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**Beyond Stratification: The Emerging Class Structure in Rural Russia**

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**Abstract**

This paper addresses the question, when do groups of people become a class, and is Russia developing classes in its rural society? This question about class development is particularly interesting because past Soviet policies were explicitly intended to minimize differences among classes, and because the way in which rural classes develop will affect the future competitiveness of the rural economy in Russia.

Using survey data from Russian villages, this paper examines the development of a rural class structure in postcommunist Russia. The paper argues that as a result of market reforms, social and economic relations have evolved beyond stratification, and instead argues that a rural class structure is emerging. The paper posits five measures of an emerging class structure: income stratification, land holdings, capital stock, class consciousness, and shared attitudes and values. Focusing on upper and lower income strata, significant differences are documented for each measure. The economic and political implications of the findings are discussed.