



## Historical development of forest policy in Ethiopia: Trends of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization

Alemayehu N. Ayana<sup>a,b,\*</sup>, Bas Arts<sup>b</sup>, K. Freerk Wiersum<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Forestry Research Centre, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, P.O. Box 30708, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

<sup>b</sup> Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group, Wageningen University, P.O. Box 47 6700 AA Wageningen, The Netherlands

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyse and explain the historical development of forest policy in Ethiopia from post-World War II era up to present. The analysis was conducted by tracing competing ideas, interests, institutions, and power configurations over a period of time. A qualitative historical analysis method was employed to collect and interpret data along the analytical dimensions of the so-called Policy Arrangement Approach (discourse coalitions, rules, resources and power). The development of forest policy in Ethiopia exhibits a dynamic process of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. The institutionalization and deinstitutionalization process was co-shaped by a complex interplay of structural factors such as national political orientation and economic priorities, environmental calamities; and the dynamics in the global forest related discourses. Forestry was, most of the times, marginalized or integrated into the dominant agricultural development paradigm, where the integration also failed to maximize the synergy between the two sectors. The findings indeed confirm the usefulness of Policy Arrangement Approach to understand and explain such nuanced and dynamic process of (policy) change and continuity.

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### Introduction

The development of forest policy in Ethiopia is strongly intertwined with the evolution and vicissitude of its state structure. Although some accounts claim the beginning of modern Ethiopian state as early as the second-half of the 19th century, it is generally acknowledged that an organized and elaborated state structure only emerged after the Second World War (Bahiru, 1991; Teshale, 1995). Since then, the country went through a series of changes in its polity and politics. The long monarchical rule was replaced by the socialist dictatorship in 1974. Despite the differences in approach (the former used 'divine right' to legitimize its system of rule and the latter was guided by Marxist-Leninist ideology) both regimes were highly authoritarian and governed through centralized power structure (Ottaway, 1990; Young, 1997). The incumbent government that stepped to power following the demise of the socialist regime in 1991 espoused a markedly different system of governance – a decentralized federal polity and a democratic political process (Young, 1997; Vaughan, 2003). Parallel to changes in polity and politics, the principal economic policy also shifted

from a kind of 'laissez-faire', to a command economy, and to a free-market (Keller, 2002; Vaughan, 2003; Dessalegn, 1994, 2004). Those fluxes have had significant implication for the development of forest policy. Forest policy is broadly conceptualized in this study as a social and institutional arrangements designed to steer and guide the use and management of forests; which ranges from different regulatory instruments to a general framework defining fundamental assumptions, principles, objectives and priorities.

Although the incidences of deforestation and forest management interventions by the state was recorded since the beginning of twentieth century (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001), formal forest policy started in Ethiopia during the brief period of Italian annexation (1936–1941). Italians issued various forest laws and regulations and instigated the first structured forest administration called *Milizia Forestale* (Forest Militia) (Melaku, 2003). However, Italians were expelled from the country before adequately introducing their forestry policy. The predominant policy preoccupation of the so-called restored Imperial period (1941–1974) was 'modernization' following Western industrialized countries (Bahiru, 1991). Modernizing agriculture with emphasis on large scale commercial farming was sought to transform the country from agrarian to industrial economy. Forest development and conservation issues were mostly sidestepped during the restored Imperial period. However, after two decades of competitions between actors advocating different ideas and interest, the first

\* Corresponding author at: Forestry Research Centre, P.O. Box 30708 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Tel.: +251 911 17 58 46/31 317 48 61 96/92.

E-mail addresses: [alemayehu.ayana@wur.nl](mailto:alemayehu.ayana@wur.nl), [alemayehunegassa@yahoo.com](mailto:alemayehunegassa@yahoo.com) (A.N. Ayana), [Bas.Arts@wur.nl](mailto:Bas.Arts@wur.nl) (B. Arts), [Freerk.Wiersum@wur.nl](mailto:Freerk.Wiersum@wur.nl) (K.F. Wiersum).

forest law within the country's sovereignty was issued in 1965 (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Melaku, 2003).

Nevertheless, forestry as an autonomous sector has come to high policy attention and institutional profile after mid-1970s when the socialist military council, popularly known as 'Derg', deposed the Imperial regime. The 1975 revolution induced land reform that extinguished all the pre-existing property rights to land and nationalized its holdings including private forests and large estates of agricultural farms. The national political and economic changes coincided with the rise of global fossil fuel prices and the associated energy crisis of the early 1970s that triggered the surge of interest in biomass energy as an alternative source (Arnold et al., 2003). Those international drives manifested in Ethiopia in a strong focus on production forestry and enhanced fuel wood plantations with exotic fast growing tree species (Davidson, 1989; Demel, 2001; Dessalegn, 2004; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). Sizable flows of funds from donors earmarked to forest development and the enthusiasm of the socialist government towards the same end contributed for the establishment of what later become described as the 'strongest' forestry organization in the country's history. Following the 1984–1985 catastrophic drought and subsequent famine, the country's attention gradually shifted from production to multi-functional forests and a broader conceptualization of environmental conservation. Since mid-1990s and up until now both forestry and environmental conservation issues have been overshadowed by the thrusts of accelerated economic growth via agricultural intensification. Such shifts in attention were also reflected in institutional arrangements. For example, forestry as an autonomous sector has gradually disappeared from the scene without installing alternative institutions with similar functions and strengths (Yonas, 2001; Melaku, 2008; Berhanu, 2009; Tibebwa and Negusu, 2009).

This paper attempts to analyse and explain the historical development of forest policy in Ethiopia from post-World War II era up to present. It seeks to answer the following central questions: How has forest policy evolved and changed over time in Ethiopia? Which ideas have guided the changing process? Which interests have been served, by whom and what means? What forest institutions have been built over time? And to what extent have the national (forest) policies been co-shaped by the international forest related discourses? Analyzing the evolution of forest policy in Ethiopia offers an exceptional case that can add to our knowledge because (i) unlike many other African countries where colonial heritage laid its institutional foundation, Ethiopia has been an empire with a long history of independence, (ii) the country has experienced series of radical political changes only within four decades (from semi-feudal monarchy to socialist dictatorship, to decentralized democratic system) which have had impact on the development of forest policy, and (iii) forest policy experienced change during the authoritarian socialist regime that followed extreme shock events such as drought and subsequent famine. In light of these distinctive backgrounds, examining the development of forest policy in Ethiopia contributes towards a better understanding of how historical settings impact the dynamics of contemporary (forest) policy processes and practices. Moreover, this paper shed light on the mechanisms behind institutional change by introducing a new theoretical perspective to the field of policy analysis in Ethiopia. By doing so, unlike most previous studies that emphasize the stagnation of forest policy (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Yonas, 2001; Melaku, 2003, 2008; Tibebwa and Negusu, 2009), our analysis reveals a continuous and dynamic process of institutional transformation co-shaped by a complex interplay of national politico-economic orientation and global forest related discourses.

## Analytical framework

The aim of this paper is to analyse the dynamics of forest policy over a certain period of time. It will do so by tracing competing ideas, interests, and institutions served by different parties over a period of time. The so-called Policy Arrangement Approach (from now on PAA) is taken as an organizing analytical framework to understand and explain the institutionalization and deinstitutionalization process of forest policy.

PAA was selected as analytical framework due to several reasons. First, PAA as elaborated by Van Tatenhove et al. (2000), Arts and Leroy (2006) and Arts and Buizer (2009) distinguishes four interrelated analytical dimensions (discourses, actors, power and rules) to understand policy practices, thus offering a comprehensive approach. Second, PAA is built on other policy theories in the field of institutional, network, and discourse analysis; thereby, it addresses agency, structure, interests and ideas in a dynamic perspective (Arts, 2006; Arts and Buizer, 2009). Third, although it has only recently been developed to study policy dynamics in the environmental field, PAA has already proven to be a suitable analytical tool in various policy fields, including environmental policy, rural development policy, natural resource and forest policy (see Van der Zouwen, 2006; Wiering and Arts, 2006; Buizer, 2008; Arts and Buizer, 2009; Veenman et al., 2009; De Boer, 2009). Fourth, PAA takes a midway position along the *agency-structure* continuum, thus, it connects the daily policy process in which actors interact with structural forces of social and political change (Van der Zouwen, 2006). In our case, for instance, PAA enables us to understand and explain the extent to which the institutionalization and deinstitutionalization process of forest policy has been shaped by changes in polity and politics.

Policy arrangement refers to the way in which a certain policy domain such as forest policy is temporarily shaped in terms of *discourses, actors, power and resources, and rules of the game* (Arts and Buizer, 2009; Arts and Leroy, 2006). Arts and Buizer (2009, p. 343) conceptualized *policy discourses* as 'interpretative schemes, ranging from formal policy concepts and texts to popular narratives and story lines, which give meaning to a policy issue and domain'. Ideas, concepts, and narratives that constitute discourses are continuously produced, reproduced, and transformed into a particular social and policy practices (Van Tatenhove et al., 2000; Arts and Leroy, 2006). In the policy arrangement approach, it is generally assumed that more than one competing discourse exist together at a time that enable actors to group together in coalitions to enhance certain discourses and challenge others. *Actors* are comparable to 'discourse coalition', as distinguished by Hajer (1995), and can be defined as a group of players who share a policy discourse as well as policy-relevant resources, in the context of the given rules of the game. *Power* refers to the dominance of one coalition over the other. It concerns about the ability of actors or actors' coalition to mobilize resources in order to realize their preferred policies (Arts and Buizer, 2009). The fourth dimension of policy arrangement – *rules of the game* – delineates a policy domain by defining the possibilities and constraints of actors to act within those boundaries or certain realms (Van Tatenhove et al., 2000). The rules of the game determine how politics is played and delineate the boundaries of policy coalitions (Arts and Buizer, 2009).

Often, a PAA analysis focuses on existing policy arrangements characterized by a specific institutional configuration at a given moment in time. However, this study particularly pays attention to the historical dynamics of change and continuity of such arrangements. Drawing on Van Tatenhove et al. (2000) and Van der Zouwen (2006) *institutionalization* is conceptualized in this study as a dynamic processes of 'construction and reconstruction' of policy arrangements, for example, when new ideas, concepts and narratives emerge, find their way into policy practices, and become

reflected in new actor coalitions, new rules, new organizational setups and new resource mobilizations. Since the concept of institutionalization is well-known, as it has been extensively studied by policy and institutional theorists (see March and Olsen, 1989; Hajer, 1995; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Hay, 2006; Schmidt, 2008), we pay more attention to the 'newer' concept – *deinstitutionalization* – below.

Broadly defined, *deinstitutionalization* concerns the process of how the once established institutional arrangement start to destabilize by the emergence of new ideas(s) and interests and undergo a dynamic process of institutional metamorphosis. Deinstitutionalization sometimes resembles institutional restructuring in which a once established policy arrangement is reconfigured into a new one, intending to fulfil the normative and procedural goals of its predecessor. However, in the 'strict' sense Mol (2009) defined *deinstitutionalization* as a process of continuing stagnation, erosion, decline, or even disappearance of institutions, without the emergence of new institutions that fulfil similar functions and have similar strengths. Examples of such a process in environmental policy include significant downscaling or even dismantling of environmental state agencies, the abolishment of environmental laws, the systematic downsizing of nature protection rules and resources, the removal of environmental standards and licensing systems, and the de-legitimation of environmental protection and nature conservation without successfully installing alternative environmental institutions (ibid).

## Research methodology

Qualitative historical analysis is employed to understand and interpret the forest policy process in Ethiopia from post-World War II era up to present. The historical analysis follow the traditions of George and Bennett (2005) and employs 'process tracing' that involves systematic and theoretically informed analysis of historical narratives to examine changing patterns of dominant policy discourses and practices. We have made use of the theoretical concepts introduced above (PAA) to guide the qualitative in-depth analysis. Yin (2003) and George and Bennett (2005) justify that in a historical analysis where researcher has no control over the events, prior development of theoretical stance will significantly facilitate data collection and analysis. De Jong et al. (2011) note "theory provides a rationale for the information that is to be collected and how it is to be interpreted". Data was collected using semi-structured key-informant interview and document analysis during field study from June 2010 to December 2011 in Ethiopia. In total, seventy-eight (78) in-depth interviews have been carried out with key-informants directly and indirectly involved in forest policy process of Ethiopia (politicians, bureaucrats, NGOs officials, academicians and research scientists). Since the overall aim of this study is to gain better insights into the complexities of policy process and make sense of patterns in historical perspective, the interviewees were selected to ensure variety of opinion, but not statistical representation (see Yin, 2003). Thus, informants assumed to have different opinions, knowledge, and interest in the forest policy processes were chosen by integrating cluster and snowball sampling techniques (see Kumar, 2005, for details of these techniques). Qualitative and quantitative content analysis was conducted on documentary sources including policy and legal codes, academic literatures both published and grey documents, statistical records, newsletters, and newspaper articles. One source of information was used to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources to increase the validity of the findings. For example, when possible, information from the literature was triangulated by interviewing the author(s) who wrote or currently working on the issue related to the topic

of interest. All text blocks and core ideas that emerged from interview transcripts, and documentary sources were interpreted along PAA theoretical concepts, first into several thematic areas. Then, the thematic areas were systematically decomposed into a few themes or codes. The revised codes were further used to reconstruct policy discourses and synthesize the rest of the data sets.

## Development of forest policy under different historical periods

### *The 'restored' Imperial period (1941–1974)*

Forest policy has evolved in Ethiopia very lately and in a distinct way as compared to many other African countries where a colonial forest service laid its institutional foundation (Turyahabwe and Banana, 2008; Kirchberger, 2010). The first recorded forest management intervention by the state has begun a century ago through introduction of fast growing exotic species notably *Eucalyptus* to augment the supply of fuelwood and construction material from natural forests (Demel et al., 2010). The *Eucalyptus* that initially introduced around major urban centres later became the main components of farm forestry practices in the country (Davidson, 1989; Pohjonen and Pukkala, 1990). The first organized forest administration was started during the brief period of Italian annexation (1936–1941). Italians issued various forest legislations and instigated the first structured forest administration called *Milizia Forestale* (Forest Militia) for inventory, supervision, and extensive exploitation plans (Gebremarkos, 1998; Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Melaku, 2003). However, Italians were expelled from the country before adequately introducing their forestry policy.

The development of forest policy during the so-called restored Imperial period is best understood by examining (1) the competition between *discourse coalitions*, (2) the emergence of certain *power relations*, and (3) the formulation of specific *rules*. When the Imperial government returned to throne after five years of exile in UK, the overwhelming political discourse was consolidating territorial control and modernizing the country following the model of 'Western' countries (Ottaway, 1990; Bahiru, 1991; Teshale, 1995). The Imperial ruling elite sought commercial agriculture as a main vehicle to realize their modernization drive. Readily available natural resources such as timber from the forest was turned to be the main source of income to fuel the economy and forest land was considered as wasteland or frontier to expand the emerging commercial agriculture. The five years Imperial government plans that officially stipulated agricultural modernization encouraged investors to convert forest lands into commercial farms like coffee and tea plantations in southern and southwest Ethiopia. Some of the incentives for private investors include exemption of land tax during the early years of agricultural investment, granting lease for long duration, and converting forest 'waste' land to 'valuable' agricultural land was used as a precondition to claim for land ownership rights (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Dessalegn, 2008). Moreover, in the continuous effort to re-establish the functioning of the government after the ruins of war, the Emperor 'too generously' distributed hundreds of thousands hectares of forestlands to the royal family members and the dignitaries, civil servants, military forces, and war returnees. The recipients were also encouraged to convert the forestland into agricultural land with the aim of increasing state revenue and create a landed class loyal to the Emperor (Melaku, 2003).

At the same time, forestry professionals, often expatriate, problematized the fast depletion of forest resources, and advocated the need for strong protection (see Melaku, 2003, pp. 16–17 for

the detail reports advocating protection discourse<sup>2</sup>). All reports stressed the fast depletion of forest resources, the negligence of the forest sector by the Imperial government, and the urgency to formulate forest laws and establish an autonomous forestry organization that helps to implement the law and take care of the forest. For instance, the report of Mooney in 1955 cited in Melaku (2003, p. 79) described the forest depletion in western Ethiopia as follows:

I notice with regret and great apprehension the dangerous and short-sighted tendency that exists to make quick money out of these forests without any thought for the future. This is certainly not in the national interest. Throughout my tour in the west I saw on all sides the destruction of forests in progress.

Melaku (2003) described that the highland forests estimated to be 5.5 million ha around mid-1930 was declined to about 3 million ha in the early 1960s. Then the next question is why the Imperial ruling elites were negligent to the forest sector and why the protectionist discourse was unable to impact the institutional setups during much of the Imperial period. Our analysis reveals that the balance of power between the two discourse coalitions was not proportional. The modernization discourse was advanced by the ruling elites that controlled all state machineries. As clearly manifested in the five years perspective plans, the interest of the ruling elites was economic gains from the forest, whereas a strong forest law and an autonomous forestry institution was assumed to hinder such short-term exploitation (Melaku, 2003). The modernization discourse also anchored in other hegemonic discourse, e.g. that modernization based on the Western model could protect the territorial integrity of Ethiopia and safeguard it from colonial encapsulation that encircled the country from east, west, north, and south in Africa (Clapham, 1988; Ottaway, 1990; Bahiru, 1991; Vaughan, 2003). On the other hand, the major impulses and support for the protectionist discourse often came from colonial forest services and 'trans-imperial' networks of scientists in the colonial protectorate of Africa, India, and Australia (Melaku, 2003; Kirchberger, 2010). Specifically, the ruling Ethiopian elites mistrusted the pressing reports to protect the highland forests written by expatriates, mostly British foresters. They considered these as an expression of the British desire to conserve the upstream of the Blue Nile to control the erosion risks to the downstream irrigation projects in the former colonial Sudan and Anglo-Egyptian possessions. The common belief that the colonial interests in Africa were driven by the exploration of the Blue Nile made the successive Ethiopian rulers cynical about any discourse in connection to this river and its basin. The Nile Treaty that was signed between Menelik II of Abyssinia (present Ethiopia) and the UK government in May 1902 was one such example. Article III of this treaty clearly demand Ethiopia not to construct, or allow to be constructed, any work across the Blue Nile basins including along the inland Lake Tana except in agreement with UK government, a pact that persists to the contemporary Nile debate.

In addition to the political sensitivity of the issue, the protectionist argument was often founded on the conventional story that 40% of the Ethiopian highland was once covered by high-forests and has been dwindling at an alarming rate (150,000–200,000 ha deforestation per year) and that recommended the urgency of protecting the remaining forests (Gebremarkos, 1998; Hoben, 1995; Wøien, 1995). According to Melaku (2003) these unsubstantiated narratives about forest cover and rate of deforestation probably

entered into academic writings towards the end of 1950s through FAO reports. The same author claims that although such argument persisted for more than five decades, it failed to convince decision-makers and created rather a pessimistic attitude towards the potential of forest resources in the country.

In summary, the continuous effort by protectionist coalition to establish a professional model of forest administration was not successful until early 1960s. This can be grasped from H.F. Mooney eleventh report compiled in 1961 and cited in Melaku (2003, p. 93):

In spite of the advice that has been given by professional foresters over the past ten years, I regret to say that, so far no serious effort has been made to protect and manage any of the forests of this country.

After two decades of competition between the two coalitions, eventually the need for formulating legislation for stimulating improved forest management was accepted. The first draft forest legislation was presented to the Imperial parliament in 1953. It faced stiff resistance from the parliament ostensibly that it contradicted the constitutional article about private free-holdings and confusion between public and private forests. The initially, said to be, comprehensive draft forest law was dissociated into three weak and inconsistent forest proclamations (State, Private, and Protective) to appease the members of the Parliament (*de facto* nobility and the landed class) (Melaku, 2003). Finally, the first forest law within the country's sovereignty was enacted in 1965, twelve years after submitting the first draft bill, and after having been rejected four times by lawmakers. Some of the reasons for such drastic move to pass the law that was blocked for more than a decade were: (1) during the amendment processes the draft law became softer so that the final version was weak enough to be acceptable by the nobility and the landed class. For instance, articles demanding strong forest protection were made less strict for private forests (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001). (2) After a long impediment of the draft bill the protectionist coalition compromised their stance to overcome the stiff resistance from parliament to have at least a 'weak' forest law. Since the nobility and the landed class controlled both the legislative and executive arms of the state, they again mobilized their power to delay and manipulate the subsequent implementation instruments and resource allocation (Melaku, 2003; Vaughan, 2003). The detailed regulations were issued in 1968 after four more years of fight over meaning and interest. By the time that the regulations were issued the organization that was supposed to implement the plan remained weak, understaffed, and without sufficient financial resources. For example, Melaku (2003) reported that the semi-autonomous forestry department was downsized to section level within the ministry of agriculture and the only forestry-training centre in Ambo Agricultural School was closed a couple of years before the law was issued. The same report indicated, only 10% of the budget that the sector demanded was allocated between the years 1968–1973. In general, the impact of the 1965 forest law on institutional setups and other power arrangements were less significant (Melaku, 2003). Some analysts characterized the Imperial forest law as weak, vague and geared towards exploitation (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Melaku, 2003).

#### *Early socialist era (1975–1985)*

Although the need to institutionalize a professional model of forest management was recognized well before the downfall of the monarchy, forest policy only received high political attention and institutional profile following the mid-1970s Ethiopian revolution. The revolution among others induced land reform guided by Marxist political ideology that extinguished all the pre-existing property

<sup>2</sup> Some of the most prominent reports advocating forest protection discourse were: the report of the American forester David Rusu (1944–1946), Logan (1946) and H.F. Mooney (1953–1961) from British Colonial Forest Service, Swain (1954), F. Breitenbach (1961–1962) the German Forest advisor to Ethiopia, and Ethiopian veteran botanist and forester Wolde-Michael Kelecha (1961).

rights to land and nationalized its holdings, including many of the private forests and commercial farm estates. The 1973–1974 great Ethiopian famine that precipitated the collapse of the Imperial regime signalled the failure of modernization driven by commercial agriculture (Clapham, 1988; Dessalegn, 1994). The revolution and the subsequent weakening of the modernization discourse created a policy space for the *protectionist coalition* to reorganize itself and push its agenda within the socialist context. The socialist government on its part wanted to replace the vast agricultural lands confiscated from the feudal aristocracy and nobility with grand State-owned plantations for political and economic purposes. Politically, they wanted to destroy the economic base of the landed elite (Clapham, 1988; Ottaway, 1990). Economically, they sought to tap the growing demand for wood products by enhancing production forests, particularly with fast growing exotic species (Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). The convergence of professionals' enthusiasm and political priority created high time in the history of Ethiopian forest policy. However, the top-down command-and-control system of the socialist military government did not allow open competition between groups advocating strong production forestry and/or other land use options. Yet, dissent and unheeded response to the dominant policy were expressed through idiomatic expressions, jokes, and poetries (Pausewang, 2002). One of such popular poetry coined in Amharic (Ethiopian national language) during this period reads as:

Deh'ina deh'ina mere't ba'hirza'f lebese  
Yeme'yarso a'tito hizbu iya'lekese (Fekade, 2002)

Literally translated: “all the fertile lands are covered with eucalyptus while the masses/peasants are crying in need of land for farming.” Beside the non-participatory demarcation of agricultural lands for tree plantation, the ill-defined use right to the planted trees created long-lasting hostility between the peasant population and the state (Alemayehu and Wiersum, 2006). The socialist government established an autonomous forestry institution – Forest and Wildlife Conservation and Development Authority (FAWCDA) within two years after the revolution. This institution has been characterized as the strongest forestry authority ever having been active in Ethiopia (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Yonas, 2001; Melaku, 2003). Several studies documented various success stories during the operational period of FAWCDA. For instance, Berhanu (2009) noted that the period of FAWCDA was the ‘golden age’ of forestry, characterized by intensive forest development activities, the outcome of which are most of the currently existing plantations; including the extensive fuel wood plantations around urban areas. On top of the national political and economic changes the global trend, particularly the discourse on fuelwood crisis around the mid-1970s, contributed to the increasing focus on forestry (this will be elaborated below). Such global discourse attracted sizable funds from multilateral and bilateral organizations including FAO, UNDP, and SIDA earmarked to forest development, capacity building, and human resource enhancement. The establishment of new research centres and academic institutes geared towards production forestry such as Forestry Research Centre, Wood Utilization Research Centre, and Wondo Genet College of Forestry are often mentioned as success stories under the auspice of FACWDA (Yonas, 2001; Demel, 2004; Tibebwa and Negusu, 2009).

The enactment of the new forest law in 1980 further strengthened the institutionalization of forestry. This law was an extension of the 1975 rural land reform, which according to some commentators, guided by radical political precedence without considering ‘rational’ economic, social, and environmental objectives (Dessalegn, 1994; Melaku, 2003). As a reflection of the then dominant political discourse, the preamble of the 1980 forest law states:

Whereas, Ethiopia's forest which formerly covered most of the country has been depleted by the defunct feudo-bourgeois for selfish interest of the aristocracy and the nobility; [–]Whereas, immediate and decisive action must be taken in order to avert this disasters situation by **agitating** and coordinating the **broad masses** to plant, conserve, develop and administer the country's forest and wildlife resources;

Although the proclamation recognized the role of grass-root organization such as Peasant Association (PA) in forest development, enormous discretionary power was bestowed to FAWCDA, a central government agency, to designate, demarcate, and administer all forested land where the authority deemed it necessary for conservation and production purposes. Consequently, the authority undertook extensive demarcation works and established 58 National Forest Priority Areas (NFPAs) covering an area of about 4.8 million ha (Demel et al., 2010). In many cases these NFPAs incorporated private agricultural lands and communal grazing areas through blanket notification or forceful eviction. In order to administer all NFPAs, FAWCDA increased its staffs about ten-folds. And the size of forest estate plantations increased from 42,300 ha in 1973 to about 250,000 ha in 1985 (Demel et al., 2010). This was made possible by a comparatively adequate annual budget that had already increased seven-folds compared to the years before the establishment of FAWCDA (Melaku, 2003).

Parallel to the development in the forestry sector, the socialist government took various measures to enhance agricultural productivity and transform the rural economy. Some of those measures include:

- Implementation of radical land reform that abolished the tenant-landlord relationship and private ownership of land (realization of a popular slogan ‘Land to the Tiller’).
- Introduction of a new village level government structure, Peasant Association (PA) entrusted with the administration of local affairs.
- Organization of smallholder farmers into producers cooperatives (collectivization program).
- Clustering of small and scattered villages into mega villages (villagization and resettlement programs), ostensibly to overcome fragmentation of farmland and to offer efficient rural infrastructures and social services.

However, many of these measures were later found to be counterproductive and agricultural sector grew less than planned during the socialist regime. Habtemariam (2008) indicated that agriculture grew at an average rate of 0.6% per annum from 1973 to 1980 and 2.1% from 1980 to 1987. Factors that contributed to low agricultural growth included increased incidences of drought, extended civil war and political unrest, ‘strict’ centralized planning and government price control, forceful resettlement and villagization program, and the conscription of young and productive peasants for military purpose (Hoben, 1995; Dessalegn, 2008; Habtemariam, 2008).

#### *The late socialist era and the transition period (1986–1994)*

The ascendancy of production forestry discourse with an overemphasis on fast growing exotic species during the late 70s divided the former *protectionist coalition* into two rival groups: the one that merged its interest with the then prevailing discourse (production forestry) and other group that criticized exotic species in favour of indigenous ones and proclaimed the adverse effect of the former on the environment (Davidson, 1989; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). However, due to the vanguard political nature of the then socialist military regime the underlying

*environmental conservation coalition* had never posed visible challenge to the then dominant *production forestry coalition* until mid-1980s. Following the 1984–1985 devastating drought and subsequent famine in the country, the conservation coalition nonetheless got policy space to bring their argument into the forefront. It conceptualized the value of forests and other woody vegetation primarily for environmental functions such as land stabilization, erosion control, regulation of climate and hydrologic flows. The proponents of this discourse were predominantly pooled from soil science, agro-forestry, conservation biology, ecology and similar disciplines. The problem associated with promoting monoculture exotic species such as the alleged ecological drawbacks of Eucalyptus and the mysterious mass-dying of Cyprus species in some parts of Ethiopia was presented as evidence against the production forestry stance (Davidson, 1989).

Simultaneously with the episode of drought and famine in Ethiopia, a shift in global discourse (see section “The impacts of global discourse on the national forest policy process”) also helped to switch the balance of power from production forestry to environmental conservation. A visible breakthrough was observed when the environmental conservation coalition secured a gigantic fund, popularly known as the Ethiopian Highland Reclamation Study (EHRS), from the Swiss government. The findings of this extensively sponsored program have been published in several series since 1986. A range of key data and statements about soil loss and land degradation in Ethiopia were produced and entered the policy debate, enabling the coalition endorsing environmental conservation (Hoben, 1995; Keeley and Scoones, 2003). Following the research of EHRS, this coalition framed an influential discourse that directly linked the devastating famine in Ethiopia to environmental degradation, specifically the loss of soil fertility and the subsequent reduction in agricultural productivity. It recommended building extensive soil conservation measures through food-for-work program, sponsored by several donors as a ‘win-win’ solution to fill the food shortage in the short run and increasing agricultural productivity through soil conservation measures in the long-run (Hoben, 1995; Keeley and Scoones, 2000). Hoben (1995) noted that the ‘invention’ of this discourse enabled the Western donors to justify the massive aid programs to the socialist dictatorial regime through local-level environmental reclamation projects that address the long-term underlying causes of famine, rather than merely alleviating its symptoms. For instance, the World Food Program (WFP) had implemented ‘project 2488’, the largest single food-for-work project in Africa, to support the country-wide soil conservation program of the Ministry of Agriculture (Pausewang, 2002). Wøien (1995) reported that between 1985 and 1990 the ‘project 2488’ mobilized 35 million man days per annum and constructed more than 1 million km of bunds on agricultural land and 1/2 million km of terraces on hillsides.

While the dominant discourse markedly shifted towards environmental conservation after mid-1980s, the weak production forestry coalition continued advocating the importance of an autonomous forestry, however, without significantly impacting the institutional setups. Among others, this coalition produced the Ethiopian Forestry Action Program (EFAP) in 1994, a comprehensive four volumes document, with a support from FAO and UNDP. EFAP was prepared following the general framework of the Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP) that was initiated at the ninth World Forestry Congress held in Mexico in 1985. The EFAP initiative basically emerged from the FAWCDA’s ten years plan (1984–1993) that targeted to increase the forest cover of Ethiopia to 24% in the planned period (Melaku, 2008).

The primary programs of EFAP include tree and forest production, forest industry development, forest resources and ecosystem management, and wood energy development (EFAP, 1994). It is clear from its contents that the EFAP programs were dominated

by the classical production forestry paradigm. Owing to the weakening of such discourse at that time and the fall of the socialist regime in 1991, EFAP has never been able to impact the formal policy arrangement neither was it accompanied by an adequate implementation mechanism. The document remained an in-house reference for forestry sympathizers who voiced alarm about the danger and the consequences of not establishing an autonomous forestry sector. The Tropical Forestry Action Program was also unable to coordinate international support to forest related programs at the national level and it ceased to serve as an international framework in June 1995 (Melaku, 2008). As the period between mid-1970s and mid-1980s was often mentioned as a ‘golden age’ in the history of Ethiopian forestry, the time since mid-1990s has been marked as a period of institutional ‘stagnation’ by most foresters. The next section examines whether forest policy has further stagnated since mid-1990s as most foresters believe, or has been going through an institutional metamorphosis or adaptation to fit to the dominant discourse.

#### *Development of forest policy under the Federal Republic (1995–up to present)*

Mid-1990s witnessed landmark reforms in social, economic, and political spheres of the country. The most significant one was the adoption of a new Constitution in 1995 that heralded a decentralized federal polity and a democratic political process (see FDRE, 1995). The intention of decentralization in Ethiopia was to transfer constitutionally specified authorities from central government to autonomous regional states and local governments. The constitution bestowed substantial decision-making autonomy to the sub-national units including the authority to manage resources under their jurisdiction (Meheret, 2007; Young, 1998). Within this broader policy framework, forest management authority has been legally shared between government agencies at different administrative tiers. The new plural political platform also enabled the involvement of non-state actors, including community-based institutions and NGOs into forest governance. Nonetheless, the national government remained mandated to set standards and policy frameworks on affairs concerning environmental and natural resource management. Article 51, sub-article 5 of the 1995 constitution particularly vested the power to enact laws for the utilization and conservation of land and other natural resources, including forestry, to the Federal government. Therefore, this is why our current analysis concerns the development of forest policy at federal level which is in congruence with Mol’s (2009) assertion that – regardless of globalization and decentralization trends – the ‘nation-state’ remains vital to understand political processes and outcomes.

The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) that stepped to power following the demise of the socialist regime in 1991 declared accelerated economic growth through *Agricultural Intensification* (AI). Proponents of this AI discourse proclaim that improving the performance of agriculture will not only increase the income of rural households but also increases market surplus that eventually provide more agricultural products and raw materials to the urban economy and the industry. This in turn will promote industrial production and will dynamically bond rural–urban economies (FDRE, 2001: Amharic version; Dessalegn, 2008). Since its official inauguration in 1993, AI has accorded a very high political attention and popularized through all means of government communications including extensive media campaigns. Several strategy and policy documents were issued that revealed government commitment towards accelerated economic growth and agriculture as a centre-piece of its development policy (see Habtemariam, 2008). Rural Development Policy and Strategy (RDPS) document drafted in mid-1990s and issued in 2001 is

one of such document disclosing government plans and strategies concerning agricultural and rural development including forestry. Content analysis of the RDPS document revealed how government perceived the role of forest in supporting the envisaged rapid economic growth. Forestry issues were given marginal attention and are mentioned only in ten lines in the document of 280 pages. It is conceptualized as an agro-forestry intervention where trees are grown on agricultural lands to ameliorate soil fertility and thereby boost crop production or to serve as livestock feeds. The RDPS document note:

Forestry activities shall not be performed for the sake of forest development per se. Trees to be planted shall provide tangible economic benefit to the people. It must be an agro-forestry undertaking. (FDRE, 2001, p.125) [Amharic version translated].

Explicitly, the strategy focuses on how forests or trees supplement agricultural production and contribute to the planned rapid economic growth rather than developing the forest sector by its own virtues. The message in the RDPS document clearly implied the shift in government priority from forest development to agricultural intensification. The shift in government attention was also manifested in organizational setups. The former forest department in the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environmental Protection was downscaled to a subsection under the Ministry of Agriculture with fewer than six professional staffs. From 2008 to 2010 forestry team was almost non-existent at federal level and some of its activities were subsumed under Sustainable Land Use and Watershed Management Case Team (Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). Again, in 2011 Forestry was reorganized as a Case Team under the Natural Resources Conservation and Development Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture.

Government claims that the integration of forest development with crop and livestock production has enhanced the synergy between the two sectors. It advocates the aptness of the new arrangement and the progress in resource management including the increase in forest cover from 3% to 9% following the implementation of the strategy (MoA, 2010). However, adversaries of this view argue that AI overemphasize crop production and marginalize other components. For instance, Tilaye (1998) and Yonas (2001) note the marginalization of forestry where substantial amount of financial and human resources were relocated to intensify crop production. According to these authors, forestry professionals in the Agricultural offices are intentionally assigned to undertake extension activities aimed at enhancing crop production which further undermine the already limited capacity of the forestry sector. Habtemariam (2008) notes that natural resource sectors including forestry, soil and water conservation altogether accounted for less than 5% of the total extension work between 1995 and 2004. Mulugeta and Tadesse (2010) also reported that during the last decade, forestry sector received less than 10% of the overall budgets allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture both at the federal and regional levels. Similarly, Yonas (2001, p. 17) comments 'while crop and livestock have a relatively better airtime and print space in the media, such is not the case for forestry, missing out an important opportunity'. He summarizes the dominance of agriculture over forestry as: 'the intention of integration has actually resulted in forestry being completely assimilated by agriculture' (Yonas, 2001, pp. 15–16).

While AI remained inviolable government policy priority, a weak coalition of actors has been advocating to bring a strong and autonomous forestry back to the policy scene (Yonas, 2001; Berhanu, 2009; Tibebwa and Negusu, 2009; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). To fit into the government policy priority (rapid economic growth) and to get the approval of the decision-makers, these proponents emphasized the potential contribution of forests to

the envisioned accelerated economic growth. Series of meetings and workshops aimed to promote economic forestry have been organized over decades and policy briefs were presented to the decision-makers.<sup>3</sup> These briefs stressed, amongst others, the inaptness of the existing institutional arrangement both for sustainable management of the resources and for enhancing the contribution of forestry sector to the economic growth and unanimously called for the establishment of a strong and an autonomous forestry sector. In the continuous effort of reinstating a strong forestry sector, a new forest policy was ultimately approved in 2007. It emphasizes *economic forestry* which focuses on how to meet forest product demands of the society and increase the contribution of forest resources to the national economy. Its general objectives read: 'to meet public demand in forest products and foster the contribution of forests in enhancing the economy of the country through appropriately conserving and developing forest resources'. Given the long stand and position of advocates for forest conservation in Ethiopia, it is rather strange to have such one-dimensional, production-focused policy objectives. However, these advocates already recognized that conservation stance remains weak in the era of the dominant AI discourse, and compelled to compromise and align their position with the government's overarching priority for rapid economic growth (Melaku, 2008; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010). The policy document recognized two types of forest ownership (state and private). It paid special attention to encourage the engagement of the private sector in forest production and industrial development. It also demanded the establishment of an autonomous forestry organization to implement the policy objectives.

Although the enactment of the 2007 forest policy was considered as an achievement, its impact on the other institutional arrangements (particularly, organizational setup and resources for implementation), is less significant. First, the process of formulating the implementation instruments such as directives and guidelines has taken more than five years, and it is not issued yet. Second, the plan to establish an autonomous forestry organization that supposed to coordinate forestry activities, particularly at national level has not been realized yet. Third, partly due to the above two factors, the much desired involvement of the private sector in forest development, particularly large and medium level investment in forestry has remained insignificant. On the other hand, although tree plantations and forest product marketing by smallholder farmers have significantly increased in the last two decades, the official statistics often underestimate the contribution of forestry sector to the national economy and rural livelihoods primarily due to lack of reliable data and methodological limitations (Ensermu and Abenet, 2011). Finally, the synergy between the new forest policy and the government overarching development priority (agricultural intensification) is weak. The status quo reflects the lingering tendency of an uneasy marriage between forestry and agriculture. Often, the adoption of the new forest policy is viewed by the advocates of a strong forestry sector as a breakthrough and a step forward (see Melaku, 2008; Berhanu, 2009; Tibebwa and Negusu, 2009). However, under certain political circumstances, particularly in developing countries, policies and legislations can be introduced to appease certain groups, such as donors or NGOs, without

<sup>3</sup> Some of the remarkable workshop with policy recommendation includes 'Imperative Problems Associated with Forestry in Ethiopia' in 2001, 'Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia' in 2007, 'Ethiopian forestry at crossroads: the need for a strong institution' in 2008, 'Ensuring integrated forest development in Ethiopia in the era of climate change' in 2009, 'Multiple Roles of Forest in Ethiopia vs. Associated Challenges' in 2011, and several discussion forums were also organized by Forestry Society of Ethiopia.

having any intention of enforcing them (Young, 1998; Grainger and Konteh, 2007). Typical characteristics of such masqueraded policies may include lack of internal consistency, incompatibility with government overarching policies and discourses, and reluctance to allocate sufficient financial and human resource to implement their objectives. These characteristics also apply to the 2007 forest policy of Ethiopia, which has remained 'dormant' for almost five years.

We further examined why the proponents of strong and autonomous forestry institution were unable to win political support even after two decades of deliberation to bring forestry back to the forefront. A major reason is that forestry was not well aligned with the Agricultural Intensification (AI) policy. This policy was intensively promoted by the ruling party (Mulugeta, 2005) and formed the cornerstone of all other socioeconomic policies (Dessalegn, 2008). Policy-makers weighted forest development options mainly in terms of its contribution to this dominant paradigm. We identified several interrelated factors that explain why an autonomous forestry sector is less appealing to the ruling elite that promote the AI paradigm. The AI strategy is anchored on three main premises: ensuring accelerated economic growth, mobilizing the 'abundant' resources of the country (land and labour), and use of capital inexpensive technologies (see FDRE, 2001). With respect to accelerated economic growth, the strategy asserts that structural economic transformation has to be based on the economic activities that the majority of the population are engaged in and that contribute significantly to GDP (Gross Domestic Products). Compared to the aggregate agricultural sector that accounts for about 42% of the GDP and employs more than 80% of the population, the forestry sector contributes only 4% to the GDP and employs less than 5% of the population (EFAP, 1994; FDRE, 2011; Ensermu and Abenet, 2011). Considering the mobilization of resources, in contrast to forestry, the smallholders dominated agricultural production system is better able to mobilize the rural population. And regarding the use of capital inexpensive technologies, smallholder agricultural development requires less physical capital (finance and technological innovation) than forestry. AI strategy also emphasizes accelerated economic growth that can be achieved within one election term (five years) and the relatively short-term agricultural development options strongly limit attention to the more long-term forest development options. Moreover, despite the intensification rhetoric of the AI strategy, the actual agricultural development practices resulted mainly in a spatial expansion of land under cultivation, most often at the expense of forest and wood lands. For example, the cultivated area in Ethiopia has increased from 9.44 million ha in 2001 to 15.4 million ha in 2009 (Ensermu and Abenet, 2011). The proponents of an autonomous forestry sector often consider that the ruling elites are purposively shunning away from the persisting urge to establish strong forestry institution due to their fear that such institution could constrain agricultural production (Yonas, 2001; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010; Ensermu and Abenet, 2011). The strong elitist process through which AI policy has been initiated and maintained hegemony over two decades reflects the 'closed' policy-making tradition in Ethiopia (Pausewang, 2002; Mulugeta, 2005; Meheret, 2007). The hegemonic position of the agricultural policy is a typical example in which the ruling party leaderships translating their ideological pre-commitment into policy instruments with little or no input from professional experts (Keeley and Scoones, 2003; Mulugeta, 2005). Under these circumstance where ideological pre-commitment set the frame of references for a policy and the means for its implementation, divergent views and its proponents have little or peripheral space to influence policy (Mulugeta, 2005). From such a point of view, it is no surprise that the proposals to establish a viable forestry institution are not heeded.

### The impacts of global discourse on the national forest policy process

As indicated in the analysis above, the development of forest policy during the Imperial era saw very little input from the international policy processes (Hoben, 1995; Melaku, 2003). However, in the era of growing international forest related discourses and development cooperation (Umans, 1993; Singer, 2008; Arts and Buizer, 2009) global impact on national forest policies gradually increased. For example, the rise in global fossil fuel price in the early 1970s, particularly, the influential discourse on the 'other energy crisis' (Eckholm, 1975) significantly shaped the focus of national forest policy in developing countries including Ethiopia (Arnold et al., 2003; Demel, 2001). As a result of such international process, production forests with fast growing exotic species were emphasized in Ethiopia to tap the 'booming' demand in wood products (EFAP, 1994; Gebremarkos, 1998). The institutionalization of such stance was further facilitated by sizable funds and capacity-building programs from multilateral and bilateral agencies such as FAO, UNDP and SIDA. Towards the end of 1980s, however, global attention gradually switched towards sustainable forest management where multiple-uses of forests such as maintenance of genetic diversity, watershed protection, and regulation of climate change were emphasized (Umans, 1993; Arts, 2006; Arts and Buizer, 2009). This shift of emphasis was reflected in Ethiopia when the production forestry oriented organization, FAWCDA, dissolved and merged with soil and water conservation sectors. In the aftermath of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, forestry was reconstituted under the newly established Ministry of Natural Resources Development and Environmental Protection.

In retrospect, one could argue that the impact of external factors on national forest policy remained negligible during the socialist era. This is not to neglect the significant role of the international organizations mentioned above, specifically, the remarkable contribution of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in the field of forestry education and research. However, their influences were mainly restricted to the technical sphere and minimal in reshaping policy paths. For example, the preparation of the Ethiopian Forestry Action Program (EFAP), which was predominantly supported and pushed by the international community, took nearly ten years to convince policy-makers and translate into implementation instruments. The delay was predominantly attributed to the impenetrable tendency of the then socialist authoritarian regime. In contrast, the period since mid-1990s has seen a considerable increase in the influence of the international discourses on the national forest related policies (Young, 1998; Keeley and Scoones, 2000; Melaku, 2008). Such marked increase is attributed to several changes in the global and national political contexts. Globally, the increasing pressure from donor countries and powerful international institutions such as the World Bank and IMF towards democratic governance (Arts, 2006; Singer, 2008) enabled the emergence and growing role of non-state actors in the national policy process. Internally, the demise of the socialist regime and the adoption of democratic system of governance enabled the process of sharing forest management authority between multiple governmental levels, as multilevel governance. At the same time, the new system stimulated the involvement of non-state entities from market and civil society organizations such as community cooperatives and NGOs into the forest governance process, as multi-actor governance. As multi-level governance arrangement, for example, the regional states are empowered to not only administer land and forest resources, but also mandated to formulate and implement social and economic development policies including forest law. Within the multi-actor governance initiative, the number of NGOs and community-based



**Table 1**  
the evolution of forest policy arrangement over different historical periods.

| Policy arrangement dimensions | Historical periods  |  |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
|                               | Imperial era (1941–1974)  | Early socialist era (1975–1985)  | Late socialist era and the transition period (1986–1994)  | Federal republic (1995– up to present)   |
| Dominant discourse coalition  | Agricultural modernization: Imperial ruling elites (the landed class and the nobility)                                    | Production forestry: classical foresters, FAO, UNDP, and SIDA  | Environmental conservation: ecologists, soil scientists, agro-foresters, and biologist  | Agricultural intensification: ruling party, private sector, and World Bank   |
| Competing discourse coalition | Forest protection: forestry professionals (mostly expatriates)  | Multi-functional forestry: ecologists and conservation biologist   | Production forestry: classical foresters, SIDA, and FAO   | Economic forestry: forestry professionals  |
| Power configuration           | 'Absolute' power in the hand of the Emperor and the nobilities who owned most of the forest lands                         | Highly centralized power arrangement. Top-down flows of command and little or no room for open competition between different views   | Authoritative power with the centre, some room for competition between different discourse coalitions   | Decentralized democratic system, continuation of the past authoritarian tradition, increasing role of non-state actors                                     |
| Rules                         | The five years Imperial Government Plans, the 1965 Forest Law, geared towards exploitation of resources and modernization | The 1975 Land Reform, State ownership of land and all natural resources including forests, the 1980 Forest Law, enormous discretionary power to the State Forest Agency (FAWCDA) | The 1994 Ethiopian Forestry Action Program (EFAP), the 1994 forest law, overemphasis to the environmental role of forests, recognition of regional State forests (first time) | The 1995 constitution, the 2001 Rural Development policy and strategy, and the 2007 Forest Policy, continuation of the State ownership of land and forests |

institutions involved in forest and related environmental governance (e.g. Participatory Forest Management Program) steadily increased after the second half of the 1990s. Beside the rise in number, those actors diversified their level of engagement from the conventional policy implementation role to advocacy, policy evaluation, and monitoring activities. However, examining the depth of institutional reform and the extent to which the non-state actors influenced the decision-making process are beyond the scope of this paper.

Moreover, the role and the involvement of Ethiopia in the international negotiations and the adoption of forest and environment related treaties have significantly increased since mid-1990. For instance, the country is a signatory of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Ethiopia is also a pilot country for UN and World Bank REDD<sup>plus</sup> initiatives and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto protocol since 2008. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia led the African heads of states on climate change negotiation at Copenhagen (COP 15). He is re-elected to chair the African heads of state and government on the UNFCCC climate change conference held in Durban, South Africa (COP 17). Despite the growing role of Ethiopia in the international (climate) negotiations and treaties, critiques point out that little effort has been made in the country to harness deforestation and land degradation (Melaku, 2008; Tibebe and Negusu, 2009; Demel et al., 2010; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010; Ensermu and Abenet, 2011). In reaction to this claim, the government of Ethiopia issued the Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy in 2011. Unlike the other government overarching strategies such as RDPS (see above) that loosely mention forestry issue, CRGE strategy stipulates forestry as one of its four pillars (see FDRE, 2011). However, it is too early to assess the effect of this new initiative on the Ethiopian forestry sector.

## Discussion and conclusions

Throughout the history of modern Ethiopia, agricultural development paradigm has been firmly entrenched while forestry was mostly marginalized with the exception of the period between mid-1970s and mid-1980s. In this paper, it is argued that the dynamics in the global forest related discourses and the national

political orientation and economic priorities constitute the most important factors shaping the evolution of forest policy in Ethiopia. The prime time in the history of Ethiopian forestry was recorded when the global discourse shifted towards biomass as alternative sources of energy for the rising fossil fuel price that coincided with the national political and economic change in favour of forest development. The 1984–1985 catastrophic drought and subsequent famine, the shift in global attention towards multi-functional forests and broader environmental conservation issues gradually undermined forestry as autonomous policy field. Most of the times, forestry was integrated into agricultural sector with the intention to maximize the synergy between the two sectors. However, as it is extensively argued in this paper, the integration of the two sectors did not yield positive outcomes. Throughout the successive regimes, the development of agricultural policy was marked by unbalanced objectives and priorities that hampered the potential to capitalize synergy between the two sectors. The Imperial government overemphasized commercial agriculture run by a few landlords and neglected the majority of smallholders engaged in production of subsistence and non-cash crops. The socialist regime abolished landlordism and prioritized state and collective farms at the expense of smallholder individual farmers and stiffly discouraged private initiatives. The agricultural policy under the current government overstates the potential of smallholder agriculture and crop production, with very limited attention to other sectors such as natural resource conservation and forest development.

The institutionalization and deinstitutionalization process of forest policy in Ethiopia revealed trends of change and continuity. The interplay of complex structural factors including the national politico-economic change, and environmental calamities coupled with the global discursive shifts contributed for the dynamic processes of forest policy development. The structural factors delineated the broader context and enabled or constrained one discourse coalition over the other. Such complex interaction of ideas and structural factors, on one hand, stimulate the institutionalization of dominant discourse that reflected in the emergence of new coalition, new rules, and new organizational arrangement. On the other hand, it can also pave the way for the deinstitutionalization of the once established policy practices aligned with the weak or receding discourse. For example, the once celebrity production forestry discourse that founded the autonomous forestry sector gradually weakened and lost its essence with the emerging

concept of multi-functional forestry and a broader environmental conservation discourse. Both discourses were later overshadowed by the drive for rapid economic growth through agricultural intensification that reflected in the significant downsizing of the forestry sector in its mandate, power or autonomy, and resources (see Table 1). The findings indeed confirm the usefulness of PAA to understand and explain such nuanced and dynamic process of policy change and continuity. It is a suitable analytical approach to explain the role of ideas, structure, and actors' action and interactions in a dynamic perspective.

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<sup>4</sup> Following the Ethiopian practice and logic of names, Ethiopian authors appear under their first name.

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