

# **Affecting Mobility: Consuming Driving and Driving Consumption in Southeast Asia**

**Ivan V. Small**

Department of Anthropology  
Central Connecticut State University

This talk examines emergent consumption patterns in Vietnam's shifting transportation market and then considers them within broader design and marketing infrastructures shaping emerging markets in the region. First I explore the strategies and histories of Vietnamese buyers and sellers participating in the transportation commodity market starting with the growth of motorcycle. I examine how motorcycles were used not only for consumptive purposes but also served as stores of economic and symbolic value. However, shifts in manufacturing and recent regional and international trade agreements mandating tariff reductions are reorienting material and temporal relations to the market. In this transition period in which the meanings and valuations of the motorcycle are shifting, anticipations of automobiles are also paramount. In the second part of the talk I move from micro examinations of motorcycle and automobile user experiences to macro perspectives on market design to discuss how a transnational transportation industry is anticipating and engaging new consumer publics in not only Vietnam but the Asian region more broadly through an exploration of affective notions of mobility, and in the process potentially framing an emerging Asian "cultural market" around and with them. I suggest that identifying collaborative opportunities for stakeholders in academia, industry, and policy to explore issues of transportation and mobility preferences and developments in Asia may be a productive arena for further lateral learning and analytic insight.

**Ivan V. Small** is a sociocultural anthropologist and assistant professor at Central Connecticut State University. He holds a Ph.D. in Sociocultural Anthropology and Southeast Asian studies from Cornell University, a Masters in International Affairs from Columbia University and a B.A. in History from Boston College. Prior to joining CCSU in 2014 Dr. Small was a postdoctoral scholar at the Institute for Money, Technology & Financial Inclusion in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California Irvine, and a field study director with the India China Institute at The New School.

Dr. Small's first project investigated the social, spatial and material dimensions of international remittances to Vietnam. As a Fulbright-Hays fellow and visiting scholar at Vietnam National University from 2007-2009, he interviewed urban and rural remittance receiving households to examine changing economic capacities and forms of remittances, as well as shifts in local and transnational social and political relations from 1975 to present. He also conducted research among remittance senders in Vietnamese American communities in California. His latest project (topic of the current talk) examines consumption patterns in the Vietnamese transportation sector afforded by remittances and other new financial capabilities, and how emerging economies in Asia are framed by culturally targeted design and marketing research.

Dr. Small's work has been published in a variety of disciplinary and area studies journals and edited volumes, including *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*, *Mobility in History*, *Current Anthropology*, *Visual Anthropology*, and *Figures of Modernity in Southeast Asia*. He is finalizing a book entitled *Currencies of Imagination: Channeling Money and Chasing Mobility in Vietnamese Remittance Economies* as well as a co-edited volume entitled *Money at the Margins: Global Perspectives on Technology, Financial Inclusion & Design*.

**Wednesday, February 10**

**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**