

# Underlining Basis for the National Environmental Policy Design in Ethiopia

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## ABSTRACT

This article focuses on Ethiopia's National Environmental Policy design process. The research methodology entails a mixed research design to yield reliable and valid evidence, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation and analysis of the National Environmental Policy design process. The empirical investigation demonstrates that the National Environmental Policy in Ethiopia has been triggered by the inability of the policy to respond to the emergent environmental changes, and international environmental convention, and to harmonise with the restructured environmental sector. Although significant new environmental issues have been acknowledged higher on the policy agenda, the National Environmental Policy design process is dominated by the ideological, incremental, and elitist policy design approach rather than rational policy analysis. The policy option generation and selection process has not been conducted through generating the possible policy alternatives and weighing up their relative consequences, and decisions seem made under bound rationality using the rule of thumb guided by the ruling party policy and the overpromising intentions of international environmental conventions which affect the quality of the policy and the implementation thereof.

## INTRODUCTION

Policy design is a process by which public problems that require different policy responses at different levels are identified and resolved through the creation of new policy, or the amendment of existing policy (Howlett and Mukherjee 2017). It involves identifying and structuring the problem, clearly defining policy goals, identifying different policy options, evaluating each policy option using specified criteria, and choosing the most appropriate policy choice for achieving the desired goals (De Ridder, Turnpenny, Nilsson and Von Raggamby 2007; Hisschemöller and Cuppen 2015). This rationalistic view, however, has been criticised as oversimplistic as the reality of policy development is non-linear, and policy decisions are influenced by different factors. Policymakers, like most people, have naturally limited mental capabilities and they make decisions under conditions of bounded rationality, focusing on the most relevant and 'good enough' factor that satisfies or seeks a satisfactory course of action instead of considering all the facts and optimising alternatives to make the best policy decisions (Kørnøv and Thissen 2012:193). Owing to such limitations, practice depicted that bounds rational policymakers is much more likely to introduce incremental policy changes based on learning from experience (Cairney 2016). Since policy design is a complex and interactive technical and political process where ideas and interests interact with the intent to find an acceptable solution (Hankivsky and Cormier 2019) decision-makers may act in terms of their self-interest motivated by their idealistic and/or professional concerns and interests; where politicians seek re-election and office bureaucrats may strive to advance their careers (Eryilmaz 2015; Gill 2017).

The article explores and describes the National Environmental Policy design in Ethiopia, the problem identification and agenda setting process, policy goal and objective setting, policy option generation, and what aspects have an impact on the policy design and decision-making process. This article will add to the current public policy discourse by (i) presenting the rational policy decision-making and the bounded way in which decisions are made, (ii) highlighting how environmental policy decisions are shaped by public officials or other individual participants' self-interests to comply with their political ideology or party policy, and their motivation to comply with the international environmental conventions; and to what extent the decision falls under the influence of the environmental experts' scientific knowledge. The findings have a practical significance. Primarily, it enables the Ethiopian government to comprehend the salient features and recurrent problems related to policy design process drawing upon a body of theories and empirical evidence. The majority of the studies on policy design were conducted using a qualitative research design. Unlike most previous studies, the current study employed a mixed research design to yield more evidence and to explore,

describe, and interpret the data gathered from the interviews, focus group discussion, questionnaire, and document review.

## **POLICY DESIGN PROCESS: PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION TO POLICY DECISION**

Policy design is a critical phase of the policy process through which public problems affecting citizens are identified and alternatives or potential solutions are devised to resolve the problems (Howlett and Mukherjee 2017). It is thus a complex and interactive technical and political process where ideas and interests interact within an institutional setting to find an acceptable solution that can address societal problems (Hankivsky and Cormier 2019:79; Thomas and Ken 2015:834). While the policy design process differs from country to country, most scholars portrayed that it involves the conceptualisation, identification, and structuring of the problem, agenda setting, goal and objective setting, identification, and appraisal of potential policy options and decision-making or policy adoption (De Ridder *et al.* 2007; Hisschemöller and Cuppen 2015).

Problem identification is the first stage in the policy design process and refers to the identification of societal problems or public issues that require the intervention of the government and are worth solving (Cairney 2016:33). This requires understanding the environment in which the problem is occurring, the key dimensions of a problem, and analysing the problem from different perspectives (Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayner 2015:8). Though there are a lot of problems that demand government action, only a small portion receives the attention of the government and this is dependent on how various interest groups successfully draw attention to an issue (Cairney 2016). Public policy is a spiral in that, after a policy has been adopted, and implemented, and its effects have been assessed, issues that have not been definitively resolved will receive the attention of the government and will possibly appear back on the agenda (Vining and Weimer 2015). These problems should be structured and framed to obtain a deeper understanding of the problem and diagnose root causes. Problem structuring is a precondition for designing solutions for the corresponding problem and needs a systematic procedure for structuring surveying, and digging deep into a particular issue, as well as solving ill-defined, ill-structured, or complex problems (Capano and Michael in Tiruneh 2023)). For instance, environmental problems related to climate change, droughts, and wildfires are complex problems, which have different causes. The interlinked nature of the environment with agriculture, industry, and urbanisation may be fraught with difficult decisions and trade-offs due to competing interests. These problems need an understanding of the interlinked nature of the environment with other sectors to develop an in-depth

understanding of environmental problems, and to reconcile competing demands and find strong portfolios that can satisfy environmental and other sectors.

Following problem identification and structuring policy goals, objectives will be crafted to show the destinations that are achieved when the issue at stake is addressed (Turnpenny *et al.* 2015). Policy goals are broad statements of purpose, the range of desired outcomes, or what is to be achieved by implementing the policy. Conversely, objectives are more specific statements of purpose and policy actions that provide a bridge between general policies and actual implementation guidelines. Policy objectives and goals can be achieved when the most realistic or best policy alternatives are chosen (Cairney 2016; Dye 2017). Policymakers should thus generate policy alternatives and weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of each policy alternative to choose policies that offer the greatest benefit. The process of policy option generation and selection is often conducted using different tools such as Cost Benefit Analysis and Multiple Criteria Analysis (Henrichson 2014). Cost-benefit analysis is a valuable, comprehensive, and powerful tool for choosing the best alternative policy options in monetary terms and the valuation of how people whose welfare is affected by policy actions value those losses and gains; while multi-criteria analysis is often used to measure and assess each policy alternative and select the best policy option by considering different criteria (Ward, Dimitriou and Dean 2016).

## **POLICY DESIGN MODELS: RATIONAL VERSUS INCREMENTAL MODEL**

The rational approach to policymaking follows a linear process and it typically involves the stages of identifying a range of alternatives, predicting the consequences of each alternative, and selecting the alternative that maximises the attainment of goals (Cairney 2016; Dye 2017). One of the major requirements of the rational model is that it requires adequate knowledge, facts, and information to analyse the relative weight of the alternatives and all of the potential benefits and costs of each policy alternative. Policymakers may, however, be constrained by their mental capabilities and may make decisions under conditions of bounded rationality that satisfy or seek a satisfactory course of action rather than considering all facts and alternatives to make the best policy decisions (Anyebe 2018; Cairney 2016; Simon 1976). Because of these constraints, evidence shows that bounded rational policymakers are far more likely to implement minor policy adjustments based on learning from experience by addressing the unintended consequences of earlier policy decisions (Cairney 2016). The incremental policy approach assumes that policy change appears through the accumulation of small changes and serial remedial measures (De Coning and Cloete 2006; Hayes 2017).

The model thus accepts a slight adaptation, taking into account the existing policy as legitimate, effective, and satisfactory. This implies the occurrence of the possibility to integrate the incremental approach with the rational approach. On the other hand, the rational behaviour of individuals may not necessarily produce positive collective outcomes. Due to the self-interested nature of the individuals, seeking the aggregated whole and the common good amid diverse policy preferences might be idealistic (Eryilmaz 2015; Gill 2017). The rational choice theory thus assumes public policy is a function of self-interested individuals, groups, or organisations who want to maximise their benefits within the policy decision-making process. Public officials, political elites, bureaucrats, and technical experts may act in terms of their professed motivations considering their idealistic and professional concerns and interests, where politicians seek re-election to office and bureaucrats strive to advance their careers (Bothe 2019); to minimise any uncertainty associated with policy effectiveness and satisfy their ideological self-interest (Anyebe 2018; Hula, Bowers, Whitley and Isaac 2017); and budget maximisation (Keech and Munger 2015). For instance, people who consider themselves as being to the right (or conservative) prefer a smaller government, and a free-market economy and tend to deprioritise environmental issues and display weaker environmental support; whereas the leftist is considered as pro-environmental (McCright and Dunlap 2013; Niklas, Sverker and Simon 2017). Most public officials try to comply with international conventions and integrate the intentions of the agreements into their national policies, strategies, and programmes (Sand and McGee 2022; Tunnicliffe, Metaxas, Le, Ramirez-Llodra and Levin 2020). The environmental policy discourses in most cases have also been dominated and influenced by environmental experts and interest groups (Patricia 2022). Although scholars suggested that complex scientific and technological issues should also embed perspectives of citizens (Machin and Smith 2014; OECD 2017); people from different ideologies and personal interests, look at problems, understand, interpret, and suggest policy alternatives from different perspectives motivated by their self-interest.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN**

The unit of analysis for this article is the National Environmental Policy process. The second unit of observation, the product of human behaviour, in this article refers to the legal and policy documents, official documents including operational plans, opinion survey documents, the National Environmental Policy and websites. The article employed both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The qualitative approach enabled the researchers to gain an insider perspective, to understand and describe the policy design process; whereas with the quantitative

approach the survey was also vital to gather a large number of opinions and measure the perspectives and experiences of employees of environmental sector and civic organisations from naturally occurring data. The data emanated from interviews, and focus group discussions were thus complemented, triangulated, and integrated with the survey data to ensure the validity of the study.

The research population of this study refers to the policy design team, public officials, employees, and civic groups in the environmental sector as a venue of environmental policy design. The study made use of both probability and non-probability sampling methods to draw a sample of questionnaire respondents and interview participants respectively. Questionnaire respondents were selected using proportional simple random sampling. A total of 351 questionnaires were distributed to individuals working in the environmental sector and civil societies engaged in environment-related issues. Of the interview participants 22 were drawn from among environmental sector public officials (8), Civil Society Organisation Executives (10), the Environmental Standing Committee at the House of People's Representatives (2), and from the National Policy Study Institute (2) using purposive sampling. One focus group discussion was carried out with six participants drawn from the environmental policy design team. The result obtained through interviews was also verified and supported by document review.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **Problem identification and agenda setting**

The interviewees and focus group participants reported that the need for National Environmental Policy revision was initiated by a development partner called Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance (ACCRA). They added that environmental Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have also been drawing attention and repeatedly calling on the government at various times to revise the aging and outdated environmental policy. However, soon after, the Ministry accepted the need for the policy revision considering the following driving forces:

- Because the existing environmental policy is more than two decades old, reformulating the policy is inescapable due to the emerging environmental problems.
- Owing to the high dependence of the population and economy on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture, a robust environmental policy is worthwhile in Ethiopia, to coordinate and manage the dynamic environmental changes and their impact on the economy.
- Due to the transboundary nature of the environment, the new international environmental agreements and legally binding instruments related to climate

change, global pollution, and depletion of natural resources also demand the revision of the National Environmental Policy.

- The interviewees emphasised that the environmental protection sector has passed through different institutional restructuring and changes in its legal formation. Institutional structure change was one of the driving forces for the revision of the National Environmental Policy in order to make the policy compatible with the duties and responsibilities of its implementing agency.

The interviewees revealed that steering and technical committees were established to undertake the policy design process. The steering committee, headed by the then State Minister of Environment and Forest Ministry was comprised of all the directors in the Ministry and was responsible for providing overall direction to the technical team. The steering committee was also in charge of monitoring the policy design process, reviewing and providing feedback on the draft policy submitted by the technical committee. The technical team that was assigned to design the National Environmental Policy was drawn from different departments of the environmental sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), ACCRA, the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and academics (Addis Ababa University).

According to the focus group participants, upon receiving instruction from the steering committee the technical team ( policy design team) conducted a public opinion survey, the constitutional and international legal framework analysis, and mandate analysis to find out the actual gaps and weaknesses of the previous policies and frame the environmental problems that ought to be addressed by the new policy. The environmental rights and duties entrenched in the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, Article 44 (citizen's right to live in a clean and healthy environment), and Article 92 (the obligation of the government to protect the environment) are considered as the main agenda of the government to be reflected in the policy. They also indicated that a comprehensive policy gap analysis was conducted to determine whether the existing policy complies with the policy content of the international environmental agreements Ethiopia has signed and to identify issues that should be embedded in the National Environmental Policy. The globally released sound technical environmental assessment information was taken into account in the problem definition.

As learned from the focus group discussion, the public opinion survey conducted during problem identification was financed by the development partner. The researchers questioned whether the donor organisation had influenced the priority setting during the problem identification process and agenda setting. The participants revealed that the problem identification process was carried out by the technical (policy design) team, and except for the funding, the donor organisation was not influencing the problem identification process.

One interviewee from CSOs stated, however, that there will be donors' influence indirectly by availing additional environmental information to policymakers regarding issues that were placed high on global environmental agendas and informing them on which environmental issues adequate financial support can be obtained for the implementation thereof.

Interviewees among the public officials also voiced a positive sentiment about donor influence and acknowledged the importance of donors' support in promoting environmental protection activities. They highlighted, since the environment globally matters and has a direct international impact, it will be obligatory to pay attention to the priorities of donor and other international organisations that work on environmental protection.

Most of the interviewees and focus group participants, however, remarked that since the policy was revised after two decades, reformulating the policy was inevitable to sufficiently address the major new environmental problems. The document review of the revised policy illustrated that, among others: climate change, the need for green technology, disposal of solid and liquid waste and hazardous substances, wildlife management, the impact of transport, energy production, and large-scale agricultural investment on the environment, the need to incorporate an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), the need to harmonise other sectors' policies that take into account the national developments, and the need to build a partnership of the environmental sector with CSOs, the private sector, and an effective international cooperation system; these are the major issues identified to be addressed by the new environmental policy.

The focus group participants added that the national environmental problems structuring process is carried out by the policy design team. The problem identification gap analysis report, the implementation history of the previous policy, the global environmental problems, the mandate of the environmental sector, and the trend analysis are taken into account to frame environmental issues affecting Ethiopia. Following the analysis of the policy design team, the steering committee members drawn from the environmental sector public officials provided their input and finally approved it. Based on the belief of the participants, it is therefore only the government officials' opinion (elite), environmental experts' opinion (expert), and their institutional experience that play a significant role in influencing the environmental agenda and the problem structuring process.

## **Policy goal and objective setting**

The focus group participants stated that policy goals and objectives are designed to take into account the major environmental problems and fulfilling the constitutional right of citizens to live in a healthy and safe environment. They added that environmental policy goals and objectives in general are based on two fundamental



principles: reducing human interference with the environment and the impact of environmental pollution on humans and other organisms, as well as managing these impacts to protect the well-being of society and other life on earth.

The participants and the interviewees emphasised that the goals and expectations of the international environmental conventions, and multilateral environmental agreements are taken into account during goal and objective setting. Due to the transboundary nature of the environment and the interconnectedness of the climate, there are issues that both developing and emerging economies need to focus on and fulfil to limit the harmful impact and keep the environment safe and clean. As elaborated by respondents, the environmental goals and targets stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for instance, are used as a foundation to design the National Environmental Policy goals as Ethiopia must achieve SDGs as a signatory party. As learned from the House of Peoples' Representative legislative process guideline (2017) national policies are required to comply with international conventions signed by the country; in particular, the policy should consider if there are obligatory statements imposed on the country by the treaty.

The review of the newly revised National Environmental Policy document indicates, the policy sets only one policy goal and nine objectives. The National Environmental Policy goal stated, "To ensure sustainable development by promoting to satisfy the present generation desire for development in harmony with the future generations' ability to meet its own needs". The objectives include: "to establish and strengthen environmental administrative structures that ensures environmental sustainability; to promote culture compliance and implementation of environmental laws; to prepare policies, laws and standards in participatory and inclusive processes towards ensuring sustainable environmental protection; to promote sustainable environmental and natural resource management by allocation enough financial and technological supports; to enable environmental education, raise awareness, and build capacity to effectively implement natural resource management and utilization system; to put in place timely and accessible information system on environment; to enhance green employment opportunities; to put in place a response system and build capacity to neutralize the adverse impacts of climate change on national economy" (The newly revised environmental policy 2020).

## **Policy option generation and selection**

Interviewees from public officials strongly believe that the technical team, established by technocrats and practitioners, has used rational information and followed a logical step to identify and analyse different alternatives and make the substantive decision to address the environmental problems. Likewise, an interviewee from the CSOs assumes that most of the problems identified and addressed in the

National Environmental Policy are new issues and thus require policy designers to identify and compare different alternatives and choose implementable and effective solutions to address environmental problems.

As learned from the discussion points of the policy design team, new policy options are selected taking into account different criteria such as sustainability, availability of adequate technical and financial support, urgency and sustainability of the solution, coherence, and compliance with international environmental conventions, cost-effectiveness, practicality and administrative ease to implement within the capacity of the country.

Furthermore, questionnaire respondents were asked their perspective on a range of environmental policy alternatives and their relative consequences are identified during the environmental policy option generation and selection process.

**Table 1: A range of environmental policy alternatives identified and their relative consequences weighted**

Statement		N (%)	Types of Working Organisation	
			Government	CSOs
A range of environmental policy alternatives and their relative consequences are identified and weighted to select new policy options that could bring about the desired outcome	Disagree	20(6.6%)	10 (5.6%)	10 (7.9%)
	Undecided	59(19.4%)	20 (11.3%)	39 (30.7%)
	Agree	178(58.6%)	114 (64.4%)	64 (50.4%)
	Strongly Agree	47(15.5%)	33 (18.6%)	14 (11%)
	Total	304 (100%)	177 (100%)	127 (100%)
	Mean	3.83	3.96	3.65
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
	SD	0.765	0.726	0.782

Source: (Authors' interpretation)

The mean score of the groups ranges from 3.65–3.96 and the median of 4.00 across all groups shows that 74.1% of respondents agree (58.6% agreed, and 15.5% strongly agreed) that the environmental policy alternatives and their relative consequences are identified and weighted to select new policy options that could bring about the desired outcome. There seems to be a degree of variation in terms of responses between those working in government offices and CSOs where CSOs tend to be undecided with the highest proportionality level, 30.7%.

Yet, the SD at 0.782 suggests the responses of CSOs are also clustered around the mean and perceive that a range of environmental policy alternatives and their relative consequences are identified and weighted to select new environmental policy options. The researchers were skeptical of this result and tried to investigate using a follow-up question to the policy design team. The policy design team members revealed that comparative analysis has not been done among different alternatives and their resultant consequences have not been weighted and rated to compare and choose the best policy alternatives, and no explanatory document has been found that shows the process.

Respondents were asked to reflect on the extent the National Environmental Policy is adopted relying on the existing policy as illustrated in Table 2.

**Table 2: The National Environmental policy is adopted relying on the existing policy with only incremental change**

Statement		N (%)	Types of Working Organisation	
			Government	CSOs
The National Environmental Policy is adopted relying on the existing policy with incremental change or improvement.	Disagree	19 (6.2%)	12 (6.8%)	7 (5.5%)
	Undecided	41 (13.5%)	36 (20.3%)	5 (3.9%)
	Agree	190 (62.5%)	100 (56.5%)	90 (70.9%)
	Strongly Agree	54 (17.8%)	29 (16.4%)	25 (19.7%)
	Total	304 (100%)	177 (100%)	127 (100%)
	Mean	3.91	3.82	4.05
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
	SD	0.757	0.798	0.677

Source: (Authors' interpretation)

The average mean score of 3.91 and the median of 4.00 indicates the consistent agreement of respondents across the group at 80.3% (agree 62.5% and strongly agree 17.8 %). Respondents view that the National Environmental Policy is adopted relying on the existing policy with incremental change or improvement. The SD, 0.757 implies the least variation among respondents within the group.

According to most interviewees and participants, the environmental policy was adopted relying on the existing policy with some incremental change to address environmental policy objectives of the previous policy, and those were not achieved due to the low implementation capacity of the country. They added that

the global environmental assessment information and the specific environmental policy options which allocated tasks to be performed by Ethiopia pertinent to controlling pollution and climate change, conservation of habitats, and biodiversity have been taken into account.

## **Environmental policy decision-making**

Policy decisions are often influenced by public officials and individual participant self-interests to obey their political ideology; comply with international environmental conventions; and/or motivated by scientific knowledge.

Unanimously, interviewees believe that public policies including environmental policies are the reflection of the government and public officials' political ideology. The respondents from elected representatives said:

“Developmental democracy is a political ideology that the Ethiopian government and its public officials who lead different sectors are promoting. The government considers environmental management and sustainable development to the level of fundamental human rights. The Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to live in a clean and healthy environment. The constitution further requires the government to protect the environment from any human-made damage. These constitutional requirements certainly show that Environmental rights are given due attention as an extension of basic human rights and as a tool for sustainable economic development in Ethiopia. These constitutional provisions, environmental rights, and duties are reflected in the national environmental policy”.

Likewise, one interviewee from the public officials says:

“Public officials' political willingness for greater environmental protection is demonstrated in Ethiopia in integrating the issue of climate within its development planning to build a green economy and passing the country to middle-income status by 2030. In addition, Ethiopia has played a great role in political leadership in the green economy and climate change at the international level. The former late Ethiopian Prime Minister has led international climate discussions at the Conference of African Heads of State on Climate Change for two terms held in Copenhagen and Durban. Ethiopia effectively lobbies the world for greater international ambition to tackle climate change and support for mitigating its impacts”.

Adding to this, the other public official emphasised the regional contribution of the Ethiopian government towards the protection of the environment, he stated:

“The government takes different measures to integrate the protection of the environment into the development plan of each sector. It has also influenced climate change planning at the regional level through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) with a member state of neighboring countries Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Sudan. Ethiopia has influenced these countries nations to prepare a regional climate change strategy for the period 2016 to 2030 to harmonize national efforts to adhere to low-carbon, climate-resilient sustainable development. This gave the country high images and political visibility at global environmental events”.

According to the interviewees, although there are limitations related to the capacity of implementation, the ideology-driven political position is pro-environmental protection and has a positive significant impact on the environmental policy design process. They accentuated that at the minimum public officials shared those beliefs and values entrenched in the constitution and show their commitment to the protection of the environment while practising sustainable development.

However, interviewees from CSOs overtly explained that even if the developmental democracy political ideology is manifested to the level of considering environmental issues as human rights in the policy document, the practicality of protecting and preserving the environment while speeding up the economy sustainably is still a big challenge to Ethiopia. As one respondent said:

“Due to a political focus on economic priorities, the government encourages investment through the development and commercialization of the agricultural and industrial sectors. In such a case, it is most difficult to balance environmental interests with development interests, and the priority is mostly given to economic development with a high tolerance or expense of environmental damage”.

Most of the interviewees, however, highlighted that the development and implementation of a climate-resilient green economy strategy in Ethiopia envisioned a climate-resilient middle-income economy by 2030, with a zero net increase in carbon emissions. This demonstrates the political commitment of the government to circumvent the conventional approach to economic development that exploited natural resources and increased carbon emissions and create a green economy where economic development goals are met sustainably while reducing emissions.

One of the public officials highlighted that Ethiopia launched the green legacy initiative in 2019 to plant 20 billion trees across the country over four years until

2024 which aimed to tackle climate change, reduce environmental hazards like deforestation soil erosion, and different types of pollution, and compensate the environment by creating sustainable favourable conditions for the agricultural sector and economic development.

Questionnaire respondents also reflected on the extent of the influence of public officials’ political interest and developmental democracy as illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3: The influence of public officials’ political interest on environmental policy decision-making**

Statement		N (%)	Types of Working Organisation	
			Government	CSOs
Public officials influenced policy decision aimed to maximise their political interest (developmental democracy)	Disagree	20 (6.6%)	14 (7.9%)	6 (4.7%)
	Undecided	35 (11.5%)	20 (11.3%)	15 (11.8%)
	Agree	199 (65.5%)	113 (63.8%)	86 (67.7%)
	Strongly Agree	50 (16.4%)	30 (16.9%)	20 (15.7%)
	Total	304 (100%)	177 (100%)	127 (100%)
	Mean	3.91	3.89	3.94
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
	SD	0.755	0.804	0.682

Source: (Authors’ interpretation)

As depicted in Table 3 81.9% of the respondents agreed (16.4 strongly agree and 65.5 agree), the high mean score, 3.91, and the mode 4.00 indicate that respondents across the group perceived that public officials influence policy decisions to maximise their political party policy and developmental democracy.

Concurrently, most interviewees from public officials and focus group participants think that International Environmental Agreements (IEAs) are legally binding treaties negotiated, signed, and ratified by individual countries to address transboundary environmental issues that have common global features. The IEAs provide a policy not only for resolving transboundary environmental disputes, it also offers a framework for the development and convergence of national environmental laws. They believe that the National Environmental Policy should be compatible and comply with the international environmental accords that Ethiopia signed.

As one of the public officials stated:

“Many environmental challenges are trans-boundary and global which can have a potential impact on every country. Ethiopia, unless it works in collaboration with other countries in addressing these global problems, will be affected or will affect the environment with its eco-unfriendly activities. Recognising this fact, Ethiopia has become a party to most of the international treaties to protect itself and the earth against destructive impacts and to promote environmental protection and sustainable development. Not only Ethiopia, the majority of countries in the world have adopted mandatory regulations and incorporated them into their national policies. Certainly, one of the driving forces for the revision of this environmental policy is also to comply with IEAs that are signed and endorsed recently as part of the national policy”.

Most of the interviewees from CSOs also emphasised that due to the transboundary character of pollution and its impacts on global shared natural resources, cooperation with the global environmental context is inevitable, and this cooperation will bring about financial support and know-how from the donor partners, such as the World Bank Group and UN Agencies to the realisation of environmental protection.

Focus group participants also revealed that they have largely considered the global narratives and convention of environmental effects in framing environmental policy. According to one participant, the coherence and compliancy of policy options with the international environmental conventions are also taken into account as a major criterion to evaluate and select policy alternatives. Adding to this, another interviewee suggests that as the government signed the agreement it should comply with international environmental orders to establish sustainable relationships and garner significant support from the international community. By Article 9(4) of the 1995 Constitution, *“all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land”*. The House of People’s Representatives legislative process guideline (2017) requests the executives and the council of ministers to ensure that the policy complies with international conventions signed by the country.

Another respondent highlighted that the international environmental discourse that is undertaken at different times has created not only an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge and practice but also guides the dialogues of the National Environmental Policy makings. He added the implementation of agreed conventions by countries is also monitored and reported by the UN to signing countries. Questionnaire respondents also reflected this as indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4: The influence of public officials on policy decision to comply with international environmental conventions**

Statement		N (%)	Types of Working Organisation	
			Government	CSOs
Public officials influence environmental policy decision to comply with international environmental conventions	Strongly Disagree	3 (1%)	3 (1.7%)	–
	Disagree	17 (5.6%)	8 (4.5%)	9 (7.1%)
	Undecided	36 (11.8%)	23 (13%)	13 (10.2%)
	Agree	190 (62.5%)	108 (61%)	82 (64.6%)
	Strongly Agree	58 (19.1%)	35 (19.8%)	23 (18.1%)
	Total	304 (100%)	177 (100%)	127 (100%)
	Mean	3.93	3.93	3.94
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
SD	0.787	0.812	0.753	

Source: (Authors' interpretation)

The proportionality of respondents across all groups with the average mean score of 3.93 and mode 4.00 is tremendously in agreement with the view that public officials influence environmental policy decisions to comply with international environmental laws.

While policymakers are at the forefront of making decisions, they are also responsible for involving environmental experts and professionals. In this respect, respondents were asked for their reflection on the extent of environmental experts' influence on policy decisions motivated by their scientific knowledge.

Respondents at all levels, from the government sector and CSOs were overwhelmingly in agreement and perceive that environmental experts have influenced environmental policy decision-making motivated by their scientific knowledge. The overall mean scores and median 4.06 and 4.00 respectively indicate a strong move to a general agreement.

Most of the interviewees noted that the National Environmental Policy design process is largely dominated by technocrats drawn from departments of the environmental sector, and environmental academics and most of the participants of the opinion survey were also drawn from experts who are working in the environment and environment-related sectors. They portrayed that environmental policy is more allied with technical and scientific-driven information wherein



**Table 5: The influence of environmental experts on environmental policy decisions**

Statement		N (%)	Types of Working Organisation	
			Government	CSOs
Environmental experts have influenced environmental policy decision-making motivated by their scientific knowledge	Strongly Disagree	3 (1%)	3 (1.7%)	–
	Disagree	17 (5.6%)	8 (4.5%)	9 (7.1%)
	Undecided	36 (11.8%)	23 (13%)	13 (10.2%)
	Agree	190 (62.5%)	108 (61%)	82 (64.6%)
	Strongly Agree	58 (19.1%)	35 (19.8%)	23 (18.1%)
	Total	304 (100%)	177 (100%)	127 (100%)
	Mean	4.06	4.08	4.03
	Median	4.00	4.00	4.00
SD	0.766	0.797	0.723	

Source: (Authors' interpretation)

environmental experts play the leading role in establishing the facts about environmental realities.

An interviewee from CSOs and elected representatives also revealed that environmental issues usually include considerable scientific issues, albeit a wide consultation in the public realm is conducted; technocrats play the leading role in the framing of policy debates as well as in making the final decisions. From the response of the interviewee, it is noted that there is a technocratic attitude that advocates environmental policy decisions to be led by the opinion of scientific experts rather than by the preferences, experiences, and values of the general public obtained from policy deliberation.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for the National Environmental Policy revision was first initiated by ACCRA that is made up of the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (OXFAM), Save the Children International, Care International, and World Vision International, and it has been working to influence climate resilience policies and practices in Ethiopia. ACCRA has played the leading role in compelling and providing both technical and financial support to the government to take the initiative to fully

revise the Ethiopian National Environmental Policy. Conversely to the legal mandate, donor partners were the major initiators of the need for the revision of the National Environmental Policy although later on public officials weighed and valued the evidence about the inability of the existing policy in solving complex environmental problems and facilitated the policy revision process. The article thus affirmed that the strong collaboration of the NGOs with the environmental sector and the financial and human resource support obtained from the donor partners was a cause for the environmental sector to accept the policy revision initiated by the donor partners. As Keech and Munger (2015) remarked, budget maximisation has influenced the decision of public administrators and decisions to revise the policy. This process shows that the issue of the National Environmental Policy is more likely to get on the policy agenda when the interest of the issue advocates donor partners being aligned with the interest of the public officials.

Indeed, the right to initiate public policy in Ethiopia is only vested in the House of People's Representatives and the executive including the environmental sector. The House of People's Representatives legislative process guidelines (2017) defines the responsibility of initiating public policy as a duty of the government, the house, standing committees, and parliament groups; and prevents other bodies such as CSOs, opposition political parties, and interested groups, to initiate public policies. NGOs and other interested parties are not allowed to initiate public policy. Moreover, the then proclamation 621/2009 to provide for the registration and regulation of Civil Societies in Ethiopia inhibited CSOs that do not fit the definition of Ethiopian Charities/Societies to participate in human rights, democratisation, and policy advocacy until it was repealed by Proclamation No. 1113/2019. This finding may bring about an assumption that the proclamation (621/2009) to provide for the registration and regulation of Civil Societies in Ethiopia, which limit the involvement of civil societies that do not fit its definition of Ethiopian Charities and Societies, might not be strong in the case of some policy issues such as environment, and donor partner organisations. In this regard, Burgess (2017:118) also revealed that environmental NGOs cannot have a political agenda, they are treated far less harshly when compared with those who work in human rights and democratisation, and they are taken as partners of the government in the case of environmental protection activities.

This finding resonates with Ayana, Arts and Wiersum (2018) who studied the forest policymaking process in Ethiopia. These authors concluded that NGOs resort to indirect strategies to push for the adoption of a new policy when the formal avenue for their involvement in the policymaking process is not open. These strategies involve catalysing policy processes through actions, such as documenting and communicating field evidence and best practices, forming strong networks with key decision-makers, and investing sufficient human and financial resources to push the adoption of a new forest policy. A comparative

study conducted on South Africa and China echoed that due to a strict and controlling regulatory framework, environmental NGOs in China prefer to use mostly informal mechanisms such as personal relations and informal networks to have an impact on policy or influence policymakers (Burgess 2017:118).

The empirical analysis illustrated that the constitutional right of a citizen to live in a safe and healthy environment and the possible health and economic implications of environmental change served as guidance for policy revision. Due to the transboundary nature of the environmental problems, the policy revision is triggered by international environmental agreements and the need to create a coalition and eliminate global environmental problems. A recent study on lessons learned from two decades of international environmental agreements, also revealed that most countries are promoting and integrating the intentions of the international agreements and conventions into their national policies, strategies, and programmes motivated by the support they obtained and not to lose face and strengthen their relationship (Sand and McGee 2022).

While it is noticeable that policy change brings about a broad spectrum of activities including the establishment or restructuring of implementing instruments and agencies, the case of the revision of the National Environmental Policy conversely indicates that the need for policy revision was also caused by the restructuring of the institutional arrangements of the implementing agency. This finding is indeed consistent with de Coning and Cloete (2006) and Fox, Bayat and Ferreira (2006) that public policy is the product of public institutions where the formal structure and legal powers have an impact on the policy design process; and institutional changes shape public policy and public administrations have policy capacity so that they can promote the policy changes to which they are committed.

The composition of the policy design team shows that predominantly technocrats are involved in the overarching environmental policy design process; however, their decision is subject to be monitored by the steering committee established by public officials. As Peters and Rava (2017) emphasised, one of the significant resources that public administration agencies possess for policymaking is their expertise that has the actual technical knowledge and knowledge of their clients. Yet, their decisions are subject to review and scrutiny by the steering committee established from public officials to provide overall direction and monitor the work done by the technical team.

The problem identification processes produced evidence and acknowledge a significant number of new environmental items higher on the policy agenda that ought to be addressed by the newly revised environmental policy. This enables policy designers to obtain a deeper understanding and analyse the problem from different perspectives and to establish clear-cut causal linkages between the policy problem and its intended solution (Hankivsky and Cormier 2019). Yet,

the opinion survey conducted during problem identification is found tailored to limited homogenous segments of the population drawn from state actors. It is therefore only the government officials' and environmental experts' opinion and their institutional experience that plays a significant role in influencing the environmental agenda and the problem structuring process. This suggests that both the public officials and the policy design team alike do not comprehend problem structuring as an iterative process of problem definition and an important phase that helps to better address the community's problems. Policy designers should regard problem structuring as a significant task that requires not only the perspectives of public officials and experts, but also the views of social actors and social understanding to gain a deeper knowledge of the problem, identify conflicting assumptions, and to diagnose root causes that lead to the best solution (Hoppe 2018).

In addition to the major environmental problems the policy goals and objectives are designed taking into account the expectations of the international environmental conventions, and multilateral environmental agreements. The policy goals stated in these conventions needs to be refined according to the country's own context and implementation capacity constraints and timelines rather than overpromising, which results in under-delivery or underperformance. The context, the social, economic, political, technological, legal facets where the institution operates; and the capacity including the structural and functional capabilities, access to technological resources, financial capability, and leadership ability and knowledge and skill of those entrusted with the duty to carry out and execute the policies, should be considered to enhance the implementability of the policy (Caves and Oswald-Egg 2019 in Tiruneh 2023).

The National Environmental Policy goal was defined in broad aspirational terms, and describes the range of desired outcomes, or what is to be achieved by implementing the policy. It shows the end towards which the effort is geared, and provides direction and guidance to the community on the importance of environmental protection for ensuring sustainable development by aligning the current generation's development needs with those of future generations. This is a strong move and is in agreement with Turnpenny *et al.* (2015) who noted that policy goals show the destinations that are achieved when the issue at stake is addressed. However, the researchers opined that this ambition is very comprehensive and difficult to easily understand and show its connection with the objectives of the policy stated, unless it is disaggregated and simplified. Environmental goals can be stated using specific statements of outcomes that a country is aiming to achieve, for instance, minimising damage to the natural environment, limiting pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, reducing noise impacts, among others. Essentially, goals are considered coherent if they are consistent and congruent with policy objectives to effectively produce optimal outcomes. Additionally,

objectives should be concrete, organisational, and often quantitative and specifically defined. Yet, each of the objective statements of the National Environmental Policy is designed comprehensively and seems difficult to measure, and it does not describe the desired outcome and the precise actions that the people have to take to move closer to attaining the goal. The environmental problems/issues identified during the problem structuring process are not reflected in the policy objective statements. In the content of the policy that refers to the means and goals that the policy sets out to address or solve the perceived problem or policy issues will be clear, specific and measurable to enhance not only the quality of the policy design but also to enhance the success of policy implementation (Cloete and de Coning 2011:135–169). This indeed needs the policy designers' capacity knowledge and skill in terms of policy goals and objective setting so that they could design workable policy solutions that will improve environmental protection in Ethiopia.

Due to the ongoing changes over the last two decades, the revision of the National Environmental Policy is subject to rational policy analysis to address several emerging environmental issues identified during the problem identification process. Although policymakers did not make any reference to any models it seems that both the incremental and rational model has been considered to select policy options. The incremental approach was employed in particular to address those policy options that were part of the previous policy but had not achieved their goal due to the low implementation capacity of the country. Indeed, policy design may not terminate but continue to be reformulated throughout its implementation as informed learning takes place about its operational effectiveness and associated outcomes (Vining and Weimer 2015). The incremental approach was also applicable to considering the goals and objectives included in the international environmental conventions. In this context, the researchers argued that the implementation problems of the previous policy are most likely the result of the weak policy analysis in selecting the implementable policy options. This also needs a rational analysis to measure the practicality and administrative feasibility of policy options and select the preferred one. Adopting the intentions of the international environmental conventions without a systematic analysis of the context of the country could also have a repercussion on the quality of the policy and the implementation thereof. As Hayes (2017) remarked incrementalism needs a form of systemic rationality to build on practical experiences and use the intentions proposed by the international conventions.

Indeed, environmental policy is one of the public policies where a rational policymaking model is applied and policy option generation and selection process ought to be done with a comparative assessment using multi-criteria analysis or cost benefit analysis since it requires contemplating environmental sustainability and economic development. The policy design team has tried to consider

different criteria to select policy options. However, a comparative analysis has not been conducted and each alternative has not been weighted and rated to select the best policy options among alternatives that satisfy the objectives that the policy aimed to achieve. This resonates with Simon's (1976) thought that the policy design team may use a simple rule of thumb focusing mainly on the most relevant and/or seek a satisfactory course of action instead of exhaustively optimising alternatives and their resulting consequences. For instance, in the case of the application of renewable energy sources in agriculture, officials and experts might be more concerned about their performance and to comply with the international convention, than taking into account the financial capacity of farmers. Consequently, this may not be feasible for farmers and they may not buy into such a policy option. Unless different policy alternatives are generated and weighted based on the criteria identified by the team in consultation with citizens, the policy decision might be dominated by the choice of one group and this will have a repercussion on the legitimacy and implementation of the policy. Owing to such limitations, Cairney (2016) remarked that bounded rational policymakers are much more likely to introduce incremental policy changes based on learning from experience through addressing the unintended consequences of previous policy decisions. Furthermore, self-interested public officials, political elites, bureaucrats, and technical experts may act in terms of their professed motivations considering their idealistic and professional concerns and interests (Eryilmaz 2015; Gill 2017). Most studies revealed that political ideology has long been identified as an important factor in shaping the policy preferences of individuals and in determining their attitude towards environmental issues (Hula *et al.* 2017). In this regard the article found that the ruling party policy in Ethiopia, developmental democracy which has a left ideological dimension, is likely to be a major element of the value that public officials place on influencing environmental policy decision-making. The Constitution and the ruling party policies are pro-environmental protection and have a positive significant impact on the environmental policy decision process. Most studies have conveyed that a left ideological dimension constitutes a crucial determinant of all sorts of environmental attitudes, including support for pro-environmental policies (McCright and Dunlap 2013; Niklas *et al.* 2017). People who consider themselves as being to the right (or conservative) prefer a smaller government, and a free-market economy and tend to deprioritise environmental issues and display weaker environmental support (McCright and Dunlap 2013). Other studies add to this picture, a growing attitudinal cleavage as right-wing and left-wing supporters are gradually moving further and further apart in matters related to the environment (Niklas *et al.* 2017).

However, previous studies in Ethiopia revealed that the political support only serves the political agenda rather than genuine environmental concern as the political intent is still not fully translated to environmental performance (Desalegn

2018). The trade-off between economic growth and the protection of the environment has a great impact on the practicality of protecting and preserving the environment, while speeding up the economy sustainably is still a big challenge to Ethiopia. Although Ethiopia played the highest role internationally in political leadership on green economy and climate change, Ethiopia's environmental achievements are below the record of countries with less international knowledge on environmental issues such as Kenya, Ghana, and Mozambique (Sebsib, Mulugeta and Shimellis 2019). Based on the 2020 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) (2020), Ethiopia ranks 141 out of 180 countries on environmental health and ecosystem vitality. A recent study by the Ministry of Environment reveals that out of the 163 factories surveyed, 101 (61.93%) release their industrial wastes directly into the environment without any treatments. Due to institutional dissonance and lack of political will and commitment to mainstream environmental issues into national development goals, the environmental issues of Ethiopia only serve the political agenda rather than the genuine environmental concern as the political intent is still not fully translated to environmental performance (Sebsib *et al.* 2019:88). The emphasis of public officials on short-term economic gain might be drawn from their interest to stay in power. As Gill (2017) emphasised in public choice theory the best way to understand the behaviour of public administrators is along roughly maximising lines, there is little reason to think that the state will generally be in favour of the public interest. There is some evidence to support this view in Austria where the motivations and horizons of public officials are often inhibited by their political interests to stay in power and their close involvement to satisfy economic interests (Bothe 2019). This indicates that the behaviour of public officials' self-interest may influence public policy decisions unless there is the possibility of the pluralistic political process that facilitates the free exchange of opinions.

There is a strong belief among public officials that the National Environmental Policy should be compatible with the international environmental accords that Ethiopia signed. This belief has constitutional legal grounds as all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are considered as an integral part of the law of the land (Constitution 1995:Article 9,4). The House of People's Representatives legislative process guideline (2017) requests the executives and the council of ministers to ensure that the policy complies with international conventions signed by the country. Due to the transboundary character of the environment, cooperation with the global environmental context is inevitable, and this cooperation will bring about financial support and know-how and guides the dialogues of the National Environmental Policy makings from the donor partners, such as the World Bank Group and UN Agencies to the realisation of environmental protection. If the cooperation allows the states to eliminate environmental problems in their country, the influence of the international regime on the national policy

can thus be considered important from the rationalistic point of view. This finding resonates with what Huang (2002) signifies in his model of obedience to international environmental law that states have tried to comply with the international environmental orders based on the motivation not to lose face and to strengthen their relationship with the international community. A study conducted on Baltic countries inferred that the formation and successful implementation of environmental policy in these countries was and still is largely dependent on the influence of the international environmental regimes (Kratovits 2011). The international convention guides signatory countries not only to create overarching environmental goals and objectives but also to set implementing mechanisms to achieve them (Tunncliffe *et al.* 2020). While developed states are the largest contributors to climate change and global warming, developing states are currently obligated and forced to switch to renewable energy sources, which may restrain economic development and directly impact citizens. For instance, farmers in Ethiopia who could not afford it carry the consequence. This will thus affect the successful implementation of policies that incorporate ambitious goals and targets stated in the IEAs unless issues related to feasibility, consequences of action, and other constraints are taken into account. As the means justify the end, a pragmatic look is important for policy designers to consider the practicality of policy options instead of taking IEAs and their party politics for granted.

Furthermore, the study found that the traditional view which reified environmental issues as technical and the domain of experts promoted environmental policy decisions to be led by the opinion of scientific experts. A recent study by Patricia (2022:1) revealed that the climate governance debate has been dominated by scientists and interest groups and the public rendered 'spectators'. In absolute terms, this approach denies first, the controversial and political nature of environmental decisions that cannot rest mainly on the knowledge of experts; and second, it denies democracy and democratic deliberation that opened up to more diverse forms of knowledge, experiences, values, and preferences of the general public (Mekonnen, Kidemu, Abebe, Semere, Gebreyesus, Worku, Gebre and Chernet 2021:9). These authors further highlighted that understanding and integrating experiential knowledge systems into the formal policy process has a multiplier effect on other government interventions such as through facilitation of technology adoption, and in building trust among citizens and government (*ibid*). Studies likewise suggest that more ecologically-sensitive and democratic decision-making about complex scientific and technological issues can emerge and cohabit if the differently embodied perspectives of decision-makers that are from scientists to citizens are acknowledged (Machin and Smith 2014; OECD 2017). In contrast to technocratic, democratic decision-making assumes that all affected by a given decision have the right to participate in the making of that decision either directly or through their representatives. Since the understandings



of the environment and values placed on different types of nature are socially constructed differently by different actors and so are subject to significant contestation, it is imperative to take into consideration the experiential knowledge and values of different actors. For instance, the issue of Ozone Depletion was first constructed and presented to the general public through science but with rapid uptake by the media, business groups, government, and citizen policy debates on the way to control substances associated with ozone depletion. The discussions about global climate change, desertification, biodiversity, deforestation, water management, and other themes are held in international contexts with different stakeholders. This will not only open the space for the participation of different actors but also will create a way to transform science into the public and improve environmental education and then enhance the relationship between scientific experts and the environmentally informed public. As pronounced by Keeley and Scoones (2000:13) the interaction of a wider range of knowledge and perspectives beyond the boundaries of science and scientists brings about not only shared values, consensus, and ultimately, better policy decisions but also creates a balance between science and public trust and enhances institutional legitimacy.

## **IN CLOSING**

This article investigated the National Environmental Policy design process, the extent to which the rational policy analysis is conducted and the bounded way in which decisions are shaped by public officials' self-interests to comply with their political ideology or party policy, and their motivation to comply with the international environmental conventions; and the extent to which the decision falls under the influence of the environmental experts' scientific knowledge and their institutional experiences. The right to initiate public policy in Ethiopia is vested solely in the House of People's Representatives and the executive. Contrary to what the law and process of policymaking stated the National Environmental Policy was initiated by development partners, although public officials later on weighed and valued the evidence about the inability of the existing policy in solving complex environmental problems and facilitated the policy revision process. The analysis conducted on the contextual environmental problems that are affecting the country identified by the gap analysis survey; international environmental agreements and the need to create a coalition and eliminate the transboundary environmental problems; and the restructuring of the environmental sector triggered the need to revise and design the environmental policy. These analyses provide evidence to acknowledge a significant number of new environmental issues higher on the policy agenda that ought to be addressed by the newly revised environmental policy. The National Environmental Policy goal

is defined focusing on intergenerational equity and a wide overarching target of the National Environmental Policy. It shows the ultimate goal towards which the effort is directed and provides direction and guidance to the community regarding the importance of environmental protection in ensuring sustainable development, aligning the current generation's development needs with those of future generations. However, this ambition is very comprehensive and difficult to understand and show its connection with the objectives of the policy and the desired outcome and the precise actions that the policy implementers have to take to move closer to attaining the goal. Policy targets driven from international environmental agreements are often overpromising given the country-specific context and capacity and may lead to policy failure. Furthermore, the policy decisions are made without generating the possible policy alternatives, weighing up and comparing their relative consequences using specified multi-criteria and cost-benefit analysis to make the optimal policy decision. The National Environmental Policy design process is dominated by the ideological, incremental, and elitist policy design approach rather than rational policy analysis. Even though the ruling party policy in Ethiopia is pro-environmental protection and has a positive significant impact on the environmental policy design process the trade-off between economic growth and the protection of the environment has a great impact on the practicality of protecting and preserving the environment while speeding up the economy, and sustainability remains a big challenge to Ethiopia. The environmental policy decision is influenced by public officials' need to comply with international environmental conventions. Adopting the intent of international environmental conventions and agreements without measuring their practicality and administrative feasibility is simply overpromising. These policy options should be adjusted according to the country's priority and own capacity instead of overpromising and creating unrealistic goals which could have a side effect on the quality of the policy and the implementation thereof which in turn results in a negative consequence on institutional legitimacy and public trust. This study thus recommends that scientific rational policy analysis should be conducted using a clearly defined multi-criteria analysis to exhaustively list policy alternatives, weigh their relative consequences and select the optimal policy options that could fulfil the intended objective of the policy.

## NOTE

- \* The article is partly based on a dissertation for a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration (PhD) degree under the supervision of Prof C Alers and Prof W N Webb, titled: Tiruneh, T A. 2023. *Citizen participation: a sine qua non for effective design of the National Environmental Policy in Ethiopia*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Pretoria: University of South Africa.

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