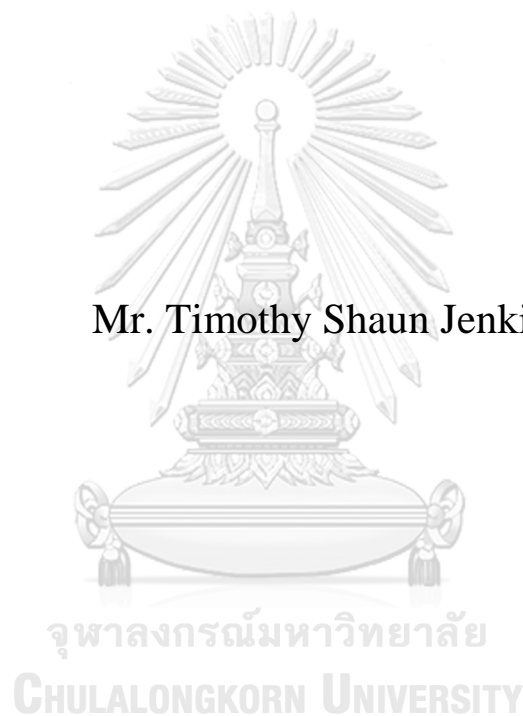


Ulaanbaatar's Ger District Residents: An analysis of  
development challenges and structural violence

Mr. Timothy Shaun Jenkins



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# Ulaanbaatar's Ger District Residents: An analysis of development challenges and structural violence



วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

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ทิโมที ซอน เจนกินส์ : Ulaanbaatar's Ger District Residents: An analysis of development challenges and structural violence. ( Ulaanbaatar's Ger District Residents: An analysis of development challenges and structural violence) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : ฉันทนา หวันแก้ว

This study investigates and researches the impact of the Government's policy of putting the 'economy first' by analyzing the situation through the lens of Johan Galtung's concept of Structural Violence. The research answers the question: How does structural violence occur in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar under the current development challenges?

In the 1990's, after the fall of communism, the IMF and the World Bank, along with some leading political figures within the Government of Mongolia, pushed forward with their plans to bring the free market to Mongolia. The World Bank and the IMF introduced the shock-therapy approach with the aim of quickly integrating Mongolia into the global supply chain. Massive layoffs were instituted within the government and nearly all of the state-owned industries were privatized. This resulted in mass inflation, job loss, and increases in poverty. The consequences of shock therapy reverberated throughout the social landscape for decades. Today, the Government continues to heed the advice of the IMF and the World Bank by focusing on the economy and gaining the trust of foreign investors and other key partners. As a result, the economy continues to be put ahead of social issues and services, with limited consultation with those most effected: the herding populous. What this means is that a pattern of injustice has been solidified within some structures so much so that the lowest-ranking actors, in this case the rural migrants now living in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, were deprived not only of their respective potential, but undeniably below subsistence minimum. These policies were compounded in 2017 when the Government received a bailout from the IMF. As a result, basic social services were again slashed, and taxes rose across the country to meet the demands for the loans.

This paper is particularly focused on extracting data via interviews of internal migrants originally from rural communities now living in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. To support these findings, an analysis of civil society, UN reports and in-depth interviews have been conducted, as well as a review of public statements by government officials. The research has found evidence of the structural violence

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# Chapter 1: Background

*The background briefly delves into the history of Mongolia's transition to a free-market economy, its geography and the results of rural-to-urban migration that has taken hold in recent decades. In addition, this chapter gives an overview of the limitations, conceptual framework, preparations, scope of the study, ethical considerations, and objectives.*

## **Mongolia: History, politics and geography**

For centuries, Mongolian nomads have roamed the open steppe: from the plains of Manchuria to the Altai Mountain. Mongolian pastoralists and the grasslands lived in an almost symbiotic relationship with one another. However, today, that life style and heritage is under threat. Due to rapid urban migration, climate change and economic instability, thousands of herders, as well as families that have livelihoods that depend upon animal husbandry, have abandoned their ancestral homelands and livelihoods in hopes for a better life, and a piece of prosperity, in the nation's capital of Ulaanbaatar.

There are significant development challenges at play – socio-economic, corruption, poverty and environmental – that have led to the vast inequalities that exist today. These inequalities are namely those between the elite and those living in the ger districts. Although a large proportion of the population is still dependent on some form of animal husbandry, the wealthy elite have all but distanced themselves from their ancestral past. From the mid-1990s, corruption and elite self-enrichment became increasingly serious issues in Mongolia (Fritz 2007). Assumed estimates claim that over 70% of the country's wealth lies in the hands of just 10 wealthy families, with all of them having family members representing their interests as Members of Parliament, whilst the nomadic herders still average less than 3,000USD per annum (Kamata, et al. 2010). In fact, only a few Members of Parliament, since the democratic transition in the early 90's, have been herders themselves – a shocking realization when taking into account that 30% of the population still relies on herding as a livelihood (Rossabi 2005 ).

Mongolia's physical environment and population density make for a unique development challenge unlike any in the world. With the fall of the socialist state and the rise of the free market economy from the mid-1990's to the present day, corruption and self-enrichment by the political and social elite have become increasingly serious challenges facing the country's development progress.

Landlocked between China and Russia, the predominantly Buddhist country of Mongolia is sunny, arid, and cold (World Bank, 2009). Mongolia is classified as a medium-human development country with a human development index of 0.675 and a rank of 103 out of 187 countries in 2014 (UNDP HDR, 2016; p36). Wintertime temperatures regularly dip below -40° Celsius at night, with highs around -20 during the day. Mongolia also experiences frequent droughts and occasional severe winters commonly known as a "Dzud<sup>1</sup>" (a natural disaster encompassing a summer drought followed by an unusually harsh winter).

From 2000-2012, Mongolia's mining industry has grown rapidly. As a result, almost a quarter of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is linked to the mining sector. The country's mining boom has led to rapid economic growth, however this wealth is not reaching the vast majority of the population. A key challenge for the Government, the private sector and Mongolia is to find ways to manage impacts, both positive and negative, and create a solid foundation for social development which respects and supports nomadic livelihoods, health, and social wellbeing of all people (Menon 2011).

Historically, Mongolia's natural environment supported widely dispersed families dependent on herding sheep, cattle, horses, goats, and camels across the steppe (Kamata, Reichert et al. 2010). Today, it is recognized as the least densely populated independent country in the world, with a population of 3 million spread over a surface area of nearly 1.6 million sq. km (UNFPA 2014). However, the population landscape is changing. The population is becoming more urbanized, with 63% of the population

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<sup>1</sup> dzud: a unique disaster where too much snow falls and livestock are unable to graze, thus causing them to starve.

residing in urban areas, while 36.3% are residing in rural communities (UNFPA 2014). This population is increasingly concentrated in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, which now accounts for nearly 50% of the total population. Over a third of the population is still reliant on herding livelihoods as their primary source of income and 45% of households are still living in gers<sup>2</sup>. To illustrate a more complete picture of Mongolia's challenges, one must not forget increasing desertification, widespread corruption, and a flailing economy, and these are still just the tip of the iceberg (UNFPA 2014).

Over the last 20 years, the transition to democracy and the free market economy, while peaceful, was not necessarily equitable for all. The transition left many without support mechanism during disaster or other crisis. While herders now held their animals as private property, many services – veterinary, marketing, emergency assistance – lapsed in the countryside. The universal school and health care system, hitherto rather unique among any nomad population, noticeably degenerated (Fritz 2008). Bold reforms have been carried out with the aim of stabilizing the economy, privatizing state firms, strengthening the private sector, establishing fundamental market institutions and improving the investment environment. Unfortunately, many of these reforms have arguably resulted in greater inequality.

Countryside communities are viewed as the bearers of Mongolian culture. In the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, however, these same people, though only recently removed from their ancestral homelands, are often the point of blame by the middle and upper classes. They feel the ger district residents have caused the pollution, increases in crime, the bad traffic, and other challenges facing the city. Until recently, countryside families continued to make their way into the capital looking for work and opportunities whilst they continue living in the 'nomadic' lifestyle. However, these assumptions have real world implications and result in forms of violence against this population of people, as are the policies, or lack thereof, meant to assist them.

Though challenges persist, Mongolia has been, and continues to be, a success story in

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<sup>2</sup> Ger: Traditional Mongolian dwelling or often referred to as a yurt.

terms of improvement in human development. In the last 40 years, Mongolia has maintained steady gains in life expectancy; maintains one of the highest literacy rates in the world at nearly 97 percent; and mean household incomes have continued to rise, even during uncertain times (NHDR, 2015; p.47). However, poverty and rising inequality remain a challenge in Mongolia, particularly over the past twenty years. For instance, within roughly ten years after the establishment of the free market, the headcount ratio of poverty reached over 35 percent (Rossabi 2005 ). In 2010, when the author arrived in country, economic growth was reported at 17.5 per cent. Today, according to Trading Economic News, economic prospects remain extremely dim for the foreseeable future, as growth fell below 0 to -1.4 percent during the third quarter of 2016. Despite GDP growth from 2000-2010, *one in three* Mongolians are currently living below the poverty line. According to the estimation, concluded jointly by NSO and the World Bank, the poverty rate in Mongolia reached 29.6 percent in 2016 – an increase by 8.0 percentage points from the poverty rate of 21.6 percent in 2014. With an additional 300,000 people, the grand total amounts to nearly 1 million Mongolians living in poverty.

Like many developing nations, especially those that have been culturally nomadic, rapid urban growth prove to be major challenges for both the population and the government. Urban services and infrastructure are extremely poor, with the conditions worsened by the growing ‘ger districts’<sup>3</sup>. Urban infrastructure and services are poor in general, and the conditions are exacerbated in informal settlements (ger areas) that comprise up to 60% of the capital city (UNICEF 2018). Urban issues include poverty, increased intensity of air and soil pollution, heightened risk for disasters, especially earthquakes, as well as lack of access to urban basic services including water, sanitation and heating (Singh 2017). Ger district residents are the urban population suffering the most. These issues, compounded by extreme weather and unchecked poverty, are the result of years of poor governance and mismanagement by the Government of Mongolia (GoM), regardless of which party was at the helm.

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<sup>3</sup> Ger Districts: Surrounding the Capital of city Ulaanbaatar, are hundreds of thousands of ‘ger’ dwellings (also known as yurts)

Through this research, as well as research done by experts within the field of health and safety, vast social injustices have been revealed. In Mongolia, specifically within the confines of the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, this research investigated social injustice and inequalities that have resulted in structural violence towards Mongolia's most vulnerable citizens.

By evaluating past failures in the transition to the market economy and recent maldevelopment practices by the Government of Mongolia, this paper will look at the subsequent impact on the ger district population, as well as other decisions that have impacted the ger dwelling community. It will look at how the ger district residents feel about their government focusing more on foreign investment than improving their lives. It will also investigate why the government has justified leaving vast proportions of its population behind in pursuit of a larger economic agenda. We will explore how these policies, or lack thereof in the case of the ger districts, has resulted in structural violence by the state.

## **Research question and objectives**

How does structural violence occur in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar under the current development challenges?

### **The objectives of this research are as follows:**

1. To explain Mongolia's development characteristics.
2. To describe and analyze structural violence emerging from development practices.

## **Research methodology**

In this study, the qualitative research methodology was used as the basis for data collection. Qualitative research methods fit nicely with the skill set of the researcher and his knowledge of the culture. Data from secondary sources are from the Nations Statistics Office of Mongolia, the United Nations Populations Fund and the Ministry of Population Development and Social Protection, and other institutions. All of which, respectively, have conducted massive quantitative analysis over the last five years.

This research is particularly focused on collecting data vis-à-vis individual household

interviews of internal migrants originally from rural communities now living in Ulaanbaatar. To support these findings, the author conducted an analysis on civil society, UN studies and statements by government officials within the public sphere. The researcher aimed to obtain a firm understanding of what is happening on the ground; from the market to the local herder to the local and national governments – all through the eyes and hears of locals. The meetings and interactions with key informants and/or community stakeholders proved to be critical for the successful investigation on the **“Challenges and Structural Violence Facing Ger Dwellers in Mongolia’s Capital”**.

### **Preparations and implementation of the interviews**

For every interview, an introduction and explanation of the ‘Discussion’ process was given. The research team introduced themselves and their respective roles. The lead researcher and/or facilitator further discussed intent of the research and notified the participating household/individual that they may end the interview and withdraw from the research at any time. Contact information was also handed out to each respective household.

### **In-depth and expert interviews**

The study predominantly focused on internal-rural migrants living within the Chingeltei district, as well as some surrounding areas. In-depth interviews were conducted with families in the district of Chingeltei (n=6), key informants from international organizations (n=2) and key informants from the national government (n=1). The statements made by the families reinforced observations and statements made by the key informants. The researcher spent about 45 minutes to 90 minutes during each interview.

### **Key informants**

Code	Age/Gender	Location	Date	Years in
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				<b>UB</b>
CDI1	70 years-old/female	Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar	03.21.2018	17 years
CDI2	Couple: 72 years-old/Male 62 years-old/Female	Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar	03.21.2018	15 years
CDI3	29 years-old/Female	Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar	03.21.2018	10 years
CDI4	31 years-old/Female	Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar	03.21.2018	7 years
CDI5	59 years-old male	Chingeltei District, Ulaanbaatar	07.11.2018	15 years
CDI6	62 years-old male	Chingeltei District	06.11.2018	3 months
SDI1	Couple: 30 years-old/Male 29 years-old/Female	Sukhbaatar district, Ulaanbaatar (on the border of Chingeltei)	03.21.2018	5 years
NDI1	28 years-old/male	Nailakh district, Ulaanbaatar	03.26.2018	Recent arrival
NEI3	Female UN Youth Advisor	Ulaanbaatar	07.25.2018	N/A
NEI5	50 year old male from International	Ulaanbaatar	06.13.2018	N/A

	Organization			
NEI6	Ch. Enkhtulga, Co-Founder of the Ger Community Mapping Center	Ulaanbaatar	06.20.2018	N/A

### **Methods of data analysis**

The data was analyzed based on the one-on-one interviews held with community members and validated by research conducted by CSOs and reputable international organizations, as well as data from the GoM itself. A Narrative analysis of the interviews was conducted by gathering stories, analyzing each story and looking for insights and meanings from the statements. The statements were compared with findings from other studies and reports. The data was classified, translated, coded, and grouped per the research questions. However, it's worth noting that the questions were slightly revised after the first interview as the language was too technical for the community members to fully grasp.

### **Secondary data collection**

In addition, there was a bibliographical analysis of varied resources such as books, journals, textbooks, newspaper articles, news reports, social media discussions, documents and agreements that related to the topic and the research.

### **Scope of the study**

Positioned in the northern part of Ulaanbaatar city, Chingeltei district is one of nine districts within the capital. The population consists predominately of ger district dwellers, totalling more than 153,000 residents accordingly to the most recent census by NSO. The district is one of the most impoverished and polluted (air and soil) communities in Mongolia, and is one of the most underdeveloped when compared to the southern districts of UB.



## **Research limitations**

There were limitations for the research.

1. Limited availability of time on the ground and within the community was a big constraint.
2. The highly politicized environment was completely unexpected. The 2017 election, and subsequent run-off, left the country fractured which led to argument, rather than discussion during the focus group. During the attempted focus group discussion, rather than focusing on policies or issues facing their respective communities, participants attacked candidates directly.
3. My topic was greeted with great skepticism, particularly by the Government and in local academia. Some also believed that, as a foreigner, I could not understand the actual situation of those living in the ger districts.
4. As a foreigner, translation was an absolute must. Limited resources for translations was always a challenge and the researcher had to rely on the generosity of volunteers or family members to facilitate discussions or interpret data.

## **Significance of the research**

Without giving all members of society an equitable opportunity to achieve their personal and community-based development goals, Mongolia's growth and development will stagnate, leaving thousands of people behind in the process. Within Mongolia, there has never been research undertaken on this specific topic. This paper will hopefully add to the larger discussions involving inequality within Mongolia. This research explores and analyzes policies and practices, as well as their impact, on internal migrants that have left their respective livelihoods in the countryside with the hope of a better life in the capital city.

Overall, the findings of this research will contribute to ongoing discussions and debates that are underway to improve the quality of life, as well as access to services, for incoming internal migrants and current ger-district residents. In efforts to reduce air pollution, the Government of Mongolia and local authorities must look beyond simply improving on ger stoves and limiting access to coal – a systematic approach is needed to address the root causes of structural violence and inequality.

### **Ethical considerations**

This study had certain ethical issues, as briefly mentioned within the ‘research limitations’ section. The purpose of the interview and research was expressed to all the interviewees and key informants over the phone, as well as in person, before conducting the interviews. Consent was obtained in person for the use of their respective quotes when writing this thesis. As the political climate has become increasingly divisive, it was best to conduct private interviews, rather than traditional focus group discussions. Additionally, Mongolia is a small, interconnected country. Therefore, all interviews will remain anonymous as the consequences for revealing a key informant or an interviewee could have career and/or personal implications on all involved. Additionally, in an effort to give each participant informed consent, the translator read a statement informing them about the research, where it would/could be published and that they had the right to end the interview and withdraw their inputs at any time.

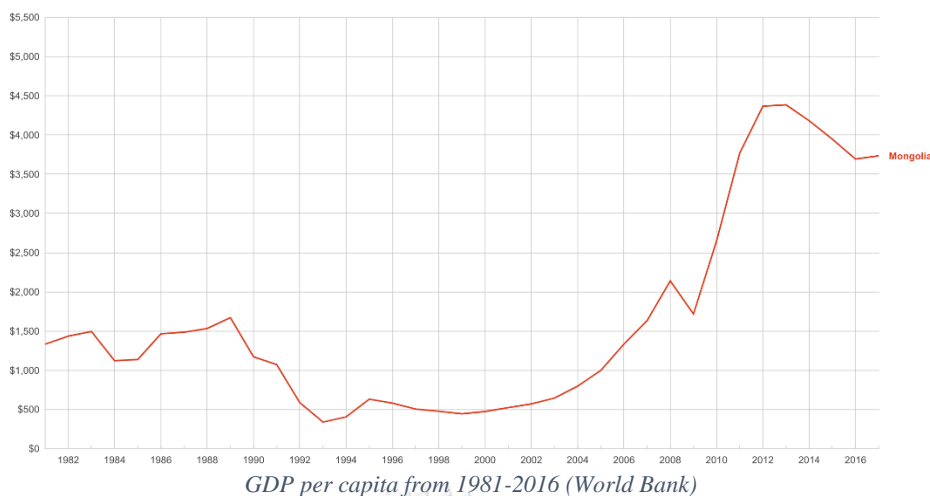
### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into five chapters. **Chapter One** covers the background by giving the country context of the Mongolian people and lays out the research methodology. **Chapter Two** looks at Mongolia’s development characteristics. **Chapter Three** looks at structural violence in the context of the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. **Chapter Four** highlights the stories of the ger districts. **Chapter Five** pulls together the concluding thoughts and findings from the research.

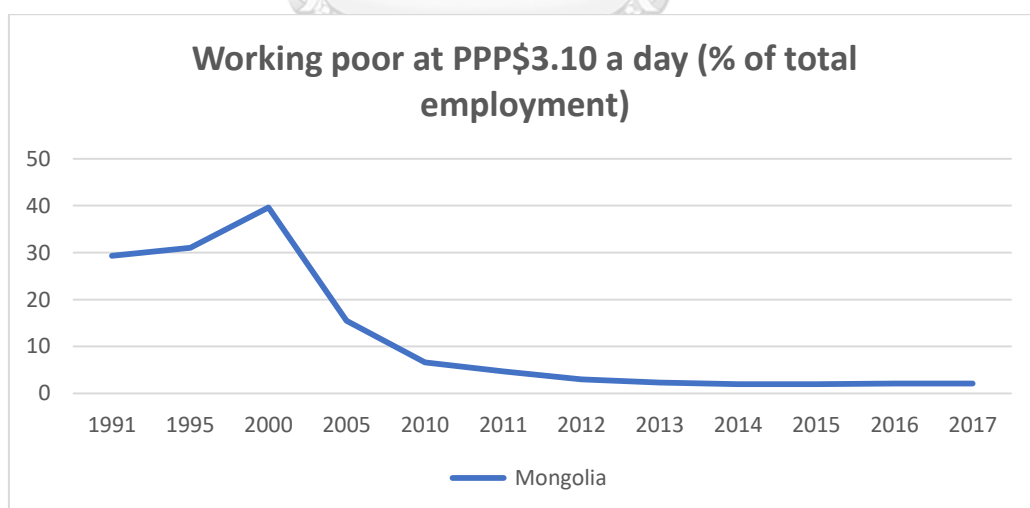
## Chapter 2: Mongolia's development characteristics

*Mongolia's development and democratic rise is often touted by many in the West as a model democracy in Asia. However, the tides of economic development have not lifted all boats. After the fall of socialism, Mongolia abruptly turned to neo-liberalism. This sudden shift had ripple effects that fed into the belief held by succeeding governments and leaders that the economy – at times solely the economy – would be the answer to their woes. This chapter looks at the historical development characteristics, implications of the 'shock therapy' approach to the economic transition in Mongolia, the impact of the transition on herders, and how the lessons of the past were not reflected by present day policy decisions.*

The structural readjustments of the 1990's left Mongolia, particularly the most vulnerable people, in a state of economic downturn for nearly 18 years. An entire generation lost the opportunity of upward mobility. Prior to the 1990's, during the socialist era, the economy was largely based on nomadic husbandry, forestry, agriculture, and some large scale industry. According the World Bank's publicly available data on GDP, in 1981, Mongolia's GDP per capita was US\$1,382. However, by the early 1990s, Mongolia was considered one of the poorest countries in the world when its' per capita GDP dropped from US\$1,670.69 in 1989 to less than US\$339.52 by 1993. This sudden drop in GDP coincides with the implementation of Shock Therapy which will be discussed in the next section of this chapter. Since the late 1990s Mongolia's economy has steadily grown reaching a GDP per capita of US\$3,713 in 2017.



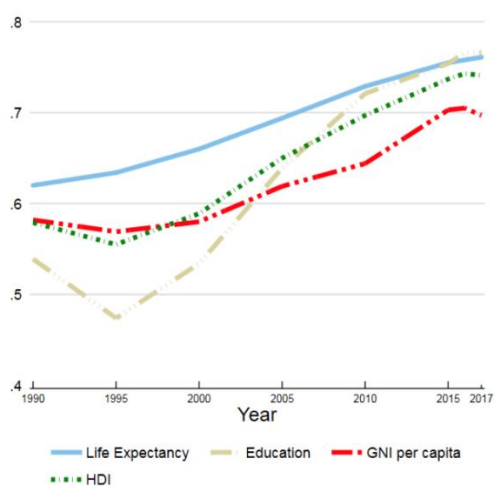
When we look at UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), we do see that Mongolia has been a strong performer since the late 1990's. However, the HDI's baseline is from the post revolution period. Meaning, the HDI begins whilst Mongolia's economy was crashing and the economy was being restricted by IMF and the World Bank. Still, it is important to observe the HDI as it does show dimensions of inequality that have improved or persisted over the past 25 years. The graph below demonstrates the rapid gains made in the reduction of the working poor. Since the late 1990's, we PPP has dropped from nearly 40 percent of the working population to less than 3 percent in 2017 (UNDP, 2018).



*Proportion of employed people who live on less than \$3.10 (in purchasing power parity terms) a day, expressed as a percentage of the total employed population ages 15 and older.*

*Source: ILO (International Labour Organization) (2018a). ILOSTAT database. [www.ilo.org/ilostat](http://www.ilo.org/ilostat). Accessed 13 April 2018.*

As well, the graph below show the contribution of each component within the HDI in Mongolia since the index began in 1990. Mongolia falls solidly within the middle of the 189 countries with a rank of 92, tied with Fiji.



*Trends in Mongolia's HDI Component Indices 1990-2017 (Source: UNDP Office of Human Development Report)*

Yet, many have been left behind during the country's rise through the HDI ranks. According to the HDI (2018), Mongolia's indicators on quality of health and education remain in the top third of countries, while the quality of the standards of living remain in the bottom third on all four indicators. When we compare figures for Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan are also shown in the table below for comparison, we see that Mongolia has fallen short of its' peers in Central Asia, when it comes to the quality of standard of living.

	Quality of health (3 indicators)			Quality of education (6 indicators)			Quality of standard of living (4 indicators)			Overall (13 indicators)			Missing indicators
	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	Top third	Middle third	Bottom third	
	Number of indicators												
Mongolia	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	4	5	0	5	3
Kyrgyzstan	2	1	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	4	4	2	3
Turkmenistan	2	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4	3	0	6

*Summary of Mongolia's performance on the Quality of human development indicators relative to selected countries (UNDP Office of the Human Development Report)*

## Neoliberalism and the uprooting of social safety nets

Mongolia achieved its political independence in the early 1990's but its economy remained largely dependent on China and international financial organizations.

Bumochir (2018) explains that whilst the IMF, World Bank and ADB were pushing a classical neoliberal approach to the country's new economy, many in academia and the political sphere were warning this approach could be putting national interests and independence at risk. They argued that the value generated from foreign direct investment, the private sector, the mining sector, and transnational corporations would coincide with soft and hard concessions in national sovereignty (Bumochir 2018). Nevertheless, the words of caution were ignored.

IMF and ADB research teams each conducted an official visit in 1990 and produced two reports titled, *The Mongolian People's Republic: Toward a Market Economy (IMF)* and *Mongolia: A Centrally Planned Economy in Transition (ADB)*, respectively (Rossabi 2005). Rossabi (2005) found that two of the four chapters in the IMF report include "reform" within their titles and the foreword to the ADB volume makes similar use of the term. The ADB volume goes even further by labeling privatization "the centerpiece of reform". The first deputy minister, Davaadorjiin Ganbold, embraced these reforms – an economist himself – in his ambition to turn Mongolia into "an Asian Tiger." Even the Mongolian President vowed to make Mongolia one of the Asian Tigers within a few short years (Bumochir 2018). The transitions of the East Asian Tigers were neither neo-liberal, nor were they democratic. As Rossabi (2005) explains, this agenda was at odds with the polices that had proven successful in postwar East Asia. The Four Tigers – Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, and Singapore – had fostered economic growth through active government involvement and supervision of their economies. Yet, IMF et al. did not take into accounts these experiences. Instead, under the supervision of the IMF, the World Bank and ADB, Mongolia's free marketers launched a shock therapy (or structural adjustment) program in 1991 to establish a free market economy (Bumochir 2018) Rossabi 2005). Despite the ruling party's efforts to slow the pace of shock from 1992-1996, the 1996 election ushered in a new government that immediately reinstated the shock strategy at an unparalleled rate. At this point in time, privatization had acquired its own internal "political dynamics" as the political parties each raced to build secure economic bases (Bumochir 2018).

However, the journey to democracy and the open market was not only a burden for the

average Mongolian but a genuine struggle. For years, Mongolians would wait in lines each week, often for hours, to collect their weekly ration of meat, bread, and milk. The 1990's were especially hard on working or retired Mongolians as the country's largest employer, the Government, laid off thousands of workers and ended pension payments seemingly overnight.

*“The transition was a difficult time for most Mongolians. I had a degree but it wasn't useful during that period. There were no jobs. I was lucky because I was able to run scrap metal across the border but many of my friends and family really struggled. Lots of people struggled to find work. We saw a lot of drinking during this time and maybe that's why it's still so high today.” Batbayar, “Baagi”, 2018 interview.*

*Aid agencies [in Mongolia] say the transition from communism to market economy has hit Mongolia so hard that some men have been driven to drink and some women to despair. – BBC Report (Shahane, 1998)*

“In Mongolia, fifty years of building industry was virtually annihilated over a period of just four years, from 1991 to 1995, not to recover again” (Bumochir 2018, Reinert 2004 p 158; see also Rossabi 2005, Chap 2). Control of the greater part of the Mongolian economy has been transferred from the realm of public/political to the realm of the private/market. Furthermore, privatization and deregulation together with corruption and mismanagement have amassed national wealth in the hands of a tiny minority, entailing dispossession, dislocation and displacement of the vast portion of the population (Bumochir 2018). The shock waves from the initial structural adjustment from socialism to the free market economy by the ADB, IMF and the World Bank can be felt to this day.

By 2004, Bumochir (2018) explained the market system's domination of the economy and the almost complete privatization of Mongolia's most valued companies. As the result of neo-liberal structural adjustments, Mongolia had become a country that ran society as an adjunct to the market in less than two decades.

According to Rossabi (2005) and Bumochir (2018), these reforms resulted in the socialist welfare state being deconstructed which led to large-scale disentanglement that had long-lasting implications. For instance, Ganbold, as well as the ADB, held that even expenses on education, health, welfare, and culture should be reduced because they felt these basic social services contributed too much to the deficit and government spending. By the end of 1991, Ganbold, with support from ADB and then Prime Minister Dashiin Byambasuren, initiated “one of the fastest privatization programs in the reforming socialist countries” (Rossabi 2005 ). This coordinated structural adjustment not only created a market-dominated economy but also entailed a massive impoverishment of the population and the polarization of the society (Rossabi 2005 ).

*“Before 1990, Mongolia - the most sparsely populated country in the world - produced enough cereals, mainly wheat, to meet its own needs and to export. The 1990 wheat harvest was 718 000 tonnes. In 1996, the harvest was down to 220 000 tonnes. "The decline is largely attributed to the break-up and sell-off of state farms..., high indebtedness, reduced access to credit, high interest rates, a critical shortage of inputs and operational farm machinery and poor husbandry practices" according to the Special Report issued by the assessment mission. As a result, the country now produces only 60 percent of its cereal needs, and the most vulnerable sector of Mongolian society is facing a serious food shortage.” – FAO News (Report 1997)*

### **Herders vulnerability during free market transition**

Rossabi noted that (2005) the market economy model, the recipe developed by Western advisors, applied to more sedentary agrarian or industrial economies but had yet to be tested in a society where nearly one in three working adults were nomadic pastoralists, earning their livelihoods off of the land. Throughout the 1990’s and in the midst of strict structural adjustment, Mongolia’s Government gave little in terms of support to the herders and nomads living in the remote countryside.

The Parliament and Government gave greater significance to more urbanized



communities. In fact, the herding population had little representation. The herders did not have a political party of their own to reflect their concerns and champion their needs and rights (Rossabi 2005 ).

The decentralization and free market implementation in Mongolia was not all negative, as they allowed for more freedom of movement for herding families. However, this marginal benefit was outweighed by the fact that they also left herders particularly vulnerable, as basic social services had been significantly reduced during the structural adjustment period, thus leaving them vulnerable during an environmental or economic crisis.

*Gurzan explained his predicament to a Red Cross worker. "For the last six months, we've been searching for pasture. We've struck camp and moved 20 times," he said.*

*"I had 500 animals. More than 200 are already dead. My horses are all dead - either that or they've run off in the blizzard." Gurzan said it was the first time in his 53 years that he had been without a horse. He said he had never seen the situation this bad, adding that Mongolia's transition from communism to the free market had exacerbated the situation.*

*"The number of herders has increased. After the herds were privatised, many people thought they could make a lot of money," he said. "Many of them didn't know livestock and that's made the situation worse." The old state-run system of fodder distribution has broken down as well. – BBC Report, 2000*

These rapid structural adjustments led to incentives to increase the size of their herds, but ultimately left the herding population extremely vulnerable as the world entered the new millennium. By the end of the 1990's the livestock population in Mongolia rapidly reached 30 million head for the first time in its history (Vernooy 2011). Yet, the rural poverty rate continued to increase and the social and economic services (including health care, education, transportation, communication, and credit) remained abysmal or

were non-existent. As Vernooy (2007) explained, the result was disastrous: wide-scale overgrazing and pasture degradation, with limited support for pending natural disasters.

*"The assistance available during socialist days no longer exists, so the herders are on their own," said Douglas Gardner, the UN Development Programme officer for Mongolia to the BBC in 2000.*

A boom in rural to urban migration was a ticking time bomb - the vulnerabilities of the herders became ever present with the onset of climate change, the increase in rural poverty, and a shrinking social safety net. The 2010 dzud was one of the worst ever, resulting in the death of nearly 8.5 million livestock. Seven hundred seventy thousand herders were affected of which 43,500 were left without a single animal; 164,000 lost more than half of their livestock. Herders and the government alike were not prepared and ill-equipped to deal with the consequences despite ample warning (Rao, Davi et al. 2015). By 2012, hundreds of thousands of rural migrants made their way to the capital with hopes of a better life.

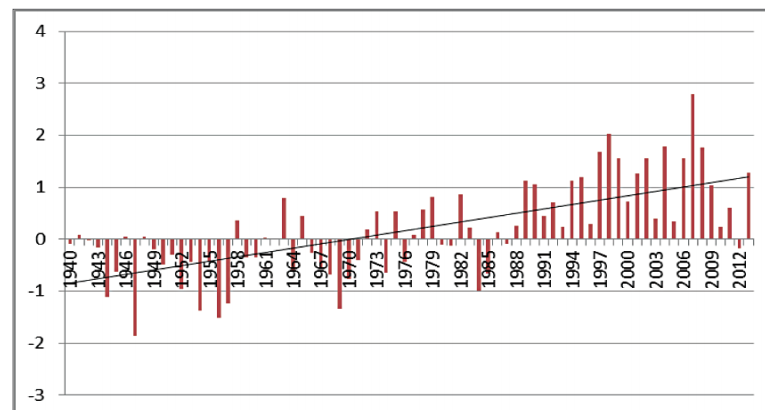
## **Climate change and migration in Mongolia**

According to NSO and the Mongolia Assessment Report on Climate Change (Singh 2017), about 286 thousand people are engaged in the herding of roughly 60 million heads of livestock (Montsame 2017). The size of herds today is in stark contrast with the size of the herds two decades before. During the socialist period, approximately 23-25 million head of livestock were owned by the state and managed by herders (Singh 2017) and the livestock herding was regulated by the Government in an effort to manage livestock numbers and grazing practices (UNDP/GEF 2015). The Government provided not only salaries to the herders but provided them with a safety net in the event of disaster. For example, if a dzud were to hit, the government would provide hay to the herds.

However, in the early 1990s, herds were privatized and market access and supports disappeared (UNDP/GEF 2015). In the place of the state, wealthy Mongolians began investing in herds, paying herders as the state once did, while encouraging larger and

larger herds as the price of cashmere began to rise. Larger herds and the turn to goats for their cashmere have altered grazing practices. This combination of factors resulted in a phenomenal increase in livestock numbers from 25 million in the early 1990s to more than 60 million today. According to UNDP, as much as 80% of Mongolia's fragile landscape is grazed beyond capacity. While overgrazing is not the only culprit, it is a leading critical factor contributing to Mongolia's declining biodiversity, pasture health, herd fitness, and degraded soil and water systems, including siltation, erosion, and diminished ecosystem productivity (UNDP/GEF 2015). As well, research suggests that climate induced variability is likely to increase water stress (Singh 2017). During a 2015 UNDP event, titled, 'Ulaanbaatar Development Dialogues', one panelist raised alarms with respect to water security stating, "nearly all of Mongolia's ground water could disappear by 2040 if current trends continue, aside from Lake Khovsgol in the north of the country". The structural adjustments of the 1990s, therefore, had compounding impacts on the people and the environment.

Further compounding these challenges is the rise in global climate change. Rising temperatures are having a significant impact on Mongolia's weather patterns and overall ecosystem. Statistics collected between 1940 and 2013 by the 48 meteorological stations that are evenly distributed across the country demonstrate the increase of the mean air temperature at the land surface by 2.07 Celsius (Singh 2017). In the chart below, you can see that the period from the 1990's through today have been the warmest on record (see graph below).



*Deviation from the multi-year average (1961-1990) of the annual mean temperature averaged over the territory of Mongolia (Singh, 2017; p. 8)*

As a result of the changing environment, Mongolia has witnessed an increase in the number of natural disasters over the past 18 years which has had a profound impact on herders' livelihood – causing migration to urban areas, urbanization and other related challenges (Singh 2017). In both 1999-2000 and 2009-2010 dzuds had a devastating impact on the livelihoods of herders and the country's economy. Towards the end of the 2009-2010 winter, more than 10 million (approximately 22 percent) of the country's entire livestock in Mongolia was lost as a result of the dzud. More than 200 thousand rural herders, roughly 70 percent of all herders, living in the affected regions were severely impacted (Singh 2017). According to the MARCC report (2017) the social impacts and associated costs of a dzud are difficult to estimate due to the lack of data. What we do know is the proportion of people living below income-based poverty line is nearly 1 in 3, as previously stated, making them susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

When herders lose their livestock and are left without support, such as a social safety net, they tend to abandon their livelihoods and migrate to the urban centers, particularly Ulaanbaatar, in search of employment. This indicates the vulnerability of the country's population to climate change and migration. Structural adjustments that are not gradual, but rather a shock to the system which leaves the most vulnerable at risk.

As briefly highlighted above, herders are not to be solely faulted for the changes to the environmental landscape within Mongolia. During the implementation of shock

therapy, rapid expansion of mining permits and extraction of natural resources, including the infrastructure needed to remove and transport the minerals, had a detrimental impact on the natural environment. According to the UNDP and the Global Environment Facility, Mongolia is already beginning to witness the implications of mining activities on land and water resources, including land degradation at the mine sites and surrounding communities, as characterized by the loss of grazeable land, decreases in vegetable yields, surface water and aquifer losses and much more (UNDP/GEF 2015)).

An example of indirect impacts is the Oyu Tolgoi (copper and coal) mine in South Gobi:

*The Oyu Tolgoi mine site created 13,000 jobs increasing the local population four fold. The mine established its airport, connected to the central electric grid, piped deep groundwater from 70 km away for the purpose of mineral exploitation and laid 100 km of asphalt road to the Chinese border for mineral export. There is also a plan to lay 260 km of railway to the Chinese border. All these have caused severe impact on the productivity of pasture and they have taken traditional grazing areas away from many herding communities. These patterns contributed to a high level of poverty and net out-migration of 45,226 people from the Western provinces from 2005-10, representing 12.8% of the total population. There is therefore an urgent need to reduce pressures on natural resources from these competing and often conflicting land uses. – UNDP, GEF Project Document (2015; p. 17)*

Furthermore, access to water, food security, and economic opportunities are driving herders to migrate to urban centers en masse. Many are leaving behind their livelihoods and culture in an effort to forge a better life for their families and escape the poverty and despair in the countryside. These climate refugees are often already poor, or at risk of becoming poor. Those arriving today or within the last two years are poor, unregistered and unable to receive the services that they require to meet their basic needs. Structural adjustments have led to a breakdown in environmental and land

management. However, despite all these challenges in the countryside, it might be safe to assume that herders are worse off in the cities due to air pollution.

## **Market collapses: Government says economy comes first**

In the nearly 30 years since the transition from a planned economy to a market-based economy, income inequality, unemployment, and a failure to measurably reduce the poverty rate remain a disappointment to the general public and development practitioners today. As a result of these shortcomings, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) continued to call for greater promotion of human development at the national policy level: protection of human rights, and greater transparency and accountability (Campi 2012). The public was very vocal in the past two election cycles (2012-2013 and 2016-2017) about how they wanted to optimize the spending of mining revenues to alleviate social problems, and their calls boiled down to three key points. They sought to: 1) improve basic social services and housing conditions; 2) reduce inequality in life expectancy and material standards of living, and 3) maintain and protect the environment. To this day, none of these have been realized nor adequately prioritized by any government initiative (Campi 2012).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, from 2009 to mid-2013, Mongolia was experiencing rapid economic growth. The annual GDP surpassed 17 percent, leading to speculations that Mongolia could soon be the new Asian Tiger. The Government, confident in their newfound wealth, began spending on an unprecedented scale in the country's history. Massive infrastructure projects were announced. The Government hosted the Community of Democracies annual forum, to which the researcher of this paper was a delegate. It was even announced that Mongolia had planned to bid to become the host of the Olympics, albeit, for the 2040 Games.

However, these ambitions and spending were short lived. By October 2014, as a result of the deteriorating economic situation in Mongolia, the Parliament demanded the resignation of Prime Minister N. Altankhuyag and his cabinet. Shortly after Altankhuyag's ousting, the newly appointed Prime Minister, Ch. Saikhanbileg, in his first major address to the country, acknowledged the critical situation facing the

economy. During his address, Saikhanbileg announced his support of policies that prioritized the economy first and stated that he aimed to create “a government that can make decisions quickly” (Japan 2016). The Government’s policy on putting the “economy first”, while never formally written, rather a verbal vision, was a response to the collapse of the mining sector within Mongolia. The Government’s aim was to jumpstart the flailing mining sector by focusing on rebuilding trust amongst its investors and other key players.

This policy, as described by Prime Minister Ch. Saikhanbileg during his address, puts the economy at the center of governance. All other policies related to social issues, the environment, etc. were temporarily tabled until the economy begins to recover. Now, this does not mean the Government had completely forsaken all other issues; the Government simply meant that the first point of concern was the economy (McRae 2015). Take for instance, the laws on Gender Equality and Youth Development, both of which are required to have funding under the Mongolian Constitution. However, as the researcher witnessed firsthand during his time working with the UN, the budgets were never passed by Parliament and implementation remains lackluster. Additionally, the Law on Youth Development was particularly established to address the massive underemployment amongst young people and the need for increased skills as many countries in the region, including Mongolia, begin to prepare their youth population for the 4th Industrial Revolution. Whilst Altankhuyag and Saikhanbileg’s Governments are no longer in power, their actions, as well as their 1990’s predecessors’ shock therapy treatments, have had a domino effect that continues today.

While the economic downturn presents pressing challenges, one of the main long-term challenges for Mongolia has been to ensure that growth is inclusive (Parks, 2014). Although Mongolia’s GDP growth has helped to reduce poverty in some areas of the country, it is clear that some are benefiting more than others from Mongolia’s mineral wealth. According to Parks, an advisor from the Asia Foundation, on income inequality and poverty there “is a perception among many people of rising inequality in terms of income distribution, but also in terms of access to opportunities such as a good education, a good job, or just to get decent healthcare” (Parks 2014).

## **IMF bailout and austerity measures**

The 1996 elections and ensuing policy changes can be felt more than 20 years on. The same international advisor and institutions that set Mongolia on its path to “shock therapy” economics are back and demanding austerity measures for a crisis that, in some respects, are their own creation.

*“The new Government [1996] and the foreign groups who had helped it come to power asserted that Mongolia, with its small population of 2.5 million, required no more than a handful of successful economic activities. They were confident that Mongolia’s natural resources, especially its copper, cashmere, and vast herd of livestock, together with a revival of some efficient industries, could foster a productive economy that would eventually translate into improvements in social welfare.” – Rossabi (2005)*

Recent Governments have not deviated much from this path and little has been learned from the past. The ADB-IMF bailouts are eerily reminiscent of policy recommendations, described by Rossabi, during the mid-1990’s.

In mid-2017, after years of economic instability, the International Monetary Fund brokered a deal with the Government of Mongolia in the form of a bailout (Edwards 2017). On May 24<sup>th</sup>, a deal was approved for three-year loan of US\$434.3 million to the Government. The Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, Japan and South Korea also committed support with an additional US\$5 billion loan, while the People's Bank of China agreed to extend a swap line with the Bank of Mongolia (Bayartsogt 2017). Some analysts believe the austerity measures may help stabilize or even shrink public debt levels, preventing a banking crisis, while others predict the full implementation of the program is expected to lead to forty-seven thousand fewer jobs by 2021 (Edwards 2017). Within the framework of this deal, the Government of Mongolia was required to raise taxes on all its citizens, as well as scale back social programs.

Interestingly, in the same Reuters report by Edwards in 2017, the country’s debt crisis was a result of over-optimistic revenue projections based on unrealistic expectations of



mineral sector revenue growth, off-budget spending and a plethora of small infrastructure projects with questionable economic development benefits. It is widely assumed that infrastructure projects are used as a means of corruption, though very few cases have been successfully tried and convicted. All the while, the average citizen is forced to manage austerity, with few public sector job opportunities, higher taxes and reduced social security benefits. Structural readjustments continue to not only impact average Mongolians, but the government's use of austerity to cut down on public spending and reduce staffing at government institutions is seemingly round two of structural adjustment – finishing what was started in the 1990's.

Timeline of economic collapse and austerity	
<b>1989</b>	Mongolia reports highest GDP per capita ever at US\$1,670
<b>Jan 1990</b>	Large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations were held
<b>1993</b>	Mongolia reports lowest GDP per capita in a generation at US\$339
<b>Oct 2011</b>	Government of Mongolia and Ivanhoe Mines agree to the construction and operation of the Oyu Tolgoi Mine <sup>4</sup>
<b>Jan 2013</b>	Mongolia is one of the fastest growing economies in the world at 17.3% growth
<b>June 2013</b>	Government and Parliament express public displeasure to the Oyu Tolgoi agreement
<b>July 2013</b>	Oyu Tolgoi ships its' first batch of copper
<b>July 2013</b>	Laws and policies on direct foreign investment are revised
<b>Aug 2013</b>	Rio Tinto cuts 1,700 jobs and halts underground exploration, economy begins to hemorrhage investments
<b>Oct 2013</b>	43 percent of direct foreign leaves the country – economy in a tailspin
<b>Oct 2014</b>	Prime Minister announces the economy must come first
<b>Feb 2015</b>	Country says “No” to austerity measures via text message
<b>May 2017</b>	Mongolia receives IMF bailout
<b>Sept 2017</b>	UN claims budget cuts resulted in increase in maternal mortality, disproportionately impacting the poor
<b>Oct 2017</b>	UN and World Bank announce poverty levels now 1 in 3

Source: Reuters (2017) & China Daily (2013)

<sup>4</sup> [The Mongolian Mining Journal Reported](#) that a long-term Investment Agreement signed between Ivanhoe Mines and the Government of Mongolia at a state ceremony in Ulaanbaatar on October 6, 2011 established a comprehensive framework for the construction and operation of the Oyu Tolgoi copper-gold mining complex in Mongolia's South Gobi Region. This mine is considered the world's largest copper-gold mine with a value of more than one trillion USD.

Some may find it somewhat ironic that the same institutions – ADB and IMF – that heavily advocated for the reduction of Mongolia’s social safety net, in the early 1990’s, claiming that the neoliberal economic model would create growth and jobs, thus reducing the dependency on the government, is once again requiring the government to slash public spending. This attack on the government spending may be the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back, as the social safety net infrastructure had been severely hampered during the 90’s transition. Some of these cuts, it could be argued, had deadly and life altering consequences. An example of the consequences of austerity, and a prelude to the next chapter on structural violence, was the reduction in the budget for the procurement and distribution of conception was cut. Thus, according to the UN Population Fund, there was a 50% increase in maternal mortality in 2016 (Tali 2017). After pressure from civil society and UNFPA, the Government increased its procurement and distribution of contraception in 2017. As a result, the currently available data confirms that the maternal mortality rate dropped back to 2015 levels during 2017 (Tali 2017).

Compounding this is limited ability for citizens, particularly those living in the ger districts, to access affordable financing. Accessing home loans in Mongolia is extremely challenging if you’re not from a solidly middle-class family where your relatives have assets or you are a seasonal laborer or working freelance in some manner. Since the austerity measures went into effect, interest rates have been raised to 19% and higher. The government also put strict limitations on those that can access the 8% loans, requiring individuals to work in the same job for at least a year. For all of the families that the researcher spoke to during this research, this is nearly an impossible task for them. As for financing for entrepreneurial endeavors, the bedrock of neoliberalism, this is just as challenging. Nearly six years ago, according to the World Bank, bottlenecks to accessing finance for small businesses was extremely difficult, particularly for the lower middle class. These thoughts may seem a bit out of place but when you look at it from a perspective of exclusions – from healthcare, schools and now finance – a pattern begins to unfold.

*While financial intermediation in Mongolia has been growing fast, access to finance remains a constraint for enterprises, and especially for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The Enterprise Survey shows that access to finance is the most important constraint amongst the top 10 constraints reported by firms. MSMEs contribute 25 percent of GDP and employ half of the workforce in Mongolia. However, they lack favorable financing conditions that would enable them to expand operations and contribute to further growth. MSME credit is characterized by relatively high interest rates, short loan maturities, relatively small loan sizes, and predominantly immovable collateral-based lending requirements. On the supply side, banks are constrained by the short maturity structure of deposits and the shortage of other funding sources with longer maturities. –(World\_Bank 2012)*

Although the economy is touted as the government's highest priority, it does seem that this focus serves to benefit only a select few. In addition, the austerity measures are indicative of the assumed beliefs that the economy will lift people out of poverty, but more than 20 years of practice have yet to produce these results. The country's leaders have now turned their policy gaze towards the economy/extractive sector and away from the spoon that has fed the entire population for millennia. What troubles many herders and countryside residents is the fact that their livelihood accounts for more than 80 per cent of the gross agriculture product within the sector that is contributing 30 per cent of the country's GDP (Shagdar 2017). This begs the question, why use structural adjustments or austerity on 30% of your GDP? Classic neo-liberalism might consider the herders not just as part of the population, but a valuable commodity. Could it be the interest in mining is self-serving to those in power? Or maybe this is just simply malgovernanace. This is a research topic within itself but deserves some pause for thought.

The neo-liberal structural adjustment of the 1990's had lasting impact on the people and it persists to this day. In 2016, the population of Ulaanbaatar stood at nearly 1.3 million. A breakdown of the data, provided by the National Statistics Office (NSO), shows that nearly 60 percent of the urban population resided in ger districts due to the

increasing costs of apartment options and an inability to access financing (NSO, 2016). Despite the relative growth during peak years within the past decade, job creation in Mongolia only increased by 11 percent mainly because the mining industry is not labor intensive (Singh 2017). Additionally, adult unemployment rate stands at 7.3 percent (NSO, 2016) but this is widely regarded as an underestimate, with informal estimates putting it at 12 per cent. However, Mongolia has a unique opportunity, similar to Japan nearly 30 years ago, as the country is currently experiencing a population dividend.

Mongolia is experiencing a demographic dividend with more than 60 percent of the population under the age of 25, and the Government of Mongolia has an opportunity to invest in its young people, thus bolstering an able-bodied workforce for decades to come (Barter, 2013). Unfortunately, the youth unemployment rate is close to 25 percent, with youth underemployment estimated to be higher than 40 percent and 50 percent of young people are still relying on a parent to support them (Barter, 2013). Mongolia's economy and current development challenges are interlinked with its nomadic livelihoods, geography and extreme climate. With a culture deeply rooted in history and respect for its nature, the Mongolian traditions still significantly influence the day-to-day life of most of the population. By harnessing the economic engine of young people, Mongolia could still realize their dream of becoming an East-Asian Tiger. But there needs to be significant political will for change in order for this opportunity to be realized. It's good to remember that the business leaders and entrepreneurs of tomorrow are sitting in high schools across Mongolia, eager to learn and someday transform their country into the economic power the country is striving towards.

And while the agriculture sector is not facing an economic crisis per se, it's worth noting that almost 30 per cent of Mongolia's grassland biomass production has been lost over the past 40 years (Vernooy 2011). At the same time, the Gobi Desert, which dominates the southern half of the country, has been steadily expanding north at a pace of 150 kilometers every 20 years (Vernooy 2011). Take for instance Tsogttsetsii Soum, located in Umnugovi Aimag (province), which is home to three major, multi-national mining companies: Erdenes Tavan Tolgoi, Energy Resources, and Tavan Tolgoi Joint Stock

Company. Over the last decade, Tsogttsetsii has grown rapidly, mainly with transient populations (drivers, mining staff, their families, etc.) moving into the area seeking career opportunities. However, according to the Tsogttsetsii Governor's Office, the number of herders in Tsogttsetsii has dropped significantly from 378 households in 2008 to 232 in 2013. It is extremely likely these families have relocated to Ulaanbaatar, specifically to the sprawling ger districts. Prior to 1990's structural adjustments, a different approach to shock-therapy might have better planned to meet the needs of the communities before the mines began operations.



## CHAPTER 3: Structural Violence

*This chapter will show how neoliberal policies – structural adjustments and shock-therapy – affected Mongolia’s culture and economy. Since the transition to the free-market economy, Mongolia has struggled to root out poverty from the countryside to the urban centers. In fact, poverty has continued to hover between 21 percent and 30 percent for nearly two decades, with the largest proportion of the poor residing in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar. This chapter uses Johan Galtung’s Theory of Structural Violence to explore how neoliberalism economics have resulted in structural violence towards the ger district community in Ulaanbaatar. It’s important to point out that the ger districts are not slums nor are the residents squatters. They have the right to live in these areas which is guaranteed by the Mongolian Constitution. However, limited investment in services, infrastructure, and other areas have left ger dwellers in the capital with limited opportunities for advancement. All the while, the Government has poured nearly 3 billion USD into the Rio Tinto owned copper and gold mine in the south of the country. This raises questions on whether or not neoliberalism is only a talking point when it comes to public services and not the market itself. This chapter is broken into 4 areas, the:*

- 1) *Conceptual framework;*
- 2) *Operationalizing Galtung’s theory to fit Mongolia’s context;*
- 3) *Understanding the implications of the Economy First Policy; and*
- 4) *Human Rights and Evidence of Structural Violence.*

### Conceptual framework

This research claims that citizens living in the ger districts are experiencing structural violence due to disproportionately higher morbidity and mortality rates as a result of air pollution, limited basic social services and restricted access to healthcare facilities. By extension, this violence is the result of or influenced by vast inequality which is the aggregated consequence of structural readjustments, poor governance, and exclusion of poor communities from meaningful civic participation, As depicted below,

following the writings of Therborn (2005), a foundation of exclusion spurs inequality and poverty, thus resulting in a lower quality of life and higher morbidity and mortality rates. All of these injustices when stacked on one another paint a picture of structural violence. One tool in which to validate Johan Galtung’s structural violence in Ulaanbaatar’s ger districts is through measuring multidimensional poverty. According to the UNDP, multi-dimensional poverty is critically important because it is more than simply economic measures of deprivations. Using an analysis of multidimensional poverty by World Bank Economist Gayatri Singh (2017) as well as supporting evidence from other sources and key informants, this research will use their findings and stories as a window into how poverty and exclusion - in all its dimensions – is disproportionately impacting ger district communities in Ulaanbaatar and thus leading to structural violence.

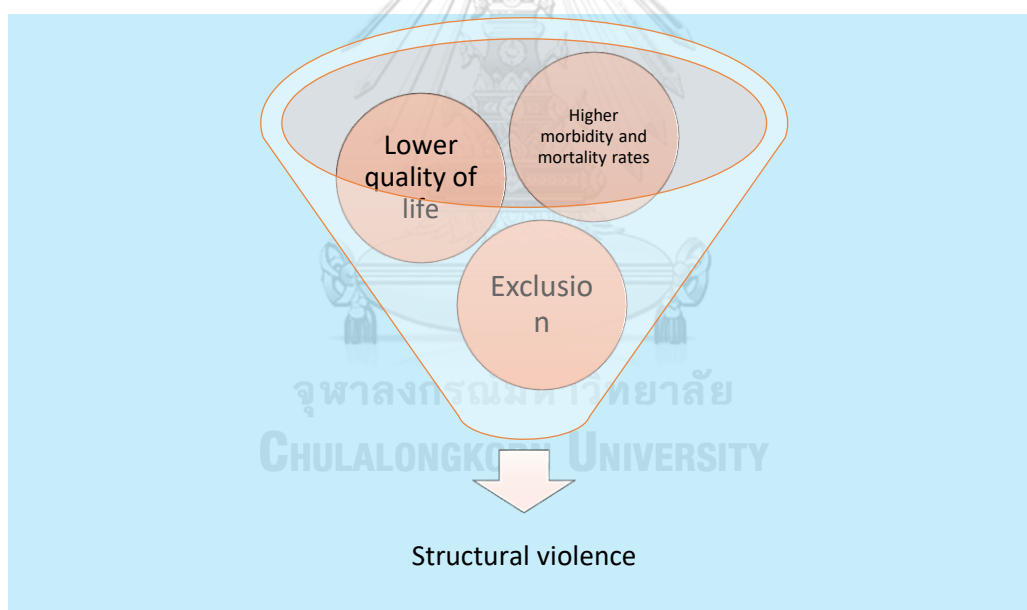


Figure 2.1: Conceptual framework on the structural violence facing the ger district community

## Galtung’s structural violence in Mongolia's context

By the simplest definition, Mongolia is classified as a “peaceful” country. Peace is usually referring to the absences of war, but peace involves more than simply a society without armed conflict. This traditional thinking of peace is also very misleading as when we often think of peace, we may also assume harmony exists in that society .

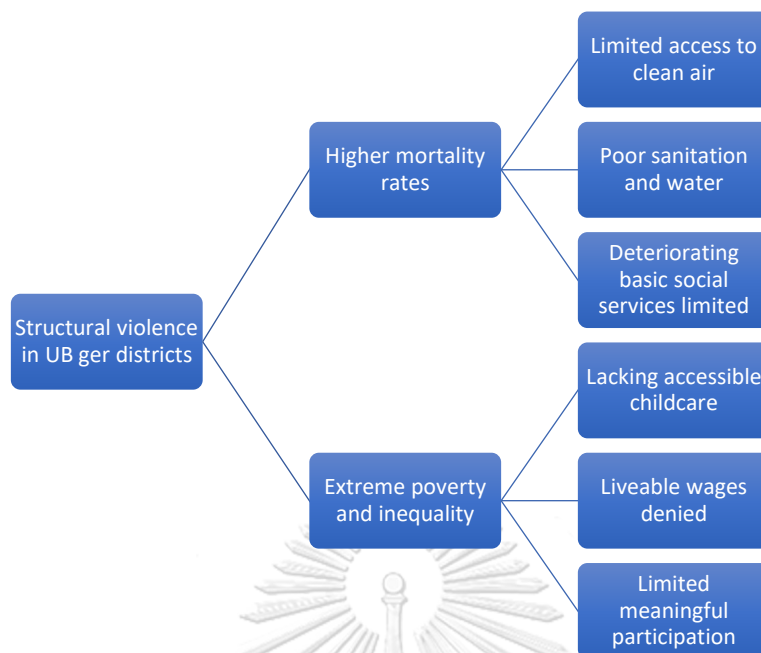
When defining violence, people tend to view it as actions of force – a military acting

against its people, a police officer shooting an unarmed black man, or oppression of an ethnic group. Still, violence is more complex and deeper than how most would define. For instance, when the actual is unavoidable, then violence is not present even if the actual is at a very low level (Galtung, 1969). Thus, if a person died from tuberculosis in the eighteenth century it would be hard to conceive of this as violence since it might have been quite unavoidable, but if he dies from it today, despite all of the medical resources in the world, then violence is present according to Galtung's (1969) definition. Correspondingly, the case of people dying from earthquakes today would not warrant an analysis in terms of violence, but if they died in the days following the earthquake due to lack of water, sanitation, or other preventable illnesses, such deaths may be seen as the result of violence.

As such, this research has found that structural violence, caused by neo-liberal structural adjustment, is widespread and unacknowledged, but more importantly, it's layered. Multidimensional poverty rates amongst the ger districts in Ulaanbaatar is extremely high. By some matrices, it's two or three times the rate of those living in apartment buildings. As well, resources have been unevenly distributed for decades, as income distributions are heavily skewed, quality access to education unevenly distributed, equitable medical services are limited, and environmental health threatens the most vulnerable. Whilst there is no one individual that has created this structure of violence and inequality, the violence is none the less built into the structure of Mongolian society, specifically within the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, where unequal power and poverty has consequently led to unequal life chances for residents .

The 1990's shock-therapy gives us the methods for which structural violence was established. While Multidimensional poverty measures give us the window from which to view the structures that impede on the lives of ger district residents. Poor planning and corruption, as well as lacking in political will, are motivating factors that leads to structural violence. These measures and perspectives are the channels for which these challenges can be understood and addressed.





*The breakdown of structural violence amongst ger district residents*

## **Understanding the rationale and impact of the Economic First Policy and the role of stakeholders in policy making**

The Economic First policies were continued neo-liberal structural adjustments under the belief that the economy, without evidence by this point, would fill the gaps of the government if more investment could come into the country. As well, there are several important factors that have led to the disenfranchisement and marginalization of Mongolia's internal migrants: the enrichment of political elites, corruption and related forms of mis-governance, rise of income inequality since the 1990's, limited leadership with strong ties to herding lifestyles, limited access to basic social services, assumption that ger district citizens are uneducated, the mining boom of the 2010's, among others (Vernooy 2011).

As well, V. Enkhtamir, a leading land rights lawyer in Mongolia, the sale of public land to the private sector does correlate with the actual value of the land. He explained that was witnessed during the attempted sale of a plot of land near the city square to wealthy Arab-Mongolian. The public bidding, which is required under law, took the price of the land up to nearly 13 million USD. Enkhtamir explained that this is the true value of the land and many of the other land sales related, do not follow the same, required under

the law, due diligence. Many of the sales of public land are not known. sale of public land remains quite low. The Government was able to raise one-third of the 5.3 billion USD necessary for the second phase of the underground exploration of the Oyu Tolgoi mining. This tells us that they have the capabilities to raise resources and the means – i.e. appropriate taxation and public sales of land. Additionally, commendable laws are in place that are not appropriately budgeted for, though required by the Constitution. For instance, the laws on gender equality and youth development, in principle, go a long way to support those, within their respective demographics.

*“In order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, Mongolia has to start giving attention to demographic issues and giving and spending money for social and environmental aspects of the SDGs. The SDGs have three pillars: economic, social and environmental. Right now the Government has really focusing on the economic side of development, which is quite understandable, but they can’t continue to work like this in the future. They have to invest more in human development. The creation and passing of the youth development law goes a long way in doing just that. The beauty of this law is that they look at all aspects of people’s daily life: employment, education, health, life skills. So everything is looked at [under this law] in a comprehensive way. There’s also a line in the law that establishes a youth development fund, so young people will have access to funding opportunities for development.” – A. Iliza, UNFPA Assistant Representative and national expert on reproductive health and rights (June 7, 2018).*

As Iliza, quoted above, points out, Mongolia has some progressive laws in place that would address structural inequalities and help to lift people out of poverty. Enkhtamir also points out that selling land at its true value could help to fund those laws and policies. However, corruption is likely the key culprit as many of the country’s decision-makers are not only from the wealthy class, but from the super elite. Addressing these challenges, raised by Iliza and Enkhtamir are goals that are not complex, nor challenging, therefore not impossible to attain. Thus making peace an

attainable reality, with proper investment and resource mobilization, for the ger districts dwellers.

Therefore, evidence suggests that policies and practices of past governments<sup>5</sup> have resulted in structural and cultural violence against the internal migrants making their way to Ulaanbaatar for a better life. This “policy on putting the “economy first” – established under the now deposed Prime Minister Saikhanbileg – was, and is, indicative of the mind-set of the ruling elite. This policy, and coupled with others, has led to the disempowerment and disenfranchisement of rural migrants that have arrived on the doorsteps of UB. The former Prime Minister, in 2015, made it clear that his government’s focus would have to be on the economy, stating, “we must focus on reigniting confidence in national and foreign investment” (McRae 2015). Begging the question, **how have current development challenges and trends by the Government of Mongolia led to structures of violence against the Ulaanbaatar’s ger district residents?**

Johan Galtung defines cultural violence as the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that we have been taught since childhood and that surround us in daily life about the power and necessity of violence (Galtung 1969). In Mongolia, we see cultural violence as a path from inclusion to isolation with neoliberal structural adjustments to blame. While defining structural violence when groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc are assumed to have, and in fact do have, more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc, and this unequal advantage is built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world (Galtung 1969). As we can see in the rise of poverty, particularly for herders, or former herders now living in the ger districts.

There are many important factors, as previously mentioned that have led to the disenfranchisement and marginalization, resulting in social injustices, of the residents of the ger districts: the rise of political elites, corruption and related forms of mis-

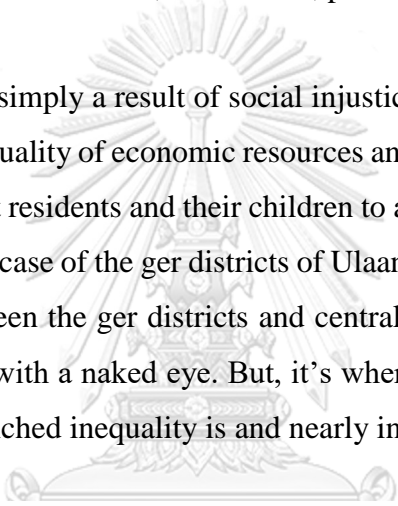
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<sup>5</sup> At the time that this thesis was written, the GoM changed three times. Therefore, this thesis has focused on previous governments.

governance, rising poverty rates, poor sanitation, limited access to health, among others (Vernooy 2011).

Since the fall of the Mongolian Socialist State, pressure by the elite to buy into the market-based economy has been significant. While social inclusion or assimilation is practiced by many governments, even supported by international development agencies, the transition from a nomadic sense of inclusion versus that of modern day neo-liberalism is vastly different. As current social inclusion thinking has missed a number of insights related to culture, livelihoods, poverty and inequity (Jackson 1999).

Economic inequality is simply a result of social injustices, economic squandering, and political distortion. Inequality of economic resources and their political deployment has relegated the ger district residents and their children to a life of poverty and poor health (Therborn 2014). In the case of the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, visually speaking, there is a stark contrast between the ger districts and central residents. You can clearly see the rampant inequality with a naked eye. But, it's when you speak the people is when you realized how entrenched inequality is and nearly insurmountable it has become.



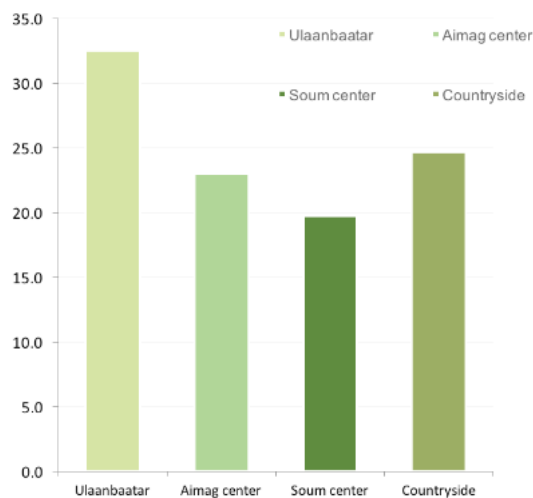
*Economic progress has also come to some extent at the expense of environmental degradation. Mongolia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change on earth. Over the past 70 years, its average temperatures have increased by more than 2°C, already exceeding the limit the world is trying to avoid, and rising by almost three times than the global average. Climate-related disasters, such as droughts and dzuds, are putting greater strains on herding communities and threatening rural livelihoods. This has led to more migration to Ulaanbaatar and as a result, greater air, water and soil pollution. Without adequate housing, families in ger districts must resort to burning coal during winter that can lead to air pollution in some ger districts more than 30 times the WHO safe limit, raising serious concerns for human health. – Statement by Beate Trankmann, UN Resident Coordinator in*

*Mongolia during a meeting with the National Statistics Office on August 28(Trankmann 2018).*

## **Multidimensional poverty and structural violence**

*Results of the analysis (utilizing qualitative weighting) show that overall 23.4 percent of population of Ulaanbaatar can be categorized as multidimensional poor. However, multidimensional poverty is consistently higher and more intense among ger residents and this result is robust regardless of the levels of cut-off applied. Using the analysis mentioned, 39.5 percent of ger residents are poor as compared to only 17.8 percent of non-ger residents. In other words, a person living in ger strata is twice as likely to be multidimensional poor as compared to someone living in non-ger strata. – Gayatri Singh, World Bank Economist (2017; p.45).*

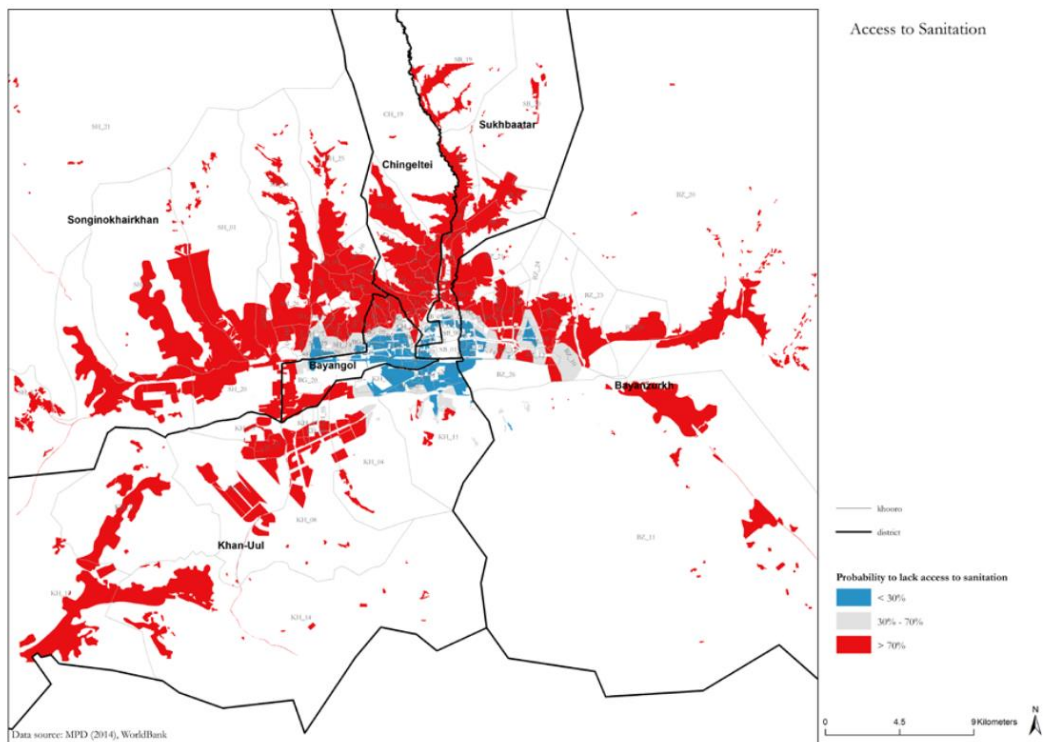
Not all cases of poverty are due to structural violence. However, in the case of the ger district dwellers of Ulaanbaatar, poverty and exclusion are contributing dimensions of structural violence. Ger dwellers make-up the majority of urban poor, receive fewer benefits, and are often unable to access services. Their life of poverty, like so many others, is multifaceted and multidimensional, as their poverty is more than merely a lowness of income (Sen 2001). An analysis conducted by World Bank economist Singh (2017) of the National Statistical Office's Household Socio-Economic Surveys, or HSES, from 2010, 2012 and 2014 found that the poverty in Ulaanbaatar is highest amongst households living in Gers. Within the context of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, has the highest proportion of people living in poverty at 33 percent of the country's poor (see graph below) (Singh 2017). It is likely this figure has increased as poverty levels have risen, as previously mentioned, to 1 in 3 in 2016.



*The Distribution of the poor by locations: 2010-2014 (Source: World Bank, 2016)*

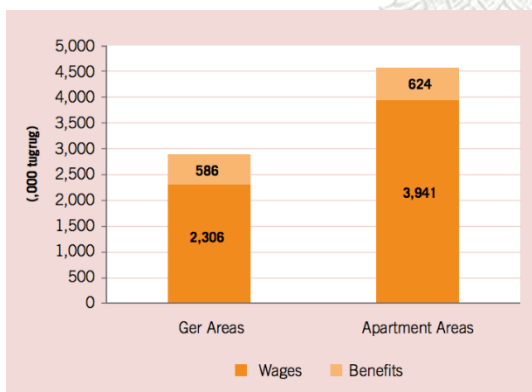
*Retrieved from: Singh, 2017; p 21*

Again, multidimensional poverty is not only the measure of income. For instance, three times more ger residents are deprived in the education dimension as compared to non-ger residents, which includes primary or less than primary educational attainment and 98 percent of ger district residents are also deprived of a close water source, as compared to apartment dwellers at 42 percent respectively (Singh 2017). The ger dwellers' anguish is a result of their multidimensional poverty and the structures in which they are trapped within because of their inability to access their basic rights as people and citizens.



*Access to Sanitation Services (Singh, 2017; p 55)*

Access to basic social services continues to be raised because it shows that ger dwellers



*Average Incomes, Including Wages and Benefits ((Kamata, et al., 2010, page 8)*

in Ulaanbaatar have significantly more challenges accessing those services than their peers living in apartments within the city center. This also holds true in terms of supplemental income. The World Bank’s 2010 study, *Enhancing Policies and Practices for Ger Area Development*

*in Ulaanbaatar’* found that while ger district residence were predominantly

the recipients of benefits the apartment dwellers received on average 38 USD more per annum. This is on top of an already wide salary gap between apartment dwellers that is nearly twice that of the ger dwellers (see left table). In the table below, it clearly demonstrates as well how poverty has continued to fall amongst apartment dwellers, while poverty amongst the ger district community continues to rise.

	POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATE			DISTRIBUTION OF THE POOR			DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION		
	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014	2010	2012	2014
<b>Gender</b>									
Male	29.1	19.0	14.3	70.2	76.7	67.9	75.4	80.4	77.7
Female	37.8	23.7	23.6	29.8	23.3	32.1	24.6	19.6	22.3
<b>Education</b>									
Less than primary	66.8	50.0	64.0	1.5	2.3	2.5	0.7	0.9	0.6
Completed primary	50.8	32.3	23.8	5.6	4.8	2.9	3.4	3.0	2.0
Lower secondary	50.9	36.9	36.1	17.2	22.1	18.5	10.6	11.9	8.4
Upper secondary	36.8	24.4	23.9	49.5	50.6	44.2	42.2	41.3	30.3
Vocational training	21.2	17.9	17.1	19.0	11.8	24.0	28.2	13.1	23.1
Degree or Diploma	15.4	5.6	3.7	7.3	8.3	7.9	14.8	29.8	35.5
<b>Housing Type</b>									
Gers	58.5	40.8	37.7	44.2	53.4	57.5	23.6	26.0	25.0
Apartments	10.3	3.4	0.6	10.6	5.5	1.5	32.1	32.3	38.4
Detached House or Flat	32.8	19.8	17.7	43.9	37.6	36.7	41.9	37.9	34.0
Other	17.5	17.6	27.2	1.4	3.4	4.3	2.4	3.9	2.6
<b>Employment Status</b>									
Wage - public sector	24.7	11.6	10.8	10.9	7.0	8.5	13.9	12.0	12.9
Wage - private sector	30.7	21.1	16.4	35.4	44.3	44.0	36.3	41.8	44.0
Family business - non-agric	17.5	12.4	11.6	6.4	8.6	9.7	11.6	13.8	13.7
Herders and farmers	43.4	21.9	2.6	0.8	1.4	0.1	0.6	1.3	0.9
Unemployed	41.1	39.6	33.6	5.6	4.5	6.5	4.3	2.3	3.2
Inactive	38.5	23.6	20.3	40.8	34.2	31.1	33.4	28.8	25.2
<b>Income Source</b>									
Agriculture	64.2	16.9	2.9	0.9	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.6	0.8
Public sector wages	24.2	11.3	12.8	14.2	8.5	12.5	18.3	15.0	16.0
Private sector wages	35.2	21.7	17.5	56.8	54.4	56.1	50.3	49.9	52.7
Household business	24.1	12.7	10.5	9.2	7.2	8.4	11.9	11.2	13.2
Social transfers	37.3	28.3	26.0	16.2	27.8	20.2	13.6	19.5	12.7
Remittances	17.8	12.6	10.7	2.7	1.4	1.8	4.7	2.3	2.8
Capital income	3.7	2.2	7.2	0.1	0.2	0.8	0.8	1.4	1.8
Total	31.2	19.9	16.4	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

*Poverty by household head's characteristics, Ulaanbaatar (Singh,2017)*

## The Right to Breathe: Health and structural violence

*The city faces several key challenges in ensuring broad access to basic services. Demand for social services generally exceeds supply, leading to overcrowding and poorer quality of services. Furthermore, health clinics and schools are in some cases inefficiently located in areas with less demand, while the areas with higher demand are not adequately served. The high demand for limited space in schools and clinics raises opportunities for*



*bribery. The poorest residents who have less money to pay bribes or offer gifts to direct service providers are either excluded or only able to obtain a lower level of service. – Gayatri Singh, World Bank Economist (2017)*

On air pollution, the current situation is an apocalyptic scenario that was unimaginable decades ago. The air pollution disproportionately affects those living in the ger districts, as the highest rates are concentrated in and around the ger areas. This is because of the harsh winter climate and vast 'ger district', where people live in tents and burn coal to stay warm – a traditional lifestyle that works in the countryside but not in a dense urban environment. Shockingly, on 30 January 2018, air pollution exceeded 133 times the international safe limit set by the World Health Organization (UNICEF 2018). The measurement was taken at a monitoring station at Baruun 4 zam where PM2.5 pollution reached 3,320 micrograms per cubic meter (UNICEF 2016). The elderly and children are seriously affected by air pollution, particularly those living in ger areas. According to UNICEF in Mongolia, reducing the effects of air pollution on children is in desperate need of political commitment to ensure resources are allocated for research into its health impacts, adopting an effective regulatory framework, as well as to evaluate the impact of policies on air quality (UNICEF 2016). UNICEF and partners have found strong statistical correlations between ambient air pollutants and spontaneous abortion in Ulaanbaatar as well as uncovering significant associations of air pollution in Ulaanbaatar with low birth weight in full-term births (see figure 2 below). According to UNICEF and WHO, respiratory infection is the second leading cause of infant and under-five mortality in Mongolia, accounting for 15 per cent of infant deaths in children under 5 (UNICEF 2016).

Mongolia is a party to several global human rights instruments including the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) and the [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#). Also, as previously mentioned, Mongolia has enshrined human rights within its [Constitution](#), with specific mentions of Human Rights seven times. Yet, the right to a standard of living adequate for health is violated by UB's air pollution. Many families living within the ger districts in Ulaanbaatar are without access to sanitation, running water or central heating, adding to water, soil and air

pollution within the ger districts. Many residents there burn coal to keep warm, contributing to 80 percent of Ulaanbaatar's winter emissions. In one of the city's ger districts during December last year, air pollution exceeded 60 times the World Health Organization's safe limit. That's three times above Beijing's threshold for declaring a 'Red Alert' for smog. It also exceeds recent levels in Dhaka and Mumbai (see Air Quality Index image below), making Ulaanbaatar's winter air potentially the most hazardous on earth (Trankmann 2018).

	Major Cities	US AQI
1	 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	971
2	 Dhaka, Bangladesh	335
3	 Lahore, Pakistan	257
4	 Kolkata, India	242
5	 Mumbai, India	211
6	 Krasnoyarsk, Russia	210
7	 Kathmandu, Nepal	176

*Source: AQI Air USA, February 2018*

Though outdoor temperatures hover around -30 degrees Celsius, Mongolian gers are warm, very warm as a result of a roaring fire and insulated with thick layers of felt. They are, however, not air tight. In other words, the hot air easily escapes and outside air easily flows into the ger. So in the world's most polluted city from November to March, this results in the ger district dwellers literally inhaling toxins for months inside their very homes. The fundamental human right to health and wellbeing is impossible when you're suffocating in the very space you should be safe. The consequences of this are very real and life threatening.

According to the UN and other development agencies, the health costs for the elderly, children, and pregnant women are especially great, **with 3.5 times more miscarriages** during winter, as well as recurring lung infections and reduced lung function for children here (UNICEF 2018). The World Bank also estimates, **2,424 people (children**

**and adults**) died due to air pollution in 2013 – a welfare loss equal to 6.9% of the country's GDP. The National Program for Reducing Air & Environmental Pollution will cost an estimated USD 4.1 billion, or USD 450 million per year, about 4.1% of GDP, but has secured **only 4.5% of the total funding needed over 8 years** (Trankmann 2018).

According to the UN Resident Coordinator in Mongolia, the actions to reduce air pollution in UB have not been as effective as hoped, due to poor monitoring and a slowdown in efforts throughout 2015-2016.

*The budget allocated specifically to reducing air pollution in 2017 was also lower than the average over the last six years. Based on the Government of Mongolia's current plans and the realities on the ground, it will likely take years before Ulaanbaatar's air is safe to breathe – Beate Trankmann, UN Resident Coordinator (2018)*

Civil society organizations, such as the Ger Community Mapping Center, Lantuun Dohio and Women for Change NGO have raised concerns on the investments in combatting air pollution, as it relates to their specific thematic areas. For instance, in 2015, Women for Change and other women's rights NGO raised concerns about the Government's pronatalist policies – a policy aimed at increasing the population of the country by encouraging women to have more children – when the physical environment was not conducive to children's health, amongst other issues. To voice their concern at the highest level, Lantuun Dohio representatives met with the Mongolian Prime Minister in 2018 for the first time. During the meeting, Lantuun Dohio advocated for a ban on raw coal and subsidize improved coal within Ulaanbaatar by 2019 and to begin seriously exploring renewable energy sources as an option away from coal. According to Lantuun Dohio's Facebook page, the Prime Minister promised to ban raw coal and offer affordable, cleaner alternatives by the end of 2019.

The map below, provided by the Ger Community Mapping Centre – a local NGO working with ger district communities and local governments to identify issues and solutions – demonstrates a child's 1.6 KM walk to and from school. The walk to school,

in the morning tracks air pollution levels that reach over 300 PM2.5 during the 26 minute walk to school. During the afternoon walk back to the child's home, PM2.5 hovers around 100 PM2.5, but still reaches over 300 PM2.5 in some areas. This means, even the walk to school and at home in the ger, the child is surrounded by toxic fumes air. The long-term consequences are only now coming to the surface.

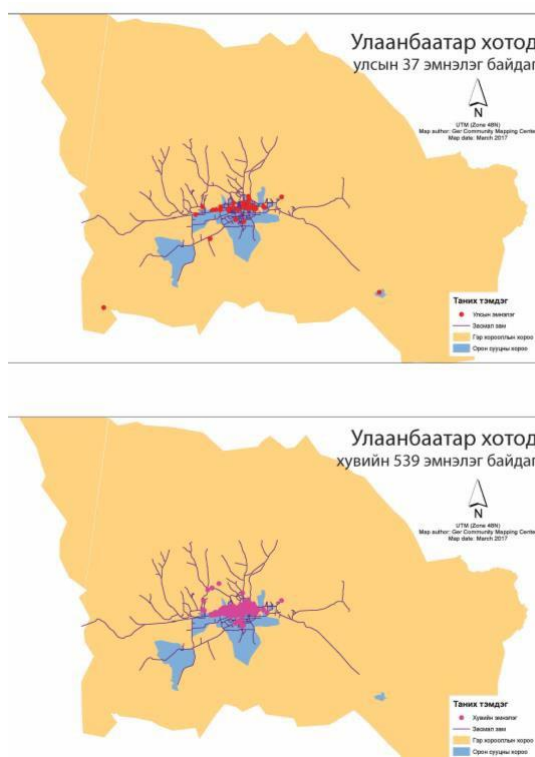
Though the high rates of air pollution alone are enough to cause concern, it's also extremely troubling the level of inequality when it comes to accessible services such as hospitals, pharmacies, schools, and access to clean water and sanitation. In the ger districts, as previously mentioned, quality roads and easy access to services is extremely challenging.

In the city center, public transportation, such as buses and trolleys, are cheap and readily available. However, in the ger districts, they are rarely convenient. As a result, ger district residents are forced to walk in heavy pollution or pay higher fees for transportation by taking a private taxi. Kamata, et al. (2010) claimed that Mongolia has far too many hospitals – 23.4 hospitals per 100,000 people – which is more than twice the average in the European Union and other transition economies but community maps tell a different story in terms of equitable access (Kamata, et al. 2010).

According to the Ger Community Mapping Center rural-to-urban migrants are particularly vulnerable. They have found that many of the migrants in the ger districts are unregistered due to a ban on migration to the capital city. Due to this ban and that they are unregistered, they cannot vote, access healthcare, or send their children to public schools without paying a bribe.

*In Ulaanbaatar, there is a segregation between access to services and many other things between the different areas of the city. The city is rapidly urbanizing – the ger areas and apartment areas situations are very different. So we're trying to showcase the difference between the ger and apartment areas through community, participatory mapping. – Ch. Enkhtulga, Ger Community Mapping Center*

Furthermore, according to the Ger Community Mapping Center’s findings, access to hospitals and pharmacies are significantly limited as shown on the map below. The clusters of pink squares represents primary and secondary hospitals respectively. In the north, you’ll see “road lines” where no hospitals are located, but thousands of ger dwellers live near and around those roads, respectively.



*Distribution of hospitals (top) and pharmacies (bottom) in Ulaanbaatar. Source: Ger Community Mapping Center, 2018*

As a result of many of these actions, more specifically the Government’s policy on putting the “economy first”, the citizens within the ger district have witnessed increased inequalities. As well, though no disaggregated data exists, has resulted in higher rates of air pollution, poverty, access to basic social services, and poor sanitation, among others, could result in higher morbidity and mortality for the residents living in the ger areas of Ulaanbaatar. The growing inequality and poverty rates in the ger areas is extremely disconcerting.

Higher mortality rates, though not desegregated, is another forgone conclusion. As UNICEF pointed out in its 2016 report, the high rates of under 5 child mortality has a disproportionate impact on children, and their families, within the ger districts. Due to

poor policies and practices, availability to the most basic social services thousands have been excluded or face significant barriers to gain access.. One such respondent explained:

*The location of our home is just over the boundary for the other district. For my neighbors across the road, the district office and hospital are very close. For us, it's so far. It's difficult for us to reach the district authorities. Just to go to the hospital for our baby, due to mountains being in the way, we have to walk to the bus stop and then travel over 10 kilometers by bus to our district hospital. We could walk over the mountain, but it's very far and can be difficult in the winter with a baby. Basically, we have to travel around the entire city just to go to the district's office (n=SD11).*

According to Kamata, et al., and as demonstrated by the maps provided by the Ger Community Mapping Center, the provision of health services in Ulaanbaatar is inequitable and favors the non-poor areas of the city (Kamata, et al., 2010 page 79) UNICEF (2018) draws a similar conclusion and raises concerns about access to not only health care services, but the lack of access to other essential services in the ger districts.

*Despite laws, regulations, and policies that underscore the importance of Primary Health Care Centers (PHC), financial support for public health has been insufficient. PHC is known to receive only around 5.5 percent of total health funding; the hospital sector, by contrast, continues to account for about two thirds of the state health budget. The lack of health care quality and investment in infrastructure, facilities, and equipment are also well illustrated in the three ger areas. PHCs in the ger areas face problems in keeping up with the demand placed on the services. Each khoroo has one or two PHCs and the ratio of patients to doctors is high compared to a similar PHC in apartment areas. Due to limited budget allocations, the facilities in the areas are reported to have outdated equipment and are under-staffed, with less than ten staff per facility, including part-time workers. The health clinics in remote ger areas, in*

*particular, tend to be over-crowded given the lack of alternatives that residents have for primary health providers. – Kamata, et al. (2010; page 79)*

Kamata, et al., (2010 page 79)) and UNICEF (2018), as well as during this research, found that although there is no hard data is publicly available, many community representatives – including some residents themselves – expressed concern that an increasing number of poor households do not have access to health services because they lack civil registration and are therefore not officially entitled to free health and education services or other social welfare benefits, nor are they eligible to register for the social health insurance scheme ). These claims are concerning as airborne particulate matter is a critical pollutant responsible for negative health outcomes, such as respiratory illnesses, premature death, and restricted activity days. This implies a severe impact on both human health costs and economic costs to the society (UNICEF 2018). In 2016 Ulaanbaatar surpassed both New Delhi and Beijing as the capital with the highest levels of air pollution in the world.



*Young girl walk to school in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia / Photo Credit: UNICEF Mongolia*

*The level of fine particle concentration is often used as a proxy for measuring air pollution and its impact on health. PM<sub>2.5</sub> can penetrate deep into the lungs and has been found to have strong links to a variety of health problems. The current WHO guideline for PM<sub>2.5</sub> is set at 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for the annual mean. In Ulaanbaatar, the average concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> in 2016 was 256 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, more than 25 times the WHO guideline for the annual mean concentration. The*

*average fine PM2.5 detected in the ger districts is considerably higher. Furthermore, there is a large seasonal element to air pollution in Ulaanbaatar, with high concentrations between the months of November and March. This spike in air pollution is mainly due to increased combustion of coal and biomass, as well as the usage of heat-only boilers in the ger districts. The city's location (in a valley surrounded by mountains) and the lack of air movement during the winter further aggravates the situation (UNICEF 2018)*

Structural violence and injustice is not inevitable in developing countries. Policy and decision-makers taking the time to listen and respond to the challenges their constituents face would be a significant first step in reducing inequalities and improving lives. Yet, when a majority of respondents in during this research felt that there's 'no point' in speaking with local authorities because they don't listen or care, something is broken.

*"I've observed that miscarriages are more common from November to January, when toxin levels in the air are higher. It seems like if you get pregnant within those three months, it's not possible to carry to full term. Our government encourages women to have more babies, but they don't pay attention to how and if the children come out healthy. At the moment, the influx of migrants, along with their gers and stoves, is not stopping. And there is little infrastructure in place to help women in ger districts get the care they need during pregnancy." – Delgerzul Lodoisamba, a professor of environmental health at the Health Science University of Mongolia (Aghajanian 2015)*

Aghajanian, while reporting for Aljazeera (2015), found that the Songino-Khairkhan district, with a population of roughly 15,000 residents, have only six doctors and four nurses working at the district's clinic. For many of the patients, due to poor or lacking infrastructure, the only way to reach the clinic is to walk long distances. Because of these obstacles, nurses say that pregnant women often wait until the last minute to be seen by medical professionals (Aghajanian 2015).



Deteriorating access to basic and essential services, as figure 3.1 highlights, while much of the country is getting richer, the poorer ger district residents are losing lifesaving rights. For instance, respiratory infection is the second largest cause of infant and under-five mortality in Mongolia, accounting for 15 per cent of infant deaths in children under (UNICEF 2018). On water and sanitation, the UN Special Rapporteur, Leo Heller, observed that there was clearly a different standard applied to Ger areas, in terms of access to clean water, as most are not connected to the central water and sanitation infrastructure (Heller 2018). He added that in addition to explicitly recognizing the human rights to water and sanitation under the Constitution, the Government of Mongolia should ensure that human rights perspective is clearly reflected in the legislation and respective regulatory instruments (Heller 2018).

One common trait that emerged from the in-depth interviews with local residents, that aligned with the aforementioned, was that they lacked basic services, such as access to waste management, clean water, clean air, and electricity. Some commonly held feelings were:

- *I lived my entire life in the countryside. I never had to worry about air pollution. We had fresh air and we always had food on our table. But now that we've moved to UB, it's not what I expected. The pollution is very bad and earning an income can be unpredictable (n=ND11).*
- *Our waste issue is the biggest issue we face. As you can see there's so much waste. Before we moved here, they told us that the waste would be cleaned up. The government said they came in and cleaned, but people still think it's a dump so the waste continues to pile-up because the waste truck never comes to our area. Also, our kids are sick quite often. Our youngest son was recently in the hospital for respiratory illness (SD11).*
- *We have to travel far to fetch water. For electricity, in the past, we would run along cable to connect to another ger that would connect to another ger. I think it was over a kilometer of wires that would be connected. It was*

*dangerous. I'm grateful we received a grant to buy solar panels. The local government told us that up-to 12 homes can be powered, but it can hardly power our own home. Other families still need to run wires to the central grid (n=CDI4).*

- *I hear about a lot of families that can't afford to buy food because they're spending so much on fuel for their ger. Even the prices of meat continue to rise, but salaries and pensions remain the same. Meat is so expensive these days. Something needs to be done. How can families afford to eat and stay warm? (n=SD11)*
- *We are pretty happy living here, but we didn't really have any other choice. There's nowhere else to live. So, we'll make do (n=CDI3).*

The words from the interviewees are nothing new. This evidence has been well documented over the years and publicly available, yet, the government makes the choice to focus its attention on foreign investment, all the while slashing public services. Millions of dollars have been invested high-level forums in attempts to attract investment. Billions have been handed out to the mining sector to support the sectors development. All the while, thousands of ger district residents lack access to basic rights and dignity: clean water and air, decent employment, among others.

When the actual is avoidable, such as the current situation in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, then violence is present (Galtung 1969). With the quality of life seemingly significantly lower than that of their fellow citizens, structure violence is present.

Recently, the UN Resident Coordinator, Beate Trankmann, spoke on the challenges of growing inequality as it relates to the ger district communities stating:

*“In terms of challenges, while growth is recovering, the ‘recovery’ is not necessarily being felt. During the downturn, poverty jumped – from affecting one in five citizens in 2014, to one in three in 2016. So a major task now is to*

*try and better share the benefits of growth. While mining makes up 20 percent of GDP, it has not benefitted everyone equally”.*

With this evidence, it's clear that the actual, as Galtung puts it, is avoidable. The shock-therapy and structural adjustments were an avoidable and flawed attempt to open-up the Mongolian economy. Today the Government has knowledge of the problem that's leads to greater suffering of its people, particularly those living in the ger districts. The Government could have the resources to combat this crisis if they raised appropriate taxes on larger corporations. Again, as was previously explained by V. Enkhtamir, the land rights lawyer, the selling of public assets could offer funding to support development and poverty alleviation initiatives in the short-term. In the long-term, the taxation on larger companies and mining projects should go to support those excluded from their livelihoods due to environmental changes caused by mining and exploitation of the land. In a way, the taxation should be considered as reparations for rehabilitating the land and those that were cast out. Thus, as Galtung explains, the potential of realization is present as is the level of insight and resources. Therefore, it is clear that resources are monopolized by a group [the economy and elite] but used for other purposes. It's here that we find the actual level falls well below the potential level and that violence is present within the system (Galtung 1969).

*“Children and pregnant women residing in the Ger districts are at highest risk. They are exposed to the highest levels of air pollution levels because most of the pollution stems from using raw coal and other solid fuels in the Ger districts to stay warm. Their overall health condition is often relatively low, making them more vulnerable to air pollution. Their access to good and affordable health care is often limited.” Alex Heikens, UNICEF Representative in Mongolia (2017)*

### **Social Exclusion: migrants' citizen entitlement**

In Ulaanbaatar, particularly if you're from the ger districts, your life may be stunted for being born poor. The structures of violence that the ger district communities face with respect to income distributions being heavily skewed, education unevenly distributed, and medical services limited is a text book case of Johan Galtung's Structural Violence Paradigm (1969, p 26). But what about when it's not structural violence? In the case of

the ger districts, it's also exclusion. Just as Göran Therborn explains in the Killing Field of Inequality, when it doesn't literally kill people or stunt their lives, inequality means exclusion: excluding people from possibilities produced by human development (Therborn 2014). However the framing, human rights are being denied to ger district communities and, as a result, their ability to raise from deprivation is limited or even impossible.

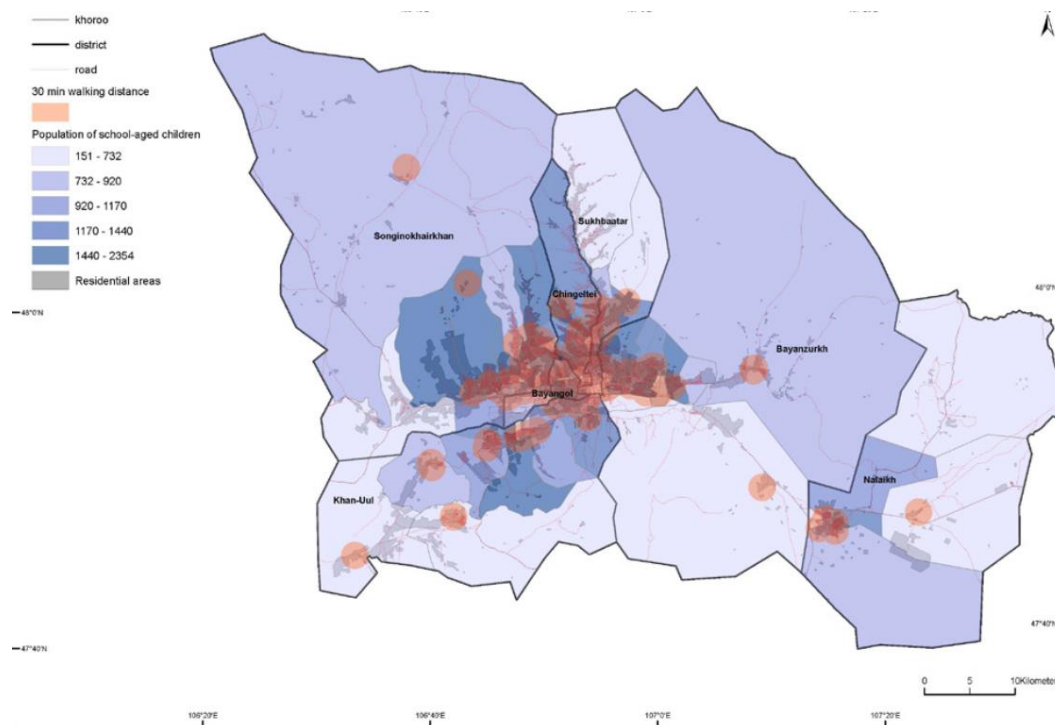
*Before I delivered, I worked in a factory. Since the baby arrived, I now work from home. I've now been working from home for about 5 months. From my work, I wasn't given maternity leave with money because the company I work for did not pay the social insurance. Therefore, my maternity leave is unpaid. So after I gave birth, I just left work and started trying to work from home. Luckily, the company did provide some sewing equipment and materials so I could work freelance from home. But the income is not the same. Because of the kids and our new baby, I can't get as much work done as I could in the factory (n=SDII).*

In attempts to 'share' the wealth of the booming mining sector, the Government of Mongolia instituted a policy that would give mothers up to 8USD per child each month. This money is supposed to help with raising and supporting the child. When, in reality, it's not even enough to pay for children to attend private kindergarten. In the ger districts, the kindergartens are overcrowded. The Government has instituted a lottery in order to slim the class sizes. If your child is not selected in the lottery, you either pay a bribe or send them to private kindergarten. This was the case for one respondent:

*We have three kids. My smallest one is right here. She's two years-old. Unfortunately, we didn't get the lottery for the kindergarten, so I need to stay here with her. To get the lottery, you must register your kids with the local kindergarten, within your district. Because there are too few kindergartens in our district, some of the kids are omitted through the lottery. This is so difficult. After my daughter was rejected through the lottery, we tried to give her to one of the private kindergartens, but the with the private kindergarten, they don't*

*have standards, so it can be pretty bad. When I would send my daughter to the private kindergarten, she would cry about having to go. That made me also think it was quite bad. During the winter, it was manageable because my husband wasn't working, so she could stay with him. However, now that it's much warmer, my husband needs to go back to work. Since we both work, I don't know how to deal with this issue. My salary, before taxes and social insurance, is only 250USD. So having to pay for the private kindergarten, on such a small salary, is very difficult for myself and my husband. For eight years, I was a stay at home mom. We needed the extra money so I decided to go back to work. By having two incomes, we do okay financially. But right now, it looks like I'll have to stay at home to care for my daughter (n=CD3).*

Though not structural violence, the respondent above highlights the ongoing exclusion that exists for the urban poor, particularly those residing in the ger districts. An analysis by Singh (2017; p 70) found that public kindergarten facilities are able to accommodate only 30% of children eligible for enrollment, indicating severe shortages that affect ger district residents disproportionately. The map below, show the majority of kindergartens are located in the city center, which is also home to a larger proportion of higher income residents and apartment dwellers.



*Kindergartens within a 30 minute walking time (Singh, 2017; p 71)*

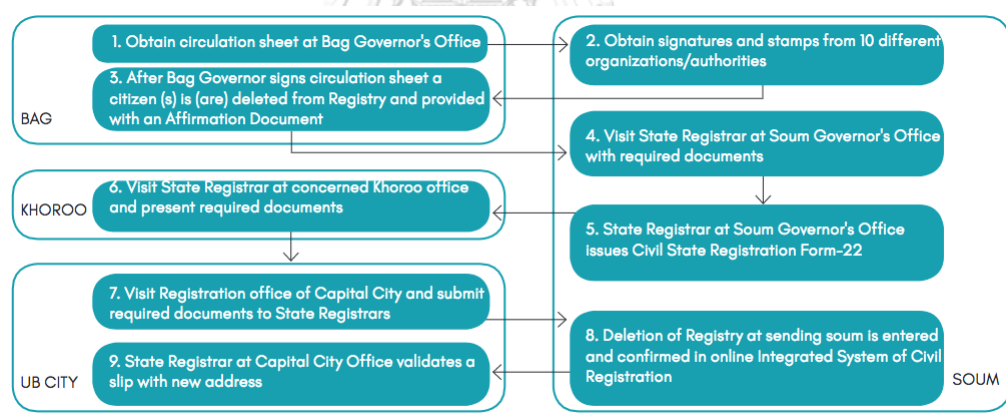
One's ability to function is impacted by the affluence or poverty within their relative community. Therefore, relative poverty is a meaningful concept. The severity of poverty also tends to depend on the overall rate of poverty.

*In-depth interview: There are many challenges in our area. It's quite far from the bus stop and we don't have a car, so we must walk very far just to get a ride. For electricity, we're not connected to the central grid. To get power, like many families in our area, we have cables running from other gers far away. As you can also see, our biggest issue is waste management (n=SD11).*

## **Social Exclusion and Voice**

Mongolia is free and open, in terms of speech and voting. All people have the right to speak to or vote out decision-makers. Unless, that is, you are not registered or moved to Ulaanbaatar during the migration ban. Unregistered citizens do not have the right to vote for their district representatives, nor are they, as will be described below, able to take advantage of services such as education, social welfare, etc. Singh (2017) found that citizens migrating from the country side to Ulaanbaatar are required to transfer

their registration status to the new urban residence and register their city address with the local municipality. This process is long and complex, fragmented and fraught with corruption, as well as the procedure is not easily understandable for new comers. The chart below lays out the complexity of changing ones registration. These complexities add additional burden, as well as costs on new comers that likely as previously explained are already poor and destitute (Singh 2017). As a result, despite the availability and affordability of the plots in the fringe of the city, obtaining and registering a plot is challenging for the rural-urban migrants (Singh 2017). Singh (2017) and the Ger Community Mapping Center explained that access to land-titling services is tied to urban residency status. The residency status is key to allowing people to access their right to vote, lobby for change and take advantage of basic social services such as education and healthcare. As a result, as Singh (2017) highlights throughout their study on multidimensional poverty, the ger district residents are disproportionately impacted by these bureaucracies that cause them to pay bribes with money they don't really have.



*Administrative procedures for obtaining urban residency status (Source: Singh, 2017, p73)*

As well as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) began to raise red flags concerning the ability for rural-to-urban migrants to access their political, economic, social and cultural rights (NHRC 2015). The NHRC in 2015 stated that the migrants' basic rights, enshrined in international conventions – that Mongolia is already party to – which includes the right to vote, right to proper housing, right to social services, right to health, right to education, labor rights, and the right to a clean environment were at

risk of being violated (NHRC 2015). In a report by Aljazeera (2015), it's common for women to experience significant delays in receiving medical care:

*“Most of the people who have migrated, they settled here without permission. We just can't access the pregnant people. This makes it harder to treat many of the pollution-related problems that the clinic routinely addresses, from premature delivery to respiratory issues to low birth weight. In the ger districts, babies are born with everything from hypoxia, in which the fetus doesn't receive enough oxygen, to cleft palates and more severe birth defects, such as underdeveloped organs and developmental problems,” explained Yamsuren, a nurse who works in the clinic (Aljazeera, 2015)*

Within the context of Mongolia, exclusion and inequality take form in the shape of a migration ban. In 2017, the city mayor banned all migration into the capital. This policy limited the freedom of migration, a human and constitutional right. This law was levied specifically on the poor, as it excluded property and mortgage owners. Poor families wishing to move to the capital for more better schools, healthcare, and/or job opportunities were subsequently restricted. This law not only has implications of exclusion, but also on the ability for people to participate in their respective civic spaces.

Mayor S. Batbold stated in 2017:

*“Even though freedom of movement is a constitutional right afforded to every citizen, the threat of air pollution in the capital has reached a point where it could potentially affect national security. The right to health and safety of Ulaanbaatar residents is being violated, therefore, the Mayor's Office has decided to issue the decree within the rights afforded to it, based on multiple studies and consultation from numerous agencies, in order to meet the demands of our residents” (UB Post, Jan 2017).*



New migrants will be banned from settling in the city, and the existing rural migrants in the capital city will be given opportunities to return to the countryside, according to the Municipal decision.

*“All migration to Ulan Bator from the countryside except those people that require long-term medical treatment and those who purchased apartments shall be prohibited until Jan. 1, 2018. We are forced to make these decisions as the current air pollution violates our right to live safely and healthily. We are hoping to reduce the current air pollution by 20 percent. Those poor households that burn raw coal will be given improved, efficient fuel to burn in their stoves. If people stop burning coal, air pollution will be reduced,” Mayor Batbold to Xinhuanet News on January 10, 2017.*

This is no small measure in a nation whose constitution guarantees citizens the right to choose where to live; one that places itself in the tourism world as a nomadic land without fences. The ban raises a number of important questions. What other options are there for impoverished herders, especially those who suffer from the effects of dzud? How might it affect herders who try to relocate to the capital anyway? Will it increase the likelihood of them being stuck in unemployment or informal, low-wage work? Could this, in turn, increase reliance on poor-quality coal and in fact worsen air pollution?

In the nearly two years this policy has been in place, the consequences are ever present as new arrivals do not register with the local administration units/khorools. As a result of them not registering, they're unable to access basic social services, such as clinics, or participate in elections and lobby their local officials.

*Recently, Ulaanbaatar City Municipality instituted a ban on migration in order to curb air pollution. When we interviewed our migrants that came into the city after the ban was in place we found that there are many unregistered migrants. So what does that mean? Well, in Mongolia, a lot of the services – whether that's health, education or welfare – it's tied to your registration status. This*

*means, when you are a migrant, and you come from the countryside to the city and you don't have city registration – so when you get sick or you try to send kids to school – you have no official address. So what migrants face is an inability to access services. And then when they come into the city, they mostly live in ger areas but in Ulaanbaatar the land distribution and access is very complicated. So what some end up doing is living on illegal land. So those lands are far from basic services – water, transport – so what we're seeing is migrants facing multiple vulnerabilities. This registration system is flawed. Just because you're not registered means that you cannot access your basic human rights. This makes migration a very sensitive issue in Mongolia. – Ch. Enkhtulga, Co-Founder of the Ger Community Mapping Center*

This migration ban is not only an explicit violation of Mongolia's Constitution, with respect to freedom of movement, but it is inconsistent with the core values of democracy. Mongolia has previously struggled to cope with the challenges of economic and climate-based urbanisation. A migration ban is not the answer. A sustainable solution that protects the lives and livelihoods of both rural and urban dwellers is desperately needed. This will require both significant investment in providing greater support to herders, particularly during harsh winters, and extensive development of the ger districts, finally connecting their residents to heating, electricity and proper sanitation.

## **Exclusion and participation**

A key instrument that fosters inclusion within a society is one's ability to meaningfully participate within it. Whilst this does not guarantee that issues don't arise or anguish does not exist, it does help governments and communities address ongoing issues constructively. During the in-depth interviews, respondents were routinely asked about their ability to meaningfully participate in society.

Respondents answered, when asked, *do authorities within the national government or your representatives give you opportunities to discuss your issues with them:*

- *No, we have never tried to raise it with authorities. To be honest, I've never really thought about telling the government.*
- *Of course. But it doesn't seem like they have done anything to make it better. They make promises but nothing ever changes.*
- *Just once, I did remind our local authorities about this issue, of the waste. I raised it and left it with them. I expected something would get done. I don't think it's up to me to demand or to solve these problems. Once the authorities know, they should just fix them. (SDI2)*
- *There's no need to speak to decision-makers or authorities. When we talk, they just listen and then leave. They never do anything. With today's civil servants, they're more worried about how to live themselves and not about how to improve the lives of citizens. (CDI2)*

*Another observation showing exclusion from being heard can be viewed from the opinion of young people.*

*“When young people attend townhall meetings, they are not given the space to speak or raise their concerns. This is due, in part, to cultural norms as elders in communities often do not give young people the space to speak. Politicians and government officials also play a role in limiting the voice of people, but not giving a space to hear feedback, but rather, lecturing their constituents. Much of these practices stem from socialism. – Z. Uyanga, Youth Advisor, United Nations in Mongolia*

Young people and the ger community members that the author of this paper spoke with during this research complained about either lack of space to meet and discuss issues with local leaders, or that they weren't given the space to meaningfully participate. Often, during townhall meetings – though they do not exist in every district as it's up to the local leaders – officials speak to the citizens and not with them. It's very much a holdover from the socialist era of “do as you're told”. Good governance is essential to upholding the values of a nation's citizens and, at the same time, progressing the development agenda of the state. Without proper mechanisms, people are left behind

and in this case, it is leading to the demise of an entire group of people . These forms of structural and cultural violence are avoidable, but if left unchecked, it may cause great despair and anguish amongst the most vulnerable population. For smoothing the process of transition, there also have to be opportunities for retraining and acquiring of new skills for people who would otherwise be displaced, in addition to providing social safety nets for those whose interest are harmed (Sen 2001).

## **CHAPTER 4: Stories from the ger districts**

*This chapter is divided into two sections: 8 case studies and a narrative analysis. The cases studies were constructed from interviews conducted in 2018 within the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar, predominately Chingeltei District. The Narrative analysis looks at the case studies as a development paradox from the perspective of social mobility and vulnerability.*

### **Defining the ger district residents in Ulaanbaatar**

*“The socio-economic differences between the ger areas and apartment areas are as significant as the physical differences. Ger area households are larger, younger, less educated, poorer, and more reliant on social services than households in apartment areas.” Kamata, et al. (2010)*

Across Mongolia, nomadic herders and rural communities continue to be significantly impacted by climate change as there have been significant increases in dzuds, both in terms of scale and frequency. The planned economy of the pre-1990’s calculated dzuds and support for herders into their governance responsibilities, but the 1990’s structural adjustments removed the role of the state when it came to herding. The 1999-2001 and 2009-2011 dzuds decimated entire herds and left millions of livestock dead. In 2010 alone, approximately 43,500 herders were left without a single animal (Levene 2017).

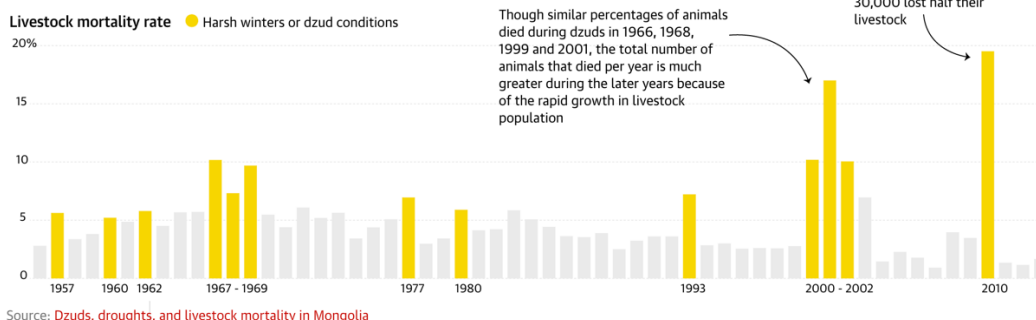
The pre-1990’s planned economy was far more than just a political ideology. It was a culture. Herders had come to depend on the government for their migration patterns, preparations for dzuds and much more. A seemingly overnight structural readjustment left hundreds of thousands of herders without support and guidance after more than 70

years of top-down leadership by the central government. This research is not endorsing one economic model over another, but it can't be denied that political ideologies have an impact on a society – particularly when it has been in place for more than seven decades.

As a result of the structural readjustments, the now much smaller state could not and would not participate in the planning of the herding economy. This poor planning, rapid development of mines and overgrazing resulted in herders being excluded from their livelihoods because of the increase in dzuds. These herders are, in a way, climate refugees. This exclusion is not by their making but by a lack of support and planning from the national government. In the past, the impacts of dzuds were minimized due to planning by the central government. When a dzud hits, it's the herders with fewer than 300 heads that are most affected – if fodder and other supplies are not available, most likely the herds will die. Many of the herders migrating to the capital were either in poverty or near poverty as their herd sizes were below 250 heads<sup>6</sup>.

#### Livestock deaths linked to harsh winters

After winters facing extreme conditions, Mongolia's livestock population sees a higher than usual death toll during the following year. During the 1990s, regulation to prevent overherding was lifted and the livestock population has doubled to more than 50 million



Before the dzuds Ulaanbaatar, the structures of violence have already begun to take shape. With dim outlooks for many herders and the Government struggling to boost its' economy, mass migration of herding families will likely continue to flow into the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. Unfortunately, the herders are neither skilled for the modern

<sup>6</sup> As a means to measure income-based poverty for herders, the NSO uses less than 250 animals as the benchmark for extreme poverty.

workforce, nor was the city adequately prepared the influx of this population.

In just the past 15 years, the capital city of Ulaanbaatar has seen its urban population increase by 67 per cent, adding nearly 600,000 people, most of them setting up their homes in the Ger Districts of Ulaanbaatar (IOM 2010). As well, according to the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia, the number of residential apartments as well as the number of households living in apartments have increased by almost 40 thousand households. However, the number of “ger” dwellers has not decreased due to the increased migration flow from rural to urban area, namely Ulaanbaatar city (NHRC 2015). The vast majority of the ger district residents live in abstract poverty – unable to access basic social services or find dignified, meaningful employment. Their basic needs have been denied: access to health care, clean water, sanitation, and breathable air have all been denied. Many of them are on the brink, living paycheck to paycheck, if they are receiving a paycheck at all. The ger districts remain unplanned and unregulated, with no attempts, other than out right banning people from arriving, to improve the infrastructure in a meaningful way (see figure 1 below).



Source: *The Guardian*, NSO, & Mapbox 2017

The background of the ger district residents is diverse, yet similar. Neo-liberal structural adjustments have impacted their lives by removing safety nets or policies that would

have supported them to potentially remain as herders. Many of those interviewed for this thesis arrived between 1999 to 2010, during some of the worst dzuds on record. Aiming to escape impending poverty, families upended their entire lives in hope of a better life. A life dreamt but never achieved.

*“This is our home now. We are settled. Some of my children have jobs and families here in the city, so there’s no reason to go back. We just need to make our [the city] better.” – 73 year-old, female from a ger district.*

Today, many have lost hope. They know there’s no going back and that they must improve the community in which they live. However, whilst there have been proclamations by the Government that things are getting better as the GDP growth was net positive in 2017 and the forecast for 2018 predicts even more growth. In 2017, the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the World Bank in Mongolia, announced that the poverty rate had risen to 29.6 percent in 2016. This was an increase by 8.0 per cent from the 2014 poverty rate of 21.6. So whilst the economy may be growing, it’s had little, to no effect on the poor, working class families.

Estimated disease burden for Ulaanbaatar, 5 diseases, 2015			Relative ranking
Disease	Deaths	DALYs	Years of life lost
<b>Children under 5</b>			
Pneumonia as an acute lower respiratory infections (ALRI) (aged 0–4)	435	37,290	2
<b>Adults</b>			
Ischemic heart disease	2,151	47,903	1
Cerebrovascular disease (stroke)	1,493	34,321	3
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	453	17,739	17
Cancer of the trachea, bronchus, lung	233	5,826	18

Source: Air pollution-related disease burden in Ulaanbaatar in 2015 (UNICEF & Ibid, 2016).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Note: The disability-adjusted life year (DALY) is a measure of overall disease burden, expressed as the number of years lost due to ill-health, disability or early death.

*“In Mongolia, I would say two key areas are where human rights could be improved – the right to work and clean air. Firstly, the right to work and fair pay, under Article 23 of the Human Rights Declaration, is threatened by the recent economic crisis of 2014-2016. During this time, the poverty rate jumped by 40%, as unemployment reached 8.8%, while many who kept their jobs were paid late, or not at all. Further, wage increases did not reflect inflation” – Beate Trankmann, UN Resident Coordinator (2018)*

## Case Studies

*Note: all names have been changed to protect the identities of the interviewees.*

### Case study #1: 70 year-old female – Chingeltei District

Tuya, a 70 year-old woman, moved to Ulaanbaatar in early 2002. Living in Chingeltei District, Tuya’s family lives on top of one of the mountains with her son and his family. Her home is simple, yet, comfortable. While she would be classified under the poverty-line, she seemed content with her life, but did convey it could be made easier.

Tuya, formerly from Bulgan aimag, a province just to the West of Ulaanbaatar, was a school dormitory cook outside of the provincial center. Her husband was a herder and the main bread winner in their family. With roughly 250 heads of livestock, Tuya’s family lived below the poverty line, but she says life was not too difficult.

The 2001 dzud hit Tuya’s family particularly hard.

“We had to abandon our livelihood in the countryside was because of the 2001 dzud that killed much of our livestock. So we sold the remaining animals and used the money to move to the city and pay for my daughters education,” Tuya recalled.

“Unfortunately, there were no support systems to help us after the dzud. We had to do everything on our own.”

Sadly, however, just before the move Tuya’s husband passed away. With the remaining animals already sold or dead, she felt it was best to move forward with the plan to



relocate her family to the city for her daughter's education and the hope of opportunities for her other children.

“Since moving to UB, I think our expectations have been met. We came here for a fresh. Since moving to UB, my son has a job as a bus driver and my daughter finished university and is employed,” she explained.

When pressed further on challenges since moving to UB, Tuya didn't feel that there were many barriers as she's happy that her children have jobs and is exceptionally proud of one grandchild that is studying law.

When it comes to air pollution, though she says it doesn't bother her too much as she lives atop of a windy mountain, Tuya doesn't believe that there's much they can do about it. Even lobbying government to intervene, in her opinion, seems to not matter, as the pollution exists. But she does worry about how air pollution affects her grandchildren's health.

“In the countryside, we would burn bio fuel (dried dung). But in the city we burn coal. If we want address the pollution we need different sources of fuel that's clean. I know that the air pollution is harmful for my grandchildren, especially when they're sitting in school,” she said.

When Tuya was asked about the government's plan to ban cheaper coal, she raised concerns about the affordability of different types of fuel but worries if they'll be enough money to keep themselves warm, particularly for her neighbors that don't have children to support them.

“Before moving forward with this plan, they need to start testing it now. How do we know it will work? If the government is going to ban the cheaper coal, they need to provide affordable options for us. There needs to be a subsidized option or we won't be able to afford to purchase the fuel,” she said.

But living on top of the mountain has other challenges too. The well where she fetches her water is at the bottom of the mountain. It's impossible for her, at her age, to push the water up the hill. As well, in the winter, the wind keeps the pollution away, but it also makes it much colder and, according to Tuya, they have to burn much more coal. She explained that this winter, for example, she burned more than 5 trucks of coal, which is much more than the other families at the bottom of the mountain – reinforcing concerns about the ability for her to purchase fuel if prices were to go up.

Aside from the challenges of water and heat, Tuya and her elderly neighbors said they are facing long queues at the elderly hospital. Tuya's accounts at the hospital fit with the findings from the Ger Community Mapping Center that clearly illustrates limited access to public clinics and hospitals within the ger districts.

“Twice a month, I have to wait in this long queue. One time, there were more than 100 people ahead of me. It took more than a month before the doctors were finally able to see me. Even when it's urgent, I feel like I'm waiting a long time. The local government, must know about these queues. I shouldn't have to tell them. They must know,” said Tuya.

When asked if decision-makers give her and her neighbors opportunities to discuss their issues and concerns, she explained that they probably listen to them, but she doesn't get an opportunity to meet decision-makers or members of parliament. She just hopes they know about their issues.

“I believe that our local and national representatives know about our challenges and problems... When they call meetings at our local district office, I do try to go. During the previous meeting, just before the Lunar New Year celebrations, our representatives from Parliament handed our gifts to all of the elderly. Sometimes they give us free fuel to support us during the colder months,” she recalled.

Tuya When it comes to her income, Tuya says it's not really an issue for her as she has children that work and are able to support her. Though it's not an issue for her, she is worried about the families that are less fortunate, particularly with the rise of inflation.

“As you know, when Mongolians talk about inflation, we use the price of meat to measure. I'm not sure of the prices these days because my kids purchase all of my meat know, but I know it's really gone up a lot. The last time my kids went to buy meat, they said it's really expensive now. It used to be so affordable when we lived in the countryside, but we were herders in those days, so we didn't really have to pay for meat or worry about food,” she said.

“I do know with some families, they don't have the support that I have. They don't have jobs, so it's much more difficult. I hear about a lot of families that can't afford to buy food because they're spending so much on fuel for their ger. Even the prices of meat continue to rise, but salaries and pensions remain the same. Meat is so expensive these days. Something needs to be done. How can families afford to eat and stay warm?,” she added.

To conclude the discussion, Tuya was asked if there were opportunities for her family, if she would go back to the countryside.

“This is our home now. We are settled. My children have jobs and families here in the city, so there's no reason to go back. We just need to make our home [the city] better,” she concluded.

**Case study #2: 72 year-old male & 62 year-old female – resident of Chingeltei District**

Dorj and Altai have been married for almost 40 years. They migrated from Sukhbaatar aimag (a province to the East) in 2003 when they retired from their careers at a rural school. Altai, 62, was a school cook and met her husband, a teacher, shortly after joining the school. In their long marriage, Altai has given birth to 9 children and are the proud grandparents of 42 grandchildren.

“We lived in Sukhbaatar soum, Sukhbaatar aimag – a small village 100km from the aimag center. We mainly moved to UB because our children had moved here for university and we wanted to be closer to them. We really had no reason to stay in our village because all of our children were here,” she explained.

But this wasn't the first time Dorj had lived in UB. His parents moved to the capital city in 1959 when he was 10 years-old. His father worked for the Central Bank during the socialist era.

“After graduating for the Teachers University in UB, because we lived in a planned economy, I was required to move to Sukhbaatar to teach. They sent my diploma to the soum and when I arrived to teach, I could retrieve it. So the only way I could get my diploma was to show up in the soum and work. These kinds of policies were right because it required us to leave the city, so all of the educated populations weren't consolidated in a central place. This was the governments' plan to spread development,” explained Dorj

Dorj and Altail felt the social times were better in many ways, particularly when it came to education and healthcare because it was free and readily available. Dorj also said that there was more of a culture of civic duty, or giving back. They also aren't happy with the changes in Ulaanbaatar.

“We've been living on this spot, on top of the mountain, since 2003. Life has been tough since moving to UB. And compared to the 1950's, though there were fewer buildings, we didn't have all these problems like air pollution. Today, we can see development like buildings and some new roads, however, we don't really have development in terms of lives. We can't purchase the necessities and education is so expensive now. It's expensive to get an education. Also our retirement benefits are difficult to rely on. It's not much. So, I wouldn't say our lives have gotten better,” said Dorj

When it comes to what's needed for change, both Dorj and Altai agreed that jobs are needed in their community [the ger district]. Dorj said the country needed more industry, recalling more opportunities during socialist times, something that Rossabi (2005) also highlighted.

“During socialist times, we would export knives and meat, as well as other products. This brought money into our communities. When Mongolia transitioned to the market economy, there was no gradual shift. Overnight, they threw out everything. Even the things that worked. So that's why we now have all of this unemployment and poverty,” said Dorj

Dorj and Altai also felt, when asked, decision-makers at both the local and national level were not truly concerned about their issues.

“There's no need to speak to decision-makers or authorities. When we talk, they just listen and then leave. They never do anything. With today's civil servants, they're more worried about how to live themselves and not about how to improve the lives of citizens,” said Dorj.

Altai is worried about the future of her children and grandchildren.

“Having such a big family, it's been tough, but we got through it. Now, my kids are doing well. I do worry, but they're prepared,” she explained.

### **Cases study #3: Male, 59 – resident of Chingeltei District**

Sukhee and his wife are from the countryside and were married in 1981 and now have three sons. He began his working career in 1978 in Sharyn Gol soum in Darkhan Uul province. From 1978 to 2003 he spent every working day down in the mine, nearly 25 years.

“I was put on welfare in 2003 because I had pneumoconiosis from working in the mine, and that's when I moved to the capital,” Sukhee said.

Since leaving work, Sukhee says life has been getting harder and that socialist times seemed to be better than the current system.

“It was really good during the socialist period. Housing was free, salary and provisions were sufficient. Everything was really nice. Since we moved into the city, things have been getting more and more difficult. Everything, including housing is difficult, and now we are living in the ger area. At least we got a khashaa (property) and home to live in,” he said.

Older generations often reminisce about the pre-revolution era, as basic social services seemed to be more accessible in hindsight.

“Things have definitely become worse and difficult since the revolution. Back in my day, everything was free and everything was great. There was no need for debts and loans. Since the [revolution] everything has turned for the worse,” explained Sukhee.

According to Sukhee, during the socialist period, if you had a job, you would have an apartment or some kind of home and the wages were sufficient. He also claims that the average person didn't know about bank debts and loans because they didn't need such things.

“Under socialist times, if you worked hard and improved, you were rewarded. I worked for two years as an assistant machinist and became an excavator operator. I had an assistant and back in the day we all used the Russian 6,000 volt excavators. After three or four years later, I was put in charge of eight people. So I was head machinist until I was put on welfare. Housing and apartments were all provided, and everything else was provided for. Everything was sufficient,” Sukhee recalled.

But things have drastically changed for Sukhee and his family. A welfare recipient under the current system of government does not seem to be meeting his basic need, according to him.

“Now everything is more difficult and closed. Money is always needed. For instance if we want our children to be educated, we need to take out pension or welfare loans. This is the only option available to us now, and these are the major differences in my opinion,” Sukhee stated.

Since moving to UB, Sukhee and his family had hoped there would be opportunities for work, better healthcare and housing that would be safer and healthier. However, Sukhee encountered issues related to housing nearly right away.

“So after much effort [to secure a home], we took out a loan and bought a khashaa (a plot of land), and built a house with the help of our children with everyone chipping in through loans and whatnot. Housing was very difficult. Since I was on welfare, I didn’t even look for a job because I knew there was no job for me. So we have been making do with the welfare money and now I’m on pension,” Sukhee said.

As Singh (2017) pointed out, the bureaucratic systems currently in place are slow, inefficient and costly to get district residents, both in terms of time and financially. Sukhee story confirms Singh’s findings and raises concerns on the ability of the government, both local and national, to effectively serve its citizens.

“To get welfare because of work related illness, I had to go to Darkhan three times. I needed to get various documents from the Darkhan archive because Sharyn Gol mine is under Darkhan. So I needed to go to Darkhan three times because I every time I came with the documents, they would say you need this and that, such as specific salary records of certain years, and I would have to go back again. So there is a lot of bureaucracy and red tape. After a lot of effort, I managed to get all my documents together within half a year and got access to welfare. It was difficult to go to such a far place so often,” Sukhee explained.

These bottlenecks have financial and human costs. Traveling hundreds of kilometers to collect documents is expensive and time consuming, as well as challenging for a person living with a disability.

Sukhee, though he's faced significant challenges since living his career in 2003, does believe things could change. Particularly if local representative act on some specific issues related to pension and welfare. He feels confident that he could meet with the khoroo section head and, if that person was't helpful, he could go to speak with the khoroo governor.

“If we really need to talk we could, I suppose, get an appointment with the governor of the khoroo and talk to them. But mostly we go through the section head of the khoroo office,” Sukhee said.

But Sukhee reinforced that things need to change and local and national decision-makers need to act.

“Pension and welfare needs to be increased. Bank interests need to be lowered. If you sort these out, things will improve quite a bit. Housing prices also need to be reduced and the loans and mortgage issues should be resolved through the law. I think that's what's needed,” he concluded.

#### **Case Study #4: Pregnant female, 31 years-old – resident of Chingeltei District**

Tsedmaa, 31 and pregnant, live in a valley between two mountains just on the border of Chingeltei district. Tsedmaa has been living in this spot for more than eight years, after she married her husband. Uniquely, they had more than 10 solar panels set-up on their property.

“I am from the city, but my husband is from the countryside and moved when he was younger with his parents. They were herders and sold their livestock after one of the dzuds in the late 1990's. The two of us work in Naraantuul (the “Black Market”) selling candy,” said Tsedmaa.



According to Tsedmaa, for the first 7 years that they lived on this land, they did not have power. She said that the government could not, or would not, connect them to the central system. She explained that all of the families living in this small valley do not have power or water nearby.

“We have to travel far to fetch water – more than a kilometer. For electricity, in the past, we would run along cable to connect to another ger that would connect to another ger. I think it was over a kilometer of wires that would be connected. It was dangerous,” she recalls.

All of the families in the valley still struggle with fetching water and continue to run long cables, from ger-to-ger, in an effort to be connected to the electricity. For Tsedmaa, however, they were selected by the Government’s Clean Air Fund to test solar panels as part of a solution to provide power to ger dwellers that aren’t connected to the central grid.

“They gave us these [points to the panels]. They told us it could power 30 families, but unfortunately, it can only power our home. Sometimes, we still have to burn coal because, as you know, running heating units takes a lot of energy and it’s cold up here,” she said.

When it came to raising concerns with local decision-makers on these issues, and others, Tsedmaa was grateful the government was trying something new in her case, but admitted more could be done, particularly for other families living in the valley. She also worries about the high levels of air pollution for her pregnancy and her child’s future health.

“I don’t know if this solar panel idea is going to work. It sound like a good idea, but it would be better to connect us to the central grid. It’s more reliable and our neighbors could also be connected. Maybe this could solve the air pollution problem, if we all had reliable electricity,” she concluded.

### **Case Study #5: Female, 29 – resident of Chingeltei District, UB**

Tunga and her family live in a small valley on the border of Chingeltei District. According to her, she's not sure exactly which district she falls into because they are unregistered. Tunga is originally from UB, but her husband was a herder in the countryside until recently.

Her family hopes to one day build a small home on the land that they're currently living, but she says for now their ger will do.

“My husband works on his own doing seasonal-freelance construction. I work at a construction company as an assistant worker for a construction company. When we're both working, our salaries are good,” Tunga explained.

According to Tunga, they don't own the property that they're living on, but her uncle has been living nearby. Like many ger district residents, Tunga's story is not new. According to Singh (2017) many families in the ger district do not own their property and are unregistered because of the migration ban or difficulties collecting documents needed for registration.

“We moved here because we knew that the space was vacant. But it is difficult, besides just being windy and wet, we don't have power here. We have to run a cable from far, far away. You know, it's dangerous to do this. For water, it's okay because we can take our car to the water distribution center,” she said.

Tunga says she's happy living where they are and that between her and her husband, they can make a decent living.

“We are pretty happy living here, but we didn't really have any other choice. There's nowhere else to live. So, we'll make do,” Tunga said.

Tunga and her husband have three children, with their smallest one being two years-old. Unfortunately, since she is unregistered in the district, they were unable to send their daughter to kindergarten and access other basic services within the district.

“We have three kids. My smallest one is right here. She’s two years-old. Unfortunately, we didn’t get the lottery for the kindergarten, so I need to stay here with her,” Tunga said.

Tunga said that before taxes, she made about 250USD per month. Combined with her husband’s salary, she claims that they could have a comfortable life.

According to Tunga, as well verified by Singh (2017), that in Order to get the lottery, you first need to be a registered as a resident with the local district. Then, as Tunga explained, you must register your kids with the local kindergarten and again within your district.

“Because there are too few kindergartens in our district, and we are unregistered, some of the kids [like mine] are omitted through the lottery,” said Tunga.

However, since she’s not able to send her daughter to kindergarten, she only has three options: pay a bribe, pay for private kindergarten or quit work. Paying the bribe is not an option, according to Tunga, because she said it’s almost as much as her monthly salary. Tunga said she tried the private kindergarten, but it’s unregulated and the quality as extremely poor and the price, though lower than bribe, is still quite high.

“This is so difficult for us. After my daughter was rejected through the lottery, we tried to give her to one of the private kindergartens, but the with the private kindergarten, they don’t have standards, so it can be pretty bad. When I would send my daughter to the private kindergarten, she would cry about having to go. That made me also think it was quite bad,” Tunga recalled.

For many years, Tunga was a stay at home mom but recently returned to the workforce because, as she said, they needed the extra money.

“During the winter, it was manageable [working fulltime] because my husband wasn’t working, so my daughter could stay with him. However, now that it’s much warmer, my husband needs to go back to work. Since we both work, I don’t know how to deal with this issue [of my daughter not being in kindergarten]. By having two incomes, we do really well financially. But right now, it looks like I’ll have to stay at home to care for my daughter,” Tunga said.

Tunga’s issues with the kindergarten registration is not an issue of her alone. For several years, civil society organisations, such as MonFemNet and Women for Change, have been calling for more kindergartens to be built so women, if they choose, can go back to work earlier. Older children of unregistered families in the ger district don’t have this issue because the state allows all children to attend school, regardless of their registration status.

When Tunga was asked about raising these concerns and issues with the local authorities, she was quite open in her response.

“No, we have never tried to raise it with authorities. To be honest, I’ve never really thought about telling the government,” she said.

**Case Study #6: 30 year-old male & 29 year-old female resident of Sukhbaatar District**

Bataa and Oyunaa have three children and live across the street from Chingeltei district. Their home, as well as their parent’s home, is located inside of a dump site. When the researchers arrived, the children were playing amongst old refrigerators and scrap parts. The couple moved to UB as children after one of the dzuds in the 1990’s, though, they could not recall which year they moved.

“I was born in the countryside, but my parents and I moved to the city in the 90’s. I was originally trained as an artist, but I could never find jobs that paid well. It’s very difficult

to earn enough money to provide for my family. So instead, I do freelance construction work to make ends meet,” Bataa said.

However, construction work isn’t easy for Bataa. He explained that the work he does is usually for a contractor and that getting paid can be difficult.

“Often, I do work and the contractor, or person I’m working for, won’t pay me on time. Sometimes, they never pay me. For the past few months, it’s been really difficult. People hire us and let us go before paying,” explained Bataa.

For Oyunaa, her work experience is a bit different as she works in a garment factory.

“Before I delivered, I worked in a factory. Since the baby arrived, I now work from home. I’ve now been working from home for about 5 months,” Oyunaa said.

While working from home is a great opportunity for young mothers as it enables them to still earn an income, whilst getting extra time with their newborns. However, Oyunaa’s case is a bit different. She wasn’t given maternity leave – under Mongolian Law new mothers are supposed to get 6 months of paid maternity leave – the company she works for did not pay the required social insurance. Therefore, her maternity leave went unpaid.

“After I gave birth, I just left work and started trying to work from home. Luckily, the company did provide some sewing equipment and materials so I could work freelance from home. But the income is not the same. Because of the kids and our new baby, I can’t get as much work done as I could in the factory,” said Oyunaa.

Oyunaa and Bataa have been living on their plot of land since 2014. They explained that there are many challenges in their area and that it’s quite far from the bus stop.

“Since we don’t have a car, so we must walk very far just to get a ride,” Oyunaa explained.

The location of their home proves to be a significant challenge. So while they are registered, accessing their basic social services have proved to be extremely difficult

“We are just over the boundary for the other district. For my neighbors across the road, the district office and hospital are very close. For us, it’s so far. It’s difficult for us to reach the district authorities. Just to go to the hospital for our baby, due to mountains being in the way, we have to walk to the bus stop and then travel over 10 kilometers by bus to our district hospital. We could walk over the mountain, but it’s very far and can be difficult in the winter with a baby. Basically, we have to travel around the entire city just to go to the district’s office,” Bataa explained.

As well, like many in the area, the Oyunaa and Bataa’s home is not connected to the central grid. To get power, like many families in our area, we have cables running from other gers far away.

However, according to Bataa, these issues are small in comparison to the pile-up of waste.

“As you can also see, our biggest issue is waste management,” said Bataa.

Elaborating further, he said “there’s so much waste. Before we moved here, they told us that the waste would be cleaned up. The government said they came in and cleaned, but people still think it’s a dump so the waste continues to pile-up because the waste truck never comes to our area. Therefore, people just throw it in the pit, which is our home. We have told the local district authorities, so they know, and they always say they will take care of it, but nothing ever happens”.

Oyuna and Bataa both said they worry about their children being around all of the waste when they’re playing outside because they know some of it could make them sick.

When Asked if they speak to local authorities, Bataa and Oyunaa said yes.

“Just once, I did remind our local authorities about this issue, of the waste. I raised it and left it with them. I expected something would get done,” Bataa said.

Oyunaa feels that it shouldn't be up to her to demand or to solve these problems.

Once the authorities know, they should just fix them,” she said.

**Case Study #7: 28 year-old male resident of Nailakh District**

Tulga, 28 years-old, was a herder in the Mongolian countryside until very recently.

“I was a herder in the countryside. I had very little income and I was always out of money. Life was very difficult. So, my wife and I decided to move to the city because we thought it would be better for our children's future. There are better schools here and lots of jobs.

However, according to Tulga, finding a job was much harder than he thought it was going to be. So her turned to mining and selling coal to make ends meet. Mining coal in the abandoned coal mine just east of the city earns good money, but it's extremely risky.

“It's really hard work and many times, it's dangerous because I'll go into the mine myself to collect,” Tulga explained.

Though there are risks, Tulga believes it's worth it if he can provide a better life for his family. However, he's quick to admit that life in UB for his children was not what he had expected and a challenge he has never faced in his life.

“My entire life I lived in the countryside. I never had to worry about air pollution. We had fresh air and we always had food on our table. But now that we've moved to UB, it's not what I expected. The pollution is very bad and earning an income can be unpredictable,” said Tulga.

Air pollution levels in the ger districts, especially during the winter months, are some of the highest in the world. In 2018, there were numerous cases where pollution reached more than 3,000 PM2.5 – 300 times more than the WHO recommended levels.

“Our kids are sick quite often. Our youngest son was recently in the hospital for respiratory illness. The doctors told us it was because of the air pollution. The doctors have been telling us that our son will probably suffer from lifelong respiratory illnesses [asthma]. Our son has been hospitalized more than eight times. He even was in the intensive care unit because of these respiratory diseases,” Tulga said.

Tulga talks about the high rates of air pollution and what’s happening to his children with everyone he meets, including Time Magazine and local journalists, but little seems to have changed in his view.

“Of course I raise this issue. You’ve seen me do it. But it doesn’t seem like they have done anything to make it better. They make promises but nothing ever changes,” Tulga explained.

**Case Study #8: 62 year-old male – resident of Chingeltei District, UB**

Enkhbat, 62 years old, has been living in Chingeltei district early this year. He and his wife migrated to Ulaanbaatar to be closer to their children – one of their seven children are studying in university. They entered the city during the migration ban.

“I was born in Govi-Altai Province’s. I was the governor of the бага (smallest rural administrative unit in Mongolia). I also had some livestock which I used to herd myself. We moved to UB in September this year. My children take care of our livestock now,” Enkhbat explained.

During the socialist period, Enkhbat was a veterinarian. He’s a bit indifferent concerning which was better – planned market vs the market economy.



“ It’s hard to say which was better. Before, we used to make do, but now it does seem more difficult, I think,” he explained.

Enkhbat admits that today, as a herder, there’s a bit more freedom to have larger herds, thus it’s possible to make a bit more money. But he does see a difference between the two systems.

“The good thing, I suppose, was that people used to listen and get along with each other [during the socialist period]. People were more friendly and supported each other. Nowadays, I think human nature has worsened. The only thing I can think of that’s better than before is, I suppose, we can have larger amounts of livestock. Aside from that not much else. I would say that I favor the life before the revolution,” Enkhbat said.

Enkhbat was educated in Khovd’s Technikom, a university in Western Mongolia. During the socialist period, he said they lived in two gers and life seemed to be good.

“The provision back then was decent. If we told our superiors we need some things, for instance animal feed, they would provide. I did receive much social support, since I was working,” Enkhbat recalled.

In his short time in UB, he doesn’t seem to see many challenges, though, the migration ban could be an issue, but he has bigger concerns.

“I’m on pension. We haven’t changed our residency officially. Before we left, me and my wife, we took out a pension loan, so we don’t get pension anymore. I wouldn’t mind if they increased the pension a bit. Loan interests can be very burdensome. University tuition seems quite high to me. The rest is, I suppose, our own problem. We’ll have to make do,” said Enkhbat.

Enkhbat, when asked, said he hasn’t really brought this to the attention of his new, local authorities, but thinks he’ll be able to in the future.

**Table : Development Paradoxes in Ger district**

<b>Social mobility</b>	<b>Vulnerabilities</b>
- Livelihood	- no support systems to help us after the dzud
- Sources of fuel	- air pollution is harmful
- Healthcare	- more than a month before the doctors were able to see me
- Children had moved	- no reason to stay in our village
- Moving to UB	- problems like air pollution
- Development	- can't purchase the necessities - education is so expensive - retirement benefits are difficult to rely - our lives have gotten better
- Market economy	- no gradual shift - unemployment and poverty
- Welfare	- more difficult - housing is difficult
- Sufficient	- drastically changed - more difficult - welfare loans - making do
- Land	- travel far to fetch water - kilometer of wires - dangerous
- Central grid	- solve the air pollution
- Both working	- difficult
- Happy living here	- didn't have any other choice - don't have power - dangerous
- Income - Education	- unregistered - need to stay with her - kids are omitted - difficult for us - don't have standards - pretty bad - I'll have to stay at home
- Jobs	- difficult to earn enough money - won't pay on time - never pay
- Hospital	- Far - Difficult
- Waste management	- so much waste - waste continues to pile-up

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Moved to UB</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Air pollution</li><li>- kids are sick quite often</li><li>- lifelong respiratory illnesses</li><li>- intensive care</li></ul>
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## CHAPTER 5: Conclusions

*This thesis intends to continue a conversation that dates back to those started by Rossabi (2005) and Kamata et al. (2010) – looking at structural readjustments for the 1990's and Ulaanbaatar's distinct development characteristics. By looking at these development characteristics, unique and challenging structures were observed in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar: inequitable access to health services, lack of infrastructure, and higher rates of air pollution, amongst other things.*

### **Explaining Mongolia's development characteristics.**

The sudden changes to social safety nets also left herding communities particularly vulnerable, as was discussed, during the new economic and democratic system. This was particularly evident in the stories featured in chapter four, as several interviewees felt life before the transition was better. As the Government had previously provided support to herders during disasters, the structural readjustments had purged the government of bureaucrats and limited its' financial support. Therefore, during environmental disasters, such as a dzud, herders did not have a safety net to support them.

Additionally, climate change also played a role in the herders suffering. The previous system of government had closely regulated the size and scale of herds. In the free market economy, herders were left unchecked and the size of the herding population tripled in just over a decade. This led to depleted grasslands and the expediting of climate change challenges within the country, leading to more dzuds.

The aforementioned – structural adjustments, changes to social safety nets, and climate change – had compounding impacts that can still be felt to this day. So much so, that several of the respondents from the interviews for this thesis, hark back to better days under socialism. These compounding impacts have led to the government continuing to try to bolster the economy and putting it ahead of social welfare systems. With recent economic instability, it seems inevitable that the mistakes of the past could be repeated with the new IMF bailout now signed and austerity measures underway. Thus, as was highlighted above, it's important to recall that austerity measures taken on social safety

nets have life altering implications, as the UN Population Fund found a 50% increase in maternal mortality in 2016 due to cuts to maternal health funding. Thankfully pressure from civil society and UNFPA pushed the Government to increase its' budget back to 2015 levels and we witnessed drop back to 2015 levels during 2017.

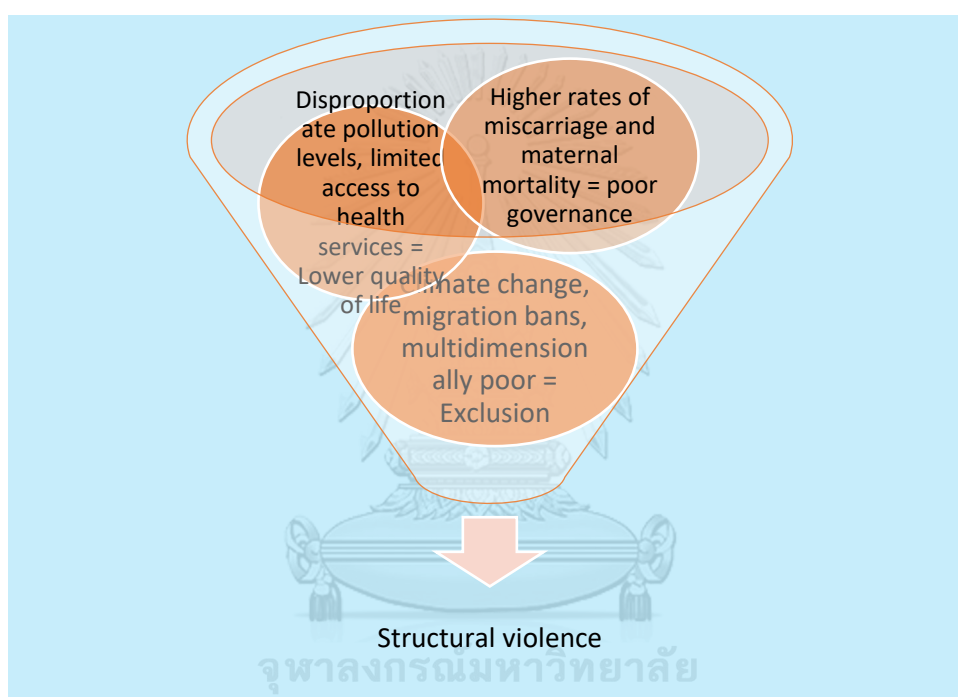
As well Mongolia's greatest challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is likely tackling air pollution. Throughout this thesis, the high rates of air pollution and the impact it's having on ger district communities. Taking meaningful action to improve heating systems will be one step, but it's also important to address heating units within individual gers. The free electricity during the night for ger residents is a noble attempt, but secondary heating units are dangerous. Innovation is needed and it should be done in consultation with the ger dwelling communities. Additionally, to tackle air pollution fully, people need to be lifted out of poverty and they're going to need more than just a "hand-up", but also a "hand-out". In Mongolia, multi-million dollar institutions have been given financial support, but the people living and breathing in the ger districts need just as much, if not more, investment and support. If the government can get children healthy, that will enable to get mother's back to work, thus boosting the economy. Again, reinvesting in the ger districts in a way that gives people opportunities so they may support themselves financially and they will lift themselves out of poverty. If this can be achieved, it will mean fewer gers, meaning fewer stoves and less pollution.

### **Describe and analyze structural violence emerging from development practices**

Though further research is needed to explore whether **structural violence has emerged from maldevelopment practices**. It is evident that poor governance and somewhat restricted access to basic social services, have excluded people and communities from accessing their rights and services. These practices have disproportionately impacted herders and ger district communities. Looking back on the conceptual framework's structural violence pyramid, we can easily see how being a multidimensionally poor migrant residing within the ger districts has disproportionate impacts on health, livelihoods and education. For those that fall into the category of being multidimensionally poor in Mongolia has development challenges and implications,

yet, for those living in the ger districts it is exacerbated.

Strikingly, this thesis explored the limited accessibility of hospitals and pharmacies within the ger district communities. This would fit into Galtung's structural violence as this thesis has found disparities between access to health services depending on where you live in the capital city. Further quantitative research is needed to explore whether mortality rates are higher due to delays in accessing health services.



*Conceptual framework on the structural violence facing the ger district community as it applies to the findings*

The Migration Ban is a prime example. A further study on the specific impacts on families that have been 'banned' but still moved into the city as unregistered residents. Being multidimensionally poor and arriving in the ger districts as unregistered migrants impedes on their rights and capabilities to access education, health services and to meaningfully lobby their local leaders on issues and concerns relevant to their lives. Short and long-term studies should be conducted to identify the implications of the implications of the ban and its' long term impacts.

The structural readjustments of the 1990's has had a profound impact on the communities living in the ger districts that resonates to this day: air pollution, access to decent work, poor living conditions, rising prices of meat, limited water/sanitation, and restricted access to basic social services – healthcare and childcare. When we look at Galtung's concept of structural violence with regards to the ger district communities, in many cases, the actual is unavoidable. For instance, looking at the many of the issues raised by the respondents – access to healthcare, safety, and infrastructure – can be improved, thus the quality of life could be improved. Nearly all of the families interviewed expressed concern over the health and wellbeing of their children. These issues are compounded with the rising levels of air pollution, particularly for families living within the ger districts. However, it very well may be, when it comes to air pollution, that the actual is unavoidable. Meaning, the geographical nature of the city and the challenge of people needing to keep warm, may not be possible for the Government to change.

To conclude, structural violence may be very much present within the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar. Though Kamata et al.'s contribution was consequential, much more research is needed, both qualitative and quantitative. Robust up-to-date research would paint a picture of the current situation after the recent economic crisis as this thesis has found increased vulnerabilities and mobilities amongst the ger district communities in Ulaanbaatar. As well, using Galtung's concept of violence, would give a different lens from which to study. This needs to be a robust, representative study, similar to the demographic and health survey, but with a heavy qualitative approach, needs to be conducted within Ulaanbaatar. As well, future survey's should disaggregate based on type of living accommodation, rather than breaking it down based on current districts. This will require political will, both in terms of collecting data and ensuring samples are representative.

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WBM	World Bank in Mongolia
UB	Ulaanbaatar
EU	European Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
IOM	International Organization for Migration
GoM	Government of Mongolia
WHO	World Health Organization
NSO	National Statistics Office
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
SISS	Social Indicator Sampling Survey
NSO	National Statistics Office of Mongolia



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