

## **Florian Stammer**

TITLE: 'And if the tundra turns into a desert, we start herding camels, 'but we have only one planet to live on, so let's save it now together'

### **ABSTRACT:**

These quotes by two reindeer herders illustrate the self-confidence and agency of a native culture in the Russian North, as well as the anxiety of global changes that are inescapable. Nomadic livelihoods as a particular human-animal-environment relation in extreme climatic conditions have been threatened for centuries mostly by sedentary communities. On the other hand, nomadism is because of its mobility well equipped to flexibly respond to changing natural environments, including climate. Based on a decade of research among reindeer nomads of West Siberia, I argue that the main future challenge does not come from climate change directly, but from its cumulative impacts. This presentation analyses the perception of these impacts among reindeer nomads in Nenets society, which is commonly referred to as a showcase for successful maintenance of traditional cultural and economic practices. Tundra inhabitants of the region have been interacting with a changing climate throughout the last 1500 years. What makes the current situation different from earlier challenges are consequences of a changing climate in combination to exposure to industrial development of the region. Nenets reindeer nomads draw on their spatial flexibility as their main asset for responding to changes. Encroachment of pastures by oil&gas infrastructure is therefore an immediate threat to which they react with greater anxiety than to climate scenarios. This pertains in particular to cultural impacts, as sites of spiritual significance are threatened by the advance of industry into the area, but also economic consequences, as fishing lakes are disappearing due to a mix of industrialisation and climate change. The exposure to cumulative impacts has led to a change in reindeer nomads' agency and responses, as they perceive themselves increasingly as part of a global community where spatial evading of pressures is not a viable strategy anymore.