



URBAN INTEGRATION

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Abstract:

This project concerns urban development in the developing world, in this case Mongolia. How is urbanisation creating challenges and opportunities for people, and how can the city develop sustainably. The theme in the case of Mongolia is influenced by the fact that Mongolia have never experience urbanization before. As nomad culture cities is a relatively new phenomenon and still emerging. Through an analysis of the societal context and a site of interventions, a design proposal is offered to start a discussion about the impact of design interventions in the context.

Andreas Morsbøl

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INTRODUCTION

Mongolia. Where is Mongolia? Ah, that small country in between Russia and China. Mongolia is maybe not that well known in the Western world. It is home of the mythic emperor Gengis Khan, or as they say, Chinggis Khaan, pronounces *haan*. As it is already evident in the informal language, this thesis is a personal quest. I went to Mongolia 5 years ago as part of a voluntary project group of scouts. We were two Danish scout leaders and two Mongolian in the team working voluntarily with building the scout movement in rural Mongolia. When I got back from there I started in the university and this is my thesis.

Mongolia is not a small country but it is extreme in many dimensions. Freezing winters and short but hot summers and dry climate. It is also extremely rich on natural beauty and other natural resources. Together with the fall of Soviet and other structural factors this has led urbanization to hit the nomad culture and now virtually the country move to the city.

The problems followed by the migration are staggering for the young democracy. Health care, infrastructure, social programmes, cultural adaptation to the urban life together with sensible and regulated urban development are huge challenges for any developing and in a nation of nomads it just seems even worse.

This project is about integration. The integration of one part of the city with the other. The question in this project is focus on the urban integration, using the hinge as a metaphor. The hinge in the urban fabric is this little essential part that has to work and work well to make connection and coherence in the city, with no creak. It is suggested that the urban hinge is a way connect the city, the flows of people and goods and to connect people more figuratively in social encounters or informally. The argument is, that by implementing an urban design solution that play on established urban images will excite and invite the local residents to form communities and take care. Ideally, this kind of solution needs to emerge from an design process that is integrated aswell. The integration has to go through all aspects of the project.



III. 1 The airport highway

IMMERSION

I arrive in Chinggis Khaan International Airport in Yarmag south west of central Ulaanbaatar. Much has changed since I arrived here for the first time, I realize immediately. “Those are new, right” I ask my Mongolian host Deggi, a friend from back then, while pointing to a row of maybe 20 twelve-storey apartment blocks along the high-way from the airport in the simple English that you always take on to ease communication between our substantially different mother tongues. “Yes.”

It is good to be back. The distinct smell in the air, the cool dry wind, the incessant beating sun, the mountains, the people, the food. It does not fail. It is five years since I arrived here first time in a virtually empty Aeroflot flight from Moscow. It was early morning and the plane was descending above the soft undulating frost-white landscape that continued into an endless gray hazy horizon. We woke up in our seats and realized little white dots appear down there on the ground, the gers. They grew in number as we descended for landing and then the valley opened with the view to the city. The plane caught a little turbulence and we landed safely. While walking out the isle inside the plane the smell changed instantly. The same thing happened this time.

I see many changes on the way to the city center where my hosts Deggi and Tuvshoo live in a spacious two-room apartment: along the highway a British School has been built, malls and outdoor malling stretches has appeared, Korean franchise coffeeshops shoot up on every corner, KFC, and finally the sky-line are all indications of changes since I left Mongolia. My host explains: “All this is new,” Tuvshoo tells me in the car, pointing to the surrounding ten-storey complex while we wait for Deggi who is shopping in one of the new supermarkets. He explains how the changes has influenced the city and their daily life. The streets have been repaved, they can afford better cars, the range and variety of food products in supermarkets and convenience stores has been greatly expanded, both local products and imported ones. I ask him, while we are still in the parking lot, if these apartments are popular under the assumption that the huge amount of incoming migrants arrive with virtually nothing and the new flats are too expensive and therefore too many for the limited demand. The answer is not clear, other than people do move into these apartments.

We drive home and on the way I get a closer look to the downtown skyline. It has really been booming. Tuvshoo points forward to the tallest tower, a steel-glass skyscraper still under construction: “Burj Ulaanbaatar.”

The following days I drive around in Ulaanbaatar with my other friend and now local guide Gaa. It is nice to see him. He has got a car but he can not drive on Mondays due to the road space rationing that the city council has adopted to counter some of the urban air pollution. We go to the ger districts, huge areas of tent camps and make-shift brick houses, the distinct characteristic Mongolian slum. The word ‘*slum*’ here only indicates what to me seems as poor quality relative to my own Danish cultural background and what I am used to as a Westerner. The Mongolian ger district today is the home of all kinds of Mongols and therefore the term ‘slum’ is a little misleading. The ger district is where you live because there is no better or affordable alternative or you simply do not want to live in an apartment.

Ger means home in Mongolian and is the word for the white felt tent, circular in plan and with a low pointed roof that Mongolians and peoples on the Eurasian steppe have used always as the home of the nomads. It is a relatively unaltered modern version that is made permanent in the ger compound, the *khashaas*, surrounded by plank fences, updated and fully equipped with refrigerator, flat-screen tv and the burn stove. The permanence in nature of the ger districts makes it sensible to build regular brick buildings and small wooden houses. This is often a very long process starting maybe with a small one room shed that develops into a quite big multi-room building over several years. This is highly dependent on the private initiative and economic capacity of the single household.

Within one *khashaa* more generations of a family can live together, from the old grandmom and uncles and aunts to children and grandchildren. A new house is built or another ger is erected and the *khashaa*, the ger compound, becomes a little camp in it self.

The ger is also the cause for the pain. As the new-comers in the city primarily settle in the ger they brought with them from the life on the steppe, now more than half the city population live in ger districts [MUB 2014] The lifestyle in the city ger is not much different from that on the steppe except from the proximity to the city and also neighbors. The areas develop very unstructured with the space between plots as the only dirt road, no supply of urban services such as water, sanitation and heating, and unreliable connections to the power grid. The primary heating source in the cold winters is the stove in the center of the ger tent, but where the primary fuel in the steppe is organic such as wood or sheep dung, the primary fuel in the city ger is coal or simple trash, old tires among other things.



III. 2 Downtown Ulaanbaatar - Chinggis Khaan Square



III. 3 Chingeltai ger district

This has made air pollution a major health impact in Ulaanbaatar [World Bank 2011]

I have to work with this problem. Deggi, Tuvshoo and Gaa, my Mongolian friends, put me in contact with an architect and with their help I also get to meet a couple of city planners, a UN worker and the Ulaanbaatar City Museum. I get different stories from each of them.

The architect Amga who is working in a british architecture firm in Ulaanbaatar, gives the full story from the fall of the Soviet, the free market, the mining, the economic boom and the demographic changes and urbanization. To him the big problem is the ger districts and the best solution is the flat: *"The ger area is the picture of, you know, nomadic trying to become a civilization, right?"* he tells me. [Interview March 9th 2015] I tell myself this historical and cultural lecture has become a little too highfalutin, but I can not help to think his comparison with European and American cities has some truth to it:

"As you know Mongolians are nomadics. We are not civil people. Nomadics never had a city in their history. (...) o, UB is our first permanent city, the official capital of Mongolia, right? (...) well, I have been in Denmark, I've been in the United States, I've been in other countries, right? Mongolian culture, nomadic culture is very rare. Only some Africans and Mongolians have the nomadic culture, right? And now, maybe, we are only in the world who keep this culture. In the civil culture they've spend thousands of years in civilization, right? (...) They have experience, life experience 'cause they've lived in civilization more than us. We've been living in UB the last 100 years in an urban culture, you know. How old is Copenhagen city? Some thousand years. So compare that experience, of course you guys have more experience for the life style, right?"

[Interview March 9th 2015]

Mongolia gained independence from the Chinese Qing Dynasty when this collapsed in 1911. Untill then Ulaanbaatar had been nothing more than a monestary and a settlement of gers known as *Ikh Khuree*, simply *"The Great Monestary"*. The settlement was a mobile temple with ger settlements surrounding it forming a circular tent city structure. The great temple and the whole settlement was temporary and moved around several times untill it eventually settled permanently in 1779 where it is now next to the Gandan Monestary that is still operating today.

After the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, the death of the last khan (a cultural and *theocratic* emperor) followed by a revolution in 1921, and the introduction of socialism in 1924 Ulaanbaatar got its present name meaning "Red Hero". In the following period Mongolia was under Russian influence with construction Sukhbaatar Square and adjacent public functions such as the Government Palace, the National Library and National University in a distinct neoclassical architecture. [Atwood 2004:565-569]

Ulaanbaatar got its first general city plan in 1953, followed by a number of revision cycles, all with Russian influence, up untill the fall of soviet in 1990 when masterplanning was "forgotten" untill the latest masterplan from 2004. [Interview 03.16.2015]

Besides the public building a number of housing projects was built together with a growing network of urban services: central water and plumbing was built in 1954-57, central heating in 1959 and central garbage disposal was put into system in 1966. Projects called "50.000" in the 50's and "40.000" in the 60's was large, socialist style housing projects named after the number of square meters. In 1956 the population was 118.387 in Ulaanbaatar city, 267.400 in 1964 and 584.400 in 1989. [Atwood 2004:569] The population exploded since and was at 1.362.874 in 2014 in Ulaanbaatar [NSO]

Planning for Ulaanbaatar the city council has introduced the 'Masterplan 2020 for Ulaanbaatar', which prescribe strategic, structural, technical and social redistribution and development areas for the city. [MUB 2014] From the current state as monocentric the plan suggests a multi-centered structure; from a car based infrastructure the plan suggests mass transit systems; and from the current state of vast areas of more or less unregulated ger settlements, the plan envision drastic resettlement of these in modern housing units: apartment blocks, medium density housing typologies or detached houses, with full utility services for up to 78.5 % of all households by 2030. By 2010 less than half of the households in Ulaanbaatar was fully connected to urban utilities such as water, sewage, heating, electricity and infrastructure [MUB 2014] In the ger districts drinking water is manually collected at local water kiosks.

When Amka explain about the economic boom and the demographic changes he is refering to the high rate of growth of 17.5 and 12.3 in 2011 and 2012 that followed the low growth rate of 2009, which is reasoned with the global crisis. The extreme Mongolian weather phenomenon, the *dzud*, in the winter 2009-2010 was severely damaging for herders who reportedly lost 10.3 million adult animals, compared to the 1.2 million annual average. According to the Mongolian Ministry of Economic Development this is the primary cause for the migration to urban areas. [MED 2013]

I suggest it is an extreme situation and he tells me about irregularities, incompetence and dysfunction in the planning and the construction and the lack of skill and experience that complicates development and transition to what he sees as the only solution, the flat, [Interview March 9th 2015] and conclude:

We're nomadics, you guys are civilization.

[Interview March 9th 2015]

Of course Mongolia has to learn and get experience, but now there is a chance to learn from the experiences of other countries, who has gone through similar development. I think it is also what Amga is pointing to, but I am not convinced that the flat is the only and best solution. Responsible construction of affordable and sustainable apartments to the scale alone is very difficult in the landlocked, freezing country with poorly developed infrastructure [OBG 2014]

Amga has been a big help in giving me this historical and contextual overview of why the situation has ended as this, but he overlook a potential greater risk than that of the environmental that can be solved through technical measures. The question is how will the culture adapt in the standard size apartment of European,

Russian or Chinese model? Does the issue call for a true Mongolian typology? This is maybe the lack of experience he is pointing too. A Western spectator points out a much greater threat to the Mongolian society:

A cattle herder who comes from his pasturage into the city certainly undergoes a psychological crash and is completely unable to cope with urban conditions. A cattle herder who was self-sufficient and really free all his life, arrives in this city and is now an absolute nobody, not even self-sufficient. He is worth nothing.

[Prof. Dr. Udo Barkmann in Welstadt 2014]

To me this quote is really strong. A horrific vision of Mongolians in decay flash before my inner view. The quote also suggests that neither the typology nor the location nor the structural and physical challenges are the main causes for collective delusion but the deeper social division between the nomad culture to the urban.

In my pursuit I visit the local UN compound in the government district, Sukhbaatar District, around the Palace of Parliament where I talk Enkhsetseg, officer in charge of UN-Habitat of Mongolia, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme that work through projects to better urban conditions mainly among the urban poor [un-habitat.org] UN-Habitat in Mongolia has conducted a number of projects in the ger areas; The Community-Led Ger Upgrading Projects among others [UN-HABITAT 2009]

Enkhsetseg does not see the ger districts as the main challenge:

“Now, my point is the ger area is not that problematic, because actually it’s the area where you can live independently from your neighborhood, somehow. You don’t have anyone upstairs or downstairs. You can actually live freely there, but the problem is there is not proper solutions, like sanitation, water supply, heating, like urban services, so if we can find some rational solutions for those problematic areas... The area itself is not so problematic, so it can actually be left there without any concern, if we can apply some basic service solutions”

[Interview March 12th 2015]

She continues to give me an overview of the master-planning towards the ger districts, the classification of the districts and the approaches towards developing the urban technical infrastructure and comfortable urban living:

“It will be developed according to them into a comfortable living area. The area needs to be developed with community led activities. So, the main concept of the project is based on the community planning and based on that bottom-up approach, and to influence the city planning and implementation of the masterplan”

[Interview March 12th 2015]

As part of the project and to engage the local initiative

within the local community, the project also entails a number of microprojects in the ger districts. This is small interventions on the hyper local scale such as a small busstop combined with room for a shop, street lights for a small piece of road, a piece of road paving, a little footbridge across a channel, a small piece of stair steps in a muddy path, a playground, or a water kiosk. They also build kindergartens and community buildings which were planned in conjunction with the local community, but the microprojects were designed and built by the local residents, and funded and assisted by the professionals at UN-Habitat. [UN-HABITAT 2009] Enkhsetseg elaborates on the results of the approach:

“One person is one person, but when you start working together with the neighborhood, you will have big power. You can influence some policies and so on. You can develop yourself, you can improve the area, at least near area. (...) They started working together already. They started every two weeks to have regular meetings to discuss things or sought out other opportunities or plan for next activities, so those are bringing the sense to the people (...) we can do it for ourselves, we can develop many things without government or municipality. At least we can do resource mobilization. So, that was actually the main achievement, I guess, from the project.”

[Interview March 12th 2015]

The latter part strikes a chord with me and I start thinking of solutions. As a Dane I know this very well, I live it, this, *the common*. The common responsibility, the common society. The common commodity. It reminds me of the cooperative movement we have cultivated so well in the Western World, but somehow tend to forget in post-modern individualism. Can this be adapted to Mongolia? Could an approach where the consumers are equally as responsible for the commodities as the producers? Where there is a fluid distinction between producer and consumer and the producing part form a community of individuals who help each other instead of beating each other in fierce competition.

Apparently, it has struck a chord with others, too. “Commonities = commons + communities” is a book by Danish author and writer Tor Nørretranders and farmer Søren Hermansen about the communities that grow around a transformation of the management of the World's natural resources. A community that has to emerge to make the growth sustainable and resilient. [Hermansen&Nørretranders 2011] In the preface they define the common as every resource that is common to a group, such as a grassing field, a hunting, ground a pond, a language. The problem arise when every one care for them selves and unrestrained take from the common. Therefore, the common is what is in common, that is, what belongs to a community of individuals who work for the common asset. [Hermansen&Nørretranders 2011]

What happens in the microprojects in the Community Led Ger Upgrading Project of UN-HABITAT is that the residents start to realize that they have a common good, the ger district, which they need to improve and maintain on their own and that is really inspiring.

I visit the Ulaanbaatar City Museum as one of last things to do before leaving the home of Chinggis

Khaan. I get an exclusive guided tour with personal interpreter and they give a full overview of the meaning of the city. The historian Ochbayar confirms the architect Amga on the lack of experience and the emerging city culture:

(...) we don't have the culture and design says culture is everything that comes from human minds, and we as Mongolians are nomad and we are very attached to the nature and nature is not culture (...) we don't have a culture for the city, but we are trying to build a city, and we are not knowing, what a city culture is, and that's a little bit difficult.

(Ochbayar, historian in Interview March 19th)

To me it sounds a little ruthless to claim collective abandonment of culture and civilisation as the historian here does and the architect did, but I think the Mongolian holds pride in the way they are bound to nature. To me, this is definitely a cultural trait. Culture is any sense of cultivation, so if you worship nature, as Mongolians literally does on an everyday basis, it is a cultural action. Not to make this an extensive unraveling, there is however some claims of a dichotomy between culture and nature at least in Western thinking (Culture on wikipedia.com) and this is maybe what the interviewees are referring. It is an important assumption and an indication of the discourse in the planning, which the historian Ochbayar elaborates more on.

As the history shows the city has started as a monastery and the Mongolians are very spiritual, but the message from Ochbayar is more towards the gers and the ger districts:

A Mongolian ger is purely what Mongolian is and to make the ger district fade from our city is not possible because the ger is what Mongolia is

(Ochbayar, historian in Interview March 19th)

Here, historian Ochbayar is more in line with Enkhtsetseg of UN-HABITAT and further away from Amga.

With this preface I am ready to approach the issue

through this project. I have seen the rapid development in Ulaanbaatar, how the city core develops into a modern metropolis and the divide to the ger districts. I know that the ger districts, as home of the larger part of the population, possess a number of threats and opportunities for the development of Ulaanbaatar, that the residents of the ger district are willing and resourceful and the ger is a central part of the Mongolian culture.

I will approach this in two parts, a theoretical and a design proposal. First, I will survey literature in the search for earlier examples of similar issues. This will feed into a design proposal for a specific site that will work as an example for how to improve the ger districts.

The issue is a lack of integration between the dense development in the city center and the haphazard and sprawling development in the ger district. This is a divide in many aspects from structural such as infrastructural inequalities forming barriers between the two, over cultural and social barriers between the rural population who move to the Westernized capital and the modern youth who live in apartments and hang out at bars and coffeshops, to physical obstacles that complicates development.



III. 4 Gandantegchinlen Monestary

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In my pursuit to improve the situation in the ger district I will here give a theoretical overview of some approaches that can be useful in relation to the urban issues in Mongolia. This forms the basis for the design proposal given in the following chapter.

An obvious concept for further urban intergration and equality is that given by UN-HABITAT that is called "Street-Led Approach to Slum Upgrading" (UN-Habitat 2012) The approach is a realization of the current slum issues that is a result of global urbanization and local city planning efforts as equal sides of the same coin, using the street as an instrument to create city-wide network that can integrate the issues. The approach is a shift from piecemeal upgrading projects in isolated slum areas to a programmatic but incremental approach. This also opens up for a more participatory planning practice and other benefits. The street as urban element is suitable due to its nature as corridor for travel and as public space. (UN-Habitat 2012) The latter part is important, but the whole approach is a beautiful integrated approach, post-modernist in its pragmatic use of established urban elements. Accepting the street as both a transit corridor in a network and a social space is important to make the strategy succeed.

For similar integration other approaches combining the utilitarian purposes of infrastructure with architectural purposes have proven effective. An example is the Cantagalo Elevator in Rio de Janeiro. As described in the book Catalyst Architecture by Hans Kiib and Gitte Marling, it is an elevator complex consisting of two elevator towers connected by walkways reaching from the street level in the formal Ipanema to street level in the favela of Cantagalo, one of the informal slums on the hills of Rio de Janeiro. The towers are clad in blue and green shading *brise-soleils* that give the towers a characteristic visual expression in the city and its infrastructural function connects the slum with the city. (Kiib&Marling 2015:231-234) As well as being a practical means of transport completely free of charge, the aesthetics of the construction and a covered observation platform at the top has created a landmark with multiple combined positive effects as visual characteristic and tourist destination. (Kiib&Marling 2015:241) For this, Kiib & Marling uses the term *architectural performance*, and define the analytical tool *internal and external performance*: Internal performance is the way the architecture affects the daily specific use of the architecture, while the external performance is the way the architecture affects the perception and the story of the place and the environment that surrounds the given architecture. (Kiib&Marling 2015:24) In this way

architecture works directly on the users and more indirect on the place, architecture has a *performance* towards the users and a *performance* towards the environment. In the definition of the the authors Kiib and Marling, this is how the architecture act as catalyst. (Kiib&Marling 2015:25)

This leads on to the main basis for this thesis, the theory of Spatial Agency in the book "Spatial Agency" by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till. (Awan Schneider Till 2011)

It inscribes itself into an ongoing debate, but is more of a catalogue and an extensive and operational expansion of the Actor-Network-Theory and to me a comment and an ordering of the recent turn to aid-architecture, such as Architecture Sans Frontières and Architecture for Humanity. The book itself give an extensive argument for the concept of Spatial Agency as a general term and by surveying the field of what the authors call Spatial Agents, a widened understanding of the possible role of architects, and space makers in general can be. (Awan Schneider Till 2011)

As described Spatial Agency widens the understanding of architectural practice in the way the book unfold the concepts of *spatial* and *agency*. *Spatial* is defined from the basis of Henry Lefebvre's The Production of Space (Lefebvre 1991):

"(social) space is a (social) product"

(Lefebvre 1991:26)

When Spatial Agency quotes Lefebvre here it does so to turn away from the introvert polemic of the architectural debate and unfold the concept of the spatial:

"At a stroke, Lefebvre wrests the production of space from the clutches of specialists, most notably architects and planners, and places it in a much broader social context."

(Awan Schneider Till 2011:29)

From here three main themes of *the spatial* arise: (1) Social space is a social act involving 'others', and in its social nature (2) the social space is required to be dynamic and change over time, and (3) social space is political (Awan Schneider Till 2011:29) I think political here means it is situated and related in a context, that

is both political, social, cultural and economic. The argument that the architectural tend to abstract from the context and claim neutrality in contrast to *the spatial*. In *Spatial Agency* you cannot claim neutrality, seems to be the argument. (Awan Schneider Till 2011:29) Heck, even claiming neutrality or objectivity could be seen as a political act in itself. This is where *agency* comes in:

Agency is described as the ability of the individual to act independently of the constraining structures of society; structure is seen as the way that society is organized.

(Awan Schneider Till 2011:30)

Agency is the duality between independence and constrain, the level of agency is the the degree of freedom from constraining structures, of any kind. In the terms of architecture this could mean the degree of creative independence from constraining social and economic trends. However, in terms of spatial agency, this 'either or' is not accepted:

To avoid on one hand the ineffectual solipsism of individual agents or on the other hand despair in the face of overarching structures, one has to get away from the idea of agency and structure as a dualism, as two opposing conditions. Instead, as Anthony Giddens has argued, agency and structure should be understood as a duality, two linked but separately identifiable conditions."

(Awan Schneider Till 2011:31)

Based on the findings in the catalogue of projects of alternative architectural practice in the book it is argued that spatial agents operate in this field between omnipotence and impotence, as negotiators, as facilitators, as investigators of potentials, and reason with Cedric Price that building is "not necessarily the best solution" (Awan Schneider Till 2011:31)

Due to the duality and dependency on both agency and structure a number of features for the spatial agents are defined: The spatial agent has to work with a responsive and flexible intent, with 'mutual knowledge', with empowerment and work both discursive and practical, simply put; to work with one's whole being. (Awan Schneider Till 2011:31,32) Tellingly they conclude:

"Attention is shifted from architecture as a matter of fact to architecture as a matter of concern."
(Awan Schneider Till 2011:33)

Buildings will always be buildings and should be understood as such, but when the meaning, or more precisely the *impact*, of the building on a socially and societal scale is drawn into the equation the meaning of it enters into the realm of agency.

The examples in the book include both architectural works, art works, happenings, architectural discourse & polemic, development programmes and political movements. (Awan Schneider Till 2011) The Danish cohousing movement and Christiania, the free town in Copenhagen are amongst. (Awan Schneider Till 2011:119,122)

This is where I want to return the focus to the concept introduced by Tor Nørretranders and Søren Hermansen, *Commonities*. As in the cohousing movement and in Christiania there is a sense of sharing and caring for the common resources. It is a responsible and considerate way of life, basically, and allegedly the way to lead a sustainable life. (Nørretranders&Hermansen 2011) In relation to spatial agency, *commonities* are e.g. cohousing where you live in a community and enjoy those benefits while you are part of a household and responsible for sustainability. In relation to Catalyst Architecture the causality is reverse: here the argument is that the architecture has the performance towards its context, requiring the users and the environment to change accordingly. This is agency performed by architecture.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

With this initial part one the scene is set and a number of challenges are described. It is obvious that the ger district is a huge question to the development of Ulaanbaatar as this is both the home of most Mongolians and a cluster of all kinds of nasty consequences of poverty. The initial analysis of the problem field suggests a divide between the formal Ulaanbaatar planned by the Russians and the ger district, that grows family by family. This is divide in several levels. A physical divide in the distance and the physical obstacles to the formal city with its workplaces and economy. This divide is enforced by the infrastructural divide and inequality, due to the nature of the two city types. This produce a number of unfortunate sideeffects and the result is a story of virtually two cities developing very different.

To this problem a solution is obviously in the regard to integration, but learning from the UN-Habitat Micro Projects how can this be conducted in a sustainable and long-lasting way? And learning from Spatial Agency I have to work with all my agency as an urban designer, if I want to pursue this specific question. So, how can urban design promote urban integration of the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar?

The following chapter is a presentation of analysis and design of an urban element that will integrate the city. The proposal is supposed to act as an example or prototype for similar projects. The integration lies in part in the practical function and in the positive effects it will bring, according to Spatial Agency, the agency of the spatial intervention, the matter of concern.

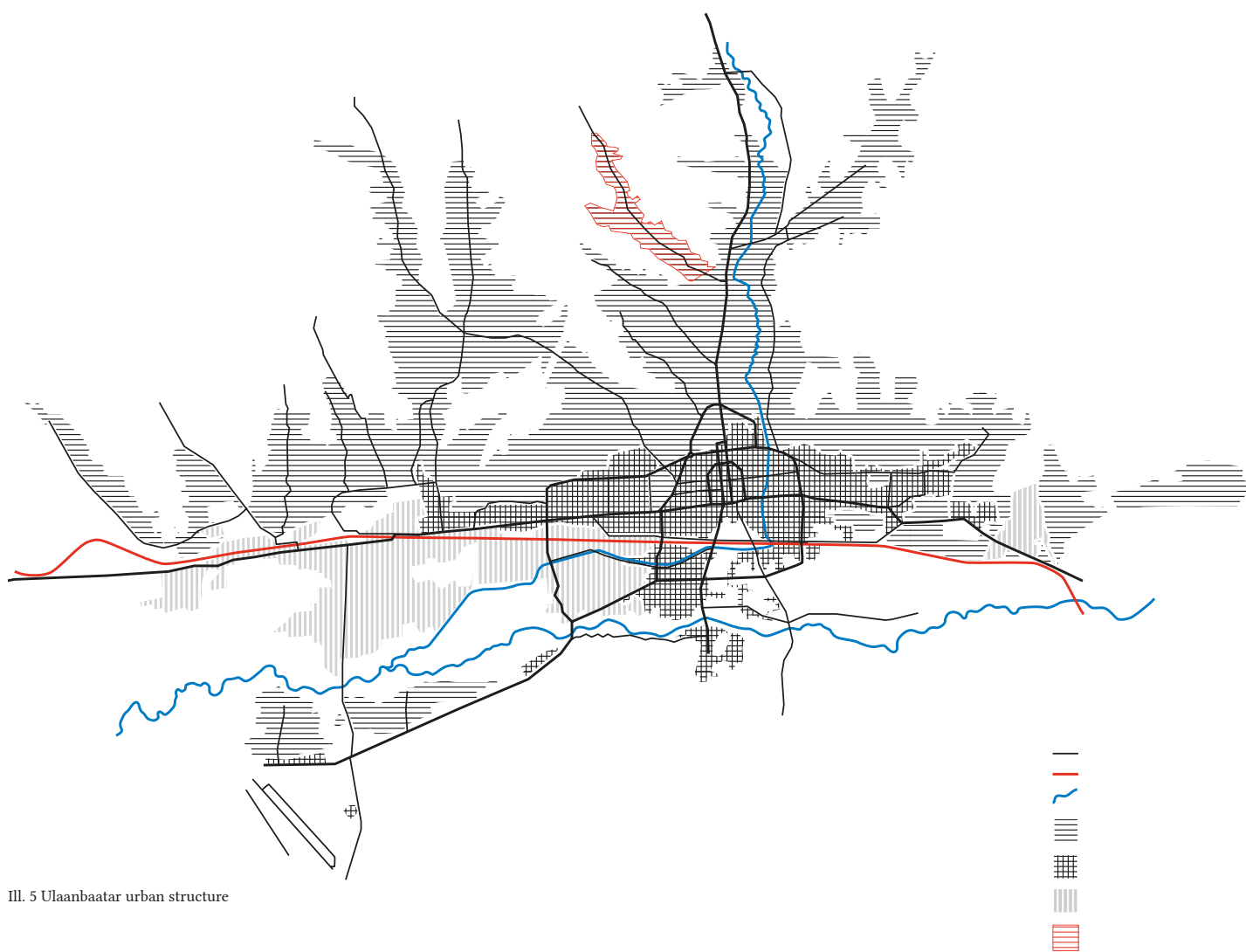
CONTEXT ANALYSIS

This context analyses is about defining and understanding the site of intervention. The site is located in Chingeltei ger district north of the city center.

Chingeltei Sub-district, *Chingeltei khoroo*, is a valley in the system of hills and valleys north of the city center, a branching valley from the Selbe flood plain valley, which is one of the biggest ger districts. It is a sub-district of the Chingeltei District, *Chingeltei düüreg*. The structure of the Chingeltei is governed by the surrounding mountains and Chingeltei Street, *Chingeltei gudamj*, that runs all the way from the main north-going artery road along the river Selbe and all the way to the end of the valley at the top of the mountain.

Entering Chingeltei is like entering any of the many ger districts: The irregular fence lines define the distributing network of frozen dirt roads that make up the only access to ger lots, *khashaas*, where the ger is found behind a tin board gate or a small door.

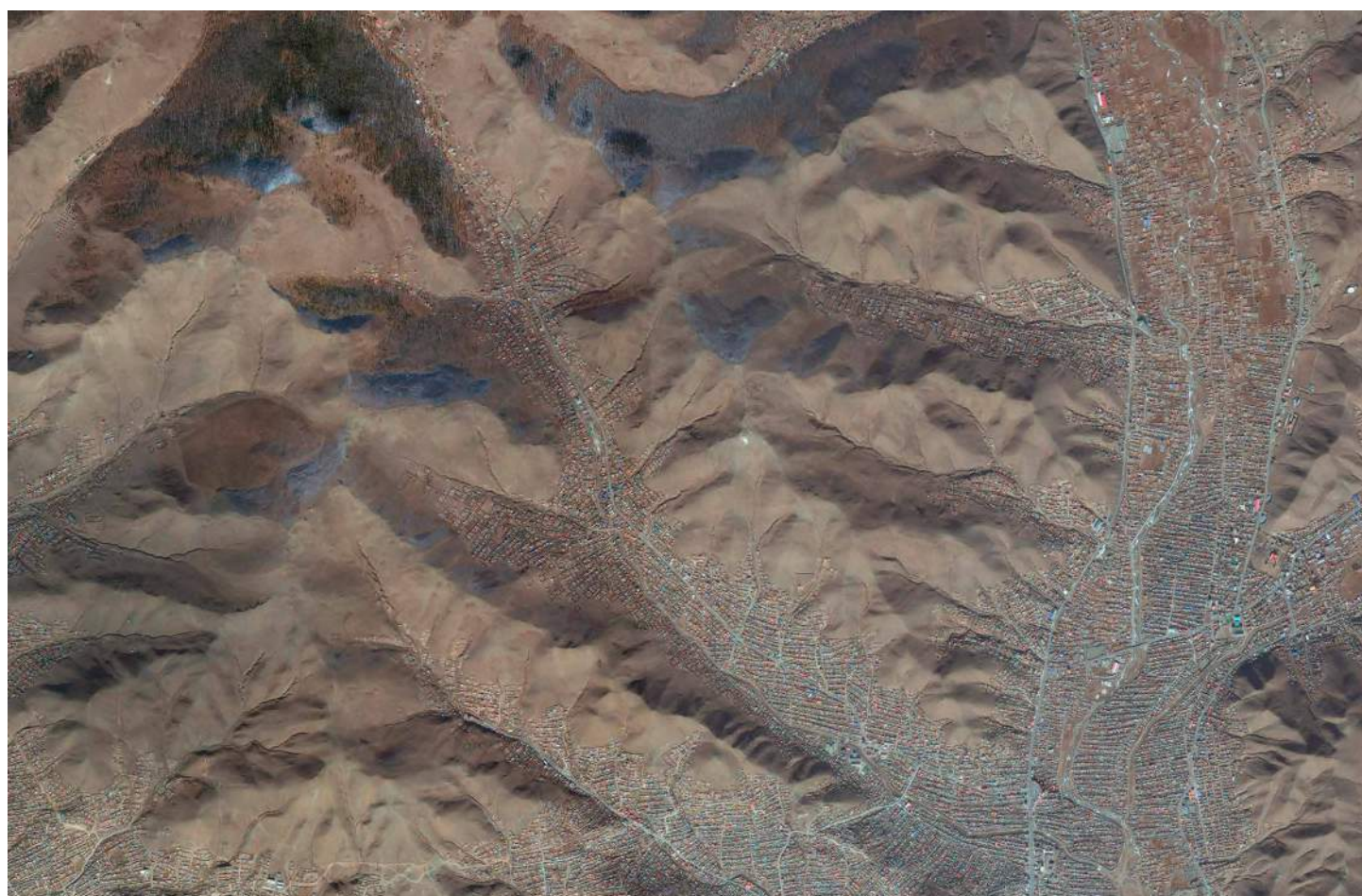
The sun is beating down from the eternal blue sky and barking stray dogs rule the deserted streets. The fences give a refusing gesture to everyone visiting the ger districts. Walking the streets there is a feeling that the life of the ger districts is huddled behind fences.



III. 5 Ulaanbaatar urban structure



III. 6 Ulaanbaatar aerial, © Google Maps



III. 7 Chingeltei дүүрег aerial, © Google Maps



III. 8

Mapping physically accessible areas of downtown Ulaanbaatar and Chingeltei ger district shows the divide immediately. This Nolli-style comparison shows the difference in order, structure, planning, regulations of spaces, proportion and size.



III. 9

Even though the above mapping shows the accessibility between the fences in the ger district the difference is very striking. The irregularity and grown nature stands out clearly. The black areas are private and the size and the amount of space left over for public functions is therefore very limited. This indicates a huge difference in density, even though many of the plots only contain one ger or one house and the urban sprawl is therefore looming.



III. 10

Structurally Chingeltei is a housing area and the grown structure show again. Chigentei street is the only planned element and it cuts through as a backbone. But this is not the only formal infrastructural element. In critical points in away from the street bridges and gangways has been constructed.

The maps also show the variation in the amount and the configuration of buildings on each plot.



III. 11

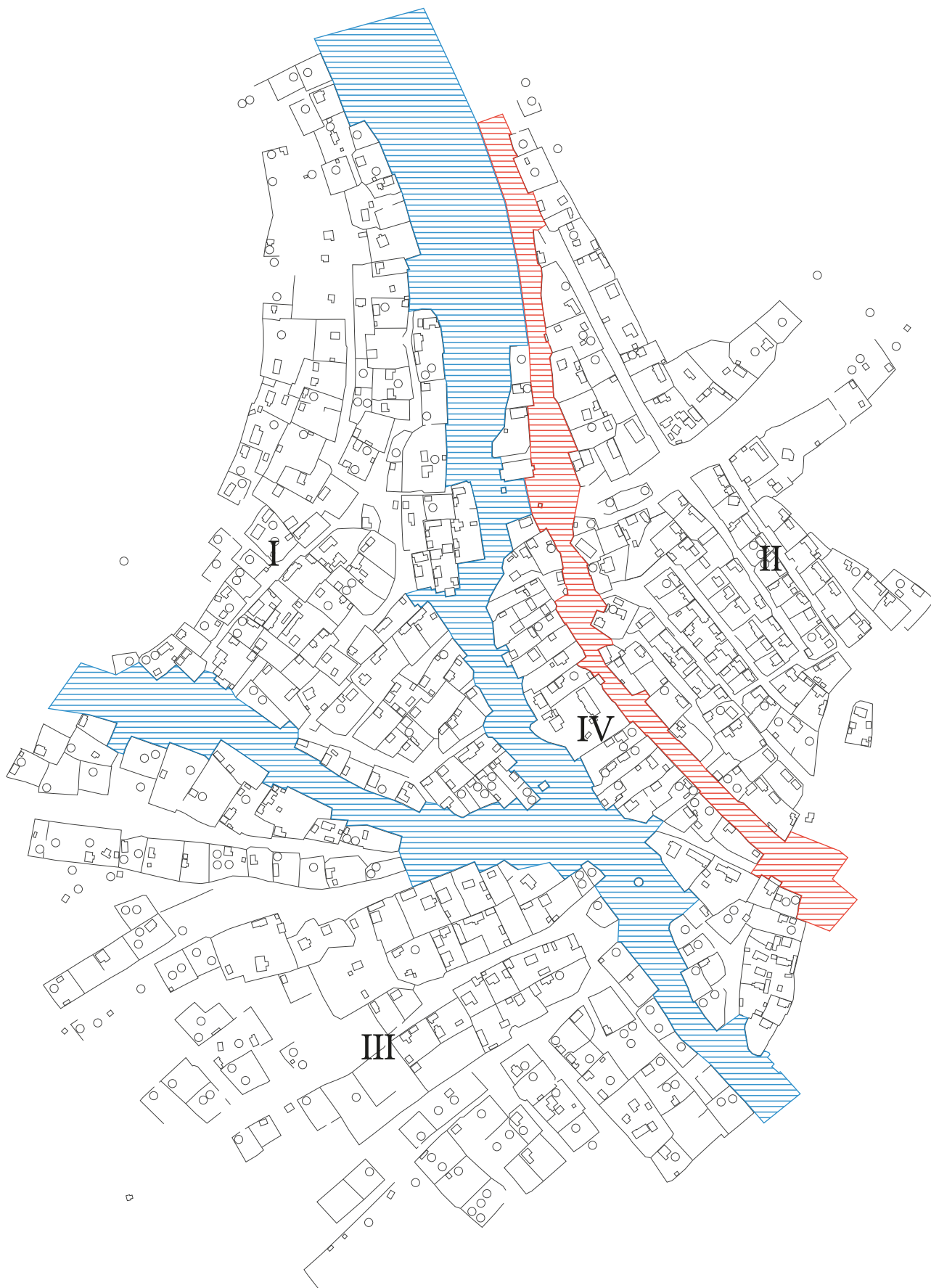
As the aerial photos above show the area and the country is mountainous. This has a clear influence on the way the ger districts evolve, shaped by the topography. In many areas mountains accumulate snow and water. Rivers are significant in the Mongolian landscape and in Chingeltei and in much of the city rivers are part of the urban fabric. These rivers have a very big variation in flow of water over the year and the size of the river therefore vary similarly.

The two previous diagrams show two main tracés in the area: One for infrastructure and one for the natural environment. These corridors form sub-divisions and barriers in the city. I do not know if the divisions are accepted locally, but structurally there is a clear separation.

The corridors represent concentrations of activity: traffic two and from the area can only happen on the street and all the water flows upstream from the site go through here in the river corridor.

The two corridors are clearly different in shape and size but also in how they are perceived. The speed and controlled behaviour on the street also allow for a narrow tracé. As the main and formal infrastructural element in the area the street, the red corridor, is the access point to the area and the point of reference at least for visitors and definitely for tourists.

As the function of the blue corridor is governed by topographic and natural conditions, this tracé is less predictable and require a much different configuration allow the river flow to meander naturally. Here, any human intervention to contain the river is completely absent and the surroundings has to adapt to the masses. The ecological role of the water flow also make the blue corridor a much more vital entity to the global system.



A zoom in on the dry river corridor show the topographic details. Along and around the dry river course there is an informal flow of local residents and many ger plots has its main entrance to the corridor. Here, the river course is used as much as a road as it is a void, available for the seasonal water flow.

This marks the end of topographic mappings in this report. The following is an insight into the area taken with my camera. I try to capture indications of the life that huddles behind the fences. The ger resident is not a public being, it is very introvert, gathered around the hearth inside the ger.





III. 14 Fences in the ger district



III. 15 Shop on the road to Chingeltei



III. 16 Drinking water is collected in local water kiosks as this one and carried in bottles or on small carts



III. 17 Milk tea being prepared before some of it is offered to the Sun and the Earth



III.18 Students walking home from school in downtown Ulaanbaatar



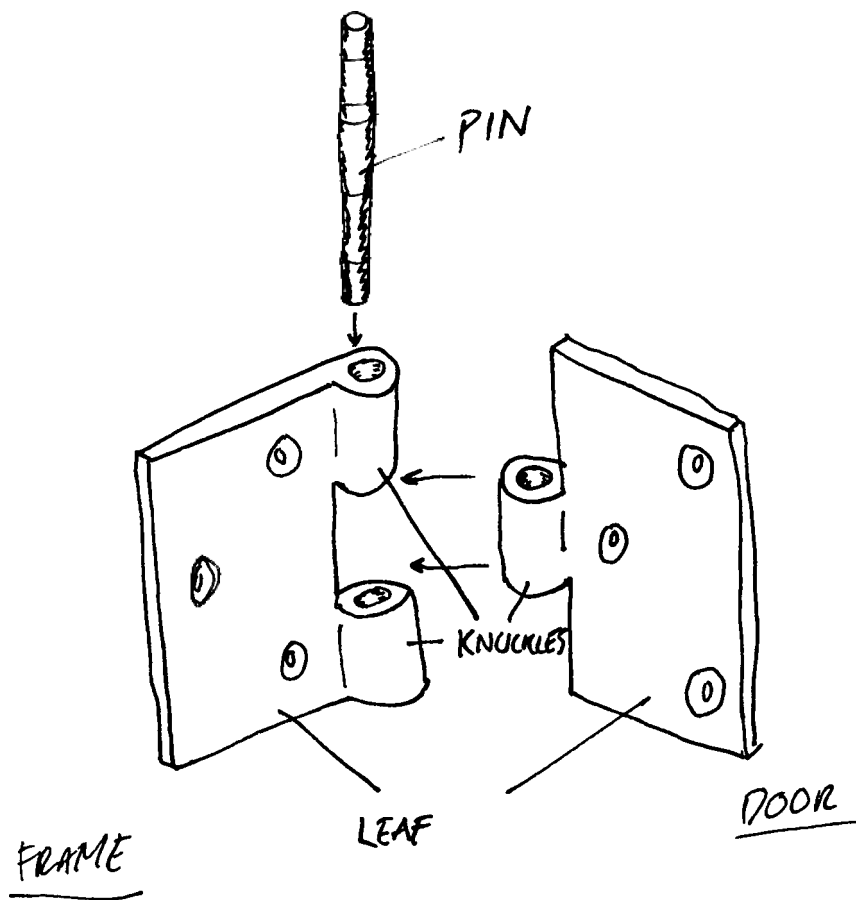
III. 19 State Great Khural, the Mongolian Parliament

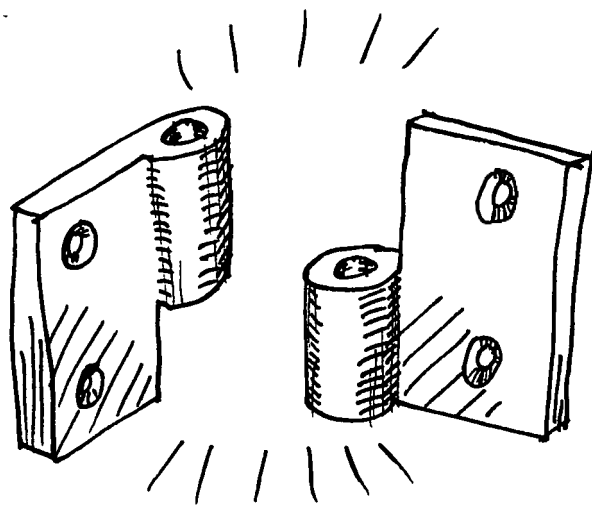
CONCEPT

Now, the site is presented I want to step back and look at it a little from above. The site acts a small model of Ulaanbaatar, a city that is divided in so many ways. The site is divided physically by the dry river. To comprehend this gap and what has to happen conceptually, I introduce the concept of the urban hinge.

A hinge, e.g. for a door, consists of two sides, leaves. The leaves has a number of knuckles. Connected and interlocked with a pin the hinge is held together while the leaves can turn independently and the door can function optimally. Thus, the hinge has a function as fastener between two subjects and as bearing for the moving subject. The hinges posses a critical and poetic role in the world as these are what allows doors to open and to stay closed. If a door has a loose hinge, it will not close tight or might slide open, and if a hinge is too tight the door will creak or stick. Both have impact on the daily life. A creaking door can be frightening. A firm door expresses tidiness and order. The hinges are the transmission of power and have to withstand great forces, for example when are door is slamming or when it has to hold out intruders.

Urban hinges as definition is a hinge in the urban fabric. Due to its character as a concentration of all human activites, the urban fabric hold enormous forces and the hinges has to withstand this force and convey and connect the city, hold it together. As for the hinge for the door.





THE PIN IS MISSING

Under the assumption that Ulaanbaatar is a divided city and a suggested solution should relate to common resources the image of hinge, is a hinge where the pin is missing. This form huge voids in the city.

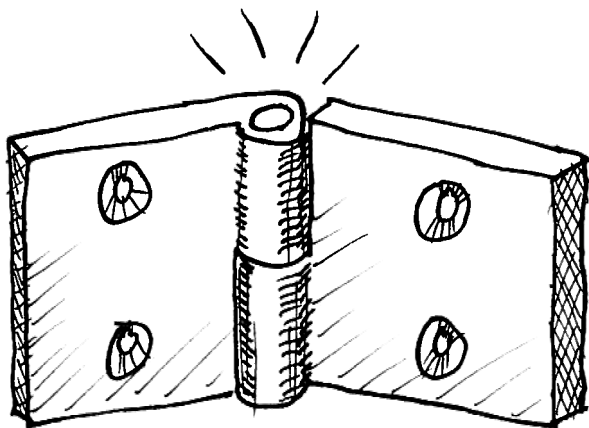
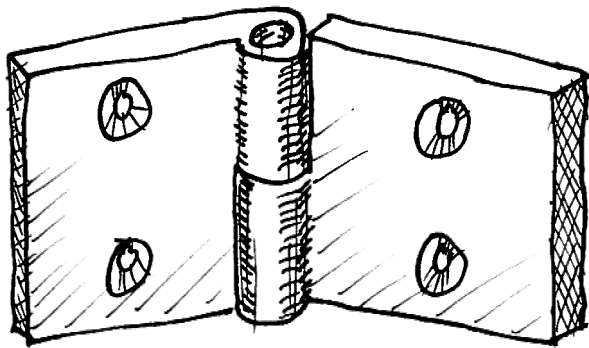
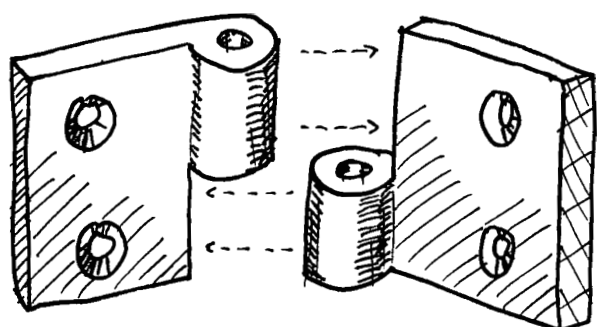


III. 22 Image from user Batjav Tsanjid on Panoramia.com

The intention is to join the two sides so they form a hinge. The proposal will work as a pin, the key to hold the hinge together and make it work day after day. As long as this little piece of metal is intact you will not notice the existence of the hinge, you can simply enjoy the use of it.

In the traditional perception the pin is a metal rod that can withstand the moment and grinding from a continuous load of open and closing the hinge, all the little pulling and stress that build up over years and tear it. The hinge is at service. This is the perception of many urban hinges.

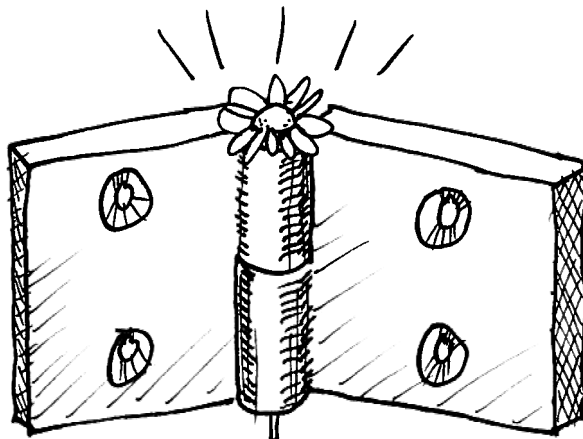
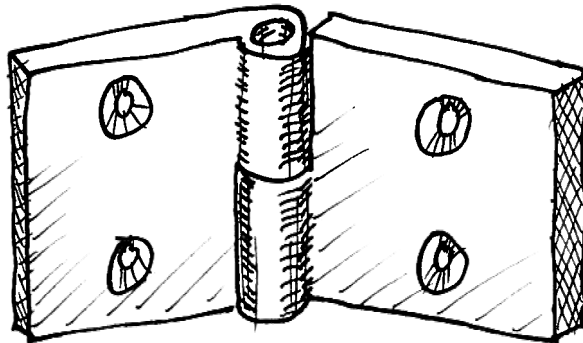
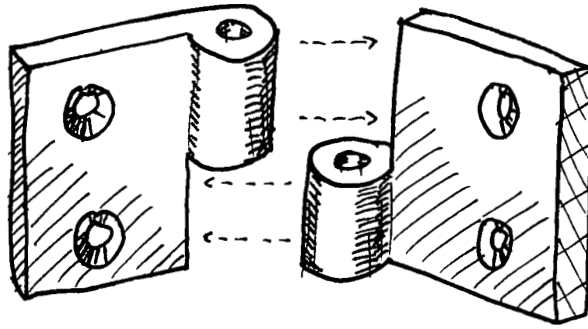
In this concept, however, this mindless trust in the durability of the hinge is not fully descriptive of what this proposal is supposed to do. The concept of commonities play a vital role in the design concept of the urban hinge.

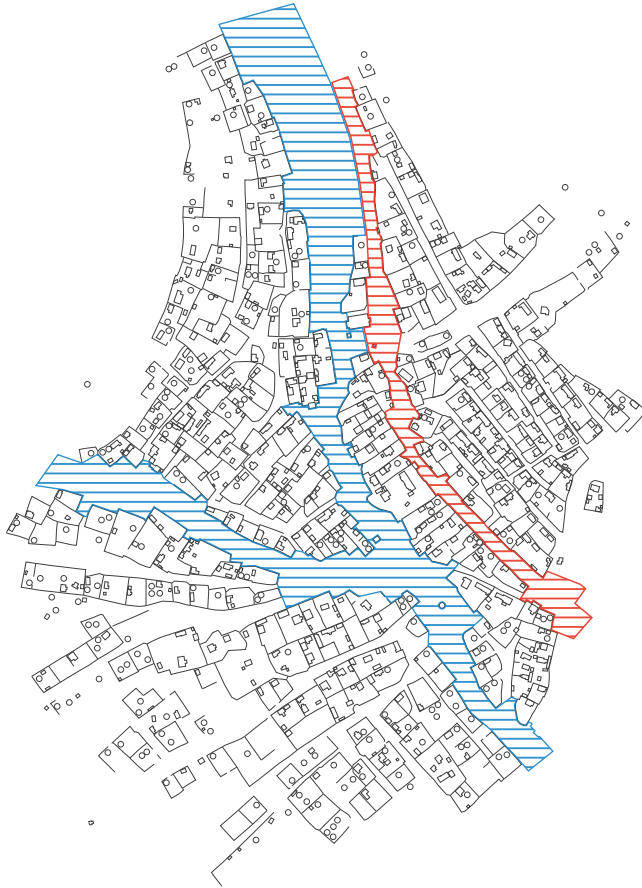


Therefore the pin is removed. To create a hinge that will knit the local community tight together on a social level, the hinge has to be held together with an proactive effort from the human resources. Keeping the two sides together requier the local residents, the neighborhood and the city to take responsibility and take care. This is valuable but fragile. This fragility is here represented by a flower.

This hinge is not at your service. You are at service to the hinge.

Now, how is this communicated in design? This is developed in the following pages, but an important assumption is a prerequisite: As described, the river tracé plays a vital role on a global scale for the whole stream of the city. Similarly, the water masses possess a great potential for local growing. As it is now, the water is lead out into a regional river network and only a small portion is utilized for irrigation of crops in private household gardens. By utilising more of the melting water, that flows in the dry river in the spring time, the river becomes an asset, a common good.

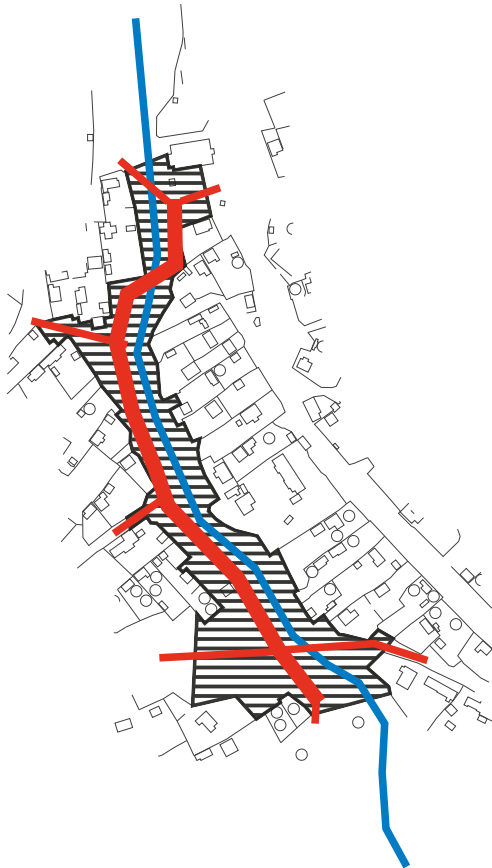




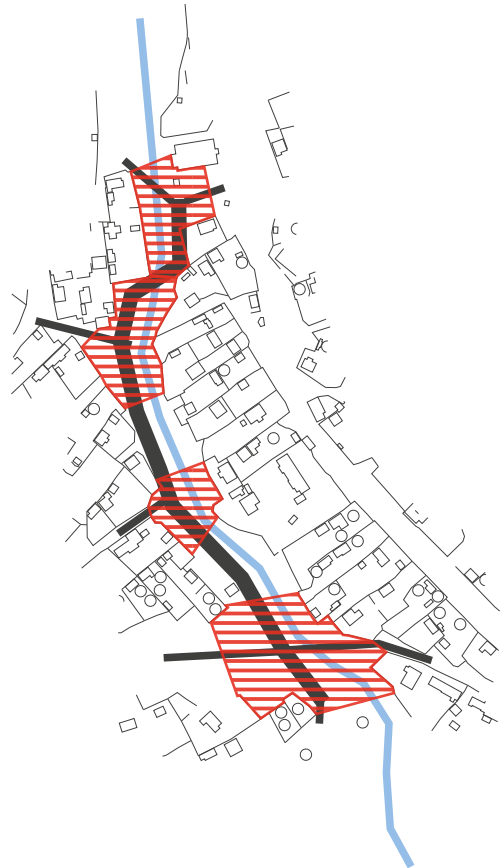
From the analysis the two corridors are recollected.



The demarcation of the specific site is defined by the most narrow space in the trace of the dry river and by connection to the formal street.



The informal flows on the site from small informal intersections.



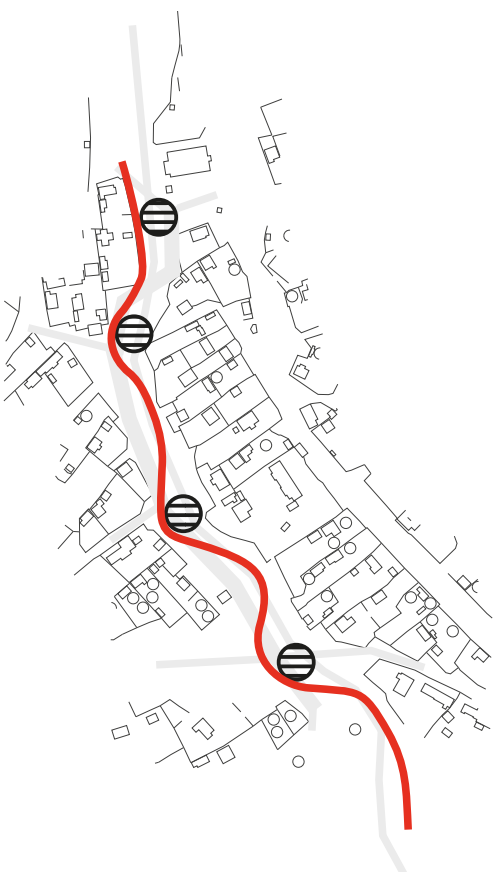
Subdivisions and mapping of potential for urban hinges based on a determination of spatial attributes in intersections and between fences.



Geometric simple forms gives each space a distinct spatial rationality.



Each simplified "stanza" is centralized to one spot.



The stanzas are tied together by a connective string, that run through the site and connect to the surroundings.

DESIGN PRESENTATION

The design solution is based on the damming of the river stream. This makes it possible to accumulate water from the mountains and prolong the watering season and thereby the growing season. This creates a very concrete common good and common responsibility as this installation needs maintenance and proper operation to last.

The dam can contain about half the melting water, that flows through here. Therefore some water will still be flowing through, however greatly reduced and in a more steady flow.

From the dam the river course forms a small hollow stretch that is filled with different types of programme in the public oriented department.

From north, when entering the site from Chingeltei street, there is a vantage point shaped from the landscape. This is in level with the street and creates a receiving platform for users and visitors, with views to the whole area.

Walking into the site, you walk down from the street and meet the cliff to where the river has eroded the ground. Here you are for the first time meeting the walkway that connects the whole area; north to the gers in the northern part, and south to the river corridor. Standing in front of the gangway on one side you have the dam and on the other the dip in the landscape is filled with trees and bushes. When walking on this part of the elevated walkway, it is like walking in tree tops.

Continuing into the site, the ramp declines slightly and descends to the ground. The fences narrow in and view is narrowed equally to the trees, but then it opens up and there is again view to the whole area and the hill sides.

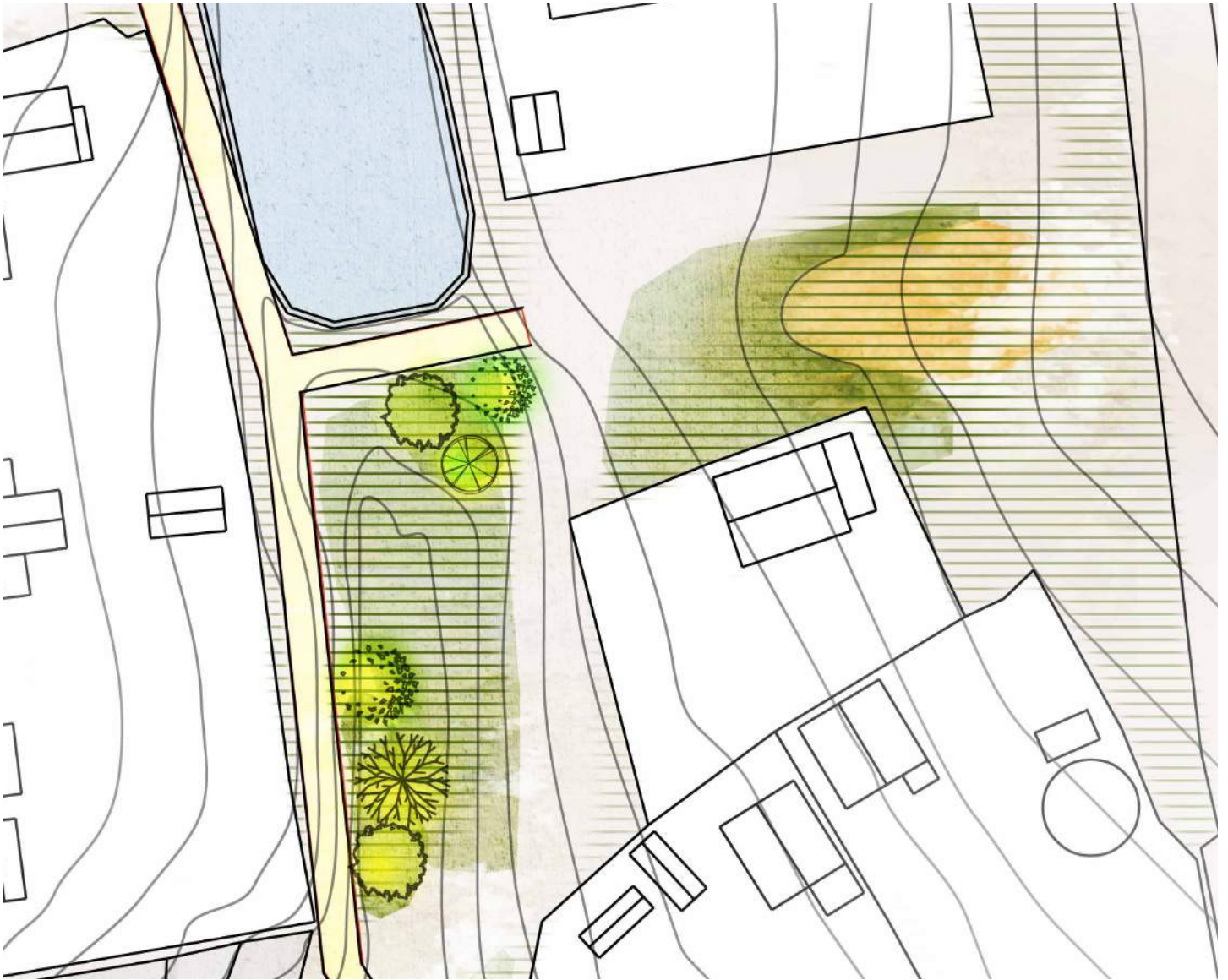
Here is a stanza that is designed as a meeting point for local people. This is like the common living room, where people relax with each other, talk and laugh, connect and settle. The place is designed as a series of little terracings down the slope, made in smooth concrete. The lowest terrace forms a dock to a sea of green. In the bottom the hollow bushes and small trees create a wilderness of green. The level of the lowest terrace is 1,20 meters from the ground, and therefore the visitor will take a role as observer of the green.

On the terraces the elevated walkway leads through and the first part of the bridge construction is physically separate from the second. The second part leads

further south to a more open and less programmed stretch. Here, access to the surrounding living areas are placed strategically where the path connects ashore. Midway a cluster of circular platforms is shaped from the ground, that is less dramatic here. This is the gallery. Each platform shapes a little island where the excess water flows naturally. Each island is a petri dish in Mongolian and Siberian flora with a grass theme island, an island for trees, one for bushes and shrubbery and one for utility flora and farming flora. The gangway is here in level with the shores surrounding it and one step above the platforms.

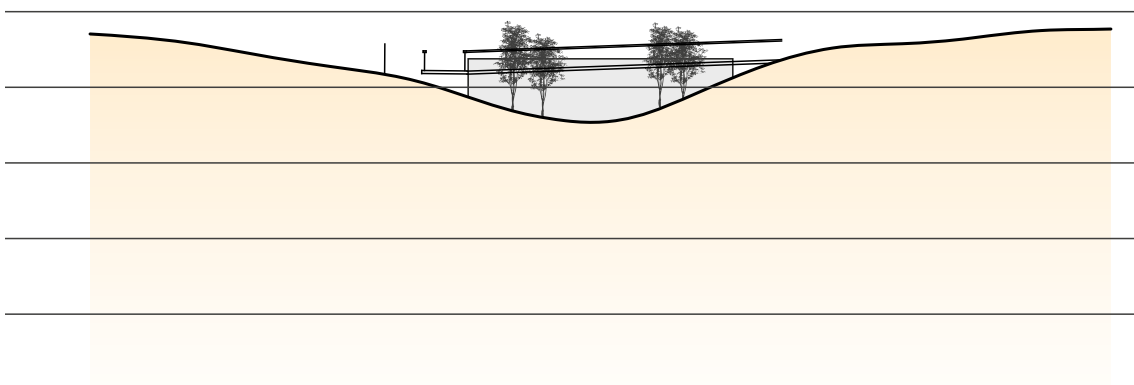
From here another longer open stretch lies before the final stanza, the backyard. The backyard is for the family, for barbeque, for physical intelligences and cultural events. An elevated stage is the centerpoint in the place that is also an informal intersection of existing flows. There is an existing bridge, that is kept and the elevated walkway meets the square right in that spot. From the stage radiates different programmes: Along the elevated walkway to the south, platforms for different kinds of games are formed from the landscape. To the west of the stage an elevated picnic corner is installed vacant for families and friends.





Ill. 33 The Entrance, plan 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

THE ENTRANCE



Ill. 34 The Entrance, section 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

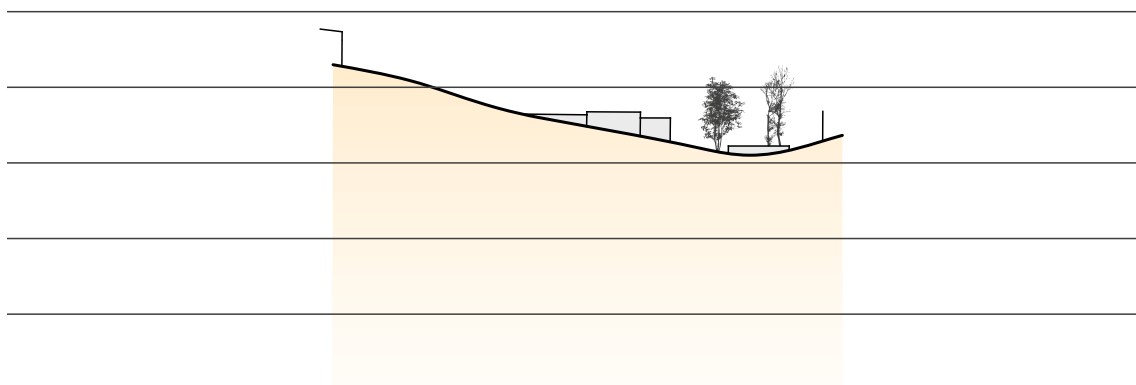
Ill. 35 (Opposite page) The Entrance, on the elevated walkway facing south





III. 36 The Living-room, plan 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

THE LIVINGROOM

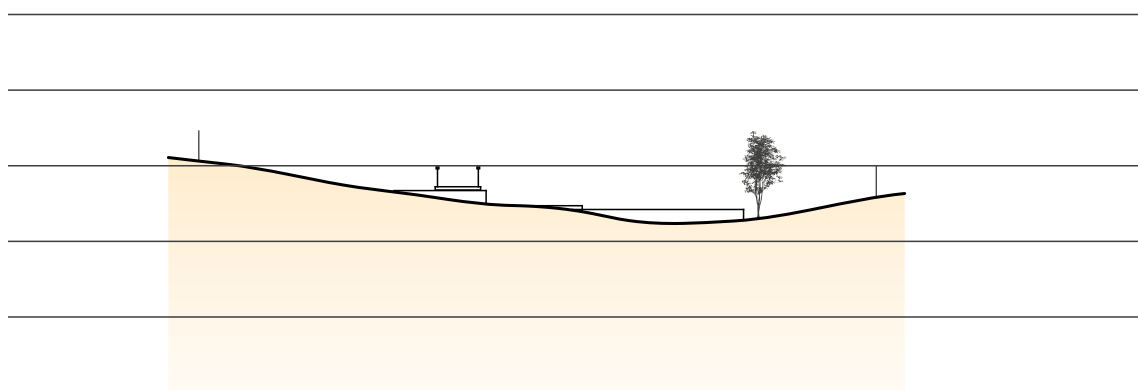


III. 37 The Living/room, section 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

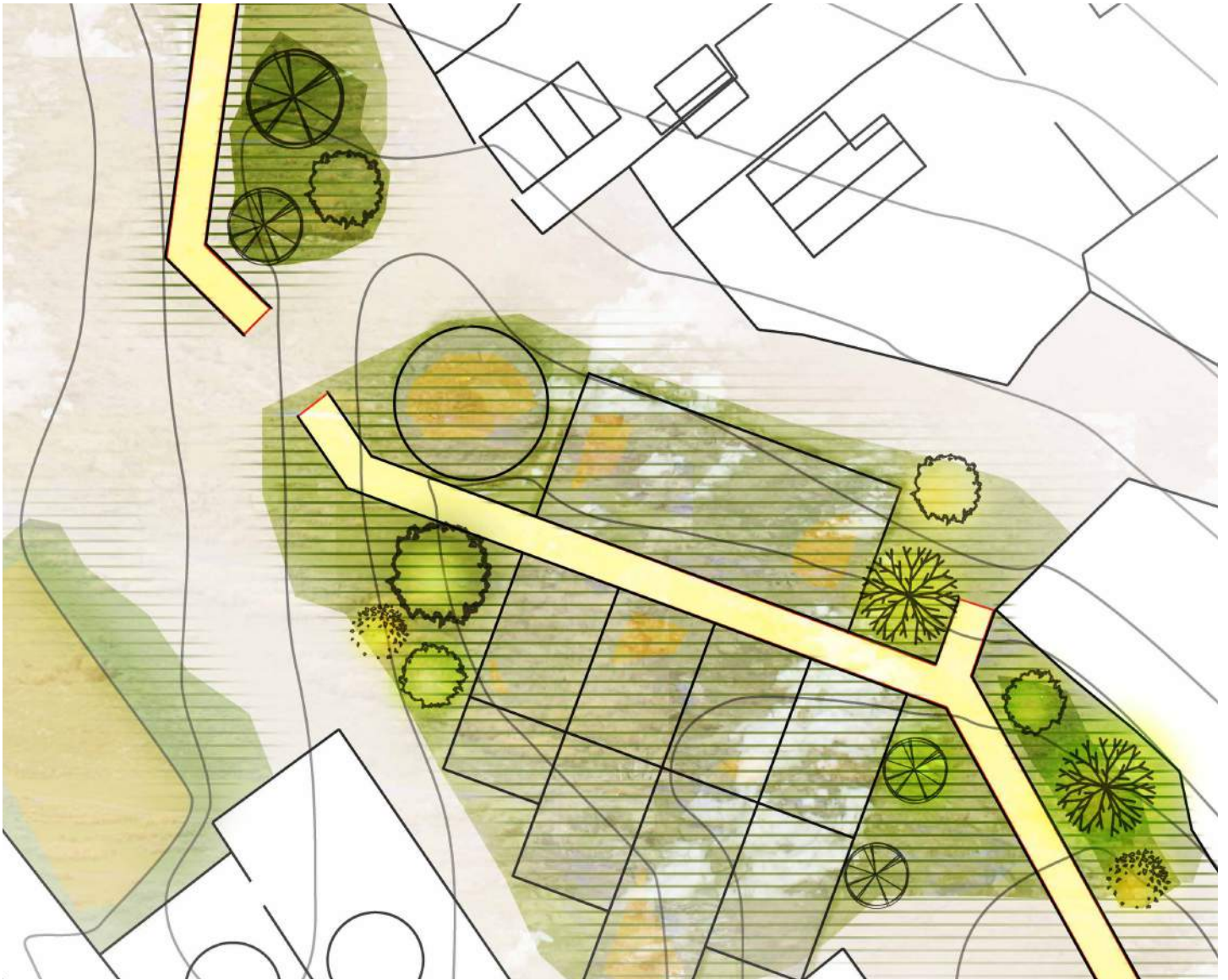


Ill. 38 The Gallery, plan 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

THE GALLERY

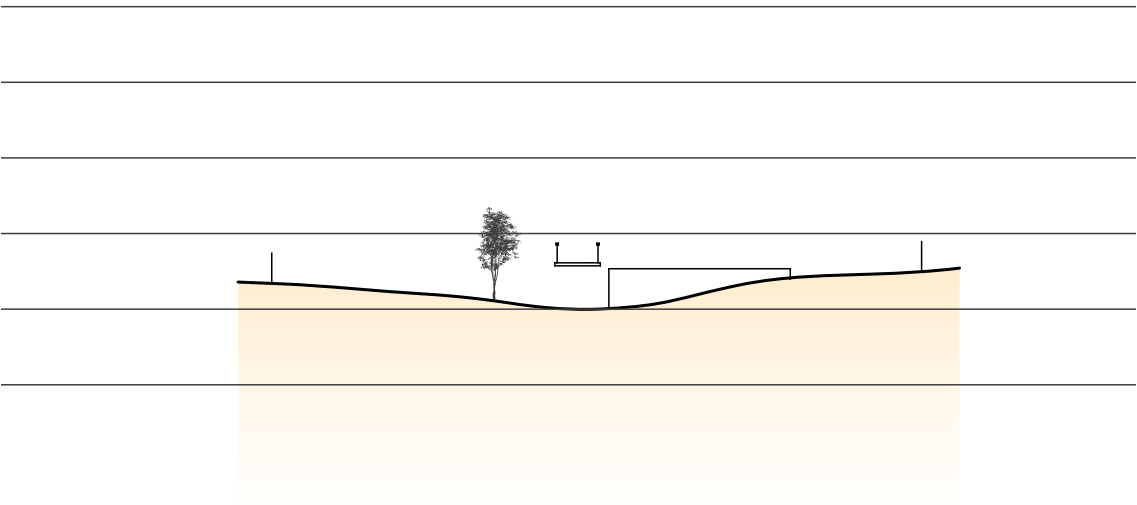


Ill. 39 The Gallery, section 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1



Ill. 40 The Backyard, plan 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

THE BACKYARD



Ill. 41 The Backyard, section 1:500, see attached drawing folder, appendix 1

Ill. 42 (Opposite page) The Backyard, from the elevated walkway facing north



CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis and to open up to a reflection upon the design and the concept and the theoretical frame this conclusion is a way to gather the threads.

First of all the design.

A conventional strategy could be a densification in the building stock, maybe conversion to more formal housing. This has not been the intention with this project, the intention was to investigate a more direct here-and-now method to activate a potential. The picturesque landscape thematic is only one way to affect the user and the visitor in a very sensoric way by staging nature, plants, trees, landscape, topography from an elevated, constructed walkway made of i-beams and point foundations. This can be worked out in other ways as well, one can speculate.

The walkway as an elevated and inclining and declining bridge construction is a way to work with the landscape very direct. The low level of inclinations, 2,8%, forces stability in the trajectory but the way of meandering with and across and along the existing river hollow and small humbs and lumbs in the landscape is a way to mediate the landscape, pragmatically tying to the “shores” and the surroundings and taking longer stretches in open and unprogrammed stretches of experiencing the area.

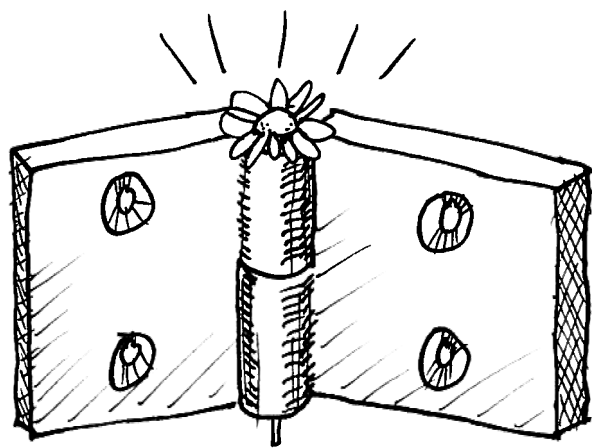
In the theoretical frame experiences from Brazil play a central role as a model to integrate through directly, practically connecting the separate areas. One lesson is important in the case from Rio: The Catagalo Elevator project is the result of an acceptance of the favela as part of the city of Rio and an effort to ‘bridge the gap’ between the formal rich and the informal poor. The rationale is social and economic and the integrated city has benefitted from (Kiib&Marling 2015:225) The downfalls of the integration here is gentrification, that forces the poorest residents will have to move. In Ulaanbaatar the city has an opportunity in the strong cultural heritage, which is still very present to Mongolians. Therefore, the huge cultural differences has not yet formed, also due to the fact, that urbanism is so new in Mongolia.

The proposal is a different, radical perception of what used to be no more than a technical measure in the urban fabric, a gutter. A natural one, but still. Now, the void is utilized as something that will tie the neighborhood together and create a strong community. This community will afterwards have to form working

communities and projects to improve and maintain their neighborhood and a positive cycle can start.

The cycle is based on communities or rather, *commonities*, from Nørretranders and Hermansen. Air pollution is an omnipresent and hazardous menace. To make the ger districts sustainable or rather resilient, the clean, green and sustainable solutions has to be robust in a number of regards, including socially.

For Mongolia my argument is that equally to the Street-Led Slum Upgrading, improved urban integration is a way to improve social and environmental conditions. This integration is achieved through commonities, that is building a community around a common asset because the community is a social function and therefore fun for people and a necessity to form ownership. Social space is a social product.



ILLUSTRATIONS

All illustrations are property of the author of this thesis, unless stated below. All credits to the owner.

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APPENDIX II: INTERVIEWS

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW,

BAT-AMGALAN ("Amka")

ARCHITECT, B.A. Arch.

GRADON ARCHITECTURE, ULAANBAATAR

Recorded March 9th, 2015, 18.26 PM @ Amsterdam Café in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (U.B.)

by Andreas Morsbøl

Andreas: ... and I'm here to gather information, now just.

Amka: Aha. Why'd you choose U.B.? There are a lot of interesting cities. Why you choose U.B.? Because you are familiar? Is it because you've been here before?

Andreas: Yeah, you know, but I've also been to Rio and Hanoi which is warmer, and I could also just choose Copenhagen

Amka: Aha, are you still doing scouting?

Andreas: Yes! Sometimes. I'm going on the scout summer camp this summer.

Amka: As a scout master or as a rover scout?

Andreas: As a scout master. But I choose U.B. because I think you have a really interesting culture in general, I've been here before and wanted to come back, and also because you have some really interesting challenges with this whole urbanization, and I think it could be, eh... You know, all Danish students choose local Danish projects or sites...

Amka: ... and you wanted to come to Mongolia? Good! Good. That's good. Is it your final thesis? (Andreas confirms) And you are writing a whole book which you submit to the school and they will give you a review?

Andreas: Yes, they will review it and I will have to go to an exam, where I have to present it and defend it.

Amka: Do you physically do some project or something, or is it just... research?

Andreas: No, I also have to do a design.

Amka: A design solution for what?

Andreas: You know, I have to focus the problem on to a local site..

Amka: Aha. Is your degree building design or urban design?

Andreas: Urban design. Planning and urban design.

Amka: Aah. Now I see. I'm more in the building design.

Andreas: What are you.. It's a big company you are working in?

Amka: Now I'm working in a British company, they just opened office in U.B. It's called Gradon Architecture. British architects. We have one expat and three local architects. I mentioned you to my expat co-worker, and she was like, if he wants to, he can visit my office. We can have the other guys opinion and the expats opinion. Their point of view is different. Out point of view is different, so you can compare. Yeah. So.. Go ahead!

Andreas: Yes. From the top: How are things in U.B.? Since I was here last you have built a lot. You've built everywhere. Is everything going according to plan? What kind of planning process go ahead building all of these high-rises?

Amka: Well, first, because of economy, right? Since you left in 2010, '11, '12 we've had this mining boom, and our economy was growing so fast and we were leading the world in terms of, you know, economic growth. We were number two, just after Qatar, and our growth was about 13-14 % per year at the time. So, all eyes on Mongolia, all investors, you know, experts, you know, of course we are taking attention, as this is the growing economy, so everyone started investing for... Well, first for mining, right, and after the mining, maybe, the second benefitting sector was construction. So a lot of companies invested in construction. That's why all this high-rise build up. Some of them

started, but couldn't finish, you know, so they just stopped under construction because, you know, economic crisis.

Andreas: Lack of funding?

Amka: Yeah, you're right, so these new development projects started from that economic boom.

Andreas: Yeah. So from the authorities, city council..

Amka: We have some procedure, right? We have building regulations, building codes and norm, everything, right? All countries have... something, right? So, we have local rule, so procedure is pretty much same as everywhere else. Of course, if you want to build something, first you need land, right? So, you have to have land, then you need investors, a developer, right? You can be the developer by you self, or invite investor for that project, right? And of course, depends on the project size, you need to have design consultants, right, so you approach the design consultant, and the developer, the client gives them a design brief and explain what they want, based on that, the design company develop the design.

Andreas: Architects.

Amka: Yeah, but the architectural job is not only by architects, structural designers, urban designer, landscape architects, those disciplines will be involved. And after the design is finished, they need to have a permission, so there is a certain procedure, and the design should be approved and after that the developer can construct something based on that approved design.

Andreas: Yeah, that's pretty much... Sounds...

Amka: It's similar to everywhere.

Andreas: Yeah, okay. And it is like that in all projects or, you know, I have this thought, that not everything is going according to this plan always.

Amka: You are right! Well, because of let's say corruption or whatever... Also, the system is not developed so well, of course there is some blurry areas in the system. There is some gaps, you know, in some construction or social actions there is no rule for that certain action; there will be gaps so someone can play in that area, for that certain subject. And also because Mongolia is small and must of businesses corrupt with politics, especially Chinese developers or Korean developers they corrupt a lot. And local guys who have the authority, they are also kind of corrupted, and that's why, you know, as an architect, let's say in a small town, maybe some district area must of the building heights are maybe five floor, right? And maybe some developer is hungry about they want to build some highrise and it blocks some access, you know, make shadow for certain apartments, right? So it can't be done according to architectural philosophy, right? It has to be made in same level, right? It has to be calculated somehow, right? But, that developer is just, you know...

Andreas: Yeah, wants to build!

Amka: - want to build it, so that is why some things is going on under the table, so he got permission. Once he got the permission on the design, he can construct it. So, this happens a lot, right?

Andreas: Yeah, I think, you know, we also have bad planning in Denmark, you know, that it is maybe not always because of bad will or corruption, it's maybe just we really want this thing to happen, so there is like a consensus between the developer and the authorities, not any corruption between them, just that they agree we want to build this, and then they build it and then later years they see that it was bad or... But at the moment maybe the municipality need money or something like that or labor, just... Could it be the same here, that, you know, it's not necessarily illegal it's just not thought through or how?

Amka: It really depends, right? Because now, well, to explain it I need to go back in history, right? As you know Mongolians are nomadics. We are not civil people. Nomadics never had a city in their history, right. There was some cities, but it was still nomadic cities. They could just disappear tomorrow, right. They can get up one day for a big conference or naadam, right, and a week later they can just disappear, right? It's not like permanent city, right? So UB is our first permanent city, the official capital of Mongolia, right? So, of course our population was not so much, so... UB city is originally designed for 250 thousand population and it's density, infrastructure, everything was designed for that, right? And you know, back to the communist era, you know, before 1990, government controlled everything, so they controlled people where to live, so when my, our parents graduated school, they just sent them to the countryside, you know? 'You have to go there and just, work there and get kids, have family. You are supposed to live there and not in the city' So, at that time the government can control the migration, everything, right? So they spread the population, so UB was just okay for 250, right? Infrastructure, density, landscape, everything was fine, but after 1990 there was a new constitution coming out, and this says everyone has the right to choose where to live, right? So of course in Mongolia remote areas are not developed, and this (UB) is the big marked, big infrastructure, capital, culture, center of everything, right? That's why people start coming to the city. It makes density very high, right? And also this debate developing the ger area, right? It starts the problem, right, and it's also this change of systems, right? Before 1990 we were under communism, the government control everything, but after that everyone has the right to choose how to live, right, so that's why they are coming and that's why, I think, the problems started there.

Andreas: I think it's kind of an extreme situation and the municipality, UB, has to react to that somehow, and if they don't have time plan a big masterplan for all, they just change the masterplan from 250...

Amka: Yeah, exactly, also at the time the economy was not so good, so I believe at the time the government had no experience and economical capacity to handle this process, right? Of course, if that happens, as an architect, you know, maybe in general, as architect in the city, they should prepare for that, right? Maybe they should build new infrastructures, new road, right? Try to expand the city, right? So it can make a balance, right? At the time it was hard and we were not experienced, so, all this just happened, you know? Everyone comes to the city and build some house or something, and burn coal and everything, and all this traffic, you know, 'cause this is originally designed for 250 (thousands), right, now we are over a million, right, so of course it will have, you know...

Andreas: Yeah... That's a really good back ground.

Amka: Yeah, also, well I have been in Denmark, I've been in the United States, I've been in other countries, right? Mongolian culture, nomadic culture is very rare. Only some Africans and Mongolians have the nomadic culture, right? And now, maybe, we are only in the world who keep this culture. In the civil culture they've spend thousands of years in civilization, right? They know the rule, right? If there is too much density or there is no road in the city they know it is not gonna work, so that's why they are aware of it already, that's why they plan, right, they can plan. They can make some channel, there is a road, there should be a park or something, right? They have experience, life experience 'cause they've lived in civilization more than us. We've been living in UB the last 100 years in an urban culture, you know. How old is Copenhagen city? Some thousand years. So compare that experience, of course you guys have more experience for the life style, right? That's why, you know, based on that experience and knowledge you know that the city has to be planned, you know, it's a live organism, then it will work, right? We haven't had that experience, even to us as architects, of course architects have, you know, we have not experience but we learn at school but our city mayor or government, authorities they don't have experience, so they just stamp, give the permission for the, you know, unreasonable, unfeasible thing because they don't have experience of the urban culture. That's why all this happens, and know we are seeing, okay, that was our mistake with all this pollution and all this traffic and everything, right? It happened. So there is two reasons, the one is this system change, the 1990 system change, and also this experience of lifestyle: We're nomadics, you guys are civilization.

Andreas: Yeah.

Amka: In like, let's say, Copenhagen, maybe you guys have same problem in Copenhagen, let's say, but maybe that's some hundred years ago, right, and once you've got the problem you solve it and you never repeat that, right? This is our first mistake, first... That's why we hope that it won't happen again in the future and we will solve this problem and maybe you can find a solution.

Andreas: Yeah, maybe I will come up with something. To me it's also a lot about sustainability. I think now you are kind of defining your city form in Mongolia and you have maybe a unique chance to make it sustainable from the beginning, or at least, maybe not until now, but from now on...

Amka: Yeah, as I know there is a theory in urban design, well, city develops in a sustainable, stable way after, like, 200 or 300 some years, right? It becomes sustainable, it gets its shape and form and everything and it is a sustainable city and it can develop itself, right? Maybe Copenhagen or New York are already passed that stage, right? So now they are already sustainable running. We are in the early stage, so that's why we need maybe 100 more years to become a sustainable city. That's what I think about this.

Andreas: Yeah. I was also thinking of this, you know, ecological, environmental sustainability, that the transformation of the ger districts will bring more sustainability in the environment because the ger, the way of life in the ger is not environmentally sustainable.

Amka: Yeah. The ger... About the ger area what is specific about this is, the ger area is the picture of, you know, nomadic trying to become a civilization, right? Well, few people living the countryside having some livestock... You know the countryside livestock, it's fine, it's sustainable. Few people in a house and stuff, they move four times a year, but when they come to the city they cannot directly become urban people. They don't have apartment, it's expensive, so they bring their home, which is the ger, and live in the city. This is urban lifestyle, this is nomadic lifestyle, countryside. Ger area is in the middle of this. They try to become the city, live in the city, and of course it's totally two different lifestyles meeting each other in that area and making the problems. It's social-cultural.

Andreas: It's cultural and it's, how can I say, it's also mix of structural, physical, the ger next to the apartments and all that. Everything is completely clash.

Amka: Ger is actually... I have studied about the ger. It's perfect creation, perfect architecture for nomadic lifestyle, not in the city, perfect in the countryside. Here, maybe the flat, those are perfect for the city, right? So, of course it is not sustainable and comfortable in the city but to live and survive they bring the ger to the city, right, and burning coal, and, you know, hundred families burning coal at the same time make pollution, right? In the countryside it is the same only it's singly families. All though you are two three families you are in one big valley, right, so it won't make pollution. So this density and the nomadic lifestyle that comes to the city, that mix, that makes crossing culture, crossing lifestyle. It's really a mix of that.

Andreas: How is it to work as an architect in all this defining the urbanity.

Amka: To me urban is urban country, urban culture. We can't mix it. To me those gers are supposed to be in the countryside, it's a perfect home in the country. I love the ger, I love to live in there, but not in the city. It's the countryside, right? To me the fastest solution to fix this problem is just develop the construction to change the ger area, reconstruct, formalize it, build infrastructure, roads, green areas, shopping areas and housing. That's the fastest

solution. To me. Quiet drastic, but a lot of people think different things. People also say that those areas has to be developed as a housing area, private housing: It takes time! As an architect's point of view it just has to be changed drastically. That's what I will say. Maybe when you talk to different people they may say different things, but that's just my opinion.

Andreas: Yeah, and that's also what I want. Then I have to sort out what I need.

[Small-talk]

Andreas: I think this is really interesting, what you are saying. It is kind of an extreme perspective, you know, that they just have to be formalized, but I think the reason you are making, that the ger is for the countryside, it makes sense to me.

Amka: Yeah, it's perfect creation for the countryside, it has... You know, architecture is new to Mongolians. 'cause it's art and science of urban lifestyle, right? So we were nomadics, we don't have such beautiful churches or house area as Europeans. We don't have that. We only have the ger and that's perfect creation for nomadic lifestyle and here and now it's not for the city. That's my point of view, and all the ger areas are burning the coal, making a lot of pollution and it drastically affects our health, right? We don't know how long we will live, maybe you will live longer than us, who knows. Because of this environmental bad effect, my personal opinion, we need to change it as soon as possible.

Andreas: Okay... And the solution is: the flat? Some kind of smart city, compact city model?

Amka: The flat. Smart city. Yes.

Andreas: I think for now I have some really good things already to start with, but I will get back to you if something should come up.

Amka: The problem is we are now exhausting the soil. You know how toilets work in the ger area. We stick a whole and put a toilet on top of it and make shit, right? Then we just burry it, making pollution in the soil. Also, this coal burning: If they cannot burn the coal they burn rubber, trashes, even worse than coal, right? 'Cause they are poor and don't have money to buy coal, and so, let's say we make it housing they will still burn coal, that's the cheapest and easiest solution to make heat, right? This is officially the coldest capital in the world, so to survive people have to be warmed up, right? The only solution is coal burning. So, to change that: central heating system is the only solution as I see it and also plumbing system. For the existing ger areas, you know how the pipes work, all the piping... All the hills in the ger area, right? We can't develop the piping infrastructure through the ger areas, right? It's hard. Physically it's hard. That's why it's hard to run pipes there, pipe for plumbing, pipe for water supply and for heating, right? Sewage has to run by itself and there is no pump, so in a valley like this plumbing flowing from here then where? It's meeting inside, right, it has nowhere to flow, so there it's hard to develop the infrastructure. So in my point of view we need to relocate them and develop some housing. That's the fastest way. I heard that the same problem happened in London and Europe hundred years ago... (Phone ringing) ... And, eh, that's my opinion.

Andreas: Yeah. You are still missing some law, right?

Amka: Of course. The people living there they have the right to choose where to right?

Andreas: Yeah, there is this rule about the 700 square meters.

Amka: Yeah, they already own the land, they already have the property, some house or building on it, right? We can't just steal it or kick them out, you know, we can't do that.

Andreas: No, at least as the laws are.

Amka: Yeah, they can sue us, right? Not us, the government, right? So we should find a very smart way to develop the areas, but win and win situation, right? Beneficial for both parts, right? Beneficial for those people, beneficial for... Maybe... Of course, to do that the private sector should be involved, right? So beneficial for private sector and also for the government. So win and win situation, but it's really hard to find that way. Of course, they don't want to be kicked out, they have nowhere to go, right? They have jobs and lives here. But to make the construction we need to kick them out for two years right. Then we can build something, then they can come back. But we need that: How do we let them live in that two years period. That's the answer, but the government already has some program and it's started and I hope it will go well. It is an interesting city.

[Small talk]

After the interview some comments on mining and the development in Mongolian economy. Amka is optimist on behalf of a sustainable progress in Mongolian economy.

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW, with

S. ENKHTSETSEG, Officer in Charge

UN HABITAT MONGOLIA, UN MONGOLIA

Recorded March 12th, 2015, 09:58 AM @ UN-HABITAT OFFICE, The UN House in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia ("UB")

by Andreas Morsbøl

Andreas: My interest area is urban design in UB and urban design in the ger districts in particular, and to me it seems as a big challenge to elevate the ger districts from a poor lifestyle to a more modern lifestyle and also to make UB sustainable in more aspects, environmentally, socially, economically. I found all your projects, GUSIP, GUP, and also this Community Led Ger Upgrading Program. So, but you are the leader of this...

Enkhee: I am actually officer in charge here... What is the theme of the thesis?

Andreas: It's part of what I have to define for myself.

Enkhee: You haven't defined yet?

Andreas: Not as precise as I wanted it. For now my research question is: 'Using strategic urban design interventions how can the social potential of the ger residents be activated to help facilitate the transformation from nomad to urbanite society' And there is of course many assumptions in that question.

Enkhee: Okay, so, on the UN Habitat activities here in Mongolia we have started in 2006 with the strategic development, so we had like urban development masterplan in UB city like 5 times in socialist time starting from 1950's with help of the Soviet Union, they helped the development of masterplans. Then, 2000 the first time Mongolia developed urban masterplan for themselves, but by that time, until 2000, the ger area was actually considered temporary settlement, although it actually was a part of the city already. But, at that time, they were planning it as a temporary settlement, it would gradually become a built up area, like housing, apartment areas. But in 2000 they understood it will still be there. It's kind of like the urban morphology of Mongolian cities, one of the composition typologies of Mongolian cities. So, then they started thinking how to develop this area into a more comfortable area. Because, we have more than half the population living in here, and then it will not be converted in one night to this nicer area, as Americans or Europeans imagine, comfortable living area. But like, I have now been working with this UN Habitat with this ger area typology issues for eight years, now, my point is the ger area is not that problematic, because actually it's the area where you can live independently from you neighborhood, somehow. You don't have anyone upstairs or downstairs. You can actually live freely there, but the problem is there is not proper solutions, like sanitation, water supply, heating, like urban services, so if we can find some rational solutions for those problematic areas... The area itself is not so problematic, so it can actually be left there without any concern, if we can apply some basic service solutions. So, that's now my understanding at this point. Initially it was like even some foreigners were recognizing it. One American and one from Australia saw the ger areas see it as problematic, because the ger area is not so known lifestyle for them. They see it as problematic, but in the area the people see it differently. They, somehow, enjoy living there, so their problem is actually to find a comfortable lifestyle through connecting to the basic urban services. Last year we had a survey in some certain areas and we asked them... We provided some options: if you are willing to move from here into the apartment area, or if you want to swap the land with the apartment, or if you want to still have the land still continue as the they are doing there. The answer was like 50-50. Half of them wanted to continue living there like they are doing now, and half of them want to change their lifestyle and sell the land and move out. And then in 2006 we helped the municipality of Ulaanbaatar city to develop ger area development strategy and in that strategy conceptualized three types of ger area in the city... And how many times have you been in here?

Andreas: How many times? Second time. First time 5 years ago.

Enkhee: Second time. So you've already observed there is a built up core area, and then there is the ger area, which is surrounding that area where we have some pipelines, or where we can have the ends of the existing networks, where we can extend pipelines. So that area is the center area, and then the middle ger area is just around that center area, and then the peri-urban ger area, which is where, maybe you can observe it is where people already climbed the to the mountain and settled in the valleys. That area is referred to as peri-urban. There is defined three types strategies in that three kinds of ger areas and the central ger area is actually a planned to be developed with the help of the private sector, because the central area is the only area where the city can extend because the city actually ends there, so with lowest cost it can be extended in the area. So, in that sense it is considered to be the area to be extended. When we started this Community Led Ger Area Project, there was already some activity in the central ger area because the private sector tried to get the commercial land and the land was already sold and they had started developing the land in the central ger area. And then we thought the middle area will be more the area where they cannot easily find the funding, and already the ger area land is privatized, you know that?

Andreas: Yeah.

Enkhee: The ger area land is actually private to the owners. There was a law in 2003 for the privatization. Maybe you know that we were a socialist country and all land belonged to the state before 2003. But already in 2006 it became very hard to acquire the land back from the citizens, because it was already converted to the private so then the middle ger area development strategy is based on the community willingness, so it will be developed according to them to a comfortable living area. The area needs to be developed with community led activities. So, the main concept of

the project is based on the community planning and based on that bottom-up approach, and to influence the city planning and implementation of the masterplan. So, that was the approach and then we started the project in 2009. I actually have here some brochures that explain the project, maybe Tuvshoo will help you. When we started the project, this was the introductory brochure. Here we have described the UN Habitat interventions in UB City and a little bit on the ger area and on UB City, can be helpful for you. Then, this is about 4 components in the project and it started from social mobilization. We have selected 5 areas with help of the municipality and then started with mobilization committee organization. It was kind of, you know, in the socialism we waited for the government to provide the services, maybe it can be different in your country, but then we were waiting for the government to provide, even if we need to remove waste, solid waste in my plot we actually wait for the municipality to send the waste collection car and so on. But instead of initiating anything, we were used to that. But in the project we tried to change that mindset of the people and give the mindset that: Instead of waiting for the government to bring you something, you can actually do it yourself, and not only yourself but with your neighborhood, and the main concept is: One person is person, but when you start working together with the neighborhood, you will have big power. You can influence some policies and so on. You can develop yourself, you can improve the area, at least near area. Of course, in the neighborhood you have common problems. Our approach is: the neighbors who are living in same condition, maybe living on the edge of a valley for example, the neighbors who are living in same environments if its flood form, disaster form or windy, those who have a common problem can form as a group. They will be triggered by a common problem and define the problems themselves and plan the activities towards the problems themselves and then go for the plan implementation themselves, that's our approach. So to implement that we started the social mobilization because as I mentioned we became inactive, so people should be activated. We call it mobilization and our original office was not sure, like, we were socialist country and this approach was implemented in south Asian countries, but they were not sure because with socialist background if it would work or not. But somehow it worked well. We made the people identify their needs and develop their plans and based on their plans we developed our activities. We tried to address those needs on which the community can't do much. Where they need some professional service and so on and we left some activities to the people. Those activities people can do themselves without much involvement of the authority. So this sort activities were divided into two parts: Under the part that needed some contribution, some budget or some professional service we have built 15 community buildings, three in each of the areas, we have 5 areas. We have would have built one community center in each area but we tried to address as many of the needs in the wish list of the community, so, for instance we provided 3 community centers in one area, like one is... You know in the ger area we don't much space together for the people, so one is community hall where they can celebrate many different things, a sort of multi-purpose community hall, where they can have meetings, celebrations, they can have parties or sport competitions, like this. The other one is the community center, where people who are doing some small business at home can rent rooms and start kind of... We call it brigade, kind of workers team. Like... for instance, if you have a sewing business you can rent a room there and start doing the sewing and you can have partners working together. It will give some visibility at least, you will be exposed there compared to working at home, and have more opportunity for income generation. So those is kind of rental spaces. Other ones are dependent on the area's needs. Some places we have kindergartens, some places we have school extensions, some places we have elderly centers and so on. This is those 15 building by area (points to brochure). Maybe you can get Tuvshoo's help to understand it. For instance this one is in Songinokhairkhan district we have kindergarten, community center, rental spaces, bath houses, two of them, because, you know, in the ger area we don't have shower facility so the number one problem is to have a shower and so we tried to address that need in the buildings. So that's kind of that.

Another activity we call micro-projects. It has been implemented by the community themselves. We helped with the design and budget estimation but we made a contract with the residents and provided the money, and they purchased what they needed for the work and they mastered all those things and implemented those micro projects. This is examples of... (Points to brochure) This is a water kiosk, this a point where you can get water. It can be ground well or it be a water truck bringing water to the point and be the distribution center of this water. And another one is a playground for children, and this one is a drainage channel, and this is like a bus shed, and this is street light. This is a good project of the community because you know, in the ger are when you go in the night you will find many spaces very dark so where there is darkness there can be negative... Crimes like robbery or rape, so, because the people are in the best position to know that where there were cases already happening those areas identified by them and they provided the street lights there. They actually developed them themselves, it doesn't actually look like street poles in the built up area, this is kind of a self-made one, with different design in different areas, but the concept is the same; they should light the street. Then the committee found a way to negotiate with the plot owners and the poles are installed inside the plot, but the lights are looking outside of the plot to the street. There are many municipality provided street lights but usually what happens if those work for a while but severe wind or a kid throw a stone or something else damages the pole it will be left like that for a while until the municipality reach there. Here it's different because it is a ger committee project, so they have negotiated with the family who are hosting this one and they should be in charge of the maintenance and the operation and they have this time table. During the year the turn-on/turn-off time will be different because of this day length and they have this responsibility to turn on the light in certain times and pay for the bill of the electricity. That's actually it's a very good community project because those hosting, the family feels some responsibility and give some responsibility at least for the neighborhood. Those (points to brochure again) are some steep ways where there was slippery and they have initiated a project and designed themselves. What our contribution was that we provided the budget and we provided supervision services and engineering and so on. We were actually going around when they were implementing the project, advising them how to do the concrete or what ratio they should use for this one or that one.

Andreas: Okay, so it's also self-built?

Enkhee: Yes, self-built, but our engineer was actually visiting the area there and providing some advice to the people. And this one is a foot bridge and a foot path and some small constructions like asphalt road. So, those are community projects where the community implemented the project. There was no involvement of companies. Here, in this project we announced the tender and selected private companies to construct the buildings. So, because the companies

should have its profit through some contracting, here, the communities are working, they don't get the profit because the things are for themselves, so will just get some salary, estimated, but not profit. That is actually the difference. And in the end they will be the end users and they will be watching after the realization and they will who should fix if there will be something wrong.

Andreas: So there is also a lot of responsibility with this?

Enkhee: Yes. With this one no one will be able to do it alone, so they have to do it together and know each other. This is like kind of, although it's maybe one month, two months, shorter activity, but through the process they start knowing each other and recognizing who is more reliable, who is more knowledgeable, who will be not so reliable, so through they start recognizing themselves. Before the projects they hardly knew each other faces. You just generally know this is my neighbor, but maximum you would say 'Hi', but after this one they started working together already. They started every two weeks to have regular meetings to discuss things or sought out other opportunities or plan for next activities, so those are bringing the sense to the people.

Andreas: Actually it's right in the center of my problem statement, this activating social potential because to me activating social potential is about making network or making a community and make it work for some kind of growth or betterment of the community.

Enkhee: Yes. This work actually works as team building and now they've become a team. Although, the project completed in December 2013, already one and a half years, they are still existing, doing something helpful for the environment or the neighborhood, initiating things. In order to ensure the sustainability of the project result we actually gave some of the community buildings operation and maintenance right to the people. There were established community development councils in one sub-district, so they are now taking care of these buildings. Actually, it's different for the kindergartens, they belong to the education department. Their operation and maintenance belong to the education department, but those community buildings have ownership rights (?) to the city but the operation and maintenance rights go to the community. (Meaning the city owns the buildings, but the operation and maintenance belong to the local community, my interpretation) They are now trying to create employment for themselves. They run the buildings without any loss, there shouldn't be any loss, gradually they should make profit and gradually they are managing, and those bath-houses... We have these two bath-houses in this area, and initially the design was based on this truck service. The truck water service. The truck was coming to deliver the water to the building and the building should utilize that water. But because if the community will run the building it will actually be more expensive for people to every time buy one tank of water for the daily use, so then we got the community to help dig down a water well there and they are now using the ground well, and this has helped to decrease the cost of the baths. After we assessed the project we had a high-level reporting meeting with the municipality reporting the results of the project, and the community leaders was actually saying that things can be done on other projects but we can do it for ourselves, we can develop many things without government or municipality. At least we can do resource mobilization. So, that was actually the main achievement, I guess, from the project.

Andreas: Yes. I think so too. And it's these, (point to brochure) they are all in the peri-urban..?

Enkhee: In the middle area. Peri-urban should be tricky... Because although they are settlement but if the settlement is not so suitable for settlement, those areas need to be moved or relocated and so on to where it's suitable for human habitat. It can be actually developed for them, so we actually didn't touch the peri-urban, only tried to help this middle ger area.

Andreas: 'Cause to me, I was talking to this architect the other day, and to him the biggest issue for UB was the ger districts, and I think also it is, as it is now, but to me it sounds like you are thinking more in an upgrading for the ger districts, rather than a relocation or redevelopment.

Enkhee: They call redevelopment, but it's kind of half, maybe more than half, a political decision, you know, to get the votes. Because the ger area people are dominant, population is more than in the built up area, so to get more votes in the ger area the leading part is coming up with the ger are redevelopment strategy. Although it's actually a problematic area their interest is more on the votes for their political power. That's why they are talking about the redevelopment, but we are already seeing there negative side of this start of the redevelopment process. Because the companies are calling for the interest of development, the private companies will not go there where they allow it to ger area people... They will develop with the purpose of getting profit out of it so they will not spend much time, like we did, for community mobilization and so on, community needs, they will not structure it like that because it will be very time consuming and will need finance. Instead of doing that they just go there and buy the land and start develop apartments on the freed land and, while they are constructing the buildings, start buying neighborhood areas. Because there is not actually certain land value in the ger area one day, when you come visit my family and ask my land rate, I could say 3.000 \$ and we agree. Tomorrow, when you bring the money can already have changed my mind and say 'My neighbor actually sold it for 30.000 so I will sell for 40.000.' Because of this, they (private companies) will have problems with the people getting the land, so they have changed their way. So they buy some of the land and in the area where they will not negotiate they try to pressure by making the ger area not so livable during the construction, making it noisy or dusty. So, through that they actually leave the families like that and that family's daily lifestyle will be changed. It will be broken with this kind of construction neighborhood. Through that they try to lower the prize and pressure the families. Those ways to negotiate they are using, not going through the community needs. Now, we can see many buildings are coming up in the ger area, and many people are questioning this picture of the apartment areas, and as I told you almost 50% have the interest of living in the ger area, so then maybe we will see more ways in between those with power and our soft ways to implement the areas. That the municipality will find a rational way to develop the ger areas. Okay. That's it. Hopefully you have some information from that.

[Small talk, the end]

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW, with

TANJA SMITH, Architectural Specialist

GRADON ARCHITECTURE, ULAANBAATAR

Recorded March 11th, 2015, 14.13 PM @ Gradon Architecture Office in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia ("UB")

by Andreas Morsbøl

[Small-talk]

Andreas: Yes, maybe you could give a short introduction of Gradon Architecture and Gradon Architecture in UB, and maybe more specifically 'Why UB?'

Tanja: Right, I don't know how much you've been told already, I could quite easily run through a presentation with you, but just quickly: We set up 6 years ago, where we started off with a couple of people and then quickly grew, and we never thought we'd ever work abroad from the UK and we ended up in Kazakhstan for some strange reason. Some of us had moved to Kazakhstan and asked us to do some work. On the back of that they were coming into Mongolia to have a look around and advised us to join them, but we'd already heard of Mongolia and were quite intrigued anyway. A lot of our work we do is based on sustainable architecture. Apart from the fact that we like it we have to in the UK, it's now law. So, we developed a good system, we liked what it had to offer, and of course everybody in the UK has to do the same thing because of the law, so we thought how can we take it somewhere where it will benefit, and obviously Mongolia is a prime candidate because it is a developing problem, but also because of the pollution problems it faces. So, lots of things sort of tied up and that's how, more or less, how we ended up in Mongolia. It wasn't just (index-finger in the air measuring the wind direction) 'Yeah, we'll go!' So it took us three years of travelling back and forwards pretty much every other month, so we've travelled a lot here, always with the intention in mind: 'Are we going to make a home here for Gradon Architecture' and I came out in October last year, and it was really just to find if I could live here and also trying to find the guys we've got now and see how it will work. So, I went back in December, packed up my life and came back over here. We started here in January 19th, we opened and it's a kind of a mixture of the moment where we've got a couple of projects about to break, but at the moment supporting the UK and their projects as well. We are trying very much, 'cause we've got three offices, we don't want each of them to be their own office, we want the cooperation to happen 'cause that's how we get exchange of knowledge, good cultural exchange, and it makes us stronger. So we Skype every week, we have our team meeting. Ireland (the office) have yet to join us on that one, Ireland is kind of new to us yet, so they have to sort that out. The big thing for us, when we came over here, even in the UK, part of our philosophy is that architecture is for and about people, it's not just about buildings, and therefore we serve a community and not just investors. So we are not scared to help the granny down the road with their 4 square meter kitchen extension, but equally we can tackle multi-million pound deals as well. Everywhere we go we try very much to, even if it's a little bit, bring in sustainable architecture, because our philosophy is a little better than nothing at all. 'Cause everything relies on budgets, yeah?! Coming into UB, it's a little bit like my background from South Africa, where we deal with a lot of the squatter camps and informal settlements, and of course they are made of tin sheds, and they are not quite as economically or environmentally friendly as the ger even, so, and not well organized at all, so, that's the background I come from where we got to deal with the squatter camps and their organization in those areas. While the structure might be different the social problems are the same: It's poverty, it's lack of utilities, water, electricity, that sort of things, it's safety, you've got violence, you've got all sorts of things, you've got hunger, drugs, you name it. These are unfortunately the things that poverty and unorganized settlements attract. So, also coming into UB we've established contact with charities, which we try to help out from UK and we got to continue doing so while we are here, and those are primarily in the ger districts as well. So, one of our key things, while we will take any project that is going, we definitely want to be involved with ger regeneration and it's not just about putting people out of the ger districts and into apartment blocks and then we can cut down on pollution. We are hoping that somehow there is some kind of collaborative thinking between the departments so that there is a clear way forward for the ger districts to be for the people, and for the ger districts to be rehoused without losing their identity. Now, whether that is possible or not at this point, 'cause it seems to have gone past that idea already, I don't know. The areas are being developed very separately without any overall plan, which is frustrating because they are trying to be little islands on their own and there is no thinking for further growth and they are taxing an already over-stretched system like the electricity and water and resources like that. It's very strange, Mongolia is this massive country and everything is around this nucleus of UB, but the worry is that they are not going to be able to sustain it. So, it's a challenge for us to try and influence the things the best we can, and in our approach to architecture that would be to approach the building and the basic fabric first before we start adding things like solar panel, all that kind of things on to the buildings. So, if we got the main structure right the requirements for things like that will decrease. It will still be there, but it won't be that much.

Andreas: And here you are talking about ger districts?

Tanja: Talking about ger districts being rehoused into modern buildings but the modern buildings have to be right. You can't... If they are not done properly, then all you are doing is you're creating this massive problem. You shifting it from air pollution to something else. So, it's going to be a big task and hopefully there is going to be people in place that will guide them in the right direction. Unfortunately, at this point, looking at development plan we have seen so far: Not too hopeful on that.

Andreas: Ah. Okay. That was the guys I met with yesterday.

Tanja: Yeah, well. I think the let out pieces of land and then individual agents or construction firms do a little masterplan, it get's approved, but this masterplan doesn't talk to another masterplan right next door, so, yeah.

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Amka: Yes, but in Mongolian. I found the whole package, I will give it to you.

Andreas: I think it's there but it's hard to understand the detail, 'cause you can see they've put up an administrative system with these khoroos, and also, when I talked to them yesterday, it was, you know, democratic... to some extent, at least, but the process after the democracy, it was a little hard to see. Then it got into some kind of bureaucracy with the companies, kind of, pulling.

Tanja: Now, there is a lady I spoke to at the United Nations, some weeks ago, talking about the ger districts and about how I think it is going to rehouse people, and there is obviously a lot of unemployment and maybe to create apprenticeships within the construction firm, where they take on 10 people who live in the areas and teach them how to build, and they will build their own and then move on and build the next and train the next and so on and so on, and then she end up with a skilled work force. She went a bit beyond that. Her concerns were a lot deeper in terms of the social impact of moving people around. It might be worth that you talk to her as well. Her name is Sezin, I can see if I got her cars. She's a very busy lady, so don't be surprised if she doesn't have time. She pretty much runs the whole of the United Nations here. Well, but I think the whole concern is such a deep, wide spread and so many players that got to be involved, that, if they don't have one key person or organization that will drive and make it cohesive thing, it's just going to dissolve into a mess in the end, I think.

Andreas: Yeah. Ehm. It opens up a lot of thoughts. I hear many different things about the ger districts. Some are saying it should be transformed completely, those I talked with yesterday where saying it is developing slowly as the time it takes to construct and, of course, as investments keep coming in and this lady at UN she was like 'We shouldn't transform the ger districts at all, we should make it kind of a sustainable ger district.' A smart ger typology...

Tanja: I think it's vague. You are dealing with people and you got people how want to move into fancy apartments, however aspirations for that, and you are dealing with people who just came in from out on the steppe, who move to the city for whatever reason, they are living in the ger, and they don't want to live in a modern building. But they live next to the guy who does and this is the land that's going up so what do you do to those people.

Andreas: Yes. Exactly. That's also what I asked those, yesterday.

Tanja: Yeah. So it's a big political thing and it's not a problem I want to be managing at this point in time, so, just from the architectural side it's a mountain of a task. Going back to my experiences in South Africa and dealing with immigrant labor and everything that used to come in from Zimbabwe or Mozambique and all those places. They were illegal in the country, we couldn't really prove it but they were clearly not South African. They were camping pretty much alongside the main arterial road in their tin sheds, and, you know, come home drunk and they fall out their front door and get run over by a bus, you know. That's how close they were to the main roads. Their lights were kerosene lamps and when they fall a sleep with the lamp then, not only their shed would've burnt down, but it would spread and then thousands and thousands would die. It was a big big big problem and of course the government's response was to put them into brick houses, which were probably half the size of this room with a family of ten, then they could live in that room, but it was the best you could do on the budget given to provide some kind of solid structure for them to live in that was safe, had drain water and had a toilet and a little kitchen or whatever. It wasn't fantastic by any stretch of the imagination but it was safer. When you found it, because of the cultural things, they come from the tribes where they live in the huts that were round and you put them in a square "hut", the first thing they did was to knock a big hole in the floor and build a fire in the middle of the... So, it's a cultural thing, you know, putting people with ancient traditions into a modern space isn't always the right way to go. It's separating those who do know and want that way from those who don't, who just want their traditional lives and how do you bring that

into the century?

Andreas: Exactly.

Tanja: So there's a lot. [More stories from South African rehousing programme] So, you can point a lot of fingers at the government initiatives but they are never gonna get it right, not a 100%, but the key thing is to get behind a good plan that will be cohesive and, I suppose, serve the best for the majority of the community, but they are never ever gonna get it 100 % right. So. That's my take on it.

Andreas: Yeah. And that's also what I want. Ehm. We've been all the way through. Just briefly, the projects you are doing in UB now, can you say something about that?

Tanja: Uh, there is no ger projects at the moment. We were going to join a company building 44 tower blocks on a site, now is that the way forward? Someway if that doesn't come through we wouldn't be equally as happy, 'cause I don't fully agree with that. And, I suppose in architecture you got to have some moral standing and it's compounding problems. 44 tower blocks on top of each other? You know what the cycle of cities are? When that becomes urban sprawl, is that gonna be a safe community?

Andreas: No, and that's what you said before, if it's not done right then it's just another problem that is built. That's also what I... You know I was here 5 years ago and it's completely changed, I mean, I think it's double towers built here, and I can't help wondering if everything is going according to plan and is it a good these architects come up with, and also, you know, you can see the building quality if you live in one...

Tanja: Not great. Well, it's because you've got a lot of unskilled labor who ends up on site, they also ship in loads of unskilled Chinese labor doing work on site. The guys doesn't worry if the building leaks air or not, they just want to lay bricks and get off and get home and earn their money so they can feed their families, yeah? But the greater scheme of things, if you wanna make a sustainable building, you've gotta make sure it's built right, yeah? Well, you know, in the west we've got this passive house and all that kind of thing, it will never get done here because I suppose you would have to train everybody all over again to do that, and unfortunately... You know, they will get there in the end, but for now it's going to be a big, big job because they need to get the bits and the planning right, but when you got that coupled with 'How do you train a work force', you know, sure! So, yeah, it's a two edge sword they've gotta fight with.

Andreas: Yeah, it's... My design problem was at one point 'What is the core of Mongolian modern living', because to me that's not found yet, but that's also a big question.

Tanja: But that's also exciting to see which way it will go. I mean, we had the conversation in the car, where I say 'Well, what is Mongolian architecture?' There is not something like that you can point at and say 'That's Mongolian!' It will be nice to see that one day, and it will be terrible to arrive in Ulaanbaatar and it looks like Singapore.

Andreas: Yeah or some European city.

Tanja: Yeah, but in the end we've been asked to bring in British architecture, and we've like 'Yeah, we bring our knowledge and everything, but particularly, you know, do we really want to design London or New Castle?'

Andreas: I've been thinking the same: 'Am I, also I have very limited time for that, but am I going to define or give a proposal on some kind of Mongolian typology?' As a westerner? But again, there's also architectural influence, and I think that is also okay, you know, in Europe we've been influenced by each other all the time.

Tanja: All the time yeah, yeah. I think the speed at which everything is being done there is no time given to just developing a true Mongolian typology, as you say.

Andreas: But I'm thinking that's the culture and the means and the history and the future that should go into some kind of (typology)... but that's also a big question that may take time... will take time to answer.

Tanja: Oh yeah, but until clients stop looking at places like: 'We wanna build like that one in Korea,' you know, 'Yeah, we can do that, sure, but why?' You know? Yeah, but the ger area is a massive question that's got to be answered and if it doesn't get answered right it's a disaster.

Andreas: Yes.

Tanja: So, it will be interesting to see when you come up with the answer.

Andreas: The answer... Yeah. ☒

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW, with

TANJA SMITH, Architectural Specialist

GRADON ARCHITECTURE, ULAANBAATAR

Recorded March 11th, 2015, 14.13 PM @ Gradon Architecture Office in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia ("UB")

by Andreas Morsbøl

[Small-talk]

Andreas: Yes, maybe you could give a short introduction of Gradon Architecture and Gradon Architecture in UB, and maybe more specifically 'Why UB?'

Tanja: Right, I don't know how much you've been told already, I could quite easily run through a presentation with you, but just quickly: We set up 6 years ago, where we started off with a couple of people and then quickly grew, and we never thought we'd ever work abroad from the UK and we ended up in Kazakhstan for some strange reason. Some we'd worked with had moved to Kazakhstan and asked us to do some work. On the back of that they were coming into Mongolia to have a look around and advised us to join them, but we'd already heard of Mongolia and were quite intrigued anyway. A lot of our work we do is based on sustainable architecture. Apart from the fact that we like it we have to in the UK, it's now law. So, we developed a good system, we liked what it had to offer, and of course everybody in the UK have to do the same thing because of the law, so we thought how can we take it somewhere where it will benefit, and obviously Mongolia is a prime candidate because it is a developing problem, but also because of the pollution problems it faces. So, lots of things sort of tied up and that's how, more or less, how we ended up in Mongolia. It wasn't just (index-finger in the air measuring the wind direction) 'Yeah, we'll go!' So it took us three years of travelling back and forwards pretty much every other month, so we've travelled a lot here, always with the intention in mind: 'Are we going to make a home here for Gradon Architecture' and I came out in October last year, and it was really just to find if I could live here and also trying to find the guys we've got now and see how it will work. So, I went back in December, packed up my life and came back over here. We started here in January 19th, we opened and it's a kind of a mixture of the moment where we've got a couple of projects about to break, but at the moment supporting the UK and their projects as well. We are trying very much, 'cause we've got three offices, we don't want each of them to be their own office, we want the cooperation to happen 'cause that's how we get exchange of knowledge, good cultural exchange, and it makes us stronger. So we Skype every week, we have our team meeting. Ireland (the office) have yet to join us on that one, Ireland is kind of new to us yet, so they have to sort that out. The big thing for us, when we came over here, even in the UK, part of our philosophy is that architecture is for and about people, it's not just about buildings, and therefore we serve a community and not just investors. So we are not scared to help the granny down the road with their 4 square meter kitchen extension, but equally we can tackle multi-million pound deals as well. 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Andreas: Yes.

Tanja: So, it will be interesting to see when you come up with the answer.

Andreas: The answer... Yeah. :)

TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW, with

Historian OCHBAYAR and translator L. BULGAN ("Buli")

ULAANBAATAR CITY MUSEUM

Recorded March 19th, 2015, 13.59 PM @ ULAANBAATAR CITY MUSEUM, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia ("UB")

by Andreas Morsbøl

Buli: What he wants to ask you first is what is architecture, like, he wanna know the difference between urban architecture and urban design, like, what is architecture?

Andreas: D'you mean the difference between architecture and urban design?

Buli: No, just what is architecture? Because he don't know that well.

Andreas: Architecture is the design and concept of buildings, mainly. You know, architecture is science and also art of building design.

Buli: [Mongolian translation] The reason why he is asking is, he wanna, like, know if he understand it very well.

Andreas: Okay, yeah. For me architecture is mostly building design and that means also the relation between buildings, you know, and that means also urban design, which is kind of field in that regard, focusing on this relation between buildings. And with the relation between buildings is very present in cities because there is so many buildings and they have to relate to each other in some way, and the design in that, between the buildings, that's urban design.

Buli: [Translates to Mongolian] He said, our culture us very different. We built the city and now we are developing it, now we start making cities. The term 'city' come from you guys. Ours is something else, it was something else because we were nomads and now our history of the urban city has started. This is the masterplan form 1986 and he wants to start with that. Although our history of our city is 376, the real history is 100 years. It's very new. The first masterplan was made with order from the Russians in 1954. Now we are following the 5th masterplan. Do you need exact years?

Andreas: That could be really nice, yes.

Buli: The first masterplan was from 1954 to 1961. The second one was from '61 till '76. And the third one was from '76 till '86. The fourth one was from '86 till 2004.

Andreas: Yeah? And until now we are in the 5th?

Buli: Aha, the 5th. Since the fourth masterplan we had it for 4 years and after the fourth we had democracy and then we didn't follow the masterplan. This masterplan is from the fourth, from the Russians, and this is main city center. It's named by the avenue, this is called the Peace Avenue and this is the Peace Avenue Masterplan. In this masterplan they copied the form. We had the old... Before we had the masterplan we lived in the circle like the old, they lived in a circle, and they copied the form of it to make the masterplan, with circle and they spread out... How you can see it is the half circle, and this is the bigger circle. The main point of the organization from the old city was to have the half circles and let the front, the south, be more open for squares and always open, not building. Like our old organization was to have right in the middle the castle or main building from the king, and we have our government in the middle the open space here and we have limited it with two streets, and that was called 'Lenin'.

Andreas: Lenin Street?

Buli: Lenin Avenue but now it's Chinggis Avenue and this is the Olympic street. The old city we called khuree, and we copied that. In Khuree, in the open space, they had always celebration, like Naadam and Tsam, a religious festival where they have the masks and where they dance, and the third one is where the king give the people things, like money or I don't know. From that we copied it, and we have always green areas and here we have the stadium because we copied the policy. We copied it not only in this masterplan (from 1984), we had it in previous masterplans as well. From this masterplan we just made the big string and the smaller string, and except this region the other wasn't made according to this plan.

About the ger districts, we had it in the first masterplan too, but we didn't specify the policy for the ger district. Since 1966 we had the flood and from this people living in the ger had the problems and from this we had the policy that ger districts is outside the city. The flood was the middle river, we call it Middle River and it was mixed, the ger district and the city, and from that flood they decided to move it outside the city to the mountains.

We can separate the masterplan in two sections, one is the Russian masterplan and one is the democracy masterplan and we told you we have the privatization since 1999, it was only for big industry, but since 2004 our government allowed citizens to have land and people who were rich or had a high position had land in the city, anywhere they could, and they just build buildings and the masterplan is a little bit messy now.

Andreas: Yeah, they kind of forgot the masterplan. Also, here, it's open but now there is build a lot around here.

Buli: Yeah, people bought the land. UB is a new city, we had only since 1958 to 1961 our first apartment street. The first was here, it's called düchen-myankh (40.000) around the department store.

Andreas: 40.000?

Buli: Yeah. It was a complex: There were school, there were kindergarten, sports.

Andreas: So it's like a modern city plan where you have all functions in same area.

Buli: Yes. It's a little bit embarrassing to tell this story, because we as Mongolians had for the first time a toilet, but UB is very young, and until now we didn't get clearly about masterplanning. Because the city is very young we have problems: first of all the plan was just for 500.000 and now we are more than a million and the second is we don't have that many good, experienced experts to make a really good masterplan, and the third one is we don't have any experience for making the masterplan.

Andreas: Mhm, also this architect I talked with, Amka, he said that any city have like a 100 years period to find it one way before it's sustainable and can develop in a good way and UB is very young so it will take at least 50 more years before. In Europe we had cities for thousands of years, or 500 years at least so...

Buli: True. From the design side we don't have the culture. From his (historian) profession he says we don't have the culture and design says culture is everything that comes from human minds and we as Mongolians are nomad and we are very attached to the nature and nature is not culture.

Andreas: No, it's opposite.

Buli: Yeah, opposite, and such people are trying to make a culture and make a city because we don't have a culture for the city but we are trying to build a city and we are not knowing what a city culture is and that's a little bit difficult.

Andreas: Yes. I have one question: this was the first apartments in UB but it was built before this and the ikh del-guur(state department store)?

Buli: According to the masterplan we started it from here but the very first building we had was earlier but with the masterplan we started from here. He (the historian) says he is very happy to meet people like you who are trying to help make the ger districts smarter because he says the ger is for the nature not for the city, and we have the construction for the nature in the city and we have to find a way to make it smart and have a solution. Because the problem for the city, what's makes it look not like a city, is the ger districts, and we have to find a way to make it good. He's very happy that you've chosen this topic.

This is a copy of the original masterplan from 1915, and it was drawn in 1946, the copy was. And this is the city from 100 years ago and you can see what was the city 100 years ago here. At that time the city had many parts and the main part was lived by (inhabited by) monks and they live in this circle. That's the khuree. In the center of the khuree was the house of the last king, the Bogd, and this was his palace. As we talked about over there, here they had the open space and they had the tsam, the naadam. They called this one the left khuree and the area here is the gandan now, the monastery, that is the right khuree. In this city, 100 years ago, we had around 5.000 citizens and the main part was the monks and the second one was the Mongolians. The Mongolians lived in the south-west and south-east quarters. They mainly lived with their family and their position was just mixed, if they were traders or if they were high position. The third part of the population was Chinese people and the lived here in this area, and then here and here. These areas were called the Mamei city, it's a Chinatown. The fourth part of the population was Russians and the Russians lived in small houses. The Russians was the first to make two-floor house. The first two-floor house is from 1863-1865. The Russians introduced the house to us. These are the prisons, they were always made by wood. Our last kind had a very big land, the whole ground here was his and he four palaces, and there are now these two, the others were destroyed. Before 1924 we had always like this policy, the khuree. Based on this we had our city. This is the Peace Bridge. Because of the khuree we started to use fences. Before that we lived in the land and we didn't need any fences. From here until now we have all fences in the ger districts. Any questions?

Andreas: This is still existing?

Buli: Yes, it's called the winter palace. Generally the history is like that, and if we go more in detail it will take 2 hours.

Andreas: Okay. Just one last thing, can we see this khuree in the new masterplan? Are there like some traces somehow? Because can find this, Gandan, but this it this maybe?

Buli: I think it's here. The king is around here. Now, people have destroyed it, we can find no more trace. There is buildings now. The main system is like we started to build buildings from the center of the city and then spread out, and that's one reason why the ger districts are on the outside. We start from the inner and the spread out. 100 years ago we had monasteries and they were the buildings and they have their own history.

Andreas: Yeah, it's kind of Tibetan style.

Buli: For the monasteries we have three kind of styles, one is Tibetan, one is Chinese and one is Mongolian, and sometimes you see it mixed like Tibetan-Chinese, or Mongolian-Chinese or Mongolian-Tibetan or all three mixed together.

Andreas: I saw a painting yesterday of all three styles.

Buli: Aha. A Mongolian ger is purely what Mongolian is and to make the ger district fade from our city is not possible because the ger is what Mongolia is, and we have to find a solution not to make fire in the ger. Because to make a fire is a nature thing and if we find a solution to make a fire we have the solution for air pollution and everything. There are many reasons why we still have the ger district, because who grew up in the city they will have an apartment, but people who grew up in a land, they will like to still live in the ger, and then there is a problem with the two. To build houses in the ger districts by them selves because they have not enough money to make it by themselves. If you count the buildings and the gers, the count is higher of the gers. But we don't know if more people live in the ger or the apartments.

Andreas: I think more people live in the ger.

Buli: Yeah, probably. For you, you have to think of the tradition of the Mongolians, because people who live in the ger they are very traditional. For example, if they cook the tea then they have to make to the sky and something like that. You have to think of the tradition. So, what was in your mind the first time you saw the ger district? Do you have any solutions right now?

Andreas: My first idea was kind of very fantastical, very impossible I could say. It was some kind of big, big tent around the ger districts to keep some heat inside and protect from the wind. That could maybe work temporarily some place and then be moved around, but that would of course make a lot of problems with the smoke. My latest concept have been something like a comprehensive upgrading plan, which is kind of a piece-meal, piece-by-piece upgrading. So, maybe start by changing all the fire stoves to be electrical, then you upgrade with a toilet or a small building or something. Then there is maybe an improvement of the road, a new bus-shed or some kind of public square in the middle of the ger districts. Many little steps to take it in a slow progression for an upgraded ger district.

Buli: To live in an apartment is very easy, it doesn't matter what season it is, if you are wake up it's warm and if it's warm you can open the window, but in the ger it's very difficult. In summer it's very nice but in the winter it's very cold. You have to fire it to heat it. And if you heat it we have air pollution. And to solve it we have to heat it in a smart way and we have to find a solution for the infrastructure. From our government we have many projects to improve the ger districts, they tried to change the floor from the ger or change the fire place or the roofing, and it didn't help and it's a very headaching problem for the government now. Very stressful.

Andreas: But why didn't it help? What are the challenges? What are the obstacles?

Buli: For example they tried to make electric fireplaces but the first problem was it cost more than burning the coal and then people said no, we are using the older version, and it was uncomfortable, and the second was the people didn't want to change the ger, because some tried to change the roof but didn't like it because they said it's not good, it's not Mongolian tradition and so. Many problems. We have not found any good solution, but it might be that we found it but the people who make the decisions they see the it only with money. Like, when we make this they think 'Can I make more money' if that's not good enough business, then they won't do it. It's the third problem. We need a leader that can make it happen, the good projects.

Andreas: You know, UN Habitat made some projects. They called it Community Led Ger Upgrading Projects. Do you know them?

Buli: Are these from the German?

Andreas: No it's from the UN. They work with these 5 areas and then they make some buildings and then some smaller things like this water kiosk, bus shed, a little stairway, streetlights, pavement, these kind of things. And it was together with the local who decided, and design it and helped building it and maintain it. So UN sponsored it and put a lot of money into in and facilitated the workshops, but it was the community itself that wanted it and made the decisions and made it work. I'm not sure how it's going now and what is the after math of this, but I think it's very popular in Europe to make this community participation because also in Europe we have this problem that politicians are only thinking in big lines and there is less money, so if we want something changed we do it ourselves, at least some do. So, could that be an approach, what do you think, that you depend on the community to make it?

Buli: The people who lived before and live now in the city have a will to change, have a will to live in a clean city a healthy city, and yeah, because they are ready to make change. It's a good way. It's very important to understand each other, what the citizens wanna have and what your main goal is, and if you understand each other very well then you can make your project happen. He personally is for you, he wanna raise his two hands and say 'Yeah we wanna make it'

Andreas: Yeah, I think this divide between those like you, who live in apartments and those who live in a ger, and as I see it it's this kind of... It's these two parts that have to understand each other and find a common goal to go towards. Because I'm only doing this for some months and I will of course send you the results but then what. I think it has to be in Mongolia that this kind of agreement is established.

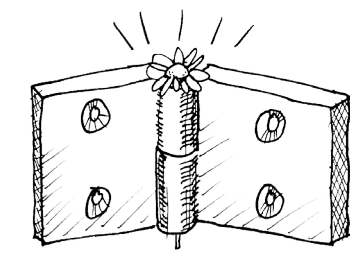
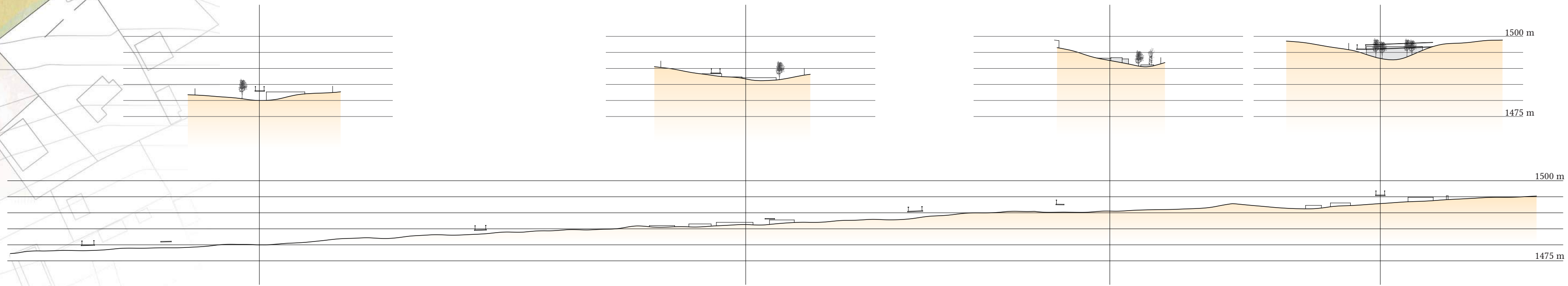
Buli: He says it's absolutely true what you just said that we have to have agreement between people who live in apartments and people who live in ger districts, and what people from the ger districts really want is that they have everything near themselves, shops, school, kindergarten, a place where they can have rest, a nice place, not in the ground.

Andreas: So, what does that mean? In their private cadaster or some kind of common square or buildings?

Buli: Common square. Because they have only fences and it's not fair. It's too boring and they wanna have places where they can meet their friends, especially young people, where they can meet and talk. Mongolia is ready for a change but we don't have any experience with that, and he is very happy that people like you or the Germans who wanna help us, he is very thankful for that, and what he really want you guys to learn is the methodology and some kind of advices how can we approach it. That's what we want because we don't have any experience how to make it and that's the main reason why we disagree with each other. If you have examples how you did it, examples that you show us 'This change is possible'. Because we want the change, we just don't know how exactly. The main problem is that.

Andreas: Yeah. Okay. But my professor would also show how I did my design and method. I should explain all that so it fits together and I can send you the pdf.

Buli: Thank you. Thank you for caring for our city.



URBAN INTEGRATION	
MA4-URB09, AALBORG UNIVERSITY 2015	<div>PLAN</div> <div>CROSS SECTIONS</div> <div>LONG SECTION</div>
1:1000	