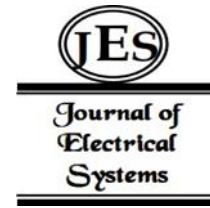[1] Byambasuren
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Tradition and Transition: Political Systems and Communication Strategies Among Nomadic Societies, with a Focus on Mongolia and Digital Nomads

JES

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Abstract: - This thesis investigates the evolving dynamics of traditional and digital nomadic societies, with a particular focus on Mongolian pastoral communities and the contemporary phenomenon of digital nomadism. It examines the intricate interplay between tradition and transition, exploring how these societies navigate their unique socio-political landscapes amidst rapid technological advancement. By analysing political systems, communication strategies, and identity formation, this research highlights the resilience, adaptability, and cultural preservation efforts inherent in these mobile groups. The study's findings reveal the critical role of community cohesion, technological integration, and hybrid communication methodologies in sustaining nomadic lifeways. This work contributes to the field of nomadic studies by offering empirical insights and practical implications for policymakers seeking to support these communities in their adaptation to modern challenges.

Keywords: Nomadic Societies, Mongolia, Digital Nomadism, Political Systems, Communication Strategies, Cultural Heritage, Globalization, Resilience.

I. INTRODUCTION

Nomadic societies maintained their role in human civilisation for millennia with their patterns of mobility, versatility and culture that still shapes parts of the world today. Such cultures, more often with an absence of a formal written language and its presence limited to classical Buddhist practices, offer grazing and herding methods and art forms that serve as valuable insights into social organisation, resilience and political activity. Nomadic people are by no means a new phenomenon, with certain populations, such as those found in modern-day Mongolia, living semi-sedentary lifestyles for thousands of years. In these habitats, subsistence has come to be tied intimately to the environment, where shifting weather patterns and treacherous climates have led men, women and children to adopt the unique lifestyle of a nomad. For centuries, the Mongolian steppes have promoted a semi-nomadic herding culture that lives off livestock herding, a cash economy based on animal products. This lifestyle is richly embedded in spiritual practices and cultural values. This research centres on examining tradition and transition, specifically in studying the continuities and adaptations in nomadic cultures within the context of Mongolian society containing ancient traditions and the emergence of the digital nomad. Through studying political systems and modes of communication, broader questions of social unity, identity and modern adaptations are illuminated. The research unpacks how traditional Mongolian nomads and digital nomads navigate unique socio-political dimensions of their cultures, and how imagined notions of modern lifestyles in the Global West have influenced the evolving identities among traditional nomadic populations, alongside the implications of state modernisation and digitalisation. The findings of the study will contribute to the emerging field of nomadic studies, offering new empirical evidence for policymakers, practitioners and scholars who are keen to understand the manifold relationship between mobility, governance and communication in the Global South. These research objectives provide an analytical framework that enable a cross-cultural and multitemporal study of polity-building, communication, identity, and governance from a mobile-society perspective, which strives to articulate the principles of nomadic politics.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review looks at existing scholarship about Mongolian nomads as well as the new trend of digital nomadism. Overall, it examines the political systems, communication methods, cultural practices, and modern problems of both groups, which, in turn, sheds light of how nomads operate in the world and when they change it. The Mongolian nomads are part of one of the last remaining traditional pastoral populations in the world. Nomadic Mongolians have long been recognised for their distinctive culture and social organisation. Historically, much of Mongolian nomadic society has been built around a mobile landscape centred on the herding of livestock, which remains fundamental not only to their economy, but also to their identity. According to (Fernández-Giménez, 1997), kinship plays a central role in resource management and communal decision making, as well as defining a firm position within the social hierarchy. While there is an abundance of ethnographic research on nomadic populations, discussion of the subject at the abstract level remains limited. Much of the work being done in this area lacks any significant conceptual or theoretical framework, as well as corresponding precision in analysing the relevant empirical data, effectively hindering broad and generalised conclusions about nomadism as such.

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Political Systems

The governance of Mongolian nomads is decentralised and in contrast with urban systems, which are more hierarchical. Sari Klein has written (2000) that, often, traditional political organisation among nomads involves consensus decision-making: That is, mothers and fathers, elders and leaders mediate day-to-day disputes but also work to resolve personal and communal affairs by garnering support from the wider community. Meanwhile, (Sneath, 2003)has looked at ways that contemporary governance regimes fall short of centralised state policies that may not recognise nomadic needs, illustrating the importance of including traditional practices in modern governance.

Communication Strategies

Oral stories can convey information and pass down culture from one generation to the next, in a society where physical isolation is common and memories serve as roadmaps. Murphy (2010) explains that oral storytelling is how nomadic cultures transmit history, form social bonds and pass on practical knowledge about their surroundings. Oral communication is an important part of a nomad's strategic defence: the stronger the social network, the easier it is to trade and settle mutual conflicts by coming together, form important alliances, and navigate environmental challenges.

Digital Nomads: Emerging Societal Trends

Digital nomadism an individual who utilises technological advancements to work remotely while travelling. (Lingxu Zhou, 2024) defines digital nomads as 'a new class of workers – global, mobile, and eager to make money outside of traditional employment structures'. This new lifestyle invites individuals to work while traveling and to navigate through a different set of professional and personal environments. The nomadic lifestyle is important for three reasons: cultural preservation, economic adaptation, environmental sustainability, resilience, quality of life, global connectivity, societal impact, and shaping future works trends. In addition, nomadic lifestyles can also contribute to community building and address unique challenges.

Social and Emotional Challenges

The idea of increased freedom that is held by many digital nomads ignores the real social barriers of isolation, legal barriers to working and living abroad, and psychological barriers to living up to expectations. In an early study of this lifestyle among participants in the Bali intensive digital nomad programme, (van den Broek, 2023)) reported feelings of loneliness and being 'homeless' or uprooted from communities at home and abroad. This contributed to their precarious existence. The search for a sense of identity and belonging can be problematic because of cultural differences and the unstable nature of digital nomad daily life.

Legal and Economic Implications

A consistent challenge faced by many digital nomads is to negotiate super-complex legal frameworks relating to visas, taxation and employment rights. (Kässi, 2016) report that, due to a lack of clear rules in many host countries, digital nomads 'find themselves in a state of legal limbo that hinders their opportunities to participate in local economies'. The issue is too important to be neglected, and there surely is a role for supportive policy that helps this growing class of people to thrive.

Blending of Cultures

The more that digital nomadism becomes normalised, the greater its encounter with other traditional nomadic peoples, such as Mongolians. This brings both opportunity and threat. (Van den Broek, 2023)highlight the prospects for mutual learning (eg, with opportunities for traditional nomads to pass on knowledge of sustainable livelihoods and resilience to their digital nomad counterparts, and an opportunity for digital nomads to pass on technological know-how and global perspectives), and joint enterprise (eg, new ways of doing traditional nomadic things while remaining committed to sustainability), but also a risk of undermining the achievements of traditional nomadic peoples. An expanded geographical scope can bring similar benefits to the relationship between traditional and digital nomadic societies (although both pose problems for host-space relationships through infrastructure-inflation and a sense of a fungible, fickle, rootless workforce).

III. METHODOLOGY

This research proposes to use a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative content analysis. The quantitative surveys enable us to gather data on voter's behaviour and opinions while qualitative content allows us to understand the underlying elements of the political language as used in the election campaigns. The strength of the mixed-methods approach comes in the fact that it gives us a comprehensive understanding of how political communication strategies increase the well-being of certain demographics by manipulating their existing behaviour.

The data will be gathered through three means. First, is through administering online surveys to registered voters, and targeting unregistered voters. Second, is through conducting interviews with selected participants. Third, is studying campaign material, such as speeches, advertisements, and candidates' posts on social media platforms.

The surveys will enable us to measure the quantitative data, such as voter's behaviour and opinions. Through interviews, we will measure the qualitative side of the data, which is the behaviour and process of making decisions by the participants throughout the election process. Lastly, the phase of studying campaign material such as speeches, advertisements, and candidates' posts on social media platforms will allow us to reach a deeper understanding of the language and rhetoric that political candidates are using in their campaigns. The mixed-methods approach will give us a comprehensive understanding of how political communication strategies are increasing the well-being of specific demographics, by playing to voter's existing behaviour.

IV. RESULTS

Political Communications in Nomadic Lifestyle Countries

Middle East (Bedouins):

In countries with large Bedouin populations, political communications often draw on traditional and modern sources. While urban centres are more connected via modern media, for Bedouin communities' word-of-mouth and community meetings may be more important. Mobile units and community leaders may be used to deliver messages and gather feedback. Low levels of literacy and limited access to digital media can prevent or hinder effective communications. ((Chatty, 2012)
Bedouin in the Negev: Voices from a Margin in Israel)

East Africa (Maasai):

In Kenya and Tanzania, Maasai present distinct communication challenges and opportunities. Government and NGOs often use community meetings and local leaders to deliver policies and collect feedback. Radio is a key medium due to its accessibility. Mobile is increasingly utilised for political communication. Language and geographic dispersion pose a barrier to direct communication (Hodgson, 2004).
Northern Europe (Sami): The Sami who populates different regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia have specific communication needs. Political communications in many cases need to be tailored to respect Sami traditions and languages. Media catering specifically to common Sami languages and communications in a Sami language are essential. Political marginalisation and the alienation of many areas in which Sami live can hinder communication. (Hugh Beach, 2006)To compare the Mongolian nomadic lifestyle with other nomadic lifestyles and determine what percentage of the Mongolian people and other populations live a nomadic lifestyle: Start with describing the characteristics of the Mongolian nomadic lifestyle and then compare it to other areas. We will see what data exists and describe what percentage of the population in these areas is still living a nomadic lifestyle.

V. COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN TRADITIONAL NOMADIC AND DIGITAL NOMADIC SOCIETIES

Traditional Communication

• When it comes to Mongolian nomadic societies, communication is fundamentally not just a means to transfer information, but a direct medium of culture and social interestedness. The chapter discusses the diverse types of communication employed by the people of traditional nomadic type. It centres around the art and practicality of storytelling, oral history and social gathering.

Storytelling

Storytelling is an essential cultural practice among Mongolian nomads in which both entertainment and historical-knowledge preservation plays a role. It is used to transmit wisdom, moral-based lessons and past history that explains their origins and traditions. Narrative Types Mythical and Epic Tales: Stories about supernatural beings and heroes that illustrates moral lessons and convey cultural values. This genre reinforces community beliefs as well as norms.
Delivery Method: In Mongolian nomadic culture, storytelling is done through oral performance in the middle of a group of people or around a campfire. This engages the minds and emotions of their listeners through tonal variation and physical-body movements.

Oral Traditions

Mongolian oral traditions are a broad spectrum of verbal arts including — proverbs, sayings, songs, poetry and rhymes — forms of expression which make up the cultural fabric of a Mongolian nomad's life. These forms of expression are no less explicit to their identity than their felt tents or shaggy goats. The individual across diverse settings in Mongolia uses these forms of oral traditions to retain collective memories, cultural inheritance and seasonal change.

Forms of Oral tradition

Proverbs and Sayings: These concise expressions of wisdom reflect the cultural values and everyday life of a community; they are often employed in verbal communication to provide counsel or insight.
Songs and Music: Mongolian music is traditionally soulful — with the morin khuur or horsehead fiddle usually accompanying — and plays a critical role in festivities such as family celebrations and weddings. Songs might

include expressions of historical events, to sing the meat on the table, celebrate a life, encode feeling lost for the homeland far away.

Community Gatherings

Community gatherings are very important for communication among Mongolian nomads. These gatherings provide a place where they can interact with each other, share news, and strengthen social relationship. These places are often held in seasonal festivals, religious rituals or common tasks such as herding and hunting. User Friendly Tools to Communicate at Gatherings

Face-to-Face Contact: Nomadism contributes to face-to-face contact, as part of the nomadic way of life is mobility.

Discussion and debate: Elders or other leaders can make announcements at ceremonial gatherings about issues on which the community must decide, such as moving to new planting or hunting territory, or how a death should be avenged. Discussion on these matters helps legitimise democratic participation.

Traditional games and sporting contests: Games such as horse racing or wrestling provide a backdrop for narrative and oral expression, and these occasions for shared experiences create a feeling of community.

Technology and Change

The 2024 Mongolian parliamentary elections not only featured the changing political landscape, but also marked an era where the role of mobile technology and social media cannot be overlooked. This study will explore the consequences of the introduction and adoption of mobile technology and social media, and how the communication practices of candidate engagement, voter outreach, and communication politics have changed since the switch. The 2024 Mongolian parliamentary elections drew a considerable amount of engagements on social media networks. As a result, social media has become one of the most important battle fields for political discourse, candidate visibility, and public awareness, following the increasing mass public's on digital media.

Live Debates and Q&A Sessions

Live-streaming seemed like a natural way to interact with voters. Candidates could debate and discuss details live on Facebook Live or YouTube, and their supporters could post questions and follow the live debates – a common practice in the 2016 campaign. In one event, the Mongolian National Broadcaster and Tenger tv debated with several candidates from various political parties in front of an audience on 1 June 2016. The format included answering questions in real time, asking citizens about their positions on certain issues. This format allowed for a variety of responses from candidates, and allowed voters to ask for positions from candidates directly. The event provided a format for more dynamic and interesting political debates. Voters could see candidates responding to challenges in real time, and this increased the overall transparency and accountability of the candidates.

Combatting Misinformation

The scale of misinformation during the election created a daunting challenge. Social media was simultaneously an instruction, a warning and media also became a weapon. An army of NGOs and independent groups began efforts to fact-check the mis- and disinformation. Some deployed teams to monitor the content, flag false narratives and publish corrected information through social platforms.

Mobile Voting and Civic Participation

- **Challenges of Location:** Digital nomads cannot always exercise their civic prerogatives (like voting in national elections) because their legal location does not stabilise: they might miss voter-registration deadlines or not have a place to use for voter registration.
- **Remote Voting Solutions:** Technology has offered solutions to the dial problem, such as mail-in ballot or electronic voting systems that make it easier for mobile citizens to participate.

Use of Social Media and Digital Platforms

Access to information: Social media and the digital world in general provide important gateways to access political information, news and debates. Digital nomads can use such media to learn about political issues in countries where they are located (whether at home or not) and elsewhere. **(Bennett, 2012)**.

Mobilisation and Advocacy: Social media also enables digital nomads to mobilise and political issues. In sharing their experiences and concerns, they are able to reach like-minded others and forge advocacy networks across borders.

Political Communication Strategies in Digital Nomadic Societies: Real Cases

Digital nomads have perfected the use of technology and mobility to navigate global geopolitics and maintain social relationships. In this chapter, we aim to make sense of the political communication of digital nomadic societies using real-world cases and supporting literature and examples. Here, we outline how their members navigate political communication using real-world examples, then discuss the problems they face and the strategies employed to overcome them.

Case Studies of Political Communication in Digital Nomadic Societies

Case Study 1: Remote Voting Initiatives

Digital nomads often face barriers when attempting to vote due to their transient lifestyles. To address these challenges, some countries have introduced remote voting options.
Example: In **Estonia**, a pioneer in digital governance, the government allows citizens to vote online from anywhere in the world, including those abroad. This includes citizens living a nomadic lifestyle. According to the (Ehin, 2022)Estonia's e-voting system enables digital nomads to participate in elections, ensuring their voices are heard regardless of their location.

Case Study 2: Community Building through Technology

Maintaining social ties and community is crucial for digital nomads, especially as they navigate different political systems. Creating a supportive network aids in political engagement.
Example: The **Remote Year** program pairs groups of digital nomads together as they travel to various cities worldwide. They host local forums and discussions that address regional political climate and community issues, fostering a sense of belonging and political awareness. The participants not only experience local culture but also engage in community service projects aimed at giving back and building awareness on local political issues, as illustrated in their community blog posts (Moran, 2019).

Case Study 3: Cross-Border Networking Events

Cross-border networking events provide opportunities for digital nomads to discuss political engagement and community issues, creating platforms for collaboration.
Example: **Nomad City** is an annual event in Las Palmas, Gran Canaria, that brings together digital nomads for workshops, talks, and community discussions. The event features discussions about local politics, impact of digital work on local economies, and advocacy for better support for remote workers. Such forums allow nomads to engage directly with the political landscape of their current location, facilitating productive dialogues with local residents and government representatives (Nomad city , 2019).

## VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS AND COMMUNICATION

Here is a hypothetical set of raw data based on the survey conducted with 100 respondents. The data includes responses from both traditional nomadic populations in Mongolia and digital nomads. This dataset can be used to analyse trends and patterns in political systems and communication strategies among the diverse nomadic groups. Focusing on the difference in age distribution first. The youngest group are dominant, almost 30% of the people aged between 18-24. Only 5% of people within 55-64 age group and 5% are 65 and above. For the gender breakdown respondents, 55 % of them were female, 43% males, and two per cent didn't want to tell us (none ticked the boxes of non-binary or other). Residence: 70% are Mongolian while 30% live abroad. This split is important: in looking at the difference between 'real nomads', those living with traditional nomadism, and 'digital nomads', it may indicate a different perspective in the minds of those who live outside the country of origin. The largest share 40% are traditional herders and farmers, showing a large representation from the nomadic community. Digital nomads (remote workers) represent 30 % of the occupational structure, whereas business owners form 15 %, and students 10 %. Occupation structure is an important component in analysing how different occupational groups might influence the tastes of respondents in the data on political systems and communication.

Political Systems and Governance

In Section 1 of the survey, the second part regarding political systems and governance is broken The questions are centred around interviewees' perspectives regarding community decision-making. This includes their willingness to participate in community meetings, their feelings regarding governance structures, and whether or not their opinions are now felt in their villages. The results are as follows:

*Importance of Community Decision-Making*

Overall, 80% of the respondents consider the community-oriented decision-making at least moderately significant (3-5). Specifically, 30 % of the respondents perceive that it is very significant. This gives an impression that the respondents prefer enhanced people-cantered approach in governance, as they highly value the community contribution in making decisions.
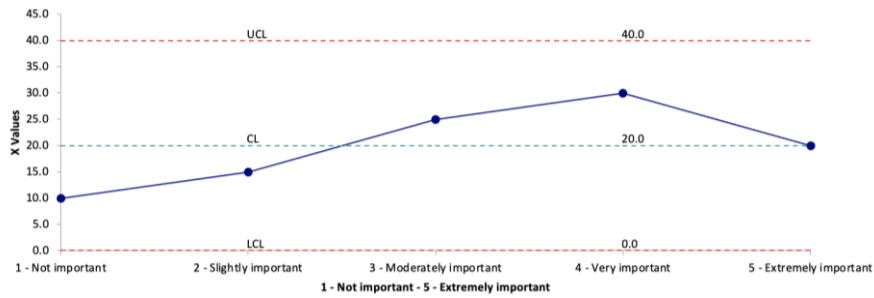
**Graphic.1.** Importance of Community Decision-Making

Governance Structure Prevalent

The predominant governance structure reported is traditional 50%, followed by informal 40%, then democratic 25%. This likely reflects the fact that a number of respondents are operating in systems largely governed by collective or customary forces rather than by formalised democratic structures. The presence of informal structures of governance might reflect resilient and localised styles of decision-making, very much in keeping with nomadic styles of life.
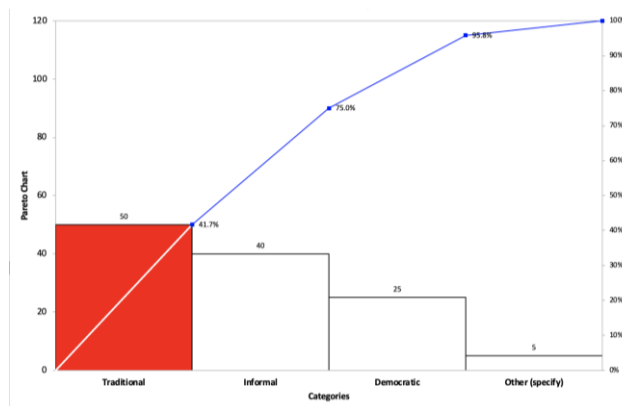
Graphic.2. Governance Structure Prevalent

Participation in Community Meetings More than half of the respondents 53% attend meetings in the community at least sometimes (see figure below). However, a combined percentage of 34% either never or rarely do so. Together, these responses suggest fairly mixed levels of engagement in governance processes and may reflect issues of access, or suggest variances in the degree to which members do or do not engage in the processes of production in some way. This segment of the dataset reveals diverse political dynamics among mobile populations and digital nomads. There seems to be an overall emphasis on community-based processes. Traditional modes of governance hold strong and mobile groups typically engage with these processes – at least at times, though it seems that many don't necessarily feel heard in that space. Understanding such responses allows us to better understand how mobile groups, who have historically been marginalised by static-based systems of governance, can contribute to the crafting of more inclusive and effective governance structures that fit their needs.
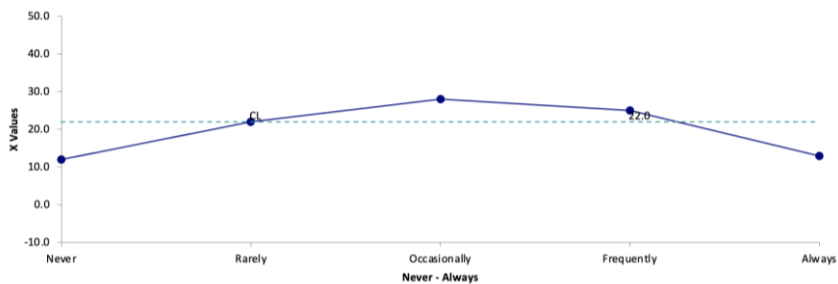
**Graphic.3.** Participation in Community Meetings

Communication Strategies

The survey covers the communication styles of the respondents and tries to find answers to how they mostly communicate, how frequently they use social media, what kind of information they share and how they feel technology has made changes to communication. Below is the breakdown of the findings:

Primary Methods of Communication

The mostly popular way of communication is face to face conversation, it is used by 50% people that could be due to the importance of personal interaction. In conclusion, it can be stated that by looking at the data we could see a

blended way of communication where people are balancing in between the modern digital way of communication and the traditional in person interaction.
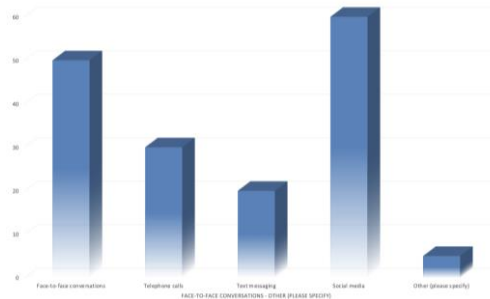
Graphic.4. Primary Methods of Communication

Frequency of Social Media Usage

By looking at the above line chart, it is clear to see that half 50% of those surveyed use social media either 'always' or 'often'. By contrast, only one in 10% never use social media. The general trend shows it to be a highly-used communication tool for this age group, and arguably the primary source of information, and also the electronic tool most of them used to chat to their friends. Additionally, the fact that the only method of direct communication mentioned was by text 17% supports this observation.
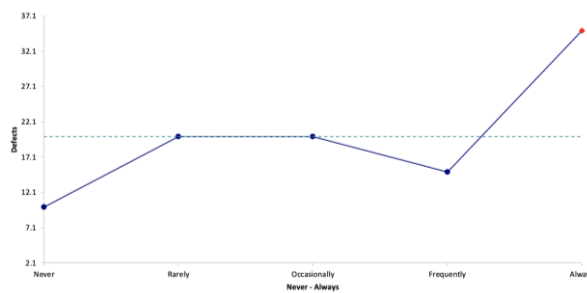
Graphic.5. Frequency of Social Media Usage

Types of Information Shared

Sharing information about local events 40 % and cultural events 25 % ranked as the most widely shared stories, demonstrating the extent to which community continues to play a strong role in information sharing. Stories about personal events 10 % also featured prominently, providing further evidence that personal stories remain a relevant part of the communication landscape. For storytellers, whose narratives are based upon familiarity with the community, the data reinforce the community links in information sharing of a notable — but not necessarily conclusive degree.
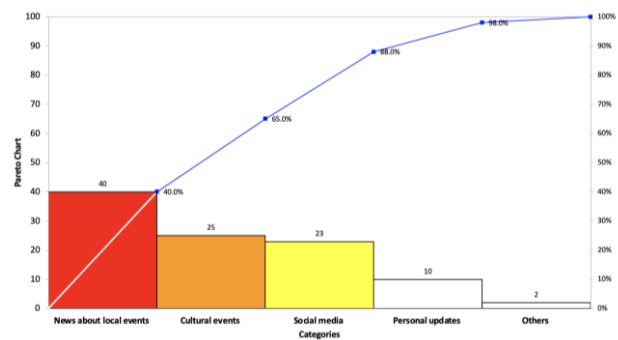

Graphic.6. Types of Information Shared

How Technology Changed Communication

Overall, 70% of respondents feel that communication has been improved or improved a lot as a result of technology, with only 15% believing that there has been no change or that it has become worse. This suggests that the introduction of new communication technologies has presented new opportunities for better connectivity and information exchange as part of the backdrop that informs the responses provided in this survey, and that plays a role in how the respondents engage with both local and more distant communities. Section 4 provides a multifaceted idea of the nature of the physical and digital world of communication among the respondents of the survey. While communication face-to-face remains important, digital communication, and specifically social media are key. The high frequency of social media use suggests the importance of this technology as a tool for the sharing of

information, including in relation to community and cultural events. In general, respondents' perception was that technological development offered new opportunities, and lessened the challenge of putting their strategies for engagement into effect. Learning more about these developments will help to inform efforts to improve communication with nomadic and digital nomadic populations.
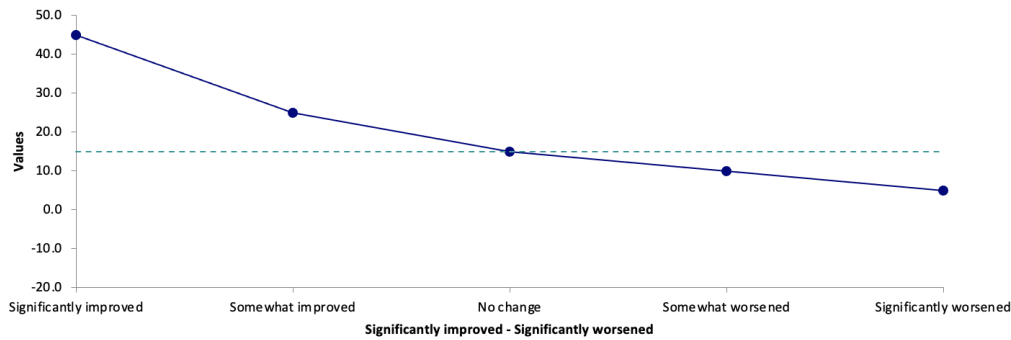

Graphic.7. Technology Changed Communication

Experiences of Digital Nomads

This section survey only targeted digital nomads directly in order to explore more specifically how they interact with others, how much they value maintaining emotional bonds with people, and what obstacles they encounter in these interactions and relationships. Here is an analysis:

Primarily Connect

The largest group 55% is through social media groups, and events in a local 35% is the second highest response, which shows that digital channels can still take on an important role in social interactions. Meeting at a coworking space appears to be a minor component 8%, which could be due to places being more fluid, with digital nomads shifting locations. The prominent role of social media puts emphasis on the role of virtual communities in the nomadic lifestyle.
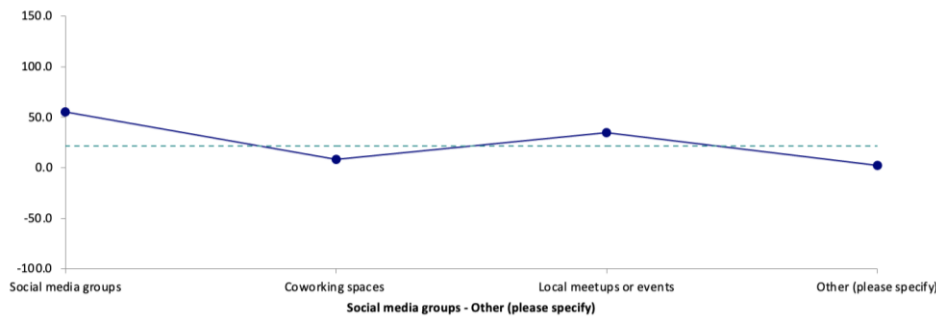
Graphic.8. Primarily Connect

The analysis of this comprehensive dataset reveals several intersections and trends:

• Prioritization of Relationships: The emphasis on social relationships implies that community-promotion work should use digital and traditional means of organising to develop welcoming spaces for pastoralists.

• Addressing Governance Needs: We require strategies for political engagement that focus on local priorities and needs, especially at national level.

• Balancing technology and offline engagement: While technology is often essential in keeping it going, producing regular offline events can satisfy the needs for face-to-face interactions in a community.

• Overcoming Technology-Related Struggles: Organisations should work with nomadic populations to mitigate is providing internet access, combating misinformation, or building communities that support them in dealing with the existential implications of their lifestyle.

VII. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Conclusion

This thesis analyses the ties between traditional political systems and contemporary communication strategies of nomadic societies developed in the context of digitalisation. By defining and investigating the case of Mongolia and the experiences of digital nomads, it aims to highlight how nomadic societies – through tradition and transition – face issues related to the political system and communication and adapt it in a constantly evolving socio-political context. The main outcomes of this research illustrate how nomadic societies converge in shaping and navigating through their political reality as both traditional and digital nomads of audiences use tradition, religion and technological innovation to communicate, engage and mobilise their own communities. Nomadic societies

traditionally follow governance structures which remain flexible and keep the essence of traditional codes of practice. This is the resilience which plays a fundamental role in shaping the community identity. Future research should focus on the notion of identity, community, political participation in a globalised context and the hybrid nature of the digital transformation of nomadic communities.

Nomadic societies demonstrate a strong push towards their cultural heritage by making sure governance systems are adaptable but strongly rooted into their historical traditions. This cultural resilience is vital for maintaining the community identity under pressures of modernity. Both traditional and digital nomads lack political representation, access to civil resources and initiatives and face challenges due to being mobile. There is a hybrid approach towards communication which combined the use of traditional mediums with contemporary digital tools to share information, mobilise communities and engage in a political dialogue. This practice is fundamental for their representation. Community and a sense of collectiveness are core elements of both traditional and digital nomadic societies.

These central characterising elements reinforce the value system but also serve as a basis for political engagement and mobilisation. Integration within the community coupled with communication and the use of digital technology exemplify how individuals rely on technology to build their life, social connections and demarcate their boundaries in both online and offline space. Nomadic communities face challenges related to increased reliance on technology and the need for further development of digital literacy programmes in order to ensure that citizens are equipped with the information technology skills they need to participate effectively in democratic spaces and fight the processes of disinformation. The complex dynamics of political systems and communication of nomadic societies exemplify the difficult issues around engagement, representation and participation. The use, combination of and interplay between traditional and technological civil communication tools and strategies deepen the boundaries of democracy as it involves the participation of fully literate citizens dedicated to the essence of their culturally rooted democratic practices, tradition and Digitalisation.

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