

# **Mongolei-Colloquium**

**am Mittwoch, dem 27. Mai 2009  
von 18 - 20 Uhr**

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## **Double exposure: How synergies of environmental change and globalisation limit adaptation for Mongolian pastoralists**

The talk uses the example of Mongolian pastoralism to illustrate pervasive mechanisms which reduce the adaptive capacity of natural resource-dependent people in the face of climate change. During the last decade, the climate of Mongolia has become drier, windier, and less predictable, with more extreme weather events (storms, droughts, *dzuud*) leading to 10 million livestock dead and widespread destitution. These shocks and stresses have previously been dealt with by using complex migration strategies that utilised patchy seasonal resources, the ubiquitous adaptation of pastoralists the world over. Today, migration is limited and hampered by a series of reforms which have been brought about by the transition from communism to market liberalism started in 1989.

These socio-economic reforms are hinged on neo-liberal principles of state-retreat and efficiency argued and pushed for by powerful international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Trade Organisation (WTO). Adhering to the conditionalities and principles imposed by these powerful global actors, the Mongolian state has stopped providing many of the services that eased migration and flexibility for the nomads: subsidised transportation, maintenance of wells and winter-shelters, free boarding schools for herders' children, etc. Herders reacted in part by increasing the number of goats they tended, hoping to cash in on the good cashmere prices on the world market. Instead, Mongolia's adherence to WTO has resulted in herders getting a worse price for their cashmere and in the downturn of the local processing industry. With the price for cashmere being effectively controlled by the Chinese purchasing policy, the profits are unreliable, and seldom increase the adaptive capacity of Mongolian herders. An alternative way of financing increasingly expensive migrations is by using commercial loans, but these are given only to the better-off herders and often have prohibitive interest rates. In 2008, as a result of the global financial crisis and the lack of funds, banks have effectively stopped commercial loans to herders. In the same year, China has decided to stop all import of cashmere, leading to prices plummeting by 50% in Mongolia. During the same summer, the prices for petrol went up despite a significant drop on the international market, due to lack of regulation which allowed the effective monopoly over the domestic market of a few Mongolian firms. This situation illustrates how the most important climate change adaptation of Mongolian pastoralists- their mobility- is practically removed by globalisation processes in complex ways. The case is revealing multiple, synergistic drivers of adaptation at multiple geographical levels.

Ort: Zentralasienseminar, Invalidenstr. 118, 5. Etage, Raum 507

**Alle Interessierten sind herzlich willkommen.**