


Spring 2015

# Placeness: Mongolia A Call for the Creation of a Human Impact Assessment

C. Winston Kies  
*SIT Study Abroad*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection)

 Part of the [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Human Geography Commons](#), [Law and Society Commons](#), [Nature and Society Relations Commons](#), [Place and Environment Commons](#), [Sociology of Culture Commons](#), and the [Theory, Knowledge and Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Kies, C. Winston, "Placeness: Mongolia A Call for the Creation of a Human Impact Assessment" (2015). *Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection*. 2080.

[https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp\\_collection/2080](https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2080)

This Unpublished Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the SIT Study Abroad at SIT Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Independent Study Project (ISP) Collection by an authorized administrator of SIT Digital Collections. For more information, please contact [digitalcollections@sit.edu](mailto:digitalcollections@sit.edu).

# Placeness: Mongolia

A Call for the Creation of a Human Impact Assessment

C. Winston Kies  
Middlebury College  
SIT: Mongolia

## Abstract

Sense of place, place-based identities, and “placeness” are fundamental ways through which human beings understand their physical place in the world. The means by which most Mongolians—and indeed most human beings—strive for placeness is fairly simple. First, one decides what location will become their place. Their place may be predetermined (i.e. a birthplace) or chosen (based on the wildlife, the scenery, the neighborhood, etc.). Once one has a place, sense of place necessarily follows. One’s place becomes the standard by which locations are understood, and by which one understands oneself. The latter process constitutes the formation of place-based identities, which inform how one will strive for the feeling of placeness.

Although the outcomes may vary, this framework can be seamlessly applied to any community, and is especially applicable in Mongolia. Mongolia is going through incredible demographic transitions, making it an especially unique location to study the different ways in which people understand their place in the world. The implications of individuals’ understandings of place were explored in four research locations: Galuut *soum* (Bayankhongor *aimag*), the UB *ger* district, Ulaanbaatar, and Ulgii (Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*). The senses of place, place-based identities and placeness of citizens in each of these locations were studied through literature review and synthesis, interviews, surveys and participant observation, and supplemented by photographs and vignettes. In the end, this research illuminated two trends. First, various cultural and geographical factors give rise to a diversity of social identities within Mongolia. Secondly, the deep importance of family to Mongolians tends to homogenize individual identities.

At the end of this paper, I propose the creation of a law on Human Impact Assessments, which would require the assessment of the role of sense of place, place-based identities, and placeness in communities affected by the activities of the central government and private companies.

**Key terms:** Sociology, Geography, Individual and Family Studies

## Table of Contents

<b>Title Page .....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>List of Figures, Tables and Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Table of Figures .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Brief Explanation of Key Terms .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Literature Review .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Methods.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Discussion.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Summary of Results.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>A Nomadic Population: Galuut Soum.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>A Population in Transition: The Ulaanbaatar Ger District.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>An Urbanized Nomadic People: Ulaanbaatar City.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>An Extraordinary Population: Bayan-Ulgii.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Proposal for the Creation of the Law of Mongolia on Human Impact</b>	
<b>Assessments.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>iii</b>

## Acknowledgements

This is, in so many ways, the most important section of the paper, as there would be no paper without the brilliant, kind and thoughtful people who supported me along the way. Many times I have tried to make a list of everyone involved in this endeavor and each time I have failed, so instead, I will keep it short and sweet.

Tsolmon, thank you for taking me on as an advisee and devoting more time to my project than it rightfully deserved, especially with all the incredible work you're doing at the Zorig Foundation.

Bayaraa, thank you for your boundless patience and consistent willingness to discuss whatever was on my mind, no matter how big or small.

Thank you to the Zorig Foundation for being so welcoming. I would not have gotten nearly as much done without such a welcoming environment.

Janbolat, thank you for guiding Adrian and me through Bayan-Ulgii. You were, by far, the best man for the job, and a good friend to boot.

Thank you to the SIT: Mongolia Staff. Without all of you, I doubt I would have made it to ISP period in the first place.

And finally, thank you to my friends and family who, whether they know it or not, sustained me throughout this wonderful, exhausting month. I appreciate each and every one of you.

## List of Figures, Tables and Abbreviations

### Table of Figures

Figure 1 .....	17
Figure 2 .....	21
Figure 3 .....	21
Figure 4 .....	24
Figure 5 .....	28
Figure 6 .....	28
Figure 7 .....	34
Figure 8 .....	34

### List of Abbreviations

**EIA:** Environmental Impact Assessment

**LMEIA:** Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments

**HIA:** Human Impact Assessment

**LMHIA:** Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments

**OED:** Oxford English Dictionary

**MSIS:** Mongolian Statistical Information Service

**UB:** Ulaanbaatar (City)

### Brief Explanation of Key Terms

**Sense of Place:** A broad phrase most often associated with the field of human geography. Although rarely defined, it refers to the various manners in which individual humans define and connect to particular places. Most often, this is a feeling-based connection.

**Place-Based Identities:** A sociological phrase used to categorize and describe the way particular places influence individual's thoughts on "self" and "identity" and vice versa.

**Placeness:** The endpoint and the finish line, or rather, a multiplicity of finish lines. Placeness is one feeling verbalized in many ways (feeling at home,

feeling comfortable, protected, safe; the list goes on). Human beings are biologically predisposed to partake in a never-ending search to find and feel placeness wherever they are, and attempt to do so by first understanding their sense of place and, subsequently, their place-based identities.

## Introduction

Often times the things that matter most are also the things we think about the least. Breathing comes to mind as one of the clearest examples: it is so absolutely necessary that our subconscious takes the reigns and leaving us to take it for granted. And yet, many of the most common forms of meditation center on intentional breathing. “Placeness”—a term that I will soon come back to, but can be roughly defined as the parent of sense of place and place-based identities—functions in daily life much the same way as breathing. It guides the major life decisions of nearly every human being, and plays a fundamental role in helping us understand our individual selves and our respective identities. And furthermore, because the relationship between placeness and society is reciprocal, researching either subject will illuminate the other to some degree.

Although some work has been done studying sense of place and place-based identities in Mongolia, the research is slim, and no work, to my knowledge, has been done to compare and contrast the way these ideas are understood in distinct communities throughout the country so as to better understand the state of Mongolian national cohesion. In an effort to fill this gap in research, special care has been taken to provide the deepest possible understanding of my four research locations, those being Galuut *soum* (Bayankhongor *aimag*), the Ulaanbaatar *ger* district, Ulaanbaatar City and Bayan-Ulgii *aimag* center. Therefore, in addition to interviews, participant observation and surveys, four photographs, a photojournal (see Appendix A), and four pieces of creative nonfiction are used to supplement the data collected in each location. In short, the research that has been done, though potentially valuable, does not attempt to provide the reader with the full picture of any given place and lacks inherent practical application within Mongolia.



To ensure that the work done here is put to practical use, I have created the Human Impact Assessment (discussed briefly in the following paragraph) and proposed that it be made into law, using my placeness research to help prove its applicability. This law is meant to give the Mongolian people a way to voice their opinions of projects that may affect them. It also requires that the organization in charge of a project survey the potentially affected population to gain a better understanding of their thoughts on placeness (and therefore also sense of place and place-based identities) so as to have a clearer idea of how that community might react to a certain project.

The Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments is meant to give the environment a voice during the planning stages of large government and private projects, but there is no such law that explicitly gives the local people that same level of respect. This lack of communication between the organization in charge of any given project and the people most directly affected has had negative—sometimes even crippling—effects on Mongolia's economic and infrastructural progress as well as its national unity. This is an unfortunate and unproductive trend, but it is also a correctable one. If Mongolia were to pass the Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments, legally coupling it to the Law on Environmental Impact Assessments, private companies and the government would be legally required to include the local people in the planning, exploration, and implementation processes. This proposed law, along with the following research, would help curb much of the tension that is presently hindering healthy economic and infrastructural progress in Mongolia.

## Literature Review

The theoretical basis of this paper focuses on sense of place, place-based identities, and placeness, with some focus on self and identity to provide additional depth. However, before diving headlong into the theories themselves it is necessary to understand the fields of study by which they are framed. Sense of place comes most directly from the field of human geography. The Oxford English Dictionary defines human geography as “the branch of geography dealing with how human activity affects or is influenced by the earth’s surface” (2015). Sense of place is used within the field of human geography to study the various manners in which individual humans define and connect to particular geographical places. This research can be used to better understand how human activity affects and is influenced by a particular geographical setting. Like sense of place, the study of place-based identities deals with the human and feeling-based aspects of its respective field, in this case sociology. According to the OED, sociology is “the study of the development, structure, and functioning of human society” (2015). Therefore, in its sociological context, place-based identities are used to study how a specific society influences the way humans see themselves and how their individual understandings of self and identity influence the nature of society. Although seemingly distinct, albeit related, theories from seemingly distinct disciplines, I argue that sense of place and place-based identities are in fact two peas in the same pod, that pod being placeness.

In order to fully grasp the deep implications placeness has on the everyday happenings of individuals and governments alike, its two constituent parts—sense of place and place-based identities—must be further developed. In the last 50 years, sense of place has become one of the sexiest topics among intellectuals across several disciplines. As American poet Billy Collins bluntly explains in “A Sense of Place” (2005):

“If things had happened differently,

Maine or upper Michigan  
might have given me a sense of place —

a topic that now consumes 87%  
of all commentary on American literature.”

As popular a topic as sense of place is today, in the ever-thickening whirlwind of academic articles, forums, poems and books, one is surprisingly hard-pressed to find any concrete definition of the term. This is due, in part, to how general the term is in isolation, making it nearly impossible to define in any sweeping way. However, when put into the context of human geography, sense of place becomes specific enough to become definable. Even so, because “place always implies a sense of place” when humans are present (Butz and Eyles, 1997), the definition has to embody an infinite multiplicity of senses of place, and is therefore necessarily broad. In the context of human geography, then, sense of place can be defined as the various ways human beings understand and explain their connection to a place by way of memories and affections formed through repeated and complex encounters with that place. This definition uses Relph’s (1985, p. 26) understanding of place, which states that place is qualitatively different from landscape or space (Butz and Eyles, 1997). Humans cannot help but interact with landscapes and spaces because they “are part of any immediate encounter with the world” (Relph, 1985), but when interaction occurs without attachment it precludes the possibility of a landscape or space becoming a place.

Place is a both geographical location and a site of self-knowledge. It is created when one decides to use a landscape or space as a lens to interpret and understand one’s place in the greater physical world, the world outside of a place (i.e. landscapes and spaces).

“Before any choices there is this ‘place’, where the foundations of earthly existence and human condition establish themselves. We can change locations, move, but this is still to look for a place; we need a base to set down our Being and to realize our possibilities, a *here* from which to discover the world, a *there* to which we can return”.

(Dardel, 1952, p. 56; translated by Relph, 1985, p. 27)

Place and sense of place help frame humans’ interpretations of and interactions with the world, helping us make an incalculable amount of decisions throughout our lives.

Some present-day human geographers have argued that individuals have become dissociated from physical place as social media networks make geography less relevant than it once was: “institutions, not places, guide interactions” (Stacey, 1969; Butz and Eyles, 1997). This model implies that senses of place also come from these “institutions” rather than geographical places. This may very well be true in some societies, but as later sections of this paper address, Mongolia is not one of these cases.

Sense of place focuses on how one’s place affects one’s life decisions, as well as one’s interpretations of landscapes and spaces. Sociological place-based identities takes this idea one step further, addressing the ways in which a chosen place (and the society therein) affects an individual’s perception of self and identity, and vice versa. Put another way, to study place-based identities one must turn one eye inward while keeping the other focused squarely on the external world, so as to understand how self and identity interact with society and how society interacts with self and identity. The “place” of place-based identities refers to the same definition of “place” as human geography’s sense of place and will therefore not be readdressed outright. Place-based sociological definitions of self and identity, however, are imperative; only once these ideas are defined can the implications and applicability of place-based identities be properly addressed.

The self has many faces for the many different contexts in which it is used, once again precluding the existence of a truly static definition. By looking at theories on the creation of self, however, a definition, one contextualized in a place-based frame of reference, can be sussed out. Mead (1934) sees the self as “emerging out of the mind, the mind as arising and developing out of social interaction, and patterned social interaction as forming the basis of social structure” (Stets and Burke, 2003). Although this line of reasoning has good bones, it misses a few key aspects of self-creation. Here again is Mead’s line of reasoning, rewritten to account for the gaps in theory: the self emerges out of the mind, the mind arises and develops out of social interaction, *as well as self interaction and place-based interaction*. Furthermore, patterned social *and place-based* interaction form the basis of social structure. Directed by this updated line of reasoning, which takes into account self and place-based interactions, self can finally be defined. For the purpose of this paper—and indeed self-creation theory on the whole—the self may be defined as a set of dynamic perceptions of who we are in relation to others, ourselves, and our place(s).

With this definition in mind, a specific understanding of identity—or rather, two different aspects of identity—can also be formulated. Stryker (1980) argues that identity is a way to organize the multiple “selves” (place-based, social, etc.) within each person. For this paper, personal identity and social identity are the most relevant social organizers. Personal identity is defined as the collection of things that make every human unique (Stryker, 1968). These “things” include their understanding of self through their individual biographies (e.g. birthplace), characteristics, and role identities (e.g. parent, employee), biographies being especially important in the place-based frame of reference common in Mongolia. Social identity focuses on groupings instead of individuals, and may be defined as a person’s sense of who they are—or their sense of self—based on their membership(s) in social, cultural and/or ethnic groups (Tajfel, 1981). Although these two place-based identities by no means capture every kind of Mongolian identity,

they do a good job of encapsulating the most popular, and therefore the most influential, frames of reference within Mongolia. This claim is further supported by my data collected throughout the country, which is described in depth in the discussion section.

Sense of place and place-based identities are important ideas in certain academic realms, but are in a way half-baked, incomplete. Neither idea acknowledges that the end goal of the other is the same as its own, thereby connecting sense of place and place-based identities so inextricably that I argue they should be seen as two different steps in a single process, a process driven by the never-ending search for a single feeling. Humans strive for it from dawn to dusk every day of their waking lives, yet the feeling is never defined, at least not at face value. Harner (2001) comes close to touching on it in his summary of the process:

“Place is the location in which people struggle to achieve goals and understand their existence. Through struggle, meaning is built into inanimate objects that give place symbolic significance. This meaning can become a part of social identity – a place-based identity for groups within society.”

First, it must be said that although Harner’s theory is well taken, it fails to consider that meaning can be built into animate objects as well, for example the wildlife in a certain area. Having addressed this point, this theory can act as a springboard to dive into a deeper understanding of humanity. This “symbolic value” is often described as feeling “at home” or feeling “comfortable,” but no such existing term (a) takes into account the process by which it is found and (b) its universal human importance. This is a problem that calls for the particular solution of word invention, and that word, considering the context, is placeness.

Placeness is the endpoint and the finish line, or rather, a multiplicity of finish lines. It is one feeling verbalized in many ways (feeling at home,

feeling comfortable, protected, safe; the list goes on). Human beings are biologically predisposed to partake in a never-ending search to find and feel placeness wherever they are, and attempt to do so by first understanding their sense of place and, subsequently, their place-based identities.

Placeness is an invented word and an important word, and describes one of the key factors humans use in major life choices, for example where and with whom to live. Therefore, by understanding placeness by way of sense of place and place-based identities, one can better understand how a society might react to a certain law, company, or project.

Placeness is a term with vast and unexplored value outside of Mongolia, but within this country, one of its greatest applications is in the world of law. To complete the picture and understand where placeness fits into the Mongolian legal structure, certain aspects of the Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments must first be reviewed. Because the merits of the Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments will be touched upon at a later point in this paper, this review will focus on the gaps in the law, all of which relate to the lack of articles on the rights of the humans in these environments. As *Environmental Impact Assessment* implies, people are not at the heart of this legislation. However, because conducting an EIA is prerequisite to good international standing (for companies and governments alike), the LMEIA is fairly well respected within Mongolia.

As respected as it is, it does little to respect the people. The only articles specifically devoted to the rights of the public come in Chapter Four, the final chapter, under the Miscellaneous section. Article 17 is titled “Public participation in the process of environmental impact assessments” and includes five points, three of which are dangerously vague. The first (17.1) states that the “central administrative organization in charge of nature and environment shall make public via its website information regarding development programs and plans...and the projects that have undergone an environmental impact assessment.” Upon visiting the English version of the

Ministry of Nature and the Environment's website, however, I failed to find a list of, and further information on, the current programs, plans, and projects in Mongolia. Moreover, there is nothing in 17.1 that states that the public must be notified of this information in the first place. 17.2 is equally problematic, stating "public comments may be invited during the process of strategic assessments of national and regional polities that the government plans to adopt and development programs and plans [that will] be implemented." The use of "may" in the official English translation of the document implies that there also may *not* be a space for public comments during the planning and development stages of projects. Furthermore, it fails to explicitly state that such a space exists during a project's implementation. 17.4, though somewhat longer than the other four points, has a similar problem as 17.1 and 17.2 in that its language is insufficiently explicit, thereby allowing for grey area. The fourth sub-article is a single sentence, stating:

"It is the responsibility of the legal entity performing the detailed environmental impact assessment to organize, at the report preparation stage, consultations with and formally seek comments from the local authority, the community that is likely to be affected by the project and local residents living in the area where the proposed project is going to be implemented."

This is a sufficient start, but does not explain what it means to "formally seek comments" or the nature of "consultations," therefore allowing the most important aspects of 17.4 to be interpreted as a "project implementer" sees fit.

In this paper, I use placeness research to fill these gaps in legislation, conducting studies to better understand placeness throughout Mongolia, finally creating a piece of legislation that addresses the issue of placeness in the context of present and future projects throughout Mongolia.



## Methods

The four research methods I employed were literature review and synthesis, interviews, surveys and participant observation.

I read, reviewed and synthesized several theoretical and site-specific academic articles, current Mongolian laws, and Mongolian poems and folktales in order to better understand how sense of place and place-based identities are understood in a distinctly Mongolian context. The majority of this research occurred during the first week of May 2015, at the beginning of the ISP period.

I conducted a total of 22 interviews in four distinct areas of Mongolia, using two different translators when necessary. These four areas—listed in the order by which they were visited—are Galuut *soum* in Bayankhongor *aimag*, the Bayan-Ulgii *aimag* center, the Denjiin Myanga area of the UB *ger* district, and Ulaanbaatar City. Janbolat Khumarkhan translated 13 of the 14 interviews conducted in Bayan-Ulgii (Janbolat was the subject of the 14<sup>th</sup> interview, therefore no translator was needed). Tsolmon Bayara aided in the translation of interviews in Ulaanbaatar City and the UB *ger* district. In total, she translated six of the 22 interviews. The questions, which can be found in the appendix section, were specifically chosen to better understand how each person described and understood their personal sense of place, place-based identities and opinion on the proposed Human Impact Assessment. The fundamental line of questioning remained the same throughout the research period, but questions were added to follow relevant lines of inquiry when they arose. Each interviewee signed a consent form outlining the purpose of the study and an explanation of their rights. Each interviewee was also offered a signed copy of the consent form. A list of the fundamental interview questions and a copy of the consent form can be found in the appendix section.

A total of 40 surveys were completed during May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. The surveys were written in English, translated into Mongolian, and administered

with the help of five research assistants. 20 surveys were administered from the government building of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*, Chingeltei district. The second 20 surveys were administered from the State Department Store in Ulaanbaatar City. Both sets of surveys were administered as I conducted interviews in the two respective areas. Once completed, the surveys were translated from Mongolian to English and delivered to me on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. Although the phrasing of the survey questions was slightly different than that of the interviews, the content served the same purpose of understanding individuals' respective place identities, senses of place, and opinions on the proposed Human Impact Assessment. Unlike the interviews, the survey questions were set and did not change. A copy of this survey can be found in the appendix section.

Participant observation was employed to varying degrees at each of the four research sites. This method was employed most often during my 12-day homestay with a nomadic family in Galuut *soum*, Bayankhongor *aimag*, and my month-long homestay in Ulaanbaatar City. During these periods, I participated in each family's daily routines and took extensive notes in a fieldwork journal, focusing mostly on experiences related to sense of place and place-based identities.

Additionally, I took several hundred pictures and several videos documenting the time spent traveling throughout Mongolia, including the four research sites. These two forms of media are utilized in an effort to clarify and color topics, supplementing the four main research methods employed. A link to the three relevant photojournals (Mongolia I, Mongolia II, Mongolia III) can be found in the appendix section.

## Discussion

### Summary of Results

As an invented word, placeness does not directly translate into Mongolian. Therefore, interviewees and survey participants were instead asked the question: “what makes you feel at home?” The surveys were conducted in two locations: the State Department Store in Ulaanbaatar and a *UB ger* district (Denjiin Myanga area, Chingeltei district). Of the 40 people surveyed, 25 wrote that family makes them feel at home, 15 people answered with a place, citing some form of the birthplace argument (“I was born and raised here”), and 9 answered that quiet places make them feel at home. The reason more than 40 responses are counted is due to the fact that some gave multiple answers (personal communication, May 18-19, 2015). When the same question was asked to the 14 interviewees in Bayan-Ulgii, 10 said that their birthplace and their family make them feel at home; in each of these cases, interviewees clarified that family took precedent over birthplace, however (personal communication, May 8-11, 2015). My findings in Galuut *soum* followed a similar pattern, but because they are rooted in participant observation, they will be formally addressed in the Galuut section of the discussion (personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Of the 62 people who were officially asked to give their opinions of the Human Impact Assessment, 60 people stated that it is a good and necessary idea (including the Governor of Bayan-Ulgii *aimag* and the Governor of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* of the *UB ger* district). 59 people stated that they would be more willing to allow government and private company projects with the HIA in place. Those who did not answer these questions in the positive left them blank; no one said or wrote “No” as an answer to either question (personal communication, March 30-May 19). For a visual representation of this data, see Figure 1 and 2.

### A Nomadic Population: Galuut Soum

“My grandfather lived his life in this *soum* and so did my father, and I will live my full life here too.”

- A nomadic herder from Galuut *soum*  
(personal communication, March 30,  
2015)

Galuut is one of 20 *soums* in Bayankhongor *aimag*. Located on the north end of the *aimag*, Galuut has a subarctic climate with mild summers and blisteringly cold winters (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, 1961-1990). According to the Mongolian Statistical Information Service’s (MSIS) 2014 data, Galuut has a population of around 3,815 people and 207,935 livestock. Research was conducted in an area almost entirely occupied by nomadic herders; MSIS data indicates that there are about 842 herder households in Galuut *soum* alone (2014). Galuut’s landscape may be best described as a series of uneven waves: long valleys of pastureland followed by low mountains stretching for miles in every direction.

I lived with a nomadic family for 12 days—from March 28 to April 8—conducting research, primarily in the form of participant observation. When asked to describe themselves, they said that they were a normal family with an average number of livestock: 25 horses, 18 yak, 150 sheep, 50 lambs, 87 goats, and 38 kids. From the perspective of a host son, the family consisted of a 48-year-old father, a 46-year-old mother, a 23-year-old brother, an 18-year-old brother and a 7-year-old sister. They considered themselves as having a similar family breakdown and lifestyle as most of the herders they knew in Galuut *soum* (personal communication, March 28-April 8, 2015). In order to understand the place underneath the statistics, a brief vignette on life in Galuut has been added below.

### **Twilight Horses, Ski-masked Singers, and the Race to Come Undone**

Before the race to come undone, before I saw the moonlight dance and shimmer atop the vibrating air, I had learned a few things, and I had made a list.

1. Only approach a horse from its left side.

My three brothers and I are at the bottom of a valley. It is twilight, and the horses have just been hitched. My eldest host brother tucks the billowing pieces of my *deel* into my sash. As usual, I am confused.

2. These nomads are a handsome, colorful, hospitable people. They love wrestling and vodka.

Another brother, two years my junior, takes my hand. I ask myself how confusion has so quickly become my resting mental state. Then the moonlight shimmers turn electric and my confusion evaporates, leaving me with a head full of steam. I remember my sprinter's stance.

3. Sometimes, they keep their sugar in empty Pringles cans.

Launch. Never has clarity felt so crisp. Herding turned my legs to rubber; biological impulse turned them to springs. My brothers and I are racing, the *ger* is the finish line. I know this to be true because I, like my new brothers, are human.

4. Humans are humans, no matter where you go.

### Relevance

Every aspect of their daily life centered on the land. The pastureland provided food for their livestock; clean water came from massive chunks of frozen river; goat and yak dung was used as fuel for their central hearth and the meat cooked over the hearth came from the livestock. This dependency and constant interaction, coupled with their long family history in the *soum*, has developed into a profound feeling of place-attachment to Galuut *soum*, implying there within a clear, unshakeable sense of place. Their respective senses of place, in short, are entirely based on a geographical area. When the updated self-creation theory is applied to this family, it becomes clear that their different senses of self—though still informed by social, self and place-based interaction—arise almost completely out of a single source, that being their native environment of Galuut.

The social interactions of each member of my host family are limited to immediate family and the other herders in the area, whose individual selves are almost singularly place-based, having arisen out of interactions with those who themselves interact primarily with the land. This limits self interaction to the knowledge provided by fellow herders—whose “selves” are primarily place-based—and any internal discussion one might have about sense of place in Galuut. The few herders who go off to school have the potential to be an exception to the norm because they have access to academic knowledge and are therefore more equipped for self interaction. However, the majority of herders in the area who go to school drop out once they are able in order to herd again, indicating their believe that school is not as important as herding, and is therefore not an important aspect of self. Taking my host family to be a fair representation of the local population, it can be reasonably asserted that the vast majority of Galuut herders adhere to the place-based understanding of sense of place.

Furthermore, because their senses of self are so singular, so too are their place-based identities. Simply put, a Galuut herder’s total self (or collection of selves) needs very little organizing, making his or her identities

easy to understand. The personal identity of an average Galuut herder's consists of familial role(s)—for example his or her role as a parent, a child, a cousin and so on—and their birthplace, which is almost always Galuut *soum*. The social identity of a herder like my father is similarly limited, and is defined by family and profession. To bring case study into a practical light, if a project implementer (whether that be a private company or the central government) were to spend time studying sense of place and place-based identities in a community like Galuut, they would have a better idea of how to interact with such a specific population and how they might react to any given project (for example, Galuut herders would not take well to a mind diverting the rivers in their area). This would in turn increase trust between the two parties and allow for a swift-moving, mutually productive project.

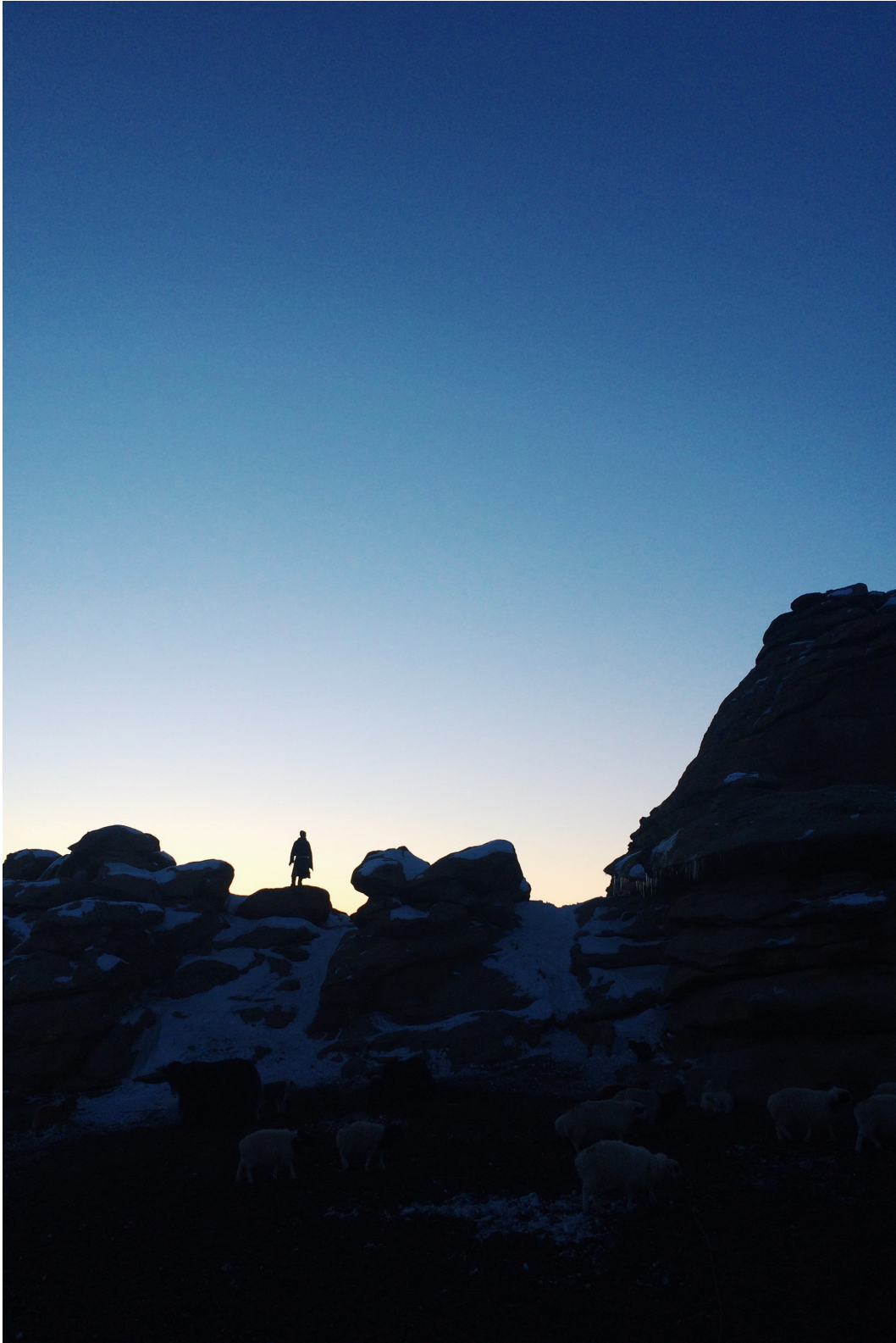


Figure 1



### A Population in Transition: The Ulaanbaatar Ger District

“I feel happy here, but I do not feel at home, so if a company came in and gave me money to move into [an] apartment, I would take the money and move.”

- A retired herder living in the UB *ger* district (personal communication, May 18, 2015)

The 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* is one of 18 *koroo*s in the Chingeltei district of Ulaanbaatar City. Although the whole of the Chingeltei district is not in the *ger* district, the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* is. Oyuntsetseg Namkhai, the Governor of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*, supplied further information: a total of 6,998 people live in the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*. It is a fairly young population, where 3,000 people are 0 to 18 years old and another 3,400 are between the ages of 18 and 55. The total population is 45% men and 55% women, and the vast majority of the households are low-income (O. Namkhai, personal communication, May 18, 2015).

I interviewed three people while in the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*, a small shop owner, the governor of the *koroo*, and a retired herder and bus driver. 20 surveys were also administered to local residents during this time. Before turning to the research itself, however, it is important that this research location is understood as more than its statistical bones. The following vignette has therefore been written to breath life (as well as a sense of reality) into the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*.

#### A Few Perspectives of the UB Ger District: Near, Nearer and Far

When I first caught a glimpse of the Ulaanbaatar *ger* district from a frosted window of an unknown bus, I thought it looked like those favelas in Brazil, the ones I’ve never seen. At a distance, squinting, this comparison isn’t so far off. The *ger* district looks like a deflated Brazilian slum, but it is

not a deflated Brazilian slum. It is a liminal space, a mouse maze of high fences where families in transit decide to rest, until they decide to stay.

The first time I entered the *ger* district I was a blind mouse. I was with my family, still unsure about their names. It was dark and we were late—by my standards, certainly not theirs—so all my memories of the drive center on the lurch in my stomach and the traditional Mongolian long song my host father sent ringing through the dust-pummeled car. (I took a recording of him singing that night. It is one of my favorite things I possess).

I stepped out of the car and into the night, then relieved of the night I stepped into a doorframe. Blown out before me was a shrine disguised as a living room and bathed in a dense, dirty gold. Behind the TV, on the furthest wall from the door, Chenghis Khan sat prostrate on his throne in a rug. He was dead-eyeing another rug that covered one wall so precisely that it looked more like a floor than the ground so clearly beneath my feet. On the television, an animated baby dinosaur was in search for his mother. The search would continue for the rest of the night. Those patches of the walls not lavished with rug were adorned with two *morin khuurs*, an acoustic guitar with white stenciled Beatles silhouettes, a Buddhist altar (shoved in the corner), a teal space heater, two large holographic pictures of mountains, one dozen rubix cubes and rubix cube-like puzzles on a shelf beneath a cuckoo clock, and a large poster of a wolf howling at the moon. The room had the feeling of a shrine but to what I did not know.

I've since spent some time roaming the *ger* district, talking to people, absorbing the colors, and inhaling the dust. And now I know: the shrine is to the *ger* district; it is a celebration of all its glorious, motley potential. But whereas this golden shrine is contained within a living room, the *ger* district is allowed to expand into chaos. But for once, like the favelas of Brazil, there is potential in this chaos.

### Relevance

Sense of place and place-based identities, though remarkably strong among the citizens of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*, are almost entirely based on places where they are not. This is not unique to the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo*, residents throughout the UB *ger* district suffer from a case of “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” creating a confused concoction of identities representative of the transitional space within which they reside. When asked what makes them feel at home, more than half of the people in each of the other three research locations—Galuu, Bayan-Ulgii, and Ulaanbaatar City—answered with their current home/community, often citing the birthplace or hometown arguments to explain their answers. However, of the 20 citizens surveyed within the *ger* district, only two wrote that their current home/community makes them feel at home while also citing either the birthplace or hometown rationale. This means that although many citizens of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* feel placeness with their families, their current living location does not provide them with the feeling of placeness. Furthermore, those who did not answer the aforementioned question with family—as well as some who did—answered with somewhere other than the *ger* district, for example a resort or the countryside in general (personal communication, May 18, 2015). To summarize, individuals in the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* do have a sense of place, but it is rooted somewhere other than where they are. This causes confusion when trying to define one’s place-based identities, because the motley spectrum of individuals’ senses of place leads to a lack of cohesive selves, making any hope of patterned interactions an impossibility.

The 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* is representative of a liminal space, one that is screaming for the possibility to find a sense of place where they are. This is why, as Governor Namkhai explained, 75% of the people living in her *koroo* support the construction of multistory apartments. They want a space to be comfortable; they want a space to create a place (O. Namkhai, personal communication, May 18, 2015).



Figure 2



Figure 3

### An Urbanized Nomadic People: Ulaanbaatar City

“I feel at home in Erdenet because I was born there and my family is there. But now UB feels like home, and this is where I want to stay.”

- A 24-year-old clerk at the State Department Store (personal communication, May 19, 2015)

Ulaanbaatar City now houses about half of the population of Mongolia, around 1.5 million people. Even with such a massive population, however, the sense of place and place-based identities within UB are as much of an enigma within the Mongolian context as they are when compared to the same ideas in Western cities. As of now, the citizens of Ulaanbaatar seem to adhere to a hybrid understanding of sense of place, place-based identities and subsequently, placeness. This peculiar train of thought is more accessibly addressed below.

### An Ode to the Unknowing Mothers, Fathers, and Friends of Ulaanbaatar

During my first few weeks in Ulaanbaatar I got in the (ultimately good) habit of getting lost. In subsequent months, I have gained a dozen mothers, at least 10 fathers, a grandparent or two, and some exceptional moment-long friends. Considering all the people I’ve asked for directions, you’d think that one would have pushed me in the right direction, but of course you’d be wrong. See, Mongolian city dwellers use buildings and monuments the way nomads use rocks: when everything is a landmark, what’s the need for an address? But my knowledge of Ulaanbaatar landmarks is slim, so I’ll keep getting lost and keep finding family.

### Relevance

Placeness in Ulaanbaatar is the coming together of devoutly place-based sense of self and identity, and the new—possibly lesser—role of geographical place in “modern societies.” To fully develop this idea, we must give some credence to the theory that in these modern (and predominantly

Western) societies, “institutions, not places, guide interactions” (Stacey, 1969; Butz and Eyles, 1997). Most Westerners are familiar with these “institutions,” social media outlets being the main perpetrators. Such institutions as Facebook and Instagram allow for a level of social connectivity that Mongolians—a traditionally nomadic people who were under Soviet control until 1991 and Chinese control before that—were nowhere near prior to the mid-1990s. Since then, these institutions have indeed been moving city-dwelling Mongolians away from a solely place-based understanding of placeness, but Ulaanbaatar’s denizens are still in the transitioning stages and have not yet fully transformed. Although some aspects of identities—primarily social identities—are changing at a fair clip (as is made apparent by the Mongolian youth’s obsession with all things Facebook), the results of the interviews and surveys conducted provide a substantial counterpoint to institution-based thinking.

Of the 20 people who were asked what makes them feel most at home, 10 answered that family makes them feel most at home. This data, though valuable, is unsurprising and further supporting a consistent sentiment throughout the four case studies. What is unique to this case study, however, are the 9 people who wrote that a “quiet” place makes them feel at home, four of whom coupled this answer with a green location like the countryside or a garden. The four interviews followed a similar trend, where one said “outside of UB,” another answered “Erdenet,” and the final two said that family makes them feel the greatest sense of placeness (personal communication, May 19, 2015). My host father in UB once remarked that the Mongolians who are the most entwined with the city are also the ones who go to the countryside the most (personal communication, March 8, 2015). This survey and interview data, when coupled to the massive popularity of summer homes outside of the city, are indicative of a slow moving, or even stagnating, trend towards institution-based identities and sense of place. Although some Mongolians are certainly proud to call UB their hometown, the (predominantly social) identities that are influenced by the digital and

social amenities of a city are secondary to the place-based individual identities that keep drawing Mongolians to the quietude and the greenery of the Mongolian countryside. Hustle and bustle has its appeal—and this appeal will grow with Mongolia—but for now, the majority of Mongolians see placeness as place-based, and their respective places are rarely UB proper.



Figure 4

### An Extraordinary Population: Bayan-Ulgii

“A quality person loves his birthplace and is dedicated to his birthplace, but I know my home can be anywhere in Mongolia because my children will always come to me.”

- A retired construction foreman and Kazakh Mongolian (personal communication, May 10, 2015)

Ulgii city is the capital of Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*, the westernmost province in Mongolia. The capital is in Elgii *soum*, which houses about one-third of Bayan-Ulgii’s total population, some 93,00 people (MSIS, 2014). The *aimag* shares borders with both Russia and China, and is only a few hundred kilometers from Kazakhstan. Perhaps Bayan-Ulgii’s most defining characteristic is that the majority of its denizens are ethnic Khazaks (who will from hereon be addressed as Kazakh Mongolians). This gives rise to many intriguing cultural and religious found nowhere else in Mongolia. One of the key contrasts between Kazakh Mongolians and the ethnic Mongolians throughout the rest of the country is that most of Bayan-Ulgii’s citizens are practicing muslims. I counted five mosques in Ulgii alone, and prayers went on throughout the day. The following vignette begins to chip away at the deeply fascinating—but possibly not-so-foreign—place that is Ulgii, along with the people that inhabit it.

#### An Island Full of Swimmers

(According to Google Maps) Ulgii, the capital of Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*, is situated 100 km from Russia, 213 km from China, 260 km from Kazakhstan, and 1,643 km from Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. Ulgii feels like an island in a sea of Mongolians, and culturally, it is. But one mustn’t forget that it is an island full of swimmers, and swimmers belong to the sea.



### Relevance

Skimming through the collected data, one might be surprised to find that the general trends in Kazakh Mongolian sense of place and place-based identities are quite similar to those in the three other case studies. As Darmen Khuskyei, the Governor of Bayan-Ulgii and an ethnic Kazakh himself, explained, “Mongolians and Mongolian Kazakhs are basically the same. There are some differences in daily life because of differences in religion...but both are Mongolian” (D. Khuskyei, personal communication, May 8, 2015). For the most part, this sentiment rang true in the 14 interviews conducted in Ulgii. 12 of the 14 interviewees cited family as one of the main ways they are able to placeness. This sentiment is consistent with the trend of Mongolians having a strong sense of place-based individual identities, regardless of their respective places. Six of these fourteen people also remarked that all of Mongolia feels like home, further emphasizing this unifying trend.

In comparing their full answers to those of the other three studies, however, one subtle, but crucial, difference arises. Respecting and remaining loyal to one’s birthplace was significantly more important in Ulgii and among Kazakh Mongolians than in it was in any of the other three research locations. When asked what makes them feel at home, all 14 interviewees remarked that birthplace and family were equally important in the creation of this feeling. The ubiquitous importance of Mongolian family life and traditional nomadic place-attachments helps to stabilize individual identities. This makes them quite similar across several superficially and geographically distinct locales. However, although the birthplace argument necessarily lends itself to the creation of place-based identities, Ulgii’s unique vicinity to its cultural and ethnic homeland calls for a reinterpretation of place.

In the Kazakh Mongolian context, place remains geographical, but the way it is valued and interpreted become dependant on any given place’s vicinity to Ulgii and Kazakhstan, the cultural and ethnic hubs for Kazakh Mongolians. In this way one’s understanding of sense of place becomes dualistic: it is defined not only by the place one is but its geographical and

symbolic proximity to the place it is attempting to emulate. This reinterpretation of place creates strong social identities within Ulgii—the original “satellite place”—and among Kazakh Mongolians, while still allowing entrance into shared aspects of sense of place and place-based identities throughout Mongolia. There is an underlying sense of national cohesion running throughout Mongolia like groundwater. It flows through family ties and hometown pride, rising through the individual identities they help to create. Once the connective role of sense of place, place-based identities, and placeness in Mongolia is understood, it has the potential to become a tool for massive economic, social, and political progress. And yet, wonderfully, this process begins with but a few simple questions: what makes you feel most at home, and why?



Figure 6

## Conclusion

The formula with which most Mongolians—and indeed most human beings—strive for placeness is fairly simple. First, one decides what location will become their place. Sometimes this is decided for them as a “birthplace,” sometimes they decide based on the wildlife, the scenery, the neighborhood, and the list goes on. Once one has a place, sense of place necessarily follows. One’s place becomes the standard by which locations are understood, and by which one understands oneself. The latter process constitutes the formation of place-based identities, which inform how one will strive for the feeling of placeness.

Although the outcomes may vary, this framework can be seamlessly applied to any community. This is exemplified in my four case studies, which focus on Galuut *soum* (Bayankhongor *aimag*), the UB *ger* district, Ulaanbaatar, and Ulgii (Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*). Making use of literature review and synthesis, interviews, surveys and participant observation, as well as supplemental photographs and vignettes, the senses of place, place-based identities and placeness of citizens in each of these locations were studied and compared. In the end, this research illuminated two trends. First, that Mongolians’ social identities are quite variable because of various cultural and geographical factors. Second, Mongolians’ individual identities were quite similar across the board, due in large part to the deep importance of family at each research location. This data helps to relay the incredible potential placeness has in attempts to strengthen Mongolian national cohesion and help promote swift economic and social progress. Placeness’ range of practical applications is further explored in the Recommendations section.

## Recommendations

I end this paper with two recommendations, one theoretical and the other practical. First, I recommend that there be further placeness studies conducted within Mongolia and throughout the world. The theory this paper has laid out should be stretched, stood upon and dug into, always in the hope of discovering new knowledge to propel the study of placeness into unexplored territories. Second, I recommend that a Human Impact Assessment (explained below) be legally required whenever an Environmental Impact Assessment is conducted. The official proposal is laid out below, and the translated version will be delivered to various parliament members by June 3, 2015.

### Proposal for the Creation of the Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments

#### Who am I?

My name is Charles Winston Kies. I am an American undergraduate student at Middlebury College, a small liberal arts school in the state of Vermont. I am not associated with any organizations in Mongolia except for the School for International Training (SIT), an American organization that has had a study abroad office in Mongolia for more than 10 years. If you have any questions about my proposal or would like to discuss it further, I can be reached by email ([ckies@middlebury.edu](mailto:ckies@middlebury.edu)) and by phone (95125875).

#### What is the HIA?

The Human Impact Assessment requires the central government and private corporations working in Mongolia to provide more complete information on their respective projects to the local people the project might affect. It also requires the widespread use of surveys—administered by a third party—in order to better understand the opinions of the people who would be affected by any project that warrants an Environmental Impact

Assessment (EIA). Furthermore, the HIA is meant to provide a clear, accessible, neutral channel through which the local people and the organization involved (whether it be the central government or a private company) can discuss the proposed project. The HIA is not meant to prevent projects, but aid in their success by preventing tensions before they arise, and creating a space for resolution if they do.

### **Why is the HIA necessary?**

The argument in support of the Human Impact Assessment comes down to basic respect: companies and the central government need to respect the general public, and the general public needs to respect these larger organizations and their respective projects. Respect and trust, however, only come through clarity and honesty. The HIA, through clear and easily enforceable regulations, will create a space for mutual respect and benefit for companies, the central government, and the general public alike.

As I address below, Mongolians throughout the nation are calling for the creation of this law. It may seem, then, that the HIA will benefit those affected by a project at the expense of those running the project. When the following examples are considered, however, it becomes clear that this is a misconception.

Although the merits of this company are highly contested within Mongolia, Oyu Tolgoi LLC has done an exemplary job of respecting the people of Khanbogd *soum*, Ömnögovi *aimag* (where OT is located) through a multitude of programs. On their “Community relations” page, which is written in both English and Mongolian, OT writes, “we work closely with the local communities throughout the implementation of our Land and cultural resource programmes and Local and regional development programmes, ensuring these continue to reflect their needs and respect local laws customs and culture.” In short, Oyu Tolgoi understands that they are taking something from the land and the people living there, and are therefore obligated to give something back. Unfortunately, large companies are by no

means required to respect the local people and adhere to upright business ethics, so unless they have company policies that directly address the affected population, the people are seldom respected. Although mining is a tense subject in Mongolia, Oyu Tolgoi has built a name for itself amongst the people of Khanbogd *soum* by respecting them, listening to their grievances, and providing easy access to information on their company and their project, three key tenants of the proposed Human Impact Assessment.

There are an unfortunately large number of examples of companies taking advantage of, exploiting or completely disregarding local people in order to “get rich quick.” This strategy, appealing as it may seem, creates explosive tension between the local people and the company (or companies) involved, sometimes ending in violent outbursts and halted projects. One such conflict occurred in September of 2010, when Tsetsegee Munkhbayar and three other members of the United Movement of Mongolian Rivers and Lakes opened fire on the gold mining equipment of Centerra Gold and Puraam Mining. Munkhbayar took action because he believed the joint mining project was wrongfully exploiting the land and, importantly, the local people. Although this is an extreme case, similar tensions have arisen throughout Mongolia, and will continue to arise until listening to the people (prior to project development) becomes law.

### **Will it find popular support?**

During my time in Mongolia, I have conducted interviews and surveys in Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*, Bayankhongor *aimag*, Ulaanbaatar City, and the UB *ger* district in order to better understand their thoughts on “placeness” (similar to the idea of “sense of place”), and to gauge national interest in the Human Impact Assessment. I conducted a total of 22 interviews with a wide variety of people, including the Governor of Bayan-Ulgii *aimag*, my nomadic host family in Galuut *soum*, Bayankhongor *aimag*, the Governor of the 9<sup>th</sup> *koroo* of the UB *ger* district (otherwise known as the Denjiin Myanga area), and my host family in UB proper. I also interviewed several members of the general

public in each of the four aforementioned areas to which I traveled. In addition to my interviews, I administered 20 surveys in Ulaanbaatar City and 20 surveys in the UB *ger* district.

Of the 62 people who were officially asked to give their opinions of the Human Impact Assessment, 60 people stated that it is a good and necessary idea and 59 people stated that they would be more willing to allow government and private company projects with the HIA in place. Those who did not answer these questions in the positive left them blank; no one said or wrote “No” as an answer to either question. Although not counted in the official numbers, I have verbally surveyed over 25 people spanning my four research locations; 23 of them answered in the positive to both questions while the remaining two chose not to answer.

Taking the above data into consideration, I argue that a Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments would be met with overwhelming support throughout the country and among all groups, including the private companies operating within Mongolia. As history has shown, leaving Mongolians in the dark about proposed projects—although sometimes temporarily beneficial—has profoundly negative, even life-threatening, repercussions, and makes the general public less trusting of any future projects (see the above gold mining example for further support). Clarity, trust, and respect are paramount to the success of any project at all stages of development. The HIA, if passed, will create a legal framework that requires adherence to these values, thereby benefitting all of Mongolia and everyone in this great country.

The incredible potential for positive support is further evidenced by the following graphs, which were created with the data collected by 40 surveys and 22 interviews. If interested in the raw data used for these charts, I am happy to supply the complete list of interview and survey questions and answers used in their creation.



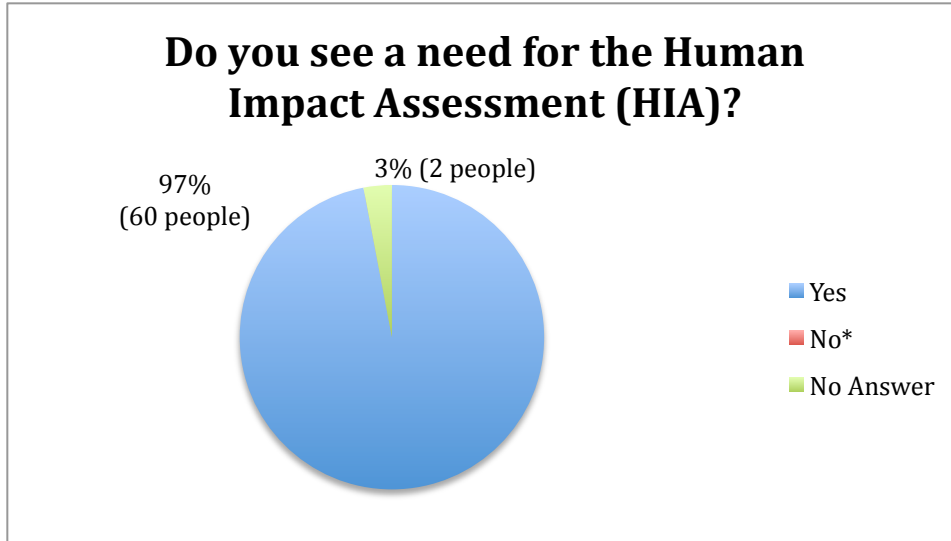


Figure 7

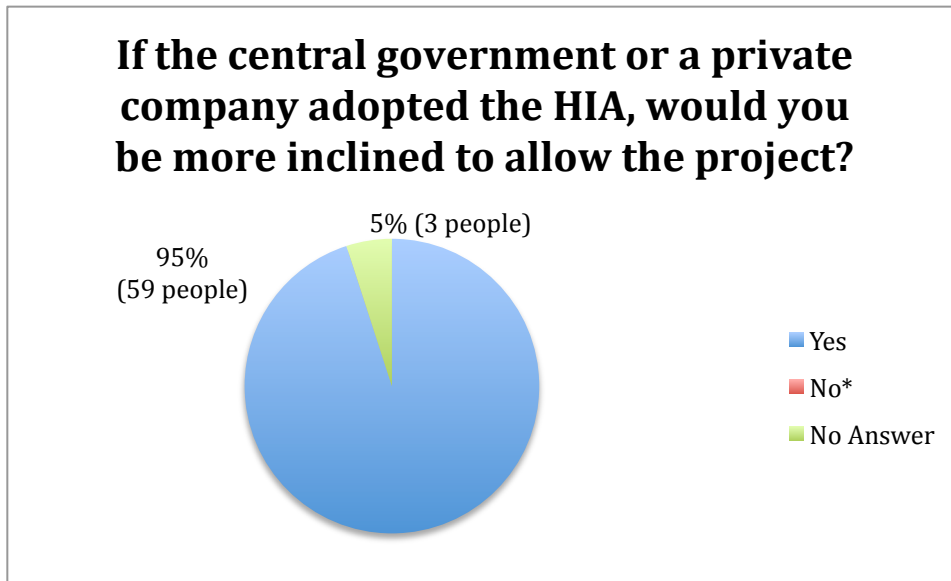


Figure 8

\*The "No" percentage (labeled red in the legend) is not displayed on Figure 1 or Figure 2 because in both cases 0% of the 62 Mongolians questioned answered with "No."

### **What will it include?**

As it now stands, the Human Impact Assessment will be structured much like the Environmental Impact Assessment—but, of course, the actual writing of the law is better left to those who understand Mongolian law at a deeper level than I. That being said, I have written a "placeness survey" that

includes about 30 questions, all of which have been tested and all of which have resonated with those partaking in the survey. This survey is a key component of the HIA because it helps the central government and private companies better understand how the local people feel about the place in which they live and the people around whom they surround themselves. In doing so, these larger organizations can get a better idea of how the local people will react to the project and what they want out of the project, thereby fostering a mutual and lasting respect.

Because I am not deeply familiar with I do not want to undermine the potential of this law by attempting to singlehandedly create a legal framework for the Human Impact Assessment. However, I believe the logical next step is to create a committee to begin drafting the Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments.

### **How will it be implemented?**

The Human Impact Assessment would find the greatest level of success and widespread implementation if it were legally coupled to the Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments. Every democratic government and private company is legally required to conduct an Environmental Impact Assessment prior to beginning a project. Because this is standard procedure throughout the world, the EIA is not easily circumvented. Therefore, the best possible way to prevent the central government or private companies from ignoring the Human Impact Assessment is to attach it to one of the most well respected and closely related laws in Mongolia.

### **Why is the Human Impact Assessment worth supporting?**

There are numerous upsides and no downsides to supporting the creation of the Law of Mongolia on Human Impact Assessments. As explained in the preceding sections, the Human Impact Assessments would be widely popular among the general public, benefiting Mongolians, the

Mongolian government, and private companies alike. The HIA would require organizations to make complete information on their proposed projects more accessible to the people who would be most affected. It would also mandate that a third party conduct “placeness surveys” in the area so as to better understand how a community might react to a given project. These two requirements alone would help build trust between the two parties, thereby aiding in the swift, seamless success of future projects.

It is rare to find a law that is universally beneficial, bipartisan and popular among the general public, but the Human Impact Assessment fits each of these criteria. I would love to work with you in creating an exploratory committee and begin drafting a law. The HIA has incredible potential for good in Mongolia, and I will work tirelessly to make this idea a reality. I hope you will join me.

## References

- Adiya, E., & Stol, I. (2010). Intergenerational Relationships in Mongolia: Togetherness as a Family Unit. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*.
- Barcus, H., & Werner, C. (2014). Immobility and the re-imaginings of ethnic identity among Kazakhs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Geoforum*. Retrieved from ScienceDirect.
- Burke, P., Stets, J. (2003). A Sociological Approach to Self and Identity, in *Handbook of Self and Identity*. Guilford Press, New York City.
- Butz, D., & Eyles, J. (1997). Reconceptualizing Senses of Place: Social Relations, Ideology and Ecology. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (1997), pp. 1-25. *Wiley*.
- Collins, B. (2005). A Sense of Place. In *Poetry* Vol. 184, No. 4, *The Humor Issue* (p. 304-305). Poetry Foundation.
- Cresswell, T. (2006). *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. *Routledge*.
- Cresswell, T. (2008). Place: encountering geography as philosophy. *Geography*, Vol. 93, No. 3.
- Dardel, E. (1952). *L'Homme et la terre*. Press Univerzitaires de France, Paris.
- Environmental Social Impact Assessment Management (2012). Oyu Tolgoi LLC.
- Galut Climate Normals 1961-1990 (1990). National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
- Harner, John. 2001. Place identity and copper mining in Sonora, Mexico. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 91, No. 4, p. 61.
- Human Geography [Def. 1]. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries*, Retrieved May 28, 2015, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/human-geography>

- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Relph, E. (1985). Geographical experiences and being in the world: the phenomenological origins of geography, in Seamon, D. and Mugeraur, R. (eds): *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World*. Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 15-31.
- Sociology [Def. 1]. (n.d.). In *Oxford Dictionaries*, Retrieved May 28, 2015, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/sociology>
- Snow, K. (2011). Goldman Prizewinner Shoots Up Foreign Mining Firms in Mongolia: Western Deceptions and the Extinction of the Nomads. *Conscious Being Alliance*.
- Stacey, M. (1969). *Methods of Sociological Research*. Pergamon Press, Oxford.
- Statistical Information Database (2014). Mongolia Statistical Data Service of the National Statistical Office of Mongolia.
- Stryker, S. (1968). Identity salience and role performance. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*.
- Stryker, S. (1980). *Symbolic interactionism: A social structural version*. Benjamin Cummings, Menlo Park.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- The Law of Mongolia on Environmental Impact Assessments, State Great Hural (2011).
- Tuan, Y. (2002). Community, Society, and the Individual. *Geographical Review, Vol. 92, No. 3*.
- Tuan, Y. (1975). Place: An Experiential Perspective. *Geographical Review, Vol. 65, No. 2*.
- Urry, J. (2000). Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the twenty-first century. *International library of sociology*.
- Upton, C. (2010). Living off the land: Nature and nomadism in Mongolia. *Geoforum*. Retrieved from ScienceDirect.

## Appendix

Appendix A: Series of photojournals documenting four months of travel throughout Mongolia (Mongolia I, II & III)

<http://cwinst.vscoco.com/journal/p/1>

Appendix B: Placeness survey used in Ulaanbaatar and the UB *ger* district

Please number and write your answers on the back of this piece of paper (if this is not enough room, feel free to use more paper). This survey is anonymous and is not associated with any private corporation or the central government. Please answer honestly. Thank you for your time!

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. Do you have a spouse?
4. Do you have children? If so, how many?
5. What is your current profession?
  
6. What makes you feel most at home? (This could be a geographical place, the people around you, etc.).
  - a. Why does this make you feel at home?
  
7. “Feeling at home” is very similar to the feeling of “placeness.” Considering Question 6, could you describe what it feels like to “feel at home?”
  
8. Do you think the central government does enough to let local people know about projects by which they might be affected? (Two examples of such projects are road or power plant construction). Why or why not?
  
9. Do you think private corporations do enough to let local people know about projects by which they might be affected? (Two examples of such projects might be the building of a cashmere factory or a mine). Why or why not?
  
10. I am arguing for the creation of a legally mandated Human Impact Assessment (HIA), which would require the government and private corporations to better explain their projects and survey local people about their feelings on “placeness” (see questions 6 and 7). The intent of the HIA is to start a conversation between the organization running the project and the citizens it would affect, and to provide

- greater clarity on the project itself, before any project gets final approval. What is your opinion on this idea?
- a. Do you see a need for this assessment? Why or why not?
  - b. If the central government or a private corporation adopted the Human Impact Assessment, would you be more inclined to allow the project?
  - c. Do you have any suggestions for questions you think should be in the HIA? Any input is appreciated.

#### Appendix C: Placeness interview used in Bayan-Ulgii

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?
4. Do you have a spouse?
5. Do you have children? If so, how many?
6. What is your current profession?
7. What makes you feel most at home? (This could be a geographical place, the people around you, etc.).
  - a. Why does this make you feel at home?
8. “Feeling at home” is very similar to the feeling of “placeness.” Considering Question 7, could you describe what it feels like to “feel at home?”
9. Would you rather be in Ulgii without your friends and Kazakh people, or with your friends and Kazakh people elsewhere?
  - a. Where would you feel greater placeness? Why?
10. I am arguing for the creation of a legally mandated Human Impact Assessment (HIA), which would require the government and private corporations to better explain their projects and survey local people about their feelings on “placeness” (see questions 6 and 7). The intent of the HIA is to start a conversation between the organization running the project and the citizens it would affect, and to provide greater clarity on the project itself, before any project gets final approval. What is your opinion on this idea?
  - a. Do you see a need for this assessment? Why or why not?
  - b. If the central government or a private corporation adopted the Human Impact Assessment, would you be more inclined to allow the project?
  - c. Do you have any suggestions for questions you think should be in the HIA? Any input is appreciated.

Appendix D: Placeness interview used in Ulaanbaatar and the UB *ger* district

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender?
4. Do you have a spouse?
5. Do you have children? If so, how many?
6. What is your current profession?
  
7. What makes you feel most at home? (This could be a geographical place, the people around you, etc.).
  - a. Why does this make you feel at home?
  
8. “Feeling at home” is very similar to the feeling of “placeness.” Considering Question 7, could you describe what it feels like to “feel at home?”
  
9. Do you think the central government does enough to let local people know about projects by which they might be affected? (Two examples of such projects are road or power plant construction). Why or why not?
  
10. Do you think private corporations do enough to let local people know about projects by which they might be affected? (Two examples of such projects might be the building of a cashmere factory or a mine). Why or why not?
  
11. Scenario 1: The central government wants to undergo a project, but needs your property to do so. They make sure to explain the project to you and you believed it is in Mongolia’s best interest. Assuming that you would be paid for the inconvenience of moving, if the central government asked you to move so that they could go through with a project, would you? Why or why not?
  - a. Replace “central government” with “private cooperation.” Is your answer the same? Why or why not?
  
12. Scenario 2: The central government wants to undergo a project, but needs your property to do so. They do a poor job of explaining the project to you and you are therefore not sure if it is in Mongolia’s best interest. Assuming that you would be paid for the inconvenience of moving, if the central government asked you to move so that they could go through with a project, would you? Why or why not?
  - a. Replace “central government” with “private cooperation.” Is your answer the same? Why or why not?



13. I am arguing for the creation of a legally mandated Human Impact Assessment (HIA), which would require the government and private corporations to better explain their projects and survey local people about their feelings on “placeness” (see questions 6 and 7). The intent of the HIA is to start a conversation between the organization running the project and the citizens it would affect, and to provide greater clarity on the project itself, before any project gets final approval. What is your opinion on this idea?
- a. Do you see a need for this assessment? Why or why not?
  - b. If the central government or a private corporation adopted the Human Impact Assessment, would you be more inclined to allow the project?
  - c. Do you have any suggestions for questions you think should be in the HIA? Any input is appreciated.