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Poverty and civil society

In earlier research of the project team it became clear that large-scale poverty in Russia has been the cause for a series of political measures aiming to stimulate economic and social development, even if poverty as such is not the explicit goal for any strong direct measures. During the long growth-period in Russian economy in 2000-2008, poverty decreased with the help of national political programmes, however, also local agency complemented political measures. The focus of the paper is on the reactions in civil society on the local level, related to poverty problems. Theoretically the paper is utilising the frame of institutional economics while adding an orientation to agency as the changing factor. Poverty can be understood as an objective or a subjective phenomenon, or like Amartya Sen as a capability deprivation, inability to achieve a collection of functioning. In this presentation, interpretations are based on qualitative study data. First the typical family level vicious and virtuous circles in development of poverty are discussed and secondly the answers of civil society to poverty are analysed. This includes among others preliminary answers on the questions, 'what kind of changes and new forms has civil society experienced, while answering the challenge of poverty and its ramifications?', and 'how are civic actors adapting into the political harnesses?' The paper is based on interviews from years 2002-2016, of local people, especially of representants of local groups and associations, which are of several different types.