

Simon Rowedder

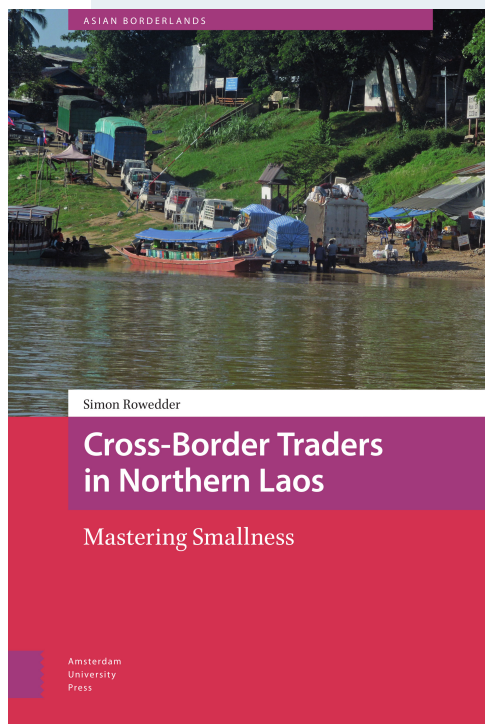
Cross-Border Traders in Northern Laos

Mastering Smallness

Northern Laos has become a prominent spot in large-scale, top-down mappings and studies of neoliberal globalisation and infrastructural development linking Thailand and China, and markets further beyond. Yet in the common narrative, in which Laos appears as a weak victim helplessly exposed to its larger neighbours, attention is seldom paid to local voices. This book fills this gap. Building on long-term multi-sited fieldwork, it accompanies northern Lao cross-border traders closely in their transnational worlds of mobilities, social relations, economic experimentation and aspiration. *Cross-Border Traders in Northern Laos: Mastering Smallness* demonstrates that these traders' indispensable but often invisible role in the everyday workings of the China-Laos-Thailand borderland economy relies on their rhetoric and practices of 'smallness'—of framing their transnational trade activities in a self-deprecating manner and stressing their economic inferiority. Decoding their discursive surface of insignificance, this ethnography of 'smallness' foregrounds remarkable transnational social and economic skills that are mostly invisible in Sino-Southeast Asian borderland scholarship.

BIOGRAPHY

Simon Rowedder was a Research Fellow at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS), and member of the NUS-Max Weber Foundation Research Group on Borders, Mobilities and New Infrastructures. In December 2021, he became Assistant Professor of Development Politics at the University of Passau in Germany.



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