

The role of discourses, structures and agency in national climate policy formation: The case of Ethiopia

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1. Preface

This paper is part of a project entitled *Analyzing the Science-Policy-Practice Interface in Climate Change Adaptation in East and West Africa* being carried out by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) as a part of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS). CCAFS and ILRI are investigating what kinds of social, institutional and policy environments best facilitate the development of promising adaptation options, and lead to the establishment of effective agricultural adaptation plans and strategies at the national, regional and global level. One way in which the program is doing this is through use of different innovative modes of interaction between scientists and policymakers to influence the design and implementation of national policies regarding climate change adaptation. Understanding how and why different approaches to science-policy interaction succeed or fail is crucial.

The aim of the *Science-Policy-Practice Interface* project is to deepen understanding of policy and governance processes around climate change in order to contribute to more effective engagement between national governments and donors, and consequently towards climate smart food systems. What factors have influenced the development of existing policies? And how do policies interact with each other as they are being implemented? Pastoralist and agropastoralist livelihoods and adaptation choices are influenced by an array of policies and also by the interplay among policies. The role of science in feeding knowledge about livelihoods and households' adaptation strategies into policy processes, and the dynamics of how scientific information is produced, delivered, received and drawn upon in the shaping of policies is poorly understood.

This working paper is a contribution toward this effort, describing aspects of the policy environment in Ethiopia, written by ILRI graduate fellow Wondwossen Wondemagegnehu.

2. Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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3. Acronyms

CCAFS	CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security
CNCR-E	Carbon Neutral Climate Resilient Economy
CRGE	Climate Resilient Green Economy
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPACC	Ethiopian Programme of Adaptation on Climate Change
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IMC	Interministerial Committee
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NMSA	National Meteorological Services Agency
PASDEP	Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty
SDPRP	Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Paper
STC	Sub-technical Committee
TC	Technical Committee
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

4. Introduction

This paper describes how the 2011 Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy came to be realized, in a policy environment that is characterized by competing narratives, organizational and institutional arrangements, and power relations. The policy process was complex, entailing interactions among and between people and institutions at multiple layers. The dynamism and level of interaction among national and supranational actors, as well as linkages with local actors upon whom policies gain expression are part of this intricate process. Indeed, as scholars in the field note, policies are outcomes of social interactions (Robinson and Crane 2015) and seldom the results of predictable processes that operate neatly along “assembly lines” (Deborah Stone 2002: 169). Though this paper analyzes a particular case, it highlights the complexity of policy processes, and by so doing, challenges the linear thinking that assumes policies as inevitable products. A shift away from heuristic approaches explaining policy change would require analyses grounded on empirical evidence, which this paper attempts to do in the context of Ethiopian policy making.

In this paper I apply a framework to describe “an emergent policy environment” (Robinson and Crane 2015:1) characterized by analytical categories comprising discourses, structures and practices that operate to influence positive or negative feedbacks informing policy outcomes. Through a set of open-ended questions, this paper seeks to throw light on what narratives, structures and practices were at play to inform the current climate policy direction in Ethiopia. It questions how these analytical lenses operated; interacted with each other or converged to induce responses in the national policy space; and the pathways that enabled such interaction. The framework containing these analytical lenses is briefly described in the next section together with the core literature expounding on it.

5. Conceptual Framework

The approach provided by Robinson and Crane (2015) to describe what the authors call an emergent policy environment comprises discourses, structures and practices. These lenses and the interaction between them and with other elements help to outline an analytical approach toward understanding how the Ethiopian climate policy path was influenced. The core elements of these analytical components are briefly outlined as relevant to the case study.

i. **Discourses or narratives** are “institutionalized linguistic and narrative frames that shape actors’ interpretations of information, as well as inform their action choices.” (Robinson and Crane 2015: 4). As tools of analyzing interactions, discourses are understood as constructs that are created, modified, sustained and reified to frame understandings by offering “rich empirical descriptions and story lines” (Twyman et al. 2011:3). Discourses can serve as “instruments of power” when used to pursue political objectives (Robinson and Crane 2015:4). Edelman (1988) asserts that solutions precede problems both “chronologically and psychologically” when elucidating on how narratives could be used to justify solutions to typical social problems (22). In such circumstances, discourses are manipulated to induce a favored pathway which “people might otherwise find painful, unwise, or irrelevant” (Edelman 1988:22). “Any analysis of policy formation that accepts the wider societal issue as *raison d’être* for the action [as rational choice theories typically do] romanticizes the grounds for governmental action and hence incorrectly predicts which policies will find organized and intense advocates” (23).

ii. **Structures**, as an analytical tool, is an embodiment both of organizations and institutions, where these are in turn understood to mean “collective actors in society” and “rules and norms which provide the framework for action” respectively (Robinson and Crane 2015: 5).

iii. **Practices** denote the exercise of human agency. As an analytical tool it serves to identify how and through what means actors “pursue [their] objectives and shape outcomes.” It helps to analyze “how people *draw upon, interpret, circumvent, or resist* institutional frameworks in order to pursue specific objectives that shape the policy environment and related outcomes and how people *draw upon* prevailing discourse or *develop counter-narratives* in order to pursue specific objectives that shape the policy environment and related outcomes.” (Robinson and Crane 2015:7).

6. Methodology

This paper draws upon, a series of interviews conducted with 23 people from an array of organizations. The purpose of the interviews was to identify how and in what way discourses, structures and practices or a combination thereof figured at the policy formulation stage and how each of these elements interacted to influence national climate policy making. The questions were designed in an open-ended format to allow room for interviewees to expand on the questions they are most familiar with given their understanding of the national policy process as pertinent to the CRGE formulation stage. A checklist (see Appendix) was prepared in advance to trigger discussions that could generate data on respondents' views, among others, on the national climate policy process, their respective roles (if any) during the formulation phase, understanding of the problem, the chosen path towards a policy response, alternative views, if and how the options considered were incremental or transformative, public engagement mechanisms, organizational and institutional arrangements, power plays, etc. Sufficient time was allowed for each interview session to cater for rich discussions around these broad themes.

Interview participants included experts from government agencies involved at some level with the CRGE process. Accordingly, this involved experts from the Ethiopian Development Research Institute, the Prime Minister's Office, the former Environmental Protection Authority, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Ministry of Transport, National Meteorological Agency, Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture as well as the various agricultural research institutions. The experts contacted were key in the sense that most of them worked as members or coordinators of Sub-Technical Committees and Technical Committees of the CRGE. They were instrumental in data collection and analysis that shaped the baseline situation, projected scenarios as well as the levers eventually selected to bring the offset measures necessary to achieve carbon neutrality. Some members of the donor community, private sector, academia and members of non-governmental organizations that were active during the CRGE formulation stage or after its adoption were also interviewed to share their understanding of the process.

Documents were also reviewed. This included official government documents, peer reviewed articles as well as grey materials. Government documents reviewed include the Green Economy section of the CRGE, the CRGE vision document, the National Adaptation Programme of Action (2007), the EPACC (2010), the draft National Adaptation Plans (2016), the 1997 Environmental Policy of Ethiopia as well as various regulatory instruments including the Ethiopian Charities law (2009) and the Environmental Organs Establishment Proclamation (2002). The end purpose of looking into these documents was not to do content analyses. Rather, the reviews were done to provide more evidence triangulate data generated out of the using the analytical framework introduced in the previous section.

Data gathered was analyzed through the lenses of discourses, structures and practices to see how these figured, conflicted or reinforced each other to induce a policy outcome. Interview transcripts were examined through these analytical frames to determine how well the framework was able to portray the storylines around national climate policy making, and conversely, how the framework itself could lend itself to the use of empirical data to justify or refute it. To place the discussions in context the paper, in the next section, outlines the

national development trajectory that preceded the CRGE formulation. Again, the purpose here is to sketch historical and factual accounts to provide sufficient detail that serves as a reference to put the discussions and analysis into perspective.

7. Context: A national development trajectory

In 2010, the late Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, announced a new development plan (the GTP) and its ambitious goal of raising the country to a middle-income economic status by the year 2025 through a development pathway that is both “climate resilient” and “carbon neutral” (EPA 2011). In less than a year’s time, the mitigation component of this vision was translated into an Inter-ministerial decision known as the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy or “CRGE” for short. Through the CRGE, distinct economic development options were laid out across six economic sectors¹ to be pursued between years 2011 and 2030 (FDRE 2011). These investment routes are promised to be “clean” and are meant to be implemented to achieve the dual goals of a middle-income economy, on the one hand, and a net zero increase in carbon emissions on the other. This strategy was formally adopted by an Inter-Ministerial Committee in November 2011 and was subsequently launched at the international Climate Summit that took place during the same month, in Durban, South Africa.

Both these promises (of a robust growth through a green growth path) were seen by many to be clearly ambitious with some still doubting if the green pathway would be any greener or if it would be any different from the conventional development path (Held et al. 2013). That aside, such an economic growth simply meant leapfrogging from a Least Developed Country status² of an annual per capita income of 380 US Dollars to a middle-income status of at least 1,000 US Dollars in per capita income. And this is to be delivered in just about ten years. To add a layer to the challenge, the government has through the CRGE, pledged to make the growth in a pathway that releases no additional carbon into the atmosphere with strong economic and social structures built to be resilient to the ensuing climate change.

The adoption of the CRGE strategy has marked quite a leap compared to other policy development processes in Ethiopia. Held et al. (2013) describes any predecessor policy adoption as slow and unnoticeable compared to the current. Since the establishment of a stand-alone environmental agency in 1993 in the country, a number of policies were adopted across a range of issue areas. But they were largely confined within the environment sector and without triggering much of a system shock. For one thing, meshing-in environmental concerns into economic policies has been unthinkable for the past several years. The GTP-CRGE complex has shown a complete unison between environmental and economic prerogatives where the CRGE appeared as a package of investment pathways that are primarily meant to usher in economic gains than ensuring environmental safety. Compared to previous economic plans, the GTP has itself characterized a new era where significant development ambition was reflected (IFPRI 2012:1). The analytical lenses used in this paper sheds light on some of the key questions around the issue of policy change that brought about this national measure. The subsequent sections outline the narratives, structures, practices, individual/ organizational agency and the interplay amongst them as this shaped up an emergent policy environment in the context of climate policy.

¹ These six sectors are agriculture, industry, energy, cities and buildings, transport, and forests.

² Ethiopia is currently one of the 48 named Least Developed Countries with in the United Nations classification.

8. Findings: The climate problem and the green economy solution

For the past several years, the idea of rapid economic recovery has persuasively been placed as the prime solution to pull the nation out of the lingering poverty with which the nation has been characterized. The ruling party, the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front, and its top leadership considered that it was incumbent upon the government and the party to overcome this stereotype once and for all (Alex 2013). The type of development that was introduced as the solution (through the GTP and later on the CRGE) was “green economy” or, interchangeably, “green growth”. Nationally, no authoritative definition was given to what the concept of green economy entails. However, the international literature on the concept offers some ideas.

Green growth is broadly understood to represent utilization of resources in an “efficient, cleaner and more resilient” manner (Hallegatte et. al 2012:3); enhance “natural capital as a critical economic asset and as a source of public benefit...” (UNEP 2011: 216). Like the notion of sustainable development, the introduction of the green economy concept is an attempt to represent unseen contributions of nature in economic activities through interventionist approaches and sustainable markets (Borel-Salladin et al. 2013: 217). These same components of a green economy characterize the very precepts enshrined within the CRGE document. Its introductory statements affirm that traditional forms of growth would, among others, result in “...unsustainable use of natural resources” calling for a need to reverse the trajectory (FDRE 2011:1). This shift in national political mood is an offshoot of a number of circumstances that may include felt handicaps of GDP as a measure of growth; or a move towards “green washing” the orthodoxy of classical economic growth; or a deliberate move to attract foreign financing opportunities resulting, for instance from global negotiations.

A series of circumstances that materialized in domestic and international politics seemed to have culminated to shape up such policy perspectives. Outstanding in domestic politics were two factors: the initiation of a transformational development objective in 2009-2010; and a re-orientation of key organizations in national government. Internationally, there were opportunities that unraveled emerging global trends to politicians and experts that in turn helped to influence national policy. The following is a discussion on these factors and their implications in shaping up the policy environment on climate change.

The “Economic Transformation” Agenda

The government was trapped in an urgency to embrace what one respondent from the former EPA (now the MEFCC) described as “the transformation agenda” during the time preceding the launch of the first phase of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). In 2009, the respondent states, all government agencies were requested by the late Prime Minister (Meles Zenawi) to come up with their respective plan that would transform the national economy. “It was in fact an instruction to move away from the business as usual, annual, routine planning ... which we were used to.” Economic planning in Ethiopia is largely incremental done every five years where portions of the aggregate were annually cascaded for sector actions. Accordingly, delivery of results is expected at the end of each fiscal year.

Sectors were evaluated for results attained against the goals they annually set. Such has been the trend pursued during the pre-GTP economic plans, such as the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Paper (SDPRP) covering the years 2001-2005, and the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) spanning the years between 2005 and 2010. However, the request from the Prime Minister in 2009 had a different tone. He was requesting a deliberate shift away from the routinized aggregation of sector-specific periodic plans and embark upon “transforming the entire economy.” The procedure was to remain the same but the thinking has to be different. Accordingly, sector-specific, transformative plans were eventually developed, evaluated, debated upon and compiled into a single package to become - as it did - the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP-I).

The “Environment” sector had a rather low profile with no or weak links with the rest of the economic sectors. The GTP initiative offered an opportunity, according to the former head of EPA, to re-configure how “environment” and “environmental protection” was later to be perceived and reckoned. For a larger part of its history, environmental protection was highly misunderstood to the extent of being considered “a hindrance to development,” he observes. Its organizational status did not allow it to participate in the deliberations of the Council of Ministers – apparently a venue where major decisions were made that have environmental implications. The transformation agenda presented thus a unique instance for EPA and the entire environment sector. The same respondent has the following remark. “When the GTP initiative was launched and we were waited upon for setting a goal for the environment, we were unable to come up with a catchy vision ...that explains what transformative meant within our sector.” It was not easy to propose for a paradigm shift when it comes to the concept of conservation itself. Environmental stewardship has always been associated with protection (guarding away resources from use) for most part of Ethiopian environmental history. “That is what people understood reading the environment policy,” he states. Protection has itself been understood to mean saving a particular resource or keeping it from use and abuse. Bringing in new approaches was difficult because those in government circles were so used to a paradigm of protection anchored in the protectionist view of resource management.

Such a shift in thinking requires a daunting undertaking of revising indicators. Referring to the old understanding of protection, the former EPA head remarked, “...the old indicators were wrong. We were anxious to enhance the level of the environmental agenda by reforming the old “protection” concept. We came up with an economic indicator through the CRGE. That is why we named the environment sector plan as Carbon Neutral Climate Resilient Economy (CNCR-E)”. This was the designation proposed prior to the CRGE. The CNCR-E was meant to show the deliberate intention of the shift in approach that avoided the previous dichotomy between the environment and the economy. The deliberateness is clear in the new linkage created between the two as qualified by an environment indicator (i.e. carbon neutrality) and an economic indicator (i.e., climate resilience). The respondent indicated that there is no “and” between the two. According to him, the “and” indicates separation between the two concepts - environment and development. The word “and” symbolizes an inherent difference, which we were trying to move away from. “Both the carbon neutrality and the climate resilience parameters indicated the type of economy we intend to build that factors in environmental resources as the basis for development. The term “economy” was included within a climate strategy because we too understood that the worst cause of environmental degradation is poverty. By so doing, we were able to shape

indicators in economic terms.” The whole process symbolizes an exercise of agency by a government division (environmental protection) towards what has hitherto been a competitor (economic development). A national economic planning process was used to re-shape environmental goals. On the flip side, economic growth was used as the yardstick to track progress in environmental achievements as both assumed common indicators through the currency of carbon emission.

This policy level revision of the environment portfolio characterized by the “green economy” narrative and the “transformation agenda” was later reinforced by structures meant to facilitate the top-down approach of policymaking.

Structures

Policy autonomy and change

There were both vertical and horizontal organizational arrangements that induced, facilitated and strengthened the “green economy” narrative. Usually national policies are formulated under the exclusive “functional autonomy” of the agency with the specific mandate, and in most instances, the process is opaque to outsiders (McCool 1995:291). However, the CRGE formulation took a rather different route – at least at the time of its initiation. Being an environmental issue climate change is likely to be debated under the domain of the Environmental Protection Authority – which is the national institution with the core environmental competence. Of course the EPA has competitors with claims of mandates over the climate issue. Up until the Copenhagen Summit, mandates over climate matters were divided between two institutions. The focal point for the UNFCCC was the then National Meteorological Services Agency (NMSA). This is the entity that represented the country in international negotiations. It also implemented certain national actions such as the publication of the Initial National Communication to the UNFCCC in 2001 and coordinated the National Adaptation Programme of Action in 2007. On the other hand, EPA was the focal point for the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC. Thus the mandate of representing the country at negotiations under the Kyoto Protocol (including the annual CDM-DNA Forums) as well as coordinating projects under the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol belonged to the EPA. Immediately after the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, the mandate of following up all climate matters was transferred from the then NMSA to the EPA. It thus seemed clear that any initiation of a mitigation or adaptation strategy rested within the mandates of the EPA.

By taking Sabatier and Weible’s analogy, an environment subsystem could best be thought of as “[environment] policy monopoly” (2014: 63). The authors further clarify this point by stating that a subsystem is a “definable institutional structure for policy making in an issue area.” Within the Ethiopian context, the environment policy monopoly is assigned (by law) to a distinct assembly of governmental and non-governmental actors. According to the Ethiopian Environmental Organs Establishment Proclamation No. 295/ 2002, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) together with the Environmental Council are responsible to initiate, review and adopt environmental policies. While the EPA is one of the executive branches of the government directly answerable to the Prime Minister’s Office, the Environmental Council is a larger assembly of actors. The EPA has, among other things, a mandate to initiate and draft policies and submit them for approval to this larger grouping

(FDRE 2002). The Environmental Council is chaired by the Prime Minister (or a designate) but has representation from selected other Ministries; a representative from each of the 11 national regional states³ as well as civil society organizations; the Chamber of commerce; and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Union. In the past, this Council has been deliberating on a number of environmental issues and adopting a series of policies, strategies, laws, directives and standards aimed at achieving certain environmental and human health objectives. So the EPA-Environmental Council interrelation can be assumed as the core environmental policy-making arena with a distinct policy monopoly (Sabatier and Weible 2014). As Weible, citing Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993), argue these national actors operate within the bounds of “territorial and substantive scopes” (Weible 2007: 98). The EPA-Council interrelation is substantively bound on environmental issues and territorially confined to federal limits. In this bounded space, the EPA is the sole initiator of policies as it has the task to ensure environmental objectives enshrined under the constitution of the country as well as the principles laid down under the 1997 environmental policy (FDRE 1997). It gathers data (see Figure 1) from international assessments such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ regarding climate; undertake its own researches or even solicit information from the wider public to identify problems that require urgent policy action.

Figure 1 below depicts the environmental policy subsystem in Ethiopia. Indeed, this has remained the sole mode of environmental policy making in Ethiopia – with the EPA defining an environmental problem and submitting proposals for wider debate at the Environmental Council. The adoption of the comprehensive environment policy of 1997 – which treated climate change as one of the ten sectoral problems – has followed the same modality with the EPA taking the lead.

³ Ethiopia follows a federal form of governance with two levels of administration. The federal government sets the rules on certain federal matters (such as setting minimum environmental standards) while exclusive local matters as well as residual power devolve to the 11 regional states. See Articles 52 and 53 of Proclamation No 1/ 1994, Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Available online at http://www.eueom.eu/files/dmfile/ethiopian-constitution-1994_en.pdf (FDRE 1994).

⁴ The IPCC is a body within the United Nations comprising climate scientists and tasked with aggregating climate related data for influencing policy making globally or by governments. More information on the IPCC from <http://ipcc.ch/>.

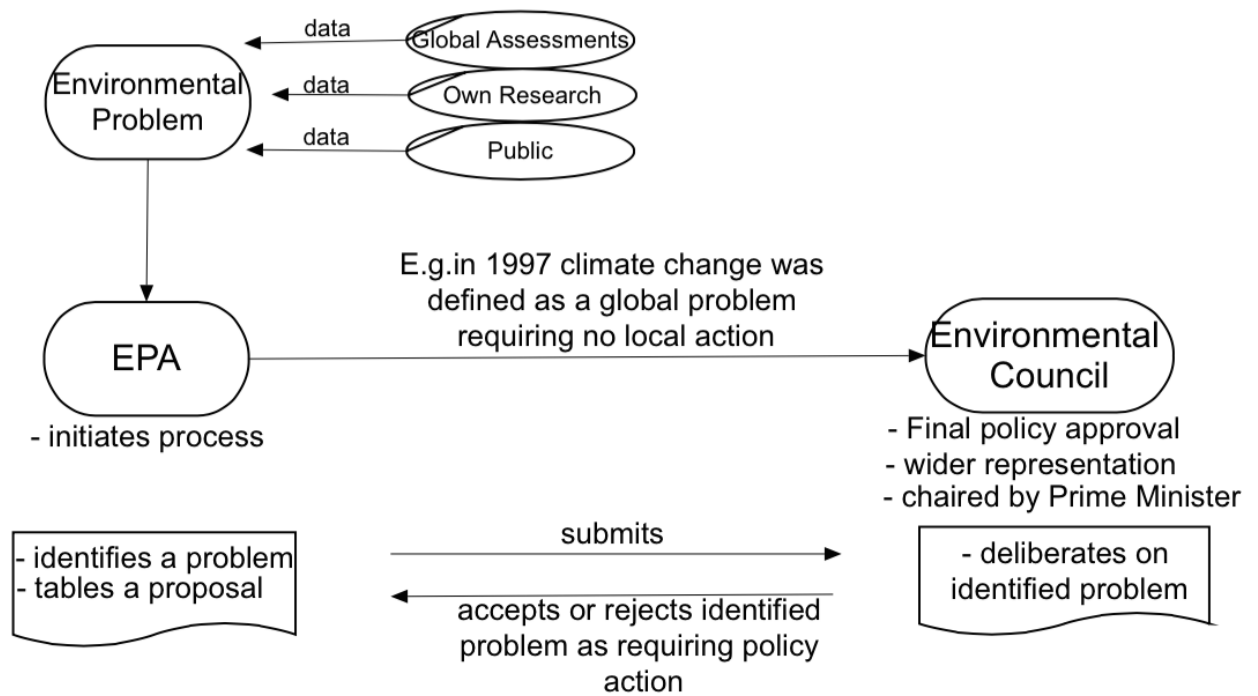


Figure 1. Environmental Subsystem in Ethiopia

In fact some authors note that since the beginning of the 1990s, climate change policy making has passed through an incremental process largely remaining the least governmental priority, although with quite a few programs initiated to address it (Held et al. 2013). This demonstrates the stability of the subsystem and the incremental nature of environmental (climate) policy making in Ethiopia. As Baumgartner et al. (2006) observe, environmental policy-making in Ethiopia remained completely under the radar of the policy subsystem without any significant political attention. It would have been unsurprising to expect the same in 2010 with the EPA probably redefining the climate change issue or submitting a proposal to the Environment Council. However, as Sabatier and Weible well noted, “issues can not forever be considered within the confines of a policy subsystem; occasionally macro-political forces intervene” (2014: 63). Exactly the same thing seems to have happened at later years as the CRGE was initiated. The EDRI (and not the EPA) triggered this process in 2010. It recruited an international consulting firm - McKinsey and Co - for facilitating the work. A researcher at EDRI explains how the process went:

“Initially, we developed a concept note with McKinsey. Eventually, government technical people participated...through committees. The concept of green economy was quite new at that moment and we needed the technical support of McKinsey.”

Of course, the “functional autonomy” precept of the mandated organization (McCool 1995) was bypassed by an organization with a core mandate of economic research and whose head is the Chief Economist. And this decided the venue for discussions on environmental matters as it changes from the more representative Environment Council to a streamlined, top-down organizational structure that was predominantly comprised of government actors. Some respondents were very much aware of these changes. A former coordinator of the REDD/ Forests STC recalls “originally, EDRI led the CRGE process but later on handed it to the EPA...”

Whatever the rationale for these changes in approach, it resulted in measurement indicators that eventually got incorporated in the evolving climate policy. This confirms to the observation in the previous sections on why economic indicators were chosen to track progress towards environmental goals. This state of affairs was reinforced through subsequent organizational re-arrangements and the development of new working modalities that cascaded tasks in a top-down fashion – all the way from the Prime Minister’s Office to sector experts. The following section discusses this vertical alignment of organizations and the procedures in place that guided work in a rather short period of time.

Organizational alignments and procedures

The CRGE process was led by an inter-ministerial committee (IMC) comprising of six state Ministers, and chaired by the Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister. This coordination committee meets every two months to hear updates from technical committees (TCs) and Sub-technical committees (STCs) under it, track sources of challenges and give directions for future actions. Beneath this platform is the Technical Committee comprised of assigned Directors from the six CRGE Ministries. The TC convenes every month and oversees the routine task of the STCs – a group of experts drawn from each of the technical ministries. The group is a dedicated pool of experts drawn from the respective CRGE Ministries and the agencies under each of the Ministries. They are assigned and mandated to finalize the national climate strategy. Thus, for instance, the Ministry of Agriculture and selected agricultural and forest research centers belonged to the Agriculture STC. According to the mandates conferred to it, the agriculture STC collects data relating to crop production, soil carbon, forest management as well as livestock emissions that will go into setting the baseline and projecting emission scenarios.

The bulk of the CRGE work entailed massive search for sector-based data that could be used in setting the baseline (the base year being 2010) from which all projections and reduction ambitions were later calculated. This form of data suitable for baseline setting is hard to find in Ethiopia as documentation and its use is yet a poorly understood concept. The experts with in the STCs were expected to deliver this task with the utmost efficiency and discipline. Time series data collection within a fixed timeline while maintaining quality was indeed a gruesome task that requires dedication. A mix of carrots and sticks were used to ensure compliance of purpose and work schedule. An expert that involved in coordinating the STCs explains the motivation for the STCs.

“The Technical committee evaluates the performance of each STC every time it convenes. Most of the motivation however came from personal interest to know about this new and promising knowledge area [green economy].”

STC members were promised monetary reward at the completion of the mission. One STC member compares the monetary benefit with the size of responsibility that befell on his team “we [STCs] were given money at the end ...but it came too late and was considerably smaller than what we anticipated and the level of work we did.” Apart from this reward, STCs were guided by disciplinary measures. A member of an STCs has this observation on the strictness of the modality of work: “We were given the traffic light system for data gathering where we would be signaled red, yellow and green depending on our level of compliance, mainly related to meeting deadlines.” Non-performance is reported to the respective sector

Ministers through the TC. Such work ethic was important to generate data in a timely manner as well as dig-in deeper to unravel the required time series data despite poor documentation prevalent across sectors.

This top-down organizational alignment was efficient in bringing results in quite a short period of time. Within less than a year of the CRGE's inception, major sectors were mobilized, workmanships assigned, rules of engagement designed and implemented, data generated, scenarios projected, abatement levers listed, shortlisting criteria adopted and measures selected – all these added up to formulate the Green Economy section of the national climate strategy.

The organizational design that helped achieve this enjoyed high level political oversight. This alignment made it easy to ensure the flow of authority and guidance to those doing groundwork at the base. However, such organizational alignment does not seem to allow for the transmission of expert knowledge to a policy product. In fact, the level of influence that scientific expertise had on the final product was limited to a large measure. There are two explanations for this. First, the system operated in a closed loop where only government officers were involved. Second, even the government sectors involved (such as STC members) were confined to the task of collecting data within the scope of their respective sectors rather than data analysis. An international consulting firm (McKinsey & Co.) did most of the facilitative and analytical work. Outputs from this activity chain (data aggregation by STCs and analysis by McKinsey) was then scrutinized by the Technical Committee chaired by the Deputy Director General of the EPA, and later by the Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister. A former coordinator of the technical committee points out how workmanship was managed: "...STCs gather the data and we discuss it internally with McKinsey." The STC's role was thus not anything more than data collection within their sectors. An STC member has this flashback memory: "we fetched and aggregated data that we never thought existed ... we never used such data to perform our routine work." While STCs were the sources of raw data that enabled the formulation of the green economy plan, the creation of a path for the flow of information from experts to the Ministerial committee accompanied by the highest observance of discipline enabled data collection and analysis in a rather very short period of time. The CRGE formation process begun at the end of 2010 and culminated shortly before the end of 2011 for an international launch of the national Green Economy Plan at the Durban Climate Summit. The "green economy" narrative that originated at the highest political level was reinforced by a vertical structure undergird by a procedure and a work ethic commanding strict observance of deadlines and quality of work. There was no space for outsider views as this structure operated in a closed loop entertaining perspectives only from government agencies and experts.

Alternative voices

As most rightly noted civil society engagement is the weaker link of the CRGE strategy (Jones and Carabine 2013). This is despite the fact that most of the community level work

particularly on climate adaptation is carried out by NGOs⁵. A respondent that has once been an advisor to a prominent CRGE donor – the DFID – stated that there is a wealth of knowledge among civil society members that engage in grassroots climate actions - than any of the government branches actually carrying out work at the community level. But the system did not allow for this type of NGO-based knowledge to inform policy processes. This echoes a deliberate politico-legal posture consistently assumed by the government for the past several years. Restraints on civic action in general relates to one of the strongest features of the developmental state ideology pursued by the Ethiopian government where in the government bears a prime role of driving economic development. Senior level politicians and those in EPRDF party leadership often claim that it is the government’s task to provide the political space within which others could play. The late Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, was a staunch supporter of the idea that civil society activism, free press and strong parliament “... distracts the agendas of the developmental state” (Tadesse undated: 5). The lack of engagement by civil society at least at the policy formulation level is an offshoot of this political climate that disenfranchised civil society activism in Ethiopia. The space got even narrower for civil society engagement because of a law introduced in 2009 in Ethiopia at around the time of CRGE initiation.

This law - Proclamation No 621/ 2009 - provides the space within which civil society activism could take place and was consistently noted for its restraining effect on charity organizations that implement rights-based activism (Dupuy et al. 2015). According to the Proclamation the formation of three types of CSOs is allowed, namely Ethiopian charities, Ethiopian resident charities, and foreign charities. The restrictive nature of the law is clear on two related fronts – scope of engagement and modality of financial access and utilization. On the former issue, the law allows CSOs registered as Ethiopian locals only to engage in advocacy of civil rights and the promotion of governance. All other formations are not allowed to perform activities in the realm of rights-based activism in general. However, local charities that are allowed to engage in such activities, can only access their main income from local sources (in the proportion of 90% to 10% that can respectively be accessed from local and foreign sources). On the reverse, the other formations - Ethiopian registered or foreign charities – can source their substantial revenues from foreign sources. However, they are not allowed to engage in rights related activities. For instance, climate change advocacy or advocating the rights of vulnerable groups and those marginalized sections of the society etc. is a realm specifically assigned for local NGOs. Hence, it is only local NGOs – whose main source of funding remains local – that can engage in these sorts of activities. Since the adoption of the law in 2009, the role of environmental activism in general and the involvement of civil society in climate change activities have considerably declined. Article 44 of the FDRE constitution on the right to a clean and healthy environment is included under the “democratic rights” section, which when invoked and acted upon by non-local CSO formations seem to tamper with the 10% – 90 % rule and raise a legality question. Linking climate advocacy to the rights of citizens may thus provoke this specific problem.

⁵ Among many circles in Ethiopia, the term “civil society” is interchangeably used to mean any grouping outside government and often registered according to the national Charity Laws.

Despite this constraining feature on rights' advocacy, the CSO law has provided some room for CSO action on environmental management (land reclamation, watershed management, water conservation, afforestation etc.). It allows for securing 90% of funding from outside sources when it comes to activities related to the direct management of natural resources and environmental protection. Thus civil society organizations are allowed to engage in grassroots activities that are "non-rights" actions, but are prohibited from engagement on strategic or policy matters that may closely be associated with rights' advocacy.

The overall CSO space has created unease to its members that wish to involve at a strategic policy making level. Coordinator of one of the largest civil society consortia on climate change - the Ethiopian Civil Society Network on Climate Change - expressed the paucity of civic engagement in the CRGE process. "We attend workshops only when we were invited, and ...as such this has not been to listen to our concerns." Whenever invitations were extended for civil society participation it was not for consultation. The coordinator of the climate NGO consortium adds, "...when we were invited at such events, for instance, during the informal donors forum periodically organized by DFID, it was more like a status update for the civil society." The stand that NGOs may not involve in policy making seems to have gained acceptance by the NGO constituency themselves. An NGO member working on climate change observes "there is no limitation on us to work with grassroots communities ... but policy making was never in our reach. ... if they want inputs they would ask for it." She gave one example of an NGO involvement when the EPACC was drafted. The NGO she worked for was invited to facilitate community engagement in order to prioritize adaptation requirements and response measures to one of the regional states.

In general, civil society presence at the government policy sessions was only by invitation. Even then, it was a one-way communication where civil society members had to listen or give data inputs only when requested. Limitation on civic engagement was not only the result of the limiting law. This was backed by the all too confining CRGE organizational alignment (i.e. Sub-technical Committee, Technical Committee and the Inter-Ministerial Committee) that has excluded expertise from a non-governmental sector.

International Political factors: mitigation over adaptation?

Respondents that were closely involved in the CRGE process underscore the significant role the international dynamics and negotiations had in shaping up the national process. A coordinator of the REDD/ Forests STC states:

"The international drive played a lot in ensuring a timely completion of the CRGE. Ethiopia suddenly became a focus...donors want to pilot the country in most of the projects designed to support developing countries on climate actions."

Authors note that Ethiopia had been tactical in making the case for mitigation before the international community not to mention the coincidence with the timing of key milestones (for instance Jones and Carabine 2013). The selection of the late Prime Minister to represent Africa at least for three consecutive terms and his leadership of the high-level Advisory Group on Climate Finance in 2010 helped to put Ethiopia in the global spotlight and spurred high-level support for its mitigation ambition. In addition, unveiling the strategy in Durban was all the more a calculated move. As Jones and Carabine note, Durban was a perfect venue "... where the governing instruments of the Green Climate Fund were high on the

agenda” (2013:14). Indeed the high level event called upon by the Ethiopian government in the margins of the CoP garnered the interests of governments as well as bilateral and multilateral donors. The Prime Minister of Norway promised monetary injection to the tune of 60 million USD per annum to realize some of the initiatives unveiled in the Green Economy plan while others stressed their support without express financial commitments. In the context of Ethiopia’s performance at Durban in 2011, it gives the impression that the entire CRGE process was well-planned from the outset. It demanded a process ownership that operated in a closed-loop that allowed for entertainment of minimal alternative views but compels an urgency and accountability for inactions.

The exposure to global realities, emerging circumstances and global negotiation dynamics was not confined to high-level politicians alone. This has effect over the top-down chain of information flow necessary for the realization of the CRGE initiative in a rather short period of time. The annual conferences of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Meetings of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the various other inter-sessional meetings (those happening between each conference of the parties) contributed to shaping up national understandings of how the climate problem is framed and the various response measures. Usually, the Secretariat of the UNFCCC covers the presence of two delegates from developing countries at the annual conferences of the parties. Other donors support delegates of their sector preference to a section or the full stretch of the meetings. For instance, the World Food Program commissioned the attendance of delegates from the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture for most of the yearly climate conferences between the launch of the CRGE in Durban (2011) and the Paris Climate Summit in 2015. The DFID country program on climate change had a component to extend such forms of support to national governments too. DFID covered the full cost of participation of Ethiopian climate negotiators through a tailored programme named “Negotiations Support Project” covering years 2011 to 2016. Under the coordinating role of the MEFCC, the project sponsored a delegate from each CRGE sector as well as members of the Ethiopian parliament. Outside the auspices of the UNFCCC there are other discussion venues such as the Climate Vulnerable Forum, Cartagena Dialogue, Petersburg Dialogue Forum etc., which has respective funding channels to ensure participation of Ethiopian experts. At various levels, national experts gained access to such global forums and this has value in exposing them to emerging trends. Though difficult to establish cause and effect relationship, it may be taken that such exposures helped to frame national understandings and perception on the climate issue as a social problem and the allocation of responsibility for its response. As stated earlier, such experience at all levels may have made it easier for narratives that shaped the response to the problem across national governance levels.

The Ethiopian mitigation plan (i.e. the Green Economy section of the CRGE) preceded any comprehensive national plan on adaptation. Respondents have diverse explanations as to why a mitigation route was pursued as a priority while there was compelling evidence on Ethiopia’s sensitivity to climate risks justifying for an urgent adaptation strategy. There was sufficient documentary evidence for this too (for instance NMSA 2001; Deressa et al. 2008; World Bank 2010; Bryan et al. 2011). Some respondents that were involved in coordinating the CRGE process saw that amplifying the mitigation ambition had relative benefits owing to global circumstances. An advisor to the Ministry of Industry underlines that such a pursuit will enable the country to own the “cleanest grid” in Africa. In line with this argument, renewable power generation has formed one of the four pillars of the CRGE - the three others being reducing emissions from agriculture; enhancing the sink function of forests and

the utilization of advanced technologies across sectors. Some respondents allege that the time factor was important too. The former director of EPA explains, “the country was at cross roads where it needed to decide between an economy driven by fossil fuel or a new stream of renewable energy mix comprising wind, solar and hydropower.” Recounting statements from the then prime minister, he further explains, “the country had to sustain the double-digit economic growth it was achieving while redirecting the path of growth. ... we chose to avoid lock-ins in fossil-fuel based technologies that the rest of the world followed since industrial revolution ... but are yet in a difficult situation to reverse...” Indeed, it was a tenable decision to embrace newer forms of technologies. Most of the developed world was already “locked-in” old technologies that lingered since industrial revolution. Whereas for Ethiopia, it was just picking up on economic development when the CRGE timing coincided with the need to decide on the choice of technologies. The CRGE thus seemed to open a window that compelled policymakers to decide on future directions for most of the decisive sectors (such as agriculture, transport, industry. etc.).

Another respondent working with in the CRGE Facility – the funding vehicle of the CRGE – expressed the same logic in terms of resource efficiency. He stated that Ethiopia is endowed with vast wind, solar and geothermal energy resources that it can legitimately exploit. Similar to “the cleanest grid” narrative, the respondent claims an opportunity to become “... a regional hegemon” of novel forms of electric power with base load in renewable resources. This could be used to generate foreign currency through “clean power exported to the neighboring countries” the respondent explains. This seems a sound rationale given the fact that almost all Ethiopia’s neighbors are dependent on fossil fuel as a source of energy. Using this same logic, the late Prime Minister repeatedly asserted that Ethiopia would lose little to nothing if green growth is embraced as a development trajectory. In a similar tone, an expert at the Ministry of Transport mentioned the potential to tap into the global carbon finance pool if such a path is to be pursued. “Nobody finances adaptation actions, at least, in the foreseeable future” he remarked, all the more, underlining why mitigation should be a strategic priority.

It may be argued that Ethiopia has had an adaptation plan before the mitigation strategy. An expert at the CRGE Facility invokes the 2007 National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) as the earliest of these. However, despite its name, the NAPA has often been criticized for the lack of a long-term vision on adaptation. It simply followed a project-based approach and hence could not be considered as a long-term policy objective. Besides, the NAPA was a response of the international community towards addressing immediate climate related hazards in LDCs. Nonetheless, a more programmatic adaptation plan was subsequently introduced in 2010, initiated by the EPA. This one entitled the Ethiopian Programme of Adaptation on Climate Change (EPACC) is a national attempt to aggregate possible adaptation actions across sectors but without ambitions or assessment parameters for measuring vulnerabilities across a spectrum of scenarios. In describing the form of the adaptation programme under the EPACC framework, a respondent involved in both the CRGE and EPACC processes highlighted that “mitigation is adaptation.” Qualifying this statement, a former employee of EPA indicated the thinking behind this as:

As we develop the EPACC, we avoided the use of the word “adaptation” and reframed it in economic terms. As such adaptation is about expenditures required to enhance resilience ...and thus the EPACC is a question of understanding the cost of reducing vulnerability. Mitigation and adaptation are the same. ... climate interventions [including adaptation

measures] at the same time mitigate the emission of gasses while reducing the cost of vulnerability.

These lines of arguments pervading policy maker discourses placed adaptation in the midst of the green economy. Some of these stories are suggestive of the tendencies to reframe both mitigation and adaptation goals in economic metrics to prepare the country for any upcoming funding or investment channels. The EPACC had another iteration in 2016, where it was re-touched without substantive changes to its content and got renamed the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). “NAPs” is the designation given to national plans on adaptation as per expectations of the Cancun Agreement in 2010. Developing countries were required to develop adaptation plans to be able to access finance designated for climate resilient actions from an internationally dedicated fund. Though Ethiopia is not alone in re-branding existing plans and renaming it to fit pre-designed expectations (foreign assistance tailored to specific plans, for example), a respondent who is also member to the national negotiation team claims, “...NAPs is essentially the EPACC. It is the same in both style and content”. In a NAPs workshop hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in May 2016, an employee of the MEFCC stated the justification for re-naming an existing adaptation document was to “access finance allotted by the UNFCCC for NAPs preparation.” A larger package that outlines potential climate adaptation actions across sectors is being designed across sectors through the Climate Resilience section of the CRGE. Overall the green economy narrative has an understanding of adaptation as embedded, an understanding which gained acceptance from most organizations and policy makers.

9. Discussion and conclusions

In the not too distant past, industrialized countries that took measures to unilaterally adopt national emission targets were praised for their bold steps or for being pace setters relative to the more common diplomacy that chose to wait-and-see rather than take actions (Binder and Tews 2004). Given their historical responsibility and the legal obligation imposed on them to curb emissions, such steps may not sound astounding. On the other hand, setting as ambitious a national goal as carbon neutrality while there is no legal obligation under multilateral agreements and while being a Least Developed Country may sound unduly ambitious and disproportionately aggressive. Such is what Ethiopia did in 2010-2011 when the zero-net emissions trajectory was unveiled. The green economy narrative helped to frame the problem, the specific measures ought to be taken and the time frame for action.

This narrative helped to decide whose interests were to be taken seriously and whose to be ignored. The “green economy” storyline that emerged and used repetitively during the CRGE formulation was strong from two perspectives. First, it came from the highest political authority in the country – the Prime Minister. Secondly, it locked the solution for the climate problem in one development pattern, arguably, leaving no room for alternatives. It was affirmed that mitigation is an option that could effortlessly be embraced and for which finance could be attained rather easily. Mitigation thus came much more forcefully as a solution towards tackling the climate problem. The notion of “green economy” appeared in government documents and was often highlighted in official government remarks. It was utilized to describe current development challenges and amplify opportunities that in turn helped to routinize climate change actions across government sectors. Such narrations were employed, not only to describe the stakes attached to the pursuit of such line of development but more so to reveal the costs attached for failing to do so.

Narratives often gain expression and force when backed by structures. By structures, it is meant here organizations: the collective actors in the field of environment in Ethiopia; and institutions: the rules, norms, and procedures that provide the framework for CRGE initiation and implementation. Though opaque to the outside world, the CRGE development process enjoyed some form of organizational structure and institutional arrangements that provided the ground for shaping up its final form. The entire process followed a top-down approach in the exclusivity of government officials aided by certain technical experts on a need basis. Alternative voices were not prominent, as the closed loop system could not allow civilian voices that often had perspectives for goal setting and approaches of goal achievement. The space was narrow for active involvement of civil society especially at a strategic policy making level. A Charities law that was adopted in 2009 reinforced this standpoint. The green economy notion enabled the re-instatement of environmental concerns in development paradigms. The EPA and its leadership used the opportunity to exercise agency that enabled to redefine the concept and perception of environmental protection.

The Ethiopian climate policymaking did also reflect international political dynamics shaping up with in bilateral or multilateral diplomatic spaces. Cross-national learning on climate change policies occurs through mechanisms of global governance that include harmonization, imposition or diffusion (Helge 2004). Researches underscore the role of diffusion of international norms and practices into domestic policies especially as countries

gain motivation to advance specific economic interests. The timing of the CRGE launch was briefly preceded by major global and national circumstances that have implications on Ethiopia's climate policy direction. Climate change was presented as an eminent and serious threat globally requiring local efforts across the globe, including by developing countries that allegedly had no historical responsibilities. It was also portrayed as something that brought forth significant opportunities for national governments in terms of the potential for access into novel technologies, access to climate finance and deployment of emerging renewable energy solutions. This resonates with the results attained in subsequent years that included the launch of the light rail system in Addis Ababa completed in 2015 (the first tramway system in sub-Saharan Africa), the Great Renaissance Dam under construction that is set to generate around 6000 megawatts of hydroelectric power, and the renewable energy based Ethiopia-Djibouti inter-country electric railway line launched in October 2016. Most of the finances for these projects came from soft loans and foreign funding. The urge to embrace these new technologies and tap into global climate finance shaped national perceptions on response mechanisms – making mitigation a prior concern over adaptation. The “green economy” storyline was very instrumental in this regard and heavily used as a justification.

Policymaking does not happen in a vacuum. Neither is it linear in the sense of tackling social problems with groups mandated to resolve them. It is essentially relational. Multiple interests mingle in domestic political spaces but also with linkages with supranational players. Narratives created along the way can lock solutions and determine the approach to be pursued. These in turn gain reinforcement from structures and designed procedures that influence who has access to the agenda and who does not. Human agency has a central role in this complex process where various actors use opportunities to use information to fit their personal or organizational interests.

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11. Appendix: Interview checklist

1. General

- Describe the national climate policy process (you may begin from the CRGE formulation stage or before)?
- What was your role in policy formulation and/or policy implementation?
- How climate change perceived? An opportunity/ a challenge? What kinds of policy responses were deemed appropriate then?
- What narratives beyond climate change affect how climate change is integrated into policy spheres?
- What kinds of adaptation options—incremental or more fundamentally transformative—were considered?
- How were policy dialogues carried out? Were you involved?

2. Structures and procedures

- What organizations were involved and how influential were they in the CRGE process?
- What are their mandates?
- What are their interests?
- What are the sources of their power and legitimacy?
- What are their capacities/ constraints in relation to shaping and implementing policy?

3. Institutions

- What were the relevant institutions that helped the CRGE formulation process:
- For policy formulation (ex: IMC, STC, Livestock Task Force)?
- Shaping how people respond to the policy environment?
- Were there institutionalized procedures for guiding activities during the policy formulation process?

4. Role of structures and procedures in the policy environment

- Which formal and/ or informal interaction processes were at play?
- Is there a mechanism to allow information from the grassroots feeds back into the CRGE or policy processes?
- How does structures and procedures allow CRGE get implemented?
- How do local actors respond to or take advantage of policies?

5. Interests and Practices

- What are the real material interests of the different actors within the CRGE policy environment?
- How do people draw upon, interpret, circumvent, or resist institutional frameworks in order to pursue specific objectives that shape the CRGE policy environment?
- How do people draw upon prevailing discourse or develop counter-narratives in order to pursue specific objectives that shape the CRGE policy environment?
- In what ways do people exert agency in the CRGE policymaking processes?

6. Role of Practices in the policy environment

- How do interests and practices shape policymaking processes? How and through which pathways do actors access scientific information?



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