



Who is planting or removing trees?

Shifting cultivation in a shifting context

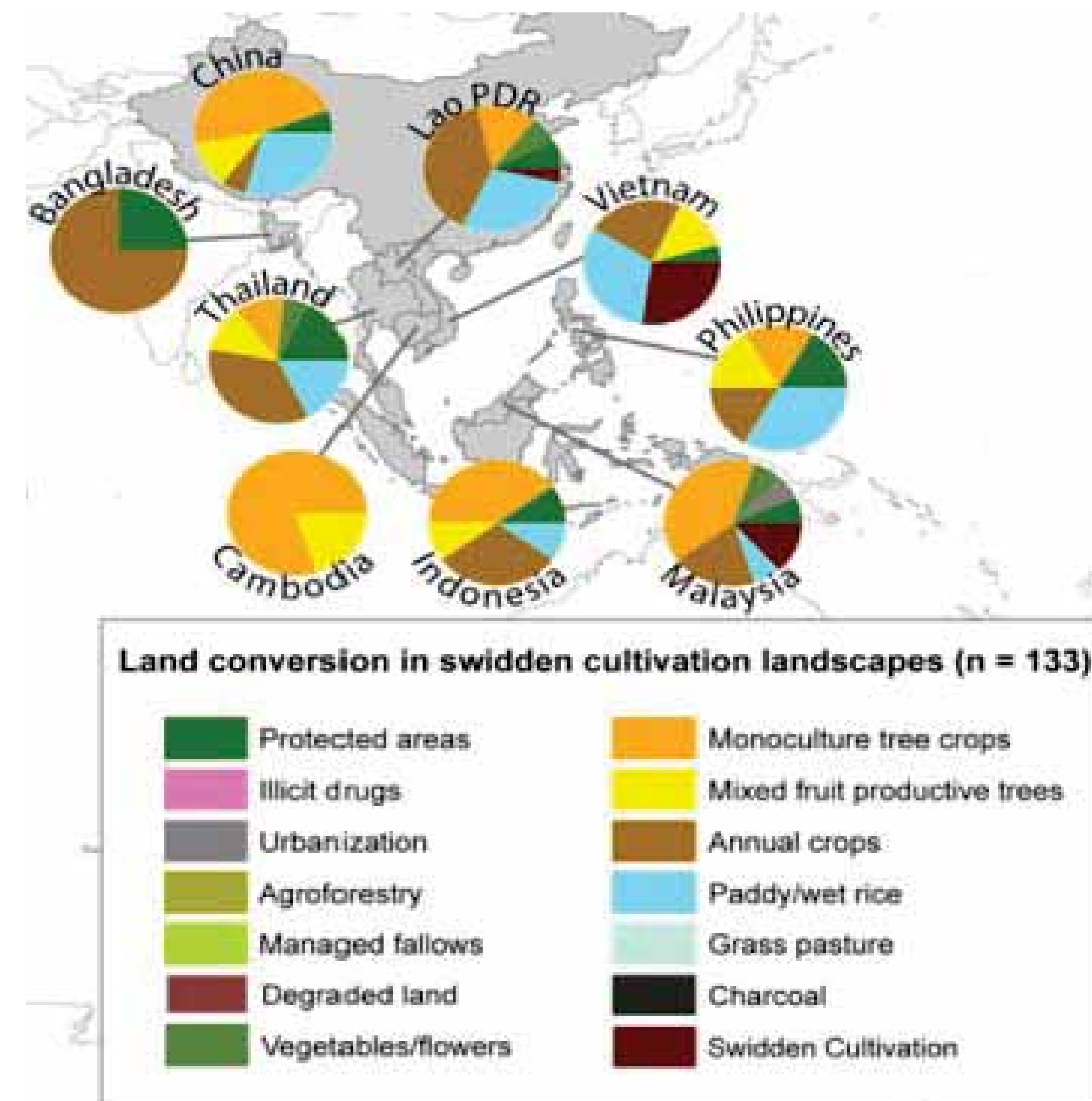


Traditional shifting cultivation landscape in northern Thailand

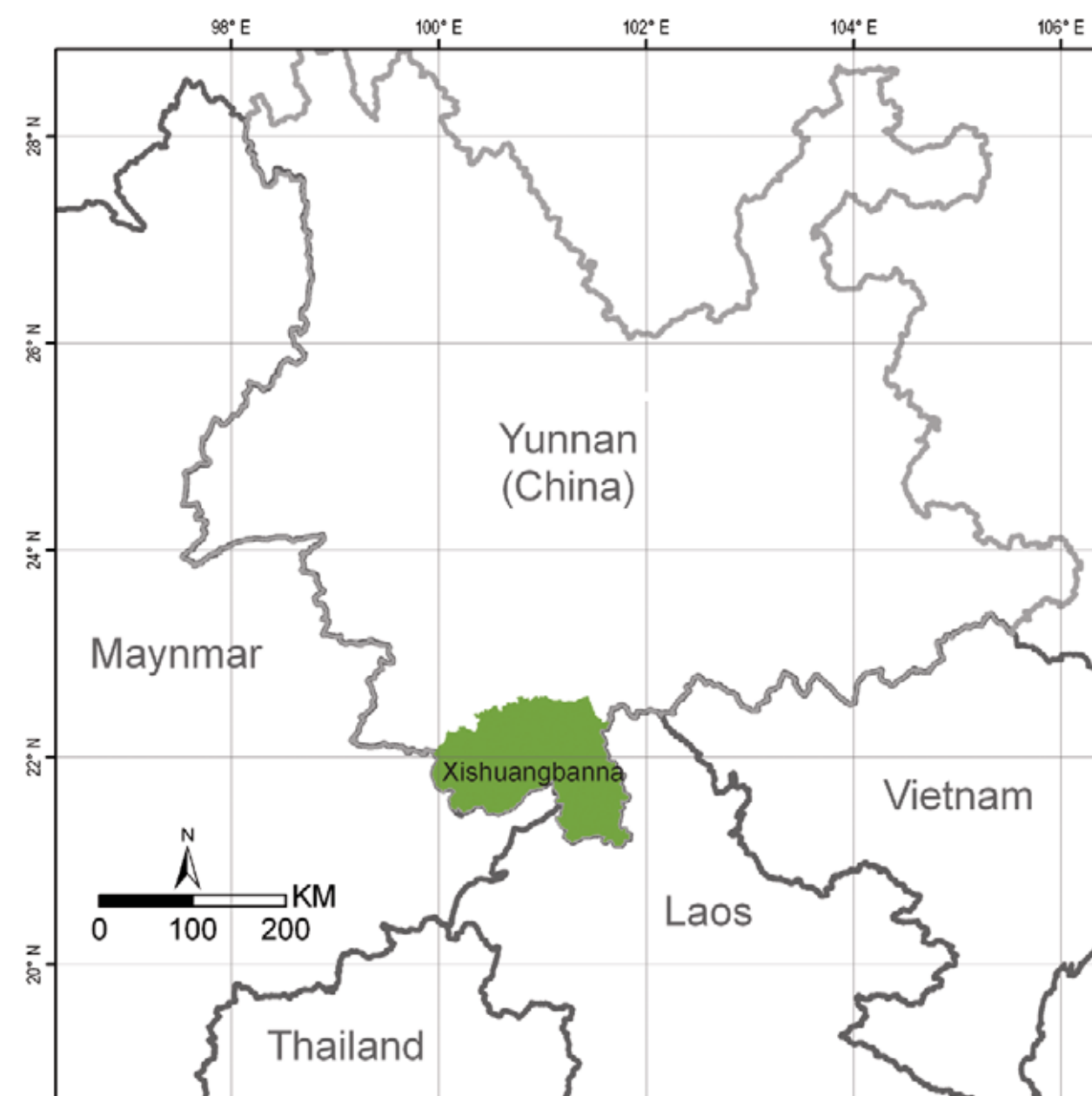


Cabbage growing on former swidden land

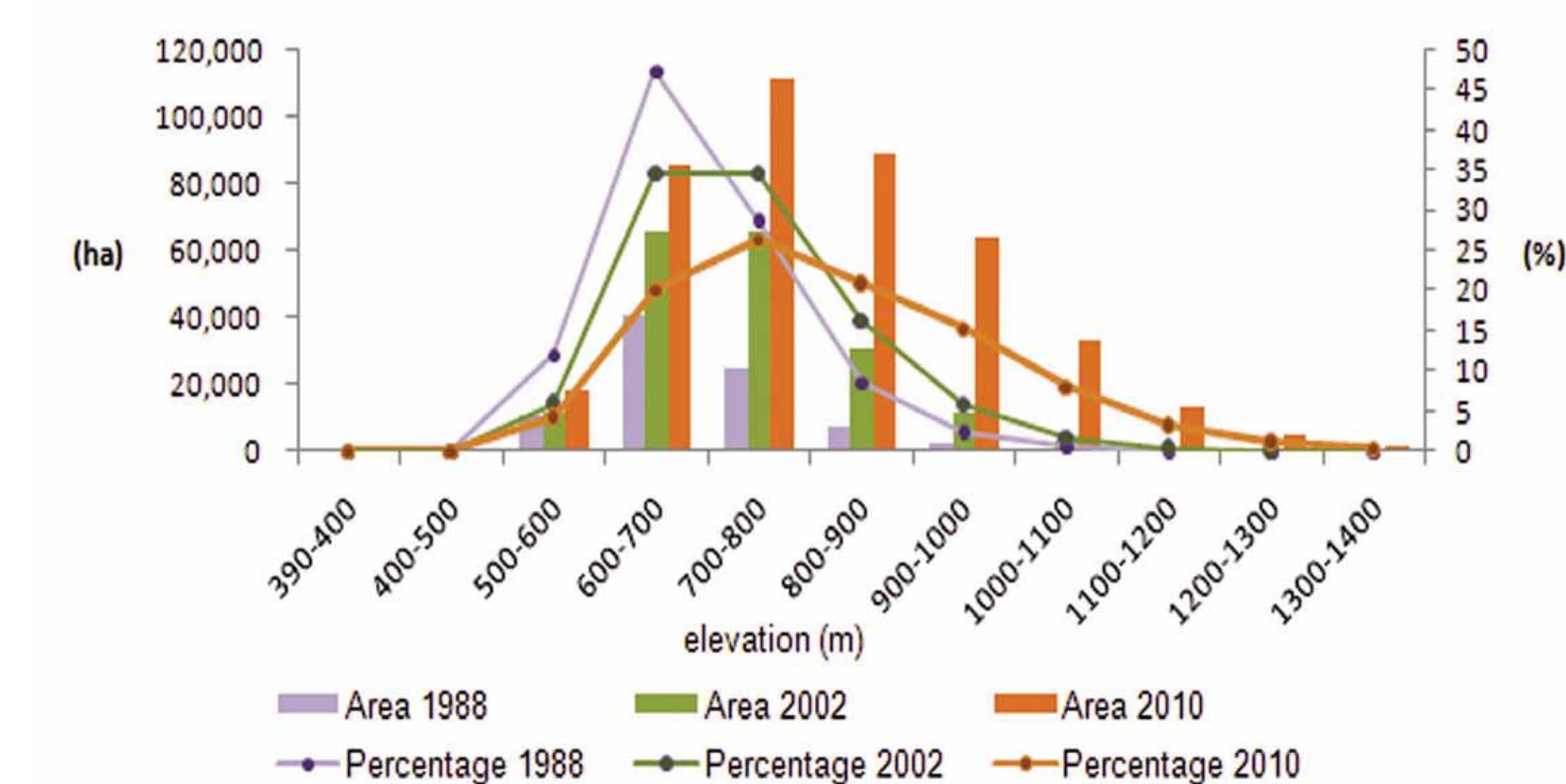
Shifting or swidden cultivation, i.e. temporary cropping on clearings in the forest used to be the most important land use in the Upper Mekong region. Shifting cultivators remove trees for cropping, but let them grow back again during the fallow period. Due to emerging economic opportunities and policy pressures, it is increasingly replaced by other land uses, e.g. permanent cropping and tree plantations such as natural rubber.



Rubber monoculture in Xishuangbanna, south Yunnan, China

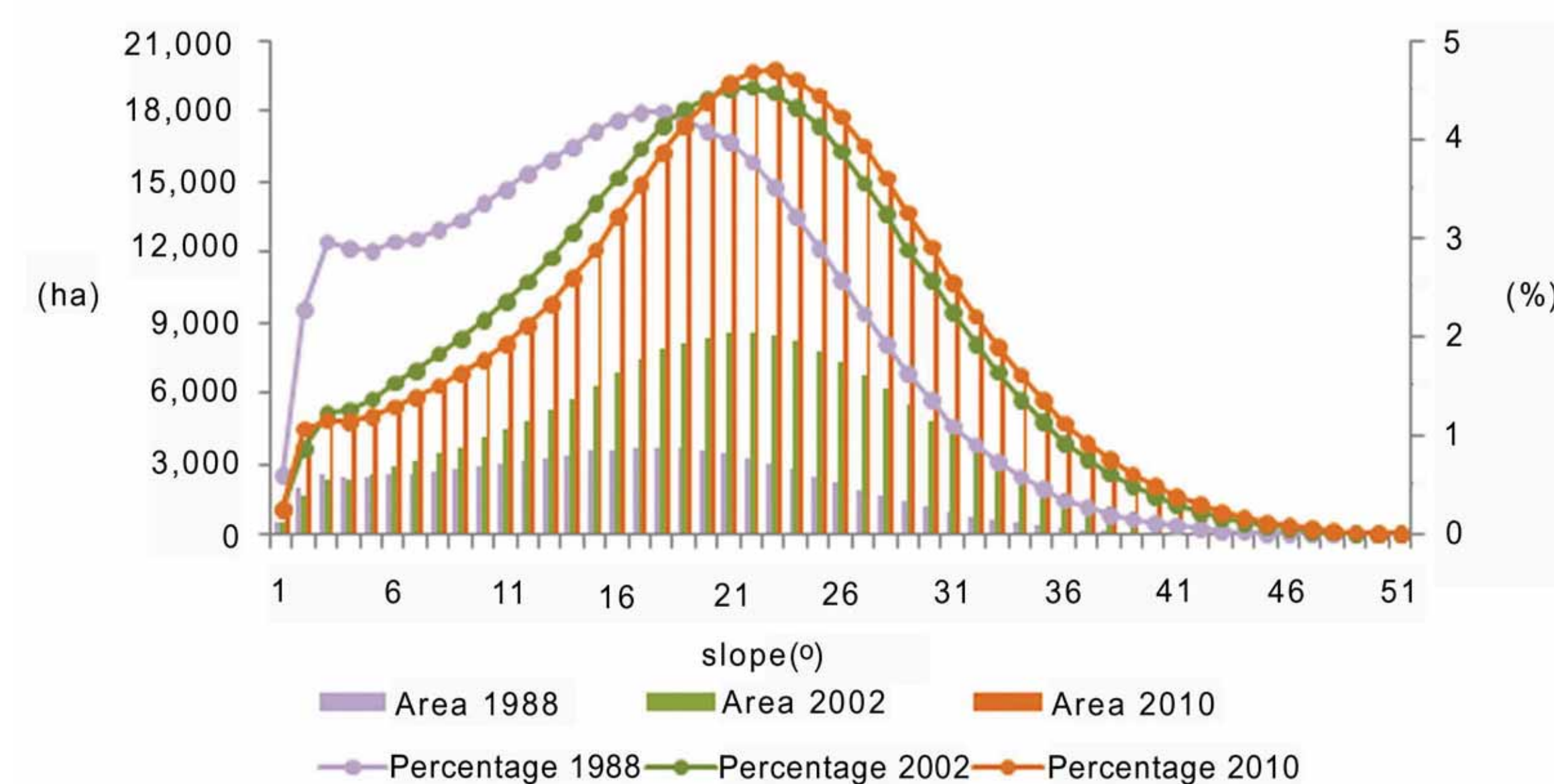


Rubber plantations have replaced shifting cultivation on sloping land and are also encroaching on the forests of Xishuangbanna.



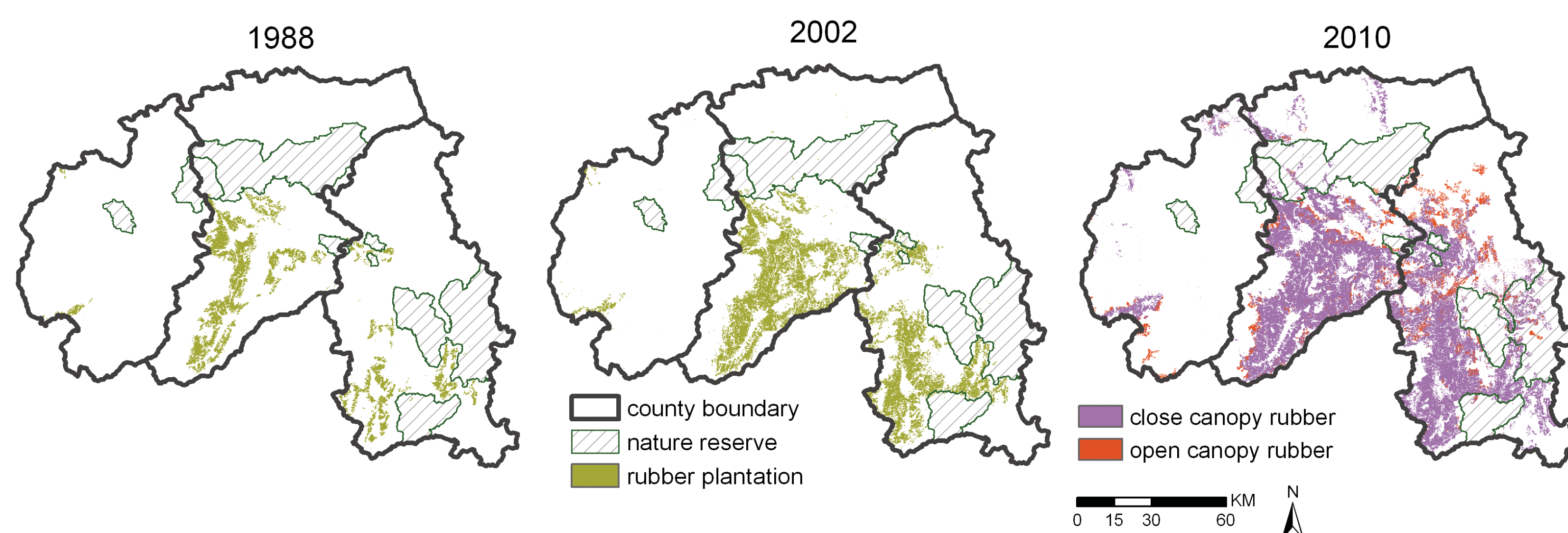
Distribution of rubber plantations in area and percentage on elevation categories in 1988, 2002 and 2010

Rubber expansion proceeds at an extremely rapid pace, from 1988 to 2010, the rubber plantation area has quadrupled from 4.5% of the total land area in 1988 to 9.9% in 2002, and to 22.2% in 2010. Rubber plantations are expanding into higher altitudes and onto steeper slopes.

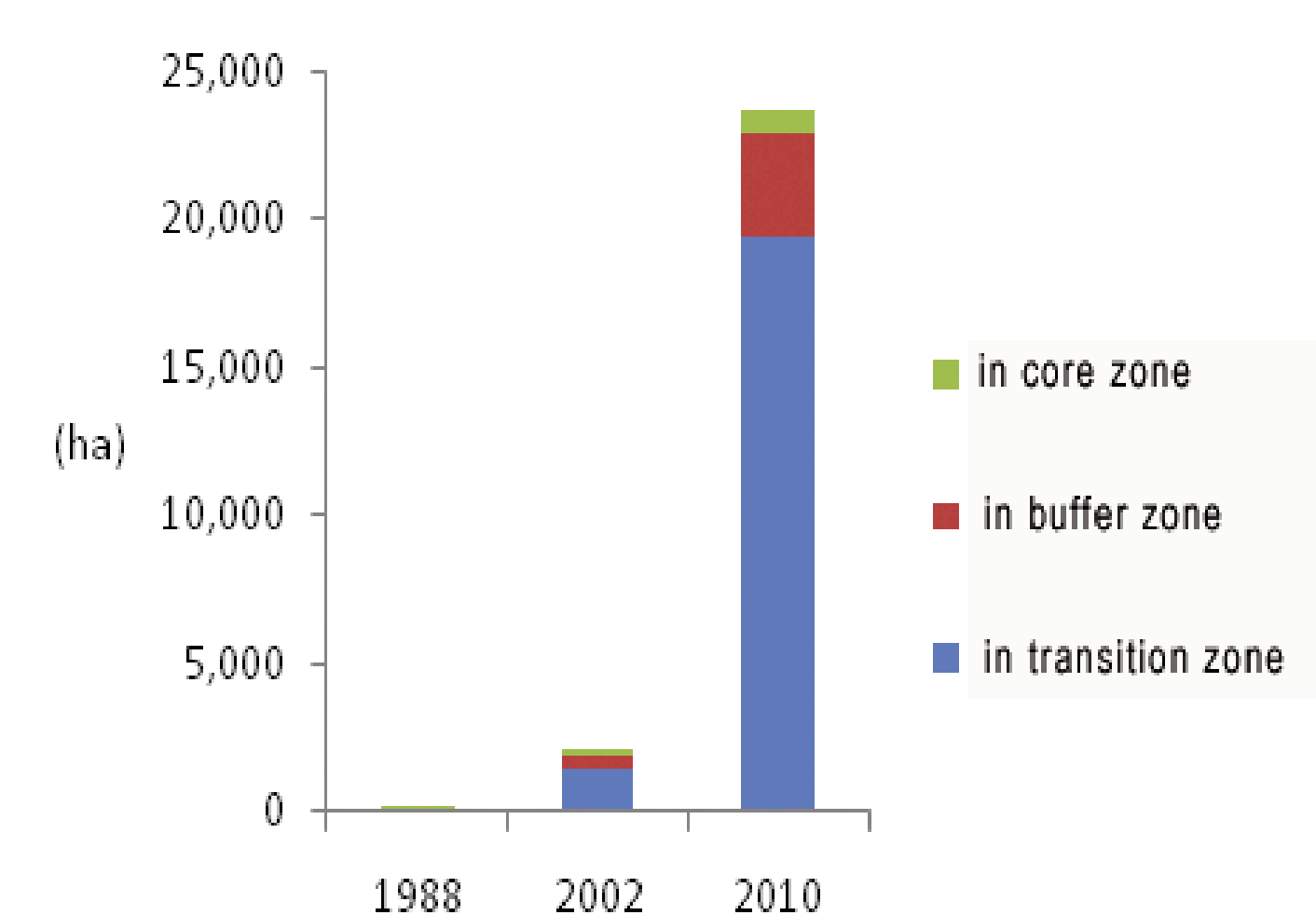


Distribution of rubber plantations in area and percentage on slope categories in 1988, 2002 and 2010

Rubber has also expanded into nature reserves. The total area of rubber plantations in nature reserves increased from 264 ha in 1988 to 23,616 ha in 2010.



Distribution of rubber plantations in 1988, 2002 and 2010



Rubber expansion in nature reserves