The State in Path Creation: the Emergence of a Tourist Destination in Ethiopia

By

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Abstract

In recent years, Evolutionary economic geography (EEG) has gained an increasing attention in tourism destination development studies. The adoption of this lens sheds new light on the inherent dynamics of how and why regional tourism economies emerge and grow overtime in different contexts. Despite the considerable contributions of EEG theorization, current conceptualizations tend to focus heavily on micro-level firm dynamics in explaining regional path creation. There is a relative lack of attention to the role of the state and its important structures in mediating the scope and pace of evolutionary changes of a new path. The current study addresses this gap by investigating the role of the state in structuring the development of tourism destination in Ethiopia through a path creation lens. The case study draws on Unity Park, a popular tourist destination in Addis Ababa that was opened to the public in 2019. The research utilizes a qualitative research approach to data collection and analysis combining thematic analysis of key informant interviews with analysis of policy documents and observations. Interviewees were recruited purposefully from institutions and individuals based on their direct involvement in the development of this destination. Document analysis is utilized to analyze data from public policy documents while interview and observation data are analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that the idea of Unity Park developed along incremental changes in public policies until a political transition in 2018 proved a decisive shift in its trajectory. This incident created more real-time opportunities for the state to influence the development of this Park through the application of power and agentic processes. The study contributes to broadening the current understanding of the state's role in path creation as well as offering empirical evidence on the political-economic mechanisms involved in destination development processes in the context of sub-Saharan Africa.

Keywords: destination development; path creation; political transition; Ethiopia; political economy; Unity Park

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Acronyms

ADLI	Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization
EEG	Evolutionary Economic Geography
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
MoCT	Ministry of Culture and Tourism
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MoPED	Ministry of Planning & Economic Development

1. Introduction

Tourism has always been identified as one key economic sector to address the development concerns of developing countries (Adu-Ampong, 2017; Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017). Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the industry is often taken as a critical tool to deal with various underlying economic problems such as foreign exchange shortage, unemployment and poverty alleviation (Messerli, 2011; Ayikoru, 2015). A keen interest to achieve these economic gains has made governments in the region to devise mechanisms to effectively integrate tourism into their local economies (Binns & Nel, 2002; Saarinen & Lenao, 2014). Part of this mechanism involves development of new destinations in areas with unique cultural and/or natural attributes (Ezeuduji, 2015).

In Ethiopia, the tourism sector, despite its recognition as an economic activity going back to early 1960s, has long been positioned as a marginal sector. Over the years, due attention had been invariably given to other economies such as agriculture as the key engine of development (Ethiopian Economic Association, 2004/5). In the last couple of years, however, new paths to support the national economy are strongly sought within tourism by integrating this sector into the country's development priorities (National Planning Commission, 2016). Tourism holds significant positions in recent socio-economic reforms and an ambitious goal has already been set to build a sustainable and competitive tourism market. Currently, the objective of the state is to become one of the top five tourist destinations in the continent by 2025 (Gebeyaw & Lovelock, 2018). In order to achieve this goal, the national government has appeared to involve in various destination development projects (Biruk, 2020) and three sites are already opened in the capital Addis Ababa since the launch of this initiative in 2018. Previous studies show that breaking lock-out situations to include tourism into the economy of an area can never be a linear process as it usually requires new capabilities and adjustments (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013). As economies in some regions continue (re)structuring processes to include tourism, the question of how and why this is the case comes to the fore (Halkier & James, 2017). Hence, the forces that are meant to induce desirable changes in the sector over the years deserve a deeper investigation by focusing on the agents that initiate the phenomenon, which is the state in the current study. Applying an evolutionary economic geography (EEG) perspective (path creation theory) to the case in point can help to capture how these changes have actually occurred in the tourism economy (Randelli & Tortora, 2014). This study therefore applies a path creation lens to obtain a

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closer understanding on the multiple roles of the state in the incremental evolution of this sector that subsequently led to a change in spatial structure. It ultimately emphasizes on the influence of public policy processes and state agency in mediating the development of a popular tourist destination called Unity Park in the capital Addis Ababa.

1.1. Problem statement

The question how regional tourism economies emerge and grow has long been one of the most challenging issues to address in tourism geography (Brouder & Eriksson, 2013). Destinations do not emerge in a vacuum (Martin & Simmie, 2008), but they are usually the result of complex processes that lead to economic novelty over the years (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014). This ultimately means that understanding the drivers of change is vital to follow how a destination is emerged (Karnøe & Garud, 2012). Existing studies that apply evolutionary economic geography tend to focus on mature destinations which are taken largely from the full-fledged market economies of the West, where firm entrepreneurial activities and market processes have much influence (Gill & Williams, 2011; Halkier & Therkelsen, 2013; Brouder & Fullerton, 2015; Mitchell & Shannon, 2018; Mattsson & Cassel, 2020). Although some studies in a non-market economy context addressed more agents of change, only a few of them have explicitly investigated the specific role of the state in the emergence of a tourist destination (Halkier *et al.*, 2019; Deng *et al.*, 2020). As the state's role in current EEG theorization is less understood, there is now an increasing call to more studies that can unpack this issue especially by combining a political economy perspective with EEG (Brouder & Ioanddes, 2014; Hassink *et al.*, 2014).

In the Ethiopian context, destination development has been an acute problem for the country's modest tourism sector (MoCT, 2015). For decades, the sector heavily relied only on few destinations which are found mainly in the extreme northern and southern part of the country (Ayalew, 2009). These very destinations also constantly encountered difficulties of renewing the experiences available to visitors. Even if a strategic response to the problem required a full engagement from both public and private sectors, the latter in this context were weak, often dispersed and disconnected to initiate a new path on their own (Altes, 2018; Tamene & Wondirad, 2019). Instead, the state assumed a key role in tourist destination projects as a means to overcome one of the most important questions in the sector (MoCT, 2015). As the government remains heavily involved in planning, financing and coordinating the development of tourism,

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studying these actions of the state can derive new insights into destination path creation in tourism. Although EEG does not deny the role of the state in a tourism area development, empirical investigations on the mechanisms that are utilized by the state in this process are rare (Mackinnon *et al.*, 2019), particularly in the sub-Saharan African context. Thus, this study has set out with the goal of addressing the theoretical question: how does a path creation approach understand the key role of the state in stimulating the development of a new destination? As the research progresses forward, it is guided by the following questions:

- How do policy frameworks in Ethiopia promote the development of new destination overtime?
- What factors triggered the state to engage in a destination project?
- How does the state influence other actors to involve in the process of developing a new destination?

1.2. Objective of the study

Through a path creation lens, this study aims to investigate the role of the state in the emergence of a new tourist destination in Ethiopia. In line with the major objective, the study focuses on the following specific objectives:

- To explore how the state had been using public policies to germinate the development of a new destination in the evolutionary trajectory of the sector.
- To investigate the triggering events that motivated the state to engage in the development of a new tourist site.
- To examine the mechanisms that were utilized by the state in an effort to mobilize other actors in a destination development.

The remainder of the study is structured as follows: the next chapter provides an overview of the path creation theoretical framework and political economy approach in relation with destination development. Chapter three of the research presents the methodological approach and procedures that were employed in the study. Divided into two sections, the findings are presented in chapter four and five before the study proceeds to the discussion in chapter six. The last chapter, chapter seven, discusses the conclusion including theoretical and practical implications of the current study.

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2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter deals with the theoretical background of the study based on perspectives drawn from Evolutionary Economic Geographies and political economy vis-à-vis destination development.

2.1.   A Path Creation Lens in EEG

In the past two decades, evolutionary economic geography (EEG) has appeared as an influential framework within economic geography to study processes that drive regional economic changes. EEG provides a theoretical basis to explain change in the economic landscape and the way spatial structures develop through actions of agents including how the economy exhibits self-organization over time (Boschma & Martin, 2010). The early theorizing of the concept was dominated by path dependence which has a constraining view on changes in economic paths. The path dependence approach explains that an industrial growth path is mainly determined by historical conditions and can only be shaped by unanticipated events (Steen & Hansen, 2018; Gill & Williams, 2014). It emphasizes on self-reinforcing mechanisms that continue to steer the growth of a regional economy along one path, rather than a deviation to another (Martin, 2010). To this concept, incremental changes can occur through time to give birth to new industries, but these are results of branching processes from pre-existing industrial structures. Such assumption of path dependence however serves as a limited and restricted way of thinking about how new industries emerge and develop in the first instance. Recent contributions to EEG have brought this issue to the fore and sought to develop an alternative that can explore this question in depth (Martin, 2010). Key amongst these alternatives is the concept of path creation which is initially developed by Garud and Karnøe (2001). Following Binz *et al*. (2016), the study defines path creation as "it contains a set of functionally related firms and supportive actors and institutions that are established and legitimatized beyond emergence and facing early stages of growth, developing new processes and products" (177). As table 1 below shows, the path creation framework is increasingly gaining interest in the subject of tourism. The adoption of this lens, among others, has offered tourism scholars the explanatory power to understand the co-evolution of this sector along with the development paths of several other economic sectors, especially in regions where tourism competes to gain priority as key economic sector (Ioannides & Brouder, 2017). More specifically, the very notion of this theory also elucidates the agencies and event-

centered interventions, be it planned or spontaneous, that are involved in a recently emerged tourist destination which modifies the path dependent trajectory of an area (Clavé & Wilson, 2017; Carson & Carson, 2017).

Table 2. 1. Sample tourism studies that explicitly apply path creation theory

Author(s)	Brief description of the study	Journal of Publication
Deng *et al.* (2021)	It took multiple rural areas in China as case studies to analyze the factors that mediate the transition of rural economies towards tourism.	*Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*
Gill and Williams (2014)	Utilized concepts such as mindful deviation and human agency to investigate the creation of a new governance path in the resort destination of Whistler.	*Tourism Geographies*
Kulusjärvi (2017)	Investigated a large scale growth-focused tourism path creation processes in the sparsely populated area of Finnish Lapland.	*Journal of Rural and Community Development*
Mattsson and Cassel (2020)	By applying theory of path creation, the study investigates the potential contribution of immigrant entrepreneurs for tourism development in rural Sweden.	*Tourism Planning & Development*
Müller (2019)	This is a case study of a path development in a remote skiing resort destination of Tärnaby/Hemavan, Sweden.	*Perspectives on Rural Tourism Geographies*
Taylor *et al.* (2019)	It applied a path creation concept to follow the emergence and evolution of a cycle tourism trail in Otago, New Zealand.	*Annals of Tourism Research*

New paths can be created either out of crisis events or other factors that are related with long term incremental changes and growth (MacKinnon *et al.*, 2009; Ioannides & Brouder, 2017). In all cases, human agency and entrepreneurial activities that operate under real-time influence are seen as crucial to shape unfolding processes of a new path (Gill & Williams, 2014). This entails that path creation is a deliberate process where knowledgeable agents both individually and collectively engage in 'mindful deviation' from established paths (Gill & Williams, 2017). Human agency holds inter-temporal elements where the past, the present and the future are constituted together to stimulate actions in real-time (Steen, 2016). In describing this rationale, Garud *et al.* (2010) stated that "the past may spawn certain processes in the present and certain aspirations in the future" (769). Therefore, "considering actors' aspirations of the future,

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sensemaking of the past, and conceptualizations of what is transpiring in the present" (Garud *et al*., 2010: 769) are essential in order to capture the notion of agency. However, "It is not just strategic agency among entrepreneurs that is important in path creation" (Martin & Sunley, 2006: 426). A deeper understanding of regional path creation processes also needs to consider "the strategic decisions made by policy-makers, including the nation-state" (*Ibid*), something tourism scholars should uncover in their works (Carson & Carson, 2017). To wrap up this section, an improved conceptual approach that takes socio-political contexts into account can facilitate a deeper interpretation of why a destination came into being in a certain location (Ioannides & Brouder, 2016). The following section reviews the conceptual background of political economy and the relevance of linking this thinking into EEG to study changes in an economic landscape.

2.2. EEG and the political economy of state intervention

As EEG is still at its nascent stage of development, scholars in the field advocate a strong engagement with political economy in order to achieve a comprehensive theorization of this paradigm (MacKinnon *et al*., 2009; Hassink *et al*., 2014; Martin & Sunley, 2015). Despite the term political economy having broader connotation, in this research it has been narrowly defined as a framework with an explicit concern of the state and its important structures in shaping the process and direction of economic changes (Martin & Sunley, 2015). In addition, MacKinnon *et al*., (2009) explains that, "A political economy approach also emphasizes the role of power and politics in structuring economic adaptation" (139). Thus, the main objective of linking EEG with political economy is to address questions of state agency and the power dynamics that are involved in the social relations amongst groups (MacKinnon *et al*., 2009; Gill & Williams, 2017). Traditionally, EEG conceived economic agents largely from firm-centric and technologically-driven perspectives and has hardly been concerned with the state's role in path creation (Hassink *et al*., 2019). The frequent omission of the state's role within EEG has opened intense debates as to whether more can be done in this front, especially by incorporating a political economy approach (Brouder & Ioannides, 2014; Hassink *et al*., 2014; Hassink *et al*., 2019). While MacKinnon *et al*. (2009) took an issue against the very theoretical construct of EEG itself, Essletzbichler (2009) claimed that the lack of the state in EEG is more of an empirical than theoretical shortcomings, noting the complementarity of political economy and evolutionary approaches. Others, such as Martin & Sunley (2015) acknowledged EEG as an

evolving project that can certainly entertain the influence of the state and its structures in analyzing economic changes.

Alongside this debate, emerging EEG studies have already begun to bring forth the multiple roles the state can play in orchestrating new industrial paths (Dawley, 2014; Dawley *et al.*, 2015; Trippl *et al.*, 2018). For instance, Hu (2014) demonstrated the influence from the changing role of the state and the initiatives it took that led to the development of a new wind power industry in an old industrial area in China. Dawley *et al.* (2015) also discussed a range of market incentives and supports from the UK government to enable emerging paths compete with established technologies.

Regional path creation cannot always be a mere result of market processes of firms (Dawley, 2014), but political actors such as the state also have the capacity to mediate "the scope and pace of evolutionary changes in the economy" (Martin & Sunley, 2015: 725). This is particularly true in countries where governments have control over the economic system and that apply a top-down destination governance model (Halkier *et al.*, 2019; Deng *et al.*, 2021). State interventions to coordinate and set up a suitable climate for the development of a new path can include policy formulation, funding, fiscal breaks, agency and the application of power (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2014; Tödtling & Trippl, 2018). In addition, as in some instances, a government in itself can also take a public entrepreneurial and venture capitalist role (Mei *et al.*, 2015). As regards to public policy, it is an extremely significant tool that a government manifests its deliberate choice through the actions and inactions it has planned to take (Hall & Jenkins, 2004). Public policy also sketches future objectives and projects of the state to help align and direct investments and resources towards its fruition (Torkington *et al.*, 2020). This has a clear implication when extended to a path creation context that achieving new economic opportunities for a region partly depends on the introduction of favorable policy regimes (Essletzbichler, 2012). Although exiting EEG studies focused on policy instruments as a tool to reorient an already established industrial path, policy interventions can also be used to introduce a completely new economic activity to a region (Sjøtun & Njøs, 2019).

Moreover, the evolution of the economic landscape needs to be related to processes of power and social agency (Dawley, 2014). Power is ultimately used to enforce the interests of a certain dominant group and often leads to questions of what is doing what and in whose interests

(MacKinnon *et al.*, 2009). The application of power can be manifested through different modes including coercion, charisma, leadership or persuasion, among others (Hassink *et al.*, 2014). The state, here, is used to refer mainly the national government and the multiple functions it has played while supporting the emergence of a tourism destination.

2.3. Conceptualizing destination development

Tourist destination development is a central theme in the tourism research and scholarship (Henderson, 2006; Zhang & Xiao, 2014). These previous studies have defined a destination differently depending on the nature of their focus area (Ayikoru, 2015). In the current research a tourist destination has been defined as "a geographical region which is understood by its visitors as a unique entity, with a political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning" (Buhalis, 2000: 98). This definition allowed to clearly scrutinize the innovative activities resulted from the state's initiatives within this territorial boundary. Furthermore, a destination site contains an assemblage of products and services such as museums, art galleries, historic buildings, zoos and botanical gardens that offer an integrated experience for visitors (Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017). Because all these facilities are branded together as one tourism product (Buhalis, 2000), a destination development and product development sometimes have similar definitions as it has been the case in this study (Nilsson, 2001).

Destination development plays an important role in tourism competitiveness (Aqueveque & Bianchi, 2017). In today's competitive market environment, offering a value-added destination products and services is partly seen as a requirement for success (Hjalager, 2010). As such, tourism stakeholders may compete through developing an entirely new destination that can benefit from resources that are intact or in any case little exploited (Keller, 2004). The emergence of a new destination involves a complex and long term process of transitioning from its historical configuration to a new economic specialization (Hartman *et al.*, 2019). For instance, it may require, among others, a change in policy regimes which can directly or indirectly affect this evolutionary change (Deng *et al.*, 2021).

The current study addresses two major gaps in the literature: first, it focuses on the role of the state in destination development in a region characterized by strong state involvement in policy, planning and development of tourism. Second, it links the concept of political economy with

EEG tourism research. In so doing, it contributes to the development of this evolving field in studying the emergence and evolution of tourism destinations.

2.4. Overview of tourism in Ethiopia and the case study destination-Unity Park

Located in the horn of Africa, Ethiopia is the second most populous country in the continent. Its national economy is heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture that contributed over 33% of the GDP in 2018/2019 fiscal year (National Bank of Ethiopia, 2019). Despite agriculture remaining as the major contributor of the economy, the role of this sector has seen a gradual decline since the mid-2000s (Seid *et al.*, 2016).

Table 2. 2. International tourist arrivals and receipts in Ethiopia (1991-2018)

Year	Arrivals	% change	Receipts (US$ M)	% change
1991	81,581		20.0	
1992	82,213	0.77	23.0	15
1993	93,072	13.2	20.0	-15
1994	98,070	5.4	23.0	15
1995	103,336	5.4	36.0	56.5
1996	108,885	5.4	38.3	6.3
1997	138,856	27.5	43.0	12.2
1998	112,000	-19.3	32.7	-19.4
1999	115,000	2.7	33.6	12.0
2000	135,954	18.2	68.0	129.3
2001	148,438	9.2	73.8	9.3
2002	156,327	5.3	77.1	7.0
2003	179,910	15.1	89.9	15.1
2004	184,078	2.3	114.6	27.8
2005	227,398	23.5	138.6	20.9
2006	330,026	45.1	170.0	24.3
2007	357,841	8.4	214.0	32.9
2008	383,399	7.1	205.0	-0.4
2009	427,286	11.4	246.4	46.5
2010	468,305	9.6	333.4	65.5
2011	523,438	12.0	411.6	28.03
2012	596,341	13.9	1,191.0	245.03
2013	681,249	14.2	2,551.0	114.2
2014	770,428	13	2,884.5	13.09
2015	863,742	12.1	3,233.8	12.1
2016	868,780	0.6	3,310.7	2.4
2017	933,344	7.4	3,494.4	0.072
2018	849,122	-0.09	3,179.1	-0.099

Source: MoCT, Ayalew (2009) and Frost and Shanka (2004)

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Conversely, its historically dominant contribution has been overtaken by the service economy, which has increased from its level of 34% in 1995/96 to 39% in 2018/19 (Alemayehu, 2020). Tourism, as part of the service sector, also emerged as a significant economic sector especially in the last decade (see table 2.2) (Birtukan, 2016; Tamene & Wondirad, 2019; Bires & Raj, 2020). For instance, its total GDP share has been able to increase considerably from well below 3% in 2007 to 6.8% in 2019 (WTTC, 2019). Nowadays, after long years of insignificant contribution, the country's tourism economy rose to become the third-highest export revenue generator next to agriculture and manufacturing industries in 2017 (Altes, 2018). Initially, as mentioned from the outset, Ethiopia formally embraced tourism as an economic sector in 1962 with the establishment of the Ethiopian Tourist Organization (Ayalew, 2009). Since then, central governments that came to power consequently sought to take various measures that intended to effectively integrate tourism into the country's economy. Notably, the demand to develop new destination areas took the center stage as a way to properly utilize the country's rich natural and cultural resources for tourism (MoFED, 2002; 2006).
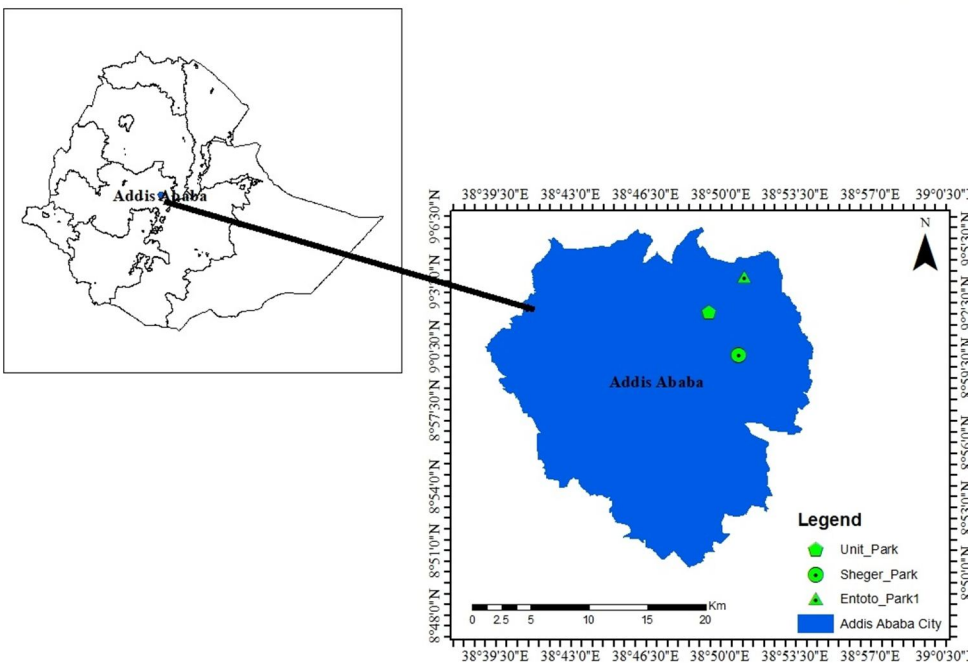

Figure 2. 1. Location of newly developed destination sites in Addis Ababa (Unity Park is represented by green circle with a dot at the center)

Despite this demand, realizing a new tourist destination in an appreciable way had not been easy for tourism stakeholders, not least for the government. Among other things, this is partly due to inadequate stakeholder collaboration and lack of political commitment and decision-making from the state (Tamene & Wondirad, 2019). However, after years of lock-out situations, the national government has now managed to engage in an extensive destination development projects. As shown on the map above, three tourist destinations have been opened for the public since 2019, namely: Unity Park, Sheger Park and Entoto Park. These destinations are part of a megaproject called *Beautifying Sheger* that intends to bolster urban tourism in the capital Addis Ababa (Biruk, 2020). This actual involvement of the state in tourism projects therefore may potentially provide insights into the state's role in regional economic development.

Figure 2. 2. Partial view of Unity Park. **Source:** the author's collection.

Unity Park (Figure 2.2) has attracted the attention of this research and serves as a case study while examining the mechanisms that brought this destination into effect. The Park rests on a 13 hectare land that is located in the premise of the Grand Palace of Emperor Menelik II which was built in the late 1880s (Seble & Biruk, 2021). The place has since been the seat of the central government and, hence a secretive compound to the general public before its alteration into a public park in October 2019. The opening of the park can be understood as symbolic in that it

represents the shift in path for the area that had been traditionally known as an exclusive seat of the government (Sanz-Ibáñez *et al*., 2017).

The Park accommodates the history of Ethiopian Emperors along with a number of buildings such as the Throne House and Banquet Hall which have enormous historical significances. In addition, it also features a state-of-the-art gallery with several installations, a zoo and children playground which are all recent additions to this historic site. Currently, Unity Park is considered as one of the high-profile tourist destinations in the city. In the time immediately before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the site had been attracting over 3000 visitors per day, most of whom were locals (Interview with Unity Park administration 1, April, 2021). Also, due to the growing economic significance from the destination, it only took a six months respite for the government to re-open the park even during the period of the pandemic.

3. Methodological Design

3.1. Basic approach and data collection

As noted by Boschma and Martin (2007) there is as yet no single, coherent or widely agreed methodology that defines EEG. Steen (2016), however, strongly suggests qualitative methods due to its potential in providing new insights given the complex processes that involves in path creation. So far several qualitative approaches, for instance case study and network analysis, are being pursued depending on the research question concerned and the available data (Boshma & Frenken, 2007). As this study aimed to apply path creation approach to analyze and explain the emergence of Unity Park as a tourism area in Ethiopia, a qualitative approach with a case study design has been utilized. Case study analysis is suited to construct a detailed account of how the destination emerged and the mechanisms that mediate the creation of this individual tourism product (Binz *et al*., 2016). There were three reasons that served as a base to specifically select this case study site: first, the destination's locational context has a conceptual relevance for path creation. Once, the exact location of this tourism site was a strictly prohibited 'no photography zone' let alone public access into its compound. So, path creation concepts such as human agency and mindful deviation can certainly enrich the research by interrogating how this place was intentionally transformed from 'a no photography zone' to a public space. Second, the quality of the case exemplifies the phenomenon of state intervention (Deng *et al*., 2021). As mentioned earlier, it is the national government who played a crucial role in instigating the development of this destination. The government was involved in developing project plan, mobilizing fundraisings, provide land for investors, offer tax relief and exemption, create networks between firms and convincing the private sector to invest. The third reason relates with case reputation. Three years on from its opening, this destination is now seen as a success particularly in motivating the country's domestic tourism by the state.

In terms of sources, national level policy documents and key informant interviews are the two most important data sources for the research. In addition, observations had also been extensively conducted mainly to investigate the available facilities and services at the destination. A number of national level policies and plans were collected based on their relevance for the research questions (see table 3.1). The policy documents served to investigate how the development of a new tourist destination had been conceptualized in the historical trajectory of the sector including

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the favorable conditions that the national government has gradually set the groundwork for the emergence of the case study destination in particular.

Table 3. 1. Analyzed national level policy documents and their source organization.

Year	National economic development plans	Source organization
1984	Ten-Year Perspective Plan (1984/85-1993/94)	Ethiopian Economic Association
1993	The Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI)	Ministry of Agriculture
2002	The Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) (2002/03-2004/05)	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC)
2006	The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (2005/06-2009/20)	MoFEC
2009	The Ethiopian Tourism Development Policy	Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT)
2010	The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I) (2010/11-2014/15)	MoFEC
2015	The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) (2015/16-2019/20)	MoFEC

Moreover, reconstructing a detailed account on the actual causal factors, the agencies made, and actions taken in shaping the geography of the case study destination requires due attention to actors making sense of the emerging situation. In such cases, Schoenberger (1991) noted the value of applying interview method particularly when the aim is to obtain the "testimony of participants in complex and ongoing processes" (in Steen, 2016). Taking this into consideration, from the end of February to mid-April, 2021, thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews had been conducted with key informants from both private and public actors (see table 3.2). These informants were selected purposefully from institutions and individuals based on their direct involvement in the development of this destination and, to ensure data richness and adequacy, an appropriate range of informants had been considered at the time of data collection (Mason, 2018).

In this session, due emphasis was given to capture the role of the government and its influence on other actors' engagement to develop the case study. An interview guide was prepared in advance (see Appendix I) which was later translated into the local language (Amharic) in preparation for the interview session with informants.

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Table 3. 2. Composition of sample interviewees

Interviewee's institution	Number of interviewee
Unity Park Administration	2
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	1
Tourism Ethiopia	1
Tour operators	2
Education institutions	2
Zoma Museum	1
Public construction enterprises	2
Private construction enterprises	2

The interview guide was divided into two categories: one for non-state actors and the other for state officials. The questions in the first category centered around the processes how and why actors joined the project, their relation with state officials at the time of construction and contribution in the project. Whereas in the second category, the points that were raised include the actions taken by the state, how the state approached involved actors and the actual support from the state to finalize Unity Park. All the interviews were carried out by the researcher which were lasted between 35-55 minutes and took place in the informants' place of work. Twelve of them were face-to-face and the remaining one was a telephone interview. Eleven of the interviews were also audio-recorded based on the consent obtained from the interviewees themselves. To ensure reliability of participant's response, sometimes their answers were triangulated. For instance, the response from non-state actors about the way how they get involved in the project was also posed to state actors in order to gather more perspectives as to what extent this might differ or correspond (Winter & Adu-Ampong, 2021). As an insider, the researcher played several roles to establish credibility in the eyes of the researched (Adu-Ampong & Adams, 2020). This is because most of the research informants are busy individuals and officeholders worth of investing their time. This was established mainly by using academic track records and institutional affiliation at a top ranked university in the Netherlands and even by physical appearance.

To guarantee anonymity, interviewees are cited only based on the group of their institution as in table 3.2 above.

3.2. Data Analysis

Two different data analysis procedures were applied for the policy documents in one hand and the interview in the other. Content analysis was applied to extract relevant data from policy documents since this method is powerful to examine in-depth how the changing contexts in policies breed the current destination path (Sydow *et al*., 2012). A close reading of the sample documents had thus been made to yield excerpts and to make sense of the relevant data (Forman & Damschroder, 2007; Bowen, 2009).

In regards to the interviews, these were first transcribed into word processing document followed by a translation of them from Amharic to English. As a native speaker of this local language, the researcher did the translation process verbatim. At the time of transcription, an overview of the range and diversity of the data was also examined. It was then analyzed through narration and interpretation of issues that can lead to the development of a conceptual generalization based on thematic areas (O'Leary, 2004). The analysis followed a six step process of thematic data analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), which involves becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing the report. The data from both the documents and interviews was coded, and while some of the codes were developed based on concept exploration (*a priori*), others were in-vivo codes that emerged out from the actual data. Initially, open coding was used to segment key concepts and identify possible topics of the data. Axial coding was then used to relate text fragments that convey a similar meaning into their categories. Finally, selective coding was applied to integrate and refine the hierarchy of codes that were built in the preceding two steps (Wondirad *et al*., 2020). These codes were assigned manually through identification of the beginning and ending of fragments in relation with its relevance to the research questions. Examples of the codes include state subsidy, destination development, employment generation, power application and social agency. When integrating the data from these two sources, the data obtained from policy documents mainly used to show the genesis and historical trajectory of destination development plans in previous years whereas the data from interviews explain more of the real-time scenarios. The following chapter presents a detailed analysis of the findings.

4. Setting the scene for a new destination development

Policymakers often use economic policies as an instrument to implement strategic agency and mindful deviation that instigate a new path (Dawley, 2014), thus such policies and plans provide a way to assess the shifts in thoughts regarding destination development (Adu-Ampong, 2019). In this vein, this first part of the analysis takes on an evolutionary perspective centered on the economic and political activities of the state that ultimately guided its direction towards the emergence of Unity Park as a desired outcome. Even though these policies initially were not specifically meant for Unity Park, it is argued that the emergence of this destination is strongly relates with the visions and claims that were made by the state over the years as an effort to create new opportunities in the national economy.

The Ten-Year Perspective Plan, 1984/85-1993/94

This plan was developed by the Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia in September 1984. It envisaged the government's long-term plan for various sectors with an aim to accelerate economic growth and a transition towards a socialist economy. Its three main pillars are the modernization of agriculture, natural resource conservation and expansion of industrial activities in the country.

Tourism had been dealt under the fourth chapter of the plan along with trade. It specifies a number of potential tourist attractions that are found in various parts of the country including the underlying causes that hinder the development of the sector at large. The state's little institutional and policy impetus to the sector is mentioned as one crucial factor that inhibit tourism from making visible impacts on the economic development of the country. To reverse the then realities, the subsection moves on to list out four policy strategies to be executed by the socialist government. These are: promotion of existing tourist products and services, producing and supplying souvenirs in both quality and quantity, introducing guidelines on easing entry and departure formalities as well as travel procedures with in the country and expanding and/or building new hotels and providing transport and telephone services. In this perspective plan, the development of the tourism business is mainly conceived from the utilization of the already available products and services and there is no clear indication of any intention to develop a new tourist destination in the country. In addition, the implementation of the aforementioned

strategies remained limited due to, among others, civil war and unstable political environment that led to a budget deficiency. For instance, between 1983/84 and 1987/88 the government allocated an average of 43% of the national budget to both defense and internal security, which sent tourism to the least budget receiving position (Shanka & Frost, 1999).

The Agricultural Development-Led Industrialization (ADLI)

In 1991, the then Transitional Government of Ethiopia which was later renamed EPRDF came to power by overthrowing the military regime that ruled Ethiopia since 1974. With the coming of the new government, the economic policy of the country has been changed to a free-market system (Ethiopian Economic Association, 2004/05). Shortly thereafter in 1993, the government adopted a strategy commonly known as the Agricultural Development-Led industrialization (ADLI) which heavily assumes agriculture's leading role in the transformation of the national economy towards industrialization (Gebeyaw & Lovelock, 2018). The primary objective of ADLI was to bring about a structural transformation within the economy in a sequential manner from agricultural sector to industry and then to a more service-oriented economy. In this long-term strategy the immediate focus was agriculture and the state was urged to extend its sizeable assistance so this sector can yield a high rate of growth in order to attain the process of structural shift (MoPED, 1993). While looking at the growing population of the country, the strategy then clearly acknowledged the necessity of creating employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors in the future.

Tourism was mentioned under the 'Export-led growth' subtopic along with subsectors like agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Despite being a service sector that was specified to be reached out at a later phase of the strategy, tourism at this stage was singled out as a sector that deserves government investment and development priorities. Promotion of the country's tourism potential, improvement of existing tourist facilities and preservation of heritage and wildlife resources were pointed out as activities that need the state's prompt attention to develop the sector. Nevertheless, there is no mention about the imperatives of achieving a new tourist destination for a country that has not fully exploited its resources for economic development. Despite ADLI's promise, any signs of implementation to develop the tourism sector did not happen immediately. Later in the early 2000s, policy advisors and academics began to pressurize the government to bring tangible changes also in other economic sectors alongside agriculture

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(Cramer *et al*., 2004). As seen in the following section, a gradual shift from the government began to take its shape towards tourism.

The Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP), 2002/03-2004/05

The Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP) as a medium-term plan is focused on poverty reduction and economic growth. It provides a further strength to the country's ADLI strategy and largely draws to the development of the rural and agricultural sector. But, in conjunction with agriculture, SDPRP also underlined the fitting need to broaden the economic base to tourism because of its good future prospects. The plan stated that "it is not possible to ensure accelerated growth and sustainable development" unless due attention is given to the service sector, where tourism is a part (MoFED, 2002: iii). The word 'tourism' appears sixteen times in the whole policy document, with fifteen of the occurrence distributed throughout the main body of the document. In addition, tourism as a sector was also given a separate section in the table of content that presents a substantive discussion about its strategy and priorities. During the SDPRP, tourism was built around four priority areas: (1) preparation of destination management plans, (2) provision of incentives for those who wish to engage in the sector, (3) human resource development, and (4) building the institutional capacity of the sector (MoFED, 2002).

Despite the relatively significant position that tourism had received in this policy, the sector was mainly seen simply in terms of its potential capacity for foreign exchange generation. Other direct and indirect roles of the sector had not been clearly linked to the goals of the plan. Furthermore, the development of a new destination was not mentioned as a strategy that was to be implemented over the course of the plan. Although the plan fails to recognize this demand, there was another significant development being made by the government around the final year of this plan. Until this period, the country's tourism was led by the Ethiopian Tourism Commission which was established in 1979. This had been now upgraded to a ministerial level in 2005 and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, as it was named, was given several responsibilities including the identification of natural and cultural resources in order to develop new destination sites (Ayalew, 2009). However, there was not a clear indication of the specific sites of the new destinations that the ministry needs to develop in the period of the plan.

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The Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), 2005/06-2009/20

As a continuation of the SDPRP, the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) sought to bring about an accelerated and sustained economic development towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In order to materialize its targets, the PASDEP was set around eight thematic areas, these are: (1) building all-inclusive implementation capacity, (2) a massive push to accelerate growth, (3) creating the balance between economic development and population growth, (4) unleashing the potentials of Ethiopia's women, (5) strengthening the infrastructure of the country, (6) strengthening human resource development, (7) managing risk and volatility, and (8) creating employment opportunities (MoFED, 2006).

As a simple word search for 'tourism' indicates that it appeared forty-eight times throughout the plan, a growing importance was attached to the sector in the PASDEP. Unlike in the SDPRP, tourism's role in the PASDEP was conceived not only in terms of foreign exchange but also a broader discussion on its direct and indirect benefits was also highlighted. It has identified tourism as a 'niche market' that merits greater emphasis from the state than has been the case. This policy primarily sees tourism as one major avenue where the private sector can find its place in the fight against poverty reduction and overall growth of the country. Besides the anticipated participation of the private sector, the PASDEP also underlined the government's intention to achieve a "step-change" in the tourism industry and stated that:

> …the government will take the necessary measures to adequately exploit and benefit from the tourism sector within the prevailing framework in line with its strategies for growth and accelerated development to eradicate poverty. (MoFED, 2006: 48)

Moreover, the PASDEP signals a turning point in terms of how the country's economic development plans thought of tourism's economic role. This can be seen not only from the long term vision that the plan has set to make Ethiopia one of the top ten tourism destinations in Africa by the year 2020, but also from the notable attention it has underscored to diversify the tourism products and services that were on offer. Even though PASDEP's 2020 tourism vision was far from achieved, canvasing this target was significant in alluring policymakers towards the

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tourism economy. The development of new destinations is explicitly included as a priority area to take the sector in the right direction towards achieving its socio-economic objectives. Since the private sector in the country is still in its 'formative stage' (MoFED, 2006), this plan assumes a key gap-filling role to be played by the government at the time of implementation. Hence, the PASDEP noted that "The state will both initiate and encourage selected imaginative projects that accelerate growth in the sector" (MoFED, 2006: 144). Interestingly the PASDEP also pinpoints the areas where new destination development projects will be carried out in its course, which are: the Konso community-based tourism project in the southern region, Dorze communities and handcrafts project and sub-projects in Addis Ababa. Despite the PASDEP mentioning that new destination projects are planned in Addis Ababa, it did not list out at which specific area the government intended to implement new destination projects in the Capital. In the due course, unlike the development of some tourist destinations in the southern part of the country, the implementation of this plan was also very limited (MoFED, 2010).

The Ethiopian Tourism Development Policy, 2009

In line with the increased recognition of tourism's contribution to the economic development of the country, the Ethiopian Tourism Development Policy was formulated in 2009 (Gebeyaw & Lovelock, 2018). When explaining the realities that led to its adoption, the policy stipulates that "enhancing the development impacts of tourism by properly developing and utilizing the tourism potential with which the country is endowed is a matter deserving focus" (MoCT, 2009: 48). Through addressing the pressing challenges of the sector, this policy seeks to build a competitive tourism economy that can effectively contribute to the country's effort to eliminate poverty.

The desire to develop a new destination has become a central component of this policy as exhibited from its considerable discussion throughout the document. The development of existing and new tourist attractions in variety, scale and quality is identified as one of the six main issues and implementation strategies of the policy. The remaining five strategies are: (1) guiding the tourism industry in a broad based direction, (2) expansion of infrastructure and tourist facilities essential for tourism development, (3) undertaking promotional work and build competitiveness (4) strengthening the collaborative relationship among actors participating in tourism development, and (5) overcoming the serious capacity limitations observed in the sector. This national tourism development policy also outlines a very significant understanding of the

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crucial roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the implementation of the policy. While it reiterates the strategic value of cooperation and partnership, major tasks ranging from the creation of favorable ground to investing in destination development projects are essentially given to the state.

One of the most vital policy interventions that are made at this time is the growth of budgetary allocations needed to develop the sector. As seen in Figure 4.1 below, government budget for tourism has shown significant improvements since 2008/09.
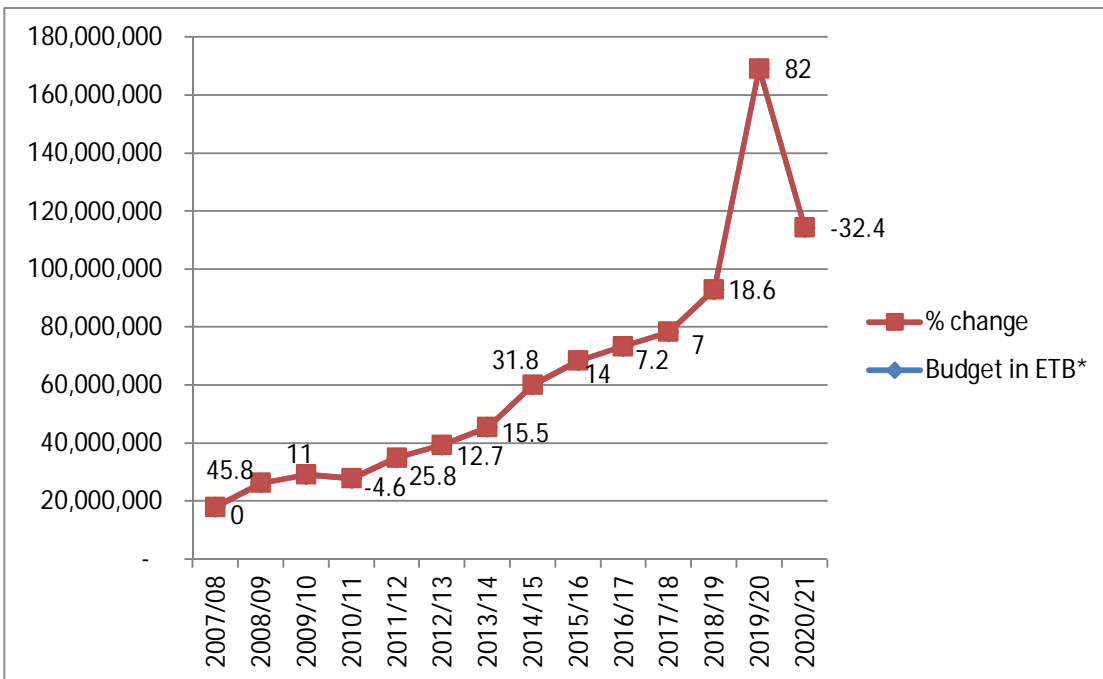

Figure 4. 1. Annual allocated budgets (* in Ethiopian Birr) for the tourism sector (2007/08-2020/21).

      Source: MoCT, 2021.

The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I and II), 2010/11-2019/20

As a medium-term plan, the government has formulated the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I) (2010/11-2014/15) to carry forward the important strategic directions pursued in the PASDEP (MoFED, 2010). Besides maintaining fast economic growth, the GTP I has an ultimate goal of leading the country into middle-income economy as of 2020-2023. In the GTP I, the country's economic target had been precisely described as "building an economy which has a modern and productive agricultural sector with enhanced technology and an industrial sector that

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plays a leading role in the economy…" (MoFED, 2010: 21). In order to achieve this vision of the country, the plan has set out seven strategic pillars: (1) sustaining rapid and equitable economic growth, (2) maintaining agriculture as major source of economic growth, (3) creating conditions for the industry to play key role in the economy, (4) enhancing expansion and quality of infrastructure development, (5) enhancing expansion and quality of social development, (6) building capacity and deepen good governance, and (7) promote gender and youth empowerment and equity.

The GTP I provided a further impetus for the tourism sector and the role of this sector has been embedded within the wider socio-economic and political context of the country. The plan attaches an increased importance to tourism not only in terms of its economic gains but also its capacity to the democratization process of the country has also been highlighted. The strategic direction that is set for tourism in GTP I is "to enhance the role tourism and culture play in socio-economic and political development initiatives" of the country (MoFED, 2010: 117). To this end, the development of tourism products and services in terms of both quality and quantity is taken as a key target of the sector. Moreover, this plan creates a sense of urgency for the government to be involved in tourism development programs. It sees the need to go beyond policy rhetoric to push the state a step further in developing new destinations as a sectoral priority. This development in turn had a significant consequence for the change in the spatial structure of the current Unity Park area. In the second year of the plan period, an initiative arose from the government to open a portion of the Imperial Palace for tourism. A government official explained that:

> A project aimed at renovating our national palaces for tourism had already been launched when I came to office in 2012. The project had phases where the National Palace, the Grand Palace [where Unity Park is located] and the Palace of Emperor Yohanes at Mekele constituted its first phase. It then took us seven years to restore the cultural heritages that are found in today's Unity Park. Part of the restoration work was carried out by the Italian construction company called Varnero and also partly by highly skilled professionals again from Italy. (Interview with Unity Park administration 2, April, 2021)

Furthermore, the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) aimed to strengthen the initiation which was created during GTP I. Besides the claim to develop a number of new destination sites, GTP II also emphasizes on the importance of completing tourism projects that were conceived in the previous period (MoFED, 2015). Hence, this policy gave an extra advantage for more restoration works in today's Unity Park through a sustained technical and financial support from the government. Although much of the restoration works were completed until the end of 2017, the decision to actually open Unity Park was delayed (Interview with Unity Park administration 2, April, 2021).

Figure 4. 2. The Banquet Hall was built during the reign of Emperor Menelik II in 1898-1899. It was here that restoration work was started in 2011 as a preparation to open the Palace for tourism.

      Source: the author's collection.

5. Scaling up state involvement

This chapter proceeds to analyze factors that account for a robust state intervention and the underlying mechanisms that the state has brought to the field to radically change the development of Unity Park. The analysis builds upon the data obtained mainly through key informant interviews. The informants come from different sectors and none of them had any previous experience in tourism destination development although some have good knowledge about the tourism sector. The respondents also underscored that while working to develop the park they maintained a top-down interaction with the office of the Prime Minister and there was weak horizontal collaboration with other involved non-state actors. The Prime Minister office usually provided those actors a certain task to carry out within a specified geographic area and monitor the smooth flow of their activities. Interestingly, all respondents also mentioned that in order to save time and keep pace of developing the park they overrode traditional bureaucratic procedures that they had to use previously. A detailed analysis has been presented in the following sections based on their themes.

5.1. Political transition as a triggering moment

Despite the progress in the preceding years, a defining moment for the emergence of Unity Park as a tourist destination happened in 2018. A political crisis that rocked the country since 2015 finally led to a regime change in April 2018 (Amare, 2020). The new government has made sweeping changes including reforms in the country's economic policy. In its new Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, the tourism sector is identified as one of the seven priority focus areas of national development. The remaining six are agriculture, manufacturing, construction, mining, trade and urban development (Plan and Development Commission, 2021). In order to achieve an accelerated and sustainable development, the policy moreover underscored its intention to diversify the economic base towards tourism as a source of economic growth. But, most importantly, the 2018 political transition has a further implication that goes even beyond the policy discourse that prioritizes the development of tourism as a sector. This incident brought a particular individual who has a strong passion for tourism into the prime minister position. The opening of Unity Park has emphasized the various steps that were quickly taken by this Prime Minister. First, given the weak institutional capacity of the sector, the new Prime Minister began to take ad-hoc measures to develop new tourist destinations so the tourism sector can achieve its

policy targets (Interview with Unity Park administration 2, April, 2021). This is followed by a decision to introduce a new plan for Unity Park in early 2019. The original plan aimed only to restore the heritage resources of the area before it is opened for potential visitors. However, to include more tourist products and services, the plan was revised immediately after the new Prime Minister took power. A respondent from Unity Park administration strengthened this fact:

> …the project in its new form was initiated by the Prime Minster. Soon after he came to power, he visited the surrounding area and he said 'this place is very huge for a government office alone. We need to revise the first plan to include more ideas and open it for the public in a few months'. A revised plan was immediately developed and construction work was commenced afterwards. (Interview with Unity Park administration 1, April, 2021)

Second, he created a momentum needed to mobilize financial and material support from a coalition of various actors. Following the new plan, the same respondent continues, the Prime Minister obtained the required financial support from the United Arab Emirates to develop the US$ 170 million Unity Park project.

The plan that was introduced by the office of the Prime Minister added more diversity to the product supply in a way that could appeal to different types of visitors, such as children and museum goers (see figure 5.1 below). This has in turn created the opportunity for various new players to join construction work in an effort to put the new concepts into action. This includes institutions like the Federal Roads Authority, Construction and Design Supervision Corporation, Construction Works Corporation, restaurant owners and individuals such as historians, curators and artists, to mention a few. The public institutions were selected mainly to help the state overcome higher financial expenditure that would be incurred if the whole project is given to a private enterprise. Whereas, elite actors based on their area of specialism were selected from the private sector.

Third, the Prime Minister played a significant role in creating this network of actors. As such he personally contacted most of these actors either at their place of work or at his own office to convince them join the project. He used both his social capital and political position to its full effect. For instance, a respondent from Zoma Museum stated:

One day the Prime Minister suddenly came to our Museum. We were not informed in advance about the visit. Then he came in and visited the museum facilities. Because he was so satisfied with the works here, he asked us to participate at Unity Park project. (Interview with Zoma Museum, February, 2021)

Participating actors were assigned to carry out a task based on their area of specialism and handed in to the Prime Minister's Office within a very limited timeframe, mostly within two months (Interview with Unity Park administration 1, April, 2021).
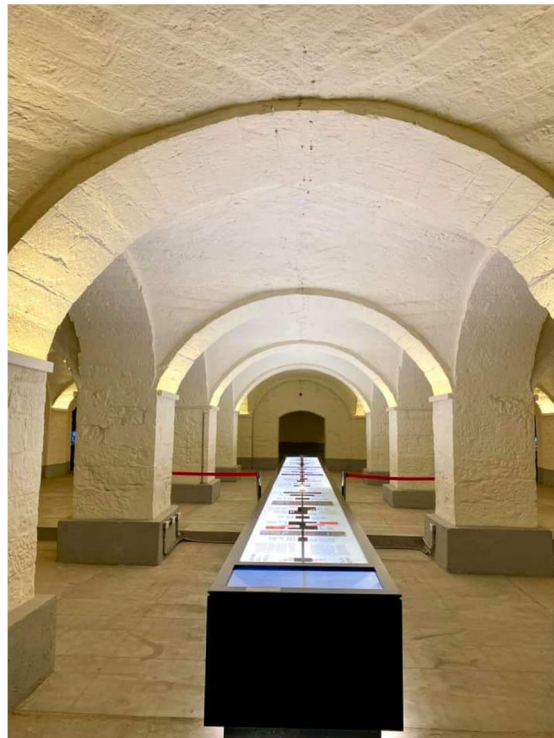

Figure 5. 1. A showcase which is found underground a torture room of the communist *Dergue* Period (1974-1991). This showcase was added later in the revised plan of the Unity Park project.

     Source: the author's collection.

Finally, even though a project leader was assigned for day-to-day operations including reporting of the progress directly to the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister himself was also active in its supervision. An interviewee from public construction enterprises revealed that "…besides the project leader, the Prime Minister often came to see our progress. Even our immediate bosses who had no any previous experience of visiting a project supervised the work closely" (Interview

with Public Construction Enterprise 1, February, 2021). As respondents indicated the forces that drive the Prime Minister in this project were not pure economic motives. Rather, he also pursued to disengage his government from past legacies in terms of completing a project on time, a criticism which was very common to the previous regime (Interview with Unity Park administration 2, April, 2021).

5.2. Power as an instrument of the state

This part of the analysis presents the role of the state in terms of exerting power over other involved actors. The interview data suggested that the emergence of Unity Park typically reflects the decisive role of power relations as it was manifested in its various forms. The forms of power that were dominantly exercised in this project includes, but not limited to, persuasion, coercion, leadership and charisma. The state was in a highly influential position to dramatically change established norms in regards to the situation of actors' involvement in a tourism project. As mentioned in the previous section, the actors that participated in the project were normally spread across a range of public, private, voluntary and community sectors. They also include both Ethiopians and foreigners from various institutions. Although securing the support and, subsequently, creating cohesion among these varied actors often poses a challenge, the state succeeded in mobilizing collective action in the direction of transforming the initial palace compound into a tourism hotspot. The use of power by the state was evident particularly in three most important stages of this emerging destination. These stages are: the preparation of construction work, actual construction work and the completion of the project. At each of the stages the state brought different forms of power into play in order to enforce certain specific objectives.

The preparation stage was executed mainly through persuasion to form a coalition of supporters who can contribute the necessary resources to develop the Park. One respondent recalled how the government made this project public:

> The government made an open call to the public to participate in the construction of the project. Soon a number of actors communicated us. Some of them asked how much money they will get at the end of the work whereas others just asked to work for free. We told those who asked payment that this is not for profit rather it is about

recognition and playing a part in the development of the country. Despite some of them withdrew from the project, those who had the real interest were convinced to start work. (Interview with Unity Park administration 1, April, 2021)

Even though some of the actors voluntarily joined the project following this announcement, there are also others that needed the strategic involvement of the Prime Minister himself. To capture the depth of this sense of power that emanates directly from the Prime Minister, it is illustrative to quote a statement from Zoma Museum, "the Prime Minster met us in-person and took us to a site in Unity Park. Then he ordered us to think what we can do for the garden there within a month" (Interview with Zoma Museum, February, 2021).

In the second stage, involved actors were influenced to produce high quality work. A respondent noted, "…you know, this is the Prime Minister's project. When the head of the state believed in you, you need to work the best quality that can satisfy him" (Interview with private construction enterprise 1, March, 2021). At the project completion stage, the pressure was in terms of handing over assigned tasks on the shortest term possible. The aim of the government was to make this project a model for other upcoming government projects and in this case the actors had to work day and night as a matter of adhering government timelines.

5.3. Collective agencies of actors

In addition to the power play from the side of the state, the collective agency from non-state actors is also essential in order to understand fully how they responded to the changing contexts in the project. In this regard, actors' sensemaking of the past, the present and their imagined future were found to be vital in mobilizing their support to the project. Respondents rewind to their past memories of the sector to mention how lack of due attention from previous governments typically hindered the development of tourism. Thus, the active involvement of the current government in a way they had never seen before stimulated actors to join hands by comparing their previous experiences with expectations.

A major issue that came across strongly in the interviews was that expectations are linked to the economic contribution of tourism. The country's under exploited tourism potential served as a motivating factor for the stakeholders to see the area as capable of generating massive jobs and

foreign exchange revenue in the future. When explaining their very reason why they supported the state in Unity Park, an interviewee from Tourism Ethiopia noted:

> Some years ago, it was very hard to communicate with a government official about the economic value of tourism. But that is clearly changing because the cadres are now watching what the Prime Minister is doing. We expect that Unity Park will also pave the way for more new destinations in the coming future. (Interview with Tourism Ethiopia 1, March, 2021)

The images of the country's tourism in the future and actor's mobilization of their past have made them to galvanize their finance, competence and other resources in support of the development of the park.

In the next chapter the research findings are discussed in relation with the theoretical framework of the study.

6. Discussion

This chapter turns to discuss the main research findings in the light of the theoretical approach introduced in chapter two and in comparison with previous EEG studies. The findings provide a relevant context within which to explore the role of the state in destination paths through EEG. Concepts such as mindful deviation and real-time influence appear to be key constructs of path creation to understand how the state influenced the emergence of Unity Park in an effort to create new economic opportunities within tourism (Gill & Williams, 2014).

Mindful deviation requires actors to make a break from established structures and practices by taking deliberate and conscious actions in favor of a new path (Gill & Williams, 2014). Policy instruments are one mechanism that can help orchestrate the emergence of a new path by identifying emerging opportunities (Dawley *et al*., 2015). In the empirical context, the state through public policies has long stressed the importance of developing new destinations, which highlight the typical feature of (policy) entrepreneurs who strive to create new paths (Garud & Karnøe, 2001). Step-by-step, these policies were operationalizing the visions and expectations of the tourism sector that need to be acted on by the state as a means to break lock-out situations (Steen, 2016). Particularly, economic policies that were formulated after the new millennium laid important foundations in consistently cultivating the emergence of the case study. In this vein, state agency that was made during GTP I to utilize the Grand Palace for tourism represent a substantive deviation from what had been traditionally known of the place. This was very decisive because it creates the know-how to disembed the state from past trends by recognizing the potential of this place as a tourism asset for the city (Taylor *et al*., 2019). It ultimately signaled the use of a political will, as a possession of the state, to open a seat of the government for tourism as a deliberate response to the economic needs of the country through tourism. Previous EEG studies in tourism pointed out a similar finding that the formalization of stakeholder actions through public policies can support destinations to deliberately break certain lock-in situations (Sanz-Ibáñez & Clavé, 2014; Clavé & Wilson, 2017). In the present case, however, the finding goes a step further to reveal how public policies can also furnish the groundwork for the development of a new destination.

Although a solid foundation was already in place, the April 2018 political transition was transformative in creating more opportunities for the state to engage in the emergence of the case

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study. The coincidence of this event with the development of Unity Park project demonstrates the role of real-time influence. This political incident certainly served as a triggering moment that radically changed the state's course of action in making Unity Park a reality. From a political economy perspective, the evolution of tourism policies in general and the completion of the Unity Park project in particular were strongly affected by the change in the political field (Bramwell, 2011). State intervention was intensified through the political and policy entrepreneurship of the Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed. As a bureaucrat, his motives were not only economic objectives as opposed to regular entrepreneurs, but partly also a political one that aimed to gain public acceptance through his achievement of government projects. In path creation, time is "a resource that offers entrepreneurs options to strike at the right time and right place" (Garud & Karnøe, 2001: 22). By being on the government's position, the Prime Minister took advantage of this time to alter how this destination should be developed and opened to the public. The new project plan was highly impacted by him in a way that could diversify the product offer, which would otherwise be different without this interference. This finding particularly supports recent claims on the role of specific moments in triggering the development of new pathways at a destination (Sanz-Ibáñez *et al*., 2017). More specifically, the study results also confirm that political transitions are to be seen as key for changes at a destination, which is in line with recent findings from Seyfi and Hall (2020).

Path creation relies upon the resources generated from different distributed actors and the process needs the strategic ability of agents to mobilize a collective (Garud & Karnøe, 2003; Binz *et al*., 2016). Thus, the formation of key resources such as financial capital and competence is always challenging for actors driving the change (Karnøe &Garud, 2012; Strambach & Halkier, 2013). In Unity Park's case, the state widely utilized various forms of power (for instance, charisma, coercion, persuasion and leadership) to mobilize actors in contributing resources for the development of the destination. By using the Prime Minister's persuasive interpersonal skills and political authority, the state was able to draw finance from a foreign country and skills mainly from a network of domestic actors. This indicates that besides agency and entrepreneurship destination path creation is influenced by power relations, a finding also confirmed by Kulusjärvi (2017).

The leadership from the Prime Minister helped to generate a momentum among involved actors who were committed to satisfy the interests of the Prime Minister. This commitment in turn made these actors to strongly engage in by interpreting past habits and future prospects in terms of exploiting the tourism potential of the country. This action of the actors is consistent with previous findings on construction of temporal agency in path creation (*cf*. Grillitch & Sotarauta, 2018; Steen, 2016). While these collective agency supports Garud and Karnøe's (2003) observation that the emergence of a "path cannot be attributed to any one individual actor" (279), the intervention especially from the Prime Minister also highlights the influential role of an individual in leadership capacity that generated an irreversible impetus for the emergence of this destination (Taylor *et al*., 2019; Mackinnon *et al*., 2019).

7. Conclusion and implications

This research has investigated the role of the state in the development of a new tourist destination through the path creation concept of EEG. The utility of path creation as an analytical framework to understand evolutionary changes in destinations had been recognized in previous tourism studies that apply this lens (*cf*. Gill & Williams, 2014; Taylor *et al*., 2019). The study argued that a better understanding of the role of the state in path creation can be established by combining political economy perspectives with EEG. The findings in this study also strongly suggest that the state has a key role and power in destination path creation which is beyond micro-level firm dynamics. While revisiting the research, three important insights have emerged that can be seen as an answer to the questions that are raised at the outset. First, it demonstrates the role of public policies and agency in allowing the state to strategically drive changes in destination development. Through these policies the state, being conscious of existing resources, was self-reflecting to escape its tourism lock-out path which is an analogue to Garud and Karnøe's (2001) boundary spanning. The empirical context shows that the idea for Unity Park developed along incremental changes in the economic policies until a political transition in 2018 brought radical changes in its trajectory. Second, it also reveals the impacts of political transition in nudging the state towards destination path creation. In Unity Park, this is very evident when the state successfully seized the 2018 political moment to scale up its intervention strategies. Thirdly, state power appeared as a crucial instrument to construct networks of actors and generate the momentum needed to develop a destination. The key player in this case was the Prime Minister who acted as an entrepreneur and path advocate (Mackinnon *et al*., 2019). Gill and Williams (2017) observe that "While individual human agency can be identified in entrepreneurial roles, collective human agency is also necessary to support the development of a new path" (52). Besides the Prime Minister's prominent role in translating his ideas and visions into action, the collective agency from non-state actors was also equally important in forging the emerging path. Actors partly connected their sensemaking of the past with the present and future aspirations to generate agency and mobilize their activities.

7.1. Theoretical implications

The current study adds to knowledge on EEG tourism research in several ways. First, it responds to calls to combine political economy with EEG to study the development of a tourism

destination (Brouder & Ioanddes, 2014; Hassink *et al*., 2014). Second, by employing path creation as an analytical framework, the study provides more nuanced answers to the fundamental question how the state mediate the development of a new economic path (Martin & Sunley, 2015). It disentangled those mechanisms that enabled the state to develop a new destination such as state agency, power and public policy, which have all received less in previous EEG studies (Dawley *et al*., 2015; Mackinnon *et al*., 2019). In addition, the study made modest contributions to the inter-temporal nature of agentic processes despite this not being its primary objective (Steen, 2016).

7.2. Practical implications

Practically, this study provides empirical evidence on the political-economic mechanisms involved in destination development processes in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Given the central role of the state in destination development in the region, the current research contributes to showing how the state can best engage in tourism destination developments. This has particularly a significant implication since extant EEG studies excessively focused on tourism economies in the Global North.

7.3. Limitation of the study

Like any other research, the current study has also certain limitations that can be served as a base for future studies. First, the analysis of policy documents focused only on selected economic development plans and tourism development policies that were accessed easily. In this case, there might be some plans that are not considered in this study. In addition, the analysis might not offer a comprehensive overview of influential actors especially without the perspectives of the Prime Minister regarding his motives and ambitions for engaging in tourism projects. Due to common bureaucratic reasons it was not possible to include his views in this study. Despite these limitations, the methodological approach employed and the variety of data gathered here allowed the research to successfully meet its objectives. A further research is needed to explore in detail more policy documents and different actors who were involved in the development of this destination.

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Appendices

Appendix I. The interview guide

Specific research questions to be addressed: the following three research questions were used as a guide to collect the necessary data from different sources.

- How do policy frameworks in Ethiopia promote the development of new destination overtime?
- What factors triggered the state to engage in a destination project?
- How does the state influence other actors to involve in the process of developing a new destination?

Interview questions for government (Unity Park) officials

I am a student who is studying Tourism, Society and Environment (MTO) at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. At the moment I am doing my thesis titled Tourism Innovation: Path Creation Role of the State in Ethiopia which I am required to do this face-to-face interview. The objective of the thesis is to apply path creation as analytical lens to explain the emergence of destinations as a new tourism development path by investigating the role the state takes on in this process. I intentionally selected you because you are from the target population who had been making decisions on tourism development projects for which the study seeks to investigate. Therefore, the data obtained from you is very essential for this thesis to adequately address its objective. The data will be kept strictly confidential only to the intended purpose and will not be transferred to a third party. The interview will take approximately 35-50 minutes and, depending on your consent, it will be recorded electronically.

Part I. Opening questions (introductory questions)

1. Can you tell me about your name and your position in the organization?
   - How long have you been working in the organization?
2. What do you enjoy most about your job?

Part II. Resource mobilization (main interview questions starts here)

1. What can you tell me about your experience so far on destination development projects?
2. Why does the government need to engage in destination development projects?
   o Keywords to probe:
     ▪ Why does tourism selected as one pillars of the economy recently?

3. How does the government subsidize and support the sector in general and the project in particular?
    o Keywords to probe:
        ▪ tax exemption
        ▪ import subsidy
4. How can you evaluate the role of the state in taking the initiation and coordinating other actors in building the destination project?
    o Keywords to probe:
        ▪ In terms of taking the initiative?
        ▪ In terms of creating a coordination among other actors?
5. What specific roles do the state played in the development of Unity Park?
6. How do you mobilize resources to build the project?
    o Keywords to probe:
        ▪ Financial resource
        ▪ Human resources (skills)
        ▪ Infrastructures
        ▪ Government subsidies
        ▪ Institutions that are needed to realize the new attraction?
7. What were your main knowledge sources to develop the destination?
    o Keywords to probe:
        ▪ Regional/local
        ▪ External source
8. How are these sources anchored across space to induce a new path?

Part III. Actors involved in the project

9. Who are the main actors involved in the project?
    o Keywords to probe:
        ▪ Where do they come from?
10. Which actors were key player in the project process?
11. How do you approach those involved actors to join the project?
12. Why do you invite foreigners in the process of developing the destination?

- o Keywords to probe:
  - ▪ Acquiring skills?
  - ▪ Financial support?
13. How do you evaluate the contribution of those non-local actors in realizing the project?

Part IV. Actions taken by the state to induce new paths

14. What actions did you take to develop an area which had so long been secluded from public access and had no previous tourism experience?
    - o Keywords to probe:
      - ▪ How do interventions from the state helped to realize the project?
15. How the prescription of tourism as one economic pillar in the current policy does support you to make this project a reality?
16. What other government policies supported you in developing the destination?
17. What initial conditions allow you to build the project?
    - o Keywords to probe:
      - ▪ What conditions hinder you?
      - ▪ How did you deal with them?

Part V. Innovation networking and co-operation

18. How did this new project start?
19. Where did the ideas and knowledge for this emerge?
    - o Keywords to probe:
      - ▪ External networking?
      - ▪ Any ad-hoc working committee on tourism projects?
      - ▪ Professional associations?
      - ▪ Individuals?
      - ▪ R&D?
20. How do you convince other actors to participate in the project?
    - o Keywords to probe:
      - ▪ Social capital?
      - ▪ Persuasion/letter of request?

21. How did the actors work together?

  o Keywords to probe:

    ▪ Were there regular meetings/briefings?

    ▪ How formal or informal were the relationships between key actors?

22. Were there foreign actors who played a key role in generating support for the project?

  o Keywords to probe:

    ▪ How did you contact them?

23. How those relationships between actors helped you to develop Unity Park?

Ending: This is the end of the interview. I would like to receive your address so that I can reach you in case if I need further clarification during the time of transcription or at any stage of the research process. I will also send you a summary of the research finding at the end of my work. Thank you very much indeed for your time!

Interview questions for firm actors:

I am a student who is studying Tourism, Society and Environment (MTO) at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. At the moment I am doing my thesis titled Tourism Innovation: Path Creation Role of the State in Ethiopia which I am required to do this face-to-face interview. The objective of the thesis is to apply path creation as analytical lens to explain the emergence of destinations as a new tourism development path by investigating the role the state takes on in this process. I intentionally selected you because you are from the target population who had been part of tourism projects for which the study seeks to investigate. Therefore, the data obtained from you is very essential for this thesis to adequately address its objective. The data will be kept strictly confidential only to the intended purpose and will not be transferred to a third party. The interview will take approximately 25-35 minutes and, depending on your consent, it will be recorded electronically.

Part I. Opening questions (introductory questions)

1. What are the main services you provide as a business?
2. How long has your organization been working in this business?
3. Can you tell me some of the other organizations you work with?
4. How do you work with these organizations?
   o Keywords to probe:
      ▪ Do you have regular meetings?
      ▪ Is there an umbrella association for the organizations you work with?

Part II. Involvement in tourism projects

5. Can you tell me about your involvement with the Unity Park project?
6. How did you get involved and what was your role?
   o Keywords to probe:
      ▪ Why did you decided to involve in?
7. How request from the government did affect your decision to participate in the project?
8. Can you tell me some of the other organizations you work with at Unity Park?
9. How did you work with other organizations to realize this project?
   o Keywords to probe:
      ▪ Do you have regular meetings?

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- ▪ Is there an umbrella association for the organizations you work with?

10. Who/which organizations were key player?

11. What do you feel about your participation in developing this tourist destination?

  - o Keywords to probe:
    - ▪ What allows you to better perform your job?
    - ▪ What hiders you?

12. What resources did you mobilize while contributing for the development of the project?

  - o Keywords to probe:
    - ▪ Available competence
    - ▪ Finance

13. How do you see the current involvement of the state in tourism destination projects?

Ending: This is the end of the interview. I would like to receive your address so that I can reach you in case if I need further clarification during the time of transcription or at any stage of the research process. I will also send you a summary of the research finding at the end of my work. Thank you very much indeed for your time!

Interview for non-firm actors (mainly academia and individuals):

I am a student who is studying Tourism, Society and Environment (MTO) at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. At the moment I am doing my thesis titled Tourism Innovation: Path Creation Role of the State in Ethiopia which I am required to do this face-to-face interview. The objective of the thesis is to apply path creation as analytical lens to explain the emergence of destinations as a new tourism development path by investigating the role the state takes on in this process. I intentionally selected you because you are from the target population who had been part of tourism projects for which the study seeks to investigate. Therefore, the data obtained from you is very essential for this thesis to adequately address its objective. The data will be kept strictly confidential only to the intended purpose and will not be transferred to a third party. The interview will take approximately 25-30 minutes and, depending on your consent, it will be recorded electronically.

Part I. Opening questions (introductory questions)

1. What is your area of expertise and work experiences?
2. What do you enjoy most about your job?

Part II. Involvement in tourism projects

3. Can you tell me about your involvement with the Unity Park project?

4. How did you get involved and what was your role?

5. Who invited you to involve in the project?

   o Keywords to probe:

     ▪ Self-motivation

     ▪ The government

6. What do you feel about your participation in developing this tourist destination?

7. What roles do the power of the government play for you to engage in the project?

8. What resources did you mobilize while contributing for the development of the project?

   o Keywords to probe:

     ▪ Available competence

     ▪ Finance

9. How do you see the current involvement of the state in a wide spread tourism destination development projects?

Ending: This is the end of the interview. I would like to receive your address so that I can reach you in case if I need further clarification during the time of transcription or at any stage of the research process. I will also send you a summary of the research finding at the end of my work. Thank you very much indeed for your time!

The observation protocol:

Although analysis of policy documents and interviews are the main instrument used to address the research questions listed earlier, a detailed personal observation was also employed to help address some aspects of the questions.

The observation was carried out within the precinct of Unity Park. The researcher conducted three rounds of field observation. During the observation, I looked around the facilities and technologies in the destination in an attempt to explicate the forming of agencies from various actors that generate the resources (such as material components, knowledge and skills, organizational arrangements, etc.) at the spot. This involved in taking pictures and conducting inventories about the attractions and facilities that had been developed at the site. The Park rests on a 13 hectare land and the observation covered all the facilities within this compound.

Policy documents were interrogated based on:

Besides interview, an analysis of public policy document also formed the main research data. In this case, seven economic policies of the country from 1984-2020 were selected analyzed based on their availability. These documents were especially interrogated using the following questions:

- o How do tourism goals had been set in policy documents?
- o How do capacities of tourism institutions had been built over the years in policy documents (e.g. in terms of resources, leadership)?
- o How do the policy frameworks promote the development of new destinations in the sector over the years?
- o How does implementation of the policy strategies looked like?

Appendix II: List of interviewees

No.	Interview code	Date	Duration	Modality
1	Unity Park Administration 1	02-04-2021	45 minutes	Face-to-face
	Unity Park Administration 2	13-04-2021	55 minutes	Face-to-face
2	Ministry of Culture & Tourism 1	15-03-2021	42 minutes	Face-to-face
3	Tourism Ethiopia	31-03-2021	43 minutes	Face-to-face
4	Tour operator 1	15-04-2021	40 minutes	Face-to-face
	Tour operator 2	17-04-2021	52 minutes	Face-to-face
5	Education institution 1	15-03-2021	37 minutes	Face-to-face
	Education institution 2	20-03-2021	41 minutes	Face-to-face
6	Zoma museum 1	27-02-2021	36 minutes	Face-to-face
7	Public construction enterprise1	09-03-2021	48 minutes	Face-to-face
	Public construction enterprise 2	11-03-2021	35 minutes	Phone
8	Private construction enterprises	22-03-2021	49 minutes	Face-to-face
	Private construction enterprises	27-03-2021	51 minutes	Face-to-face