

## Panel 5 Paper 5.2: Reconceptualising Intangible heritage: The case of the Mongolian Ger.

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# Reconceptualising Intangible Heritage: in the Case of the Mongolian Ger

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## Introduction

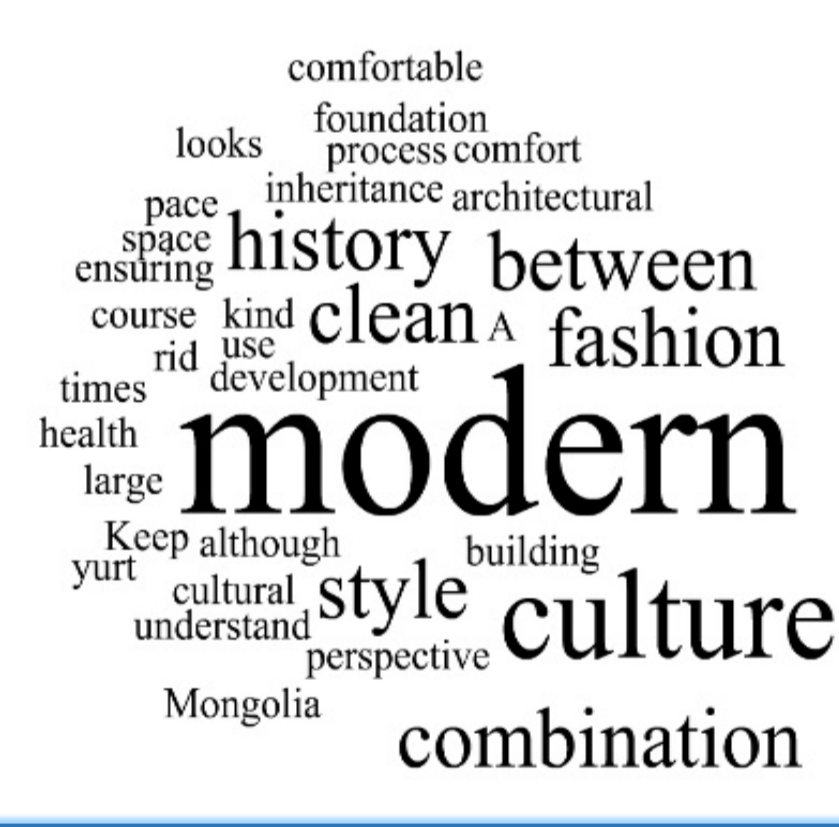
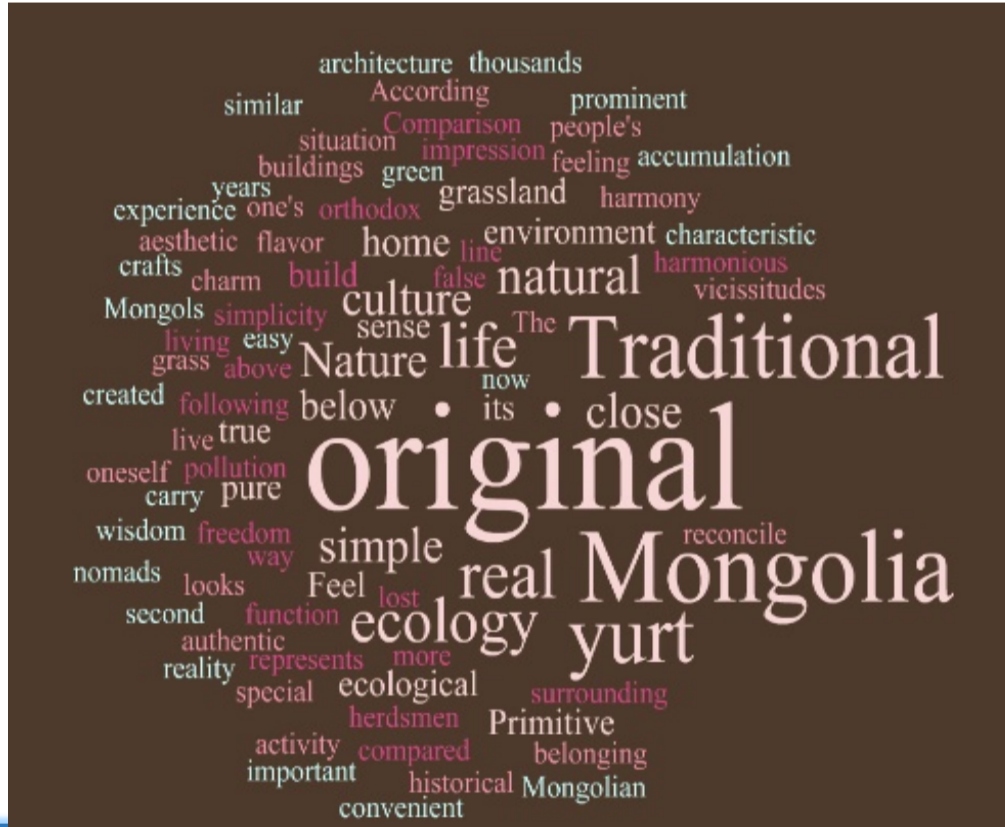
Intangible cultural heritage has been gaining increasingly attention and is now being used to critique the tangible-dominated authorized heritage discourses. However, the emphasis on non-material discourse could lead to a dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage and overlook the materiality in intangible heritage. This has been found in the analysis of the development of cultural heritage discourse, the professional heritage management works and people's experience in heritage tourism. In order to mitigate the dichotomy, this paper proposes a living heritage approach to investigate the making of heritage values through an understanding of people's cultural practices of the materiality with their subjective agencies and experiences.

This research uses Mongolian Ger as an example. Mongolian Ger is traditional dwellings that have predominantly located in central Asia for over three thousand years. These traditional dwellings form an essential part of pastoralism. The making craft of Mongolian Ger has been listed as national intangible cultural heritage in China in 2008. However, the Ger in recent times has been influenced by permanent grazing, tourism and modernity. The wooden material has been replaced by bricks, and the Gers has been transformed to solid structure instead of movable ones. They are now frequently used as tourism attractions and restaurants that have less original functions, which corresponds to the changes of Inner Mongolia's society.

## Research Results

### 1. Vision comparison and expression

by giving the traditional and modern images of the Ger to research participants. The results have been shown by the Word Cloud.

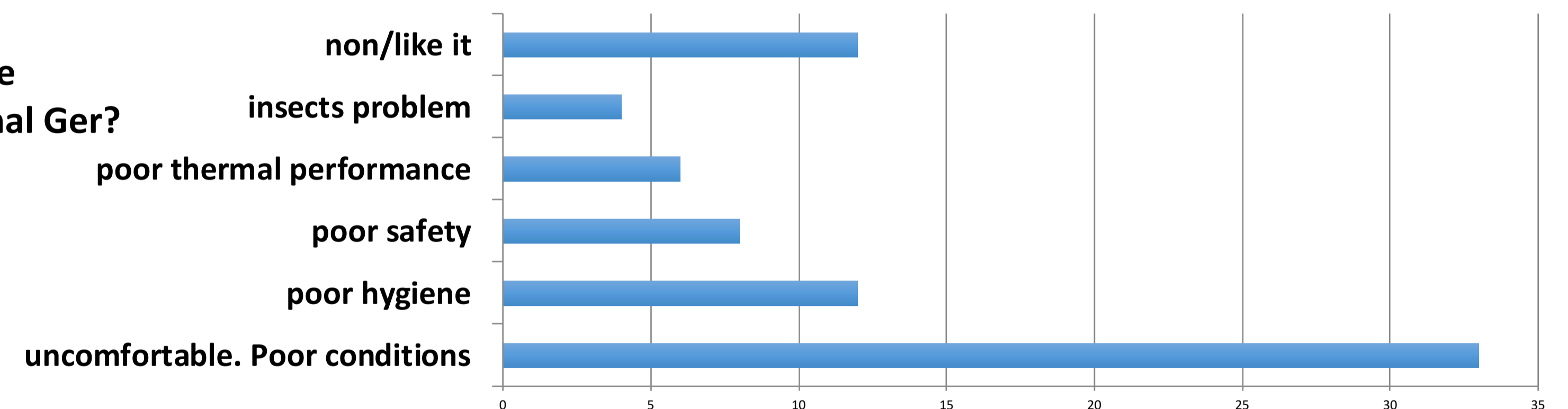


### 2. Questionnaires

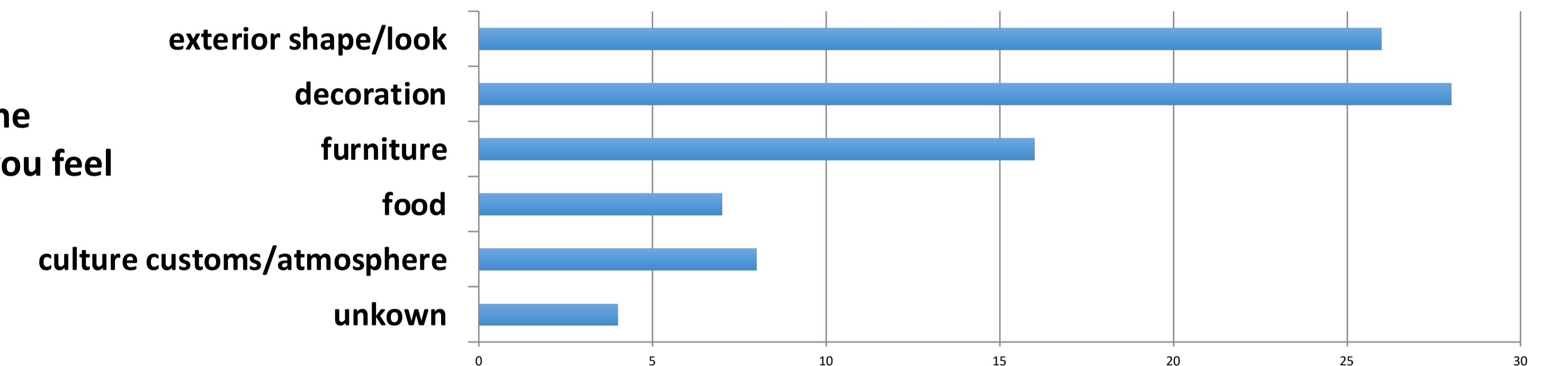
for investigating people's perceptions between traditional and modern Ger.

It aims to define the important factors of the Ger in people's minds and what they cares.

What do you dislike about the traditional Ger?

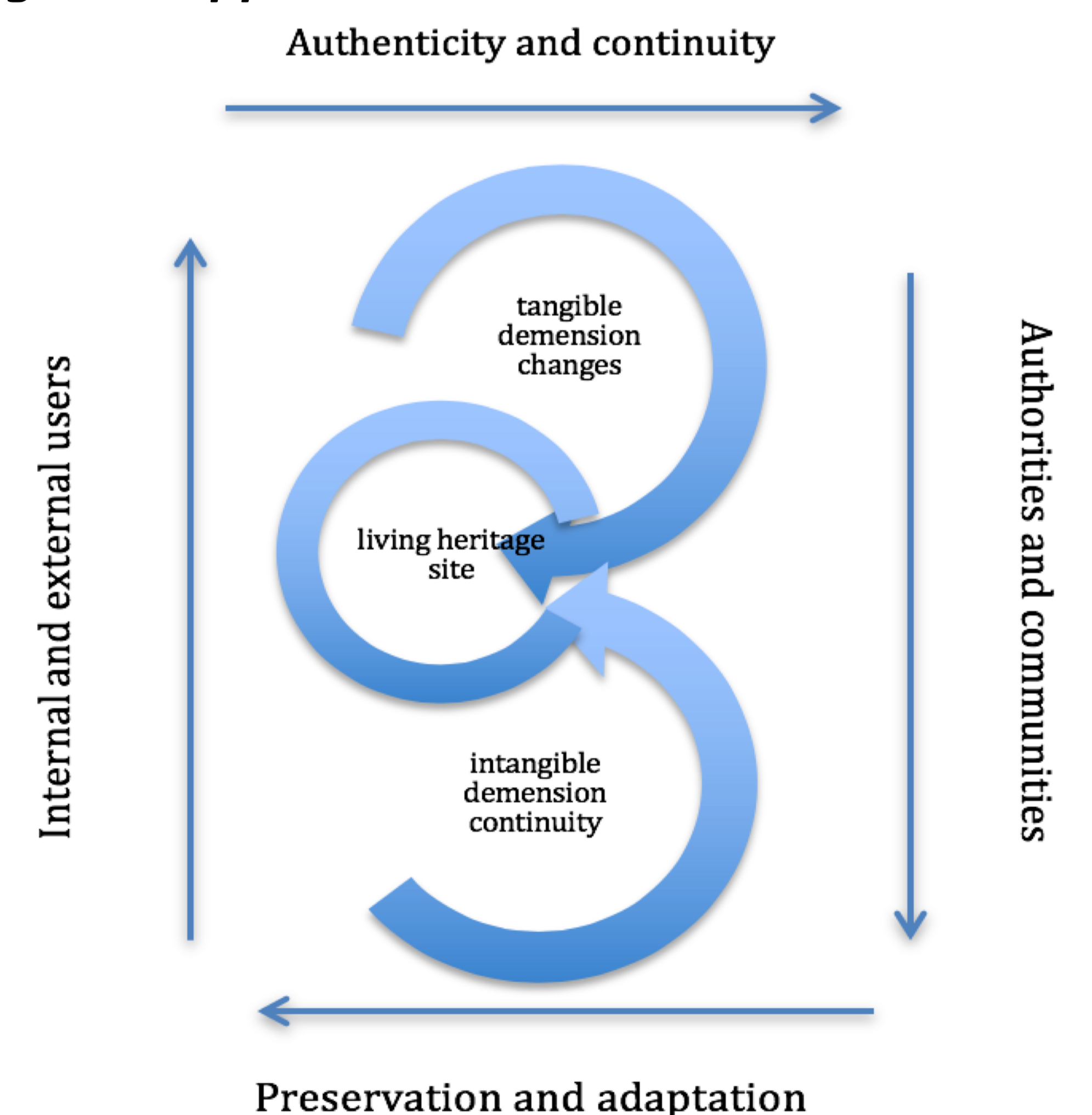


What elements in the modern Ger make you feel Mongolian?



Noting insufficient consideration on the intangible aspects of the Ger, including traditional handcraft skills of the Mongolian Ger as well as various people's use of the Ger, the research tends to redefine the relationship between tangible and intangible heritage, based on an analysis of professional and public opinions of the differences between "traditional Ger" and "modern Ger". Through observation it is seen that even though the physical environment is changing inevitably, people could still perceive the process of cultural creation in the tangibility because it can be seen as an embodiment of the living culture. In this scenario, the material creation does not only lead to culture changes but also becomes a medium that enable people to perceive and adopt culture changes. This research finally provides a living holistic thinking to explore Mongolian Ger in respect to living heritage approach, which requires balanced practices and sufficient considerations on both tangible and intangible dimensions.

## Suggested approach



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