they had only planned to have a single-level house, but as they began the process, they added a second floor to the plan. The second floor made sense considering their goals and the overall cost of construction. But she reconsidered establishing her working space on the second floor, once the house had been mostly built, as she worried the heavy sewing machines she uses might be too much for the second story floor joists. Instead, she moved her machinery into their attached garage (the garage too had been a later addition to a plan that initially did not call for an enclosed parking space. On the north side of the house and not well insulated against the cold, the garage, she acknowledges, will be a difficult place to work. She made mention of not being able to have employees work there, but it was unclear as to why or even whether she meant that as a

long-term problem or just a momentary issue. Her example of the home and xashaa as also a work site fits well with one direction of ger district development. While some use the xashaa solely as a dwelling site, a potential remains for using the landscape as capital: using the space of the xashaa as a production space for light industrial work (auto repair, wood shop, metal shop), as a place to sell things (setting up a small store for food, building supplies, school supplies, clothing), or as a studio for artistic production (such as this woman's fashion design). A furthering of the idea is to use the actual land itself, not just as a site but as the generator for one's livelihood, such as in the growing of food in the ger districts.



Figure 28: A professional building crew erected the structure, but interiors are being designed by the owner, exercising skills she learned in design school and has long wanted to implement toward a home of her own.

Conclusion

Each of family profiled here had developed its strategy for building their home that included the financial resources necessary for construction, but also the financial gain they would achieve by living here. For some, the gain was in the rent or purchase cost they had saved by living in the ger districts, for others, the equity of home ownership was understood as a value against which they could eventually measure their benefit. And for many, having the house as property became a capital cost, for they foresaw ways in which their homes or land would help them generate income. While the financial incentives were not the primary motivator—quality of life seemed to be a common thread—understanding costs and benefits was a way for keeping track of where they stood in their longer-term plan which might have had few other metrics for measuring their

satisfaction. A minority of families in the ger districts are in a position to manage such a forward-looking strategy, but these exception cases might, at the very least, show that the ger districts continue to be a place of opportunity. In the next chapter, I look at a family that has fit the statistical averages, but might be ready to leave the general conditions of the ger districts behind as they strive to join these exceptional cases.

Chapter 6: Observing a family build a house



Figure 29: From ger to fixed dwelling is the intended trajectory for many families and for the ger district neighborhoods as a whole. The figurative bricks of the foreground suggest the material potential of replacing ger with fixed dwellings, but also model the current disarray for many families without the financial means, the technical knowledge, or the acculturation to urban demands for constructing a house. In the course of this chapter, the ger of N— (above) will be superseded by a fixed dwelling.

Following upon the broader scope of the lateral survey across multiple districts of Ulaanbaatar and the narrowing and deepening discussions of the semi-structured interviews around the greater Zuun Salaa neighborhood, this chapter delves with greater depth still into the situation for building a fixed dwelling in a ger district by understanding the way a single family has accomplished this process. Such a case may alter our image of the particulars of the ger districts that evade the broader brushstrokes of either the previous two chapters. The ethnographic situation of this chapter is accurate specifically to one family, but I argue that, informed by the research of the previous two chapters, this case becomes generalizable to the situation of many ger district dwellers facing similar dilemmas of attaching their lives to the place of the ger district, with its difficulties as well as its potential advantages. From chapter 4, the primary intent of most ger district

dwellers (82%, or forty-one of the fifty respondents identified as inhabiting ger and who answered question 22) who continue to inhabit a ger is to eventually build a fixed dwelling for themselves and their family. In this chapter, I follow one such family—relatives of the larger family network with whom I reside in Ulaanbaatar—that is in the midst of building their fixed residence. Because their circumstances reflect those of the many who have not yet been able to build a dwelling for themselves, I portray this story as a cautiously optimistic model for the ger districts as a whole. While not as forward-looking as the positive examples of homebuilders from the previous, interview-based chapter, the family presented here has taken the first steps toward escaping the conditions that continue to trap many of the families encountered in the lateral survey.

In addition to developing this deeper look into the workings of a single family, I also reflect on the methods of the investigation itself. How I develop the observations that inform my analysis of this ethnographic view are the multiple and often overlapping methods of data collection. This chapter asks not just what can be learned from ethnography and participant observation, but also how does that information acquisition take place. Though the methods section, I develop and discuss several methodologies that allowed participant-observation to take place, with an intention to further the literature particularly on visual/photographic forms of ethnographic observation.

The ethnographically based participant-observation of an extended family living in the ger districts was conducted in parallel to the survey and interview research in the previous chapters. But this analysis retroactively reconsiders the family's situation in light of the other data-collection methods that were occurring simultaneous to my periodic visits and stays with the family of N— as the built their home. As such, the ethnographic work is placed on equal footing with the other two methods to support a tripod of research depicting different stances by a variety of residents in the ger district that might, in whole, compass the characteristics of the ger district built environment.

Whereas the survey provides a generalized overview of the ger districts and the interviews identify the counter-crepitations of certain ger district residents, ethnography provides depth on a single family whose background matches that of the average ger district dweller, yet this family manages to set itself on a trajectory that could lead to their successful utilization of the ger district landscape to their longer-term

advantage. Their success is far from guaranteed, but this family could provide an example for how the ger districts might be better used to sustain the needs of Mongolia's urban residents, both the population that currently lives in the ger districts and any future population that could benefit by purposely moving to the ger districts.

The family of this chapter is one branch of an extended family through whom I have learned a great deal about the ger districts, but also through whom much of my experience in the ger districts has been shaped. A few members of this family branch I initially met in spring 2009, when I was seeking my entrée into the ger districts through various connections. It was at this time, in 2009, that I had met the trunk of the extended family. Since I did not even know the trunk very well, I remained unaware of this branch in the family. When I returned to Mongolia in 2011 for six months of fieldwork, it was with members of the trunk family that I resided. For this ethnographic work however, I focus on the branch family as well as yet other family members, as their situations match the possibilities that could become available to the greatest proportion of ger district residents.

What makes the house and xashaa of N— an exemplary case is that he represents circumstances not unlike those faced by many of the families from the lateral survey. He has had some advantages of having come to Ulaanbaatar from the countryside already two decades earlier, of having settled into the ger districts early in the post-Socialist transition, of having settled into an area that was less populous so was able to select flat, fertile land with easy access to the water table, and of having a social and financial support network in his immediate proximity. But N— is typical in that he is without a regular job, had been living in a ger until recently, has undertaken significant debts to build his home, and has little other opportunity for work other than using his small plot of land to maximize his advantage. His future and that of his family is not assured; N— will still be required to work hard raising crops. His short term achievements do not out-distance the potential for future struggle.

What N— may represent is not so much the trajectory for most ger district residents as the possibility that remains open to the average ger district person. Unlike the designs of some of the interviewees, N— had few grand visions for the future. His goals matched those of the 81% of surveyees who believed that their

housing situation would improve in the future, only that he actually took modest steps to bring about that shift from ger living to dwelling in a fixed dwelling.

This chapter provides a picture of how mainstream households in the ger districts can benefit from existing land laws and ger district resources to improve their living situation. This image can be useful to policy makers, whether in municipal administration or the NGOs that advise such figures, in crafting public policy that recognizes the advantages the ger districts can play in reshaping urban economics of labor and production through use of the ger district landscape. Furthermore, the methods employed here for visual collection of information might provide thoughtful considerations for researchers intending to engage in ethnographic study.

Ethnographic methods

The methods of this section of the overall project intertwine two branches of qualitative research often used distinctly but here combined complementarily in practice. Ethnographic traditions of participant-observation have matured into substantive research practices from which this project will draw particular methodological tools (Geertz 1973, 3-32; Spradley 1979; Emerson 1995). Meanwhile, I also rely on visual data-collection techniques and other forms of visual interaction with subjects (codified into a purposely architectural set of methodologies by Groat and Wang 2002; but more generally used across the social sciences in Rose 2001). While my ethnographic methods for data collection largely follow established practices, I wish to contribute my meta-findings on visual methods to the surprisingly still nascent field. The ethnographic and the visual techniques are used concurrently; in their practice each technique reinforces the other.

Participant-observation

Participant-observation provides deeper understanding of how people in a single network of an extended-family use the spaces of their homes, yards, streets, and other areas of the ger districts. Tying together architectural spaces with human usage, Bechtel (1989) employs a methodology of 'action patterns' (after Barker 1968) to study particular quotidian actions in particular spaces or rooms of the house. Noting the

time spent at a particular activity by a person, the weighting of actions in time implies a relative level of importance. Coding of actions is taxonomically categorized according to parameters set by the research, and Bechtel uses a rather non-inductive coding of aesthetics, recreation, personal appearance, nutrition, religion, physical health, etcetera (Bechtel 1989, 169-170), but the concept behind such an approach may still prove valuable for understanding how much of life is lived in the home, and in which particular ways.

In the initial year of research (2008-9), after seven months and two unsuccessful attempts to establish a participant-observation situation with a family in the ger districts, I met and began more simple interactions with the trunk family that would serve as my hosts, informants, and connections into the ger districts. Over the remaining three months of the 2009 fieldwork, I spent short periods first visiting, then eventually staying with the family for overnight or multi-night stays of up to a week. While this period allowed me to better establish my own reading of the political-cultural landscape of personal interactions between residents and, subsequently, form the relationships with community members, such relationships did not occur until my extended return to Mongolia two years later, in 2011. Only upon returning to Mongolia and re-establishing contact was I invited to stay with various family members at length. In all, during the course of my research in 2011, I spent six months living with members of the same, extended family, shuttling between various siblings' homes in the Zuun Salaa ger district and an apartment of one son closer to the urban core (between the high-rise agglomeration of the III-r/IV-r microdistricts and Zuun ard Ayushiin ger district). As greater trust was established between me and my host family, I also found leads into the larger community, where I was able to widen my understanding by supplementing information gained through unstructured interviews. The interviews had questioned informants about building an environment, dwelling within it, and understanding how they then perceive their built environment. As interviewer, I took direction from prompts and cues from the informants in allowing the discussion to fulfill their interest in conveying to me information about their lives and views, while steering the conversation at times to fulfill my own desire to learn more about their situation and views on housing. While the ethnography occurred in a parallel timeframe as well as a parallel learning track to the unstructured interviews, I separate the different methods

here as each technique led to a distinct type of answer to the question of how residents were using the housing situation of the ger districts.

Visual research

The visual techniques, by which I observe the built environment of the ger districts are part of the tool kit I gained in my training as an architect. They are skills which I have previously relied on in conducting architectural research and, by the nature of the functioning in the visual analysis of built forms, complement an observation process that is more focused on people and their social interactions. Urban constructions are the text from which we reconstruct authorial intent through their reading. But such readings rely on the very particulars of their making (their 'practice') as the theoretical models do not resolve with great enough refinement to pick up the details that distinguish such study (Kervanto Nevanlinna 1996, 54-6). During the interview phase, as a way of beginning discussion with interviewees, I have used photographs to remove the attention from the discussion itself and focused the subject's gaze upon the artifacts contained within the photo (photo elicitation), but at the same time using the photo itself as a distancing tool, distracting artifact, or even a ruse to notify interviewees that images would be used even if the particular photo was not useful to the discussion at hand. For the participant observation, the photographs became even more central to how I observed the work of the house construction. The images provided the basis for a number of discussions on construction technique. Additionally, the photography provided a sense of legitimacy to my participation and observation of the building process.

One active use of photography in discussions with informants has been photo elicitation. Placing the photograph (or viewing screen of the camera or phone—a number of previously shot images I carried on my phone for later comparison and discussion with the builders) between myself and the discussant, several types of mediation occur simultaneously: the mediation of an object placed between us, as well as the mediations of looking into an image and speaking through it that allow a more subtle approach to the spoken exchange. By requesting the subjects' perceptions of pre-constructed images, the discussion gains reference points of common vocabulary. The responses are not simply recognitions of places, nor definitions of things depicted. Rather, the photograph can inspire the subject to connect to ideas and places beyond those that are

immediately depicted, in an attempt to draw the larger representation of their environment, how it is used, and how it is conceived. These images—generally my own—had been gathered during the survey and interview phases of research, in addition to the participant-observation. Images from the house of the family during participant-observation were useful in detailing construction choices and eliciting further information about why certain materials or formal results were selected. The other images, from the surveys and interviews, were used broaden topics of discussion into the 'instead of' possibilities—what other materials, components, techniques, or results could have been used; why they might or might not have fit the family's needs, budget, and abilities; and what the overall result might have been.

I had practiced this method in limited form on a previous research visit to Ulaanbaatar, for three months in 2000. Using a catalog of photographs I had taken of the built environment (local factories, ger components, standardized shipping containers, tools and equipment, repair shops and the craftsmen who do this kind of work), I was able to hold informal discussions with residents about the fabrication of ger and early ger district development during the late Socialist period. This localized visual vocabulary was at once generalizable enough to be understood, but specific enough to elicit details and foster discussion. The visual vocabulary itself now forms a set of collected artifacts, complementing this and future written analysis of the participant-observation and interviews.[1]

Other methods

Methodologies not used include some worthy tools with similarities to the participant-observation and visual methods outlined above. While I believe that theoretical stances must be grounded in observed behavior and evidentiary artifacts, the methodologies of 'grounded theory' would require this study to assume too little foreknowledge of the arguments I wish to make. Because I have purposefully placed this discussion amid the contemporary debates of mobility—however critically such a debate will be engaged—the project has already moved beyond the tabula rasa necessary for grounded theory as such a methodology has been proposed (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Glaser and Strauss 1967). Furthermore, as has been suggested by

[1] Photographic methods, from the subtle intricacies of using images to build rapport to how the camera itself reorders social space, are more extensively explored in appendix C, toward a 'methodology of muteness'.

Burawoy, who is himself promoting an unbounded ethnography via extended case studies, this lack of initial theoretical stance to 'grounded theory' can isolate the micro-sphere of the research from both connecting to the larger context, but also from comprehending the power relationships that connect the macro to the micro (1991, 282). Alternatively, the case study format is a more difficult category to reject for this project, as this work would seem to assume the depth of a case study. In the spectrum of case study types, it is still difficult to know whether the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar are exemplary of the phenomena of mobility or where it will reside inside (or outside) of the paradigm.

While the question of how people dwell is clearly qualitative, some quantitative resources fall within the reach of this project. The National Statistical Office collects data and publishes a statistical yearbook that attempts to track the expanding ger district population, housing stock, and other relevant figures.[2] A study funded by JICA relying on officially supplied housing statistics attempted to match quantitative information on housing with both quantitative environmental data as well as qualitative surveys of the people dwelling in the ger districts (Kato et al. [2007]). The quantitative inclusion seemed appropriate, as their study is teleologically oriented to engineer an intervention for the ger districts, designing alternative architectural forms that might provide better efficiency at generating and retaining heat, thereby lowering the proportion of family income spent on heating, as well as coal particulate emissions, ultimately improving environmental air quality and public health while alleviating poverty—all goals by which statistical metrics can monitor down-the-line impact and progress. But this initial phase of the JICA/MUST study does not relate its methods of qualitative data collection, nor does it position its findings within the overall case of the ger districts, making it difficult to ascertain how typical are the alignments between the small survey sample and its larger context. That the ger districts are expanding and spreading outward from the urban center is a clear phenomenon, and too often lost in the qualitative housing data are the curious counter trends such as, among other possibilities, the renomadization and out-migration of urban dwellers (per Bruun 2006). Putting numbers to the rate of spread

[2] On the accuracy of Mongolian data in the late Socialist period, see Doebler (1994).

is useful for knowing how quickly services and infrastructure need to keep pace, yet such quantitative answer give some context to, but ultimately not sufficiently an answer to qualitative questions.



Figure 30: The pair of foreground figures, sowing potatoes, was captured at the time in the spring of 2009, as photographic shorthand for representing the working landscape. Returning to this area in summer of 2011 (in the third crop cycle of the potatoes since their seeding of the ground, at left), I had the left image in mind as I attempted to use the same structures for visually determining if there had been much sprawl on the background hillsides. It was only after returning to my computer to align the two images that I recognized N— (with the shovel) as one of the sowers of potatoes. That he should have been one of those working this land should not have in itself been unexpected; his own homestead adjoins this larger tract at its southeast corner, and the rights to farm this land are nebulously held by several adjacent landholders as well as members of his extended family (his nephew holds and lives on a tract at the north west corner of the larger land).

The family observed

The immediate family observed in this case is that of N—. I refer primarily to him in designating the family as he is the one with whom I had much of my interactions with as the family was building the house. While it is his personality to be more gregarious than his wife, who is a very kind but rather shy person, I also refer to the family under his moniker as it is through his relations the much of the transactions occur—both my introduction to him and his reason for being in this place in the ger districts. I'll elaborate below on how the family came to be here and the role of family relations in the actual construction of their house. How I came to know this family, through the relations of N—, is relevant here to answering the methodological question of selecting this family as a representative case for the participant-observation of a ger district family building their own home.

The construction of their home during the tenure of my research was the key factor in returning periodically, and eventually staying with this family. The extended family network through which I eventually

met N— was a relationship I had initiated during my first extended fieldwork in Ulaanbaatar, over the 2008-2009 seasons. In fact, I had met and photographed N— himself, and possibly other members of his nuclear family at this time (this only became apparent to me as I sought to complete another rephotography pairing of sprawl on the landscape using a particular structure as a reference point. N— had been in the foreground sowing potatoes, unbeknownst to me at the time of the photo in 2009). Upon returning to Ulaanbaatar, I slowly became aware of N— and his relation to the larger extended family as I attended meals and celebrations at his home, which was still the ger within his xashaa at the time. I had been curious about the fixed dwelling, built of interlocked logs, rising within the same xashaa, but spatial hierarchies are not always clear, even when delineated with fence lines. Ger dwellers within a xashaa, even as a new house is present, may not necessarily be the owners to the house or the rights to the land. The builders of the house (if hired as contractors), a guard and his family, poorer relations of a wealthier land holder, or others may be allowed to set up residence in the xashaa, especially when a house is under construction and does not yet have its own occupants. In this case however, the house under construction was indeed that of N—, so he and his family were occupying the neighboring ger as progress on the house stretched through the summer. I began my visits to the family for the express purpose of witnessing both the progress on the physical form of the house and the changes in their own lives as they would come to occupy the house starting in July of 2011, with the initial log structure in place (including the poured concrete foundation and the exterior membrane of the roof). Over subsequent weeks, I would periodically visit—generally every few days—at first with other family members who were making the trip over to N—'s neighborhood (either to his house, to his nephew's land, or to another parcel of land that the family collectively farmed) with some task in mind. Such tasks, if to N—'s house directly, usually meant bringing construction supplies or tools, or helping N— in some construction-related task for his house; but more frequently the trip was to a nearby piece of land for farming purposes, and I would individually steal away to pass by N—'s house. Rarely were these visits by adult family members purely for social purposes—such social callings occurred mostly within the structured space of a celebration, such as the birthday celebration for N—'s daughter or during the wedding of a distant member of N—'s family (though unrelated to N— himself). But other social visits did occur through the younger generations.

Either a sister of my immediate host family or her young niece would sometimes visit with N—'s older daughter. Through these younger family members' inter-relationships, I gained my route to spend social time, unencumbered by the purposefulness of previous, task-structured visits. Within the space of two months of such visits, I gained enough acceptance, confidence, and rapport to feel comfortable stopping in on my own and to be invited to stay nights with the family of N—, though much of what I learned of their process for building and occupying their new house was gained from some of the earlier visits during which I was free to observe the task-oriented space of others. In the same sense as the methodology of muteness above, by remaining outside of social spaces, I was freer to observe the interactions that occurred around me. Those interactions included those between N— and the visiting family member, and between these individuals and the material object of the house they all participated, to some degree, in constructing.



Figure 31: After pouring his own foundation, N— assembled the pre-notched logs to form the main structure. The Hangai zakh is the primary market for a variety of lumber products, from logs, to pre-dressed timbers, to nominal framing members (posts and beams).

Constructing the house

The house that N— recently completed is on land that an older sister had been the first to settle. The sister was the first in her extended family to move from the countryside—she had come from the family's home province in the farthest reaches of western Mongolia, to the capital late in the Socialist period[3]—and

[3] This family's experience correlates well with the available data for the late Socialist period, when a large proportion of migrants to Ulaanbaatar were arriving from western and southwestern aimag. N— and his siblings would have been among the almost 17,000 individuals from his province to have migrated to the capital (NSO 2003, 383). The ger district of the city in which they eventually settled has a larger proportion of people from Mongolia's far west. Though they are

was also the first to move away again in the early post-Socialist period from the central city to the then nascent ger area in which she settled. N— and a number of siblings followed in each of these moves. After his sister relocated to a different plot within the same neighborhood (a number of siblings, as well as extended family, relatives, and even relatives by marriage would eventually populate this and an adjoining neighborhood), N— began dwelling here.

It was only in 2011, however, that he began the substantial undertaking of their fixed, four-room dwelling. The cost of building had until this point been prohibitive, as his wife's salary, at a steady but not lucrative job as a librarian in the city center, is quite modest and his own earnings are irregular, based on when he is able to do some work for others. To finance the construction undertaking, N— arranged a bank loan. Once started, however, progress on the house was altogether quite quick. In a six week period from when the main structural components were in place until the open house celebration, he took the house from being largely intact externally, to completing all interior work, including constructing and finishing, ceilings, floors, and interior walls. Also in this time-frame were the installation of the stove, finishing of the smoke-heated wall, installation of several windows, and the running of electricity. Of all the skills necessary for constructing a house, it is only this last one that N— claims to possess at a level beyond the knowledgeable amateur. As an electrician who occasionally helps with installations on the homes of other families in the ger district, N— expressed self-confidence in this part of the work, but he was equally adamant that this was the limit of his skills; that in no other task in the construction process did he have any experience or previous ability conducting. Never having assisted in the building of other's homes (aside for the acknowledged capacity with electrical work), he relied on being informed by his brother-in-law and another relative, from design to construction (although during an interview two months later he would contradict this statement to ascribe a less active construction role for family members other than his son).

Mongol (as opposed to the large population of Kazakh from their home province), they are not Khalkh Mongol, a detail that they frequently refer to when mentioning the other western-aimag non-Khalkh that have settled in the same ger district of Ulaanbaatar. Currently, the moderately sized aimag from which the family of N— derives supplies one of the largest populations of in-migration to Ulaanbaatar.

Like many of those in the ger districts interviewed for this study, N— assumed significant bank debt in the process of building his family's house. With the overall economy growing at one of the most brisk paces of any economy in the world,[4] and with urban dwellers becoming accustomed to steadily improving financial climate—if not yet directly in their personal financial outlook—small-scale loans have become an increasingly relied upon tool for Mongolians across the economic spectrum hoping to improve their quality of life.[5] The purchase of a car, or shorter term travel, or small business capital costs are often covered through loans, from institutions such as banks as well as through informal networks such as family. House construction or improvement projects, because of their high initial costs, can demand both informal and formal loans. For N—, the options were limited in that many of the members from his extended family were each seeking their own loans for their own projects at the same time. Two members used bank loans to buy cars (though one had initially applied for the money as a small business expense), and another family member had required a bank loan for a medical procedure. With family members already depleted and in need of cash, he had few options in the informal network, so instead turned to bank loans. His ability to repay such loans, however, was not obvious. N— himself is unemployed. Though his wife has a steady job in a state institution in the city center, her pay level is moderate and at the moment unlikely to improve much. His older children have

[4] Estimating Mongolia's extremely rapid economic expansion has become a pastime among lunch crowds of the expatriate executives that populate the 'Irish' pubs and American-style cafes south and east of Sukhbaatar square. The more conservative economic estimates of the International Monetary Fund see Mongolia's economy growing by 14% in 2012, but more robust estimates litter the pages of business journals intent on catching the eyes of risk-hungry investors. Optimists note that growth rates upwards of the 17% year-on-year growth that marked 2011 might be achievable depending on international demand, particularly in the global construction sector, for mined resources: coal as well as copper, gold, and other metals (The Economist 2012, 25-28).

[5] Small scale loans from banks were not a topic I expressly asked about, but informants occasionally offered details indicated the prevalence of such loans in financing many of the forward-looking projects homeowners in the ger districts undertook. Buying a truck or sacks of planting seeds or financing the construction of a root cellar were all capital investments for which loans were common, but so too were personal uses like a house or car. While I encountered families that would buy the necessary materials for completing their house in stages as they earned and saved money, N— intended to finance the entire project from the start, possibly because the income stream was not sufficiently steady to purchase the necessary materials per the steady construction schedule. A residential secondary mortgage market does not yet exist in Mongolia, but is currently being established with expertise by USAID (a primary market established by the Asian Development Bank reportedly began operation in 2003, but remains under-capitalized), with the United States Treasury securing half of the issued bonds. (USAID 2011, 100-103; see also http://mongolia.usaid.gov/2011/09/usaid-partners-with-mongolian-mortgage-corporation-to-develop-mongolia's-housing-finance-sector/)

begun to work, but neither currently brings in enough to substantively support the household. N— did not discuss the amount involved in his bank loan, but did note that it was primarily to pay for materials, including the significantly pre-fabricated log structure of the outer walls. However, he was able to save a great deal on construction costs building the house with his own hands, and those of his kin.

Much of the design was dictated by an early decision he made that would also affect the rapidity of the construction process. The wall construction of interlocking logs was pre-fabricated on another site, which N— purchased and moved onto his lot. This material/construction decision narrowed the possibilities of internal configuration. According to N—, though, there was no decision necessary: only one layout ever came to mind. That layout demanded a line of central support running along the east-west axis. The support is carried for half of the house axis by a structural brick wall. Where the wall ends, a series of columns and beams then carry the upper floor load across a doorway and a non-structural brick hearth-wall (a wall that channels the smoke from the stove in the kitchen, through an internal, vertical serpentine to better disperse the heat, before releasing the smoke through a chimney). The central structural axis is also convenient in that transverse beams are only long enough to span half the house width. Though N— claims this as the only conceivable configuration, his vision may have been limited by the opinions of his chief assistant, for houses built by his brother-in-law reveal, if not of the same dimensions nor of similar material palette, never-the-less are of the same layout. All have a four-square room configuration: the smaller south-east room as an entry/mudroom for removing shoes and coats, and also for washing-up. This entry communicates directly to the north-east kitchen. Here, the wood and coal burning stove (and dung and whatever paper or plastic refuse might be available) is placed centrally to connect to the heating wall, which then runs westward, to divide an inner room in the north-west quadrant from a windowed, south facing room in the south-west (accessible only off of the entry room).



Figure 32: The housewarming was held as the family moved in, before the warm end of summer (left), but work would continue into the winter (right) to add an entry vestibule when the retention of heat was needed most. B— later claimed to me that it was her own husband who laid the brickwork for her brother's house.

Asked about why he chose the log construction, N—'s initial response matched those of several homeowners from the survey and interview sessions: that wood was warmer in the winter months. But he also followed this with interrelated answers about the saving of construction labor—"each log saved having to lay ninety-six individual bricks"—and cost, though admitted that with the greater material cost of the logs it was ultimately roughly equivalent in cost to brick construction. According to our survey data, brick and log construction are the two most favored building materials for fixed houses. Brick was used in the homes of 39% of respondents, while wood (though in addition to log construction this category could include, according to the interpretation of surveyees, constructions using simple boards, or the railroad ties mentioned in the previous chapter, or even a cementitious version of wood-and-lath construction that uses for the wood strips the typical ger wall lattice, or *xana*) was the material for 44% of respondents (the other 17% being divided between concrete and unspecified other materials). Occasionally in the xashaa of the ger districts, one might come across the shell of a home assembled from logs with a sign indicating the house or the whole property is for sale. These small-scale speculative constructions have been one way for home-owners like N—, who claim few construction skills, to get a large start on building their home, but without having to contract building professionals. In purchasing the pre-cut log assembly, N— was able to get a significant start with neither the skill investment nor the long time commitment of the initial phase of construction.

This also meant that my own first view of this house, in a stage that had the exterior mostly completed, was also not long into the process for N—. Though the roof and attic was already framed and nearly complete, as were foundations and internal brickwork, N— estimates that he had only put a few weeks into the house at that point. The labor savings of the log construction were significant, for he estimates the entire construction schedule was about two months of work time (though admits too many pauses and breaks stretched the two months over a longer period).



Figure 33: Extended family members build together.

Who builds

The first time I spoke with N— alone about the construction of the house, I asked who was responsible for building it. His un-nuanced reply was that he alone built the house. His statement did not accommodate others, though the conversations occurred at a point in our relationship that had been established only through my previous visits, accompanying others who had come to N—'s xashaa to help with building his house. He observed, somewhat polemically, that others came and went, but never really helped. When I pressed further on him, adding to the question about who had helped him build the house, he included his

son, who at that moment was actually help him carry wood timbers between future rooms of the interior of the house. He later volunteered that his son, who was in his late teens, often did work on the house, sometimes under the guidance of himself but other times the son did the work on his own. At that point I had not yet been aware that the main structure had been purchased pre-configured from notched and fitted logs. When I later revisited the same question with him, N— revised his statement to note that the log base had been purchased, but his voice intoned that this was such an obvious and commonplace detail he assumed I must have known that he did not build the main structure himself. Assembly, though quick, was done by him and his son with the help of unnamed others.



Figure 34: A fissure in the pishin wall (left) awaits attachment by the wood-burning cook stove. The cavity within the brick channels smoke from the stove (right) through multiple baffles before it rises through the chimney, efficiently heating the house.

After one visit to N—'s house, I told B—, the older sister of N—, about the progress he was making on the house. She stepped in to correct me, that it was in fact her husband (Ts—) that had done many of the construction tasks that N— had ascribed to himself. B— had often conveyed to me her role in the welfare of her brother and his family, from the providing of her brother with the land on which he would build, the teaching of him the farming skills he would use to help sustain himself and his family, to the organizing of labor to assist him in the construction of his house. That B— would recharacterize the construction as a product of her own husband's hand rather than that of her brother are altogether fit with her view role in the overall family's welfare. I had not ever been to N—'s house with the husband of B—, so I had never

witnessed his participation in the construction, but there were a number of times when he would leave, mentioning to me only that he was planning to go do some work in the neighborhood. The husband of B— had a strong work ethic whereas his brother-in-law N— tended to work more haphazardly. Both men had a penchant to drink, especially when B— was not around, though Ts— was fairly functional at construction tasks while inebriated, whereas N— tended to do little work while drinking. But being N—'s house, it seemed to be a shared amount of work that was over-compensated for in his own assessment of sweat equity.

When describing the contribution that her husband would make to her brother's house, B— followed on by noting the other houses in the extended family that her husband had also built. The house of their daughter, which was within the same compound as they lived, was built by her husband. This had once been their own house, but they eventually gave it to their oldest daughter when she and their son-in-law were expecting their child (B—'s first grandchild). The husband also built the house in which they had been living when I first came to stay with the family in 2009, but had subsequently moved from that house as well in order to provide a home for the orphaned daughter of another of B—'s siblings. The orphaned daughter she had largely raised as her own, so she claimed to me some responsibility to provide for her when she too had had a child of her own. Though her husband had built many of the buildings of their extended family, B— liked to point out that they continued to live in a ger. She would like her husband to build another house for themselves within the next year. But as her husband has aged (and since undergone surgery for liver-related problems), she acknowledges that any future construction would be better served by her husband working together with her son-in-law. To date, they continue to live in a ger.

Another major contributor toward the construction of N—'s house was the son-in-law of B—. Her daughter's husband, who often worked well together with B—'s husband, often joined the construction crew. A talented worker with some knowledge and experience assisting in other house construction projects, the son-in-law Z— would frequently assist N— and enjoyed doing so for the sake of using his construction skills. But over time it became clearer that the purpose for both the husband, Ts— and his son-in-law to participate in the house construction went beyond simply employing their skills and abilities. The house, ostensibly for the immediate family of N— and his wife, might also be looked upon as one of multiple

houses in a network that spanned across the extended family and across the ger district. From such a perspective, many more people would have a stake in seeing the house completed and in having an interest in contributing their abilities or their time.

Their youngest daughter, who is now about four years old, is of course too young to make meaningful contributions, but she will be the one with the greatest attachment as she will grow up here. But her older siblings are likely to have narrower futures with the house. The oldest daughter, who is in her early twenties but unmarried, will likely stay here until she has a reason for establishing her own home. The son is already often away for educational training, living at his university or academy. After the completion of the most laborious phases of house construction I rarely saw him except during the larger family gatherings. Relatives, on the other hand, are the most common visitors, with N—'s kin dropping by nearly every day (his wife never had her own relatives over in the time I was there, but did commonly have her work colleagues come by). The oldest daughter spends time there with her cousin D—, who is approximately the same age, and will commonly stay overnight with her. The cousin is comfortable dropping by and participating in household chores without prompting in the same way that such chores might be part of her routine in her own home: cooking or cleaning or filling the water bucket or firewood pail. An older brother of N— was another common guest, bringing with him his wife or one of his adult sons with several grandchildren, or just on his own (which would end up in a drinking bout between the two brothers).

So while the house was a home for the family of N—, I came to see the larger stake that the house represented as part of the strategy for retaining ownership of the parcel on which the house sits. As previously mentioned, this land had initially been occupied by the elder sister of N—, who had since moved to another parcel. But what made the land useful in terms of its production value was its location adjacent to an intermittent streambed, where access to the shallow water table made agricultural production a more dependable prospect. Though Z— had become a steady worker in helping erect the house, this process was really the final steps in securing the land—land which had become profitable through work that Z— had performed years earlier. Z—'s own family specialized in boring wells, and the well that he had sunk on site was what guaranteed access to relatively cheap water supplies. The strategy of securing land through

residential tenure could then be seen as a project distributed across the broader family. N—'s house was really part of a larger network that controlled multiple parcels throughout the ger district, where production was able to take advantage of the economy of scale, yet do so from individuated holdings that, in legal terms, belonged to each individual entity (each household) across a larger kin network.



Figure 35: Insulation in the living room (left) disappeared beneath finish materials in time for the housewarming (right). Family and neighbors, many of whom had contributed toward erecting the house, were honored in the celebration. As the family moved out of the confines of their ger and into the house, guests provided gifts of furniture and furnishings. This same photographic record I had made of the house under construction would later prove useful for locating the now covered studs and beams in order to mount shelves and wall hangings.

The networks that create community are formed at different depths, but also only become visible to the outsider in ways commensurate with the depth below the surface at which these networks are woven. In a cursory survey of a neighborhood, through the short term observations of a single day, one might get the sense of which neighbors might know which others, possibly a hint of the characters of the neighborhood—whom is liked, whom ostracized, whom respected, whom avoided—but also the spaces of socialization are formed through these interpersonal relations. The dusty byways that cut through an area are one place where different people meet in unprescribed moments of encounter. Small food kiosks, wood and coal sellers, or even the middens that pile up against fences can detain passing acquaintances in a brief conversation and exchange of news. The principal forum for these chance gatherings of one or several denizens of an area are at the water stations, where the lengthier wait for filling ones water tanks is conducive to longer exchanges of words. The paths of children, from the gates of their own xashaa to those of their friends or relatives nearby,

also crisscross the space of the street, providing one view into the neighborhood's weft. All of these interpersonal and social-spatial behaviors were on view in the days spent canvassing survey information.

The deeper roots of connection, particularly those formed in the nether realm by a family tree, are much more difficult to discern. Two years earlier, in the family of T— I knew only one brother who lived in the vicinity (and the parents with whom she shared her xashaa). It was only in the months of ethnographic observation, living among T—'s extended family, that I realized that so many of the recurring faces were closely related family members. Aunts and uncles, first or occasionally second cousins and their own immediate relations—on both her mother's family her father's sides—filled out many of the homes in the surrounding areas. That the children in each distinct household spent so much time together might have traced out one portion of the observable evidence of these connections. Similarly, the adults' levels of comfort and competence (their 'at homeness') in operating within each others' houses and yards, also hinted at the kinship ties. Looked at from this perspective, the construction of a single house is not so much the project of the nuclear family that will inhabit the domicile, but the latest front in an extended family's strategy for domesticating a swath of ger district landscape.



Figure 36: A 'bedroom', before and after the addition of a window brings in western, afternoon light. Any room may be purposed toward sleeping at night as all bedding is stowed during the day and relaid wherever convenient each night. While a legacy of nomadic living, it has long been a practice even in apartments in the core city. Designated bedrooms have gradually become more defined with customary use, a trend that may be accelerating with the influence of westernized interior design aesthetics among the more cosmopolitan apartment dwellers. This family generally slept in the 'living room' (the more publicly accessed room of the previous figure), as did I in the time I stayed with them.

Conclusion

Using the laws that govern rights to land tenure, a family that settles a plot of land through the construction of their home in the ger districts derives advantages from that land that go beyond the basic providence of residency. Because the land tenure laws are proscriptive toward acquisition rights, with prescriptions restrained only to life and safety matters, no zoning-type regulation interferes with use once a parcel is otherwise occupied in a residential manner. But the same lacunae of zoning regulation function in the other direction as well, allowing any xashaa to become a diminutive but critically useful zone of production. Those who secure their rights to dwell in the ger district landscape are at the same time securing a place for themselves and their family in the workings of Ulaanbaatar's economy and society.



Figure 37: With her figurative bricks now aligned inside her home, N—'s daughter will likely grow up in a ger district comprised of fewer actual ger. The informality of the neighborhood might also change as it becomes a norm for her and her cohort. A better quality of life is more likely through the switch to fixed housing, but the potential desirability of these neighborhoods depends on how economically advantageous they become, as well as the degree of prestige they are afforded within the wider array of Mongolia's urban society.

Conclusion



Figure 38: The farming and threshing of grains are depicted among the many vignettes of late nineteenth century life in "One day in Mongolia," by Sharav Balduugin (1869-1939). Source: Zanabazar Museum.

Future directions of research

Building on the acquisition of land, as conveyed in this dissertation, some ger district residents have been capable of establishing a position for themselves in the wider economy by engaging forms of production that had hitherto been uncommon to most Mongolians, but had previously existed at various moments of Mongolia's past. Non-pastoral forms of agriculture exist in the archaeological record of Xiongnu and Uighur occupations of the broader territory that would become Mongolia. Historically, Chinese agriculturalists worked alongside Mongol peasants during the Qing era, with their place being supplanted by Russian agronomic advisors during the Socialist era.[1] Collective farms of the Selenge valley are a legacy from that time. Though their production levels dropped off in the collapse of Socialism, current levels exceed all previous rates for Mongolian grain production (wheat, oats, barley, and rye) and the raising of fruits and vegetables (potatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, and watermelons among other crops). But the most recent iteration of agricultural production in Mongolia has been in the ger districts. Following through on this

[1] As pertains to horticultural developments in the ger districts, a history for such usage might be built into the architectural borrowings of dacha culture. See appendix D on dacha usage and Zavisca (2003) on the association of such architectural forms with garden produce.

dissertation, a project examining the role of horticulture and agriculture, and subsequently the culture of food that hinges upon these forms of production, would be fertile terrain for future investigation.

Data from the Ulaanbaatar city office for agricultural production calculate 8000 families in 2010 engaged in some form of agricultural production, though many of these are providing only for their own use within xashaa gardens. In a rough calculation of the 300,000 or so families resident in Ulaanbaatar, farming families would represent less than 3% of the total. However, the figure of 8000 actively farming families is up from the previous survey of 6800 families in 2009—a growth of 1200 families in about a year. This does not mean that there is capacity in the ger districts for steady, year-on-year growth of the agricultural sector. Limits to where farming is possible are imposed by the availability of open land and access to water—usually in proximity to stream beds along the floor of the valleys over which spread the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar. But the short-term increase in urban agriculturists and horticulturalists is significant in that it represents a shifting mindset toward growing food, providing employment, and using the land in ways that had previously been outside the consideration of most ordinary xashaa owners.



Figure 39: Within their own xashaa, horticulture helps provide families with food for their own use or small-scale trade.

The horticultural and agricultural landscapes of the ger districts provide the products and services of quotidian life that are being altered by new cultural expectations of food and diet. Growing at the edge of Ulaanbaatar, the cultivation of food has the capacity for effecting transformation of the working landscape of the peri-urban zone as well as the eating culture of both peri- and core urban areas. The growing of food and

the resulting impact of agriculture on new forms of food culture not only impact ger district land use, but do so through a direct connection with core urban cultural transformation. Because they are proximate to the urban markets where such foods will be consumed, the ger districts have an opportunity for self-transformation into a landscape of both living and working: becoming part of the city while at the same time establishing their independent identity.



Figure 40: Where ger district residents have been able to agglomerate larger tracts, agriculture is becoming possible within city bounds at an economy-of-scale. Proximity to the urban market allows ger district tracts to be competitive to much larger industrial operations because transport costs on relatively bulky items (such as potatoes and watermelons) are tied to Mongolia's high import costs for fuel.

Two registers can be observed in how culture has shifted in relation to a wider spectrum of international contact. At a middle register, lacking sufficient employment capacity internally or in the core city for low-skilled labor, the ger districts instead have supplied its labor force to other places beyond Mongolian frontiers. Those that eventually return to Mongolia, often after several years abroad in one place, have assumed some habits and tastes not for the wider array of what might be internationally available, but strictly for products, foods, or ways of doing things that are local to that specific, foreign place. Returning with such knowledge is a transportation of particularly localized culture. Trans-localism creeps into Mongolian culture through the habits and tastes of the returned low-skilled laborers. On an upper register, a high-brow form of cosmopolitanism also presses Mongolian culture to change. As denizens who otherwise inhabit the urban core visit and work other places, they return to Mongolia with a broader perspective and set of tastes. From their travels, they acquire a cosmopolitan outlook which they wish to embed in their own daily existence in

Ulaanbaatar. Trickling out from the urban core, cosmopolitanism intersects trans-localism in the ger districts, replacing old mobilities of pastoral nomadism and the aesthetics of aligning Mongolia with its countryside (and the cultural trappings that come with pastoral nomadism) to the newer mobilities of education and wealth accumulation.



Figure 41: A family grows tomatoes and other vegetables in a greenhouse (above) while also participating in a collective group of neighbors to farm an adjacent field in the background. Small-scale agrarian use of ger district land has benefited the local economy while supporting cosmopolitanism in the urban core, but whether such phenomena will be sufficient to transform the overall place of the ger districts in Mongolia's self-conception remains to be seen.

Summation

The ger districts have resided in a gap between the Mongolia of the popular imagination—the open vistas of the steppe—and the realistic driver at the political, economic, and cultural center: the core city of Ulaanbaatar. When they have been considered at all, the ger districts have largely been portrayed in the policies of urban elites and foreign NGO work as places plagued by their difficulties. This project has sought to recharacterize the ger districts as a different kind of place, between the common conceptions of city and countryside, and one with an identity of its own. It is a place where legacies of the old mobilities of the

countryside—pastoral nomadic forms of production—are not retained, but many of the associated traditions still are, not the least of which is the form of housing. But also in this place, traditions are necessarily transformed as residents seek new forms of urban mobility through education and better economic prospects. That it remains a difficult place is not an incorrect assessment—chapter 4 noted the challenges faced by a great number of residents who have yet to find their capacity for participating in the urban economy—but the ger districts should also be recognized for their potential. The argument of chapter 2, that the ger districts might justifiably be seen as a place between the rural and the urban, leads into findings from chapter 5, where an intriguing minority of residents has found ways to use ger district qualities to their advantage. The family of chapter 6 bridges these two worlds, seeking the qualitative advantages that their children might enjoy—the new mobilities of urban education and economic participation—and in doing so, potentially providing a path for other families to rise out of the statistical morass of chapter 4. If they do manage to find a way, they will be like so many of their neighbors, who rely not only on the developing legal structures of chapter 3, but also on judicious circumvention of those same structures. The goal is not to recast the ger districts as beneficial solely to their residents, for Mongolians as a whole benefit when the ger districts succeed.

The lessons of the ger districts are generalizable beyond their Mongolian context. Ulaanbaatar's situation is applicable to other cities where people exist in a dynamic relationship with their built environment and mode of living. In this decade, world population crossed a threshold from a rural past toward a dominantly urban future. Not only do urban dwellers now outnumber the rural populace, but increasingly it is the informal housing sector that absorbs the greatest number of urban-bound migrants. Cities in developing economies throughout the world face a similar influx of rural migrants, and thus require multiple models for remaking such settlements into places where prospects for redirected forms of mobility remain viable. Informal settlements must establish their purpose in their own terms if they are to exist beyond being mechanisms that solely support the core city. The ger districts of Ulaanbaatar have the opportunity to become such a model.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB exemption

CERTIFIED EXEMPT
07-264
AUG 28 2007
Office for Protection of Research Subjects

University of California, Los Angeles
OFFICE FOR PROTECTION OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

RECEIVED
8:30
AUG 01 2007
OPRS

CLAIM OF EXEMPTION FROM INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB) REVIEW

PROJECT TITLE: Nomadics & domestics: dwelling on the edge of Ulaanbaatar				
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:	Name: Joel E Miller	Degree(s): M Arch, BA	University Status: Graduate student	Campus Phone Number: 323 733 8400
	Department: Geography	Campus Mailing Address: 1255 Bunche Hall	Mail Code: 951524	e-Mail Address: rickmiller@ucla.edu
CO-INVESTIGATOR or FACULTY SPONSOR:	Name: Denis E Cosgrove	Degree(s): D Phil, MA, BA	University Status: Professor	Campus Phone Number: 310.825.1071
	Department: Geography	Campus Mailing Address: 1255 Bunche Hall	Mail Code: 951524	e-Mail Address: Cosgrove@geog.ucla.edu
APPLICATION STATUS:	☒ New ☐ Amendment	If amendment, previous Exempt Protocol # ___		

INVESTIGATOR'S ASSURANCE

- I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct.
- I understand that as Principal Investigator, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study, the ethical performance of the project, and the protection of the rights and welfare of human subjects.
- I agree to comply with all UCLA policies and procedures, as well as with all applicable federal, State, and local laws regarding the protection of human subjects in research.
- I will ensure that this study is performed by qualified personnel adhering to the OPRS certified protocol.
- I will not modify the OPRS certified protocol or consent materials without first submitting an amendment to the previously certified Claim of Certification.
- I agree to obtain legally effective informed consent from human subjects as applicable to this research.

Principal Investigator _____ Date 7/17/07

FACULTY SPONSOR'S ASSURANCE

By my signature as sponsor on this research application, I certify that the student or guest investigator is knowledgeable about the regulations and policies governing research with human subjects and has sufficient training and experience to conduct this particular study in accord with the approved protocol. In addition,

- I agree to meet with the investigator on a regular basis to monitor study progress.
- I agree to be available, personally, to supervise the investigator in solving problems should they arise during the course of the study.
- I assure that the investigator will promptly report significant or untoward adverse effects to the OPRS in writing within 5 working days of occurrence.
- If I will be unavailable, e.g., sabbatical leave or vacation, I will arrange for an alternate faculty sponsor to assume responsibility during my absence, and I will advise the OPRS by letter of such arrangements.

Faculty Sponsor * (if PI is a student or a fellow) _____ Date 7/30/07

* The faculty sponsor must be a member of the UCLA faculty. The faculty member is considered the responsible party for legal and ethical performance of the project.

- **Check all of the appropriate boxes for funding sources for this research. Include pending funding source(s).**

  ☒Extramural* ☐UCLA Academic Senate ☒Department ☐Gift ☐Other: __

  * P.I. of Contract or Grant: J E Miller

  Funding Source: Fulbright-Hays (currently applying for) Contract/Grant No. (if available): __

  Contract or Grant Title: will submit for IRB amendment on any received grants

- **Do you or any co-investigators or key personnel have a financial interest in the research?[1]**

  ☐ Yes ☒ No *If yes, each individual with an interest must complete Form HS-1, Section VIII.*

EXEMPT CATEGORY CLAIMED (please see Exemption Categories) 45 CFR 46.101 (b) (2)

Subject population Residents of suburban Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, who were previously nomads, but have now constructed their own homes
Number of subjects I seek approx. a dozen active subjects (interviewees) from a population of approx. 200,000 suburban residents

(Please refer to the UCLA *Investigator's Manual for the Protection of Human Subjects* [www.oprs.ucla.edu] when completing this application. NOTE: Research involving pregnant women, in vitro fertilization, prisoners, the cognitively impaired, or other "vulnerable" populations is typically not Exempt from UCLA IRB review and approval. [Please refer to the *Investigator's Manual (Chapter 3)*].

Please indicate "n/a" for items that are not applicable to your research.

Subject source Neighborhoods of suburban Ulaanbaatar, as met and interacted with prior to data collection (see response to question 3 below)

1. Briefly describe the purpose of your project.

   The project is a qualitative, ethnographic study of residential architecture and its inhabitants in the suburban areas bounding Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The premise of my project is that the settlers of these neighborhoods, having previously been nomadic and only recently arriving in an urban situation, must adapt both physically and culturally to their built environment. I wish to study how these settling nomads perceive the urban landscape and respond to it in the construction of their own dwellings.

COMPLETE THIS SECTION IF YOU ARE REQUESTING PERMISSION TO STUDY EXISTING DATA, DOCUMENTS, RECORDS, AND/OR BIOLOGICAL SPECIMENS, - EACH QUESTION MUST BE COMPLETED.
(If you are requesting permission to study the products of in-vitro fertilization, or human fetuses, please complete the HS-1 form entitled, "Application to Involve Human Subjects in Research.")

2. Will data, documents, records, or biological specimens be used? Yes ☐ No ☒

   a. What is (are) the type(s) of specimens?

   b. What is the source of the data/biological specimens?

   c. Are data/biological specimens originally collected solely for research purposes? Yes ☐ No ☐
   (If "Yes" is checked, please attach a copy of the IRB Approval Notice and Consent Form for the research responsible for the original collection of data/biological specimen(s).)

   d. Is the source of data/biological specimens publicly available[2]? Yes ☐ No ☐

---

[1] For definitions of financial interests and to whom disclosure requirements apply, please see Form HS-1, Section II, Question 3 available at http://www.oprs.ucla.edu/human/forms/financial_interests.
[2] Please note that the term "publicly available" means that the general public can obtain the data/biological specimens. Sources are not considered "publicly available" if access to the data/specimen source is limited to researchers.

e. How are data/biological specimens identified when they are made available to your study team? (Please indicate by marking the appropriate box below.)

i. ☐ Direct Identifier (i.e., subject name, address, social security number, medical record number, etc.)
ii. ☐ Indirect Identifier (i.e., an assigned code which could be used by the investigator or the source providing data/biological specimens to identify a subject, such as a pathology tracking number or tracking code used by the source.)
iii. ☐ No Identifier (i.e., neither the researcher nor the source providing the data/biological specimens can identify a subject based upon information provided with the data/biological specimens.)

f. If (i) or (ii) is checked above and you are requesting permission to study biological specimens, will the identifier provided with the specimens be removed and destroyed upon receipt by your study team?
Yes ☐ No* ☐ Does Not Apply ☐

g. If (i) or (ii) is checked above and you are requesting permission to study archived data, will you abstract and record any subject identifiers as a part of the data collection process?
Yes* ☐ No ☐ Does Not Apply ☐

h. Will any data or biological specimen(s) be collected from subjects after the submission of this application[3]?
Yes* ☐ No ☐

* **Your research protocol does not qualify for exemption from IRB review.** Please complete questions # 6 and # 7 of this application and submit the materials for UCLA IRB review.

[3] **PLEASE NOTE:** Data or biological specimens are considered to be "existing" or "archived" if all of the data/biological specimens to be used for the research have been collected prior to the submission of this exemption application.

COMPLETE THESE SECTIONS IF YOU ARE REQUESTING EXEMPTION UNDER CATEGORIES # 1-3 OR # 5-6

3. In order to ensure voluntary participation, please briefly describe the recruitment procedures. Attach a copy of any material used to recruit subjects (e.g., informed consent forms, advertisement, flyers, telephone scripts, verbal recruitment, cover letters, etc.). Please refer to the UCLA *Investigator's Manual for the Protection of Human Subjects (Chapter 6).*

   Recruitment will be a long process of introduction and trust-building through personal contact that may last several months. There will be no mediated recruitment. The topic requires that I, as the investigator, spend time in the various target neighborhoods among residents. This allows potential subjects to become familiar with me and me with them. Once this is established, the observational phase of data collection will begin in a formalized manner, with the goal of being able to conduct participant-observation of the process of planning, constructing, and inhabiting structures in the suburban neighborhood. The observational phase will involve as tools for collecting data both note-taking on people's behavior and photographing of buildings. Notes on the usage of domestic space would involve all occupants, including the children members of a family unit; however such observations would be general and non-participatory on the part of the researcher, myself. No observations, including those made of architectural construction and usage behavior, will take place in settings where subjects have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Photos and notes will serve both toward the final written product, but also to inform the second phase of data collection.
   (see next question for the second phase involving participation)
   (see question 7, part ii for the request and text for an orally delivered informed consent)

4. Describe the procedures in which subjects will participate. If data collection instruments will be used, indicate the time necessary to complete them, the frequency of administration, and the setting in which they will be administered, such as telephone, mail, or in person interview. (Please submit a copy of all instruments for this study, including all questionnaires, surveys, protocols for interviews, etc. **Please note that exploration of sensitive or private topics is not an exempt activity.**)

   The second phase will require the recruitment of interviewees. Interviewees will be those persons with whom an informal rapport develops during the observational phase. They will primarily be heads-of-household (commonly adult males) who were/are responsible for the construction of the domicile. All interviews will be conducted solely with adults. The interviews, designed to be semi-structured, do not have specific questions. Rather, questions will be built on previous answers in order to elucidate background themes. Examples of discussion topics might include asking an interviewee to: describe their perceptions of the built environment, interpret usage of domestic space, interact with images and the material culture of their or others' dwellings (photos collected in the observation stage of my research), or create their own depictions of these topics (drawn or photographed).

5. Will data be recorded by audiotape or videotape? Yes ☒ No ☐
   Audiotapes are expressly for aiding my transcription of relevant dialogue as I am not fluent in Russian or Mongolian. They will be recorded over after initial review. Speakers will not remain identifiable, nor will interviews be kept nor catalogued.

   5a. Please clarify how subjects will be identified in study records/taped responses.

   Interviewees will be informed of all uses of the audiotape and its transcriptions. Interviewees who consent to the use of their name or other identifying characteristics will have it noted in the interview process. Interviewees who do not want to be identified will not be named or identified in the recording or in any other coding of the recording. No recordings will be catalogued or kept. All recordings are only for later notation of general ideas or transcription of specific quotes only, and will be recorded over after transcribed.

6. Will the study subjects be identifiable either by name or through demographic data? Yes ☒ No ☐
   (If "Yes" is checked, please answer questions 6a and 6b. If "No" is checked, please go to question #7.)
   (Note: Aggregate grouping of demographic data will prevent subject identification through that data.)

   6a. Please describe how the confidentiality of subject's identity will be maintained.

   Personal identification of human subjects by name will be made only with the permission of the interviewee. Interviewees who allow use of interview data but decline to be named will be assigned arbitrary names without any further need for tracking their actual identity. Furthermore, data will be recorded in aggregations of status in the nomad-to-sedentarist continuum. Markers for gender and general age designations (college students, young adults, middle-aged adults, seniors) will not be specific enough to singly identify any participant.

   6b. Please describe how subject identifiers will be maintained or destroyed after the study is completed.

   Interviewees who do not wish to be named will not be identified in any manner other than aggregation. Their name and any other identifying characteristics will not be recorded in the field notes or any subsequent write-up. If a subject with previously recorded characteristics wishes to have their identity removed at a later date, their name and identifiers will be dropped from all field notes and write-ups. No other codification key will be kept.

7. **Informed Consent:** (Please attach an appropriate informed consent document[4] to this application. Waiver or alteration of the requirements for informed consent should be justified by addressing the items listed below. Please refer to the *UCLA Investigator's Manual for the Protection of Human Subjects (Chapter 4).*

   i. Please explain why the proposed study presents no more than minimal risk[5] to the subjects.

   In both magnitude and probability, this study has a minimal risk of harm to participants. The identifiable risks revolve around the potential social stigma of talking with an outsider to the neighborhood or to a foreigner. Being a foreigner may even mitigate risks to speaking with an outsider to the neighborhood, as foreigners in Mongolia are routinely welcomed into domestic situations. Physical and psychological risks are similarly negligible. The perception of economic risk may be based on the general tenuousness of freehold on property in the self-built communities at the urban fringe. But such risks are unlikely to be actualized, as squatting rights are uniquely protected under Mongolian laws developed according to nomadic customs and traditions—a circumstance that partially motivates this study.

   ii. Please describe why the proposed research could not practicably be performed without the waiver of informed consent.

   Waiver of documentation of informed consent is requested on the basis that the activities involved in research are no different than everyday conversations between a Mongolian suburb dweller and an interloping foreigner. Though the topic is more directed, there is minimal risk of adverse effects from such conversations. The data collected does not concern any illegal, immoral, or otherwise harmful activity. Furthermore, there is a question of the cultural appropriateness of written informed consent: I am uncertain whether Mongolians from the countryside would comprehend the legal protections offered by a signed document. There is a possibility that such a document, regardless of clarity of the statement, might be misconstrued and misguidedly sow undue concern or stress, rather than serve in the trust-building and protective manner intended by informed consent.
   Rather, I would use an oral description of the project, its intentions, and the role a prospective participant might play in the research as an oral form of informed consent. This description will anyhow be necessary for me to describe the project and gain confidence in the community in which I intend to conduct research. I will use it to introduce my project to each interviewee prior to the interview.
   The text for the oral informed consent (attached) is in plain language English. I will work with a native Mongolian speaker from my intended host institute, Mongolian University of Science and Technology, to translate this into appropriate Mongolian phrasing.

   iii. Please explain why a waiver of informed consent will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the subjects.

   The subjects of this study face minimal risk in participating in the observations of this study, and have the option to cancel participation in interviews at any time.

[4] An appropriate consent document can consist of a consent form, information sheet, survey cover letter, verbal consent script, or a letter to subjects.
[5] Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

FOR OPRS OFFICE USE

UCLA IRB Exempt Protocol No.: 09-264 **Authorized Signature:** [signature] **Date:** 8/28/09

With the OPRS authorized signature, this project is certified exempt unless changes are made to the application.

Verbiage for orally informed consent:

I am a PhD student in UCLA, a university in America. I came to Mongolia because I am interested in architecture of Mongolian nomads. My opinion is that architecture is not only the large buildings in the city center, it is also here, in what you build. But I would like to learn from you because you have built/been building your house here. I am interested in how you build, in the materials you use, where you put your house, and why. I want to know your opinions about living here.

I would like to listen to you, and I will write down some of what you say. You do not have to talk to me about topics you do not want to talk about. I will only write words you allow me to write. I will erase words you do not want written. We can stop talking when you want to stop. My notes now and later will not use your name if you do not want your name used. If it is your wish now or later, I will not tell anyone what you have told me, even I will not tell anyone that we have talked. I say to you now because the notes I will write now will help me to write a research paper for my doctor's degree when I return to America. But you are the boss of our discussion. This helps you trust what I write, and it helps me because you will be free to say what you think.

(added section to be stated when using an audio recording device) May I record some of your words? I use this tape machine to help me remember your exact words. I will write the words later and erase the tape. If you do not want me to keep words you see, we can erase it here now. You can stop the tape whenever you want.

May I begin to talk with you?

Би бол АНУ-ын Лос Анжелос хотын Их Сургуулийн докторантурийн ангийн оюутан байна. Би монголын нуудэлчдийн архитектурыг сонирходог болохоор сонирхож судлахаар монголд ирсэн. Миний бодлоор архитектурийн барилга байгууламж гэдэг нь зөвхөн хотуудад байдаг том байшингууд биш бөгөөд туунийг хаа сайгуй харж болно. Иймд би та бухний өөрсдийн барьсан хувийг яаж, юугаар, ямар материалаар барьснаас гадна, хаалгаа чиглуулсэн зугийг сонгон байрлуулсан зэргийг маш их сонирхож байна. Би бас та энд /Улаанбаатарт/ херхэн амьдарч байгаа сэтгэгдлийг чинь мэдмээр байгаа тул таний юу ярихийг сонсоод бичиж авмаар байна.

Мэдээж би энэ сэдвийн дагуу таний ярих дургуй байгаа зуйлийг хөндөхгуй бөгөөд зөвхөн бичихийг зөвшөөрч буй зуйлсийг чинь бичих болно. Танийг татгалзсан тохиолдолд би яриаг тэр дариу зогсоох төдийгый хусэхгуй бол нэрийг чинь бичихгуй мөн таний онцолсон ямар нэгэн яриаг хэсэг хугацаанд хуртел ямарч хунд хэлэхгуй байх болно. Та бухнээс медеж авах энэхуу мэдээлэл нь миний америк дахь судалгааны ажилд тус болох юм. Та энэхуу судалгааны ярилцлагын эзэн гэдгийг мэдснээрээ надтай чөлөөтэй ярилцаж миний судалгаанд тус болох юм.

(added section to be stated when using an audio recording device) Би таний зарим нэг яриаг авиан аппаратийн тусламжтайгаар бичиж авж болох уу? Энгэснээрээ би таны юу ярьсныг санах боломжтой ба дараа нь сийруулж бичээд арилгах болно. Хэрвээ таныг хусвэл тэр дор нь арилгаж ч болно.

За ингээд ярилцаж болох уу?

Appendix B: Housing survey form

“ОРОН СУУЦ”-ны СУДАЛГАА
Эрхэм ноён/хатагтай:
Энэ нь амьжиргааны түвшин тогтоох санал асуулга бөгөөд ашгийн бус, харин зөвхөн их сургуулийн сургалтын материалд ашиглагдах болно. Уг судалгааны ажлыг Монго-лын Шинжлэх Ухаан Технологийн Их Сургууль болон судалгааны удирдагчаар АНУ-ын Флоридагийн Атлант-ын Их Сургуулийн профессор, архитектор ноён Жеан М.Калдиерон, АНУ-ын Лос Анжелос хотын Их Сургуулийн оюутан Эрик Миллэр хоёр хамтран ажиллаж байна. Уг судалгаа нь хувийн тул та нэрээ бичих шаардлагагүй. Харин хувийн мэдээлэл орно. Шаардлага хангахуйц, тохиромжтой хариултыг өгнө үү. Хамтран ажилласанд баярлалаа.

Та энэ санал асуулгад оролцох уу?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

2. Та энэ газарт хир удаан амьдарч байна вэ?
О 1 жилээс бага
О 1 - 2 жил
О 3 - 5 жил
О 5 - 10 жил
О 10 - 20 жил
О 20 жилээс дээш

3. Та энэ байшинд/гэрт хир удаан амьдарч байна вэ?
О 1 жилээс бага
О 1 - 2 жил
О 3 - 5 жил
О 5 - 10 жил
О 10 - 20 жил
О 20 жилээс дээш

4. Барилга/гэр ашиглалтанд ороод хэдэн жил болсон бэ?
О 1 жилээс бага
О 1 - 2 жил
О 3 - 5 жил
О 5 - 10 жил
О 10 - 20 жил
О 20 жилээс дээш

5.2 Энд ирэхээсээ өмнө та малчин байсан уу?
О ҮГҮЙ
О Хүүхэд байхаасаа
О Саяхан
О Одоо, ирээдүйд

5.3 Энэ орон сууц/гэр таны хувийн эзэмшилд байдаг уу?
О Хувийн
О Түрээс
О Зээл

6. Уг байрыг/гэрийг бусадтай хамт түрээслэдэг эсвэл хуваалцдаг уу?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

7. Хэдэн өрөөтэй вэ? (гал зуух, ариун цэврийн өрөөнөөс гадна)
О Нэг О Хоёр
О Гурав О Дөрөв
О Тав батүүнээс дээш

8. Орон сууцанд/гэрт хэдэн хүн амьдардаг вэ?
О Нэг О Хоёр
О Гурав О Дөрөв
О Тав О Зургаа
О Зургаагаас дээш бол тоогоо дор бичнэ үү: _____

9. Энэ байшин ямар бүтэцтэй вэ?
О Уламжлалт гэр (модон/эсгий)
О Тоосго
О Бетон
О Модон / дүнзэн
О Ган ба төмөр
О Бусад

10. Дээврийн үндсэн материал?
О Уламжлалт гэр (модон/эсгий)
О Мод
О Төмөр хийц
О Бетон
О Бусад

11. Хананы үндсэн материал?
О Уламжлалт гэр (модон/эсгий)
О Мод
О Төмөр метал
О Бетон
О Бусад

12. Энэ таны хувийн эзэмшлийн газар уу?
О Хувийн, би газрын зөвшөөрөлтэй
О Түрээсний газар.
О Энэ газрыг үнэгүй ашиглаж буй

13. Хүнсээ хадгалах эсвэл хоолоо бэлтгэн, хийх тусгай өрөөтэй юу?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

15. Та бие засах газартай юу?
О Тийм, ариутгагч татуургатай
О Тийм, ариутгагч татуургагүй
О Нийтийн жорлонтой
О Энд жорлон байхгүй.

16. Хоол хүнсээ бэлтгэхдээ ямар эрчим хүч ашигладаг вэ?
О Нүүрс
О Мод
О Цахилгаан
О Газ/бензин
О Бусад

17. Халаалтаа хэрхэн шийдвэрлэдэг вэ?
О Нүүрс
О Мод
О Цахилгаан
О Газ/бензин
О Бусад

18. Таны цахилгаан хангамж?
О Байхгүй.
О Албан тоолууртай
О Тоолуургүй, задгай.

19. Энэ байшинг хэн барьсан бэ?
О Эзэмшигч буюу гэр бүлийнхэн
О Эзэмшигч найз нартайгаа
О Эзэмшигч, мэргэжлийн барилгачдын хамт
О Мэргэжлийн барилгачид
О Эзэмшигчийн оролцоогүйгээр

21. Та сууцандаа сэтгэл хангалуун байдаг уу?
О Маш их
О Хангалуун
О Зүгээр
О Хангалуун бус
О Маш их сэтгэл дундуур

22. Орон сууцандаа ямар өөрчлөлт хийхийг хүсч байна вэ?
О Өөрчлөлт хийхгүй, би нүүнэ.
О Гэрийнхээ оронд байшин барих
О Үйлчилгээ сайжруулах
О Бусад: Бичнэ үү? _____

23. Та орчин тойрныхоо хөгжлийн ажилд оролцож байсан уу?
О Үгүй
Тийм,
О цахилгааны холболт сайжруулахад
О Бусад хөршүүддээ тусалж байсан
О Зам ба гудамж засахад
О Олон нийтийн, боловсрол эсвэл соёлын үйл ажиллагаа зохион байгуулах.
О Бусад

24. Танд эндхийн орчин таалагддаг юу?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

25. Ирээдүйд таны орон сууцны асуудал сайжирна гэдэгт итгэдэг үү?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

26. Таны шийдвэрт юу нөлөөлөх вэ? Юуг сайжруулах аардлагатай вэ?
О Гэмт хэрэг, халдлагаас хамгаалах
О Орон сууцны доторх нөхцлийг
О Цахилгаан/усны хангамжийг
О Нийтийн үйлчилгээг
О Бие засах газрыг
О Нийтийн тээвэр
О Мэдэхгүй/ хариулт байхгүй

27. Та эндээс нүүмээр байна уу?
О Үгүй
О Мэдэхгүй
Тийм:
О Учир нь би гэрт амьдардаг
О Илүү сайн оромжтой болохын тул
О Учир нь хөрш маань таалагддаггүй
О Төвөөс хол, муу байрлалтай
О Ус хомс/цахилгаан хангамж муу
О Өвөл агаарын бохирдолт их
О Бусад шалтгаан (бичнэ үү)
_____

28. Та улсын орон сууцанд нүүж ормоор байна уу?
О ТИЙМ
О Мэдэхгүй
ҮГҮЙ:
О Учир нь би гэрт амьдрах дуртай
О Би нийтийн орон сууцанд дургүй
О Би энэ орчин, хөршдөө дуртай
О Бусад шалтгааны учир

29. Нийтийн орон сууцанд байснаас хувийн гэртээ амьдарсан нь дээр:
О Гэрийг нүүлгэхэд хялбар
О Уламжлалт ахуй
О Илүү тохиромжтой
О Хямд, би орон сууц авах чадваргүй.
О Бусад шалтгаан

30. Энэ сууц танд болон гэр бүлийнхэнд тань зохистой гэж боддог уу?
О ТИЙМ О ҮГҮЙ

31. Хэрэв тийм бол, яагаад сайн гэж?
О Учир нь энэ бол гэр
О Би гэр нүүлгэх дуртай
О Гэр бүлийн маань хэрэгцээ шаардлагад нийцсэн
О Би өөрөө хийсэн тул
О Бусад шалтгаан

32. Таны орон сууцны нөхцлийг сайжруулахын тулд засгийн газар юу хийж болох вэ?
О Шинэ орон сууц өгөх
О Шинэ материалуудаар хангах
О Илүү олон боломж санал болгох
О Орон сууцны асуудал маань надаас хамаарна

33.1 Та нар гэрт амьдрахдаа гэрийн уламжлалт байршлыг (эрчүүдийн тал, эмэгтэйчүүдийн тал) баримталдаг уу?
О ТИЙМ байнга
О Бид хүндэтгэлтэй ханддаг ч чанд дагадаггүй.
О Заримдаа
О ҮГҮЙ

33.2 Танайхан гэрт амьдрах уламжлалт амьдралын хэв маягийг дагадаг уу?
О ТИЙМ байнга
О Бид хүндэтгэлтэй ханддаг ч чанд дагадаггүй.
О Заримдаа
О ҮГҮЙ

Appendix C: Methodology of muteness

Reflectivity

An under-considered component of photographic interaction in ethnographic usage has been the reflectivity not only of the photographer for the situation, but also of the subject for the recorded image. Reflectivity allows the subject photographed to become part of the active narrative of an investigation in which he or she is more often captured as mute illustration. Sets of figures (below) demonstrate how reflectivity can be used not just by the photographer in exploring the project, but between the photographer and his subjects to build rapport. Two different time frames are explored; in the immediacy of the action, an image can reassure a subject that the photo taken is to his or her liking, but also over the longer duration, photos elicit deeper, affective responses. Using both forms of reflection—short and long term—I theorize a working praxis based on visual forms of ethnographic data collection: a methodology of muteness.



Figure 42: Butchering a sheep is a common task in the countryside. The ability to do so is closely associated with the male identity in both strength (physical strength in wrestling an animal to the ground, but also the moral fortitude to take the animal's life) and knowledge (of proper butchering technique, of the anatomy of the animal, but also in the moral register of proper action according to Mongolian variations on Tibetan Buddhism). As the population urbanized in the twentieth century, fewer spaces were available for conducting such a pragmatics of the countryside in an urban environment: such traditions were counter to the Socialist modernization that the city was meant to represent. But men in the ger districts, especially those who grew up in the countryside before migrating to Ulaanbaatar, still perform the task, though at fewer and more ritualized times of the year. This sheep was slaughtered at home during the Naadam festival, providing an image reminiscent of early ethnographic photography. But modern means of sharing the image with those depicted is what allows me to develop my rapport with subjects. These two images were taken within a few hours of each other, the immediacy of the experience fulfilling a reinforcing role. But earlier work to establish entrée into the lives of the subjects also depends on longer duration connections with people and with photographs. The next set of images demonstrates how photography can be used for reflectivity over a longer time span.



Figure 43: Taken approximately two years apart, these two images parallel each other in the context of their making as well as in results applicable to discussing ethnographic access. The left photograph was taken in 2009 on the first night I spent staying with the family in the ger districts with whom I would eventually spend much longer durations. The daughter was in tears struggling over her math homework. It was a sensitive situation where photo-taking seemed inconsiderate, but occupying my own attention with photo-taking seemed more appropriate than my otherwise unmediated witnessing of the scene unfolding at the table. Returning to Mongolia more than two years later, the photograph on the right was made on the first night of my return to this family. Though it was not yet determined on this night, I eventually spent the next six months living with them and their extended members. Moments before this image was made, the family gathered on the bed around the husband, with my laptop. The husband had that day returned home to Ulaanbaatar from his many months away at work in the countryside. He and I had been talking and I was just about to show him some images from two years earlier when his wife and daughter came home, joyously discovering his return. As they piled together on the bed, they also began scrolling on the laptop through the images I had taken of them in 2009. When they came across that scene from the left image, their instantaneous reaction in 2011 was the teasing captured here. In contrast to her past sobs, the daughter now laughs in embarrassment of her former struggles (she is now an excellent student, with math being among her favorite subjects) and exults at being back at the center of both her parents' attention. These photographs illustrate their own dual roles—providing me, the researcher, with illustrations of a moment in Mongolian life, but also providing those depicted with memories from their own particular lives.

Toward a methodology of muteness

Taking on the muteness of the photographic subject (really, the 'object' in the relationship of gazes), I reconsider my own positionality in the working methods of visual capture. By reversing the relationship, I have not necessarily sought to re-empower the objects on the receiving end of my photographic lens (though in some cases, as the reflectivity mentions above, this is the product of sharing the image-making process with those I photograph), but I have further enhanced my own capacity for observing situations in which I would otherwise be caught within the structuring web of participant-observership.

During such periods of ethnographic participant-observership, I maneuvered away from the role by which I would have otherwise been structured (the interloper who had been introduced into an otherwise private, family function) by absorbing within myself the muteness that the camera otherwise imposes on those it

surveilles. Such muteness relied on the expectation of those I am surrounded by—typically not the immediate members of the family with whom I lived, but more distant family members, friends, or neighbors who had come to visit but were unfamiliar with my presence at family social gatherings—an expectation that as a foreigner I should not be able to understand the cultural context of the scene; I should not be able to understand even the discussions and words floating within the space as I should not be able or expected to speak the local tongue. A nonchalant tone was set by the family members that knew me, a tone that allowed for such non-expectations to remain in place. They did not highlight my presence, but initially acknowledged me only as an inevitable fixture of the space we occupied, allowed to fade into the background regardless of my actual presence within the space. In such moments, when I was well outside the focus of attention, I was able to observe, to consider, and even to record the events around me unencumbered by my otherwise exotic positionality. I was required neither to explain what I was doing nor even to submit to any more than the most basic social proscriptions that simple presence would request of social situations (in place of small talk or the lengthy greetings exchange that a newcomer would have with each of the other attendees at a gathering—the systematic clasping of hands or embracing of each individual as one worked their way around the circle of attendees—in my case a distanciated, simple, and silent head nod would suffice). I was left to understand—or understand to the best of my linguistic and social capacities—the situation from a non-interventive position. When left not only speechless but unexpected of speech—mute—the ethnographic actions of observing, considering, and recording proceeded effectively.

The type of recording I am able to accomplish is photography, which is particularly attuned to such situations. In such situations, I would eventually be brought back into the social fold—usually by one of the immediate family members—through an introduction to those who would have been more or less curious about my presence (but heretofore hindered from asking by their own positionality in the social fabric) with such a declarative as: "this is Eric, he takes photographs." I had come to be viewed by family member as something like their live-in photographer. The 'takes photographs' epithet invariably accompanied my name ('Eric' was used as the 'R' of 'Rick' is challenging for Mongolian-speakers to form as an initial sound of a phoneme. A Russified version aligned with the middle name on my passport seemed an easier prospect,

though even Russia, *Rus* in the language impressed upon Mongolia during the era of Soviet domination, is polysyllabalized as *Orus* by Mongolian speakers). My presence, though initially surreal, became normalized by such introductions, so I was able to fade back into banality as the center of attention refocused on the special gathering at hand.

The methodology of muteness was made complete in that I was abandoned in expected speechlessness. Yet granted the freedom of my mute presence, I was then open to communicate solely through visual cues. Not only was the recording of events through photography a permissible activity, at the point of my introduction the photography became an expectation. I was expected—though freely as the terms of image-making became my own—to bring out my camera and begin taking photographs; in parallel to a Chekhovian gun, the camera that was introduced to the audience must subsequently be used to shoot (photographs).



Figure 44: Airag stored and served in a Coca-cola bottle makes for a contemporary still-life that juxtaposes Mongol traditions with globalized realities. But the still-life scenario of these two images was photographed because it happens to be a fitting target for testing dynamic range and setting camera metering, white-balance, aperture, and shutter-speed. I spent a few minutes composing and recomposing these images, with subtlety yet deliberateness, in view of the other guests before turning my lens upon the people and their participation in the activities of this ceremony. More intimate ethnographic images then became possible once rapport had been established between the participants and me (or me as proxy for the gaze of my camera lens). A series of images documenting the community's participation in the ceremonial cutting of a young girl's hair on her third birthday (see following figures) includes those taken with my camera by other family members, including documenting my participation in the ceremony. Of methodological concern in this process is that I was unaware such a ritual was to take place (I had not been aware such a ceremony existed). Whereas when photographing inert subjects, such as houses, I was able to consider beforehand how I might make the visual documents, an event that I could not even anticipate demanded not an ability to take relevant shots, but a process and situation where the necessary images would be captured even as significance was established retroactively.

To avoid the initial discomfort of a camera wielded by an outsider in an intimate social setting, my first use of the apparatus was not to take portraits or capture the people or even the actions of the space. Rather, I

spent time adjusting the settings. I took test shots of light and dark areas to be sure that when it would become necessary to use the camera on the people and activities of the space, I would not be lost for precious seconds. If the camera was to do the communicating on my behalf, I wanted to be sure that it would convey what I intended. But I also used this time visibly and purposely deliberating with the camera settings to assure others, who would become the subjects of the camera's gaze, of the simple presence of this device. By the time I had finished taking test shots of the inanimate objects nearest to me and then readjusting the camera settings, even the most curious onlookers would have become bored by my deliberations and the most reticent subjects would have nearly forgotten the gaze of the lens. Then I was able to take photographs of the space and the people. To be sure that I had the complicity of my photographic subjects, and to build yet another layer of trust, communication, and camaraderie, and even solidarity, I casually passed the camera around to those who might have been interested to see the images on the camera's screen or even to take some photos themselves, either of each other or even of me. Sometimes, this produced the additional benefit of observing how the subjects of my images interacted with each other through the medium of picture-taking. With a carefully constructed relationship of trust, there are photographs I would have felt still unable to take for fear of collapsing those tenuous social structures, but other people who were more deeply embedded in the social relationships of the space were also more free to take those kinds of photos. When handed the camera, they sometimes captured these images that had been otherwise off-limits to me. Emerging from a foundation in the methodology of muteness, over extended periods of time and presence among the extended family, friend, and neighbor networks, I had eventually found and expressed my own voice for interactive communication.


ON HER THIRD BIRTHDAY
A DAY BEFORE
A FEW DAYS AFTER
THE HAIRCUTTING BEGINS WITH HER FATHER
AND A WISH-FILLED DONATION FROM ELDER NEIGHBORS
GUESTS EACH OFFER HER A SIP OF MILK
AND THEN SIP FROM THE BOWL



Figure 45: The milk haircut, a narrated photo series accomplished through a methodology of muteness.

Appendix D: The import of Russian architecture

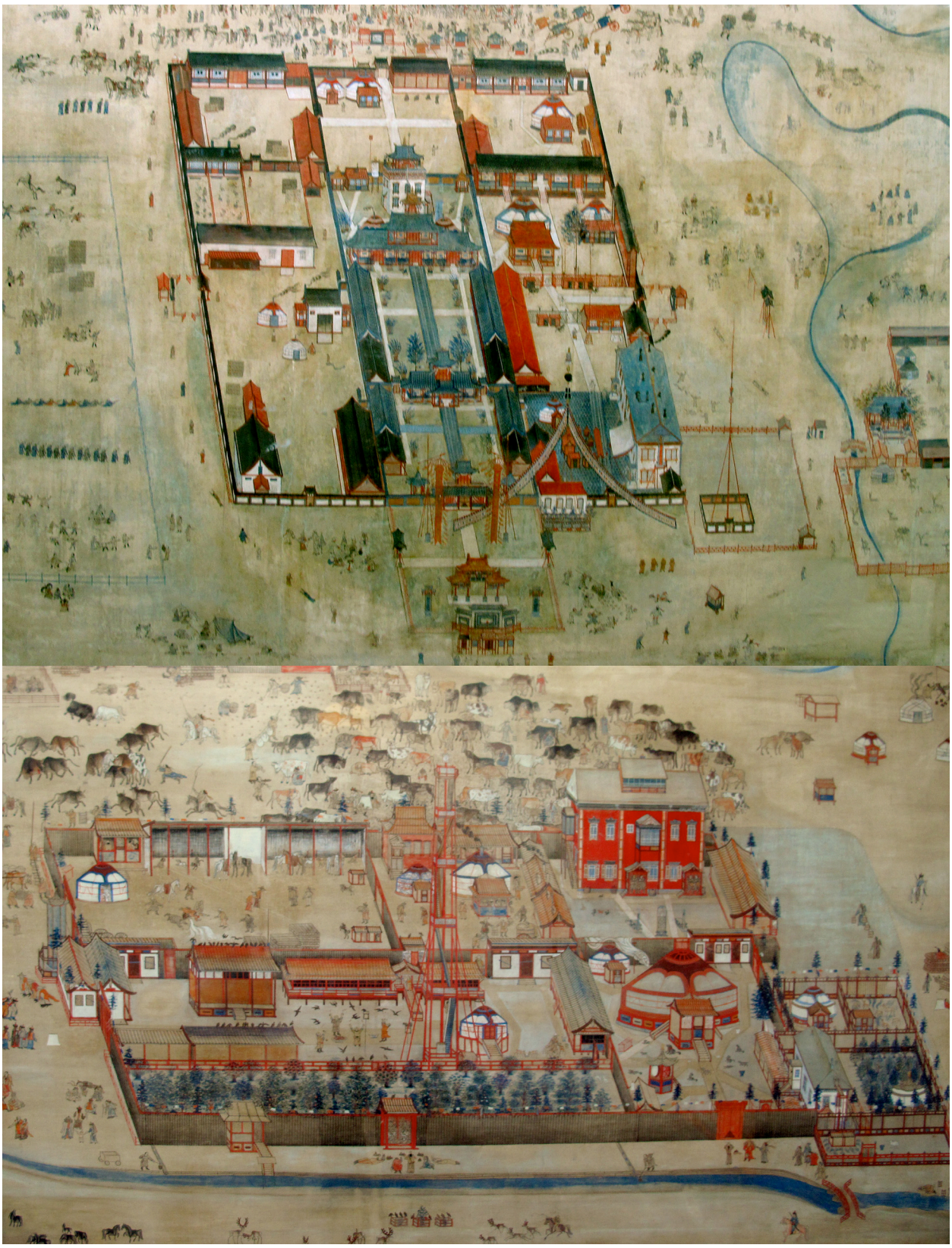




Figure 46: (First page of appendix D, below) "'The Summer Residence' or Khaistai Labrang Palace of the Eighth Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu. Painted by an anonymous painter of the Khüriye/Urga school. The large 'Red House' was built by the Russian mining executive Viktor von Grot [born 1863]. Mineral paints on cotton. Early twentieth century." (Atwood 2005, p722; citing Tsultem 1986, pl. 170).

Figure 47: Detail of "The Bogd Khaan Winter Palace," from the early twentieth century with corresponding views over the site in 2011. The winter palace (above in each of the preceding figures) has a Chinese-styled organizational scheme of courtyards along a symmetrical axis, compared with the more ambiguous layout of the summer palace (lower portion of figure on the initial page of the appendix D). Both paintings now hang in the Winter Palace museum. Source for paintings: The Bogd Khaan Winter Palace Museum.

Russian vernacular architectural forms have come to be impressed on current Mongolian housing stock through three successive waves of influence: first trickling into Ulaanbaatar's townscape from the late nineteenth century with Russian traders, the aesthetic became a torrent during the many decades of Soviet dominance. It is this second era that is most frequently cited when discussing the material form of Ulaanbaatar that has been inherited by the inhabitants of today's city. But even today, Russia's cultural hegemony remains influential on the form taken for many Mongol houses, even among upwardly mobilizing residents of the ger districts. In further exploring contemporary uses of Russian-inspired architecture, this appendix is intended to draw out greater details of the nineteenth century roots of this cultural transfer.

Stylistic emulation of Russian house or dacha construction stretches back into the middle nineteenth century, during a period when the 'tea road'—a trade route for the importation of Chinese tea into the Muscovite market—crossed Mongolia's territory. The trade in turn produced an affluent class of Russian merchants who established their residencies in key entrepôts along the route. This early form of Russian influence was propelled by the tastes of late-czarist entrepreneurs operating in Urga (the Russian name for what would become Ulaanbaatar) by the 1890s. But their aesthetic influence was felt first at the top of the Mongolian hierarchy, beginning with the Mongol leader, the Bogd Khaan, the eighth reincarnation of the Bogd Gegeen who headed the religio-cultural hierarchy of Mongol peoples (the political governor of Mongol lands remained a Qing appointee in Uliastai, seat of the governorship).

Two of the four residences of the Bogd Khaan located in the Tuul River valley, a summer palace no longer in existence but recorded in painting and a winter palace that now functions as a museum, relied on Russian-styled domiciles as part of their compositions. The Bogd Khaan's winter residence makes clear that the house is an accoutrement, part of an exotic collection, but otherwise pushed well to the side in a court

that is otherwise arranged according to Mongolian and Chinese spatial orders. The south-facing entrance to the complex leads to the most public court, while private quarters remain scattered to the northern and eastern peripheries of the site. The ordering of the summer residence is less hierarchical, and thus less legible as a result. Unlike the interior (and interiorizing) courtyard at the center of the winter palace, which forces much of the rest of that site into a relationship with its centrality, the summer complex has no center. Consequently, the component yards of the summer complex communicate more directly with the exterior landscape. This aggregated collection of residential yards varies in size, but not in spatial dominance. The Russian-style house is located at the edge of the complex, just as it would be at the winter palace, but in the summer palace it is less peripheral as the overall weighting of the site, though made distinct from the surrounding grassland, avoids grandiosity and lacks centricity.

At the winter palace, the fixed dwelling manifests architectural cosmopolitanism (the inclusion of a Russian architectural representation) in an otherwise Mongol spatial ordering. The early twentieth century would prove more tumultuous for Mongol leadership than had the late nineteenth century. But the architecture of this timeframe seems more assured—the white house of the winter palace being nothing more than a concession to modernity and comfort, but one that understood its place. This positioning came a decade or more after the initial attempt by the Mongol ruler to incorporate fixed architecture into his domestic scheme at the summer residence. In fact, at the summer palace, it was the Russian house that predated the rest of the complex. Rather than constructing the purpose-built dwelling, the Bogd Khaan instead incorporated the existent red house into an evolving complex of sedentary residence. The house had been built at the behest of a Russian national, Baron Viktor von Grot, with business interests in Mongolia. Von Grot operated a Russo-Belgian gold mining operation, a bank for funding capital-intensive enterprises, and later, as a means for transporting ore and other items of trade to markets in Russia and China, a Russo-Chinese railway project. How the house passed from the Russian trader to the Bogd Khaan remains unclear, but it may have been a gift to the Mongol leader in exchange for his political clout.[1] With a summer residence

[1] The dwelling seems to be in the Mongol leader's possession by 1905. Coincidently, it was also at this time that von Grot's various enterprises unexpectedly take flight after years of bureaucratic set-backs. The gold mining goes into

established, the Bogd Khaan would have had better standing to then build his winter base according to the hybridized scheme that resulted.

While the house of von Grot was a direct influence on Mongols through its adoption from the very top of the cultural elite, a more general influence would be the mansions of Russian tea merchants, many of whose moldering palaces still line the streets of the Russian-Mongolian border entrepôt of Kyakhta. Closer to home for the Mongol princlings and high lamas, however, was the Russian consulate. Established in 1863 on a hillside east of the Selbe, the original double-storied structure is considered the first non-ecclesiastic building in Mongolia. "The Russian consulate, in the midst of a heterogeneous collection of barracks, officers' quarters, and outbuildings, is a pleasant house enough, English in style and furnished, the Russian diplomatic agent told me, to resemble an English country house inside as far as possible. Of modest dimensions, it stands back from the road in an untidy compound, over the gates of which the Imperial standard looms large and menacing," observed Bulstrode amid description of the city ("the only other house of any size or importance is the hideous red-brick erection," she critiqued of von Grot's former residence; 1920, Ch. 12). The area in which the consulate was built had been known well into the twentieth century by variations of its Chinese designation, mǎimàichéng, 買賣城 or 'trade-city'—at the time still geographically distinct from the religious precincts of lamaseries and temples, but soon to be swept into the conurbation. The district around the former consulate, even today remains an enclave for Russian expatriates and Mongols with Russian affinities (often those who were educated or employed in the Soviet Union); a General Zhukov statue erected in 1981 near the consulate grounds remains a stop for Russian politicians visiting the Mongol capital, where

operation around 1906, despite the permit having been turned down by the Manchu political governor at Uliastai over the previous quarter century (Lan 1999, 46). Financial capital for the operation had likely been secured by von Grot through a propitious visit to America in 1904 (sailing aboard the passenger vessel Statendam from Rotterdam, the Baron disembarked in New York on the fourteenth of January, according to digitized records from Ellis Island http://www.ellisisland.org/search/Manifest.asp?ID=103299090497&BN=P00329-9&PRN=57&sship=Statendam). An issue of trade newspaper *The Railway Age* from two years previous already notes von Grot's intention to raise capital from American investors (vol.33 from 1902); he may have found such financing among investors in San Francisco or Alaska whose risk tolerance had been innoculated by extensive positions in Klondike gold operations. But how von Grot built the political capital that would back his mining operation, in the face of Manchu opposition, might be explained through a *quid pro quo* relationship with the Bogd Khaan. As ethno-religious leader himself chafing against the Manchu political system, the Khaan's sway could have provided political cover, as von Grot was operating closer to Urga's sphere of influence than to that of the Qing seat in distant Uliastai.

they reinvoke the terms of brotherhood between the Russian and Mongolian peoples. (The mǎimàichéng finds its own contemporary relevance just below the bluff at Narantuul zakh—the nation's largest marketplace). Zhukov, before rallying Soviet forces against the German army on the Soviets' western front, had halted a Japanese advance into Mongolia at the battle of Kholkhin Gol, relying on a Soviet force supplemented by Mongol troops. For political purposes, Zhukov's statue remains imbued with Mongol-Russian overtures to brotherly security—Russian leaders Putin and Medvedev have each made public shows of visiting the statue on respective visits to Ulaanbaatar. That a visit to the statue is also an excuse to journey into a neighborhood of Ulaanbaatar where many Russians and sympathetic Mongols live may be the real basis of Zhukov's continuing importance to current Russian leaders. Elsewhere in the city, Stalin's reminder that Russia is the Mongol's 'ax,' or 'big brother,' is wearing thin—the last public Lenin was removed in late 2012 (Jacobs 2012).



Figure 48: Zhukov (right) and the last public Lenin (left). The Stalin statue that once fronted the Mongolian National Library was removed, last seen as part of a nightclub's stage décor. A statue of Choibalsan, 'the Mongolian Stalin' in popular sobriquet, stands before the main building of the National University of Mongolia. It underwent refurbishment in 2011, replacing the concrete with a bronze casting.

Figure 49: A museum formerly dedicated to Lenin retains his bust but the Soviet leader's surroundings have been privatized. The building devolved first into a billiard hall (next page above, on a visit in 2007, courtesy of Mikka Fürst), but lives on happily now as the flagship of a Mongolian mobile telecom corporation (next page below, in 2011).

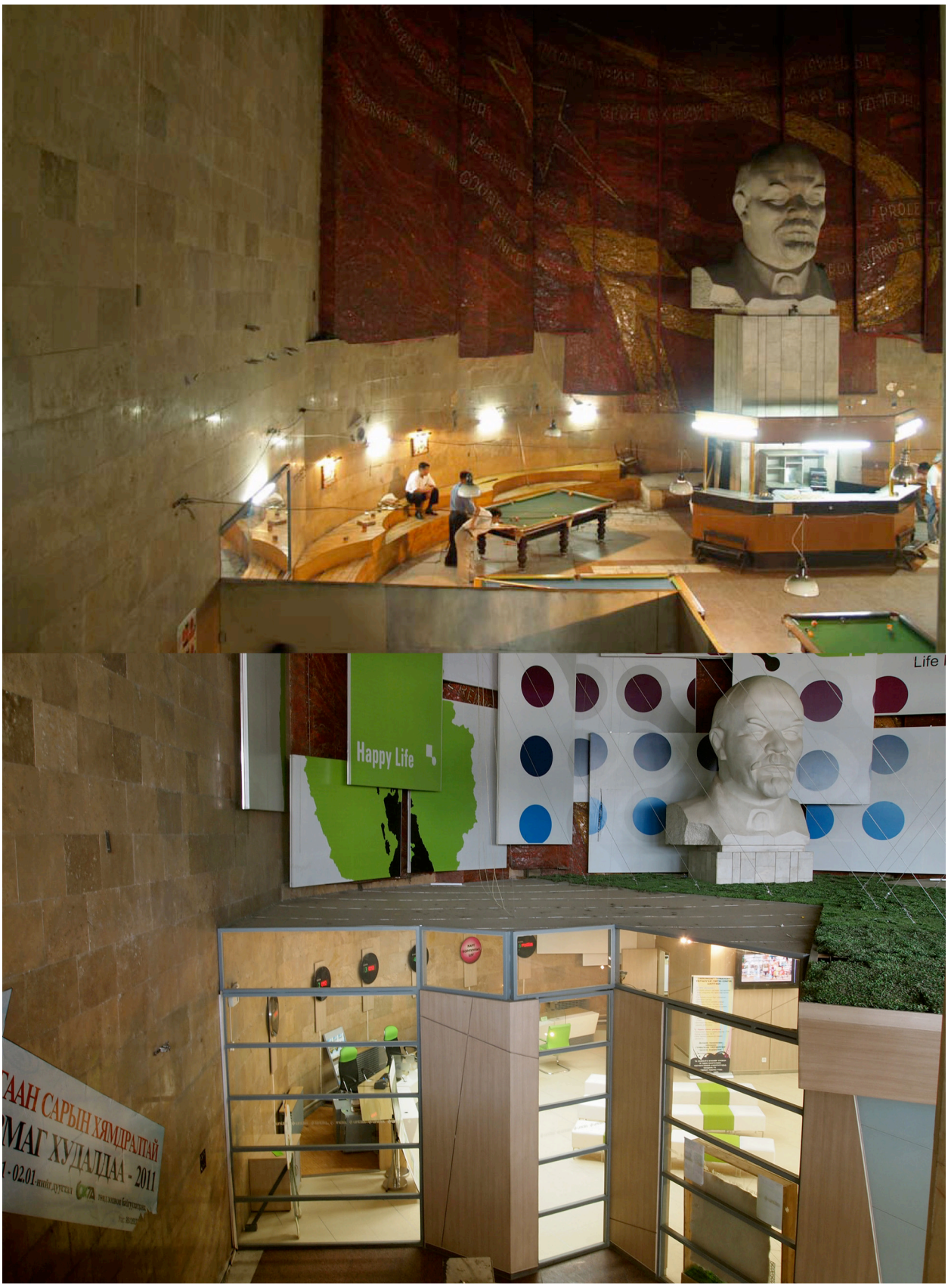

Happy Life
ГААН САРЫН ХЯМДРАЛТАЙ
МАГ ХУДАЛДАА - 2011



Figure 50: Gandan monastery hovers as a landmark (left), over market scenes to the southeast, where horses and camels transport tea and other goods or are themselves traded (right, photographs are from the collection of the Mongolian National Archives).



Figure 51: The sole remaining structure of the original Russian consulate had stood near the entry gate to the complex (the guard's blue hut now serves a similar function). In the background, the Russian hospital grounds subsume the western portion of the former embassy compound. The current Russian embassy, a massive concrete edifice and gated compound, is several kilometers west, near the core of a city redesigned by Soviet planners since the 1930s.



Figure 52: Above Zhukov square, a market carrying Russian products retains a Soviet emblem (left). The gold dome of the Orthodox church (right) was recently added to reassert the northward-looking character of the neighborhood where the Russian consulate had once risen.

The houses of Russian merchants and diplomatic authorities had their most immediate effect inspiring Mongolia's own elite of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While the Bogd Khaan's summer palace and at least two other of his residences would not survive the Sovietization of Ulaanbaatar, several other historic wood houses of the late nineteenth century remain, particularly because they had been owned or commandeered by revolutionary forces in the early twentieth century. The building that now serves as a museum of the city's history had been a meeting hall for Sukhbaatar and other leaders of the revolution. A structure that had once been home to the Mongolian Prime Minister Genden Peljediin has, since 1996, become a museum of another sort; dedicated as a memorial to the victims of political repression (Genden had been a functionary of Stalin, but was executed in Moscow after publicly rebuking the Soviet leader), the status dually preserves one of the few remaining timbered houses from the early twentieth century (Kaplonski 2002). Such houses have become rare in the city, as new office towers and shopping malls displace the humble, low-rise structures that once crowded the central district.

Much of the influence of Russian architecture came during the long decades of Soviet domination, when the means of transferring an aesthetic had less to do with inspiration than direct imposition. Soviet 'expertise' in reimagining the urban scheme as well as the buildings that would populate the new scheme is widely known, documented in the Socialist era by Mongolian (cf. Tsultem 1988) and Russian (cf. Shchepetil'nikov 1960) architectural historians alike. Less recognized than the mechanisms of formal, state-operated

transference of Russian architectural memes to the Mongol populace are the informal influences. Like the nineteenth century forms, the informal transference of aesthetics occurs first on Mongol elites before trickling down to the larger populace. And also like the nineteenth century, it is residential architecture where the transition most readily occurs.



Figure 53: Many of the earliest edifices have been lost to neglect and modernization, threats unabated by current developments. A shop believed to date from 1915 (left) is among the structures surveyed and catalogued in the Ulaanbaatar Architectural Heritage Database (http://ulaanbaatar.m-heritage.org/results/data/format-009/index.html). A meeting hall (right) survived Socialist redevelopment as it once hosted a conspiratorial meeting of Mongolia's early revolutionaries; it is now protected as a city museum, but internally decaying.

The elite of Mongolia, posted to the Soviet Union and exposed by their education and political positions to the lifestyles of Soviet apparatchiks, were the first adopters of such perquisites as the dacha garden-house retreats that officials often kept at the edge of the city. In speaking with a former officer from the Mongolian embassy to the Soviet Union (considered a top posting for party cadres), he claimed that one of his first lessons in acculturation upon arriving in Moscow was the retreat to dachas by all embassy staff on weekends. It was a lifestyle he grew accustomed to and continues to this day, even in his current post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs back in Ulaanbaatar—our discussion took place at his retreat in Nairamdal Park, a woodsy valley and camp where many of ranking members of the Mongolian government maintain weekend and summer residences. On a trek through the surrounding taiga forest (one reason it remains favored by Russians), through the stands of birch he pointed out the compound that had been the dachas of Soviet diplomats, the largest house being that of the ambassador. The compound continues to be the retreat of Russian diplomats, who use the cabins on most weekends throughout the year.



Figure 54: View of a gantry crane from the cab of a neighboring crane; each is loading timber from Russian rolling stock onto Chinese carriages in the rail yard at Erlian, on the Mongolian border (left). Differing gauges of rail interthread through the transshipment township of Zamyn Uud. The near rail (right) is contiguous with that of China, while the parallel track on which the bogey is riding continues north across Mongolia and into former Soviet territory beyond.

The idea of the dacha has since trickled down to become a form of weekend retreat available to more than just those atop the political hierarchy. Urbanites of middle-class means have since found ex-urban retreats of their own. While they cannot afford to take up residence in Nairamdal, they have been erecting dacha-style homes of their own in former summer camps, such as Gachuurt, and in areas that once lay outside the city, in Baruun Salaa and Belx. Those latter areas have since faced encroachment by ger district xashaa, housing forms that are often indistinct. In a distinct section of the Zuun Salaa ger district, I came across several larger houses that appeared to be only for weekend use. One larger compound, with a layout much different than most xashaa, contained three houses of varying degrees of use. The simplest house, a small, single-story and single-room structure of brick, was the only one to be inhabited on a somewhat year-round basis. It was occupied by the mother (Zs-14) of the home's owner. She was living there with her grandsons (the owner's sons). The compound belongs to her son-in-law's family, as the house to the west was used by his parents and the elaborate, Russian-styled one to the east by his sister's family. They came only on weekends or during summer holidays. While even within a single compound there is a mixture of dacha and ger district living, the dachas distinguished themselves with elaborate details adopted from Siberian log cabins.

While Ulaanbaatar may no longer conform to the model the city had established as the entrepôt where Chinese tea was transferred from camel to horse for the onward journey to the Russian border, in

contemporary parlance, Zamyn Uud may now fulfill such a function. Where Urga was perched between the climactic regimes that favored camel travel to the south through the Gobi and horse travel on the grasslands to the north, Zamyn Uud has a similarly pivotal position as the transshipment zone between standard 4'-8½" rail gauge heading toward China and the 5'-0" gauge that stretches throughout the former Soviet territory. Russian lumber, on its southward journey toward the warm water port at Tianjin, China, where it will be loaded on bulk carriers for worldwide distribution, must pass between these differing railstocks at Zamyn Uud (on the Mongolian side) and its Chinese counterpart Erlian (alternatively Ereen or Erenkhot). As freight transport bound for the border stacks up in the rail yards at both Zamyn Uud and further back along the line at Ulaanbaatar, this position along a prime export path for Russian forest products provides Ulaanbaatar with a prime building material at a competitive cost. With the current supply of wood from Russia, the older architectural forms have found new justification.



Figure 55: Coal dusk clouds the view from city hall during a meeting in the air quality office. Coal dark night subsumes the ger district, as particulate from a neighbor's chimney remains only momentarily distinguishable from an enveloping, soot-filled haze.

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