

# Cambridge Elements

Elements in Politics and Society in Southeast Asia

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## RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

*Dispossession, Accumulation  
and Persistence*

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## Rural Development in Southeast Asia

### Dispossession, Accumulation and Persistence

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**Abstract:** Rural areas and rural people have been centrally implicated in Southeast Asia's modernisation. Through the three entry points of smallholder persistence, upland dispossession, and landlessness, this Element offers an insight into the ways in which the countryside has been transformed over the past half century. Drawing on primary fieldwork undertaken in Laos, Thailand and Vietnam, and secondary studies from across the region, Rigg shows how the experience of Southeast Asia offers a counterpoint and a challenge to standard, historicist understandings of agrarian change and, more broadly, development. Taking a rural view allows an alternative lens for theorising and judging Southeast Asia's modernisation experience and narrative. The Element argues that if we are to capture the nature – and not just the direction and amount – of agrarian change in Southeast Asia, then we need to view the countryside as more than rural and greater than farming.

**Keywords:** Rural, Agriculture, Development, Dispossession, Accumulation, Persistence

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