Institutional problems of Russian transformation: a view from political sociology

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The presentation aims to show that analyzing Russian transformations within a framework of conventional oppositions, such as "archaic vs. modern", “liberal vs. illiberal”, oversimplifies the reality - an alternative, non-linear, multivariant approach is required.

A long-time research by our department (as well as by other researchers) has identified a set of features of Russian socium, which simultaneously are its essential problems, acting as obstacles to changes; they constitute the problematic of transformation. These are:
- a cyclical causality: a deficit of social differentiation which hinders a differentiation on political grounds, and vice versa; hence a lack of strategies, whether of modernization, stabilization, or conservation;
- an incomplete institutional design as an essential feature or as a situational problem;
- a fragmented social and political order;
- a persistent deormalization of norms and rules;
- an unfinished construction of political institutions of representation, participation, action, and economic institutions of property, market etc.;
- a reproduction of institutional "traps" as a result of agents (elites / counter-elites / citizens / masses) implementing habitual practices.

We propose to analyze the prospects of overcoming those problems, and the possibilities of institutional transformations in Russia as seen by various agents. It is required to reveal agents’ perceptions of social and political reality and the ways of its possible transformation in two dimensions: “horizontal” (their identification with specific projects of country’s development and with normative-value-sets) and “vertical” (their evaluation of ability to influence changes and outcomes).