Much of the writing on social memory studies associate ghosts and haunting with unresolved, and often violent, memories of the past. In addition to seeing ghosts as a form of such imaginaries, this paper explores the social lives of ghosts: their mediation through broadcast and social media and mediums, appropriation at the urban centers and impoverished margins, interpretations of the ghosts, and the impacts of these appropriations and interpretations on the communities and individuals involved. Throughout Mongolia, shamanic rituals strive to transform ghosts into origin spirits and thus control and ameliorate them. But many ghosts remain unidentified and thus open to ongoing re-interpretation within a loose symbolic and narrative framework. The paper explores how after decades of the state engineering of memory, the ghosts make legible the shifting frameworks of collective memory, and the controversial and differential strands of memory. Appropriated in various ways, ghosts are related to the development of postsocialist subjectivities that resist the legacy of the socialist state’s homogenizing politics of personhood, as well as science and modernity at large.

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