

Citizen Participation and place-making in the process of GER area redevelopment in Ulaanbaatar

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Abstract

This article examines the relationship between citizen participation and place-making in the process of *ger* area redevelopment in Ulaanbaatar. Although Mongolian legislation mandates public participation in redevelopment projects, in practice, the process remains predominantly expert-driven and top-down in nature. This gap between formal planning and the everyday spatial needs and experience of residents result in a disconnect between policy and lived reality. Guided by the theoretical framework of Henri Lefebvre's Right to the City and David Sim's Soft City concept, this study used a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection in two redeveloped cases in Ulaanbaatar. Findings indicated that current redevelopment plans often fail to reflect residents' everyday needs, social relationships, and expectations for public space. Rather than enjoying their living in apartment blocks, residents emphasized the importance of safety, comfort, and inclusivity in living environment. This article concludes that citizen participation must move beyond formal compliance and be integrated meaningfully into the place-making process, recognizing residents as co-creators of urban space.

Keywords

Mongolia, ger areas, urban planning, place-making, redevelopment

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Introduction

Ulaanbaatar city occupies only 0.3 per cent of the country's entire territory (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, [NSOM], 2023). Yet, nearly 2.4 million people or more than 70 per cent of the total population (3.5 million) of Mongolia resides in this capital city (Ulaanbaatar City Statistical Office [UCSO], 2012). Since the first scientifically grounded master plan for the city developed in 1954 jointly with Soviet experts, six general plans have shaped the city's development (Ministry of Construction and Urban Development [MCUD], 2018). As population growth accelerated, informal *ger*¹ districts emerged in 15 areas that lacked land-use planning (National Legal Institute of Mongolia [NLI], 2022). Currently, 44 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's households live in *ger* areas without access to basic public infrastructure (Manduul. II, 2024). This situation has intensified pressure on transportation, public services, and the environment, reinforcing a centralised and overburdened urban structure.

In response, the government launched an accelerated redevelopment program in 2010 to urbanize *ger* areas with apartment blocks, semi-detached houses and private houses (NLI, 2022). However, the purpose of redevelopment should go beyond merely constructing new apartment buildings. It must focus on enhancing residents' quality of life and the livability of their surroundings. The Law on Urban Development in Mongolia regulates the planning, documentation, and implementation of urban development activities. In particular, the Article 17 of this law mandates the integration of participatory planning principles into urban development processes, by emphasizing the inclusion of citizens' voices in planning decisions (Legal Info, 2025a). In addition, the Law on the Redevelopment of Cities and Settlements, enacted by the State Great Khural of Mongolia in 2015,

¹ Ger area is less structured sub-urban settlements, where residents dwell both in Mongolian traditional dwelling called "ger" or wooden houses. Ger area has less developed infrastructure with little or no central water scheme and heating.

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provides a legal framework for the renewal and reconstruction of buildings and infrastructure that do not meet safety and functional requirements in urban and settlement areas (Legal Info, 2025b).

While some residents seek to move from the degraded and underserved *ger* areas, others reject high-density, low-comfort apartment blocks that lack sufficient personal and community space (Terbish et al, 2024). In recent years, thus, there has been a debate to make a shift in architecture and planning towards more human-centered planning.



Picture 1: Ger areas in Ulaanbaatar. Photo by Delgermurun (first Author), 2025

Globally, the Danish originated concept of “hygge” - associated with warmth, comfort, and shared everyday moments-has gained wide attention and is considered one of the reasons why Denmark has consistently been ranking high with happiness index (Sim, 2019). Hygge emphasizes not only

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physical comfort but also emotional well-being and the enjoyment of small moments in daily life within a given space. Everyday activities such as taking out the trash, walking children to school, or commuting to work are routine and such routine acts shall be carried out with ease. Stress of sedentary life is facilitated when denizens carry their everyday practices at ease, comfortably and even pleasantly. Moreover, a well-designed living environment can encourage social interactions, foster neighborly connections, and generate positive impacts for the environment, public health, and the economy (Pantic, 2023). Such approach is broadly understood through the concept of placemaking.

While not a new concept, placemaking has become increasingly prominent in recent years, especially in relation to urban design and land-use governance. As Holman (2020) argues, even the most technically efficient building will not foster a livable environment without paying attention to placemaking. In this connection, this study aims to examine how citizen participation is meaningfully implemented throughout the process of *ger* area redevelopment and whether the resulting built environment reflects the residents' expectations for a livable, human-centered urban space. This article argues that *ger* area redevelopment should not be viewed simply as a construction process. Rather, it must be carried out based on the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of the people who inhabit those areas. Understanding how residents shape and relate to their environment is essential to successful urban planning (Sim, 2019). With placemaking that is considerate of human social needs, it is possible to develop an inclusive space that reflects human values, diversity, and positive social cohesion.

In what follows, some literature in connection to the *ger* area redevelopment is laid out in addition to some broader perspectives on human-centred placemaking practices. By using mixed methods, this study used pre-developed interview and survey questions based on the theoretical framework. Followed by the theoretical framework, findings are introduced, where we reveal a lack of effective

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institutional mechanisms and organisational structures to ensure meaningful citizen participation throughout all stages of *ger* area redevelopment processes in Ulaanbaatar.

Literature Review: From Right to the City to Soft City

As theoretical foundations, this study employs the theoretical perspectives of *the Right to the City* by Henri Lefebvre and *Soft City* concept pioneered by David Sim. These frameworks are widely used to interpret the extent and nature of citizen participation in the redevelopment and urban planning processes, the degree to which residents have influenced decision-making, and the quality of newly produced urban environment.

Henri Lefebvre, a renowned sociologist and philosopher, laid the foundations for a critical theory of urban space and spatial production (1996). According to Lefebvre, the city is not merely a physical construct, but as a space of social relations, power dynamics, lived experiences, and contestations (1996). The following core dimensions (Table 1) of the right to the city concepts are particularly relevant for analyzing citizen participation in the process of *ger* area redevelopment in Ulaanbaatar:

- Right to participation: Citizens have the right to actively engage in urban decision-making processes related to planning and development.
- Right to appropriation: Residents have the right to use, shape, and assign meaning to urban space in alignment with their lifestyles and lived experiences.
- Critique of capitalist urbanism: Lefebvre criticised the dominance of investor-driven, market-oriented urban development, which often excludes citizen input. Thus, the right to the city shall be a concept or even a struggle over control of public space and the quality of urban life;

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- Production of space: urban space is socially produced by powerful actors, and its opaque planning processes often marginalise public participation.

These dimensions could be considered as a lens to assess how extensively residents' voices and proposals are incorporated or sidelined, and how urban space is treated as a lived environment or as a commodified product. Top-down, market-led planning models are forms of spatial colonisation and space is frequently structured around the interests of dominant groups, which disregards the voices of ordinary people and, thus, reinforces inequalities (Lefevre, 1996). Such capitalist surge of power over land and smaller settlements hit countries in Caucasus and Central Asia harder as many newly established countries after the collapse of Soviet Union faced economic difficulties and faced hardships in regulating land relations (Sanghera et al., 2012). For instance, the questioning of the right behavior in the city and puzzle of rights to properly set rules in public spaces were contested debate in Baku, Azerbaijan over the last two decades, so does happen in Ulaanbaatar (Krebs, 2015; City Municipality, 2020). However, the right to the city extends beyond formal consultation processes by encompassing the right to inhabit, reimagine, and co-create space. In other words, urban redevelopment policies shall not only address the quantity, but quality of how urban spaces are intended with the public participation.

Soft City

Building upon Lefevbre's "the right to the city", the *Soft City* concept was developed, emphasizing everyday life, social interactions, and sensory experiences over rigid, large-scale infrastructure and quantitative metrics (Table 1). Echoing Lefevbre, Sim proposed a human-centered paradigm for urban planning and architecture, arguing that any urban redevelopment should not be measured solely by the amount of construction or infrastructure, but by the quality of life it fosters: comfort, connection, accessibility, and meaning (2019). The soft city concept further advocates for a shift from car-centric to people-centered planning. It calls for a flexible and inclusive built environment

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that encourages interaction, well-being, and a sense of place (2019). Moreover, Sim emphasized a collective synergy in cities by highlighting shared spaces where people can form connections, share public space, and experience a meaningful everyday life. Regardless of the fact that resources are limited, “more with less” can be achieved, meaning that a rich, human-scaled environment can be produced if only designed with care (2019). An ethnographic study conducted by Schröder around bazaars in some countries highlighted the intersection of everyday encounters, consumption, negotiations and narrations which shaped public space from Dushanbe to Dubai (2016).

Similar to Lefebvre’s concept, Sim (2019, p. 28) also developed four key principles for urban planning (Table 1). These include:

- Walkable and connected neighbourhoods: Streets and neighbourhoods should be designed for pedestrian movement and close proximity to daily needs.
- Accessible and inclusive public spaces: Public areas should be comfortable, safe, and invite both purposeful and spontaneous use, supporting active social life.
- High-density, human-scaled architecture. Density is not inherently negative if buildings are designed in proportion to the human body and pedestrian rhythm, fostering a sense of intimacy and comfort.
- Spaces that foster social interaction and neighbourly ties. Urban environments should encourage trust, communication, and spontaneous encounters among residents.

Soft city concept challenges the prevailing trend in cities like Ulaanbaatar, where redevelopment often emphasizes technical infrastructure, high-rise construction, and density without sufficient attention to social cohesion, neighbourhood identity, or everyday accessibility. In many *ger* district

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redevelopment cases, residents report that while physical conditions have improved, opportunities for neighbourly interactions have declined, and public spaces remain insufficient or poorly integrated. Soft City thus offers a corrective lens, reminding planners that the ultimate goal of redevelopment should not be limited to increasing housing supply. Beyond all positive notes, Sutriadi reminded us of possible resource depletion and a constant revival of skill sets that soft city concept requires which put pressure on some South Asian cities (2023). With that being considered, it should reflect residents' lived experiences, daily needs, and desire for social connections in a vibrant community. Nevertheless, by foregrounding human experience, Sim's theory still provides a critical framework for rethinking urban redevelopment not merely as a technical task, but as a deeply social and participatory process. It affirms that a truly inclusive city is one designed with its people, not just for them.

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Table 1. From Right to the City to Soft City. The table adapted by the first Author based on Lefebvre (1996) and Sim's concepts (2019, pp. 28-247).

Theory	The Right to the City	Soft City concept
Discipline	Sociology, critical social theory	Architecture, urban planning
Core Focus	Views the city as a space of social relations, power, and struggle	Emphasizes human experience, comfort, social connection, and livability in urban space
Key Concept	The right of inhabitants to participate in and appropriate urban space	The creation of humane, inclusive, and experiential environments for everyday life
Critical Perspective	- Critiques top-down, market-driven planning processes - Highlights spatial injustice and exclusion in capitalist urban development	- Critiques car-dominated, large-scale, dehumanized urban design - Advocates for walkable, accessible, and sociable spaces
Relevance to the Study	- Evaluates the extent to which citizen participation is substantively realized - Assesses how planning reflects the voice and needs of residents - Questions whether redevelopment merely reproduces dominant power structures	- Explores whether the newly built environment meets the everyday needs and relational life of residents - Highlights the erosion of neighborhood cohesion and access to public spaces - Frames redevelopment as a social and experiential issue
Main Thematic Dimensions	1. Right to participation 2. Right to appropriation 3. Critique of capitalist urban structure 4. Production of space	1. Walkable and connected street and neighborhood design 2. Safe, inclusive, and accessible public spaces 3. Human-scaled architecture 4. Spatial design that fosters social ties and everyday interaction

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Methodology, research context and sampling strategy

In order to examine how citizen participation is meaningfully implemented in the process of *ger* area redevelopment, a mixed-method approach was employed. Integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was appropriate to gain a multifaceted understanding of residents' experiences, levels of engagement, and subjective evaluations of the redevelopment process.

Qualitative Method

In this qualitative study, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore perspective and experience of key actors involved in various stages of planning, decision-making, and implementation. Participants were purposively selected from three major stakeholder groups. The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. In line with the research objectives, the transcripts were carefully reviewed to identify key themes and recurring concepts related to each interview question. The responses were then categorised according to the structure of the interview questions and interpreted within the framework of the study's theoretical foundation. This process enabled a contextualised and meaningful understanding of the qualitative data.

During the course of conducting this research, the first Author completed a professional internship at the Secretariat of the State Great Hural (Parliament of Mongolia), which facilitated direct access to stakeholders involved in the redevelopment process, including representatives from construction companies and local government officials (e.g., unit or horoo governors). In conducting interviews with residents, the author personally visited two newly built apartment complexes under the redevelopment program and verified whether the interviewees had relocated through land-for-apartment exchange or private purchase. Only those residents who had relocated

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through land exchange were selected and interviewed, with prior informed consent obtained from each participant.

Unit or Horoo² governor provided insights on how citizen participation was organised and facilitated during the redevelopment process. Representatives of the construction company explained how residents' input was considered in the planning and decision-making process, by the regulation on redevelopment and construction of *ger* area land (Legal Info, 2025b).

Quantitative Method

To assess the relationship between citizen participation and the formation of people-friendly environment, a structured survey was administered. A questionnaire with 42 questions was developed based on the theoretical frame, which was grouped into 10 sections for the respondents to follow easily. Ten sections were further categorised into six key dimensions derived from the theoretical frame of the right to the city, particularly focusing on dimensions of right to participation and right to appropriation. Four additional categories were developed based on dimensions of human-centered urban environments.

The survey was administered both online via Google Forms and via face-to-face meetings with *ger* residents who moved to new apartments as part of the redevelopment process. Respondents were selected from the list of households provided by the construction company, who had experienced land clearance process to be relocated to a newly built apartment complex. From the total of 170 respondents, 102 households were sampled from “Shinechlel Khoroolol” or apartment

² Unit or Horoo is the lowest administrative point in Ulaanbaatar, where city residents receive basic public/state services

blocks in unit 10 of Chingeltei District and 49 households were selected from “Darkhan Urgoo” apartment complex in unit 11 of Sukhbaatar District (N=80 from Sukhbaatar district). During the data collection process, responses containing technical or interpretive inconsistencies were identified and corrected by contacting the respondent again to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the dataset.



Picture 2. Redeveloped apartment buildings in two districts. Photo by the first Author, May 2025.

Research context

The research was conducted in two redeveloped areas in Ulaanbaatar: the Shinechlel residential complex in Horoo 10 of Chingeltei District, where land acquisition began in 2013, and the Darkhan Urgoo apartment complex in Horoo 11 of Sukhbaatar District, where the process started in 2015. At these sites, over 700 residents signed either bilateral or trilateral agreements with the construction company and other stakeholders. A bilateral agreement refers to a contract signed directly between the resident and the developer, while a trilateral agreement includes the resident,

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the developer, and the relevant government authority responsible for overseeing the project. Among more than 700 signatories, the majority of the 170 households who had moved into their new apartments by the time of the study had signed trilateral agreements. The first phase of construction was completed in 2020. In *Darkhan Urgoo* complex, land acquisition from residents started in 2015, and the first residential buildings were completed in 2021. A total of 90 households were involved in land acquisition, of which 80 had already relocated to their new apartments.

Sampling Strategy

The sample size was calculated using the following formula with a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ and a confidence level of 95%.

$$n = \frac{250 \cdot 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5(1 - 0.5)}{0.05^2(250 - 1) + 1.96^2 \cdot 0.5(1 - 0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{250 \cdot 3.8416 \cdot 0.25}{0.0025 \cdot 249 + 3.8416 \cdot 0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{240.1}{0.6225 + 0.9604} = \frac{240.1}{1.5829} \approx 151.6$$

Based on the formula above, the sample size was determined by specifying the following variables:

- n – Sample size
- z – Z-value corresponding to a 95% confidence level ($z = 1.96$)
- N – Finite population ($N = 172$)
- p – Estimated population proportion (assumed to be 0.5)
- e – Margin of error (set at $\pm 10\%$, or 0.1)

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Accordingly, it was calculated that a minimum of 151 participants from a total of 250 residents would be required to ensure statistically valid inferences at a 95% confidence level with a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error.

Research Findings

In this section, findings from both quantitative and qualitative data are summarised to illustrate how underlying conditions for citizen participation enabled or hindered accessible and comfortable place-making with pedestrian-friendly neighbourhoods in targeted areas. In particular, underlying conditions such as access to information, conditions to participate in decision-making processes, and incorporation of citizen feedback were examined. Furthermore, some findings also show how urban space creation were designed in consideration to a human-centred architecture design, which would further enable neighbourly interaction and connections.

Underlying conditions for citizen participation in the ger area redevelopment

As shown in a Figure 3, 36.3 percent of 157 respondents reported that they occasionally participated while 31.2 percent did not participate in the ger area redevelopment processes. Strikingly, only 3.8 percent indicated their regular participation. Such results suggested that the nature of citizen participation is largely passive and inconsistent in the ger area redevelopment processes. The majority of residents did not engage in the process regularly, indicating that the actual implementation of citizen participation in the redevelopment process remains weak.

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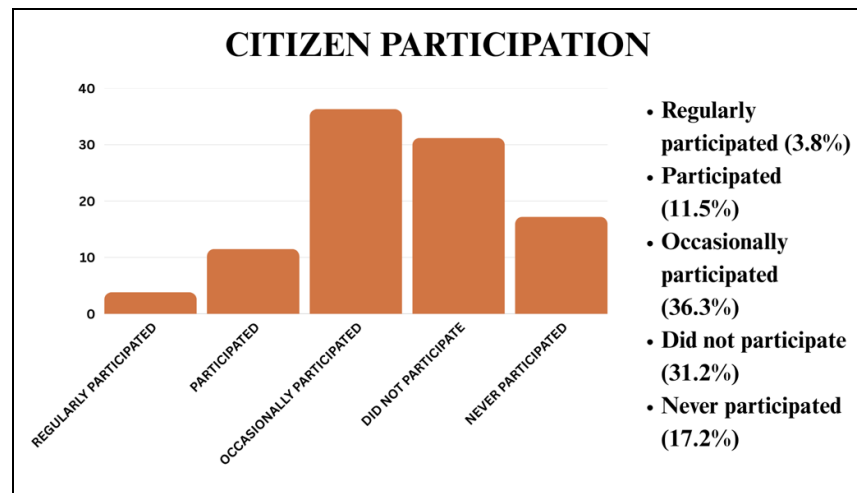


Figure 1. Percentage of citizen participation in ger area redevelopment process

In addition, from quantitative data it was clear that residents' access to early-stage information on redevelopment and opportunities for their participation, particularly in relation to apartment building design was insufficiently distributed. At the initial stages of the process, it was observed that the construction company, unit governor, and residents engaged in information exchange over the architectural plans. However, once construction commenced, some residents reported that they lacked further updates which created confusion among residents.

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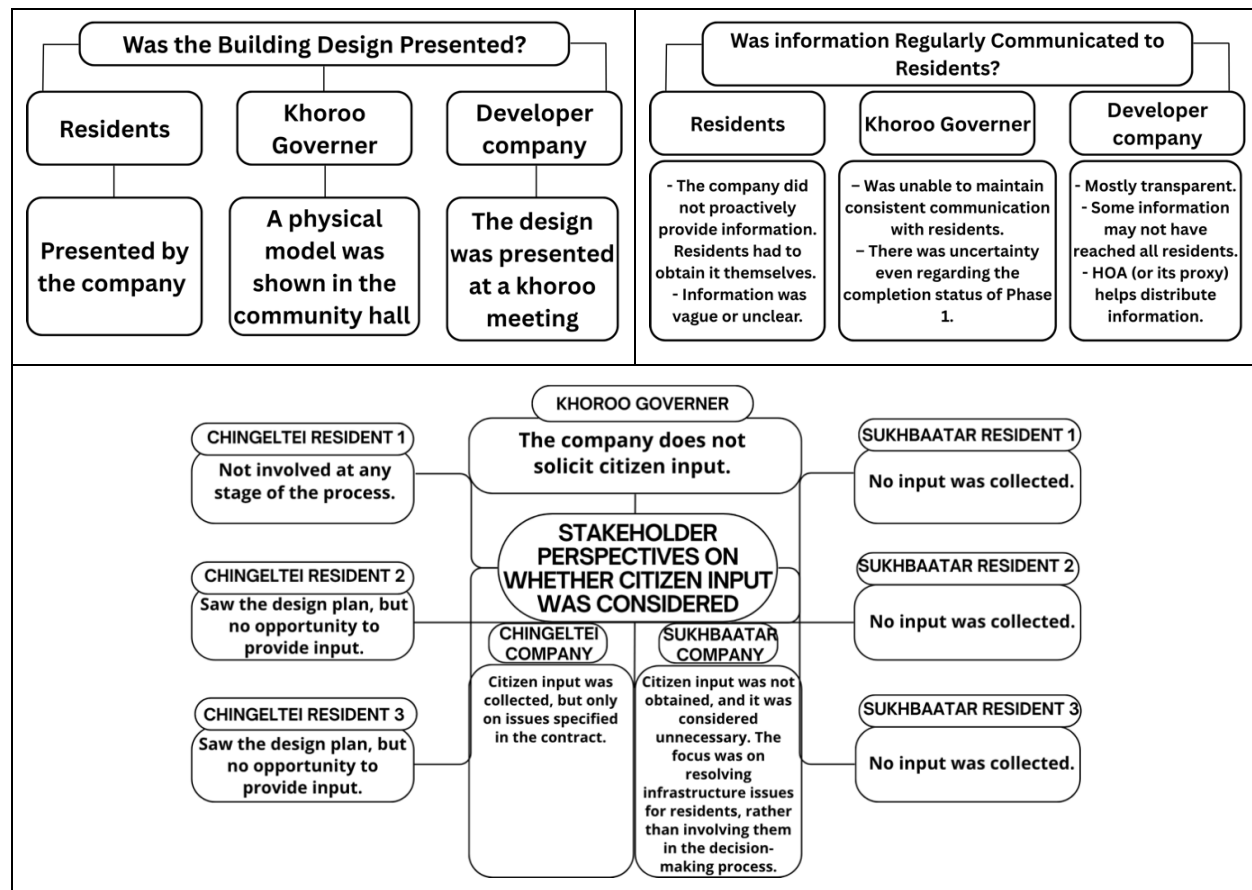


Figure 2. Outline of citizen participation in the ger area redevelopment process

Perspectives from the Governor and residents indicated that the mechanisms for collecting feedback were weak. Notably, feedback regarding the quality of apartment building and its surrounding environment were not gathered at all. This clearly demonstrates the inadequate implementation of the provision stated in Article 17 of the Law on Urban Development (Legal Info, 2025b), which requires the collection of public input. While the construction developer indicated a full consideration to their contractual agreements, residents highlighted that they had

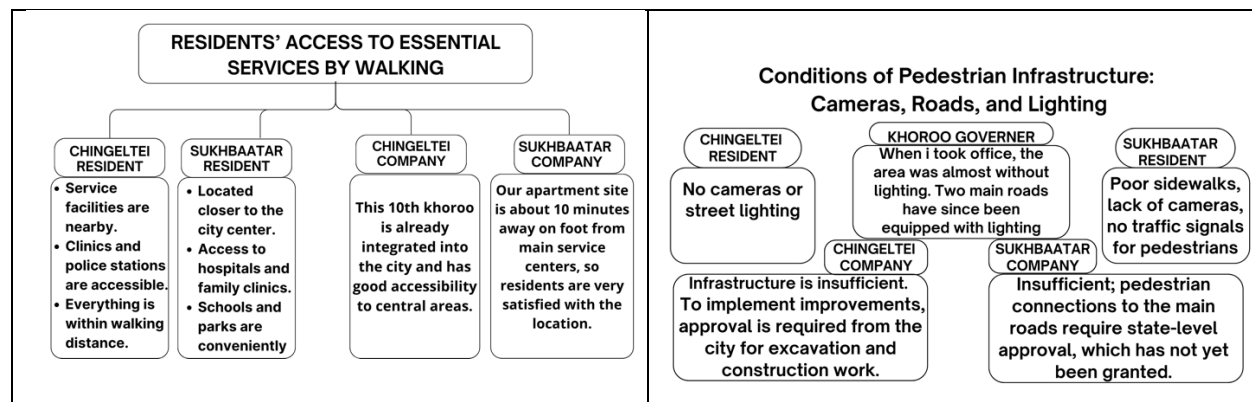
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no opportunity to provide feedback on how apartment surroundings will be shaped. In other words, citizen involvement was mostly confined to the initial presentation stage of the project, with limited influence on decision-making throughout the redevelopment process.

As mentioned earlier, four core dimensions outlined in the soft city concept were used as a guiding tool for the data collection as well as the analysis process. For each of these dimensions, specific indicators were developed to collect quantitative and generally guide the qualitative data collection process.

A creation of pedestrian-friendly, well-connected street and neighbourhood

This study further assessed the urban space creation with consideration to a human-centred architecture design, which would further enable neighbourly interaction and connections. As shown in Figure 5, respondents expressed differing views on “access to essential services by walking.” In contrast, the implementing companies in both districts rated walkability favorably, citing the proximity of the redevelopment sites to the city centre.



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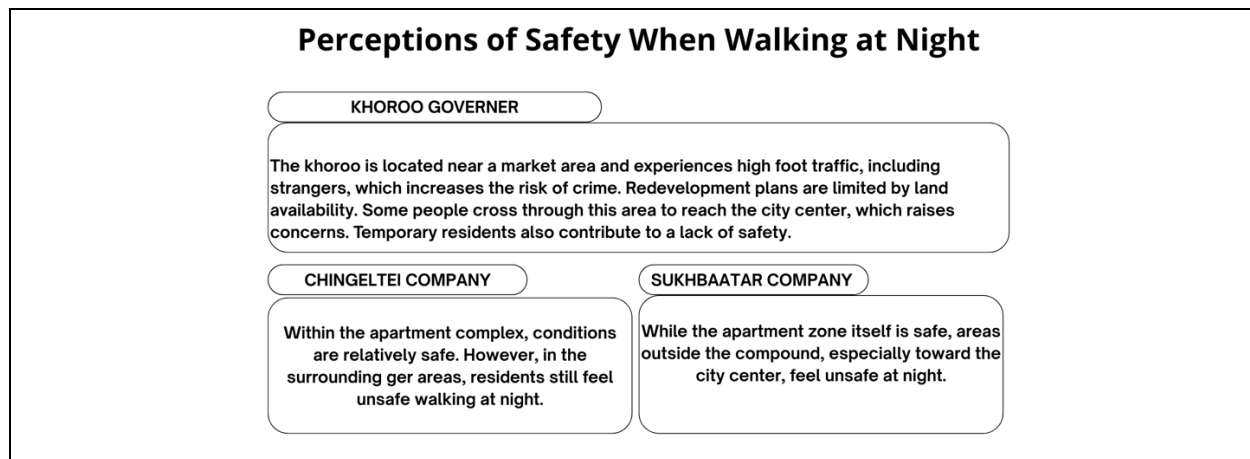


Figure 3. Pedestrian-friendly and well-connected street and neighborhood structures
(Qualitative research finding)

Residents and the unit Governor consistently reported conditions of pedestrian infrastructure (cameras, road quality and street lights) being poor, lacking surveillance cameras, having inadequate paved roads and street lights for night times. Therefore, it can be said that provisions for safe pedestrian movements are insufficiently developed. Construction developers, on the other hand, attributed these deficiencies to systemic infrastructure issues affecting Ulaanbaatar at large, thereby partially deflecting their responsibility. In general, the divergence in perceptions surrounding walkability and safety suggests that newly developed pedestrian environments fail to meet the basic needs of residents for a safe and comfortable living space.

Furthermore, with regard to safety when walking at night, the unit Governor noted that permanent residents are exhausted by the prolonged redevelopment process, which led to the displacement of permanent residents and allowed an influx of temporary tenants, contributing to a rise in local crime. In other words, an interpretation of safety was linked not only to a physical infrastructure but also to social cohesion and community stability. In contrast, developers asserted that the construction of new apartment buildings contributed to the improvement of its surrounding environment by reducing crime and improved safety. A shallow understanding of safety

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overlooked the significance of social relationships, community participation, and lived experiences. In addition to enhance safety in urban spaces with required physical infrastructure, it indicated that communities are in need for socially inclusive, collectively shaped environment for enhanced feeling of safety.

Safe, accessible, and comfortable public spaces

Based on Figure 6, about 50.4% of respondents from Chingeltei District and 59.2% from Sukhbaatar District reported that features contributing to public space, such as playgrounds, shade structures, benches, and green areas, are partially developed as part of the redevelopment process. This indicates an overall insufficiency in the provision of public space amenities.

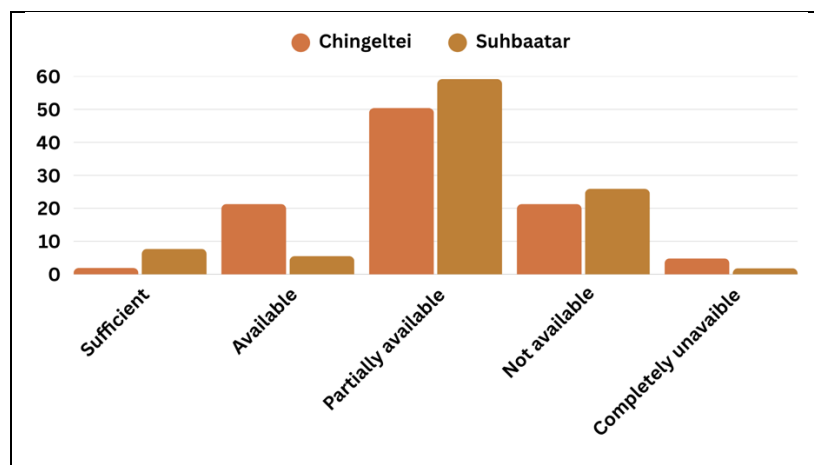


Figure 4. Differences in public space availability in two districts.

The Pearson Chi-square test yielded a p-value of 0.041, revealing a statistically significant difference in public space accessibility in targeted two districts. While public space provision in Sukhbaatar District was rated slightly more favorably, the predominance of “partially available” responses in Chingeltei District reflects a more inadequate spatial condition.

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In the case of the Shinechlel residential complex in Chingeltei District, the developer acknowledged the insufficient provision of public spaces such as playgrounds and green areas, acknowledging the fact that many other construction sites (not only theirs) are still incomplete. Nevertheless, despite the project having been initiated over a decade ago with land clearance beginning in 2013 and the first phase of housing completed by 2020, public spaces essential for daily life remain unresolved as of 2025. This revealed a misalignment with the core goals of redevelopment, highlighting a narrow focus on increasing the number of housing units only.

There is a tendency to treat public space as a “next phase” or a secondary priority, thereby sidelining residents’ actual needs, social cohesion, and the principle of co-producing urban space. The prevailing notion that redevelopment is complete once buildings are erected illustrates a distorted understanding of the process, serving as a clear example of policy failure that neglects residents’ spatial rights and participation. Construction developer in Chingeltei district elaborated that “residents themselves must also contribute to creating a safe outdoor environment”, which is not mandated for residents to contribute to what contractual liabilities the company holds. Such a misleading attitude of avoiding the responsibility for building public spaces to residents themselves undermines the developer’s social responsibility and accountability in urban planning.

Space for social interaction and neighborly connections

The study revealed a noticeable divergence in perspectives among residents, construction developer and unit Governor regarding the environment to foster neighbourly connections and relations. The developer in Chingeltei District acknowledged a lack of neighborly social interactions among residents, thereby blamed individuals for not interacting well amongst each other. On the other hand, the unit Governor emphasized that neighborly interactions are not facilitated as there is no space planned outside the apartment buildings for people to interact. It simply revealed that the redevelopment project failed to adequately consider social cohesion and

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interaction among neighbors, which is a crucial part of the community building in a new construction process.

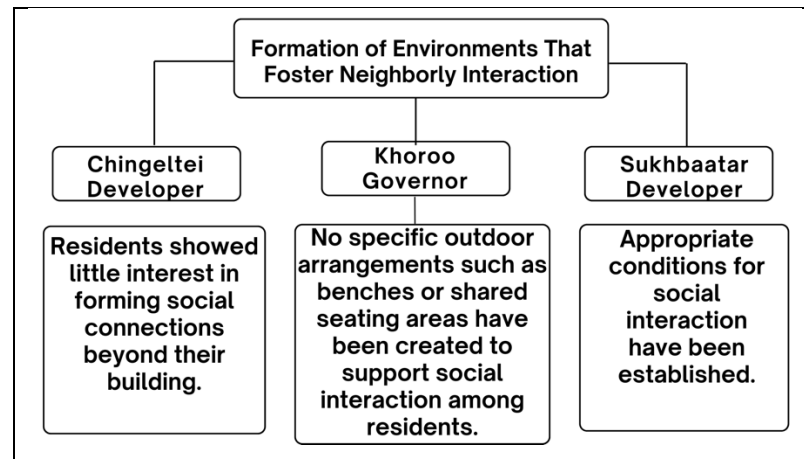


Figure 5. Construction building in consideration to neighborly relations

Human-centered architectural design

Significant discrepancies among parties involved in the redevelopment process was apparent regarding construction quality and materials used. Residents frequently reported negative experiences pointing to the material quality, including cracks in the exterior wall of the building, subsidence due to construction on former marshland, and rusty water running from pipes. Some residents observed no issues emerging indoors, while others remained dissatisfied with the external environment and water quality.

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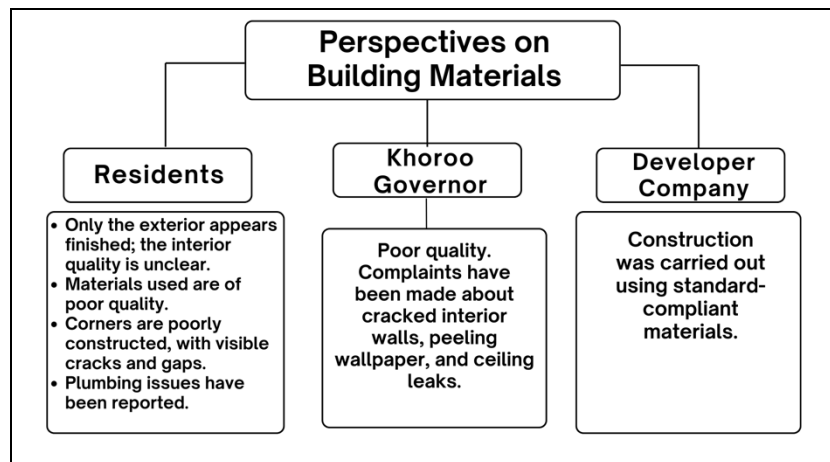


Figure 6. Building Materials

The unit Governor also reported that he/she receives complaints from residents, reporting cracks on the walls, wallpaper peeling off and water leakage from roofs. In contrast, developers claimed that construction materials were used in accordance with construction standards followed in Mongolia. However, such contradictions revealed some inconsistency between actual quality standards, material use and user satisfaction in reality. In other words, the enforcement of construction standards and quality control during the redevelopment process was questionable. It also revealed a clear disconnection between the developers' focus on delivering housing units as fast as possible, while on the other hand, it critically scrutinised expectations, health and safety of residents who invested much into such apartments.

It is true that buildings were constructed quickly, but the quality of construction is poor. Walls are thin, heat retention is low, and the materials seem cheap. The yard has only one tree, and it's clear that landscaping was not prioritized. I have to keep my child indoors due to safety concerns.

Resident from Sukhbaatar District

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In theory, the redevelopment was supposed to improve everything. However, in reality, the quality of materials used is poor, and the interior finishing is unsatisfactory. The kitchen water pressure is low, and sometimes hot water doesn't come through. Overall, expectations have not been met.

Resident from Chingeltei District

*Table 2. Residents' reflection on whether the redeveloped housing environment met their needs.
(Qualitative research results)*

In general, the newly developed residential environment was characterised by inadequate spatial organisation among residents. Despite having paid additional costs from their pocket in some cases, a number of residents expressed dissatisfaction, stating that the quality of their housing fell short of expectations. These findings underscored persistent shortcomings in both the physical and infrastructural aspects of the redevelopment process.

Conclusion

This study examined the dynamics of citizen participation and their potential influence on the spatial quality of environments created through the *ger* area redevelopment process, drawing upon both theoretical and empirical foundations. Two key conclusions could be made based on the study findings. Firstly, Mongolia lacks effective institutional mechanisms and organisational structures to ensure meaningful citizen participation throughout all stages of the redevelopment process. Participation was largely limited to information dissemination or one-time consultations, while critical stages such as planning and decision-making failed to engage with and respond to residents' needs. This resulted in a decline in public trust in the planning process and residents' struggle to identify themselves or feel a sense of ownership over a newly constructed environment.

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This aligns with the central argument of Lefebvre's the right to the city concept, which posits that urban space is not merely a product of state or institutional planning, but is socially produced through the everyday experiences and participation of its inhabitants (1967). According to Lefebvre, residents possess both the right to participate in planning and the right to appropriate urban space in ways that reflect their lived realities (Lefebvre, 1967). However, findings of this study demonstrated that residents were noticeably excluded from meaningful participation in decision-making processes, thereby violating their right to participation. Furthermore, the limited sense of attachment or ownership expressed by residents suggested that their right to appropriation was equally undermined. The developer-centric approach treated citizens as passive observers rather than co-creators of space, ultimately inhibiting the emergence of collective ownership or social cohesion in the redeveloped areas.

Secondly, the absence of substantive participation directly and indirectly influenced the quality of the apartments built. Across four dimensions used in this study, residents expressed low levels of satisfaction (walkable and well-connected street design, accessible and safe public spaces, socially integrative neighbourhood structures, and human-scaled architectural design). This indicated a disconnect between physical infrastructure development with people's everyday lived experiences and needs of residents. Furthermore, a planning approach was overly focused on technical and engineering solutions, with insufficient consideration of community building in a new urban environment.

This conclusion resonates with the theoretical understanding that spatial quality is not solely defined by physical infrastructure but is deeply intertwined with social interaction and human experience. As indicated in the soft city concept, a city should be walkable and welcoming, where social connections and encounters are encouraged (Sim, 2019). Yet, the soft city concept is far from being realised in Mongolia's case.

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Mongolia shall pursue a human-centered approach in construction and, therefore, outcomes of redevelopment must not be assessed solely by quantifiable construction outputs. Rather, the process should be recognised as complex social transformations that respect citizens' needs, lifestyles, and rights. Citizen participation should not be treated as a formal requirement for compliance but as a substantive and determinant factor in shaping the meaning, use, and comfort of the spaces people inhabit. In the future, there is a critical need to raise awareness on meaningful public participation in construction and building and embed spatial quality considerations from a quality perspective when formulating, implementing and monitoring relevant policies with respect to principles of inclusivity and equity.

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