



**Green Economy and Sustainable Development:  
Bringing Back the Social Dimension  
CONFERENCE**

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## **Planting Trees for Sustainability?**

### **A Climate Justice Perspective on Green Agriculture in Thailand**

**Witchuda Srang-iam**

**National Institute of Development Administration, Thailand**

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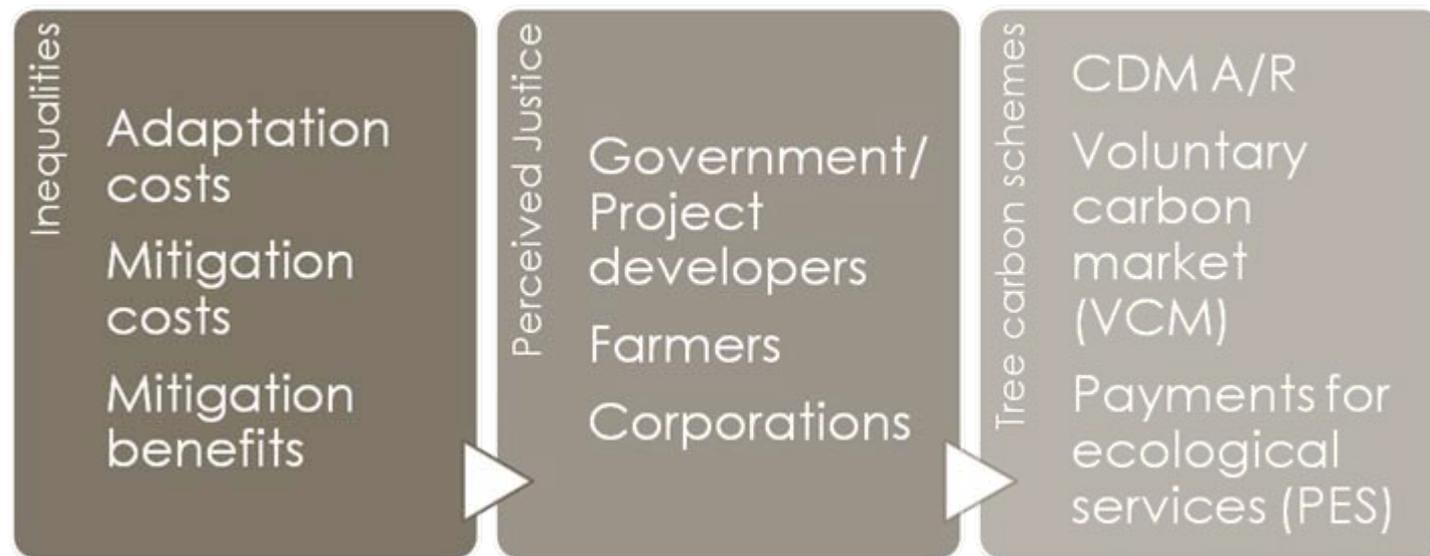
# A **global** climate justice perspective



# Tree carbon sequestration

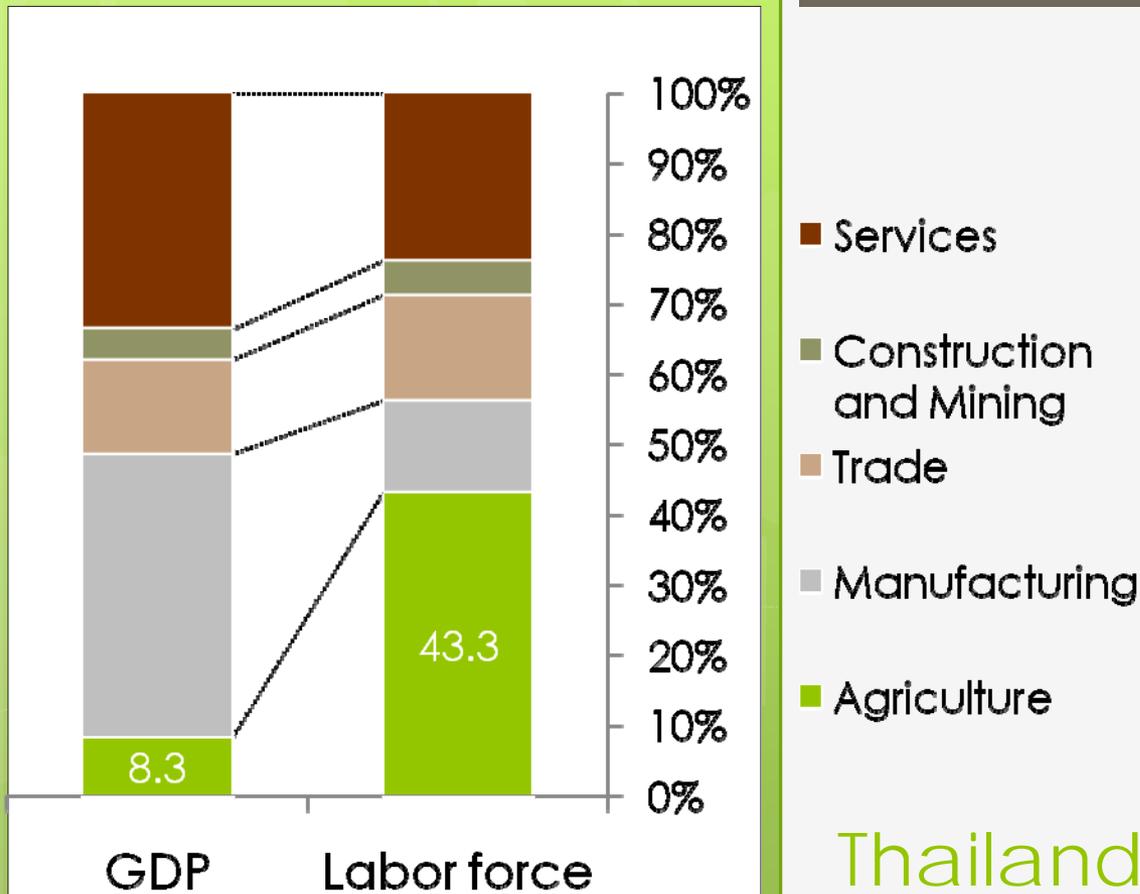
- A climate justice scheme dealing with climate-related inequalities between the *global* North and South
- It could affect social inequalities at the *local* level (Wittman & Caron, 2009); marginal farmers bear high costs or may not obtain full benefits (Corbera & Brown, 2010).
- Sustainability depends on *perceived justice* (Sommerville et al., 2010).

# A **local** climate justice framework



# Questions

- How do tree carbon schemes affect inequalities?
- How do social actors at the local level respond to these inequalities and perceive justice?
- How do tree carbon schemes relate to these local perceptions of justice?



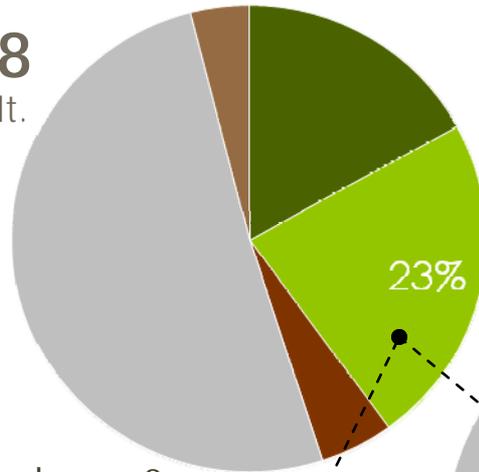
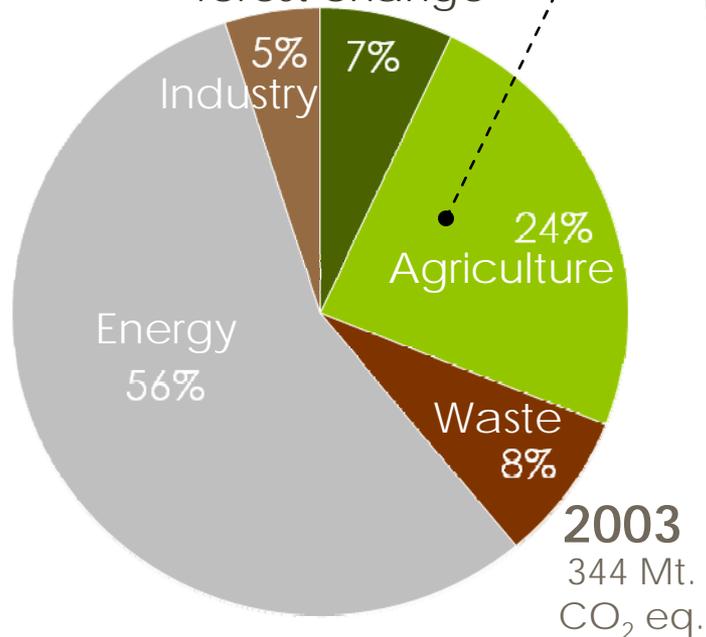
## Thailand

The agricultural sector (2010)

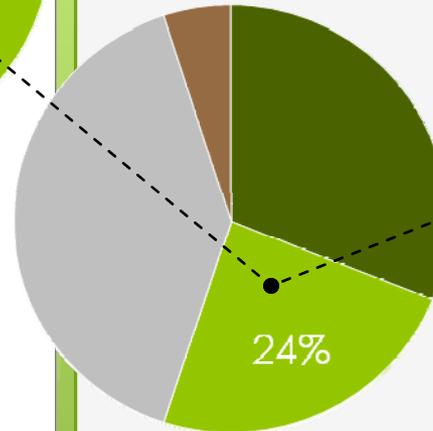
Source: NESDB & NSO

**1998**

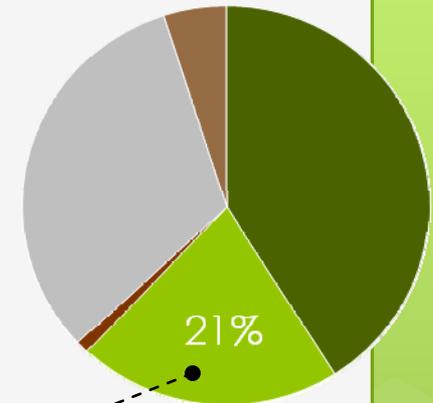
298 Mt.

Land use &  
forest changeEnergy  
56%Agriculture  
24%Waste  
8%**2003**344 Mt.  
CO<sub>2</sub> eq.**1994**

325 Mt.



24%



21%

**1990**

250 Mt

## Thailand

Greenhouse gas contribution  
by sector*Source: ONEP*UNRISD Conference on Green Economy and  
Sustainable Development

# Tree planting & climate change

- Thai government has promoted tree planting in agriculture as a mitigation strategy.
- Tree planting has increasingly become a farmer strategy in adapting to climate change.
- Only the better-offs can afford the costs of tree planting (Srang-iam, 2011).

# Recent tree planting initiatives

- Rubber trees
  - A government proposal to support large-scale rubber extension through CDM A/R
- Agroforest trees
  - An academic pilot project to develop smallholder agroforestry carbon offsets protocols for VCM
- Timber trees
  - A grassroots tree banking proposal as a PES scheme that recognizes monetary values of standing trees



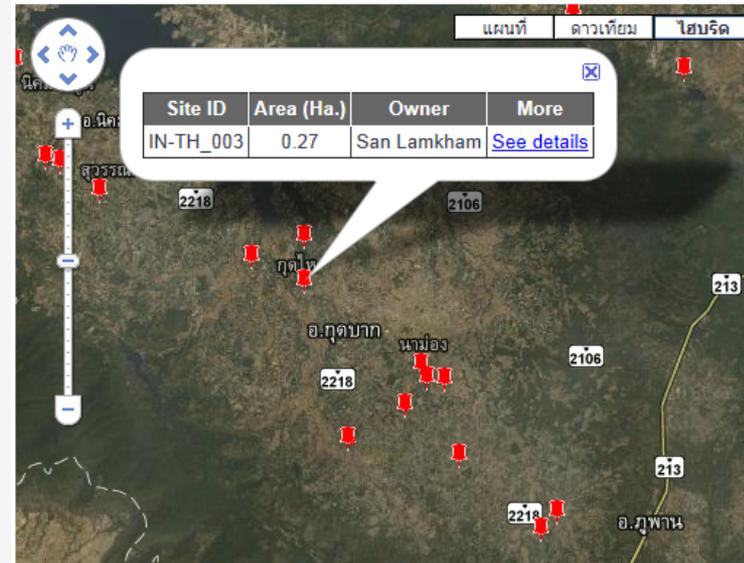
## Rubber trees

Case I

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# Rubber trees as a carbon economy

- The rubber tree carbon scheme has produced “technical” inequalities among new rubber smallholders.
  - A small-scale CDM A/R project could cover only 10% of new rubber planting areas.
  - Technical considerations could impose eligibility conditions that conflict with those in reality.



## Agroforestry trees

### Case II

# Agroforest trees as carbon offsets



- The pilot agroforestry carbon offsetting scheme has produced inequalities among farmers, brokers and buyers.
  - Farmers bear high opportunity costs of keeping trees.
  - Brokers obtain 30% of total carbon benefits.
  - Buyers/corporations are in better positions to negotiate the carbon contract, due to lack of credibility.



## Timber trees

Case III

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# Timber trees as a “standing” capital

- Tree banking has established new social relations that create inequalities between farmers and corporations.
  - Farmers bear most of tree planting costs in anticipation of future interest benefits.
  - Corporations pay only an interest portion of mitigation costs for full CSR benefits.

# A justice explanation

- Tree planting schemes have created new types of inequalities that social actors perceive as just.
- Perceived justice facilitates the stability and continuity of these inequalities.
- This stability could be achieved through a balance among multiple perceptions of justice at the local level.

# “Localization” of justice (1)

- At the conceptual level, tree planting schemes embrace different notions of justice across social actors.
  - Government/project developers see unequal distribution as a just means to compensate pre-existing inequalities.
  - Corporations focus on fair responsibility.
  - Farmers take the notion of justice as equal opportunity for participation.

## “Localization” of justice (2)

- Institutionally, rules and procedures of tree planting schemes are re-designed to accommodate multiple justice notions.
- These institutions also serve as legitimizing sources of rising inequalities.
  - Government subsidies and moral education programs let farmers bear smaller costs or realizing more of co-benefits.
  - Procedural requirements legitimize unfair cost/benefit sharing.

# Tree planting for sustainability?

- “Localization” of justice principles helps sustain the tree planting schemes.
- The sustainability of tree planting schemes, however, reinforces and reproduces inequalities that are justified at the local level.
- These inequalities between and among rich polluters and poor victims are regarded as unjust in the global climate justice perspective.

# Implications

- A situated theory of climate justice
  - A “bottom-up” approach (Heyward, 2007)
  - The locus of justice reasoning is not at the analyst’s discretion.
- “Glocalization” of justice principles
  - An approach that mediates between global and local systems
  - Local justice conceptions and institutions should broaden to encompass global climate justice principles.