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The micro-foundations of the transition from limited access order to open access orders. The case of post-socialist Russia

Since 2006, Douglass North, John Wallis and Barry Weingast have developed a theoretical framework offering a unified framework of analysing political and economic change in processes of social transformation. They have thus contributed to solving one of the central problems of transition research. In the tradition of D.C. North's earlier works (especially *Structure and Change in Economic History*), their work mainly focuses on the incentive structures governing the behaviour of empowered actors (intra-elite coalitions). The issue of the interplay between these incentive structures and the informal institutions (beliefs and habits of action and thought) in broader strata of society, in contrast, get a relatively short deal in their analysis. The present paper tries to fill this gap by providing a case study of the interplay between attempts of opening access to political and economic competition at the macro level and changes in beliefs, routines and social relations at the micro level of society. In methodological terms, the paper rests on a mainly Northian framework of institutional economics but tries to integrate insights from sociology and economic anthropology.