Placing Theories of Governance: A political geography of American Samoa

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns the study of ‘governance’, which is understood as the process of interactions between actors operating within and through institutions, with the power to steer society, for the purpose of achieving collective goals. Theories of governance are constrained by a lack of empirical research outside of large, continental, liberal democratic and sovereign states, yet on the basis of research in these places universalising claims about governance are made. In contrast, the literature on small states and islands suggests that scale and place mediate governance in important ways, so that studies that look for difference in anomalous geopolitical spaces are important counterpoints for dominant narratives in the governance literature. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to understand how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa (a non-sovereign Pacific island U.S. territory) compare to the key claims of the governance literature. It does this by analysing the history of political relations in American Samoa, assessing the dynamics of governance during and after the 2009 tsunami in the territory, and observing governance processes and practices in the field. Data were collected from over 50 interview and participant observation over four months of fieldwork.

This study of governance in American Samoa finds three key points of distinction to the dominant Anglo-European claims about governance. First, there is a mismatch between the type and influence of actors outlined in the governance literature (which are the state, NGOs and market actors) and those with the power to govern in American Samoa (which are the state, the church and chiefs), and this has significant consequences for the nature of governance in place. Second, the political and cultural history of the territory, combined with its size and scale, has served to mediate relative authority of these actors in ways that are quite different to those that the mainstream literature suggests prevail in most places. Third, and in turn, in American Samoa there is a complex mode of governance that differs from the dominant account of a shift from hierarchies to networks. These findings represent a new perspective on the assumptions and rationalities of the governance literature, and contribute to more geographically nuanced theories of governance.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of PhD,

ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is owed in large part to a team of people across many countries who supported and encouraged me to the end. Above all, my heartfelt thanks to the interview participants and everyone who took the time to be involved in this research in American Samoa. I am mindful that this is your story and I hope that I have represented the history and politics of your territory in a respectful way and that the opinions and experiences documented here hold true in the retelling.

I am hugely indebted to my colleagues in the School of Geography, at the University of Melbourne who have taught me so much over the years that I’ve been there. First and foremost, a sincere thank you to my supervisor Professor Jon Barnett, who encouraged me to do this, has showed infinite patience and has been an amazingly supportive mentor throughout the time we have worked together. Thank you for allowing me to step off the path a bit and trusting me to get there in the end. This has been an amazing learning experience and I appreciate your guidance, expertise and time enormously. To my second supervisor Dr Karyn Bossomworth and my panel, thank you so much for your advice and support throughout. And to all my friends in the School and those that have moved on but were so close in the early days thank you for sharing your ideas, commiserating on the lows and celebrating the highs – you are a wonderful bunch. Especially to the brains trust in room 204 who have endured the last years and all the chaos that comes with that – thank you for the laughs, without which this would not be done.

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<p>| <strong>GLOSSARY</strong> |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 'Aiga           | Cognatic group of extended family that give service to a single matai |
| Alia            | American Samoan fishing vessel                                |
| 'Alga           | Extended family                                               |
| Ali'i           | High chiefly title                                             |
| Aualuma         | Group of unmarried women in a village                          |
| Aumaga          | Group of untitled men in a village                             |
| 'autasi         | Consensus                                                     |
| Fa'aalupega     | Honorific                                                     |
| Fa'alavelave    | Events that require ceremonies and financial obligations from the 'aiga - usually weddings and funerals |
| Fa'amatai       | The Samoan chiefly system                                     |
| Fa'avae         | Constitution                                                  |
| Fafe'au         | Pastor or church leader                                       |
| Faipule         | Member of the House of Representatives                         |
| Fale            | Traditional meeting-house                                     |
| Fitafita        | The Samoan national guard of the navy administration in American Samoa |
| Fono            | The upper house of the legislature/ the Senate                |
| Fono a le nu'u  | Village council (often simply termed a fono)                  |
| Fue             | Fly switch                                                    |
| Itumālo         | District                                                      |
| Lāuga           | Speech                                                        |
| Lava-lava       | Traditional calf or ankle length wrap skirt worn by men and women |
| Malaga          | Journey                                                       |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Matai</strong></th>
<th>Titled head of a Samoan extended family, chief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mau</strong></td>
<td>Opposition (political)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pule</strong></td>
<td>Authority, power, responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pulenu'u</strong></td>
<td>Village mayor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sa</strong></td>
<td>Nightly curfew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sa'o</strong></td>
<td>Paramount Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Soālaupule</strong></td>
<td>Joint decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tautua</strong></td>
<td>Service paid to ones ʻāiga and matai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>To'oto'o</strong></td>
<td>Talking stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tulāfale</strong></td>
<td>Orator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ula Fala</strong></td>
<td>Ceremonial Samoan necklace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vā</strong></td>
<td>Distance between, relationships across social space, connectedness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to further a geographical understanding of difference in governance practices and processes by examining how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa compare to the key claims of the governance literature. The rationale for this study rests on the contention that theory on governance modes, processes and practices is limited by the narrow geographical focus of the governance literature, which emerged in an Anglo-European political context and has developed to explain political relations in mostly large, continental, liberal democratic, sovereign state contexts. This thesis builds on critique from a small group of political scientists and geographers who claim that over time this limited focus has led to broad consensus (both inside the academy and out) about trends in governance processes that may not reflect the heterogeneity of governance in both time and place.

The term governance has become ubiquitous across the social and political sciences and is applied in a diverse range of fields including but not limited to: economics and finance ('corporate governance'), international relations and geography ('global governance'), planning and urban geography ('urban governance'), development theory ('good governance'), and political ecology ('environmental governance'). Even within single disciplines the diversity and sheer number of references to the term is daunting. For example, a web of science search for 'governance' limited to the field of 'political science' reveals over 12,000 papers with the term in the title or keywords. The concept has reached this level of prevalence extraordinarily rapidly. As Jose's (2007) analysis of references to 'governance' in Australian political discourse (both public and academic) shows, prior to 1990 there was almost no mention of the term, but by 2003 the term was cited 248 times in Australian academic journal titles and over 5000 references to the term in leading newspapers.

Across the public administration literature there has been debate about why the term has gained such purchase, and there are two key explanations. The first is that theories of governance are flexible, having been built from the intellectual traditions of a diverse range of fields, selectively choosing different aspects of theory, and so remains compatible (if not consistent) and popular with disparate disciplines across the social sciences. For example, early writings on governance borrowed from the overarching
philosophy of New Public Management which contributed to some of the more normative claims about the ‘effectiveness’ of new forms and modes of governing (Hood, 1991; Peters and Pierre, 1998). Studies of policy networks and policy mobility have also contributed to debates on the mechanisms through which particular modes of governance are formed and constituted (Atkinson and Coleman, 1992; Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2000; Peck, 2011; McCann and Ward 2012). Similarly, theories of governance networks have been influenced by the conceptual logic of social network and social capital theory (See for example Kenis and Oerlemans, 2007; 2007; Lin, 2002) and as the next section will discuss in more detail, the work of New Institutionalists has informed much of the governance literature’s understanding of modes of governing. Taken together this disciplinary fluidity has helped the term become embedded in discourse and thinking across the social and political sciences.

The second reason the concept has gained salience is that despite its (not always explicit) concern for the political construction of power and authority, the concept of ‘governance’ has in fact enabled a less ‘political’ way of discussing politics in a neoliberal political environment (Hewitt de Alcantara, 1998; Stoker, 1998). As Chapter 2 discusses further, governance theorists focus less overtly on state politics and ideology than many other sub-disciplines of political science, and for the most part have descriptive tendencies rather than explanatory ambitions, making the ideas somewhat more palatable to a rationalised public sector (Torfing, 2005). In particular, as governments in places like Britain and Australia began to implement the reforms of new public management regimes, they needed new ways to talk about politics, and in that context the term governance became a synonym for the efficient management of organisations and institutions, and for public administration generally (Frederickson et al., 2015; Hewitt de Alcantara, 1998). The enthusiastic adoption of the term by international institutions such as the European Union and the World Bank both confirmed and embedded the concepts value as an a-political narrative of politics in the modern world.

Despite the concept of governance being used across disciplines and contexts, it is generally considered that there is a core body of thought that developed throughout the 1990’s in which the development of theory was focused heavily on the work of British political scientists such as Rod Rhodes, Gerry Stoker, Mark Bevir and later (somewhat reluctantly) Bob Jessop. European theorists such as Jan Kooiman, Kees Van Kersbergen,
Frans van Waarden and Anne Mette Kjær added to the debate, which in the early 2000s then rapidly expanded to the United States by way of theorists such as Guy Peters. While theories of governance have clearly been taken up by all sort of scholars, it was this small group of theorists that developed the foundations of what Marinetto (2003) calls the ‘Anglo school’ which, as a number of scholars have argued, has significantly influenced contemporary theories of governance.

The origins of this prevailing school of thought have meant that governance scholarship has continued to focus almost entirely on the geographical contexts of the American and Anglo-European school. For example, in Hill and Lynn’s (2005) analysis of the empirical literature all of the 834 papers were American studies. In Forbes and Lynn’s (2005) search for ‘international’ (non-American) papers, just over a third were studies from the United Kingdom and only 16% of the 193 studies were from countries outside of the European Union. Perhaps more revealing from a theoretical development perspective is the authorship and empirical focus of the SAGE Handbook on Governance (2011). Analysis of the 551-page text (conducted for this thesis and discussed further in Chapter 2) shows that of the 39 contributing authors, only seven worked outside of European or North American academic institutions and only one was located in the global south. Importantly though, even this author from Pakistan was not writing about governance in that context (but about Singapore); instead the majority of the chapters discussed governance in terms of no specific place and so by implication as being relevant to all places, with only six of the chapters referring to where the theories being discussing might be relevant (eg by referring to ‘the west’).

This tendency to assume that trends and patterns in governance are happening everywhere has been both an implicit and explicit claim of the Anglo-European school, and has likewise been constant over time. For example, one of the most influential contributors to the global governance strand of theorising, James Rosenau, stated in the 1990’s that “a pervasive tendency can be identified in which major shifts in the location of authority and the site of control mechanisms are under way on every continent and in

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1 Referred to throughout this thesis as the Anglo-European school but includes theorists from the United States.

2 The other authors were from Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan and Pakistan.
every country” (Rosenau, 1995). In more recent accounts, the claim is similarly expressed in Bevir’s assertion that “the new relationship between state and society admits of considerable variation, but it is an international phenomenon. New practices of governance extend across the developed and developing world.” (Bevir, 2011 pg 4; 2011). Governance theorists are of course not alone in their predisposition to universalism (Pateman and Grosz, 2013), and when simply applied to theory this may not present a fundamental problem. However, as Marinetto (2003) argues, the idea that governance trends are occurring everywhere has reinforced a paradigmatic consensus on key claims of the theory (discussed further in Chapter 2), which in turn has a tendency to attach itself to the concept of governance as it moves from locale to locale (Walters, 2004).

As an additional problematic then, the theoretical consensus on the broad application of governance trends has (for the most part) been matched by a normative one, which contends that the trajectory of governance modes away from state monopolies and towards decentralised networks of state and non-state actors (discussed in Chapter 2) is a more efficient, effective and fair organisation of political relations (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). As Jose (2007) argues, this normative agreement has led to prescriptive understandings of how governance should be interpreted and executed in all places in the current era. For example, this idea of governance as a normative program strongly informs the concept of ‘good governance’ in the realm of international development theory and practice (White, 2007). As many scholars have pointed out though, the ‘good governance’ paradigm (and its auxiliary concepts of ‘transparency’ and ‘accountability’) is built on rationales that don’t necessarily resonate across different social and cultural contexts (C MacPherson and L MacPherson, 2000). Despite criticism of ‘good governance’ (Leftwich, 1993; Nanda, 2006), the calls for a differentiated approach to particular political systems have not been strongly echoed by mainstream governance theorists. In fact, many governance theorists have argued, to significant effect (Kjaer, 2011; Torfing, 2005), that policy makers around the world should promote the move from hierarchy to networks and incorporate the ideas of governance into generic policy ‘toolkits’.

So, while leading institutions, NGOs and politicians across the world have embraced governance theories, there has been comparatively little critical attention paid to the
theory and empirics of the Anglo-European school’s claims (Jose, 2007). As Walters argues:

“Given the prominence of governance and its growing use in policy circles, it is surprising that the critical literature in this area is not more extensive. There is a striking imbalance between the exponential growth of a literature applying governance to particular cases and areas, and research that critically examines the foundational assumptions and political implications of governance.” (Walters, 2004 pg 27; 2004)

There is therefore, a need for comparative and interpretive studies of governance in different contexts that explicitly speak back to the key debates and assumptions which are driving the formation of grand narratives on the subject.

Political geographers have in more recent years contributed to this need with more nuanced accounts of modes governance, which foreground the importance of place and highlight the contingent nature of governance practices and processes (see for example O’Neill and McGuirk 2005; Le Heron 2007). Economic geographers such as Peck (2011) have shown how neoliberal modes of governance are not in fact universal but have important variances according to the contextualised social and political histories of different places. Urban geographers have also sought to contextualise claims of shifts in modes of governance, to explain the drivers of change in relative authority at scale, and have argued for a place-based understanding of difference in governance practices and processes (Pares et al, 2014). Larner and Le Heron (2002, pg 770) for example have called for a ‘situated method’ that attends to the emerging spaces and subjects of a globalised economy, arguing that a situated focus allows scholars to ‘particularise the apparently universal’ and so make space for alternative theorisations of governance of global economies. These make important contributions to more place based understandings of governance practices. However, as some post-colonial geographers (eg. Simonsen 2004) have pointed out, most urban and economic geographers predominantly write from and about large cities and globalised, capitalist, largely western spaces and this limits their ability to explain complex socio-political issues like governance in different parts of the world (Pares et al, 2014).

As Robinson (2005), Roy (2016), Radcliffe (2017) and others have argued there is a need to decolonise the production of theory itself, in both geography and in political and social
science more broadly. In the post-colonial tradition this has meant being attentive to the ongoing legacies of colonialism in the production of power, territoriality and particularly knowledge across the North-South ‘divide’ (Radcliffe 2005). As part of this process, Southern theorists have sought to re-think the world *from* the global south particularly with respect to economic and political theory (Grosfoguel 2007). For scholars such as Robinson (2003, pg 279) decolonising theory involves a process of both ‘acknowledging location’ in theory so as to displace universalism, and also of looking to the geographical margins in order to “disrupt and contest the dominant role of certain historically powerful locations in the production of generalisable knowledge”. This thesis contributes to this need by seeking to further a geographical understanding of difference in governance practices and processes through a place based examination of how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa compare to the key claims of the governance literature.

Following the lead of these decolonising theory scholars and feminist geographers such as Gibson-Graham (2006), this thesis seeks to ‘look for difference’ in governance both theoretically and empirically. Looking for difference means looking beyond the foundational geographical contexts of the governance gaze (i.e. sovereign, continental, industrialised, northern states) and engaging seriously with governance under different types of state (and non-state) regimes. In the context of state theory and governance then, this means recognising that we cannot simply ‘read off’ the Euro-American experience for the rest of the world (Draude, 2007), and need instead to look to different places to foreground different governance practices in order to build more comprehensive and nuanced theory. So then, as a deliberate academic practice, this thesis seeks to bring to the fore hidden or marginalised perspectives and experiences by explicitly focusing on a case that is not captured in dominant narratives (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

Jeffery *et al* (2015) argue that some of the most exciting scholarship in this context concerns ‘anomalous geopolitical spaces’, which include non-self-governing territories, annexed territories, unrecongnised or partially recognised states, and enclaves. They argue that far from being exceptional, these spaces are prolific in a postcolonial, post-WWII global context; they are certainly not as prevalent as sovereign states but they do make up a large part of the geopolitical landscape. As Boege *et al* (2008 pg 2) point out, while much of political science (including governance) is focused on
Weberian/Westphalian states “this form of statehood hardly exists in reality beyond the OECD world. Many of the countries in the ‘rest’ of the world are political entities that do not resemble the model western state”. Importantly then, these ‘anomalous political spaces’ are anomalous only in so far as they are little recognised and studied by mainstream governance research.

Given this, this research focusses on governance in American Samoa. American Samoa is a set of small islands in the South Pacific which have, for over a hundred years, been under the sovereign rule of the United States. As Chapter 2 argues, non-sovereign jurisdictions, while not rare in the world, are distinctive in their governance practices and processes, as are small islands states (Baldacchino, 2004; Baldacchino and Milne, 2006). Studying American Samoa therefore offers opportunities to learn the influence of place and scale on patterns of governance. Significantly, American Samoa is also a place that has for centuries been ruled by both traditional and religious forms of authority beyond that of the state and the liberal democratic governance actors that so concern the dominant governance school (discussed further in the next section). This gives the research an opportunity to question some of the inherent modern, colonial and secular rationalities (Mahmood, 2009) that are present in the governance literature and political science more broadly (Radcliff, 2016). So, in this thesis, looking for difference is not a strictly a methodology as in those of Most Different Systems Design in comparative politics (Lim, 2010), but is rather an approach to producing novel and critical knowledge to extend theories of governance. Chapter 3 discusses this approach and this thesis’s methodology in more detail. The following section outlines the conceptual framework that structures the specific research questions for the study.

1.2 The Meaning of Governance

While it is clear that the idea of governance has significant political salience, there remains very little consensus on its meaning and how it is to be understood empirically (Allen, 2008). So as to be clear for the purposes of this thesis, this section outlines the conceptual framework that guides this thesis’ approach to its research on governance, with focus on the main points of agreement in the literature. The discussion covers the aim of governance, the key actors, the practices and processes that make up governance regimes, and the scales of analysis that best capture different aspects of the governance
process. The section concludes with a working definition of governance that underpins the research questions, and structures the findings chapters of the thesis.

1.2.1 Governance of What?
At a fundamental level governance is about the process of political order and so is a topic that has been at the heart of political science for centuries (Hewitt de Alcantara, 1998; Rhodes, 1996). What distinguishes it from other studies of politics however, is that it is primarily concerned with the way in which political order is configured to deal with collective issues of societal importance (Kjaer, 2004; Kooiman, 1993a). As Rosenau (2000 pg 175; 2000) states, “governance is about the maintenance of collective order, the achievement of collective goals, and the collective processes of rule through which order and goals are sought”. In particular, governance concerns decision-making about collective resources (both material and non-material), and the way in which actors are mobilised to enable or constrain the ‘public good’ (Bovaird and Löffler, 2009). These conceptions of ‘collective’ or ‘public’ are, for most governance scholars, what differentiates the project of governance from the management of other complex issues, such as financial markets or niche group interests.

As in other areas of political science, there is recognition amongst those concerned with governance that ‘collective’ and ‘public’ are socially constructed concepts that are contested and contingent on the needs and goals of particular societies at particular points in time (Kjaer, 2004). So, rather than focusing their analytical attention on the collective issue to be governed (such as health, the environment, or security), governance theorists are more inclined to study the process of governing. The literature does often use case studies of public policy issues to guide analyses, as this thesis will do using disaster governance (discussed further in Chapter 3). Always however, the object of analysis in governance research is the system of rule, and the interactions between actors and institutions rather than the outcomes of the policy issue itself. In its most pragmatic form, governance theory is interested in the types of actors and institutions that are given authority to act on issues of collective importance, and is concerned with explaining shifts in the relative authority of those actors, the key terms of which are explained in the following sections.

1.2.2 Key Actors and Relative Authority
Understanding governance therefore requires understanding the actors involved in the process of governing. Unsurprisingly considering the concern for public policy issues, studies of governance are deeply interested in the role of the state. However, unlike the related field of State Theory, governance theorists pay significant (if not equal) attention to the role of non-state actors such as those from civil society and the private sector. Such analysis often implies that these actors (and the institutional arenas that they operate in) are both coherent and separate from one another. But, as Chapter 3 argues, this is an overly simplistic approach to understanding governing relations. That said, it is clear that in order to advance claims about governance, some delineation between types of actors and aggregation of those actors into the sectors of public, private and civil is useful for conceptual clarity. Nevertheless, such classifications should be read only as a starting point for subsequent analysis.

Broadly speaking, the governance literature groups actors into three categories, or institutional arenas, with general agreement about defining organisational elements of those arenas, and the types of actors involved; these are summarised in Figure 1, and explained further below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional arena</th>
<th>The State</th>
<th>The Market</th>
<th>Civil Society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The public sector — notionally concerned with the collective interest and funded publicly</td>
<td>The private sector — notionally concerned with the pursuit of profit and funded privately</td>
<td>The civic sector — notionally concerned with collective (but often issue specific) interests and funded privately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>The bureaucracy; the executive; government agencies; the judiciary; legislature; military; political parties; politicians and political leaders; voters and participants in the political process</td>
<td>Corporations; firms; companies; organisations that represent or facilitate private (for profit) interests; individuals and groups who engage in transactions</td>
<td>Non-government organisations; community organisations; social movements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: The institutional arenas and actors involved in governance
The State

As Pierre (2000 pg 242; 2000) argues “The role of the state in governance is perhaps the most important issue in governance research.” However despite the prominence of ‘the state’ as a conceptual category, governance scholars on the whole are vague about what they mean by term (Jessop, 2016). This is perhaps not surprising as the state is one of the most elusive and widely debated concepts in political science (Clark and Dear, 1984; Kelly, 1999). While Bevir (2011 pg 4; 2011) asserts that “theories of governance typically open up the black box of the state”, it is rare for governance scholars to explicitly define or take an epistemological position on the state. This is particularly evident when compared with highly sophisticated theorisations in state theory and political geography (See for example Abrams, 1988; 1988; Mitchell, 1991; Painter, 2006), and this thesis will return to some of these in the Chapter 3.

On the whole the governance literature tends to view the state primarily from an organisational perspective, as a relatively stable assemblage of organisations, institutions and peopled positions that have the power to make rules and enforce them on society. While some governance theorists (most notably Kooiman and Kjær) have taken a more relational view of the state as an effect (Mitchell, 1991), in governance research it is common for the state to be used as a synonym for government. This thesis however, takes note of the critique of this slippage, and distinguishes between government and the state.

Government in this thesis is taken to be the changeable agent of the state that is comprised of other institutions (including the military and the judiciary in liberal democracies), whereas the state is taken to be a nonphysical juridical entity that is relatively less changeable over time (Robinson, 2013). More specifically, this thesis follows Jessop’s general, or as he puts it, a necessarily ‘weak’ definition of the state as:

“a distinct ensemble of institutions and organizations whose socially accepted function is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society in the name of their common interest or will.” (Jessop, 1990 pg 341; 1990)

Building on this, the research for this thesis also recognises the multiple, historical and placed-based nature of states, as captured in Painter’s (1995 pg 31; 1995) definition:
“States should be seen as both complex networks of relations among a (shifting) mixture of institutions and social groups, and the product of their own processes of institutional development and historical change as well as important external influences.”

This two-part definition draws attention to the spatio-temporal particularity of different states, and the need to study the state’s role in governance in diverse places.

CIVIL SOCIETY
Unlike traditional Hegelian definitions in which civil society represents all that is between the individual or the family and the state (Scott and Marshall, 2009), most governance narratives separate market actors from civil society actors, and see both as separate from the state (Cohen and Arato, 1994). As with conceptions of the state, the majority of governance theory draws on liberal political theory to position the role of civil society as a balancing force, or check on state power, often drawing attention to its emancipatory values and practices (Chandhoke, 1995). As Scholte (2000a pg 177; 2000a) states, “in sum, civil society exists whenever people mobilize through voluntary associations in initiatives to shape social order.” Within this context, actors take many forms including grassroots associations, community based groups, and small and large non-government organisations (NGOs), all of which have the potential to operate at scales ranging from the neighbourhood to international arenas (Radcliff, 2016).

Outside of the governance literature, however, some contemporary definitions of civil society are intentionally broader than merely ‘not-government’ and formally organised voluntary organisations. They include:

“... all those areas of social life – the domestic world, the economic sphere, cultural activities and political interaction – which are organized by private or voluntary arrangements between individuals and groups outside the direct control of the state” (Held, 1992 pg 73; 1992)

Therefore, ‘civil society’ in this broader understanding also includes religious groups, and forms of traditional socio-political organisation such as kin, clans and chiefs. In many parts of the world these are important political organisations and actors, imbued with the recognised authority needed to steer societies at various scales (Boege et al., 2008). This thesis therefore employs the wider definition of civil society, and pays attention both
to the formal civil society sector, and to those actors outside of it that have a role in the management of collective issues.

The Private Sector
For governance scholars, ‘market actors’ or ‘private actors’ are notionally considered part of the private sector, which is different to the public sector (the state), primarily due to its operational pursuit of profit. Private actors include businesses, companies and corporations, as well as organisations that represent private interests such as chambers of commerce. These actors can also influence governance at various scales: globally through mechanisms such as the investment decisions of transnational corporations; at national scales through investment partnerships with national governments; and at local scales through activities such as profit-based local service delivery (Peters and Pierre, 1998). They can also indirectly play a role in governance by lobbying government to influence the regulations that make or constrain their role in public-sector program and projects (Hillman et al., 2004).

According to governance narratives, private actors participate in governance in instances where responsibility for collective tasks have been devolved from the state to private organisations, as is the case with the privatisation of services like health and security (Rhodes, 1996). They are also said to be increasingly involved through the mechanism of public-private partnerships, defined broadly as “working arrangements based on a mutual commitment (over and above that implied in any contract) between a public sector organization with any organization outside of the public sector” (Bovaird, 2004 pg 200; 2004). Public-private partnerships underpin much of the literature on networks in governance theory (see Chapter 2), and will therefore be a key point of empirical investigation for this thesis.

Relative Power and Authority
While there continue to be debates in political science about the definition of state and non-state actors, governance research tends to shift the analytical focus from the actors themselves to the nature of the boundaries between them (Stoker, 1998; Walters, 2004),
with those boundaries being articulated by the relative authority\textsuperscript{3} of actors to govern collective problems. In other words, governance theory is concerned not just with the form and function of particular actors, but also with the shifting balance of power between those actors. In fact, as Chapter 2 shows, the most heated debates in governance theory revolve around the relative authority of the state and the increasing power of the private and civil sectors. In that sense, governance theory is primarily concerned with the power to govern in relation to other governance actors.

Despite this overt interest in power, and with a nod to relational understandings in their theorising more broadly, a number of political geographers have argued that the governance literature is often vague on what it means by both power and authority (Allen, 2008; Bulkeley, 2012; Griffin, 2012). Their critique notes that many governance theorists implicitly assume power in governance to be a zero-sum game, and that power is ‘held’ by one actor until it is ceded or taken by another. Importantly as well, this translates into somewhat rigid spatial imaginaries of power, where it is imagined to be stockpiled in specific institutional locations, levels or scales, and exchanged across them (Allen, 2011a). Griffin (2012) suggests instead that a more topological approach to power, such as that described by Allen (2011b), would better suit governance theory. This is to say that in order to better understand governance relations, researchers should look to the interplays between actors over space and time, and in particular, should begin with the assumption that power is ‘not embedded in territory (or locales) but comes into being through mediated relationships’ (Griffin, 2012). This perspective informs the analysis of this research, and particularly the structure of the thesis which presents governance in terms of the evolution of key relationships over time and in practice. The following section outlines how governance can be understood as a practiced activity.

1.2.3 INSTITUTIONS, PRACTICES AND SCALES OF GOVERNANCE
Most governance theorists agree that the way in which power is mobilised by particular actors to enact governance is through institutions. In fact, from an analytical perspective, governance scholars rely heavily on the core assumption of institutionalism; that political

\textsuperscript{3} Following Bulkeley (2012) this thesis views authority as a type of power, distinguished from other forms such as coercion and persuasion by the presence of legitimacy. Legitimacy is understood as relational recognition of the right to govern.
rule is organised by formal rules such as laws and regulations, and informal rules such as norms and culture which create some semblance of order, predictability and continuity in political relations. Institutions are defined here as:

“A relatively enduring collection of rules and organised practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances.” (March and Olsen, 2005 pg 3; 2005)

So then, from a governance perspective, institutions affect how political actors are enabled or constrained in the process of governance (Peters, 2010). As Chapter 2 shows, ideas about the nature of change in governance owe much to the theoretical and empirical work of institutional theorists, particularly the ideas of ‘new institutionalists’ (Kjaer, 2011; Rosenau, 1995).

However, to be clear, unlike institutional theorists who are interested in studying the emergence of institutions themselves, governance theorists are interested in the interplay or interactions of institutions as they combine resources and actions to address collective problems. Peters (2010) argues that a study of institutions per se falls short of theories and explanations of governance, which instead look to the active construction of interactions between institutions. Building on this point, Kjaer (2011 pg 105; 2011) argues that “governance theory introduces an element of human agency which is often lacking in institutional analysis... governance theory is essentially about combining structure and agency in analysing changes in the political rules of the game”. Similarly, Finkelstein (1995 pg 368; 1995) argues that in combining those elements “we should be rigorous in insisting that governance is an activity – that is, doing something. If we need to institutionalise it, we must say the institution in question is a means of governance.”

This thesis therefore understands institutions to be the means through which actors such as organisations, states or corporations operate in order to participate in governance, and while institutions themselves are important contextually, it is the interactions not the institutions that are the object or site of analysis in this research.

As Kooiman (1993b; 2000) has most extensively theorised, ‘interactions’ in this sense consist of actions and practices that are performed in the process of governing. According to this perspective institutions interact in all sorts of ways to steer governance; through
policy development processes, communication processes, funding regimes, as well as the more overt forms of governance interactions that are found in legal processes of enforcement. Kooiman’s formulation of governance interactions as occurring within society (not apart from it) also privileges the study of individual interactions between political leaders and those who ‘people’ the state and non-state organisations involved, as do a number of more constructivist institutional theorists (Hallett et al., 2009). Practices then can be observed at both institutional and interpersonal levels, and include traditional understandings of bureaucratic governance such as law making, policy making, voting, budgeting and education, but can also include more recent evolutions in practice such as citizen juries, collaborative policy making, social media campaigning, and advertising (Bingham et al., 2005). As Walters (2004) points out, there is an overarching tendency in the literature to focus on productive interactions and practices (eg cooperation, agreements, collaborations) which is most likely related to the normative ambitions of much of the literature. Clearly though, less constructive interactions, such as conflicts are also influential in governance at both institutional and interpersonal levels (Cornforth, 2004). This thesis takes a neutral view on this, and sees both cooperative and combative interactions as important drivers of governance.

As these approaches to interactions and practices suggest, the governance literature is concerned not just with the nature of interactions that govern collective problems, but the scale at which they occur (Kok and Veldkamp, 2011). Cash et al. (2006) identify seven types of scale that are used in relation to governance – spatial, temporal, jurisdictional, institutional, management, network, knowledge - although as Termeer (2010) points out, there remains much conceptual confusion across the literature about the meaning of scale in the context of governance. For example there is often slippage between spatial scales, as in areas (e.g. local, landscape, region, global); jurisdictional scales, as in administrations (e.g. provincial, national, intergovernmental) and management scales, as in plans (e.g. tasks, projects, and strategies) (Cash et al., 2006). Considering the analytical project of governance is located at the nexus of these scales, this slippage seems understandable, and suggests perhaps that a more open, less bounded understanding of scale in governance may be more useful.

This thesis adopts Gibson et al.’s (2000) definition, which was developed for the purposes of broad theorisations of change in social political systems, and defines scale as the
spatial, temporal, quantitative or analytical dimensions used to study a phenomenon. Scales are therefore not 'levels', which are units of analysis that are located within scales. More specifically, this thesis follows Kooiman (2000)'s broad articulation of scales of analysis, and the actors and units of analysis that are of particular concern for governance theorists (Figure 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Sites/context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Departments, bureaucracies, projects or working groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meso</td>
<td>Organisations and groups</td>
<td>Sectors, sub-sectors and industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macro</td>
<td>Meta-institutions, i.e. ‘the’ State, the ‘market,’ ‘civil society’</td>
<td>National, supra national, and international process</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Scales, actors and sites of analysis. Adapted from Kooiman (2000)

As outlined in Chapter 3, the research methods for this thesis aim to draw together particular insights from each of these scales to develop a comprehensive picture of the interplays between scales of interaction.

Consistent with this framework for understanding the aim of governance, and key actors practices and processes that make up governance regimes at various scales, this thesis’s working definition of governance is the process of interactions between actors operating within and through institutions, with the power to steer society, for the purpose of achieving collective goals (Figure 3).

1.3 Research Questions and Structure of the Thesis
As the previous sections have shown there is much to the concept of governance, and while there is some agreement about key concepts there are also debates, variances and gaps in understanding of governance. This thesis's aforementioned working definition of governance (see also Figure 3) aims to operationalise the concept while at the same time remaining broad enough to allow for interpretations that might deviate from mainstream conceptions.
**Governance is:**
The process of interactions between actors operating within and through institutions, with the power to steer society, for the purpose of achieving collective goals.

**Where:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interactions are:</th>
<th>both co-operations and partnerships, as well as tension and conflicts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actors are:</td>
<td>peopled organisations or groups that operate within particular sectors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions are:</td>
<td>relatively stable rules and norms imbued with historical significance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power is:</td>
<td>the ability to affect change in governance, is constituted in legitimate authority and is relational in nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective goals are:</td>
<td>broadly agreed social and economic goals that are defined through political process. They are contested, as well as contextually and historically contingent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: A Working Definition of Governance**

Taking these key concepts and applying them to the case of governance in American Samoa, this study is guided by the research questions outlined in Figure 4. These questions aim to structure the approach to meeting this thesis’ overall aim, which is:

**To further a geographical understanding of difference in governance practices and processes by examining how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa compare to the key claims of the governance literature.**

The first two subsequent research questions relate to the phenomenon of governance – how it is structured and practiced. The third relates to how these practices and processes might be characterised or understood in aggregated form as particular *modes* of governance. These are most often theorised as hierarchies, markets or networks and, as Chapter 2 outlines, reflect debates about trends and changes in governance.
While these three questions are designed to focus on different aspects of the phenomenon of governance in American Samoa, there are overlaps between them, and structuring the thesis to answer each individually would likely miss the value in those intersections. Instead the thesis is structured to layer perspectives on governance: from more simplistic understandings of the form and function of the actors and how governance is ‘done’ in American Samoa, to more complex understandings of relations between key actors at scale and over time. Each of the research questions is answered in each of the findings chapters (4-8), and the conclusion of each chapter will return to reflect on these questions explicitly.

Chapter 2 of this thesis sets out the claims of governance as a theory of change, and outlines the evolving debates within the mainstream governance literature over the last 30 years. It then brings the literature on islands, small states and South Pacific politics into conversation with these debates in order to provide the theoretical framework for a study of difference based on scale and place in American Samoa.

Chapter 3 builds on this theoretical review to outline the grounded and empirical approach to this study and to further clarify some of the issues raised in this introductory chapter, including: the difficulty of ‘seeing’ governance in practice; the issue of blurred boundaries between actors and institutions; the interpretive aspects of governance; and the importance of capturing both dynamic and historical perspectives on change. The chapter proposes a triangulated methodology (including the novel approach of using
Chapter 4 aims to set the scene on governance in American Samoa by focusing on the form and function of the key actors in the American Samoan political system. It introduces broad characterisations of the relationships between the actors, as well as the modes of governance that structure the institutions and their interactions. Building on this analysis, Chapter 5 explores the way that those actors interacted during the 2009 tsunami in the islands, a case that was chosen to reveal the dynamics of governance processes in practice. While these two chapters explore much of the governance landscape of American Samoa, the analysis is designed only as a beginning to the thesis' overall inquiry – in that way, taken together, the chapters function as an introduction to what could be understood as the characters, and the play of this study. The following three findings chapters 6-8 are designed to delve deeper into particular relationships between actors at different scales.

Chapter 6 focuses on the relationship between the United States Government and the traditional chiefly system in American Samoa. It explores the construction of that relationship through the process of annexation and transition to (relative) self-governance, and highlights the evolving practices of negotiation of mutual benefits that characterise the relationship (as well as the tensions that are inherent within it).

Chapter 7 focuses on the relationship between key governance actors at a territorial scale, so it concentrates on relations between the territorial state, the private sector and civil society groups including religious institutions. Building on the previous chapter, it shows the way the size and scale of the political system, as well as the connections to the United States, serve to structure the institutions and practices of governance in particular ways that are quite different to the claims in the mainstream governance literature.

Finally, Chapter 8 focuses on the relationship between the territorial government and the village governance system, which again is shown to operate differently to the descriptions of the governance literature. This final empirical chapter brings together the findings on the other key governance relationships to explore the ways in which
Boundaries between the actors at scales are both constructed and blurred in the practices of governing.

Chapter 9 concludes the thesis by returning to the research questions, and the comparative element of the study, to reflect on what value a study of difference has for the rationale of expanding the intellectual phenomenon of governance to include more geographically nuanced perspectives.

1.4 CONCLUSION

This thesis is a response to an emerging critique in political science and geography that the concept of governance has limited explanatory power due to both the narrow focus on empirical studies in Anglo-European political systems, and the constraints of an overly normative ideological framework. Taking a political geography perspective, the rationale for this thesis therefore suggests that looking for difference in a case study like American Samoa offers opportunities to extend the theory of governance to include a greater appreciation for the effects of scale and place on the construction of governance relations and regimes. This chapter has proposed a conceptual framework and working definition of governance that informs the research questions which guide the structure of this study and thesis. The following chapter will explore the theoretical debates that structure the analysis of the findings chapters.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As Chapter 1 outlines, the aim of this thesis is to understand how governance in American Samoa compares to the key claims of the Anglo-European governance literature, and to further a geographical understanding of difference in governance practices and processes. In that context, the aim of this chapter is to provide the basis for that comparison by first outlining the main debates in and enduring claims of governance theory, and then suggesting some alternative perspectives that could structure a purposeful study of difference in relation to that theory. The first section of this chapter sets out the main claims of governance theory in the context of three evolving debates that surround:

a. the nature of multi-level governance
b. the relative role of state and non-state actors at a domestic level
c. changes in the modes of governance.

In reviewing this literature, the aim is not to propose a comprehensive theory of change or create a theoretical framework for governance that this research will ‘test’. As Chapter 3 outlines in more detail, this is neither the purpose nor the approach of this research. Rather, the objective of this chapter is to establish the core (if recently questioned) claims about governance from the literature, which are then used to structure the contrasting grounded and interpretive analysis of governance in American Samoa.

The second section of this chapter then moves beyond the core governance literature to examine three intellectual perspectives in political science and geography that may help to broaden the outlook of the governance literature to include different scales, spaces and practices of governance. The selection of this literature also reflects the choice of the case study for the research, and provides some additional justification for that choice. The review of these literatures is therefore focused both on the aspects of theory that concern the key claims of the governance literature, and those that explain the relevance of American Samoa as a means of reflection on the Anglo-European theories of change in governance practices and processes.

2.2 THREE EVOLVING ANGLO-EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES
The overarching perspective of the governance literature from a theoretical perspective
is that since the 1990’s the centralised power of the state, characterised most strongly by
the post-war welfare state (Mayntz, 2003), has rapidly given way to a new, set of
governing arrangements shared between the state, and the private and civil sectors
(Pierre and Peters, 2000). In this context, state power is said to have been displaced in
three ways:

1) upwards to international actors
2) downwards to polities, communities and individuals
3) outwards to civil society and other private actors (Bevir and Rhodes, 2011;
Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Jessop, 1993; Pierre and Peters, 2000; Termeer et al.,
2010).

As Chapter 1 argues, there is strong agreement across the literature that these changes
have occurred, however there are differences in explanations, which Hooghe and Marks
(2003 pg 234) describe as ‘islands of theorising’ about how and why the state has ceded
power and to what effect.

Peters (2000) categorises the literature into two groups of ‘old’ and ‘new’ governance.
‘Old’ governance perspectives are said to be state-centric in that they take the dominance
of the state for granted and have a normative bias to the positive role of government in
political relations. ‘New’ governance perspectives are ‘society-centric’ and begin with a
theoretical and empirical focus on non-state actors and their role in governing. Within
‘new governance’ perspectives Torfing (2005) argues that there has been an evolution in
the analytical intention between what he sees as first and second generation scholars,
where the first generation were intent on proving the novelty of the governance
phenomenon, and the second are tasked with more complex questions about processes
and modes of governance. The following sections are arranged to loosely reflect the
chronology of this thinking on governance, from ‘old’ to ‘new’ ways of thinking and from
first to second generation scholarship within the latter ‘new’ paradigm, of course
notwithstanding cross-cutting and persistent themes across the entire body of scholarship.
2.2.1 The Dispersal of Centralised State Authority: Global and Multi-Level Governance

The first key debate in the governance literature is based on a claim that global processes such as Europeanization and globalisation have led to broad changes in the international political economy, which have in turn had significant impacts on the dominance of the state in governing collective problems at both domestic and international scales. Governance theorists have come to accept that these processes have led to complex and connected ‘multi-level governance’ regimes that render the line between domestic and international politics increasingly porous and, significantly, serve to disperse the authority of the state in governance.

The Anglo-European governance perspective on this debate has been heavily influenced by International Relations scholars, who during the early 1990’s were exploring the view that state authority was being reconfigured and dispersed to subnational and international institutions by way of “globalisation” - a collective term for the process of progressively increasing flows of capital, goods, ideas and people across national borders (Hirst et al., 2009; Prakash and Hart, 1999). This perspective claimed that by enabling more interconnected and internationally dependent national economies, globalisation was (to varying extents) challenging the Westphalian sovereignty of the state (Caporaso, 2000). Debates on the extent of this claim have been heated (for overviews see C Hay and Marsh, 2000; 2000; Scholte, 2000b) and continue in discussions of international political economy today (Sassen, 2015). However, rather than contribute directly to these debates, most governance theorists instead conformed to the more descriptive rather than explanatory tendencies of the field (Torfing, 2005), and sought first to document changes in the structures and modes of governance in the context of increased global interconnection.

In this context, the phenomenon of European integration (variously termed regionalisation, devolution, de-concentration and federalisation) and the emergence of the European Union (EU) became a critical site of inquiry for governance theorists. Most notably, Gary Marks (1993) developed the argument that decision-making processes in member countries of the European Union were no longer entirely dominated by the logic of self-interested, powerful, centralised states but were more accurately characterised by what he termed ‘multi-level governance’. This expression evolved into an influential term used to describe the way in which governing authority in the European Union had begun
to be devolved down to sub-national entities, agencies and jurisdictions, and at the same time up to regional governing authorities such as EU administrative institutions (Piattoni, 2009). In particular Marks et al. (1996) made a compelling case for the increasingly influential role of non-state actors, such as the IMF or Greenpeace in both domestic and international political relations in Europe, and their ability to direct policy outcomes without the support of a centralised state. Though Marks’ work is over 25 year old, the concept of multilevel governance remains influential, and structures much of how governance is thought of in more recent studies of European governance (See for example Héritier and Rhodes, 2010; 2010; Knill and Lenschow, 2004; Piattoni, 2010).

The key contribution of this perspective has been to highlight the increasingly layered or tiered nature of political authority. The imaginary of a spatial layering of authority serves to highlight the entanglement of local, national and international ‘spheres of authority’, and to effectively challenge the divide between the domestic and international spheres of governance (Peters, 2000). Importantly, the idea of multilevel governance also questions the prevailing assumption that the state (and its locus of power) is unitary, and draws particular attention to conflicts in the distribution of roles and responsibilities across different branches, agencies and levels of government. This body of work also leads to a shift in focus from central, or national state governing processes, to local government issues (Dear, 2000; Halford et al., 1993), particularly in work on urban multilevel governance (Keil, 1998).

Focusing less on the public administration aspects of globalised governance practices, other governance scholars at this time were drawing attention to how the rise of non-state international actors might be affecting the relative role of the state in governance at supranational scales. James Rosenau was one of the first scholars to make purposeful steps to clearly articulate this relationship, arguing that a focus on the conduct of states alone was “increasingly obsolete as a source of understanding either world politics or international governance” (Rosenau, 2000 pg 168; 2000). In part, this was attributed to the increasing prevalence and power of civil society actors in the international context, such as NGOs and activist coalitions that were putting pressure on unitary state authority (Florini, 2004; Keck and Sikkink, 2014; O’Brien, 2000; Strange, 1996). For Rosenau, this meant that states should be seen to operate within competing and contested ‘spheres of
authority’ made up of multiple actors including corporations, professional private actors and non-government organisations (Rosenau, 2007).

Urban and economic geographers have done much to extend and nuance these claims. Those writing in the global environmental governance space for example have shown how territorialised state power has been challenged not just by economic globalisation but also by the proliferation of global environmental problems such as climate change which necessitate new and complex forms of transnational governance (Adger and Jorden 2009; Abbott, 2012). It has been noted that non-state actors such as investors, NGOs and financial entrepreneurs have developed increasing influence in the governance of global problems such as climate change, rendering the boundaries between national and international governance more porous (Pattberg, 2012). Betsil and Bulkeley (2004) point out these changes should not be viewed as a simple top down interventions into sovereign national policy making but rather be seen as a complex shift in the spatial politics of authority, where state power is not simply diminished but is reconstituted in different ways across territorial lines. Writing from an economic geography perspective, Peck and Tickell (2002) have argued that the process of neoliberalization has led to profound changes governance relations across local, national and transnational scales but also point out that these changes are contingent, deeply political and dynamic over time. This work draws attention to the way that processes such as economic regulation contain political logics that actually serve to redefine the enactment of power across scales of governance (Peck, 2002) and that governance is the result of a ‘dialectical interplay’ between local, national and international institutions (Peck, 1998). Similarly, while agreeing that governing authority has been dispersed across spatial scales, Gibbs and Jonas (2000) have questioned the way in which ‘the local’ is constructed and justified as a key site of regulatory intervention. In this way, geographers have extended and questioned the spatial imaginaries of the multi-level governance perspective by asserting that the scales and levels of multi-level governance systems are not pre-determined but are constructed through socio-political practices and processes of actors- including but not limited to the state.

Taken together, these ideas of multilevel governance and the decline in the centrality of state authority in governance (due to a relative rise in private and civil authority), have served to consolidate the idea that there has been a significant if complex shift in the form
and function, as well as the relative role of the state in governance. The following section outlines the effect these ideas had on debates about the role of the state within domestic political spheres.

2.2.2 From Government to Governance: The rise of NGOs and the Private Sector
The previous section outlined the way in which trends in global governance became a catalyst for rethinking the centrality of the state, at least in the international system. The second and connected debate in governance theory, influenced mainly by public administration scholars, is that the prevailing neoliberal rationalities that circulate as part of globalisation have had a profound effect on the domestic functions of the state in the form of the project of economic rationalisation in public sector reform (Rockman, 1998; Wolf, 2008). In that context, empirical attention to the demise of the welfare state and the rise of private authority as an alternative to state-based governance in places like Europe and particularly Britain, underpinned an assertion by governance theorists that we were seeing a shift from government to governance, which entailed a broader range of actors, and again suggested a diminished role for the state in governance.

In particular, the literature claims that this ‘roll back of the state’ has coincided with a rise in private authority in public good management, and an increased role for non-government organisations as arbiters of this new process. This idea needs to be understood within the context of concern with, and empirical attention to, the major shift in focus of political-economic theory and practice towards neoliberalism, which began in the late 1970’s. Many economists and political scientists during the 1980’s and 90’s argued that the modern welfare state, whose central role was to deliver social services, underpin labour markets and maintain large public bureaucracies (Sbragia, 2000), had overstretched itself in terms of regulatory capacity. Specifically they argued it had, through fiscal ineptitude, failed to effectively deliver public services and solve increasingly complex public problems (Lynn, 2006). Accordingly, neoliberal policies encouraged what was termed a ‘roll back of the state’ to make way for more economically ‘efficient’ modes of governance that were less susceptible to the state’s perceived incompetency and corruptions (O’Neill, 2008). Proponents of these policies saw markets as the antidote to inevitably flawed state planning hierarchies, ultimately viewing market mechanisms as more efficient and dynamic modes of governing and ordering human relations.
While governance theorists were not necessarily concerned with the normative justification of these rationalities, they did agree that the shift was indeed occurring across the western world. They documented it by turning their attention to the observed changes in power relations that occurred during the 1980’s in Britain and the United States due to the predominant influence of neoliberal reform agendas, most notably embodied in the conviction politics of both the Thatcher and Reagan administrations (Rockman, 1998; Savoie, 1994). By the mid to late 1990’s authors such as Peters (1994) and Rhodes (1997) were beginning to theorise a process that they termed ‘hollowing out’ of the state. Their thesis came to form the basis of Rhodes’s influential Differentiated Polity Model (DPM), which described the details of a British core executive “fumbling to pull rubber levers of control” (Bevir and Rhodes, 2006 pg 74; 2006). For governance scholars in the 1990’s, particularly those writing in Britain, it was clear that they were experiencing a period of profound change in the relative power and prestige of the state.

As popular and scholarly attention to the decline of state power increased, the governance literature (led by Rhodes) made the bold assertion that the world was seeing a move from ‘government to governance’ – a catch phrase that still has powerful resonance in descriptions of political relations today. According to this perspective, the roll back of the state has led to an increasing trend of responsibility for collective tasks being devolved from the state to private organisations, as is the case with the privatisation of services like health and security (Rhodes, 1996). Similarly it was argued that non-government organisations had increased in number and influence as a response to the retreat of the state from public policy functions, particularly at the local level (Radcliff, 2016). As Kooiman (1993a) convincingly argued, under the governance model (in western and northern Europe) these actors participate in the steering of society both indirectly, through the use of advocacy and lobbying to influence government policy development, and directly by mounting legal challenges to state action and policy. Like private sector organisations, NGOs and other voluntary organisations were also said to be increasingly involved in governance through their own regulatory actions (for example consumer boycotts or buy-ins)(Lange et al., 2015).

While this perspective was in part informed by observations of actual changes in European political systems, it was also a product of changing intellectual traditions in Europe and the United States that began to question the value of state-centric modes of
analysis (Marinetto, 2003; Walters, 2004). Pluralists have long challenged the reification of the state, but the rise of rational choice theory, as well as iterative theories like Foucault’s governmentality, post-Marxism and social humanism all had influence in decentring the state further in the study of political relations and governance (Bevir, 2011). In short, the ‘government to governance’ perspective was intellectually fashionable towards the end of the century which, at least initially, had the effect of quelling criticism and discouraging in-depth research on the veracity of its claims (Colebatch, 2009).

As the debate progressed (See Bevir and Rhodes, 2011) however, a small number of scholars began to question two key premises of the claim that there had been a shift from government to governance. The first was the premise that, at some point in history, there was a centralised, dominant, all-powerful state to begin with. As Walters (2004 pg 38) states, “governance theory works with a somewhat exaggerated conception of the power of the post-war welfare state”, which has the effect of overstating the importance of governance as a novel mode of explanation. Secondly, some authors suggested that there was little evidence of broad institutional change in state governing practices within or outside Britain; certainly not enough to warrant the paradigm shift governance scholars were heralding. Holliday (2000 pg 175) for example argues, “it would seem that the rather eccentric politics of a passing (now past) era in British politics have been confused with real structural change”. These and other critiques caused those involved in the core governance debate to question the premise that the state’s role was actually shrinking, opting instead for more circumspect language around a shifting role (Kjaer, 2004; Kooiman, 2000).

The resulting concept of meta-governance suggests that rather than a decline in the power of the state across the board we have instead seen a shift in the role of the state, metaphorically expressed as a shift from rowing, in the direct delivery of services, to steering by way of setting the institutional conditions for other organisations and agencies to implement public policy (Jessop, 2003; 2008; Sørensen and Torfing, 2007). Steering, it is argued, still requires significant and far-reaching state power even if it is no longer as visible in the policies and practices of the state. In fact, some scholars have argued that even ‘the shadow of hierarchy’ is enough to steer societies, and that the ‘Damocles sword of threatened direct state intervention’ (Streeck and Schmitter, 1985)
still constitutes a strong role for the state (Hérigitier and Lehmkuhl, 2008). These critiques resulted in an understanding that the state may not be in ‘decline’ per se, and is unlikely to be eclipsed (Evans, 1997) by other actors, but its role in terms of relative power is certainly transforming (Marsh, 2011; Sbragia, 2000). The following section discusses the way that governance scholars have theorised this transformation as changes in modes of governance.

2.2.3 **From Hierarchies to Networks**

The third and perhaps most enduring debate of the governance literature is based on the claim that there has been a discernible shift in modes of governance from state-based hierarchy to a proliferation of interdependent networks. Largely moving on from debates about state power, governance theorists in the early to mid 2000’s became more interested in the types of meta-governing modes – hierarchy, markets, or networks – that were prevalent, powerful and effective in Anglo-European governance contexts (Bevir and Rhodes, 2011; Kjaer, 2004). Interestingly, most of the core governance theory overlooks markets as an important mode of governing perhaps because of their notionally less obvious connections to the management of public goods (Williamson, 1996). As Figure 5 shows, the literature is detailed and specific about the differences between these two modes, and it is worth unpacking these differences before moving into debates on the extent to which a shift between them has occurred.

![Figure 5](image_url)

**Figure 5**: Contrasting claims of hierarchical and network theories of governance. Adapted from (Sørensen et al., 2009; Torfing, 2005; Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden, 2004)
According to the governance literature, hierarchical governance processes occur in political contexts in which leaders control non-leaders (Dahl and Lindblom, 1963 as cited in Kooiman 2000 pg 152; 1963), and are usually associated with a vertical ‘stacking’ of authority in which individuals or groups at the top of a hierarchical structure have more capacity to affect change, control behaviours and actions, and make decisions than those at progressively lower levels. Levels are set out by frameworks of rules and agreements and have particular, often long standing, institutional expectations attached to them in terms of responsibility and decision-making power. Authority thus flows vertically from top to bottom and is often characterised as ‘top down management’ in political science more broadly. Legitimacy for that authority is usually formally constituted by recognised rules (often but not always law), and these hierarchies enforce decisions mostly through command and control practices (Peters, 1998). Because of its association with the state apparatus, hierarchy is often used as shorthand to describe bureaucracy, which is one of the most elaborate forms of hierarchical organisation (Lynn, 2011).

On the other hand, a network account of governance, as originally theorised by Rod Rhodes in the British political setting, “refers to sets of formal and informal institutional linkages between governmental and other actors structured around shared interests in public policy making and implementation.” (Rhodes, 2007 pg 1244). Networks were seen as empirically observable phenomenon that emerged as a response to the changes in actors involved in governance, as well as the shifts in relative authority between them. Drawing on Rhodes (1997) and Jessop (1997), Torfing (2002) defines networks as:

“relatively stable horizontal articulations of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors who interact with one another through negotiations which take place within a regulative, normative, cognitive and imaginary framework that is self-regulating within limits set by external forces and which contributes to the production of public purpose.”

In comparison to hierarchy, a key difference with networks is the voluntary nature of interactions; one actor is not compelling another to do something and instead multiple actors are agreeing to act in order to address a need. Operationally then, networks function by way of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation and in that process are dependent on virtues such as reciprocity, duty and sympathy (Rhodes, 1997 pg 1246; Thompson, 2003). Differentiating this from other modes of governance, Francis et al
(1991 pg 15) argue that “if it is price competition that is the central co-ordinating mechanism of the market and administrative orders that of hierarchy, then it is trust and cooperation that centrally articulates networks”. Over the longer term it is argued, networks rely on negotiation to maintain compliance, and this is done through a process of bargaining and deliberation (Torfing, 2005).

The other important point about the idea of networked governance is that while government is usually one of the actors present in a network, that is not a given. Certainly in contemporary contexts, centralised state departments are not necessarily the fulcrum of a network (Bevir and Rhodes, 2011). Rather, states are said to be working in tandem, in partnership and in concert with other actors. In practice then, the boundaries between public and private sectors have become blurred, which changes the nature of both the actors themselves, and the interactions between them (Kooiman, 1993a; 2000; Peters, 2011; Pierre, 2000). For example, in many governing contexts there are now actors and institutions that are both public and private – those in health and security being prime examples. Similarly, the literature points to the increasing involvement of non-government organisations and private corporations in public (state) policy development, and the increasingly corporatized organisation of many non-government institutions as examples of an array of hybrid modes of governance (Haufler, 2013). Torfing (2005 pg 307) goes on to add that actors within these networks are dependent in the sense that they rely on each other’s resources to steer issues, however they are operationally autonomous in that “they are not commanded by superiors to act in a certain way” and are therefore distinct from hierarchies.

For most governance theorists, these blurred boundaries are evidence that networks are indeed (or at least should be) now the dominant mode of organisation for governance. In fact, most governance theorists have, in their enthusiasm for networks either relegated hierarchy to ‘the shadows’ or dismissed it as a ‘zombie category’ (Davies, 2012 citing Beck 2007). Some however, such as Pierre and Peters (2000 pg 17), argue both that the level of criticism of hierarchy is theoretically unwarranted, and that the claims of the prevalence of networks may be empirically unfounded. Indeed, despite the ‘horizontal expectation’ (Grote, 2012) of the majority of the literature, Hill and Lyn’s (2005) meta-study of over 800 research projects on governance found that most were still reporting hierarchical forms of governance operating (to varying extents) in the actual delivery of
public services. In a more damning critique, Davies and Spicer (2015) argue that conceptually and practically, networks are riddled with ‘pathologies’ that, if taken seriously, should lead researchers to a more agnostic view of their value in governing political relations.

As with the debates on state power, there has emerged a call from geographers among others for a tempering of the strength of the claim that networks have uniformly unseated hierarchies, but rather that networks may be emerging alongside hierarchies (Kettl, 2002). For example, Bulkeley (2005) argues that there is space in theories of governance for hybrid and multiple forms of authority and that scalar and non-scalar readings of spatiality in this context can be mutually constitutive. Davies (2012 pg 2700) similarly argues that hybridity is inevitable, stating “the challenge for governance theory may be less in categorizing institutions as ‘hierarchies’, ‘markets’ or ‘networks’ than in explaining how, why, and where they embody particular mixes, how configurations change space-time, and what the direction of travel might be”. Davies and Spicer (2015) similarly argue that networks need to be put in their place alongside, and intertwined with hierarchies of different kinds. These critiques are picked up in the following section in the context of looking for difference in governance modes in place.

2.2.4 Summary
While there have of course been deviations and contrary theoretical positions within the governance literature, debates about theories of change in governance can be read in terms of three key meta claims. The first broad claim is that global processes such as Europeanisation and Globalisation have led to a dispersal of once centralised state authority, which has given way to multilevel governance regimes that effectively render the line between domestic and international governance processes more porous. Second, the literature agrees that this, combined with neoliberal reform processes, has led to a dramatic change in the role of the state domestically leading it to be if not ‘hollowed out’ then at least somewhat less dominant in its form and functions. Finally, the more recent claim of the governance literature is that these changes in the role of the state have led to new modes of governance that operate through horizontal, trust-based networks of various actors, rather than the command and control hierarchical governance modes normally associated with the state. This thesis aims to understand how governance in American Samoa compares to these three key claims.
As a few scholars are beginning to argue there may be value in an agnostic view of networks, and there is room to think beyond the binaries of hierarchy or network, and old or new governance. The following section outlines some theoretical perspectives that have the potential to open up some of these debates and claims about the nature of governance.

2.3 TOWARDS A STUDY OF DIFFERENCE IN GOVERNANCE

This section brings together three sets of distinct but related literature from political science and geography with the aim of widening the explanatory potential of governance theory beyond the Anglo-European experience. It also aims to provide a basis for the choice of American Samoa as a case study, and to act as a theoretical introduction to governance in that context. So, this section first looks to the literature on small states to outline the ways in which scale can affect governance practices and processes. It then turns to the literature on islands as political spaces to show the way that islands’ geographical contexts can lead to different spatial processes of governance. Finally, the section shows that place can also be an important driver of difference, by way of examining governance in the context of Pacific Studies.

2.3.1 A DIFFERENT SCALE

As Chapter 1 argues, the majority of the governance literature is concerned with, and by implication stakes its claims on, the context of governance in large states like the United Kingdom, the United States and European states. The literature on small states (typically a subset of research in the field of Public Administration) is critical of this position, which they argue misleadingly likens large jurisdictions and territories to ‘normal’ political entities (Baldacchino, 2012). Theorists who focus on small states argue two key points about the value of their perspective; first that small states, rather than being obscurities, are important and relevant components of the global governance system; and second, that smallness produces different kinds of governance arrangements that need to be

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4 There is little agreement about definitions of large, small and microstates, as it depends on whether size is measured in terms of territory or population. Chitto (2011) argues that for the purposes of studying governance, definitions based on size of the polity make more sense than territory. In that context, most scholars agree that small states are those with populations of one million or less, and microstates are those with less than 300,000 people (Raadschelders, 1992).
thought about critically when comparing them to governing frameworks developed in large state contexts.

The most important point of the small states literature (in terms of key governance claims) is that the state, far from retreating as described in the mainstream governance literature, still looms large in the lives and governing relations of small populations (Grydehøj, 2016; 2000; Richards, 1982). In many small states the civil service is one of the biggest employers and plays a dominant role in public affairs (Bray and Packer, 1993; Brown, 2010; 2005). Political representatives are also physically and psychologically closer to citizens (Veenendaal, 2014), which in effect, brings the polity closer to the governance interactions of the state, and in many ways reinforces the state’s legitimacy. As Randma-Liiv (2002 pg 378) argues, in small places “the relatively large size of the civil service affects the labour market of the state and also reinforces the importance of the government”. Significantly, it is argued that because of this dominance, the role of the state (the central concern of governance theory) is less prone to the kinds of transformative change seen in European and other large states. Partly this is due to the make-up of the bureaucracy, which is often shaped by the revolving door of a small pool of experienced personnel, whose hold on the operation of the public sector contributes to conservatism and inertia in state forms and functions (Baker, 1992; Wettenhall, 2001).

Partly also, the role of the state remains paramount due to the relative weakness of the private sector in many small states. The incursion of the private sector into governing relations, argued strongly and convincingly by governance theorists, is less salient in small state contexts where the private sector is usually small and highly dependent on the state or external, international firms and governments (Panke, 2010), and has a tendency towards specialisation which effectively limits the number and range of economic actors (Grydehøj, 2011). This is certainly not the case in all small and microstates, as some like Brunei and Monaco are some of the richest in the world with extremely powerful private sectors (Pirotta et al., 2001). However, the majority of small states also have small economies due mainly to limited resources, small domestic markets, and competitive disadvantages including a lack of endogenous capital, small labour markets, and (typically) distance from large markets (Bennell and Oxenham, 1983). For island states, which make up a large number of small states, these problems of economies of scale are even more pronounced, and have led to an overarching (and
often exaggerated) view of the economic vulnerability of small states (Connell, 2013) discussed further in the following section.

The third key point of the small states literature that relates to governance debates is that the entanglement of state and non-state actors that is beginning to emerge in the Euro-American context has been a constant in governing practices for decades, and some cases centuries, in small states. Murray (1981) argues that in microstates in particular, the structure of government combined with the fact that ‘everyone knows everyone’ (Sutton, 1987) means that civil society is enmeshed with the state through personal politics. Small societies are inherently networked, and many people play multiple official roles in the community which often cross public-private divides (Bray and Packer, 1993; Randma-Liiv, 2002; Richards, 1982).

So, the key empirical question is how these networked interactions compare to those described in the governance literature as being horizontally ordered, voluntary and reciprocal. In most small state studies it is clear that the blurring of the roles of state and other actors is not due to the actions of organised civil society groups for the purposes of more deliberative networked governance or as a manifestation of neoliberal governance modes, but rather is result of the enduring conditions of the scale of society, and the pervasiveness of cultural practices in hybrid (often postcolonial) political systems (Boege et al., 2008; Richards, 1982). As is discussed further in Chapter 3 and 4, this point is a foundational one in the context of American Samoan politics, and is a key point of departure for this research.

2.3.2 A DIFFERENT SPACE

By focusing on large northern states, the governance literature has also narrowed the spatial imaginary of governance to reflect the particularities of continental state spaces. Similar to small states, islands and archipelagos have often been characterised in political science as obscure or insignificant despite the fact that they actually make up nearly a quarter of all sovereign states, and comprise by far the largest number of small states (Baldacchino and Hepburn, 2012; P Hay, 2006). Some island-theorists even argue that, through the history of their spatial imaginary in cartography, islands are effectively the conceptual birthplace of modern statehood for political scientists (Steinberg, 2005). Island studies, or nissology as it is sometimes known, has for decades sought to problematize universalising narratives of political theory by studying islands as political
spaces on their own terms (McCall, 1994). So too have political geographers, who are drawn to the complex assemblages of power, place and identity that make up island politics and governance (Mountz, 2015).

Empirical studies in the literature on islands stress their complex and often highly particular geographies, which have been shown to condition politics in novel ways (Grydehøj, 2016), and in some cases produce new and innovative forms of governance (Baldacchino and Milne, 2006; Stratford, 2006). In particular the complexities of their bounded but porous territoriosity have long been of interest to political geographers who seek to disrupt the naturalisation of the relationship between territory, state sovereignty and governing authority (Agnew, 2005; See also Clapham, 1998; 1998; Hansen and Stepputat, 2009; McConnell, 2009). As Baldaccino (2012 pg 58) argues, islands around the world have for centuries been heavily influenced by external intervention in the form of “hurricanes, missionaries, invasions, aid, remittances, tourism, imports, exports”. In particular, for small islands that inhabit remote locations, there has been a long history of reliance on ‘the outside world’ for economic survival and material improvement (Richards, 1982 pg 160). This long history of porous governance boundaries provides an interesting point of comparison to the newer phenomenon of multilevel governance described in the Anglo-European literature.

Additionally, because of their spatiality, islands have for centuries been viewed by larger states as enclaves, and often as spaces that offer opportunities for exploitation if occupied and controlled (Mountz, 2015). This has led to long and complex histories of colonial and imperial relations for many islands, and as Baldaccino (2004) argues, a significant number of islands across the world continue to be ruled by external sovereign states both directly and indirectly. In fact, 38 islands and archipelagos around the world remain substantially autonomous but non-sovereign territories (Grydehøj, 2016). These sub-national island jurisdictions (SNIs) offer important opportunities to question some of the assumptions about the significance of sovereignty as a precondition of and mechanism of governance, as well as flows of power in extra-territorial governance regimes. In fact, as Baldacchino and Milne (2006 pg 500) argue, many jurisdictions have been shown to exploit dependency relationships and act as the Lilliputian’s ‘tying up the giant’ of metropolitan power (Neumann and Gstöhl, 2004). In any case, it is clear that these cases of multiple jurisdictions add a layer of complexity to the theories of blurred
boundaries in multilevel governance arrangements, and are an important, if under researched perspective on the key claims of multilevel governance theory.

Beyond the political aspects of island spaces, it is also argued that conceptually, islands offer space to open up and critically examine stale or rigid intellectual problems. According to Baldacchino (2007; 2010), a leading scholar in the field, islands are ‘quintessential sites for experimentation’ or ‘sites of creative conceptualisation’ in academic thought. That said, much of the academic debate in island studies centres on a fine conceptual balance between celebrating the unique socio-political and geographical attributes of islands on the one hand, and falsely representing and at times romanticising them as fundamentally ‘other’ places in the world (P Hay, 2006). Lowenthal (2007 pg 208; 2007) points to the historical tendency to exoticise islands, and warns that “as seemingly self-contained miniature worlds, islands (can) become seedbeds of fertile imagination”. Similarly, Alison Mountz (2015 pg 3) highlights the paradox of difference in imagining islands, arguing that “Islands and archipelagos are powerful, recurring, and vexing to the spatial imaginary: highly unique, idiosyncratic, disparate and yet revealing, offering spatial form, pattern and logics that are everywhere produced”. Taking this point even further Baldacchino (2005 pg 248) argues that:

“An island is a nervous duality: it confronts us as a juxtaposition and confluence of the understanding of local and global realities, of interior and exterior references of meaning, of having roots at home while also deploying routes away from home.

An island is a world; yet an island engages the world.”

Rather than attempting to resolve this nervous duality, the research of this thesis embraces the contrary nature of islands as a fascinating way of unsettling some of the more rigid assumptions of governance theory. It also sees islands as spaces in which the qualities that construct place – identity, meaning, historicity - are dramatically distilled (P Hay, 2006), and this is discussed in the context of the Pacific in the following section.

2.3.3 A DIFFERENT PLACE

Governance scholars, while detailed in their claims about the why and how of changes in governance regimes, have for the most part failed to engage seriously with difference when it comes to the where of governance - otherwise understood as the importance of
place in governance (Martin, 1992; Sassen, 1995). Echoing much of the previously discussed literature on small states and islands, Pacific scholars have argued that while Pacific islands may be small, they are (perhaps because of their smallness) also complex and unique in special ways (Hooper et al., 1987). The Fijian President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara originally used the phrase ‘the Pacific way’ just after Fiji’s independence, as a way of expressing a particular identity and way of doing things that is quite different to the rest of the world. According to this view there are long and ancient lines of kin, culture, space and place that connect islanders in the South Pacific in a similar way of life and similar approaches to work, society and politics. Over time, the phrase has changed meaning and been much debated (see Lawson, 2010), but there remains consensus, if only implicitly, among scholars of Pacific studies that there are distinct cultural, political and geographical aspects of the region that need to be taken seriously when undertaking inquiry in a Pacific context.

The first and perhaps most striking point of difference in Pacific island governance, compared the Anglo-European context, is the location and expanse of the region, which has consequences for how political and social relations play out, and in turn mediates the ways in which governance unfolds in particular islands over time. The Pacific Ocean is a vast place; islands such as those of Pitcairn are considered some of the most remote settlements in the world. Similarly, some archipelagos have islands that are serviced by boat only a couple of times a year. However, rather than being insular in their remoteness, Pacific societies have instead developed to be both open and mobile in their trans-island connections and interactions, and have for centuries relied on movement and trade to connect to other people and economies across the ocean. In terms of studying governance in this region, this point is not simply an historical fact, it also points to the importance of understanding Pacific spatially from an epistemological perspective. One of the most influential voices on this point has been Epeli Hau’ofa’s (1994) conception of the Pacific as ‘a sea of islands’, connected and related, rather than ‘island’s in the far sea’, remote and disparate. By inverting the (mostly western) conception of the near-far, seascape-

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5 Place in this sense is understood as locations or locales that are imbued with a sense of meaning and belonging, which are socially and culturally constructed over time and experienced through common, everyday practices (Agnew, 2011; Cresswell, 2004).
landscape relationship (Matsuda, 2007), Hau'ofa points out strengths rather than weaknesses in the Pacific's spatiality. From an epistemological standpoint, this thesis begins with this positive and productive perspective of extensive but connected space through and between islands as a backdrop to Pacific governance.

These more island-centred approaches have shown that Pacific islands consistently problematize grand narratives about change, economic development and governance (Lilomaia-Doktor, 2009; Teaiwa, 2006). The most prominent example of this is the MIRAB (migration, remittances, aid and bureaucracy) model of Pacific political economy developed by Bertram and Watters (Bertram, 1999; Bertram and Watters, 1985). The MIRAB model takes island economies as they are: sustained through transfer payments in the form of remittances from family, and aid from other states, as well as through government dominated non-tradable production (bureaucracy). While this model has been both challenged and refined over time (Hayes, 1993; Poirine, 1995), there is general agreement that these factors remain key drivers of island economies. For dependent and associated territories such as the Federated States of Micronesia or the Cook Islands, the financial support vital to the MIRAB economy is a given part of political status arrangements. For sovereign states, economic connection (or dependence) comes in the form of externally driven aid regimes (Peterson, 2012). There is no Pacific state or territory that does not rely to a significant extent on external economic aid. In fact, as Levine (2012) argues, economic dependency is such a fact of Pacific existence that the debate has moved from how to make ‘vulnerable’ islands more economically sustainable, to how to make dependency work better for island economies. So then, for both sovereign and non-sovereign island states it is the fluid nature of internal and external economies that structures economic relations, and in turn provides the backdrop for both public and private sector governance in the Pacific context.

As well as being open to external influences, Pacific peoples have for centuries moved outwards, and back and forth from their islands to seek knowledge, opportunity and resources (Lee, 2009). As the literature on migration and transnationalism in this field has shown, life on islands is determined by movement and flows across both real and imagined borders (Bedford, 2008). Migration is wide spread across the region, and large populations of Pacific islanders, particularly young working age people, live and undertake permanent and seasonal work in places like Australia, New Zealand and the
United States. Sometimes, as is the case in Niue, there are higher percentages of the population living and working overseas than on-island (Connell, 2008). For those living overseas there is a strong social obligation to take care of family back home (discussed in the American Samoan context in more detail in Chapter 8), which results in significant flows of remittances back into Pacific economies by way of what James (1991) terms a ‘transnational corporation of kin’. This remittance economy is an incredibly important source of income for most states. In fact, in some smaller Pacific countries, that income exceeds earnings from any other domestic sector (Bedford and Hugo, 2012). In this context, there is much debate about the relationship between migration and development (See De Haas, 2012; Hugo, 2012), although this is not the central concern of this thesis. From a governance perspective, the more critical point is the way in which transnational flows of people and remittances might affect the types of actors involved in governance, and/or might structure the modes of governing collective problems. This aspect of mobility is less well researched in the Pacific context, and is a subject of inquiry for this thesis.

Another key point of difference from the Anglo-European governance context is that in the Pacific, traditional political institutions such as clans, chiefs, and other kin-based authorities continue to hold powerful roles in governance at both local levels and national levels. In fact, as Boege (2008 pg 7) argues, “customary law, traditional societal structures (extended families, clans, tribes, religious brotherhoods, village communities) and traditional authorities (such as village elders, headmen, clan chiefs, healers, bigmen, religious leaders, etc.) determine the everyday social reality of large parts of the population.” So too do the various Christian Churches, which are extraordinarily diverse in denomination, and prevalent in all Pacific islands and most especially in the Polynesian islands. These represent distinctly different governance actors than those described in

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6 Drawing on Moore (1986) and (1988) this thesis views the concept of tradition as internally contested and subject to changes over time though processes of invention, redefinition and reproduction. In that context, ‘traditional’ systems are generally considered as those that are influenced by the practices and politics of custom and denote a passing down of beliefs and practices over a long period of time, usually referencing pre-colonial timeframes (Ewins, 1998; Lawson, 1993).
the literature, and this presents an opportunity to contribute to understanding their form, function and relative authority in governance.

Finally, as endogenous and exogenous institutions of church, state and society interact in place and over time, governance across the region has come to be characterised by hybrid systems of rule, where indigenous and introduced systems merge to form complicated governance regimes (Fraenkel, 2010; Peterson, 2012). Until relatively recently, the collective wisdom of political science has rendered customary systems of governance ‘rudimentary’, ‘anachronistic’ and inherently conservative in comparison to European and American governance regimes (Pirotta et al., 2001; Smolicz, 1988; West and Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). Anthropologists however have for many decades been suspicious of polarized distinctions between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ societies, and have sought to develop more sophisticated epistemologies and practices of comparison (Jolly and N Thomas, 1992). Most Pacific theorists stress that each case needs to be understood as a unique case of complexity and ongoing integration between multiple systems. As Boege (2008 pg 7) points out, “in practice therefore there are no clear-cut boundaries between the realm of the exogenous ‘modern’ and the endogenous ‘traditional’, rather there are processes of assimilation, articulation, transformation and/or adoptions in the context of the global/exogenous – local/endogenous interface”. The spatial dimensions of this interface are also a key point of inquiry for this thesis.

2.3.4 Summary
While there are clearly strong connections between these literatures that deal with small states, islands and Pacific places, this section has presented them separately to more purposefully draw out the key theoretical points that offer a somewhat different view on governance theory and practice. Focusing on the effects of scale, the review of the small states literature shows that the politics of small places have particular dynamics that potentially challenge some of the prevailing claims about governance in the literature. Principally, these revolve around the relative role of the state compared to the private sector, and claims to the novelty of entanglement in the ‘new’ governance narratives. In a very similar context, the literature on nissology and islands as political spaces also raises questions for the originality of the governance literature’s spatial imaginary of governance practices and processes that reach across territorial boundaries and scales. Finally, the literature from Pacific Studies shows that place matters in studies of
governance, and understanding the multiple contexts of mobility, the effects of culture, and the history of the region is fundamental to interpretive study in particular Pacific places. The following chapter explains further how this study will bring these perspectives together and explore them in much more detail in the context of governance in American Samoa.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the key tenets of governance theory and to propose a theoretical basis for a comparative study of difference in that context. The first section of this chapter characterised governance theory in terms of three broad debates, each with key claims about the actors, practices and processes of governance. The second section moved beyond these debates and looked to alternative theories on governance practices and processes that focus on scales, spaces and places other than those that predominantly capture the attention of the Anglo-European governance literature. It is important to note that this chapter is not calling for more attention to scale, space and place in governance theory per se; that has been the concern of political and economic geographers for some time and some of their important contributions have been outlined in the first section of this chapter. Rather, the argument is that there remains a need to look at different scales, places and spaces; particularly ones that do not generally capture the attention of political scientists who are predominantly interested in the governance implications of neoliberalism and global capitalism or urban geographers interested in the governance of large cities in that context. This thesis then supports the argument made by many small states and island scholars that small places and anomalous geographical spaces are not obscurities or outliers in the global political landscape. Indeed, they deserve empirical attention and can provide important opportunities to question dominant narratives about the form and function governance. This thesis aims to further this perspective by conducting a detailed, grounded study of governance in American Samoa; the particulars of the design and methodology of the study are the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3 APPROACH AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The empirical research for this thesis was guided by a pragmatic approach to mixed methods data collection and a grounded but interpretive approach to data analysis. This is consistent with the turn in governance studies that favours allowing theory to emerge from the beliefs, practices and actions of governance actors, rather than ‘testing’ already formed theory in practice (Bevir and Rhodes, 2006; Kjaer, 2011). It is particularly relevant to the case study, because as Lilomaia-Doktor (2009 pg 3) argues, this approach is not always taken by western scholars working in the Pacific Islands, such that often “theorists remain overly concerned with fitting societies into their models or holding tightly to a particular philosophy while ignoring any conceptual problems”. This thesis aimed to avoid this trap by conducting fieldwork that engages deeply with the importance of place, and by privileging the perspectives and voices of American Samoans in the construction of the findings of the research.

This chapter explains the approach and the methods of data collection for this thesis. It begins with a discussion of the epistemological and analytical challenges of investigating governance, including the challenges of working with indistinct concepts and units of analysis. After outlining some common approaches to these challenges, an additional (original) approach of layering historical, interpretive and dynamic investigations of governance is explained, before discussing the advantages and limitations of conducting a case study in a place like American Samoa. The chapter then outlines the approach taken to fieldwork, the methods of data collection and analysis are discussed, and the limitations and ethical considerations associated with these techniques.

3.2 APPROACHING THE STUDY OF GOVERNANCE

3.2.1 THE ANALYTICAL CHALLENGE OF STUDYING GOVERNANCE

 Studying governance empirically presents a number of epistemological difficulties. First, the study of interactions between actors is complicated by the fact that there is much debate in different fields of political science (state theory in particular) about how to analyse the role of the state in relation to other actors. For example, for some state theorists the distinction between state and society is self-evident (see Krasner 1978;
Skolpol 1985; Stepan, 1985). This perspective has however, been the subject of post-structuralist critiques made by cultural and social theorists from the mid 80's to the present, which have dramatically changed the way that the state/society relationship is theorised. They stress the relational, multi-scalar and dispersed nature of the state (McGuirk and O’Neill, 2012), which in turn complicates analytical attempts to compare the form and function of state and non-state actors.

However, political geographers, following the lead of contemporary state theorists such as Jessop (2003; 2008; 2016), Mitchell (1991) and Abrams (1988), have made headway on the epistemological challenge of ‘seeing’ the state and other actors in the processes of governance. They argue that rather than attempting to clarify units of analysis through bounded categories, we instead should begin with an understanding of the border between the state and other actors as ‘porous’ and ‘mutable’ (Bulkeley and Schroeder, 2012; McGuirk and O’Neill, 2012; Painter, 2006; 2007), and importantly, to practice that fluidity in our research design and analysis. Within political geography, this epistemological approach has led to scholarship that favours the nuance and flexibility of qualitative research methods, rather than quantitative ones. This is because many of the quantitative methods that seek to explain governance through models of interactions and relationships still rely on conclusive distinctions between categories of actors in their analysis. If, instead, governance is understood as complex interactions between actors whose boundaries are mutable and emergent, then methodologies that allow depth of analysis are needed.

Political geographers such as Alison Mountz and Joe Painter have pioneered in-depth methodologies for studying governance by way of ethnographies of the state. This approach focuses on the ‘everyday’ practices of governance within state bureaucracies, as well as the discursive practices of state power more broadly, as means of examining the role of the state in governance. Painter’s ‘Prosaic Geographies of Stateness’ (2006) for example, focuses on “the ordinary practices through which the state effects are actualized in daily life” including mundane activities such as meetings, speeches, filing, report writing, public events and the like. Alison Mountz’s (2010) ethnography of the Canadian immigration bureaucracy also focused on quotidian practices as a means of seeing governance interactions. Studies such as these use techniques such as embedded participant observation and discourse analysis to build a rich picture of the complexity of
governance practices. The research design of this thesis is attentive to the benefits of this type of research, and through techniques of participant observation gathers data on ‘everyday’ governance practices and processes (discussed further in section 3.3 and 3.4).

While these deep ethnographies of the state are useful for examining the nature of the state itself, they tend to be less useful for capturing the interactions of governance (which entail more than the state). In-depth qualitative studies of governance tend to focus on one public policy area or collective problem (e.g. homelessness or forestry), or alternatively one governance actor. As Keefer argues consequently “there are few research efforts that set out to analyse all dimensions or even most dimensions of governance jointly” (Keefer, 2009). In many ways this is a practical problem; focusing on all actors and institutions across broad spatial scales and timeframes is beyond the scope of most studies. That said, it is recognised that a more integrated approach can add new insights to knowledge of governance (Pierre and Peters, 2000). This thesis proposes that integrated research into governance needs to layer the ‘everyday’ approaches to governance with studies of specific types of problems that inherently involve interactions that cross scales, and link actors across multiple sectors. The following section outlines the way in which this was done for this particular research project.

3.2.2 Understanding Governance in Place

Clearly, governance is an exceptionally complex object of inquiry, and studying it therefore requires a research design that captures the spatial, temporal and conceptual complexity of the process, while also drawing meaningful conclusions for comparative and theoretical purposes. Case study based inquiry is understood to be particularly useful where in-depth research is required to explore complexity in place (Yin, 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, a case study is understood to be different from variable led studies, and is approached instead as a defined and confined ‘real-life’ context that is the object of inquiry for the research (G Thomas, 2011).

American Samoa was chosen as the case study for this research for a number of reasons. The first is that the territory is an excellent example of an anonymous geopolitical space with respect to the terms set out in Chapter 2. As the proceeding chapters explain, not only is American Samoa a non-sovereign subnational jurisdiction, but it is also unusual in terms of the characteristics of its legal political status beyond that of sovereignty. Similarly, it is a small island state but due to its 117-year political and economic
relationship with the United States it is not a least developed state and so is different to many of its small island developing state (SIDS) neighbours. While it is a liberal democracy with a representative presidential political system, American Samoa also has powerful customary and religious governance institutions that continue to play important roles in the political system of the territory, which presents some striking distinctions from Anglo-European political contexts. As a case it therefore offers the opportunity to explore a different type of state in a different type of place from those set out in the governance literature. Secondly, the small size of the territory with a population of around 57,000 people creates practical advantages in terms of understanding connections between key actors and gaining access to the range of actors and institutions that would constitute a comprehensive case study of governance. The advantages and limitations of sampling for interviews in this context are discussed in section 3.4.2.

Finally, American Samoa was chosen as a case study because very little scholarly work has focused on the territory generally and certainly with respect to analysis of its governance system. While it is not unusual for there to be a small range of academic work on small Pacific islands, the difference in the number of sources written about Samoa and those on American Samoa is striking\(^7\). So too is the type of sources, with the majority of material produced on American Samoa being from the environmental or health sciences, compared to a long standing and sophisticated body of work on Samoa's political and cultural history. The Samoan studies experts who I spoke to at the beginning of research for this thesis recognised this quantitative and qualitative difference in scholarly material, but there was little consensus on why this might be the case. As the following American Samoan interviewee stated:

*No one writes about American Samoa. The scholars don’t find us scholastically interesting or valuable. You know why? Because all the smart people of Samoa – when I say smart, they were educated by the Europeans - and all the education facilities were located in Apia, all the colonial activity was in Apia, so that was the centre of the commercial universe for the Samoa’s, and it was where the first scholars*

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\(^7\) A basic Discovery search for “Samoa” reveals 14,231 academic books and articles, compared to 3,616 for “American Samoa”. The qualitative difference in quality and type of publication is more evident in searches of specific collections like the Pacific Collection at the University of the South Pacific in Suva.
wrote about. So then other scholars built on that work and followed their footsteps, on and on, and over that time it just became too hard to write about American Samoa. (Interview 38, Government)

This lack of detailed empirical foundation for the case study combined with the analytical challenges discussed in the previous section necessitated a layered and somewhat experimental approach to research design; one that focuses on historical, interpretive and dynamic aspects of governance. The first two elements of this three-part approach have methodological precedent in the governance literature. The third dynamic component is proposed as an original approach to governance research as so is discussed in more length later in this section.

Firstly though, as researchers such as Kooiman and Kajer (discussed in Chapter 2) have long argued, governance needs to be understood from a historical perspective and so analysis of governance practices and processes should take account of the development of institutions over time. In the case of American Samoa this means understanding the development of relationships between key actors such as the church, chiefs, and different levels of government, as well as understanding the effects of different periods of political development in the region, including pre and post-colonial expansion. The research for this thesis therefore looked to the few (but extremely useful) historical texts that explicitly seek to explain and document the development of the territory’s political system (e.g. Gray, 1960; Shaffer, 2000; Sunia, 1998; 2009). This analysis is represented throughout the thesis in the form of timelines and other figures that support detailed discussions on the development of relations over time. The historical approach to data analysis also informed the overall structure of the thesis which orders the presentation of data and analysis based on the progressive revelation of key moments in principal relationship as they occurred in time as well as space.

Secondly, drawing on the more recent work of Bevir and Rhodes (2011) the research for this thesis recognises that governance is a socially constructed lived experience which is best understood by asking those who are a part of it. In this sense the research for this thesis took an interpretive approach by asking American Samoan people what they think of governance regimes, and by observing how governance works in place. These insights served to ground the analysis of the historical data and to provide a more contemporary
perspective on the practices and processes of governance in the territory. As is discussed further in following sections of this chapter the aim of this analysis was not to get to the objective ‘truth’ of these processes but to compare and contrast different perspectives of those involved and to foreground the ideas, experiences and opinions of those who construct governance in place every day.

Finally, this thesis proposes that a third, dynamic aspect of analysis could help to further more detailed and comprehensive studies of governance in place by thinking about disasters as a window into governance practices and processes. There are two main justifications for treating disasters as a ‘window’ or lens through which to study governance. The first is that disasters are well suited to in-depth inquiries into political relations as they are themselves inherently political in nature and require interaction between a very broad range of actors and institutions to mediate their effects on society (Pelling and Dill, 2008; 2010). Critical scholarship on ‘natural’ hazards has for many decades argued that disasters are due in large part, not to the hazard itself, but to the underlying structural aspects of a society’s political economy and social support systems (Albala-Bertrand, 1993; Alexander, 2000; Blaikie et al., 1994; Cutter et al., 2003). Empirical studies informed by this understanding have developed knowledge on the dynamics of relations between the state and civil society, as well as the state and market actors during and after disasters (Jalali, 2002; Özerdem and Jocoby, 2006; Schiff, 2013; Shaw and Goda, 2004; Srinivasan and Nagaraj, 2013). Much of this literature has been focused on explaining vulnerability to disasters, or on proposing better ways to manage disasters in different contexts. This thesis however, seeks to use disasters as an analytical lens rather than the object of inquiry.

Central to this approach is the idea that disasters have the potential to reveal underlying aspects of governance practices that may be obscured from a researcher’s view when focusing on everyday governance processes. Rapid onset, large-scale disasters are seen

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8 For the purposes of this thesis the term disaster is shorthand for: “A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.” (UNISDR, 2007)
as significant focusing events in which the role (past, current and aspirational) of different institutions becomes particularly apparent (Birkmann 1997). Oliver-Smith (1996 pg 304) argues that in the chaos of the aftermath of a large-scale disaster “the fundamental features of society and culture are laid bare in stark relief by the reduction of priorities to basic social, cultural, and material necessities”. Similarly, Olson points out that the 'layers' of bureaucratic processes, semantics and symbolism that obscure certain aspects of governance are often stripped away in the event of a disaster to “provide clear insights into the nature, priorities, and capabilities of authorities, governments and entire regimes” (R Olson, 2000 pg 173). Disasters therefore can be seen as analytical moments, ones that have the potential to be combined with other lenses to give depth to insights into governance interactions.

The second justification for seeing disasters as lens through which to study governance is more pragmatic: disasters provide a ‘way in’ to discussing governance in an integrated way with a broad range of actors. Disasters are a quintessential public good problem with far reaching consequences, so that almost all departments of a government bureaucracy are involved in some aspect of disaster prevention, management or recovery. Disasters also cross the public-private divide, involving for example civil society actors such as NGOs, and private sector actors such as insurance providers and consultants. Large-scale disasters also often involve extra territorial actors such as international governments, companies, and international NGOs, which are often missed in in-depth, localised ethnographies of the state (Gupta, 1995).

Therefore, the scope of the governance landscape of disasters means that researchers often have access to a broader range of actors relative to more programmatic studies, and therefore may be able to draw some more comprehensive conclusions about governance interactions and dynamics. Discursively, disasters also offer an opportunity for participants to speak about politics and governance more easily as they provide an experiential context for discussions about challenges, failures, interactions and relationships between actors. For these reasons, this research focused on the tsunami that occurred in American Samoa in 2009, and the governance practices and processes that surrounded the response and recovery to that event. Chapter 5 explains the details of this event and analyses the way in which governance in the territory played out during and after the disaster.
While the context of disasters was useful in this study as a way of grounding conversations about governance, there are some challenges inherent in this approach. First, disasters open up complex notions of dynamics and change in political systems that are difficult to reconcile with the logic of using them as an analytical tool. It has long been argued that disasters both emerge from the pre-existing structural elements that make up a societies’ political economy, and have the power to catalyse change in socio-ecological systems (Watts, 1983). Often this change manifests in shifts in the relative authority of governance actors. In hurricane Katrina for example, the complete institutional failure of the state in emergency management led to a delegitimising of the state in disaster governance in the United States, ultimately resulting in a rise in non-government organisation (NGO) involvement in traditionally state managed public policy areas (Burby, 2014; Ink, 2006; Menzel, 2006; Simo and Bies, 2007; Weil, 2011). Similarly, in their study of earthquakes in Japan, Turkey and India, Ozerdem and Jacoby (2006) point out that disasters can change the dynamics of political systems by strengthening or (more often) weakening the state’s authority relative to other governance actors.

Clearly then, disasters are not static moments in which governance is simply revealed and then returned to normal; they are also processes that have the power to fundamentally change governance relations. A quantitative approach to governance may find this potential for change problematic in that the research cannot hold either the dependent or independent variable constant in the analysis. However, as discussed earlier this thesis is qualitative in nature, and therefore more flexible in its analysis. In fact, the research assumes that governance is messy from an analytical perspective; it is a constantly constructed process and therefore one that is subject to change with or without a disaster.

Overall then, this thesis approaches the study of governance in place by combining historical understandings of the development key relationships, with first-hand perspectives on the effects of those relations on the processes of governance by those who live and work in the territory, and importantly with an analysis of the unpredictable and often surprising elements of governance as practiced in a time of dynamic change. The structure of each of the findings chapters reflects this layered approach and draws attention to each of these elements at three distinct spatial scales (see section 3.5).
3.3 Fieldwork in American Samoa

The previous section has explained the broad approach taken to this research on governance. This section shifts the focus to the actual case of this thesis, and outlines the way in which the research for this thesis was conducted in American Samoa. As with most field-based inquiries there were challenges inherent in this research, not least those that arose from being an Australian researcher investigating a cultural, political and geographical context that was unfamiliar to me. Such unfamiliarity is a ubiquitous challenge but not necessarily a weakness in social research, and the aim of this section is to explain how this project navigated the experience of conducting research in American Samoa.

3.3.1 The Scope of Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this research was conducted over a period of 9 months, with a three-week scoping trip preceding a second phase of three-months of intensive data collection. The scoping trip was conducted in March 2015, and began with visits to Fiji and Samoa to gather primary and secondary source material from various specialty Pacific library collections, and to discuss the value of the project with Samoan studies scholars at the leading universities in the region. The final week was spent in American Samoa gathering media reports, and establishing contacts in government and civil society sectors. Following the scoping trip, and a period of six months planning and processing the initial data, I returned to American Samoa for a 3-month period of primary data collection.

The timing of the fieldwork was designed to align with the territory’s disasters preparedness month, which occurs annually in September. During the first weeks in American Samoa I was fortunate enough to make a key contact in the department of Homeland Security (the department with primary responsibility for disaster management) who provided me with access to meetings and events (outlined in more detail in Section 3.4.3), which allowed for analysis of the processes and practices of governance generally, and in the context of disasters. In particular, the outreach activities of government as part of disaster preparedness month provided insight into the ways in which sectors and organisations interact with one another. Figure 6 for example, shows homeland security staff conducting an outreach session in the church of a local village (discussed in further detail in Chapter 8).
Because disaster response cuts across a variety of governing responsibilities, the meetings included a wide range of government departments and civil society organisations, which provided an exceptionally useful first point of contact for further interviews. Figure 7 shows one of these meetings.
Figure 7: Tsunami ‘hotwash’ session; A meeting of government departments, civil society and private sector groups to discuss strategic planning and governance arrangements for disasters.

Over the period of the fieldwork I spent time in the offices of Homeland Security, as this was where many of the meetings were held. However, I chose to make my home the base of my work, so as to avoid the perception that my research was contracted by or formally connected to the programs and projects of Homeland Security. This was also imperative for the Department, who were aiding my research rather than managing or funding it, and it was also important to allow representatives of other departments to feel comfortable to speak freely about intra-department interactions and governing processes.

My home during my fieldwork was a rented house in a village in one of the more populous parts of the island. Living in a village allowed me to observe the many aspects of daily life which gave colour and context to the anthropological studies of village level governance that I draw on in the analysis in Chapter 8. I decided however, that observing people's lives as a formal data collection method was both unnecessary for my study, and inappropriate in the context of my status as a visitor to the village. For example, this made it awkward to gain permission to take photographs of village events for the purposes of this research. Similarly, where I was invited to cultural and religious events, it was often as a guest and a friend not as a researcher, and I decided to respect that status by not
recording those events for this thesis. At an analytical level though, these encounters and relationships obviously provided context for and influenced my interpretations and perceptions, and provided me with insights that inform the tone of this thesis, if not the results. From a personal perspective, it was both a pleasure and a privilege, for a short time, to share the company of the people living in the village (both Samoan and Palagi). The countless dinners and lunches I shared with people, and the generosity that people showed towards me meant that I enjoyed every day of my fieldwork, and I am enormously grateful for that.

3.3.2 ANONYMITY, POSITIONALITY AND SUBJECT MATTER

While friendship with participants can engender trust, create connections, and open up interview opportunities, it can also cause problems of reliability in gathering and analysing data (Glesne, 1989). For this reason, I chose not to interview people that I had built stronger friendships with, although I did rely on them to introduce me to people who would become interviewees (as discussed in more detail in section 3.4.2). This raises the issue of anonymity in the challenges of protecting interviewee’s identities in small communities, and particularly the risks of exposing an interviewee’s participation, even if their views were kept confidential.

The potential for exposure of interviewee’s participation in the research was partly due to the fact that I was recognisable in a small community with relatively few foreigners. Many interviewees told me that they had heard that I was on the island and had discussed my research with others before I had spoken to them. In one sense this was an advantage, as most had decided they were happy to talk to me because of the discussions. However, it also presented challenges with respect to opinions that may have been influenced by groupthink. I moderated this possibility by explaining confidentiality and the design of the interview structure, and encouraging individual responses through iterative reflection and prompts (see section 3.4.2). Secondly, the confidentiality of interviewee participation was difficult to protect because many of the interviews were conducted in public places (at the interviewees request), where they were often recognised by people they knew, and others who had participated in interviews. I attempted to ameliorate this issue by suggesting interviews in more private places but the suggestion was usually met with an amused explanation that ‘everyone knowing everything’ is a normal part of life on the island and not to be worried about. Beyond the confidentiality of participation, the
challenges of anonymity were addressed through techniques of data collection and analysis described in Appendix 1 Ethics Processes.

Another key challenge of conducting fieldwork in American Samoa was the process of negotiating my own positionality. Positionality in this sense refers to the idea that certain aspects of a researcher’s identity and experience, such as class, race and gender, can influence the way they interpret their research context, and can also effect the interactions they have with participants (Mullings, 1999; Rose, 1997). The ways in which this occurs are various and depend both on the researcher, and on the specific place and time in which the research occurs. Gender is often a key positional factor to consider, especially in the formation of power relations during interviews (England, 1994). However, gender (my own or the interviewees) did not emerge as a key factor that moderated the conduct of the data collection and research. For this project, there are two main aspects of my positionality that are worth discussing.

First, growing up and being educated in a liberal democratic country (Australia), there is a possibility that I regard Western systems of rule and governance as the norm, and in turn, position different systems as ‘other’ to that norm. This analytical process is often unconscious (Brons, 2015), and can serve to create normative hierarchies in the analysis of results, and the presentation of findings and conclusions. In particular, there is likelihood that I am drawn to using democratic political values (e.g. freedom of speech, separation of powers, social equality) as a benchmark for normative evaluations of those systems. This is not unusual in Pacific Studies, where western academics often outline ‘effective’ or ‘non-effective’ political systems based on constructs such as universal suffrage or separation of church and state (see for example Meller 1984; Saldanha 2005).

On the other hand, there is also a tendency for liberally educated outsiders to ‘romanticise the local’ (Richmond, 2011) and see traditional systems as somehow more ‘pure’ in their governance practices (Jolly, 1992), having the effect of obscuring conflict and complexity in interpretation. Anthropologists have gone to great lengths to point out the dangers of ill-informed normative dualisms in western interpretations of Pacific contexts (Jolly and N Thomas, 1992) and this is something this research actively seeks to avoid. Partly, the subject of inquiry of this thesis has moderated these issues; as Chapter 1 discusses, it does not seek to assess ‘good’ or ‘bad’, ‘effective’ or ‘ineffective’ forms of governance.
Throughout the thesis then, comparisons are made in the form of interpretations rather than evaluations, and every effort was made to be reflexive in my potential bias.

Second, and from different perspective, there is a possibility that the participants in this research anticipated a normative bias in my position as a researcher from a liberal democratic context and adjusted, or reframed their answers to influence that bias in some way. It is important to note here though, that this research recognises the constructed nature of governance, and in particular acknowledges that simply by my being there and asking questions, I am in effect contributing to that ever-changing process. In this sense, it is impossible to avoid ‘influencing’ the results of this research, and there has been relative consensus in qualitative research that there is no way to obtain an objective perspective or ‘truth’ in a social world (Padgett, 2016). I therefore see my conversations with participants as part of the construction and production of governance narratives and realities (Mingers, 2001), and while I used interview techniques that reduced the potential for leading opinions (see section 3.4.2), I acknowledge that I may have influenced the research findings in a variety of ways.

The final major challenge of this research revolves around the difficulties of researching traumatic events like natural disasters. A number of scholars, who have focused on this issue in a range of fieldwork contexts, point to the potential for increased emotional stress for participants in discussing their experience of a natural disaster (Collogan et al., 2004; Kilpatrick, 2004; Parkes, 2011). While the 2009 tsunami occurred six years prior to the fieldwork, it was the largest disaster in the territory’s history, and was one that affected everyone who was there at the time, as well as those who had connections to family and friends on the island. The potential for distress related to this event is variable, based on the individual, and the connection they had to the event. At the very least, for most American Samoans, the tsunami is a painful collective memory, and for those who were directly affected, has the potential to be an issue of ongoing trauma. I managed this risk by being upfront about the subject of the interview, stating that the focus was to be on governance processes around the event and not the impact of the event itself, but nevertheless stressing that they did not need to discuss their personal experiences if they did not want to, and could opt out of the interview at any time. There were two interviewees who were visibly distressed while discussing their experience, however they both chose to continue with the interview, and in follow up conversations indicated
that they had a positive view of the experience of the interview. This reflects Collogan's (2004) contention that, while there is potential for harm in discussing the experience of disasters, these risks should not be overstated. In fact, well-conducted interviews can often provide emotional benefits to participants. Overall, across the range of interviewees, there was a willingness, and in many cases eagerness, to talk about the event of the 2009 tsunami and the governance implications of the management of the disaster. The following section discusses in more detail the techniques used in participant interviews.

3.4 METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

Drawing on the logic of the research design to investigate different aspects of governance in place, this research utilised a multi-methods approach to data collection, typical of qualitative research on complex political questions such as governance (Berg and Lune, 2004; Patton, 2005). This approach aimed to focus on different sources of data, as well as scales and units of analysis, in order to elucidate the key aspects of the research design, and answer the study's research questions. The following section outlines each method and explains: how it seeks to contribute to the research design and research questions; how it was employed in the context of this study; and some of the advantages and limitations of using these particular methods within the American Samoan context. It should be noted though, that while these are presented here as distinct approaches to data collection, many of the methods overlapped in practice.

3.4.1 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

The research for this thesis made use of four key types of documents to answer all three of the study's research questions: legal code and the territorial constitution, reports, speeches, and public comment. Each of these has specific value for investigating governance in American Samoa. First, legislation and particularly constitutions, are often used as points of analysis in political inquiry as they are artefacts of the formal articulation of state authority and responsibilities vis-à-vis other institutions (Larmour, 2002; Lim, 2010). As similar articulations of formalised governance institutions, reports by government and other organisations also show the process of negotiating authority in governance over time, particularly those that catalogue and document processes such as commissions and investigations. For example, the political status commission reports from 1960-1970 are used in this thesis as evidence of the process of negotiating legal
authority between American Samoa and the United States. Similarly, government and civil society incident reports following the tsunami allow for knowledge on which actors did what in practice, and also allow for analysis of the formally articulated reflections of institutional actors on that process. I analysed these documents by way of a general content analysis (Neuendorf, 2016) with a particular focus on formal (often legal) articulations of relative authority between the key actors in American Samoan Governance. These dictons were then analysed in terms of the discussions on relative authority in the interviews and the analysis of relative authority in practice during and after the 2009 tsunami.

Taking note of the importance of discourse as a means to understand political relations, this thesis also makes use of the discursive data of speeches made by politicians, as illustrative of the ways in which the state (as represented by politicians) publically defines its various roles and responsibilities, and as indicative of how government exerts authority in the public sphere. As a counter point to these types of data, the research has also made use of records of public comment in public inquiries and court cases as part of processes. These act as evidence of the dialectical relations of negotiating authority between public and private actors in governance processes. They also add valuable context to the various ways that the public view roles and responsibilities of different actors. These data are mostly used in Chapter 7, which focuses on the ways in which debates about political status, and the authority of the legislature came to mediate governance relations between the key players in governance in American Samoa.

Finally, media articles are used to document the relations and practices of governance during, and immediately after the 2009 tsunami. American Samoa has one print newspaper, Samoa News, which kindly allowed access to their physical archives in order to scan copies from the editions that reported on the disaster. I collected every article that referenced the disaster from September 2009 to December 2010 (N = 324), after which there were very few mentions of the tsunami. Because of the volume of data gathered, the bulk of the content analysis was primarily focused on the months of September and October of 2009. Using standard techniques of directed content analysis for media sources (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), I analysed the articles for references to particular roles played during and after the tsunami by each actor: government (territorial and U.S.), churches, traditional leaders, village communities, NGO’s, and
private businesses. I also coded for instances of cooperation and conflict in order to record interactions between actors. The results of this media analysis are discussed in Chapter 5.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interviews
Along with these documents, the core data for this research was information provided by participants about various aspects of governance, collected through the method of semi-structured interviews. In his later writings, Rhodes (2000 pg 83) stresses that governance is best understood through the perspectives of individuals, because “individuals as bearers of tradition enact and remake structures in their everyday lives so governing structures can only be understood through the beliefs and actions of individuals”. The research for this thesis thus sought to elicit perspectives and personal narratives about governance structures and practices as forms of evidence that might complement the more static and formal insights that come from analysis of legislation and reports.

The complexity of these stories lends itself more to qualitative methods such as interviews, rather than questionnaires or surveys, as they allow individuals more scope to direct the course of the interview and subject matter (Longhurst, 2010). However, conducting interviews on complex political issues in an unfamiliar cultural setting does have its challenges and limitations. This section outlines the tools and techniques that were employed to avoid some of these challenges, and speaks to some of the remaining limitations and ethical issues that are inherent in qualitative research methods such as this.

Interview Design and Practice
The interviews aimed to ask people their insights on both everyday practices of governance in the territory, and the governance interactions that occurred during the 2009 tsunami. Appendix 2 shows the design of the guiding questionnaire, which is loosely broken into four sections to avoid cognitive burden on the interviewee (Bowling, 2005). The interview begins with a question aimed to initiate the discussion with familiar content for the interviewee; namely the role of their organisation and what they do day to day in their role. From this discussion, the interview moves to the more analytically challenging content of discussing interactions and relations with other governance actors (using prompts if needed), as well as identifying challenges in that process. The inclusion
of a question on challenges aimed to elicit a deeper assessment of the drivers and consequences of governance interactions, while avoiding the language of normative assessments such as ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘effective’ or not ‘effective’. It was hoped that this choice of language would direct the interviewee towards discussions of the process of governance rather than normative evaluations of its outcomes. Finally, the interview moved to the process of governance during and after the tsunami and the ways in which relationships played out during that time.

In practice, the interviews were variable in the extent to which this format was strictly adhered. Following Leech (2002), the approach aimed to provide structure where it was needed or seemed appropriate to make an interviewee comfortable, but also allowed the interview to remain open to small and large shifts in the content, scope and structure, as per the direction of the interviewee. Partly this choice reflected the grounded and interpretive approach of the research design; it was improbable that I would know the key issues and themes of American Samoan governance structures and practices before I arrived, and so the interview structure was kept broad enough to accommodate new perspectives. With this in mind, each interview allowed for the emphasis and prompts to develop iteratively as the fieldwork proceeded. At times, it was also important culturally to allow the interviewee to have control over the flow and direction of the discussion. For example, when talking to a high or paramount chief it is necessary to show respect and allow them to lead the conversation.

The length of interviews varied from 30 minutes, to over 3 hours, which again was left up to the interviewees to dictate. From an analysis point of view, the variation in form and content of the interviews was not considered a major concern, as like most semi structured interview analyses, the aim was never to quantitatively compare interviewee’s perspectives. Nor was it to analyse comparable concepts across interviewee types. Instead, the aim was to build a necessarily fragmented but rich picture of governance from diverse perspectives, and to use that information in concert with other sources of data where needed in each chapter.

**LANGUAGE, TRANSLATIONS AND INTERPRETATION**

Almost all American Samoans speak English fluently, particularly those who are employed in the public service or retail sectors where employees are required to conduct their work in both English and Samoan. Young people are especially proficient in both
languages, however with over 100 years of consistent and well-funded American English schooling in the territory, most older people are also confident with English. As discussed in the next section, the topic of this research is strongly focused on people who are employed in the public service as well as those holding positions of power who regularly interact with government (chiefs and church pastors), so it wasn't necessary for me to have a translator in interviews.

Language though, is not simply a practical issue of translations; it is also an important mediator of meaning in qualitative research (Polkinghorne, 2005). If participants don’t understand the key terms of the research in the same way as the researcher it has the potential to lead to data that doesn’t accurately reflect participants’ views. This is particularly problematic in cross-cultural research, even when the interview is conducted in a common language (Van Nes et al., 2010). Considering the key concern of this thesis is governance, which is a highly contested term even in its original linguistic context, it was important to limit confusion as much as possible.

In 2000, Huffer and Schuster published the results of a study that investigated community understandings of the concept of governance in Samoa, and their findings proved useful in preparing the explanations of the research and structuring the interview schedule. They reported that almost every participant had heard of the English term ‘governance’, and most associated it with political authority and leadership, albeit in different forms (Huffer and Schuster, 2000). Definitions given by participants included “the way people in power conduct the affairs of the people they govern”, “the process of ruling”, and “how people are managed and organised”. These definitions are nominally similar to (and certainly do not conflict with) the broad conceptual framework of governance outlined in Chapter 2. Given the findings of the Huffer and Schuster (2000) study, I tentatively assumed that the interpretations of Samoans would be similar to that of American Samoans on the basics of this key term (see Chapter 4 for a discussion of the close relations between the people of the two sets of islands), and so on questions of process and power at least, we would be operating with a broadly similar conceptual framework.

However, to capture some of the more abstract aspects of the topic (e.g. interactions), and to avoid narrow or overly specific interpretations (e.g. management arrangements), I included a section in the informal preamble to interviews that attempted to indicate broadly what was meant by governance in this project, while leaving room for
interviewees’ own interpretations. With this aim in mind, the following brief statement was read before the discussion of the ethics and plain language statement:

“So, as I mentioned earlier, my PhD is in political geography, so I’m interested in how political systems function in different parts of the world. Specifically, I look at governance or the way that different groups – like government, businesses, NGO’s, community groups, women’s groups, churches, chiefs etc. – interact when they are dealing with large-scale collective events or problems. That’s why I’m interested in disasters and why I’m studying who did what and how during the tsunami here. So, partly I want to understand governance during the tsunami, and how you think different groups interacted during and after that time. But also I’m generally interested in politics here in American Samoa - so please feel free to talk specifically about the disaster or more broadly about the way different groups work with or against each other in day to day governing here on-island.”

None of the interviewees indicated that they didn’t understand the aim of the research or the meaning of governance, however given the nature of a formal interview, people are unlikely to outright say that they don’t understand something. In any case, all of the interviews proceeded with discussions that fit within the broad conceptual scope of governance as a political process, and there were no terms in the rest of the interview that were obviously problematic in their shared meaning.

RECRUITMENT AND SAMPLE

In all, 50 people from across a range of sectors and organisations were interviewed for this research. The range of interviewee types was generated through the process of both snowball and targeted recruitment and is shown in Figure 8. The aim of the sample was to have representation across a range of sectors that played key roles in governance, including government, civil society, the private sector and traditional governing institutions. The numbers of interviews in each sector for the most part reflect the size of that sector in American Samoan society (discussed further in Chapter 7). The traditional authority sample is smaller than it should be given their relative importance in governance. This is because it was initially more difficult to contact and recruit chiefs as the process required building trust in the community and waiting for appropriate introductions. That said, as Chapter 7 shows, many of the government interviewees also had chiefly titles and so could speak about governance from multiple perspectives.
Figure 9 lists the organisations and groups interviewed, which covers every major department in the territorial government, as well as the key departments of the United States government that operate on island; major NGOs and key faith based organisations (churches); businesses that play a part in governing collective problems like disasters, including insurers and private media outlets; each of the traditional leadership positions across the Samoan governance hierarchy (discussed in detail in Chapter 4 and 8); and finally a range of government leadership positions including sitting House of Representatives and Senate members. Another cross-cutting consideration in the sample was to ensure that there was a range of perspectives across the hierarchy of organisations (articulated more in Chapter 4), so effort was made to recruit leaders of organisations or groups, as well as people at lower levels in terms of authority or responsibility. Incidentally, the focus on disasters helped with this aspect of recruitment as I was often talking to both the leaders of organisations as well as people who manage the day to day aspects of governance such as safety officers, outreach officers and administrative personnel.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview number</th>
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<th>Director</th>
<th>Manager</th>
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Figure 8: Interviewee Types
### ASG Government Organisations

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<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Office of the Governor</td>
<td>American Samoa Legal Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airport Police</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Port Administration</td>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The LBJ Hospital</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The American Samoan Senate</td>
<td>Office of Historic Preservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office for Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management</td>
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### Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies

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<td>American Samoa Telecommunications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Samoan Affairs</td>
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### Fed Government Organisations

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<th>Department</th>
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</thead>
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<td>National Parks Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Health – Emergency Preparedness Division</td>
<td>Homeland Security</td>
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### Civil Society and Private Sector

<table>
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<th>Organisation</th>
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<td>American Samoan Red Cross</td>
<td>Broadcasting and Media outlets*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent NGO’s*</td>
<td>Small businesses*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Churches*</td>
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### Traditional Leadership Positions

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<td>Pulenu’u</td>
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<tr>
<td>High Chief</td>
<td>County Chief</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taling Chief</td>
<td>District Governor</td>
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### Government Leadership Positions

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<td>Former Lieutenant Governor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitting House of Representative Members</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Names of organisation withheld for anonymity issues

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Figure 9: Organisations Interviewed
INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

As will be discussed in more detail throughout the thesis, many of the interviewees felt that they could speak about governance from multiple personal and professional perspectives and so instead of explicitly analysing across interviewee type, the interviews were treated as artefacts of distinctive interpretations of governance in American Samoa, and so were analysed individually. Each interview was transcribed by the researcher and coded for key themes roughly following the logic of the research design as well as the questionnaire. Common themes that originated from the research design included; the roles of the organisation the interviewees worked for, and the organisations relationships with other public and private actors; explanations of the cultural governance system; discussions of the tsunami event; and perspectives on change in governance. More specific themes that emerged during the research included: the entangled nature of traditional and state systems; discussions of the relationship with the United States; and explanations of the history of governance.

Interviewee perspectives in the form of quotes are used extensively in the findings chapters. Where there was debate or dissent in the opinions of the interviewees, these are noted. For the sake of brevity and clarity however, where the opinions are shared by many of the interviewees, just one quote has been chosen to reflect that perspective. While the analysis did not seek to explicitly compare across interviewee type, the type of interview (government, civil society, traditional leadership ect.) is noted along with an interview number after each quote to give context to that opinion. In line with the ethical considerations of anonymity the interview number has been withheld in quotes that may identify the participant. In very small sectors such as the not-for-profit sector there is a significant chance that people could be identified, and so the thesis has withheld all civil society interviewee numbers. Overall, the analysis has made every effort to represent a range of perspectives on the key themes of the thesis, and to give voice to those perspectives through extended and varied quotations.

3.3.3 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

As a tertiary data collection strategy, the research utilised data gathered from observations over the three-month fieldwork period on interactions between actors and governance practices. These data aimed to give context to those from the document analysis, and to qualify the interviewee perspectives. As discussed in section 3.3 of this
chapter, I attended a range of meetings and events in which interactions between actors tasked with public governance roles were visible. While the ethics of observation in these forums is notoriously subjective and fluid (Jorgensen, 1989), some parameters can be set that allow for more appropriate use of social data gathered from observation. At each event I introduced myself and my research, and made it known that I was taking notes for the purposes of observing processes of governance, and at public events, I asked someone to introduce me publically so that people were aware that I was conducting research. While this may have influenced the ways that actors interacted with one another, I felt that this disclosure was a necessary ethical process to ensure consent. At cultural or religious events such as the official memorial event to commemorate the tsunami (Figure 10), this disclosure was a particularly important.

Figure 10: Memorial to Commemorate the 2010 Tsunami; Leone, 2015
At each of these events I took notes on the following: types of actors involved and those that were not present; public acknowledgments of authority including ceremonial acknowledgements of rank and status; explanations of the processes of governing, especially in terms of chain of command with respect to disaster governance procedure; and finally, observations of authority including who spoke on what subjects and who did not. As this study was not strictly an ethnographic exploration of organisational culture, these data collection techniques were intended to qualify other data rather than form the basis of the research findings, and were used only as corroborative evidence in the final analysis. Where they have been used they have been presented in the form of vignettes following (K DeWalt and B DeWalt, 2011).

3.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the approach and methodology of this study, which seeks to combine an understanding of governance as an every-day practice that is both constructed and represented by the people that are involved in it in American Samoa, with a view to the dynamic and historical aspects of its construction, through a study of governance practices and processes over time, and in a moment of flux in the case of the 2009 tsunami. This experimental research design is an original contribution of this thesis, the value of which will be explored in the following findings chapters, and returned to in the conclusion of the thesis. This chapter also discusses the challenges that are inherent in the practical aspects of research of this kind, particularly focusing on the way in which the research sought to deal with issues of anonymity in a place as small as American Samoa, and positionality in the process of conducting research as a foreigner. These challenges are real and important, and so every effort was made to design data collection techniques that would give voice to the experiences and perspectives of those who participated in the research, and the analysis of these data aimed to allow for both nuance and complexity in those perspectives.

The following chapters represent the sum of findings of the document analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation that was carried out over the two fieldtrips of this study. In line with the grounded and interpretative approach to this research the structure of these chapters has emerged from the story of governance in American Samoa. As such the key actors and their form and function are discussed in the following chapter as an introduction to the governance landscape in place. This then leads
to Chapter 5 which presents an analysis of who did what and how in the case of the response and recovery to the 2009 tsunami in the islands. This aims to set the scene for the three main findings chapters (Chapter 6, 7 and 8) that deepen this analysis by focusing on key relationships over time and at scale.
CHAPTER 4: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN SAMOA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shifts the focus from the theory of governance and the research design to the case of American Samoa and the political system that structures governance in that place. While the chapter functions as an introduction to the case to provide important and necessary background, it nevertheless contains a large amount of primary analysis and, in light of the fact that very little is written about either the contemporary governance system in American Samoa or the political aspects of the 2009 tsunami, this analysis represents an original contribution of this research.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the islands themselves, including the political history of partition with Samoa, which led to the unusual political status and now underpins the territory’s political relations. Next the chapter outlines the key players in the governance of American Samoa and introduces the form and function of those actors (research question 1) as well as a preliminary analysis of their relative authority and modes of governance (research questions 2 and 3). The aim of this is to provide the reader with a sound basis from which to understand Chapter 5, which is an introduction to the 2009 tsunami.

4.2 A SMALL ISLAND TERRITORY

Chapter 2 explained the broad ways in which governance in the South Pacific differs from that of large, continental, liberal democracies in the global north. Along with the geographical, cultural and spatial conditions that underpin difference in this region, the South Pacific is unique in the number of non-sovereign territories that remain; as the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation notes, six of the world’s seventeen remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories are located in the region (Grydehøj, 2016). American Samoa is one of these non-sovereign territories, and this section outlines the way in which its political history and geography have served to create a unique context in which to study governance. It explains the territory's 117-year relationship with the United States, which has served to structure much of the American Samoa’s governance system, both in terms of the it economy and political institutions and its relations with the region. The section also introduces the context of the enduring cultural connections to the pan-Samoan political system and the way in which this continues to influence governance practices
and processes. This section acts as an introduction only, in that it provides context for the
next section outlining the key governance actors and institutions in American Samoa, and
it sets the scene for the much more detailed analysis of Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

4.2.1 History and Geography
American Samoa is a sub-national island jurisdiction of the United States, located in the
South Eastern Pacific Ocean (Figure 11). Legally, this group of five small islands and two
coral atolls is known as an unorganised, unincorporated territory, which is a unique
status even among the diversity of political arrangements that make up the patchwork of
pacific governments. American Samoa is said to be ‘unincorporated’ in that the US
constitution applies only partially, and as such the territory is not integrated into the
United States’ Federal state system. The territory is also considered ‘unorganised’ in that
local administration is under the control of the US Department of Interior, rather than
being governed by a local government or a similarly functioning municipality. The United
States has five inhabited unincorporated territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern
Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands), but American Samoa is the only one that is also
considered ‘unorganised’. As this thesis will discuss though, the formal definition of
American Samoa as ‘non-self-governing’ is hardly reflective of the reality of day to day
governing arrangements and practices.

Because of this unique status, American Samoans are nationals but not citizens, meaning
they have most of the rights afforded by the United States’ constitution (e.g. the right to
live and work in the United States and be protected by the law), but cannot vote in federal
elections. They do however elect a non-voting delegate to the United States House of
Representatives, and can vote in the US primary elections for presidential candidates.
They can also serve in the United States armed forces.

This status is something of a double-edged sword for American Samoans, for while the
lack of an Organic Act does restrict citizenship, it also serves to protect highly valued local
laws and institutions like the rights to communal land and restrictions on ownership of
private property. It also allows the territory to be exempt from particular federal laws,
which might be deemed inappropriate for cultural or religious reasons. As many authors
have noted, the legal and political status of the territory is complex and convoluted
(Laughlin, 1982; Leibowitz, 1989; Morrison, 2013; WW Tiffany, 1979), however as
Chapter 6 shows, the complexity has its benefits for both parties and is the product of historical and ongoing negotiations that have meaningful consequences for governance.

American control of the territory is a relatively recent element of the political history of these islands. For centuries, the islands were politically and culturally connected to those of Upolu and Savai’i to the west (now independent Samoa) through the chiefly system of the *fa’amatai* - a hereditary and merit-based political system (outlined in section 4.3.1 and discussed in detail in Chapter 8) that served to structure power relations throughout the island chain. As with many kin-based political systems in the region, the hierarchy of authority accommodated change through complex processes of warfare, negotiation, diplomacy and marriage. The arrival of foreign settlers in the early nineteenth century brought further changes and volatility to ever evolving local power dynamics between families, villages, districts and islands, particularly through the process of trade in resources and guns for land (Olson, 2002). As foreign settlement increased in the region, so too did the interest of large metropolitan governments like the United Kingdom and Germany, which saw the opportunity for lucrative plantation economies in Pacific colonies. The United States, not being a traditional colonial power, was interested in the strategic value of territorial expansion into the Pacific, and particularly the opportunity to establish a coaling station on the deep, protected and well positioned harbor of American Samoa.

Tensions between the interests of colonial and imperial powers increased over the nineteenth century and after some conflict eventually resulted in an agreement between the colonial governments to partition the islands and their administrative control (Chapter 6 discusses this in more detail). The *Washington Agreement of 1899* decreed that: the western islands of Upolu and Savai’i came under the control of Germany (later to be taken over by New Zealand, and then to become independent in 1962); the Eastern islands were to come under the administration of the navy of the United States; and Britain was to give up all claims in exchange for concessions from the Germans in other places such as the Solomon Islands and West Africa. The line of partition between the islands is along the 171st meridian.
As analysed in Chapter 6, the chiefs of the Eastern Samoan Islands (particularly paramount chief Mauga) were supportive of ceding power to the United States as they saw this as a way to secure protection from the growing threat of international and domestic conflict. They also saw the partition as a way to exert more control over their islands and resources, as they could now separate themselves from the costly wars and political conflict with the western islands. In 1900, the chiefs of the islands of Tutuila and Aunu’u (see Figure 11) signed the Deed of Cession in which the chiefs ceded all sovereign power to the United States, while the United States agreed to protect the American Samoan people, their culture and way of life, particularly with respect to preserving the systems of land ownership and chiefly titles. Chapter 6 discusses in detail this treaty, its evolution and the consequences for governance.

The three islands of Manu’a to the east of Tutuila, though refusing to sign initially due to concerns around the preservation of chiefly titles and political divisions, did sign a separate treaty in 1904. Taken together, these now form agreement on a territory unchanged in international political status since the signing of those documents more than 110 years ago. As Chapter 6 shows, the people of American Samoa have been active in both formal and informal deliberations over the political status of their islands and
while there is some debate around the effects of dependency on the United States, the people and the territory’s political leaders have consistently chosen to maintain the status quo when it comes to this political status.

While the islands of American Samoa are only a 20-minute light plane ride from the main island of Samoa, they are quite different in their geography. The territory is made up of 5 small volcanic islands, the biggest is Tutuila (142 square kilometers), which is flanked by the small island of Aunu’u located just off its northeastern coast. About a hundred kilometers to the east are the Manu’a Islands of Ta’u, Ofu and Olesega. The territory also includes control over two remote coral atolls; one called Swains Island (located close to Tokelau and populated by a few Tokelauans) and the other, Rose Atoll which is an uninhabited wildlife reserve serviced by the American National Parks Service. While the eastern Manu’a islands have a long history of political power and continue to be important culturally and politically (within the greater Samoan political system), the population of the islands is declining (Levine, 2016) and now over 97% of American Samoans live on the island of Tutuila. For this reason, the research of this thesis will focus on governance arrangements on the main island but will take account of influences and outcomes for the Manu’a islands where relevant.

Because the interior and northern coast of Tutuila is made up of high, steep and densely vegetated mountains, settlement is almost exclusively in small villages located very close to the coast. While Pago Pago is officially the capital of the territory, in reality it is only part of a chain of villages that make up the political capital of the island. These villages surround the large harbour (See Figure 12), which historically has been the center of commerce and trade. The village of Fagatogo is home to many of the government buildings including the legislature (the Fono). Close by, the village of Utulei is home to the governor’s office and the buildings of most of the government departments. Finally, the port and the main market buildings, as well as the courts are located in Pago Pago. While this central harbor coast continues to be a highly important political space, the area to the west called Tafuna is the industrial and commercial capital of the island. This is mainly due to the fact that the area is one of the only large flat pieces of land on the island, as well as its proximity to the small but busy international airport. Large stores, warehouses, utility facilities and the territory’s large military base are all located on this part of the island. A high quality two lane highway, built during the Second World War to
transport troops and military needs, connects most of the villages on the southern coast and is well used by the population's many American imported pick-up trucks and the public (mostly village run) bus service.

Figure 12: The Harbour of Tutuila, Photo Credit: Kate Endries

The island’s approximately 57,000 residents (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014) live mostly in villages, made up of extended family groups living on communal land controlled by the matai (chiefs) of each family (as Chapter 8 discusses in detail, the village system remains critical to day to day governance). Except in some of the most remote parts of the island, villages are serviced by electricity and running water, and people live in modern housing (Figure 14). The communal areas in villages though, contain multiple meetinghouses or fales, which are still reflective of the open, sloped roof housing that typified village life before foreign settlement (Figure 13).
Typically, families live together in houses with multiple generations and, as Samoan culture is a gerontocracy, much deference is given to older men and women. There is also serious deference for family’s ancestors, and most Samoan homes will have graves of their deceased family members (particularly chiefs and wives of chiefs) in front of their homes. Figure 14 shows a typical home in the village of Nuu'uli.
Traditionally, families would have an area of land near the village for plantation and subsistence farming, however with mean household incomes upwards of US$34,000pa, there is now less need for subsistence farming, and much of the food for the island is imported and sold in small village stores or ‘marts’, as well as large American owned supermarkets such as Cost-U-Less. As will be discussed throughout the thesis, village life is governed by the complex traditions and customs of the fa'asamo (or the Samoan way) and this system continues to dictate many of the norms of daily life. Each village also has at least one church, which usually has most of the village as its congregation, as 98% of the population are devoutly practicing Christians. The churches play a significant role in village affairs, and the money that the church makes from the sizable weekly family donations often goes back to village upkeep and village celebrations. Following chapters discuss further the role of the church in village and national governance.
4.2.2 Population, Economy and Government

As in many Pacific islands, international travel for work and family events is a regular part of life for most American Samoans. The international airport services large carrier flights weekly to the United States, as well as small carrier flights three times a day to Samoa and other regional capitals. In addition to this regular short-term travel, many American Samoan residents spend long periods of time living and working in the United States, mainly in Hawai‘i, and on the west coast in cities like San Francisco, Portland and Seattle. Because much of this migration is circular and constantly churning, exact numbers of American Samoans living away from the islands is difficult to estimate, however as a broad indication, the United Nations estimated 91,000 living outside the territory in 2012 (compared to 15,000 recorded as living in the islands in the 2010 census) (United Nations General Assembly, 2012). Much of this migration is for university level education for those who wish to study courses not offered by the territory’s only tertiary education and training institution (the American Samoa Community College). Despite the 7,700km distance to the United States, or the ‘mainland’ as it is called, family connections remain close. Family bonds are reinforced financially through the practices of remittances and fa‘alavelave (financial obligations required in times of need like funerals and marriages) (Fitzgerald and Howard, 1990), and through the use of technology such as telephone and internet, particularly Facebook. Chapter 8 analyses further these connections and networks in the context of the role of international family networks in governance during times of disaster.

Ethnically, Samoans make up 81% of the population and most families have familial connections with independent Samoa through marriage. Migration between independent Samoa and American Samoa is very common and since World War II Samoans have migrated to American Samoa in increasing numbers (Kallen, 1982). According to the 2010 Census, 29% of the population was born in independent Samoa (United States Census Bureau, 2011) who, for the most part, come in search of perceived enhanced economic opportunities (as reflected by the higher GDP per capita of USD$8,000, compared to Samoa’s USD$4,212) and for the higher minimum wage of $4.99/hour (compared to $2.30 in Samoa) (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014).

These same economic opportunities have also led to immigration of Korean, Filipino and other Pacific island populations, mainly for work in the territory’s two Korean owned
tuna fishing and processing plants. The Starkist and Chicken of the Sea tuna factories supply most of the United States’ tuna, and are the largest industries on the island. They account for over 22% of all non-government employment (14% of total employment), and are engaged in the processing and packing of over US$500 million worth of canned tuna each year. Favorable import tariff arrangements and duty-free exemptions, as well as the relatively low minimum wage have historically made the territory an attractive place of investment for large fishing corporations. However, as US political processes lead to higher minimum wages, the canneries have repeatedly threatened to close and move to more competitive South Asian locations. Chapter 7 discusses the dependency of the territory’s private sector on the United States, and the way in which this structures governance and the role of the state.

Aside from the tuna canneries, employment is fairly evenly distributed across private sector categories such as transport, retail and trade (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014). Additionally, a relatively strong construction industry, which accounts for around 6% of employment, achieves much of its financial stability through government contracts funded by grants from the United States government. Chapter 6 discusses this government-reliant private sector and its role in governance. Along with supporting the private sector, US government grants significantly support the financial capacity of the American Samoan Government (ASG). Because land tax is minimal due to communal land ownership, the government’s capacity to raise local taxes is not as strong as in other states. Therefore aid and grants from the United States make contribute between 60 to 70% of the government’s annual revenue (which was, for example US$279.9 million in 2014) (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014). The fact that around 19% of government expenditure goes to the executive and its departments allows for significant employment in the government sector, which contributes to 37% of total employment (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014).

The American Samoan Government is loosely modeled on the structure and principles of a presidential democratic system of government. It is made up of three branches: the executive, headed by a popularly elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor; a legislative branch of two chambers; and a judiciary that is separate from the first two branches. Being bicameral the legislature has an upper house, known as the fono or the Senate, and a lower House of Representatives. Chapter 7 discusses in detail the arrangements for
appointment to these institutions, and outlines the significant influence that the institutional and financial connections to the United States have on the form, function and operation of government in the territory.

In addition to the various departments that come under the Office of the Governor, there is the Office of Samoan Affairs, which is a department responsible for cultural issues such as land and titles. Headed by the Paramount chief Mauga, this office acts as an adjudicator of disputes about land and titles which are difficult to resolve within the western legal context that governs the District and High Courts of American Samoa. Often also called the ‘local government’, the Office of Samoan Affairs appoints pulenu’u (village mayors) to each village, and these mayors act as government representatives at a village level. Chapter 8 discusses in detail the role of this office as a bridge between American and Samoan political systems.

In terms of its political geography, American Samoa is split into three political districts (eastern, western and Manu’a) which are appointed governors who represent the interests of those districts in hearings and proceedings of the Office of Samoan Affairs. Each district is in turn split into counties (See Figure 11) which are also represented by chiefs who report to the district governors. As later sections of this chapter explain, these matai are also responsible for the wellbeing of their ‘āiga (extended family group), and the protection and preservation of the family's communal land (which makes up about 97% of land in American Samoa). Villages have their own fono, or village council through which the leading matai represent the interests of their ‘āiga and make decisions about village affairs. The fono is a highly respected source of authority, and in daily life, as Chapter 7 explores, the decisions that are made by the matai are often paramount to those issued by the government. Understanding how these multiple sources and forums of authority operate at different levels in American Samoa is an important contribution of this thesis. As is explained later, at times these systems work together, at times they operate in parallel at different scales, and in other situations they conflict.

While fundamental to understanding governance, these political dynamics between territorial governance actors are not the only aspects that influence governance regimes in American Samoa. Understanding the way that the territory and its people relate (or
not) to the political and cultural systems of the region is also important and is explored in the following section.

4.2.3 Relations with Samoa and the Region

Socially and culturally the connections between American Samoa and its independent neighbour are exceptionally strong, and shared cultural heritage and kinship ties continue to maintain close bonds between members of ‘aiga and ‘alga (extended family) across the political divide. As Va’a (2010 pg 73) notes, “it is extremely rare to find a Samoan who does not have a relative on the other side” and social norms dictate that people keep in touch with these relatives regularly (Figiel, 1999). People travel back and forth regularly - individually or as a part of the process of malaga that entails travel by groups of family members for ceremonial purposes such as weddings and funerals (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009). Inter-island sporting competitions are common despite the fierce loyalty to different football codes – Rugby in Samoa and American Football in American Samoa. As Chapter 7 discusses, civil society groups like non-government organisations often work together across the two island groups. Regular communications and events of particular church denominations also serve to cross the political divide and create connections between congregations. At a state level though, the connection between the two island groups is not nearly as strong.

Since Samoa's independence there has been tension between the two governments, which is usually not spoken of officially, but certainly exists. Mückler (2006) argues that much of this strain is based on identity politics and competition in economic status, development paths, cultural authenticity and perceived levels of political autonomy (See also Michal, 1992). His study of reveals how the tensions between the two states manifested into drawn out disputes over immigration processes between 1999 and 2006. The disputes concerned the length of visas and hinged on what the American Samoan government sees as the problem of (western) Samoans ‘overstaying’ their temporary visas in order to continue working at the territories’ tuna canneries. American Samoans generally do not work in the tuna factories due to the availability (for US nationals) of better paying, less labour-intensive work in other sectors, so the tuna industry relies on workers coming from Samoa and Tonga among other places. This labour issue had historically fostered a ‘symbiotic relationship’ (Mückler, 2006), and a relatively relaxed immigration policy between the two Samoas, however large numbers of Samoans
breaching visa regulations, and the subsequent potential to create both social and security problems in the territory, has led to tightening of restrictions by both governments (Va’a, 2010). In addition to the tangible diplomatic tensions, independent Samoa symbolically moved away from the territory when in 2009 they switched from driving on the right hand side of the road to the left, and in 2011 moved the international dateline to the east of the country in order to be closer in time zones to Australia and New Zealand rather than the United States (Tuimaleali’ifano, 2011). In recent years, however these tensions seem to have eased somewhat and there are now more formal efforts at integration. For example, the last four years have seen annual talks on the Joint Samoa Economic Integration Initiative, and discussions of a possible free trade agreement (Polu, 2016).

Beyond relations with Samoa, international relations between American Samoa and other independent states in the Pacific region are relatively weak. Formally, American Samoa is connected to the region through affiliation with a series of forums and organisations, however these are often secondary or subsidiary memberships due to the territory’s subnational status and its relative economic development. American Samoa is a member of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, however very few programs or projects concern the territory beyond a few small-scale fishery and public health initiatives (see SPC, 2016). In the case of the influential Pacific Islands Forum, the territory is only given observer status due to that fact that it is not a sovereign state. Also, because the territory is not a recipient of international aid (beyond US subsidies), it is not a member of regional economic development groupings such as the Pacific Islands Development Forum. Rather, it is affiliated with other US associated territories such as Guam, Hawaii and the Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific Basin Development Council. So, the political status of American Samoa, and its relationship with the United States have a significant effect on the territory's international relations with the region, which Chapter 6 explores further.

4.2.4 Summary
The territory of American Samoa is a small place with few natural resources and a landscape that is not supportive of large scale agriculture or industry, which limits the size and productive potential of its economy. During the colonial period of expansion in the Pacific, these conditions, combined with security concerns, led the chiefs of the
islands to petition for a formal political relationship with the United States that continues to this day in the form of dependent territory status. This status brings with it consistent and significant financial support from the United States, which underpins the relative prosperity of the territory compared to other countries in the region, including independent Samoa. American Samoa's relationship with the United States also mediates its relations with the region, and the territory is far more connected to the United States, some 7,000 kms away than to its nearest island neighbours. That said, the cultural connections with Samoa, and the importance of family, combined with the propensity for movement of those families across the partition, means that cultural governance connections with Samoa at least remain strong.

These underlying conditions of geography, political history and culture influence the types of actors that are involved in governance, and their relative authority in steering society on collective issues. The following section outlines the key players in American Samoan governance, and points to the ways in which these are mediated by the place-based factors discussed here.

4.3 Key Governance Actors: Chiefs, Church and State

As Chapter 3 explained, the aim of this study is to develop an inductive understanding of governance in place, and one of the most important parts of this process is to allow the key actors and institutions of American Samoan governance to emerge as the research took form. As part of an interpretive approach this also means allowing the participants to define the terms of that emergence. In that context the key actors and the form of the American Samoan governance system is perhaps best summarised by the paramount chief of the islands:

*If you want to understand everything about how this place works, understand this. We build family first. Families turn around and build villages. Villages turn around and build districts. They then build government and country, right? And then of course the whole thing turns around and builds faith, and that's the churches, and god’s will.* (Interview number withheld; Traditional Leader)

With this in mind this section presents the key actors in these terms, first with a description of the chiefly system and its connection to the family and the village, then with an outline of the key institutions of government, followed by a similar description of
the religious institutions of the territory. Finally, this section offers some preliminary analysis, based on the participants’ observations about the nature of the form, function and relative authority of these actors in governance.

4.3.1 The Matai and Traditional Governance Institutions

As all Samoans will tell you, any study of governance in a Samoan context must begin with a discussion of the fa’asamoa, which is the foundational socio-political system of both Samoa and American Samoa. Consisting of cultural practices, shared symbols, and agreed principles, it underpins almost every aspect of daily life; social, political and economic (Aiono Le Tagaloa, 1992). As one interviewee explained:

A Samoan, he walks to a different beat, from those on the outside. His customs and traditions are lived day to day. The Fa’asamoa is like our bible, in a sense. (Interview 18, Traditional Leader)

At the centre of the fa’asamoa is the fa’amatai or the chiefly system, which as So’o (2006) points out are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, though “the latter refers specifically to leadership, decision-making processes and practices associated with matai. Therefore, governance in Samoa implies the fa’amatai.” (So’o, 2006), and the fa’amatai continue to play a fundamental role in the day to day governance of almost all aspects of the territory’s political system.

The structure of the Samoan title system is distinctly hierarchical and because of the importance of historical titles (as well as some more modern interventions which Chapter 8 discusses) hierarchical authority in the system is relatively fixed (FC Ala’ilima and VL Ala’ilima, 1994). Most Samoans trace the system of titles back to time immemorial, and base the right to titles on connections to the ancient gods, as well as complex histories of succession in wars, marriages and lineage (So’o, 2008). The distinctions between types and rank of matai are complex and historically variable. At a most simple level there are two types of high title: an ali’i title which is known in western terms as a ‘high chief’ and denotes certain ceremonial privileges and responsibilities accordant to genealogical linkages with the ancient gods; and a tulāfale or ‘talking chief/orator’ title which while formally of lesser rank, and traditionally had significant power through their role of conducting the processes and ceremonies which installed the ali’i incumbents (Meleisea, 1987b; Tcherkézoff, 2000b). High chiefs and talking chiefs traditionally held joint titles with separate roles and responsibilities to that title: talking chiefs were responsible for
speaking for the title in ritual encounters; the high chiefs were responsible for arbitrating and making decisions (Gershon, 2006). While the distinctions in form and function of these types of titles have changed and blurred over time the broad differences remain significant.

Hierarchy within the titles system is maintained and reproduced through various traditional political practices. For example, oratory or skilful and performative speeches (lāuga), given in both church and fonos (village councils), serve to regularly reinforce the ‘eternal values and immutable hierarchies’ of the Samoan socio-political system (Duranti, 1994). Similarly, within the proceedings of a village council there are specific rules and regulations about rank and accepted behaviour among chiefs that serve to reinforce its hierarchical system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.0304 Village Council meetings—Rules.</th>
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<tr>
<td>The following rules shall apply at Village Council meetings:</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>B</td>
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Figure 15: Village Council Meeting Rules, American Samoa Code Annotated, §5.0304
As Figure 15 shows the village council rules dictate that in the *fono* certain participants (usually *matai*) have more *pule* (authority, power and responsibility)\(^9\) than others, and this dictates who is to speak when and who has final authority over decision making. This is also denoted spatially by the positions of chiefs when sitting in a circle during the meeting. Figure 16 shows a typical meeting house for the *fono*; in meetings, chiefs lean their backs against the struts and, in a sense, these poles are representative of the strict structure of the hierarchy itself. A number of interviewees pointed out that this practicing

\(^9\) Anthropologist Richard Gilson (1970) argues that *pule* as understood in Samoan culture represents more than western conceptions of power, such as power over other people, but also represents something closer to responsibility and the right to perform a public function on behalf of others (Cited in Armstrong, 2009).
of rank and place is fundamental to the traditional political system. As one interviewee stated:

*So that is the Samoan structure and for us everything is structure (Interview 39; Traditional Leader)*

Hierarchy and structure are not only about interactions between chiefs however, as different types of titles also have spatial relevance. Tcherkezoff (2000) calls this aspect of traditional governance ‘a hierarchy of territorial extension’, in which ali’i, while serving their own ‘āiga, are also responsible for the governance of larger regions called itūmālō. These districts consist of numerous villages, and have usually been grouped according to historical victories (mālō) in war, and as Meleisea (1987b) points out, the rank and titles of matai can only be properly understood within the context of the historical connections to village and district. The relevance of this for governance processes and practices in American Samoa is discusses in more detail in Chapter 8.

While the hierarchy of titles among chiefs is relatively fixed, incumbency for an individual title holder is not; Samoan Chiefs are chosen not purely on the rule of primogeniture (first born succession), but also on the extent to which the proposed incumbent has faithfully served their family over their lifetime (Tcherkézoff, 2000b). Therefore, tautua (service) paid to the ‘āiga through contributions of labour, goods and money is a fundamental part of gaining the authority needed to be considered suitable for a family’s title. As a famous Samoan proverb states:

*O le ‘auala o le pule o le tautua*

The path of service is the path to authority

_Tautua_ is certainly expected from the chiefs to the families, however service in the Samoan political system needs to be understood as a reciprocal phenomenon. Families are also expected to serve their matai through regular financial contributions, as well as time and labour spent on communal projects and ceremonial events. So fundamental is

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10 Although, descent and service are rarely equally weighted by the ‘āiga when selecting a matai. As Fiauai and Tuimalealìifano (1997 pg 8) note, “Achieved skills are culturally recognised and honoured; however, Samoans stress and put greater value on genealogical faia connections to former holders of matai…heirs to the title through direct lines of descent, also have a significant and important connection to titles”.

the concept of service that Tiffany (1975) argues that until membership is activated by service, rights to a kinship group are dormant. In other words, unless a person serves they are not part of the family. In particular, contributions need to be made by way of money, food and gifts to fa‘alavelave, which are events such as funerals, weddings, and birthdays. The various ways in which these reciprocal relations of service function to structure modes and practices of governance are explored further in Chapter 8.

Once chosen, chiefs have important responsibilities to the āiga, which underpin almost every aspect of social and political life. Laughlin (1982) lists the duties of the matai as follows:

1) Allocation of āiga land to members for house sites and cultivation.
2) Assessment of labour, goods, and money for ceremonial redistribution and for āiga and village-sponsored projects.
3) Custody and maintenance of other āiga assets, such as a house or bank account.
4) Mediation and arbitration of intra and inter āiga disputes.
5) Representation of the āiga in fono at district, village, or other levels.

The responsibility to look after the family’s land is a particularly important one in light of the significant connection between land and culture, and in the fact that over 90% of the land in American Samoan is communally owned (Morrison, 2013). Similarly, decision-making on the family’s resources and maintaining what Lilomaiava-Doktor (2009) calls the ‘moral economy’, also makes up a large part of the head matai’s role.

Accountability in this process of service and resources allocation is a foundational part of the fa‘amatai system. If a chief undertakes their duties to the satisfaction of the families, they will serve as chief for life (Laughlin, 1980). However, members of the āiga can and do oust matai. As Meleisea (1987c pg 150) argues, the matai “may not be angels but they are not despots”; the āiga’s check on chiefly power is well understood and taken seriously by all in Samoan culture, in part because “the oral traditions of Polynesia contain many examples of the horrible fates which befell chiefs who exceeded their powers beyond that considered legitimate by their supporters.” Nevertheless, the democratic nature of the matai system is questioned by some Samoan scholars (Ioane, 1983; So’o, 2008; Tuimaleali’ifano, 2001), who point to the possibility and propensity for corruption within this system. While there is reverence for the system itself, most
Samoans are used to debating the value of both the *faʻasamo* and the *faʻamatai* as modes of governance, and Chapter 8 explores further some of these debates.

Putting aside these normative questions, what is clear is that the *matai* continue to be fundamentally significant political actors at all scales of governance in American Samoa. Indeed, the High Court of American Samoa has stressed the importance of recognising that the role of a *matai* is different from political leaders (and property owners) in western political systems in that it entails cultural and familial responsibilities, as well as political and economic ones:

“The duties and responsibilities of a *matai* defy common law labels. They are more than chiefs who are merely leaders. They are more than trustees who merely protect property. A *matai* has an awesome responsibility to his family. He must protect it and its lands. He acts for the family in its relations with others. He gives individual family members advice, direction and help. He administers the family affairs, designates which members of the family will work particular portions of the family land, and determines where families will live. His relationship to his family is a relationship not known to the common law.” High Court of American Samoa cited in Morrison (2013 pg 79).

Incidentally, as the gender pronouns of this quote suggest, while women do hold matai titles, there are far fewer women *matai* in American Samoa than men, and in general, the gender balance in the political system is typical of most places in the Pacific political systems where male dominance of formal political positions is common (Fraenkel, 2010). The following section outlines the way in which the *matai* system compares to and interacts with the form and function of the American Samoan Government.

4.3.2 Government

As Chapter 7 explores further, the government in American Samoa continues to be a powerful player in the territory’s governance regime, mainly due to its size and capacity, which is a direct result of the regular financial support from the United States. Institutionally the government is similarly underpinned by the United States political system. Figure 17 shows the structure of government departments that make up the two-tiered state that governs the islands.
At the ‘national’ or territory level the government of American Samoa is modelled on the United States’ tripartite system of three independent branches; the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. The principle of the separation of powers, while certainly not unique to the United States’ political system, does have strong resonance in American political philosophy, and there is an evident reverence for the principle in American Samoa. As one senior political leader explained:

Well we have three types of power – judicial power, executive power and legislative power. See the legislature makes the law, the judiciary interprets the law, the executive enforces the law. And that's how it works in the United States, and us the matai's, we agree with that. (Interview 29, Traditional Leader)
Organisationally, there are also direct links into the United States political system due to the institutional requirements of the territory’s political status. The executive, for example, reports directly to the United States Department of the Interior (under the Office of the President), which is the official decision-making body for most aspects of the territory’s governance. Accordingly, the American Samoan Government Office of the Governor, and the American Samoan legislature must report to the Department of the Interior on all major political decisions, particularly the annual budgets of the territory. In practice, however, it is very rare for the Department of the Interior or the United States president to intervene in local governance issues (Hall, 2001); Chapters 6 discusses the reasons for this.

The legislature is perhaps the most unique aspect of the American Samoan government and its structure points to the influence of both the political philosophy of US-style presidential democracy, and the authority and structure of the Samoan political system. As Figure 18 shows, the legislature of American Samoa is bicameral, with a lower (House of Representatives) and upper house (senate), each with different electoral processes for representatives.

![Figure 18: The Electoral Systems of the Legislative Branches of the American Samoan Government, Adapted from Levine and Roberts (2005)](image)
What makes this legislature unique is that membership to the upper house (the senate) is restricted to matai who are chosen by other matai to be members of the house through a traditional selection process based on combinations of rank, titles and service outlined in the previous section. As one interviewee explains:

*The Senators are selected from the county by the other matai’s. We have a county meeting pursuant to Samoan custom and they select one of the heads of the families in that county, and they say 'Ok your turn to be in the senate.' And then your term is four years. So only certain chiefs can be elected to the senate.* (Interview 16, Government)

The decision to have exclusive membership of matai in the Senate was integral in the territory’s evolution to self-governance (as Chapter 7 discusses), and is one of the most prominent examples of the way in which the norms and practices of Samoan culture are woven-in to the structure of the American Samoan government (discussed further in Chapter 8). In contrast to the senate, the lower House of Representatives mirrors that of the more egalitarian American legislative electoral processes in that any American Samoan US national over the age of 25 can be elected to the House of Representatives if they have lived in American Samoa for at least 5 years in total, and have been a bona fide resident of the district in which they are running for at least the 1 year preceding the election (American Samoan Constitution Art II § 3). As in many Pacific legislatures (Larmour, 1992) though, women are underrepresented in both the upper and lower houses of the territory’s legislature. However, as the gender balance of the government interviewees recruited in this research shows (see Figure 8), women are actually well represented in the upper and middle tiers of the executive12; a trend that is also common in many Pacific governments (Fraenkel, 2010). Members of the two houses of the legislature sit for only half of the year, and many of the senators and representative hold other positions, particularly within the village governance hierarchies (Chapter 7 discusses further).

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12 In fact, in November 2014 the territory elected its first female delegate to the US House of Representatives, Congresswoman Amata Coleman Radewagen who is the daughter of the first elected Governor Peter Coleman (Levine, 2016).
Finally, at a territory government level, the judiciary is arguably the branch that is the most directly influenced by the United States government institutions. Because the territory is unincorporated (see Chapter 6 for an expanded explanation), the US Secretary of the Interior retains ultimate authority over the courts. This means that the High Court in American Samoa is not strictly a federal court; it is administered by a Chief Justice and Associate Justices who are directly appointed by the United States Secretary of the Interior (American Samoa Constitution Art. III § 3). While the court has been granted some limited federal authority on specific issues such as actions relating to shipping regulation (United Nations General Assembly, 2012), all other matters of federal law arising in American Samoa are deferred to the District Court of Hawai‘i and Colombia. Historically the Chief Justice has been from the United States, however the structure of the courts provides that the position is supported by six American Samoan associate judges who are usually high matabai and are not required to have formal legal training (although many do). These associates are appointed by the Governor, who also appoints the district court judge. While the appointment of chief justices of Samoan dissent is relatively rare (Chapter 6 discusses the reasons for this), the associate judge positions act to facilitate a connection between the federal legal system and the traditional one. So too does another important and quite unique institution; the Office of Samoan Affairs.

The Office of Samoan Affairs, is often called the local government, however as one interviewee points out this is strictly a misnomer due to the fact that it is connected to the executive, and is not functionally or operationally autonomous:

*Actually, you have the territorial government, and the office of Samoan Affairs within that, they are not separate.* (Interview 23; Traditional Leader).

However, Samoan Affairs serves a different governance purpose than the executive (one that is actually more functionally connected to the judiciary) as it is responsible for negotiation of disputes over land and titles. Essentially, the office functions as first port of call for disputes or issues that relate to Samoan cultural governance. As a staff member of the office explained to me:

*Any issues that deal with the villages, the land and titles all have to come through here. We hold hearings for Matai titles also. Because of the Samoan ways and the Samoan cultures there needs to be this office... American Samoa still owns its own*
land so there needs to be a Samoan way to settle things. That’s what we do. We deal with pretty much anything that is tied with the land...And then if things don’t settle with this office, after the family has met three times then it has to go to the palagi\(^\text{13}\) court. So first they try to agree in the Samoan way, with Samoan customs, if not they go to the high court, but that’s the last resort. (Interview number withheld, Government)

This role of mediating matters of traditional governance was given to Samoan Affairs from the beginning of the US naval administration in 1900 (Chapter 6 discusses the significance of this for governance).

The Office of Samoan Affairs also presides over the governance of villages, and the traditional governance structures of the counties and districts that were introduced earlier in section 4.2 of this chapter. As a traditional leader and district governor explained:

The Samoan local government structure, which is headed by Samoan Affairs, is divided into three districts; East and West and Manu’a. That is the basic structure. Now you have to understand the structure because that is where governance comes from. So, from each of those districts are five counties, within those counties they elect county chiefs – there are five county chiefs elected. So, in each district there might be more or less villages, it just depends on how the district is divided. (Interview number withheld, Traditional Leader)

At the top of this hierarchy is the Secretary of Samoan Affairs who, due to the need for authority over the high chiefs of the districts, is usually the paramount chief of the islands. Along with responsibility for the organisation of the district and county chiefs, the secretary also appoints village ‘mayors’ called pulenu’u. Numbering over 100 across the islands, these mayors act as the local representatives of the government in the villages, and are required to report back to the Secretary of Samoan Affairs regularly on village affairs. Figure 19 shows a meeting of the pulenu’u with the secretary during the period of fieldwork for this research.

\(^{13}\) Samoan word for Caucasian foreigner
The Office of Samoan Affairs therefore acts as a bridging institution, both in the spatial sense, in that it connects the local villages to the ‘national’ government, and also in the sense that it has a mandate to mediate between traditional and introduced systems of government. The unique role and function of this key government institution is in many ways indicative of the complexity of the structure of the American Samoan government. The history of the development of these institutions, as well as the way they influence governance in practice, is a key object of inquiry for this research, and Chapters 6, 7 and 8 explore this further.

4.3.3 The Churches
Along with traditional governing authorities and the state, many authors have noted the power of Christian churches to govern daily life in the Pacific islands (Corbett, 2013; Huffer and So’o, 2005; Lodwick, 1984; Tomlinson and McDougall, 2013), and this is certainly the case in American Samoa. One of the most notable elements in the landscape of American Samoa is the sheer number of churches, and the scale of many of the
buildings and their grounds. Figure 20 shows a typical American Samoan church during a weekday service in the small village of Faga'alu.

![Figure 20: A Village Church in Faga'alu, American Samoa](image)

Each village has at least one church and, as Chapter 8 explores further, there are strong and binding connections between village leaders and the church leaders at a local level. For those who have not grown up in the islands the prevalence and visibility of the churches is quite extraordinary. In fact, in a conversation with an American Samoan government worker, she joked that as a child growing up in the United States she was taught to cross herself every time she saw a church. When she returned to American Samoa she realised that she would have to give up the practice because she would cross herself so often in a five-minute drive that she was likely to crash the car (pers. Comm. 14th November 2015).
From a governance perspective however, it is not just the number of churches that is important but the ways and extent to which the population interacts with them. Over 98% of American Samoans are devoutly practicing Christians who regularly (at least weekly but often daily) attend church. They also regularly contribute financially and in kind to the church for facilities and events. In other ways, the homogeneity of denominations and the subsequent consistency in religious teachings also means that the churches have a powerful collective influence on the day to day governance of American Samoan society. Figure 21 shows the dominance of Christian denominations compared with the few others in the territory.

![Figure 21: Religious Affiliation in American Samoa by percentage of population. Source: The Association of Religious Data Archives accessed 2015](image)

As Chapter 7 and 8 further explain, ever since the “Good News” was so successfully introduced by the Christian missionaries, Christian norms and teachings have been

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14 Details of the financial records of individual churches is almost impossible to access, however a 1990 study suggests that close to 93% of people in American Samoa give regular financial support to their church (Fitzgerald and Howard, 1990).
influential at all scales of island governance. That said, the power of religious norms to influence the daily lives of people is most strong at the village level. For example, Figure 22 shows a sign that forbids swimming on a Sunday, a common rule for most villages. When American Samoans do swim they usually wear shorts and t-shirts in respect of church teachings on discretion. Similarly, on church grounds, which often make up a large part of villages, there are rules that regulate dress and behaviour, as shown in Figure 23.

![Figure 22: A sign prohibiting swimming in a village beach on Sundays](image)
These regulations are understood by all those living in the village, and for most, they are seen to be reasonable measures to maintain order and peace in a village. The people are extremely loyal to the teachings of their particular church, and show great respect for all church leaders who are usually a meaningful and present part of individual’s lives (Amosa, 2010). The attachment of this relationship can be seen in the findings of Fitzgerald and Howard (1990)’s study of social organisation in three Samoan and American Samoan villages, which revealed that when asked about personal networks almost every participant listed the church pastor as a highly important village figure and a member of their inner personal circle. Within this context, great deference is given to the faife’au (pastor or head of the church). As Chapter 8 shows, the power of the church to govern certain aspects of daily life with consent from those in the village is strengthened by the fact that its role is sanctioned and reinforced by the fa'amatai.

For many of the big churches in American Samoa however, the governance structure extends beyond the village, with a large number being connected to global clergy hierarchies and systems of authority. The large established missionary Christian Congregationalist denominations account for 50% of the people, Roman Catholic churches accounting for around 20%, and many and varied ‘new’ Christian right churches, with strong financial and administrative ties to the United States, accounting
The variety of denominations, as shown in Figure 24, is notable for a population of just over 57,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Christian Denominations and Associated Local Churches</th>
<th>United States Founded or Headquartered Christian Churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Church (Manumalo Baptist Church; Emmanuel Baptist Church’ First Samoan Christian Church’ Happy Valley Baptist; Korean Baptist)</td>
<td>Saint John Episcopal Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Christian Church of Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic Church</td>
<td>Assembly of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist Church of American Samoa</td>
<td>Seventh Day Adventist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal Church (of American Samoa; First Samoa Full Gospel)</td>
<td>Jehovah’s Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa</td>
<td>Calvary Christian Chapel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Church of Tonga</td>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church of God of Prophecy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church of the Nazarene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 24: Christian Churches in American Samoa. Source: List of Christian Church Denominations American Samoa Government (americansamoatravel), own analysis on geographical orientation.

Brush et al (1994 pg 124) argue that the more recent US-based churches are “the most vigorous political influence in most Pacific Island countries”, although there is little evidence that US based churches have more power in the American Samoan context. Certainly though, much of the financial and political capital of the churches in American Samoa comes from strong links to large and wealthy founding churches in the United States, and this is explored in more detail in the context of disaster governance in Chapters 7 and 8.
In both direct and indirect ways then, the church remains a key actor in American Samoan governance; it has a longer history of governing than the state, and has strong connections to the power structures of traditional governance at a village level. In a place where 98% of the population are devout and practicing Christians, it is little wonder that religious institutions play a significant role in governance. Interestingly though, unlike in the United States, faith-based governance is not seen as necessarily separate to that of public sector governance. Indeed, as the quote from the introduction to this section eludes to, religion is understood to be the foundation of both government and governance in the territory. The following section picks up on this idea of blurred boundaries between governing authorities, and introduces the way in which the entanglement of the three governance actors is evident in the symbols and discourse of politics in the territory.

4.3.4 Entangled Systems of Authority

As alluded to in the opening quote of this section, the key actors and spheres of American Samoan governance are best understood as connected or intertwined systems of authority that build on one another to construct the territory’s complex governance landscape. As the remaining three findings chapters of this thesis will show in more detail, the symbols, norms and practices of the fa’asamoa and the fa’amatai are entangled in the processes of government, as too is the influence of the church and religion. This is perhaps most overtly apparent in the Official Seal of American Samoa (see Figure 25), a quintessential symbol of the state that is depicted on most government buildings in Tutuila.

As a high titled chief explained in an interview, the Seal depicts the talking stick (To’oto’o) and fly switch (fue), which are symbols of rank among talking chiefs. It also shows the kava bowl, which represents the importance of custom and service to chiefs. Bearing the date of partition at the top and the territories moto “Samoan, muamua le atua” or “Samoa, God is first” at the bottom, the Seal is perhaps one of the most striking examples of the way in which religion, tradition and government are purposively drawn together, even in formal representations of governance.
From one perspective, the interconnectedness of these systems can be explained by the movement of people, particularly those of high rank, between positions of power in the fa’amatai, the church and the government. For example, many matai serve as senior members of the church bureaucracy, and positions like deacon, pastor, treasurer, and secretary are often held by matai (Gershon, 2006). Similarly, the majority of executive directors and people in leadership positions in the American Samoan Government hold matai titles. As the following interviewee explained, positions with more power usually (though not always) require higher ranked matai titles, and for most this is an accepted part of the system:

*The American Samoan Government recognises the matai system, so a lot of matai’s are working for the government, in the executive, the judiciary and the fono. We, the big chiefs, are in the Senate. The senate is selected by the council of chiefs every four years. The house of representatives is selected by popular vote every two years. So, the governor and the congresswoman or congressman, they are selected by popular vote. Now for those big positions it has to be top ranking matai’s, it can't just be any matai.* (Interview 29; Traditional Leader)

As many interviewees explained, the presence of these highly ranked traditional leaders in the institutions of the state has specific consequences for governance practices, and Chapter 8 explores these in more detail.
Another key point made by many of the interviewees about the interconnectedness of these three systems is that in a place as small as American Samoa, entanglement of different forms of authority is unavoidable. For some, this was seen as unfortunate,

> *We have a triple system of authority – religion, traditional and government (laughs), I mean I hope that we can separate these things but unfortunately these are included in our political system.* (Interview 23, Government)

For others, it was simply an inevitable aspect of governance in a small place:

> *Just remember we are only a 55,000 population community, and all the things that happen in a small town, that’s what happens here.* (Interview 15, Private Sector)

> *It’s the same guys that run both systems (laughs). This idea that you have to separate the state and society – on an island that’s impossible!* (Interview 39, Traditional Leader)

As the laughter in these quotes suggest, the interviewees were for the most part light-hearted and pragmatic about the recognition that the three systems were interconnected. This thesis takes its cue from these perspectives, and begins with an assumption that the systems are interconnected in complex ways. Explaining how that entanglement plays out in practice, over time, and at scale, is a fundamental objective of this research.

### 4.3.5 Summary

While there are of course a diverse range of actors involved in the governance of collective issues in American Samoa, there are three governance systems that are considered the main pillars of the island’s political system; the chiefs, the church and the state. This section has outlined the form and function of each of these systems, and has shown that there are distinct institutions, norms and practices that characterise the role of each in governance. There are however some similarities, particularly in the hierarchical structure of each of the ‘pillars’. Respect for structure and rank has been the foundation of the centuries old traditional system, and this was only reinforced by the introduction of the institutions of the Christian churches. Hierarchy therefore is a persistent and accepted mode of governance in both public and private spheres. The similarities in the hierarchical structure of the three sets of institutions have also facilitated an entanglement of these three systems of governance, both by way of the
blending of symbols, norms and practices of governance, and also in a more practical sense, through the movement of people within the systems. For many, this entanglement is not necessarily viewed from a normative perspective, more as an inevitable and unavoidable consequence of the process of governing in a small place.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter has introduced governance in American Samoa in two ways. First, it has presented the case in terms of its political history, geography and socioeconomic context, as well as the political and cultural place that it has within the region. Second, it has outlined the institutional structures and actors of the territory's political system, which gives insight into the form and function of those actors (Research Question 1). The first thing to note from this analysis is that the actors themselves are different to those described as being key to governance in the Anglo European context. Instead of a governance landscape dominated by a sovereign state, private actors such as corporations and formal civil society groups such as NGO's, American Samoa is primarily governed by chiefs, the Christian churches and a two-tiered extra-territorial government.

Notably, each of these institutions is distinctly hierarchical in both structure and practice. Unlike in the western European context of post-welfare states, hierarchy persists in American Samoa and is seen as an enduring and valuable organising principle for the governance of daily life and collective issues. Finally, the interviewees explained that the three hierarchical actors were integrally linked in governance in practice and in some senses institutionally. While an important finding in the context of relative authority in practice (Research Question 2), this analysis only establishes that they are entwined; it does not speak to relative power to govern between actors in the entanglement or the detail of the practices and modes of governance that characterise it. The following chapter introduces the case of the 2009 tsunami, and the ways in which these key actors and institutions interacted with one another in the governance of a disaster in the territory.
CHAPTER 5: THE 2009 TSUNAMI

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This Chapter outlines how the territory’s actors and institutions interacted during the response and recovery to the 2009 tsunami. The objective of this analysis is to explore how the relative authority and modes of governance described in Chapter 4 played out in practice during and after the disaster. This then provides a preliminary understanding both the form and practice of governance in American Samoa, which sets the context for the more in-depth analysis of key relationships at scale in the following three chapters.

As Chapter 3 argues, disasters provide a window into the ways that various governance actors and institutions interact with one another. The earthquake and subsequent tsunami in the Pacific Ocean in 2009 was one of the most significant natural disasters in American Samoa’s history. The scale of the damage necessitated the involvement of basically every government, traditional and religious institution on the island, as well as many connected institutions in the United States and the region. The disaster is therefore a lens through which to view wide-ranging and multi-scalar dynamics of American Samoan governance. It is important to note here again that the aim of this thesis is not to understand the event from a disaster management perspective, but rather to use the event as a lens with which to study the power relations and political processes that construct governance in American Samoa.

This chapter therefore introduces this event, outlines which actors did what, and how the institutional response to the disaster played out. It begins with a discussion of the events that led to the disaster itself, and the impact the tsunami had on the infrastructure and services of the islands, as well as on people’s lives and wellbeing. It then provides an analysis of the response of key governance actors at different stages in the disaster. Finally, this section provides an overview of the way in which interviewees characterised the response of the governance system. This overview and introduction aims to function not as a comprehensive analysis of governance during this period, but rather as a broad account of the case so as to serve as a jumping-off point for the more historically situated
discussion of relationships at, and across scales that make up the analysis in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

5.2 An Unexpected Disaster

Being located in South Pacific means that, along with many islands in the region, American Samoa is highly exposed to cyclones and severe storms that can lead to coastal hazards such as inundation, storm surge, floods and landslides. These events are by no means uncommon in the territory, and have caused both small and large-scale damage at frequent intervals throughout the islands’ history. The first recorded hurricane in 1966 was the territory’s largest and triggered the islands’ first ‘major disaster’ declaration by the United States (Shaffer, 2000). Since then, the islands have experienced many and frequent disasters due to weather related events, for example: the territory suffered from a drought in 1974; heavy rain brought severe mudslides and landslides in 1979; and severe tropical cyclones have hit the territory in 1981, 1987, 1990, 1991 and 2004 (Preventionweb, 2015). The largest of recent hurricanes, causing the most amount of damage, were Val in 1991, Heta in 2004, and Olaf a year later in 2005, which mainly affected the Manu‘a island group (FEMA, 2016). The frequency with which these have occurred means that both the people and the governance institutions of the island are aware of the risks of these hazards, and there are many disaster preparedness programs in place. Nevertheless, very few people were prepared for a disaster of the type or magnitude of the 2009 tsunami.

While small earthquakes are also relatively common, a near shore quake large enough to cause a tsunami had not occurred in living memory, and so a tsunami event (and the scale of the damage that it could cause) was completely unexpected for most American Samoans. As these two interviewees put it:

*No-one was ready. No-one expected this. It was obviously a shock for everyone, because absolutely no one expected a tsunami. Nobody even thought of one.* (Interview 11, Government)

*I didn’t ever imagine that after an earthquake a tsunami would come. No one did. I’d say about 90% of the island didn’t know it could ever be that bad.* (Interview 18, Government)
Many interviewees reiterated this point and confessed that while there were government preparedness programs and warning systems for tsunamis, the fact that it had been so long since one had occurred meant that most people felt that the event was extremely unlikely. Unfortunately however, when this unexpected event did occur it resulted in the worst natural disaster in the territory's history.

5.2.1 The Event and its Impacts

At 6.48am on the 29th of September 2009, an 8.3 magnitude earthquake (the largest in the world in 2009) occurred approximately 196km south-west of Tutuila, only 18kms below the sea bed and in the tectonic subduction zone known as the Tongan trench (American Samoa Government, 2015). The quake led to a large tsunami which hit land within 15 minutes of the first quake, and caused devastation across the three nearby island chains of American Samoa, Samoa and Tonga. The tsunami was the worst in the region’s history and led to 189 deaths and hundreds of injured and displaced people (Department of Interior, 2011); it also caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage in the affected countries. The disaster was most severe in Samoa where 146 people were killed, and whole villages in south eastern Upolu were completely destroyed. Tonga also suffered significant damage and 9 people were killed.

As many interviewees pointed out, the impact in American Samoa, while severe, could have been much worse if it weren’t for two fortunate situations. First, the timing of the tsunami meant that people were getting ready for their day, and so were awake but not yet on the one main road that services the island. As one interviewee explained:

15 Wendt-Young’s (2010) book *Pacific Tsunami Gali Afi*, is an excellent (if harrowing) account of the events of that day, the stories of those who died, and the first-hand accounts of those who survived in each of the three countries. While it is not the aim of this thesis to analyse individual experiences of the disaster, this research is indebted to the care this author took in collecting and collating people’s stories and the detail of the descriptions that provided context for this analysis.
It was so fortunate that it happened in the daytime and early in the morning, before the children were at school and the people were in their offices. (Interview 2 Government)

Second, incredibly, the 29th of September was actually scheduled as an island-wide training exercise for tsunami preparedness, an event that was the culmination of the annual disaster preparedness month. One interviewee explained the significance of this from an operational perspective:

So, we were already ready in a way. We had people at the Emergency Operations Centre doing radio checks and all that. It was amazing really. (Interview 20, Government)

The events of disaster preparedness month also meant that while most American Samoans did not believe a tsunami was likely, they had at least been exposed to recent messaging about what to do in the event, and the necessary evacuation practices and procedures. It is widely understood that these two factors contributed to significantly reduced potential for loss of life in this event (Lindell et al., 2015; NOAA, 2010).

Nevertheless, the impact of the tsunami on the island of Tutuila16 was shocking. The first wave hit just 15 minutes after the quake, which did not leave enough time for the full activation of the warning system, which was initiated around the time of the impact at 7.04am. As section 5.3 and Chapter 8 discuss further, this meant that warnings and evacuations were mostly initiated by village authorities such as the pulenu‘u. In many cases individuals needed to judge for themselves when and how to evacuate. One interviewee’s story illustrates the physical changes that led people to evacuate and the speed at which that had to occur:

I saw the water recede, there was no water. What caught my attention was that I could see the fish – fish on the sea floor! I thought “what the hell is going on” because I had never seen a tsunami, I've never read about one. I’d just never even thought of it. On the horizon I could see this big brown log coming, right? And it was coming in

16 While Manu‘a was hit by the wave it suffered far less damage than Tutuila (Department of the Interior, 2009)
slow motion. In my head, I was trying to work out what was going on with the water. We were trying to get my mom in the car and my sister was doing the same thing I was, just staring at the water amazed. Meanwhile the log is coming towards us.

(Interview 25, Government)

For most people, evacuation meant driving up the mountain or climbing the steep forest-covered hills that are located close behind most of the coastal villages. Tragically, 34 people lost their lives in the event, and two bodies were not recovered. Many of those who died were trapped in buildings in the capital or in cars caught by the wave on the coastal road (Department of the Interior, 2009).

5.2.2 Short and Longer-Term Impacts

Figure 26 shows the maximum wave heights across the island, indicating the most affected areas in: Poloa and Leone in the west; the far east of the island; and the capital of Pago Pago.

![Map of run-up heights of the 2009 tsunami for Tutuila, American Samoa](US Geological Survey, 2009)

In the central harbour region, the trajectory of the wave meant that it missed some of the island’s critical infrastructure in the harbour region (Figure 27), however being at the
end of a narrow harbour, the business district of Pago Pago was hit particularly hard. Figure 28 shows the scale of damage in the capital, where both houses and businesses were destroyed, and the wave completely submerged the some of the buildings. Many of the interviewees spoke of the shock of seeing the destruction, particularly in the port area where much of the structural damage occurred, and a cemetery was unearthed. One interviewee explained:

*In Pago, everything was flipped over but everything was covered in grease, everything was black – there were cars and boats everywhere, and there were coffins. (Interview 10, Government)*

![Image](image_url)

*Figure 27 Assets and infrastructure within the tsunami hazard zone in the harbour region of American Samoa. Source (US Army Corps of Engineers, 2012)*
Because of the steep terrain throughout most of the island, only 30% of Tutuila’s landmass is suitable for building development (US Army Corps of Engineers, 2012), so much of the significant critical infrastructure for disaster response and relief is (somewhat ironically) located within tsunami inundation zones. It was extremely fortunate that the Emergency Operations Centre, the hospital and the airport were spared significant damage and were operational for the immediate response. Some critical services were affected though; the Satale power plant, the main power generation for the island, was inundated with over 3 meters of water, permanently damaging all power generation equipment and the facilities. This initially resulted in 60% power loss across the island, however with the help of the Federal Emergency Management Authority (Chapter 7 discusses further) most of the island’s power was back up within 48 hours and full power was restored within 3 weeks (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2010).

The financial and social costs of the tsunami were extraordinary, particularly for a population of only 57,000 people. While essential services were up and running quickly, much of the infrastructure had suffered significant damage, which amounted to an
estimated $US21.8 million in repair costs for the power plant (American Samoa Government, 2015) and over $910,000 in damage to the water supply/waste water system (US Army Corps of Engineers, 2012). For families who were directly affected or lost loved ones, the impacts were immediate and the costs significant. The disaster left approximately 2,200 individuals displaced across 70 affected villages (Red Cross, 2012); some stayed in shelters, others with family in other villages, or in family homes that were not hit by the wave. In total, the tsunami destroyed 248 homes and 28 rental units, and damaged another 2,750 dwellings; one school was destroyed, and four others were significantly damaged (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2015). Again, while American Samoans have experience with the damage caused by natural disasters, the scale and speed of this event was unprecedented. As one interviewee put it:

_I mean the tsunami was a different type of disaster. It came unannounced, took about 15 or 20 minutes to play out, devastated the island and then left so quickly, left the people with all that damage._ (Interview 22, Government)

The longer-term impact on both the economy and individuals was complicated as it coincided with the scheduled closure of one of the large canneries, a key employer in the territory’s small economy. As one report noted this meant that some families lost both their home and their job within a couple of days (Department of Urban Regional Planning, 2011 pg 21). The scale of the short and long-term impacts required a significant response from both public and private sectors, as well as from families and individuals. The following section discusses the roll out of this response, and provides an analysis of who did what in the process of governing the relief and recovery.

**5.3 Governing the Response**

Because of both the scale of the disaster and the small size of territory, the impacts of the tsunami were felt by everyone on the island, and the response involved a huge range of governance actors; from the federal and territorial governments to the churches, NGOs, businesses and village governance institutions. A huge body of scholarly research focuses on the management cycles of disaster response and recovery, and this field has long established that institutional responses to disasters unfold in distinct phases, each of which is likely to involve those groups of actors best placed to undertake the particular goals of that phase of the management cycle (Patterson et al, 2010). For example, the
immediate response phase requires the resources and expertise of first response and emergency management institutions, while the long-term recovery phase is more likely to involve formal political and bureaucratic institutions at different scales. Clearly, the particular combination of actors depends both on the underlying governance landscape of the place in question, and the type of disaster that has occurred. In the case of the 2009 tsunami in American Samoa, there are very few studies that bring these two aspects together. There are a number of studies carried out by the US Army Corps of Engineers and other scientific institutions, that focus on the geological drivers of the tsunami and the physical geography aspects of the impact of the disaster (Donahue et al., 2009; NOAA, 2010; US Army Corps of Engineers, 2012). There are also a number of studies that focus on community resilience in the context of the disaster, which include excellent analysis on the role of village institutions (Lindell et al., 2015; Rumbach and Foley, 2014). However, there are as yet no studies that seek to understand the response of the full range of actors in the American Samoan political system, nor the way in which they interacted with one another at different stages of the disaster.

This section presents an analysis of the roles of key actors at different stages of the disaster, drawing on the media and document analysis explained in Chapter 3, as well on insights from interviewees who cross the range of governance institutions involved in the management of the tsunami response and recovery. Figure 29 presents a depiction of the key actors involved in particular stages of the disaster response, which is a simplification of what was a very complex governance response.
Figure 29: The main governance actors and institutions involved in the disaster response and recovery.
Figure 29 seeks to convey the insight that in American Samoa after the tsunami, the emergency response and early recovery stages involved a broader range of actors than the longer-term recovery phase. Again, though this functions as a heuristic only, the analysis of the particulars of ‘who did what and when’ are now analysed in more detail.

5.3.1 Immediate Response and Evacuation

Of the very few academic papers that have been written about the tsunami in American Samoa, two studies focus on the impact and evacuation phase, and both stress the important role that village institutions played in the immediate impact of the disaster (Binder et al 2014; Rumbach and Foley 2014). Village leaders such as the pulenu’u were some of the first to warn people to evacuate and to organise the response following the tsunami impact. One interviewee told the often-repeated story of a pulenu’u in the village of Fagasa who saved lives by making the decision to evacuate the village immediately following the earthquake:

What he did after the earthquake, when it stopped and he saw the water receding, he ran out and rang the church bell and everybody came out asking. Everybody was in bed, but the way he was ringing the bell was different, not like at church... he started yelling at people and then they past it down. So that saved a lot of people.

(Interview 2, Government)

The aumaga, or untitled men of the village were also heavily involved in evacuation, the search and rescue, and the immediate emergency response. As too were the aualuma (group of unmarried women), who were instrumental in emergency medical care in this phase. As one interviewee explained, the immediate impact of a disaster like a tsunami is localised, and so it makes sense that the first responders are those in the village:

In all disasters, it is the Pulenu’u that hit the ground first. They warn people, ring the bells and evacuate people... if anything happens the aumaga will be there too. They are both the first responders. Before the police or anything, because they live in the villages, it is a must for them to be there first. (Interview 8, Government)

It was also pointed out that, while more dramatic in a disaster situation, these responsibilities are part of the normal structure of village roles and thus can be mobilised quickly. As one interviewee argued:
The aumaga handled it so well. They know what to do already you know? That’s how they’ve been brought up, and that’s what their relatives have been doing, keeping the villages clean and safe, for centuries. (Interview 19, Government)

The detail of how these institutions have come to play such an important role at a local level is explored in Chapter 8.

While much of the immediate response was being executed by the leaders of the villages, the government departments with emergency management responsibilities were attempting to organise a coordinated public-sector response. As a number of interviewees who were involved in the process confessed, the initial hours after the tsunami were chaotic as those in the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) recovered from the initial shock and struggled to assemble staff, many of whom were taking part in relief effort in their own villages. As one interviewee noted:

*It was just chaos, because nobody had ever even nearly expected that kind of incident. It felt like everybody in the EOC was in chaos... We realised we needed to be the people in charge, so we needed to slow down and calm down and get a handle on the situation... Then we just followed the plan. I would say the plan worked well after the initial hour of chaos.* (Interview 20, Government)

The main focus of that plan was to direct effort towards public sector responsibilities such as service provision and public safety:

*Well the EOC was concentrated on essential services. Getting the roads back up and the power back on.* (Interview 10, Government)

The centre was also responsible for overseeing the deployment of the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) teams, however this process was slowed in the initial hours due to island wide communication issues. For example, due to the limited radio communication, the central command of the Emergency Medical Services did not immediately know that the west of the island had been hit until the first casualties began to arrive at the hospital (Department of Urban Regional Planning, 2011).

Despite these initial delays and confusion, the majority of the interviewees, as well as reports that referred to this stage of the disaster were all positive about the effectiveness
of both sets of actors in managing the impact and evacuation phase. As the following section shows, the emergency response phase of the days following the tsunami saw an increase in government involvement at all scales as the United States arrived on the island to support the territory.

5.3.2 Emergency Response

After the critical first hours of search and rescue, emergency medical treatment and essential service restoration, the first task for the American Samoan Government was to activate the disaster declaration process that would secure support from the United States. Declarations of ‘major disasters’ and ‘national states of emergency’ are the purview of the President of the United States and once made, the declaration triggers the flow of resources and personnel from the Federal government by way of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This was not the first time FEMA had been authorised to respond to a disaster in the territory, however as a number of interviewees noted, the process was executed unusually quickly; President Obama issued the declaration in the evening of the day of the disaster. The Governor at the time, Togiola Tulafono was off-island on the day of the tsunami and arrived the following day on the first plane, along with the heads of the FEMA operation. In an interview with FEMA a year later the Governor noted the speed with which the emergency response process was established:

“I think this disaster was the first time in memory that we were able to get the command structure up very quickly from day one. When I got the first call in Honolulu, I was able to speak directly to FEMA and to the coast guard that day, the same day as the tsunami... having that relationship in Hawaii was critical. It allowed us to move the relief and assistance very quickly. The application for the declaration for the President was up immediately and was put in place very quickly, instead of the normal one to two weeks, which it took in all previous disasters I’ve been involved in – and I’ve been involved in about three of them since 1997.” (FEMA, 2010 0.42)

Once on the island, Kenneth Tingman, the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), assumed control from FEMA Region IX’s Response Coordination Centre in Hawaii, and established a Joint Field Office (alongside the EOC) which coordinated all federal response activities. In terms of governance, the official position of FEMA is that it is a supporting agency to
local authorities, and that local authorities retain ultimate authority on decision-making during the disaster. As Chapter 7 discusses in detail however, the agency’s technical expertise in disaster management, and its capacity to deploy much needed resources meant that, in this stage of the disaster, FEMA officials were actually making many of the operational decisions.

As more personnel arrived from the federal agencies, FEMA established an Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT), and a Planning and Response Team (PRT) to steer the organisation of the response. The agency was also involved in the on-ground efforts to provide relief to the affected villages by distributing short term housing kits including tents, comfort kits, cots/sleeping mats, camp stoves and food. This was done with the help of the Department of Health, Emergency Preparedness Division, a quasi-federal department based in American Samoa responsible for facilitating the provision of medical supplies from the US, and getting those to the walking wounded and the territory’s Emergency Management Services.

The FEMA operation also facilitated the involvement of the United States military, which were considered crucial to the emergency response phase. The United States Navy, The United States Coast Guard, the Hawaii Air National Guard, and the United States American Samoan Army Reserve under the leadership of the U.S. Pacific Command provided critical transport of supplies and equipment (food and water, blankets, tents, cots, and medical supplies and equipment) for mass care operations that were being established in the villages. The military was also primarily responsible for the delivery and deployment of relief supplies during this time. Figure 30 shows one of the military cargo planes that arrived on the island carrying resources and personnel. Figure 31 shows the Hawaiian National Guard undertaking debris removal.
Figure 30: Hawaiian National Guard delivers disaster relief supplies on a C-17 Globemaster III plane. Source: Federal Emergency Management Authority

Figure 31: US EPA officials discuss strategy for debris removal with officers from the Hawaiian National Guard in Leone, American Samoa. Source: Federal Emergency Management Authority
While much needed, the arrival of these supplies and personnel from the United States also had the effect of complicating the governance structures and balance of relative roles and responsibilities between agencies in the territory. Interestingly, according to three different accounts from interviewees, the organisational conflict that was reported to have occurred was mainly between the various federal agencies, rather than between those and the American Samoan government. As one territorial government department director observed:

_The bad thing was when they got here they were arguing amongst themselves, and the local jurisdiction is sitting here watching this. They are territorial too I guess. They were arguing with each other in meetings a lot in those first days._ (Interview 4, Government)

Another senior American Samoan government employee reflected that the number of United States agencies that were on the island also meant that emergency management command structure became too heavy.

_There were so many people in charge - They were like “What? A tsunami hit American Samoa? We’re flying!!” (laughs) So, like in all disasters here there was a lot of confusion. The reason that happens is because there are way too many people who want to call the shots and not enough people to do the work. So that creates chaos and it’s not needed, and that’s what happened for a time in 2009 – I don’t know if people are going to admit to that but, yeah, it happened._ (Interview 30, Government)

As with the immediate impact response though, most interviewees noted that after the initial confusion of the arrival of United States personnel, the emergency plans and procedures were carried out fairly quickly and efficiently:

_For a lot of us there was no sleep, but amazingly a lot of what needed to be done was done in the first 42 to 74 hours._ (Interview 31, Government)

For some of the key players such as the military, this meant a significant decrease in their involvement in the disaster response. As one interviewee explained, this is in line with the role that the armed forces usually play in disaster response:
They are there to provide the help, they are there to do what they had to do and then just walk away. They are not there for all the recovery politics. (Interview 22, Government)

So, while some agencies and organisations were pulling back from the task of governing the disaster, the recovery phase saw the arrival of other organisations and institutions particularly NGOs, and as this quote suggests, marked the start of the more political phase of the disaster, in which the task of organising and distributing relief is paramount.

5.3.3 Early and Intermediate Recovery

As news of the disaster spread throughout the world, donations and relief supplies began to arrive in to the islands. Some of this relief came from families living in the United States and, as Chapter 8 discusses in more detail, was delivered to victims of the disaster by way of the village-based institutions of the matai and the church. A significant portion of the resources and supplies however, came from individual or group donations that were given to either the American Samoan Government, or to NGOs such as the American Samoan Red Cross. As often happens in disasters, both the amount and type of relief supplies proved to be difficult for these authorities to process and distribute. One interviewee discussed how this created an extra challenge in the management of the recovery phase:

As much as it’s understandable that everyone wants to help, accommodating everything that is coming off-island also helps to create that internal disaster of dealing with the aid. (Interview 37, Government)

As Chapter 7 discusses, there was some disagreement between NGOs and government as to how to deliver that aid, and a number of interviewees claimed that government procurement processes slowed down that process significantly:

We were able to get federal resources easily but processing through the ASG government was so slow that it meant these resources were held up in procurement for days, and weren’t getting to the people who needed them. The governments system for processing was slow, and old and ineffective. (Interview 5, Government)
This ‘flood’ of relief supplies, combined with bureaucratic delays, meant that large stockpiles were created, some of which were still in storage during the fieldwork for this research six years later (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Stockpile of Relief supplies at American Samoa Red Cross Headquarters

Along with problems distributing relief, there were also challenges in accommodating the increasing number of government staff, volunteers, journalists and scientists that arrived in the weeks following the tsunami. Including the staff involved in the FEMA operation, a total of over 300 responders were deployed to the island, including over 50 medical personnel from the US department of Health and Human Services, and 40 assistance workers from the US Department of Small Business Administration. The 125 local Red Cross volunteers were also joined by 82 more from Red Cross chapters in Hawaii and the US mainland. As a number of interviewees pointed out there were also many other individuals and organisations that arrived to cover the story of the tsunami or to gather
data, and this created problems for the authorities who were trying to manage this stage of the disaster. For example, as one interviewee explained:

*As soon as the airport opened up people were coming in droves, news crews and scientists. The scientists came and collected their data and then just went you know? The next thing you know there was a published paper about American Samoa and we were like what? After that people started screening these things but it was a little too late.* (Interview 30, Government)

With the two main hotels also accommodating survivors who had lost their houses, the influx of outside help became a serious logistical challenge for both government and NGOs, as this former Red Cross worker argued:

*For the tsunami incident, itself it was quite a strong response. That was a bit to our demise, and the demise would be we were overstaffed, the assessment was over predicted, we had too many people from off island without jobs to do.* (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

American Samoa is not alone in experiencing logistical challenges of the influx of aid and humanitarian workers, in fact the 2004 Indian ocean tsunami showed that it can amount to ‘second tsunami’ (Shanmugaratnam 2005) in terms of the impact on progress of the recovery. In this case though the challenges led to the centralisation of government control over the recovery process, the reasons for which relate to the relative role of the non-profit sector in governance more broadly, as Chapter 7 discusses in detail.

During this period, the American Samoan government took a more active role in the villages, delivering relief supplies and facilitating mass care initiatives. For example, government workers from a range of departments distributed over 3,500 meals a day to affected villages in the weeks following the tsunami. As one interviewee pointed out, this was a very personal task for most of the government workers; many were working closely with people that they knew, and some lived in the affected villages:

*The government workers went out and did their work, because it was their families and their friends that were suffering.* (Interview 6, Government)
These intersections between professional and personal responsibilities were also inherent in the work of many of the territory’s NGO personnel, whose primary role was in this relief stage of the tsunami. Interestingly for a disaster of this scale, the overall role of NGOs was seen by most interviewees as comparatively small (compared to government) and was understood to be limited to immediate relief activities, as shown in this discussion:

So, what’s the difference between your (American Samoan Government) role and Red Cross?

*Well Red Cross are a relief organisation. We go out and do assessments so we can assist with damages they have to their homes. Red Cross is actually there with cots, and food vouchers, you know they are there to provide immediate relief and immediate assistance.* (Interview 20, Government)

Chapter 7 discusses the limits to the role of NGO’s in American Samoan governance compared to that of the dominant and well supported government.

When both NGO staff and government relief workers arrived in the villages to undertake mass care responsibilities, they found that much of the recovery work, such as debris removal and small-scale building repairs, had already been undertaken by the village institutions of the *aumaga* and the village churches. Almost all of the interviewees made a point of stressing that this is due to the organisation and resilience of the village social structures. For example, one interviewee stated:

*The thing about our islands is that we are a very resilient people. We don’t wait for outside help, we start helping ourselves. And that’s what the villages do, they actually start helping each other and helping the next villages, and that’s what happened in the 2009 tsunami... I mean they were starting to clean up even before the federal government were able to get there...and you had some federal people who were amazed at that. So, it’s through the aumaga, it’s through the church groups and organisations like that. It’s because they know that the government can only do so much, they also have to play their part as well. And plus, everybody is related, you know, your cousin is in the next village so, it’s just the way it is I guess.* (Interview 5, Government)
The churches did a lot. They always do. They are one of our most reliable resources... in providing shelter, because usually the church halls are shelters and they can get extra people to help. (Interview 5, Government)

A number of interviewees pointed out that this level of self-reliance almost became counterproductive in light of the need for other types of assistance:

So, what happened was the church groups came in and cleaned up, straight away, along with families. So, when FEMA came in it looked like things were ok... it was almost like we were too effective. (Interview 6, Government)

However, FEMA authorities quickly realised that there was still significant need in the villages, particularly in terms of intermediate relief for families who had been displaced.

So then, in this intermediate phase of the disaster, FEMA also played a much more tangible role in the recovery of the affected villages than it had in the earlier phases in which it focused mainly on establishing command and coordinating activities. For example, FEMA provided tents for medium-term shelter, and along with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, erected 12 temporary classrooms to support damaged or destroyed schools. FEMA activities also focused on restoring power to the outer villages and repairing the power grid. As Figure 33 shows this required flying in heavy machinery and large generators to replace the smaller generators that had kept the power up in the immediate recovery phase.
This technical support was supplemented by the experience of the US agencies in highly specialised disaster management operations. For example, the US Army Corps of Engineers, US Coast Guard and the EPA removed more than 19,000 cubic meters of hazardous debris from the harbour. Beyond this intermediate recovery phase though, the role of FEMA and the United States Government agencies was primarily to provide both public and private assistance to aid the long-term recovery of the survivors and the territory’s economy.

5.3.4 LONG TERM RECOVERY
As Chapter 7 discusses in more detail, the financial assistance provided by United States government was significant and covered the costs of individual recovery, as well as those incurred by public buildings and services. In total FEMA awarded over US$22.4 million in individual assistance in the form of both Housing Assistance and Other Needs
Assistance (dental, medical, moving, storage). To aid the processing of individual assistance claims, FEMA set up the Disaster Recovery Centre (DRC), and later the Disaster Service Centre, which over the period of a year following the tsunami serviced 23,598 people seeking assistance (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2012). Figure 34 shows the Disaster Recovery Centre in the first weeks of operation, which was under the management of the Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman (pictured), but was staffed by dozens of claims process officers who were mostly American Samoans.

Figure 34: Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman in the Disaster Recovery Centre, American Samoa. Source: Federal Emergency Management Authority

17 $US18,259,342 total housing dollars approved; $US4,521,161 total other needs dollars approved, as of January 16, 2016 (FEMA 4).
The DRC processed 8,449 valid registrations, including 321 maximum grants of $30,300 (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2012) as well as funded the construction of 51 permanent housing units. Another 11.4 million was made available through the US department of Small Business Administration in the form of low interest loans for those whose businesses were affected by the disaster.

In terms of public assistance, the US government provided 57 million to fund the rebuild of public infrastructure for 30 different eligible public entities in the territory. This funding included the reimbursement of 90% of costs carried by the American Samoan Government for emergency measures and restoration in the emergency stages of the disaster, as well as 100% federal share for debris removal, and emergency work in the first 30 days following the disaster (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2012). Approximately $US24.8 million of this was from the U.S. Department of Labour for temporary recruitment of workers to remove debris (Samoa News, October 30, 2009, pg 1). Much of this work was undertaken by the territory’s private sector construction companies, which have memorandums of understanding with the American Samoan Government to undertake emergency public works in the event of a disaster, under the understanding that they would be reimbursed by FEMA (through the territorial Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management) following the declaration of a ‘major disaster’ (Interview 40, Government). This indicates much about the relationship between the territorial state and the private sector in American Samoa as Chapter 7 explores in more detail. Due to the scale of the damage to public infrastructure, and the costs of facilitating public works on a remote island, FEMA released an extra 25 million in public assistance a year and a half after the disaster to continue public programs and projects.

While there were some challenges in the delivery of both public and private assistance, most interviewees agreed that the long-term economic recovery process was handled well by FEMA and the United States government:

*It was dealt with very efficiently, because they’ve done it before, over and over. It’s interesting, because I was here in the 70’s, 80’s 90’s when all those disasters happened, and the last one had to be one of the most organised when it came to*
FEMA’s response. They came in, they knew what they were there for, they knew what they were going to do. (Interview 22, Government)

In fact, when asked to reflect on the governance of the disaster from a long-term recovery perspective, most interviewees were exceptionally positive. Comments such as the following were common:

*It was a great response, a courageous response by our people in government, I can say that for sure.* (Interview 32, Civil Society)

Even when asked to reflect on aspects of governance that did not work well, the majority indicated that there were very few major issues. The below exchange is indicative of the types of overall assessments many of the interviewees gave:

Do you think that there was anything in the response of different groups that didn’t work well?

*No not really. No. It was hard but everybody did a really good job. None of us have gone through anything like this, it was never going to be perfect (laughs) so I think everybody did well.* (Interview 26, Government)

For some though, the assessments were moderated by recognition that for the American Samoan Government, the successful cooperation was due in large part to the support and additional capacity that came with the federal response. As one interviewee reflected in the following exchange:

Do you think government departments worked well together?

*Oh yes, oh yes definitely. They worked more than well together. But they can only do so much you know? We only have two or three ambulances and things like that. So that’s why we really needed FEMA to come down and help us. They are trained to know what to do step by step rather than reactions, you know, they are organised.* (Interview 38, Government)

Others believed that the effectiveness of the government response was entirely due to the capacity of the United States government:
The ASG works to the best of their ability with what they had. They had a lot of problems... I don’t think it was that the different agencies worked well together – I think it was that the US federal agencies responded well. (Interview 15, Private Sector)

Overall though, it was clear that the majority of those who were interviewed in this research reflected on the disaster response as a complex process, but one that was more-or-less successful in supporting the recovery of those who survived the disaster, as well as supporting the long-term recovery of the island’s economy and people.

5.3.5 Summary
Because the impact of the tsunami was so severe the response to the disaster was significant, both in terms of the resources required, and also the range of actors involved in the response and recovery phases. Different stages of the disaster involved different combinations of key actors: in the immediate response and evacuation phase, village governance institutions such as the pulenu’u, the augmaga and aualuma played a critical role in evacuation and emergency medical treatment, as did the first responders of the Emergency Medical Services. Following the arrival of FEMA and the establishment of coordinated command centres, both the federal and territorial government agencies became more involved in coordinating response activities and distributing relief. The churches, as well as both local and international NGO’s were also more involved in this phase, bringing in huge amounts of relief supplies and personnel, that eventually created extra challenges for the organisation of relief activities. The later stages of recovery, which included clean up and infrastructure repair as well as individual financial assistance, were led by the American Samoan Government (with significant financial and technical support from US federal agencies, particularly FEMA), with some conditional support from the private sector. Responsibility for the long-term economic recovery of the islands’ economy has almost exclusively been in the hands of the federal agencies, delivered through both public and private financial assistance and government grants for recovery and resilience programs in the territory.

More broadly this analysis points to three key points that provide a foundation for some of the more detailed analysis of governance relations in the findings chapters of this thesis. First, it shows the importance of the relationship with the United States
government for governance in the territory. As many of the interviewees noted, much of the response of the American Samoan government relied heavily on that relationship, as did the ability of many of the individual survivors to cover the losses from the disaster and begin the financial recovery process, if not the emotional one. Second, the analysis shows the demarcation of the village as a space of organisation and response, as well as the way in which roles and responsibilities of governance actors flow across the village boundary. Finally, the analysis showed that most of the interviewees were positive about the overall governance of the disaster, which is rare in the literature (Malhotra and Kuo, 2007) and, while not the primary concern of this thesis, is an interesting finding in the context of the normative debates around good governance regimes. The next three chapters of the thesis further explore these three issues.

5.4 Conclusions
This chapter sought to explain governance by examining how it occurred in practice in the particular context of a disaster, which can be understood as an analytical ‘moment’ in which governance practices (rather than legally defined or stated roles) are revealed. In this case, the analysis shows that overall, in an unexpected disaster, the key actors in the American Samoan political system were extraordinarily cooperative and throughout the disaster response partnership between key actors structured the response. Most significant were the relationships between the United States government and the territory government, as well as between the traditional and religious institutions at the village level. Again, while these findings reveal much about the nature of interactions between actors in the practice of governance (Research Question 2), the analysis still falls short of explaining why these relationships are important and how they came to be, which is a key element of an historical, place-based understanding of governance. So, the following three findings chapters of this thesis aim to build on these analyses by focusing on three central relationships: the US-American Samoan government relationship; the relationship between the territorial state, the private sector, and civil society; and the relationship between the American Samoan Government and the village-based governance system.
CHAPTER 6: UNITED STATES-AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION
As the previous chapter has noted, the relationship between the United States and American Samoa is fundamentally important to the territory's governance. This chapter seeks to explain this relationship. The chapter begins with an analysis of the early years of the United States – American Samoa relationship and the way in which the recognition of the mutual benefits of an alliance served to structure the negotiations of relative authority throughout the period of naval rule, as well as during the later transition to relative self-governance. It then turns to an analysis of debates around the authority of the territorial government in light of the complex balance between the norms and institutions of formal political dependence and relative self-governance. Finally, the chapter examines the way authority between the two governments works through an examination of their interaction following the 2009 tsunami, which helps to further draw out the different and multiple ways that the relationship is enacted in practice.

6.2 THE EARLY YEARS OF THE UNITED STATES-AMERICAN SAMOA RELATIONSHIP
The relationship between the United States and the eastern islands of the Samoa group began during the turbulent period of colonial expansion into the Pacific in the 1800’s. However, as this section will argue, the history of the relationship does not fit neatly within the experience of manipulative appropriation that characterised much of colonial governance throughout this period. Like many other very small islands there was little of value for colonial powers in American Samoa in terms of land or resources, and so the interests of metropolitan powers were strategic rather than economically exploitative ones. This section outlines the events that led to the American annexation of the eastern Samoan islands and argues that throughout this process leaders of both parties recognised and advocated for the mutual benefits of partition. It then examines the negotiation and design of the Deeds of Cession as an artefact of the efforts of American Samoan chiefs to control the terms of cession. This negotiation lay the foundations for the formal and informal mechanisms of governance that characterise the contemporary relationship discussed later in this chapter.

6.2.1 RECOGNITION OF THE MUTUAL BENEFITS OF PARTITION AND CESSION
As Samoan historians have argued, the United States was a reluctant player in colonial conquests in the Pacific, and in the early days of expansion at least, the US government did not expressly intend to annex American Samoa (Gray, 1960). Early American interest in the island of Tutuila instead revolved around the security of American traders, and the protection of existing investments in the islands (Shaffer, 2000). It was these traders and merchants who first recognised the strategic value of Tutuila’s harbour and this soon translated into interest from the United States government. For the Navy in particular, the Pago Pago harbour at Tutuila offered two strategic advantages: it is one of the deepest and most protected in the South Pacific due to the high mountains that surround (see Figure 12), and so offered a secure base for vessels; and it was positioned along the busy Sydney - San Francisco sea routes, and so allowed ships to refuel safely en route (Sunia, 1998).

As Figure 35 shows, during the decade of the 1870’s, a series of agreements with the chiefs of Tutuila granted the United States exclusive rights over the harbour. These rights were initially for both strategic and commercial purposes: to secure the ability to control access to the island and to develop the commercial opportunities of the harbour. The development of a coaling station on the island during this period increased US investment and personnel on the islands. At this time, conflict between Britain and Germany over the control of the copra economy was escalating in the Samoan islands to the west, whilst civil conflict amongst Samoan chiefs in rival districts continued. As these conflicts worsened, the imperative for the United States to protect their citizens in Samoa increased (Hills, 1993).
Figure 35: Timeline of the Negotiation of Partition; Sources: (Morrison, 2013; Sunia, 2009).

- **1839**: Americans begin arriving on Tutuila and expressing interest in the harbour as a site for a coaling station.

- **1872**: United States wins exclusive rights to the Pago Pago harbour in exchange for protection in the mounting civil and international conflict in the region.

- **1878**: Treaty of Friendship and Commerce signed between American Samoa and the United States.

- **1889**: Berlin Convention signed but its implementation and legitimacy is hampered by a significant misinterpretation of the Samoan traditional political system through attempts to assign localised authority to a single 'King' of Samoa. A decade of conflict and civil war follows among the Samoan chiefs aided by colonial powers.

- **1899**: Tripartite Convention finally partitions the islands with international legal force.

- **1900**: Instrument of Cession signed for Tutuila and Aunu'u.

- **1904**: Instrument of Cession signed for Manu'a.

- **1905**: Congress finally ratifies the Articles of Cession.

- **1929**: The National Fono of Samoan chiefs is established and holds its first meeting.
Partly due to the escalating conflict, the Samoan political elite of Tutuila were also interested in a formal relationship with the United States for the purposes of both security and strategy. Historically, the islands of Tutuila and Aunu'u were of lower cultural status than Upolu and Savai’i (western Samoa), and were also lower in status to Manu’a, which was understood as the spiritual birthplace of Samoan culture (Meleisea, 1987a). The titles of the chiefs on Tutuila were subordinate to those of the Western Samoan chiefs such as Malietoa (Va’a, 2010), which meant that significant service was to be paid to those titles, particularly in times of war (Meleisea, 1987a). Sandwiched between two more powerful sets of islands, Tutuila was used as a place of exile for political dissidents and ‘troublemakers’ from Western Samoa (Gray, 1960). For their part, the paramount chiefs of Manu’a paid little attention to their closest neighbouring island of Tutuila (Va’a, 2010). So, the chiefs of the Tutuila were looking for protection not just from foreign forces but also as a release from the servitude of the trans-island chiefly hierarchy, and were strategising a subsequent (de-facto) elevation in status with respect to the chiefs of Manu’a (Armstrong, 2009).

The escalating tensions between both the Samoan chiefs, and between the three foreign powers came to a head in 1889 when a severe hurricane sank all but one of the foreign ships that were amassed in Apia harbour and which were preparing for war (Shaffer, 2000). Domestic outrage in both Europe and America at the loss of life in a seemingly obscure conflict in the South Seas became the impetus for the 1889 Tripartite Convention, which allowed for the Samoan islands to be governed jointly by the three nations of Germany, Great Britain and the United States of America (Sunia, 2009). This agreement gave local governing authority to a ‘king’, and appointed Paramount Chief Malietoa Laupepa from Upolu to the position. As many historians (e.g. Meleisea, 1987b) have argued however, this arrangement of centralised, singular authority was foreign to the traditional Samoan power structure and resulted in prolonged conflict, and at times outright civil war amongst Samoan districts over the next decade. As Sunia (2009 pg 110) points out, the mistake on the part of the colonial governors can be understood as a lack of understanding about the spatial organisation of authority on the islands, in that

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18 Otherwise known as the Berlin Agreement of 1889, however name of the convention is used here as a way to minimize confusion with the later Berlin Agreement of 1899.
“Samoans would never render services or obey rules of a king who was a paramount chief of another district”. Chapter 8 discusses further this importance of spatial organisation and scale in authority in American Samoa.

By 1899 both the Samoan population and the foreign governors were exhausted after 10 years of rivalry among chiefs and districts. The three colonial powers decided that if the kingship was abolished, and the islands divided then there would be little to fight over, and the chiefs agreed. Thus, in December, the Berlin Treaty of 1899 was signed by the three powers in Washington to immediately partition the Samoan islands and assign control of Upolu and Savai’i to Germany; and Tutuila, Aunu’u and the Manu’a islands to the United States. Great Britain agreed to cede interest in the islands in exchange for facilitation of ambitions in Tonga, the Solomons and in West Africa (Sunia, 2009).

In April of following year, the Chiefs of Tutuila presented a document to Commander Tilly of the U.S. Navy that ceded control of the Islands (excluding Manu’a) to the United States government. These Articles of Cession have come to be critical in mediating the evolution of power relations between the territory and the United States.

6.2.2 THE MAKING OF A ‘TREATY’
Unlike the Berlin Agreement of 1899, which signalled annexation and was negotiated from the perspective of the foreign powers, the Articles of Cession\(^\text{19}\) is a legal document that is written from the perspective of the chiefs of the islands and is signed by every high chief of Tutuila and Aunu’u. Figure 36 shows the articles on display in the Archives Office in American Samoa.

\(^{19}\) Variously known as the Instruments of Cession and the Deeds of Cession
It aims to set out the conditions of cession; in brief it proclaims five key points:

1. That the islands, waters and sovereign rights of Tutuila and Aunu’u be ceded to the United States Government
2. That the United States will respect and protect the individual rights, and rights to land of the people dwelling on the island
3. That the chiefs retain control of separate towns, provided that control is in accordance with US law, and does not obstruct the peace and advancement of civilisation of the people
4. That the new government investigate and settle claims to land and title claims
5. That the chief as representatives of the people and heirs of Samoan custom obey and owe allegiance to the government of the United States of America

Due to reluctance on the part of paramount chief Tuimanu’a of Manu’a, a similar deed was not signed with those islands until 1904, when the people were “content and satisfied with the justice, fairness, and wisdom of the government as hitherto administered by the
several Commandants of the United States Naval Station, Tutuila, and the officials appointed to act with the Commandant” (*Cession of Manu’a Islands 1904*). The deeds were received and stamped by the United States Navy administration at the time, and as Shaffer (2000) argues, were taken seriously by the early naval administrations. However, the United States Congress did not ratify them until 1929, after considerable pressure from the American Samoan Mau.20

The chiefs, in initiating the terms of the cession, understood that with the partition, a new state would be established and this presented an opportunity, certainly to dictate some terms, but more importantly to protect their control of lands and titles, which was the source of their own legitimacy (Chapter 8 discusses further). For their part, the United States needed a locally condoned cession for two reasons. First, being ideologically opposed to colonialism, the American government could not move into the islands without some form of indigenous consent. Tied up in this position was undoubtedly a perceived obligation to conserve the Samoan cultural system (*Laughlin*, 1982). Second, the navy needed local legitimacy and support from the chiefs for practical reasons; the navy personnel were small and they needed an administration and people to run it. So with the support of the traditional leadership the navy was able to hire an emerging bureaucracy of “prison guards, radio operators, yeomen, hospital-men, cooks, fire fighters, chauffeurs, butchers, mess cooks, truck drivers, stewards, orderlies, enginemen, and boat crews” as well as the highly coveted positions in the *fitafita* – the administration’s Samoan national guard (*Huebner*, 1989 pg 165). These initial structural decisions served to intertwine the local population with the emerging state and the deeds of cession were instrumental in legitimating that process.

As will be explored throughout this chapter, over 100 years later, this agreement between the high chiefs and the United States continues to be of fundamental importance to the people of American Samoa, and structures much of the way they approach and understand the relationship with the United States. Most of the American Samoans

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20 The Samoan Mau (opposition) were a progressive political force operating in both Samoa and American Samoa during the early 1900’s. In Western Samoa the mau sought *Samoa mo Samoa* (Samoa for Samoans) and their (mostly) non-violent struggles eventually led to their independence from New Zealand in 1962. The American Samoan mau took a different position, wanting a closer connection to the US and are not considered as the equivalent of the ‘oppositional’ force of the Samoan Mau.
interviewed in this research used the term ‘treaty’ of cession rather than articles and deeds, and were clear about the importance of a treaty in holding the United States accountable for their promises of both protection, and control of land and resources. This is evident in quotes such as the following:

> In 1900 our forefathers signed a treaty of cession with the United States. In the treaty of cession there are protections. Protect our land, our culture and our Samoan way of life. That is in the treaty, ok? To protect our lands, our seas and our customs and traditions. (Interview 29; Traditional Leader)

However, as Michal (1992) argues, the deeds of cession are not strictly ‘a treaty’ in the legal sense that they are binding under international law, and the United States government has never considered them as such. As of 2016 the Articles are not recognised by the United States as part of their list of Treaties in force (Department of State, 2016). This discrepancy between legal sovereignty and the obligations of a meaningful but informal ‘treaty’ have consequences for the way governance institutions emerged and continue to function. These are explored in the context of the transition to relative self-governance in the following section.

### 6.2.3 Summary

The political relationship between the United States and the eastern Samoan islands did not begin in a way that is typical of colonial relationships. The United States Navy certainly saw value in the islands from a security and commercial perspective, however those same values were also realised by the Samoan political elite. The high chiefs of the time saw benefits in the security provided by the large metropolitan power in light of the turbulence of both international and domestic conflict of the mid 1800's. They also saw the potential to elevate their status within the trans-Samoan chiefly system and the opportunity to embed their authority within the institutions of a more hands-off colonial power. While the power differential in this initial relationship was clearly stacked in favour of the United States, the Samoan elite were by no means passive players in a one-sided annexation. The Articles of Cession represent a clear, careful and strategic effort to protect the aspects of governance that the chiefs were not willing to cede; control over land, and the preservation of the Samoan culture and way of life. The following section outlines the ways in which these terms were negotiated and embedded into the emerging institutions of the territorial political system.
6.3 The Road to Relative Self-Governance

During the first two decades of the new US administration, the matai and the US naval authorities continued to have relatively cooperative relations, supported by the good relationships between the high matai and the first governors (Shaffer, 2000). Throughout the 1930’s however, many of the chiefs, particularly those in the Eastern districts, began requesting increased autonomy. Specifically, the chiefs petitioned the United States for a local legislature and an increased say in the promulgation of laws that affected the territory. These requests were acknowledged but not given serious consideration, particularly during the years of the Second World War (Sunia, 1998).

The post war period saw significant change for the territory as it came to terms with the reduction in investment and spending created by the departure of US troops and the end of war-time economy. As Shaffer (2000) argues, the United States, having emerged from the war in possession of huge tracts of Pacific territory, had cause to rethink the value of naval administration, which was beginning to be seen as an anachronistic way of administering a territory. Thus, the topic of how to transition to a self-governing territory became the key political issue in American Samoa during the post war period. This section analyses the key moments of this process (summarised in Figure 38) and shows the way in which negotiations on authority have led to complex, hybrid institutions of governance and a unique status for the territory.

6.3.1 From Naval Rule to Increased Self-Governance

In Fofō I. F. Sunia’s (1998) remarkably comprehensive book *The Story of the Legislature of American Samoa*, he chronicles the transition process from naval rule to increased self-governance, and argues that this process was achieved by way of exceptional diplomatic skill in negotiation on the part of the high chiefs of the time. After a number of years of discussion with a sympathetic governor, the legislature of American Samoa (the national Fono) was formed in 1948, with the full support of the Governor of the time (Vernon Huber). While it did not yet have the power to enact laws (its role was advisory only), the institutional design of restricting upper-house membership to high chiefs (discussed further in Chapter 7 and 8) proved to be a means for further steps towards self-governance into the future. Shortly after the establishment of this first Fono, the administration of the territory was handed from the Navy to the Department of the
Interior, which is the United States federal department responsible for the administration of Native American, Hawaiian and Alaskan lands and resources.

The chiefs in the newly established Fono saw this as an opportunity to develop a more interactive relationship with the United States government, and to eventually push for greater autonomy (Shaffer, 2000). Figure 37 is an excerpt taken from the program of ceremonies on the day of the official handover, in which the Fono formally welcomed the secretary of the Department of Interior’s arrival.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement by the Fono in the program of the ceremony to mark the transfer of administrative power from the navy to the Department of the Interior.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By the means of the ceremonies set forth in the pages of this program, The Fono, on behalf of the people of American Samoa, which is to place in the record of history the significance of the termination of 51 years of naval administration. Mutual respect, understanding and cooperation has been the keynote of our long relationship. Our appreciation for the guidance and leadership of the Navy in helping American Samoa to move forward is deep-seated and everlasting. Turning its head to the past, Samoa is sorrowful to bid farewell to a good and loyal friend, the Navy. At the same time, turning its head toward the future, Samoa bids welcome to the new administration under the Department of Interior; and offers loyalty, cooperation, and obedience with bright hopes for the future. May God grant strength, wisdom, and success to the new administration in its endeavors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fono, July 1st, 1951</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the wording indicates, the traditional leaders were diplomatic in their language and careful to acknowledge the hierarchy of continued US sovereignty in governing power. This conciliatory style was received well by the incoming Department, and it aided their negotiations on the second step to self-governance (a key concern for the chiefs) which entailed embedding the principles of the terms of cession into a local constitution and developing a Samoan led territorial government (Gray, 1960).

In this context, the relationship between the territorial government and the United States began as the territory started to move towards self-government in the middle of last century. Writing of the period from post-World War II to the early 1970’s, Sunia (1983)
argues that American Samoa saw a near complete transformation from an indirectly ruled territorial naval base to a self-ruling entity, and that this process had occurred with very little planning “but with a great deal of playing it by ear”. This period saw continued cooperative relations between the matai and the United States government, but was characterised by an increasing (albeit soft) push for greater autonomy. Importantly though, as Figure 37 shows, the drive to establish a constitution for the territory came from both the United States, by way of constitutional committees, and the territory’s traditional leadership.

The constitution, which was first drafted in 1960 and amended in 1966, is still considered a huge success by most American Samoans (Sunia, 1998). In particular, it is considered a prime example of the ability of the territory’s leadership to enact fruitful compromise in the negotiation of governing power with the United States. As Olson (2002 pg 388) argues, “the territorial constitution offered them (American Samoans) the protections they desired, in the terms they wanted, and in a way that made any subsequent changes difficult to enact”.

The key issue in the design of the constitution was the way in which it is adapted to take account of the particularities of Samoan culture, especially the issue of land use and ownership (Laughlin, 1980). The following section describes this unique governance arrangement and explains the way in which the complexities of the constitution have allowed American Samoa to tailor governance practices and processes to local circumstance, and to continue to protect the fine balance of mutual benefits in the dual governance arrangement.
Figure 38: Key moments in the road to self-governance

- **1948**: Governor Huber agrees to the formation of a local legislature to advise on but not enact law.
- **1951**: Closure of the US Naval Base, transfer of control from Navy to the Department of the Interior.
- **1954**: Constitutional committee begins the process of preparing the Territory’s first constitution.
- **1960**: The adoption of the Constitution of American Samoa – the first territorial flag is raised on Flag Day.
- **1966–67**: A constitutional convention drafts amendments to the Constitution, a plebiscite approves them and the Constitution is approved by the Secretary.
- **1961**: A study mission finds that the majority of Samoans want citizenship but are worried that they will lose control over their land.
- **1970**: First Political Status Study Commission report recommends that the territory remain unorganized and unincorporated.
- **1979**: Second Future Political Status Commission also recommends that status remain unchanged.
- **1981**: Fōlō Ioisefa Fiti Sunia, the first Delegate to the US House of Rep’s, takes office.
- **1984**: US congress signs a bill that requires congressional approval for any changes made to the American Samoa Constitution.

**1960s–70s**: Significant investment in development under the Kennedy administration.

**1930**

- **1933–37**: The Eastern district matasai petition the Governor for a Samoan legislature.
- **1948**: After being made aware of the potential adverse affects of an Organic Act on the land and titles system, more than 90 chiefs petition Congress to table any legislation on the matter for 10 years.
- **1976**: General election for the legislature.
- **1977**: First election of governor and lieutenant governor.
- **1984**: The American Samoa Constitutional convention requests the Congress not pursue any further investigations into organic acts without the permission of the territory.
6.3.2 A Unique Arrangement

As Chapter 4 discusses briefly, American Samoa is designated as an unincorporated and unorganised territory of the United States. The reasons for this unique status are fundamentally linked to both the territorial and United States constitutions, as well as to the principles laid out in the Treaty of Cession. During the lead-up to the drafting of the constitution in the 1960’s it became clear that in order to uphold the promise of protection of chiefly control of land and titles the constitution needed to contain some quite extraordinary diversions from American legal principles. Most notable are the sections of the constitution that relate to land ownership, known as the policy protective legislation. Figure 39 outlines the current wording of this article in the American Samoan Constitution, which stipulates against the alienation of land by restricting ownership of land to persons of Samoan ancestry.

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**Section 3. Policy protective legislation**

It shall be the policy of the Government of American Samoa to protect persons of Samoan ancestry against the alienation of their lands and the destruction of the Samoan way of life and language, contrary to their bests interests. Such legislation as may be necessary may be enacted to protect the lands, customs, culture, and traditional Samoan family organisation of persons of Samoan ancestry, and to encourage business enterprises by such persons. No change in the law respecting the alienation or transfer of land or any interest therein shall be effective unless the same be approved by two successive legislatures by a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of each house and by the Governor.

American Samoa Constitution Article 1 § 3

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While the United States Office of the Interior recognised that some legal diversions were necessary in the context of the principles of the deeds of cession (Sunia, 1998), this law conflicted significantly with some foundational legal principles of the American constitution, in particular the preference for free alienation and the right to buy and own property regardless of race (Laughlin, 1980). In fact, the overtly racial clarification in the
property protection article directly contravenes the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States constitution. It was clear to the drafters of the territorial constitution on both sides that this diversion was a major one that needed to be locally articulated and codified in order to minimise legal conflict (Morrison, 2013). In doing so, the United States granted American Samoa the right to develop their own constitution in part as a way of offshoring the potential legal conflict that was embedded in the promises of the treaty and the processes of direct sovereign governance.

While the creation of a divergent territorial constitution helped the United States decouple its legal responsibilities, the two constitutions created significant complexities in terms of citizenship. In order to prevent the United States constitution from overriding the conflicting territorial laws, American Samoa was designated ‘unincorporated’ in that the US constitution applies only partially and as such the islands are not integrated into the Federal state system. This meant that an Organic Act21 has never been applied to the territory, and so it is also considered ‘unorganised’ in that local administration is under the control of the US Department of Interior, rather than being governed by a local government or similarly functional municipality. This is a unique arrangement; the United States has five inhabited unincorporated territories (Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands), but American Samoa is the only one that is also considered ‘unorganised’. With this arrangement comes the stipulation that if the constitution does not extend to the islands then neither can full citizenship. This condition means that American Samoans are nationals, not citizens of the United States, meaning they have most of the rights afforded by the constitution (e.g. the right to live and work in the United States and be protected by the law), but cannot vote in federal elections.

There have been a number of popular media articles lamenting the lack of fairness and equity in the citizenship arrangements for American Samoa (See for example Ponsa, 2016). However, it is important to understand that this is something that the American

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21 An Organic Act is an Act of the United States Congress that confers powers of government onto a territory of the United States. The word ‘organic’ implies that the law ‘organises’ the political structure of the territory under federal law by establishing a civil government. Individual Acts are usually very detailed about the form and function of government institutions. An Organic Act like those of Hawaii, the Virgin Islands and Alaska also allows the federal government sovereign power to create, appeal or amend local laws.
Samoan polity (not just the political elite) have chosen repeatedly over many decades of deliberation. The following section outlines the various ways that American Samoans have deliberated this unique status, and the ways in which the United States administration has engaged in that process.

6.3.3 Deliberating Status and Citizenship
Debate over the terms of status and rights to citizenship has emerged many times over the last 50 years, and changes both slight and significant have been proposed by both the United States and the American Samoan polity. Over this period, the United States administration has wavered between a lack of interest and active paternalism, particularly with respect to the issue of citizenship. During the 1960's and 70's the Department of the Interior was under pressure to allow interior areas choice in their citizenship arrangements and so set up a number of Political Status Study Commissions (See Figure 38). Analysis of the reports of these commissions shows the difference in views of the representatives of the DOI and leadership and polity of American Samoa.

In 1961, a Study Mission led by two ‘pacific’ US senators from Hawaii and Alaska came to American Samoa seeking to answer the question: “What do these 20,000 persons who have been American nationals for 61 years want?” (United States Congress Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs et al., 1961 pg 6). They proposed two options, the wording of which is indicative of their own preferences: 1) to re-join Western Samoa “with its much greater resources, and participate in the new state, which is but a few miles distant and with whose people they are joined by common language, cultural heritage, and intermarriage” or 2) to “be enabled to enter more fully into the American social and economic pattern, the nearest point of which, Hawaii, is some 2,200 miles distant and where the predominant language and culture are alien” (United States Congress Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs et al., 1961 pg 6). The study found that overwhelmingly and across all social groups, American Samoans were wholly uninterested in the former and highly enthusiastic about the latter. This left the study commission with what they saw as a problem in recommending the future form of government for the territory:

“Clearly, we do not want to impose forms or ideas we have evolved for ourselves on this gentle, comparatively unsophisticated group of Polynesians against their wishes. Nor do we support an elaborate, complex governmental bureaucracy for
the 20,000 inhabitants of those beautiful, but resource lacking islands in the South Seas” (United States Congress Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs et al., 1961 pg 6)

As part of the delegation process, the Fono met and handed over a series of resolutions for the consideration of the Department of Interior. These resolutions, which were expressed in far more direct language and intention than the report of the committee, asked that the US Congress: confer citizenship; enact an Organic Act; allow the appointment of a representative to Congress; establish a small business agency; and deliver more aid to the territory for development purposes, including a requested one off increase of $25 million (United States Congress Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs et al., 1961 pg 12). On most of these issues the visiting senators agreed, however on the issue of citizenship they noted that, while most people appeared to want citizenship, there were ongoing concerns among the polity about the effect that may have on land and title issues. Importantly, for reasons discussed above, many people believed that an Organic Act would override the careful negotiations of benefits and protections outlined in the constitution. In light of this, the report recommended another series of studies be conducted on this “most complex of legal issues” (United States Congress Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs et al., 1961 pg 10).

Two subsequent American Samoan Commissions in 1970 and 1979 concluded that the risks to Samoan cultural identity overshadowed the benefits of becoming more integrated through citizenship (Michal, 1992). Instead, the local leadership of American Samoa again proposed a hybrid solution: to remain an unincorporated territory but to further institutionalise a self-governing state by way of the local election of a Samoan governor. As Figure 38 shows, this move was at various points promoted by both the traditional leadership and the United States government. The people of American Samoa, however, were extremely cautious about this proposal, and in 3 referendums during this period they chose to keep the United States appointed Governor. Sunia (2009) argues that this was because most American Samoans were sceptical of the ability of a Samoan official to fulfil the duties of the position, were nervous about the possibilities of corruption, and were concerned that a local politician would not have the connections needed to lobby for the territory’s interest and garner capital for development nearly as effectively as some of the highly-connected US governors. As in so many points of the
territory’s political history, the polity showed a pragmatic concern for the effects of change on the carefully negotiated benefits of their political status.

By 1976, an island wide economic crisis, combined with dissatisfaction with the performance of recent appointed governors finally changed the peoples’ minds, and a compromise was reached. It was decided that an American Samoan governor would be appointed by way of a general election, but that ties to the US would be maintained by way of the appointment of a Samoan “Delegate at Large” or non-voting member of US Congress to represent American Samoan interests in the United States (Bishop, 1977). The polity elected the first Samoan Governor in 1977. The year after, they elected the first ‘Delegate at Large in Washington’, and continue to do so every 2 and four years respectively.

In more recent decades, the people of American Samoa have repeatedly rejected proposed changes to status and citizenship on the grounds that the risks are too great. In 2008 a referendum on proposed changes to the constitution was narrowly defeated, and in 2010 when the Constitutional Convention proposed changes to the current constitution they were overwhelmingly defeated (United Nations General Assembly, 2012). The conservative preferences of many in the general population are reflected in quotes like this that followed a question as to whether the interviewee would support changes to status and citizenship,

“Well there are some good things about it but mostly I wouldn’t go with it. Because once we become citizens, that means the United States constitution extends to its fullest here and that means we are not able to protect our land and we are not able to adapt. Once that happens we can’t stop people from selling land to foreigners. And it will be a problem for the matai system as well, because the matai system is tied in with the land system, so once that goes it’s all over. I mean look at Fiji. We really worry about that.” (Interview 40, Civil Society)

That said, the issue is still debated as demonstrated by a recent (unsuccessful) high profile court case that sought to challenge the territory’s political status on the basis of grievances about the citizenship status of nationals (See Morrison, 2013). For now, there is majority consensus to keep the status quo, however as the debates indicate, many in American Samoa are aware of the fact that, while being politically connected to the United
States brings many benefits, relations of dependency are far from simple. The following section outlines the various views of the interviewees on the consequences of the present political status.

6.3.4 SUMMARY
The process of transition from naval rule to the current status of an ‘unorganised’ and ‘unincorporated’ territory was one of careful negotiation by all parties. The United States government and the emerging territorial government designed institutions and governance mechanisms such as the legislature and the constitution that are complex assemblages of both territorial and metropolitan governance priorities that together balance the terms of the deeds of cession, the principles of the US constitution, and the pragmatics of governing in a territory transitioning to relative self-governance. While the American Samoan people have repeatedly voted to maintain the unique terms of the relationship with the United States this does not mean that the position is unanimous or without contention. The following section outlines the lines of debate that continue to drive consideration of the value of the relationship and the potential for change in status into the future.

6.4 DEBATES ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP
As the previous section argues, while American Samoans have chosen to maintain dependent status this does not indicate a lack of debate on the political relationship with the United States, its implications and its values. As Baldacchino and Milne (2006) argue, this propensity for debate but preference for stability is common among many subnational island jurisdictions, particularly in the Pacific. In fact, between 1967 and 2007, 16 public referenda in island microstates have voted for continued dependence. American Samoans (like Samoans generally) pride themselves on being political people, and debate about all aspects of politics, from principles to institutions to values, is a common part of both public and private discourse. This section outlines the main lines of debate outlined by the interviewees in this study, and points to their implications for understanding governance processes and practices in the territory.

6.4.1 A COLONY OR A SELF-GOVERNING TERRITORY?
As of the time of writing, American Samoa is listed by the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonisation as a colony or non-self-governing territory, one of the remaining 16 in the world (United Nations General Assembly, 2017). This committee is
heavily invested in completing the global project of decolonisation, and along with lobbying ‘colonising powers’, it holds yearly meetings with non-sovereign territories aimed at aiding those places that are planning for independence. These meetings are also used to convince those places that are “stubbornly refusing to budge” (Baldacchino, 2004 pg 79) on the subject of independence that they should. The irony of a large international body aggressively directing a territory on the issue of independence is not lost on most American Samoans, and the position of the committee is unpopular among both the American Samoan leadership and the people. The interviewees who discussed this issue indicated that the term ‘colony’ is an insult to the spirit of the relationship with the US, and more importantly, is a significant misinterpretation of the processes and practices of governing in the territory. One leader who was involved in the decolonisation meetings explained his frustration:

I had to say, “I don’t know where you are getting your ideas from. We were never a colony. The United States is our big brother. We get along well. Leave us alone.” They do that every year... I had to say to them that they need to look at the Deed of Cession of our relationship. They came freely to us and we are free to do what we like. We have our communal land and our matai system and we are self-governing.

(Interview number withheld; Traditional Leader)

When questioned further on the distinction this interviewee and others did note that technically the designation of a colony/coloniser relationship may reflect international legal definitions but as many others interviewee opinions indicate, there is a strong belief among many in the territory that in both principle, and in practice, the term colony is inappropriate.

A number of interviewees pointed out that due to the history of colonialism in other places, the term colony implies at best a lack of agency in the process of annexation, and at worst, a forcible occupation of territory and control over governance, which is far from descriptive of the history of the relationship. As a point of principle then, many argued that the fact that the relationship was mutual should preclude it from the status of a colony. Former Congressman Eni Faleomavaega even made a distinction in this principle between other US territories in his repeatedly stated position that “unlike many American territories, the political relationship between American Samoa and the United States has been mutual since its inception” (Faleomavaega, 2012). Many interviewees
echoed this position, and added that in practice the term non-self-governing is also inappropriate. As these two interviewees argue, the existence of a locally elected Samoan governor, the long history of local decision making on territorial issues such as land and titles, and the continued support for the relationship from the people is indicative of self-governance in practice,

“I’ve never felt like we’ve been treated like a colony. Now we elect our own governor, right? And our people were even worried about that, it took three plebiscites for people to want that to happen.” (Interview 23, Government)

“Again, this relationship goes back to how the navy administered the government. It was well received by the people because they allowed the matais to keep their land and their power in the villages and that’s how this relationship developed. All the way up to now – we know that the Samoan people are the ruling party of this government. And there was no fight in that.” (Interview 22, Government)

Despite these objections, the UN continues to lobby for independence on behalf of a reluctant people, and the American Samoan leadership continue to be required to explain that American Samoa is actively and willingly choosing dependent status. For the UN, the fact that American Samoans cannot vote in US elections is of significant concern and is the primary issue supporting the veracity of the term non-self-governing (United Nations General Assembly, 2012).

In response, many interviewees pointed to the democratic institutions and processes within the territory that are designed to localise democratic decision-making, accountability, and the election process. Figure 40 outlines the electoral systems of the legislative branches of the American Samoan Government, and shows the frequency of elections. As Chapter 4 outlines, the upper house of the legislature is made up of high matais appointed through a traditional process of selection and the lower House of Representatives, aims to mirror that of the American legislative structure. Any American Samoan US national over the age of 25 can be elected to the House of Representatives if they have lived in American Samoa for at least 5 years in total and have been a bona fide resident of the district they are running for at least the 1 year preceding the election (American Samoan Constitution Art II § 3).
The Governor and the Lieutenant Governor serve for four-year terms as heads of the executive, and are voted in as part of general elections combined with the vote for the lower house representatives. As Figure 40 shows participation in the elections is high across a wide range of the electorate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voting behaviour in the 2014 General Election</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16,780 people registered to vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>10,120 people voted on the day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of those:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49% were between 18–34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22% were between 35–49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18% were between 50–64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11% were aged 65+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The gender split of voters was relatively even with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.3% male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.7% female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 40: Voting Behaviour in the 2014 General Election (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014)

In form and function then, these territorial electoral systems mirror many of the key features of the governance institutions of large sovereign liberal democracies. For many of the interviewees this, rather than the right to vote in federal elections, was what underpinned claims to self-governance, and for many, the right to participate in a far-away election seemed trivial in comparison. For example, the following interviewee states:

“See we don’t vote for the American president. For some people that’s a big deal. They say that you are not an American if you don’t vote, but who gives a damn really (laughs). As long as we maintain the level of prosperity and our kids can get an education over there freely, can go into the military and play in their sports. To me, what the United States has to offer is all available to us.” (Interview 38, Government)
The light-hearted indifference of this quote towards federal politics was a feature of many of the conversations about the United States relationship and the issues of sovereignty, as too was the reference to the relative value of other benefits that come with the relationship; namely access to prosperity and development opportunities. The following section outlines the way in which interviewees weighed these relative values, and explains the range of views on the costs and benefits of the relationship in the context of development and economic dependency.

6.4.2 Dependency or Supported Development?
As Chapter 2 outlines, there is significant debate in Pacific Studies about the concept of dependency and the extent to which connections to large sovereign powers produce or ameliorate vulnerability for small non-sovereign islands. The opinions of the interviewees on the value and costs of dependent status reflect the nuance of the debate in the literature, and the issue was discussed to varying extent in almost every interview.

Overall, the interviewees’ views on the relationship with the United States were overwhelmingly positive. Of the 50 interviews, no interviewee expressed an outright negative opinion of the relationship, 29 were expressly positive, 3 were unsure or saw both positive and negative aspects, and 18 interviews did not express a strong opinion on the subject. For the most part, opinions on the value of the relationship were inextricably linked to perspectives on the economic security of the territory’s economy and people, and many interviewees stressed that governance relations between the United States and the territory could not be understood without understanding the economic relationship between the two.

Chapter 7 discusses in more detail how the economy of American Samoa is heavily reliant on the regular and extensive financial support of the United States government, and is representative of the MIRAB political economy characteristics of many small island states in the Pacific (discussed in Chapter 2). Many interviewees saw financial assistance as something to be grateful for and as a source of protection from the vulnerabilities inherent in island geographies and economies:

*We’re partnering with a nation that is the greatest nation in the world, and how lucky are we? We need to take advantage of that.* (Interview 16; Traditional Leader)
The US will protect us if we stay with them and don’t stray from them. (Interview 29; Traditional Leader)

For some, it was precisely this financial protection that underpinned the preference to remain non-sovereign, as outlined by the views of two traditional leaders:

Some people want to be like Western Samoa, you know, independent. No! Western Samoa is ok because it is a big island, there are a lot of lands to plant crops. Look at us – there’s nothing down here, only mountains. What are we going to do? There’s no flat land left. So we have to maintain the treaty of cession with the United States. (Interview 29; Traditional Leader)

Well to be governed by the United States, some people think it is demeaning as a people, that versus the survival of our people – as a leader I would trade off the vote in the United Nations for the survival of our quality of life here on these islands. Because at the end of the day you have food on the table and you’re able to send your kids to school...It is good though that Samoa stands on its own, and that it has a vote in the United Nations. But I tell you they are poorer than we are and I don’t like that. And I think that happens when resources are pulled back through decolonisation...
If the United States pulls away from us right now we are dead. But chances of that happening is – there are two chances – nil and none. (Interview 38, Government)

For others though, the political relationship with the United States and the subsequent economic dependency on American markets does, in some ways, have negative consequences for the capacity of the territory to govern in a self-reliant way. A government interviewee put this view into context:

So, we try to teach people to be more self-reliant but it’s hard. Last year there was a longshoreman strike with the unions (US) on shipping and we went for several months without any containers bringing in food. It was a wake-up call for us, in that we should produce our own produce for local consumption. People have to decide on their destiny, but they also need to learn how to adapt to changes. (Interview 33; Government)

Still other interviewees reflected on the ways in which economic dependency translated to broader issues in terms of capacity to govern into the future.
To me this situation is one of the biggest challenges we face and it is to a fault. We now have literally decades of being taken care of by the federal government and we have developed a consciousness of dependency... For me, the problem is deeper than just the economics of the tuna industry or whatever. For me it’s not a problem of what would happen if the US were to withdraw, because I don’t think that will happen, at least in my lifetime. To me the bigger issue is the consciousness of the people and who we are. Have we gone so far that we no longer have those principles and values of self-governance and sustainability, of really having that mentality of you being responsible for yourself and that every generation needs to do better, of pulling yourself up by your bootstraps and making a go of it? Instead it might just be being born and living easy and settling for mediocrity, and not striving for more. (Interview 27; Civil Society)

We’ve become reliant on outside forces, to the point where we won’t even try to do anything for ourselves. Look I don’t even know if that’s true, it’s just my observation. I think in certain circumstances we do for ourselves and our communities, but it’s like we only do that up to a certain point, and then it’s almost like its ‘ok, I’ve done my part, who’s going to bring the other half?’...I think if this had of been 50 or 60 years ago you wouldn’t have seen such a reliance on the funds, people would have done much more themselves. (Interview 31; Government)

Chapter 7 discusses in detail the way in which dependency on federal funding affects practices and modes of governance. At this stage, what is important to note is that the majority of the interviewees were both grateful and cautious about the economic ties with the United States, but at the same time saw the economic connection as fundamentally necessary in the context of the geographic conditions of limited productive land, few resources and the territory’s remote location.

6.4.3 SUMMARY
The American Samoans interviewed for this research acknowledge that legally their political system is non-self-governing, but are insistent that this has benefits and that in practice the territory’s political system has many of the central tenents of self-governance. They also point out that the relationship itself was a choice, and one that
almost all American Samoans continue to support mainly due to the significant economic benefits that come with the regular financial support from the US administration. As many interviewees acknowledged, this support does not come without costs, but for most the relationship is something to be grateful for; a protective force for a small place with limited resources. The following section explores how these perspectives play out in practice and highlights the ways in which the role and influence of the United States in territory governance shifts according to issue.

6.5 Relative-Self-Governance in Practice
The previous sections of this chapter have highlighted the complexity of the legal arrangements of self-governance and the reasons why the people of American Samoa have repeatedly chosen to keep them that way. This section builds on that analysis and explores the way in those complex arrangements were articulated and practiced during the 2009 tsunami.

6.5.1 Relative Authority in Disaster Management
Despite the explicit reference in the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA)’s mission statement\(^{22}\) to protect ‘citizens’ of the ‘nation’, the mandate of the agency does extend to all territories of the United States, and in many ways, the relationship between FEMA and the American Samoan government is not so different from that of other states and territories in the United States. The agency is charged with providing financial support, technical expertise and other resources in cases of ‘major disasters’ in the United States. While there are many other smaller disaster categories that are usually handled by local authorities, ‘major disasters’ represent the most serious of cases in which the President believes the event ‘has caused damage of such severity that it is beyond the combined capabilities of state and local governments to respond’ (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2017). Importantly then, the trigger for FEMA’s involvement in an emergency or a disaster is not necessarily the extent of the damage caused by the event, but the capacity for local governance institutions to cope with the response and recovery. For small island territories, the ‘combined capabilities of the state and local

\(^{22}\) Which reads as “FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from and mitigate all hazards” (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2017).
governments’ are obviously limited – in the case of American Samoa it is missing an entire layer of that government structure. In this context then, it is the frequency with which FEMA is involved in disasters in American Samoa that sets it apart from relationships with many other states and territories on the mainland of the United States.

There have been 12 major federally declared disasters in American Samoa since 1966 (FEMA, 2016), and this frequency has led to close and consistent ties between FEMA and the territorial government. There are a number of departments in the American Samoan government, such as Homeland Security’s Territorial Emergency Management Coordination Office (TEMCO), and the Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management that are majority funded by FEMA grants and institutional support. As one interviewee stated:

*Even in times with no emergencies we are in constant communication.* (Interview 20, Government)

Communication between American Samoan agencies and FEMA headquarters in Washington D.C. is facilitated through Regional Division 9 which is charged with the management of FEMA activities in Arizona, California, Nevada, Hawaii, and the US Pacific territories, as well as the more than 150 sovereign tribal entities of the United States. The Region 9 headquarters being in Hawaii means that many of the staff have experience with Pacific Island culture and politics, and are able to act as a communication bridge between the on, and off-island agencies. One interviewee explained the links back to other agencies in the United States government:

*So, what happens is that once a disaster is declared, all the other national entities come in and help FEMA, it’s a coordinating agency. So, for instance, you have the Department of Transportation and the Department of Education, and all those agencies provide support, but FEMA is the lead agency.* (Interview 40, Government)

As one interviewee pointed out, the geographical and cultural differences of the American Samoan context mean that this is not an easy task:

*It’s hard for Region 9. So, they come to American Samoa and understand us but then when they have to go and explain that to their headquarters in D.C., now that’s a really big challenge for them! So, they have to convince D.C. it’s different here.* (Interview 40, Government)
In 2009, the Region 9 Hawaii office played a significant role in coordinating and mobilising support from the United States, and as Chapter 4 shows, FEMA personnel and resources were on the island quickly and were highly involved in almost all stages of the response and recovery.

While it is clear from the speed and relative efficiency of response that FEMA and the American Samoan government have close ties and a history of working well together, the question of who is in charge in a disaster is less clear. Figure 41 shows the Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman and Governor Togiola shortly after FEMA’s arrival in American Samoa, and is an intriguing representation of the complexities of relative authority between the two leaders.

![Figure 41: FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Kenneth Tingman and Governor Togiola](image)

In one sense, the scene is symbolically one of partnership; for example, the two flags hang side-by-side and in this photo, like many others from the recovery phase, the leaders are seated next to one another. Indeed, the language of partnership and cooperation was
certainly a central theme of both the FEMA press releases and those from the Governor's office:

*When FEMA got here there was a really close relationship with the governor's office. It was strong.* (Interview 36, Government)

“When we (governor and FEMA representatives) arrived and took a tour around the island, that in itself turned out to be one of the best things that could have happened to the people, because the visibility of the federal government on the ground the day after the disaster was something that brought warmth to people's hearts and confidence that help was here quickly.” (FEMA, 2010 2.07)

Notwithstanding the evident cooperation between the two governments, this photo also shows the different sources of authority that are operating within the partnership. This is perhaps most obviously represented in the symbols worn by the two leaders; Tingman in the highly recognisable American polo with the FEMA seal, Governor Togiola wearing the *ula fala* which represents the traditional authority of high and talking chiefs discussed in Chapter 4.

From a legal perspective, the relative authority of FEMA and the territorial government is reflective of the arrangements between the agencies and the states and territories in mainland United States. FEMA is given the authority\(^{23}\) to assist and coordinate federal government responses to disasters, but it does not have the authority to override state or local decision making. As Tingman succinctly stated,

*As we say in our business, every disaster is local and we are only here to support you.*

(Samoa News, Oct 1st, pg 13).

Partly, as one interviewee explained, this is a matter of pragmatism on the part of FEMA, and the product of a desire to achieve outcomes for effective disaster management;

*FEMA lands with a common sense, objectives driven agenda to get things done. And part of that is not to end up arguing with the locals. So, they know, they know their*

\[^{23}\text{By way of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 100-70 (1988)}\]
mission and they know that getting along will get twice as much done as not getting along. (Interview 21, Government)

This ‘local’ mandate is reminiscent of the role of the United States in American Samoan governance as prescribed in the constitution and the terms of the treaty; an impartial protector that facilitates aid but does not control local decision-making. Indeed, in discussing the United States response to the tsunami, the director of Homeland Security equated the positions of FEMA and the DOI, and equally stressed that decision making authority was in the hands of the Governor:

We continue to work with Governor Tulafono to support the priorities he has identified in the response as American Samoa progresses. Through the Federal Coordinating Officer, Kenneth Tingman, we are working closely with local leadership as well as our federal partners and non-profits, to meet the needs of survivors and begin the recovery. (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2012)

When asked which agency or government was in charge during the 2009 response and recovery, many interviewees who had worked with FEMA described relative authority in similar terms to those expressed above. For example, these two interviewees explained that authority between the on and off-island authorities reflects the way in which the relationship operates more broadly.

What FEMA really tries to avoid every time they come down, is trying to be forceful. They are not here to force their law, or what they normally do. They are here to assist the local government. If the local government tells them, ‘we need this and this.’ it is FEMA’s job to get it.

So it’s the local government that is in charge? (Yes) Ok so before I came over here I assumed that FEMA had the authority once the president had declared a disaster.

No, they do not have the authority, they are just there to assist and to make sure that American Samoa gets the things they are asking for. (Interview 40, Government)

We were in charge. When any federal government partners come on ground the local government is always in charge. They are a support role. So we tell them we need
this, that and that. And within a day and a half we had FedEx landing with all these medical supplies. (Interview 4, Government)

These perspectives suggest clear lines of authority, however other interviewees indicated that relative authority on decision making was more complicated in practice. As a key figure in the Governor’s office explained, there are differences in authority depending on what resources and personnel are in question:

“The Federal government is still in charge of all their folks and their resources and equipment. The Governors Authorised Representative or the governor becomes partners with them but FEMA still takes responsibility of the Federal component. Then the federal person on ground partners with the GAR to negotiate the share of responsibility and the procedures. But in the end the governor makes the final decision and then FEMA makes all the options and resources available to that decision. Of course, there are administrative decisions on what resources FEMA can provide. The governor makes decisions then on what priorities should be addressed first.” (Interview 35, Government)

Similarly, in what is perhaps the closest and most high-level account of inter-agency relations among the interviewees, the Governor's Authorised Representative at the time of the tsunami, revealed some of the detail of decision-making practices and processes between the two:

So, when they come down here they pretty much just ask me where things are and some statistics and I pretty much let them... well I don’t let them... they take over the management of things, you know, the distribution of equipment and things. Well first of all, it’s their stuff you know? (laughs) But we help out to suggest, this should go here and this there.

So who has ultimate authority there, is that you or FEMA?

Well basically FEMA has the authority over the distribution of funds but I have the authority to designate locally where those funds and equipment should go. And they have professionals that go and check on that. (Interview number withheld, Government)
These quotes point to nuance in the *de-jure* and *de-facto* authority of FEMA to steer decision making in the territory, and as other interviewees explained, this discrepancy is linked to issues of financial capacity and technical expertise. First, as Chapter 5 discusses, the early stages of the disasters’ response were chaotic, and interviewees indicated that in those phases authority was deferred to FEMA due to their experience and perceived increased capacity to manage the situation. As one interviewee explained:

*The leadership was just in shock. And it was the federal coordinating officer, Ken Tingman that picked it up and guided the governor in making decisions in that state of shock...so Tingman was the lead person who guided the decisions, but the governor was in charge in the end.* (Interview 22, Government)

Capacity to respond in disaster situations is obviously tied to experience and expertise but also strongly to financial capital. Chapter 6 explores further the ways in which the provision of capital, through grants and one-off transfers such as disaster support, serve to structure modes of governance as well as to further complicate these already multifaceted assemblages of *de-jure* and *de-facto* authority between the federal and territorial governments.

The view of most interviewees was that in times of disaster, and through the interventions of federal agencies (most especially FEMA), the United States was fulfilling its obligations under the terms of the Deeds of Cession. For many, the nature of that obligation is akin to family in the relative roles and responsibilities between the two:

*I love to have them as our big brother, big sister because they keep us in order when things go wrong. They let us know when we have to step it up here and there.* (Interview 6; Government)

*So we’re like a little nephew out there in the middle of nowhere, and it has been that way ever since 1900. We might be an annoying little nephew sometimes but you have to help your family (laughs)* (Interview 38; Traditional Leader)

That said, significant gratitude was expressed both privately by interviewees, and publicly by the islands’ leaders during the disaster and since. For example, Congressman Eni Faleomavaega thanked the US in Congress a week after the disaster, stating:
"I want to express my appreciation to President Obama and FEMA administrator Craig Fugate for their quick action in providing American Samoa with the full support of the U.S. federal government in response to the tsunami that has devastated our U.S. territory. As fellow Americans, we appreciate that President Obama personally called to convey his condolences to our people and we thank him for his leadership and support." (October 8th, 2009)

Here, in the language of ‘fellow Americans’ and ‘our U.S. territory’ the desire among the American Samoan leadership to maintain and strengthen the U.S. relationship during times of disaster is clear. The following section takes the example of ocean zoning as a different instance in which the United States became involved in territorial politics, and helps explain whether the two governments exhibit similar modes of governance and power relations under different circumstances.

6.5.2 SUMMARY
The joint government management of the 2009 disaster shows the fine and shifting balance of mutual interests and complex de-jure and de-facto governance arrangements as political actors navigate formal and informal authority in the governance of the aftermath of the disaster. This analysis has shown that while FEMA formally acknowledges the decision-making authority of the territorial government, informally the territory's government and polity defer heavily to the agency, partly in recognition of the need for the technical and financial support of the United States. That said there was little controversy around these arrangements; for most interviewees, the United States was fulfilling its obligations to protect the people of American Samoa, and so had rights to dictate the modes of that support. The direct and indirect support of the United States remains crucial to American Samoan leaders and people; Chapter 7 further explores the ways in which this support has structured the modes and mechanisms of governance between the state, civil society and the private sector within the territory.

6.6 CONCLUSIONS
This chapter has explored the relationship between the United States and territorial governments and has shown that governance practices and processes at an extra-territorial scale are the result of a long history of negotiation between these two key
actors. To return to the aim and key research questions of this thesis the analysis presented here provides some key points of difference between governance in American Samoa and the key claims of the Anglo-European governance literature (a discussion that will be drawn out in more detail in the final chapter of the thesis).

First in terms of the types of actors and institutions (research question 1) it is clear that American Samoa is a different type of state to those most often discussed in the governance literature; the government has never been sovereign and it has been subject to indirect rule across territorial boundaries for over 117 years. While the transition to self-governance saw the development of localised governance institutions like the legislature and the constitution, these are also quite different to large liberal democratic institutions in the way in which they are structured to share authority across territorial boundaries. The partial and blended nature of these institutions however, is not seen by most as diminishing of the territorial government’s capacity to govern. Rather, the liminal space that it affords is seen as an advantage in maintaining control over key collective resources such as land and culture.

In terms of research question 2, the practices and processes of relative authority between the two actors also present some interesting comparisons with the literature on Anglo-European governance. It is clear that governance at this scale is not simply practiced by way of legal mechanisms of control but is often negotiated and enacted through more informal means such as agreements and deals. The ‘treaty’ of the deeds of cession is a non-binding agreement without legal basis, however it serves to construct, if not completely dictate, much of the governance relations between the United States and American Samoa. This also points to the importance of recognising that the history of relations between key actors is embedded in current day governance institutions and practices. The Deeds of Cession, far from being a mere historical artefact, continue to be a pivotal point of negotiation in governance, and different actors evoke its principles for diverse, and often contradictory purposes.

So then, with respect to modes of governance (research question 3) these interactions could be said to produce a different kind of hierarchy in American Samoa; one that is certainly formally articulated in the legal institutions of governance, but also one that in practice does not conform to the characterisation of top down flows of power and
command and control mechanisms of rule. As the debate about networks verses hierarchy is usually centred on domestic state relations however, this question is best discussed at that scale, which is the subject of the following chapter.
CHAPTER 7: STATE-PRIVATE SECTOR-CIVIL SOCIETY RELATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As the previous chapter has shown, a long history of cooperative relations with the United States has underpinned the development of a territorial state that is mostly self-governing in practice, despite its dependent political status. This chapter aims to outline the role and function of the state in American Samoa and to compare that to the sectors that are said by the mainstream governance literature to be rising in importance, namely NGO dominated civil society, and the private sector. As Chapter 4 illustrates though, these are not the only actors in the governance of American Samoa, and so the analysis of this chapter also turns to the role and function of the churches and traditional authorities in governance. In addition, with research questions 2 and 3 in mind, the chapter aims to investigate the connections between these institutions to show how interactions are practiced to produce different patterns of relative authority and the modes of governance these interactions produce at the ‘national’ level in the territory.

To do this the chapter begins with an analysis of the form of government as an institution and the way in which its size (underpinned by the support of the United States) influences the state’s power to govern relative to the small and dependent private sector in the islands. The chapter then turns to the civil sector to explore the role and function of the small group of secular organisations compared to the large and powerful faith-based sector. Finally, the chapter outlines the way in which traditional authority is embedded in the practices and processes of governance within the state and the challenges and opportunities that this presents for the governance of collective issues in American Samoa.

7.2 BIG GOVERNMENT IN A SMALL PLACE

As Chapter 2 outlined, many Pacific Island governments are underpinned by institutional and financial connections to larger metropolitan powers. These connections structure particular political economies in those places that differ quite considerably from those of continental liberal democracies. This section explores the effect that the dependent relationship with the United States has on the form and function of the state in American Samoa, and argues that the financial support from the US has led to a large and powerful government in the territory. It then discusses how this has led to a particular political
economy in which the private sector’s role in governance is constrained by the size and capacity of the state. Finally, the section shows that this does not mean private actors have no role in governance, but rather that authority to lead on issues of collective importance is significantly skewed towards the state. The analysis of this section also explores the particulars of the relationship in the context of public-private interaction during the governance of the tsunami response and recovery.

7.2.1 American Samoa’s ‘Biggest Family’

The characterisation of the American Samoan Government as ‘the biggest family on the island’ was made by an American Samoan NGO interviewee, who pointed out that the size of the government relative to the population is an important part of why it is so influential in island governance. As this interviewee explained:

*Government is bigger than the matai system. They are linked together but I can tell you that the matai system - the matai's they each have their own families but no family is bigger than the government.* (Interview number withheld; Civil Society)

In terms of the number of people the state employs, and the number of institutions it supports, this is certainly the case: there are 46 government agencies to serve an island with a population of 57,000 people, in total employing over 7,200 people, or around 37% of the territory’s workforce (Figure 42). In addition, over 350 soldiers are employed in the American Samoan Army Reserve, which boasts the highest rate of military enlistment of any US state or territory.
While this percentage of state employment would be extraordinary in large places\textsuperscript{24}, it is quite typical of MIRAB economies (discussed in Chapter 2), in which relatively large bureaucracies are economically sustained by larger metropolitan states. In the case of American Samoa this monetary support is far from trivial; in 2014 the financial transfers from the United States Department of Interior to the territorial government amounted to between 60 to 70\% of the territory government’s US$279.9 million revenue (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014). In addition to the regular operational budget for the American Samoan government, various US government departments also support one off projects and programs in key areas such as health, transport and education, and this has contributed significantly to both the development of the islands, and the capacity of the territorial government to steer governance for collective goals.

\textsuperscript{24} The US by comparison employs around 14\% of the labour force across local, state and federal government agencies Department of Commerce Statistical Division (2014).
Significantly for this study, much of the program specific support for the American Samoan Government has also come in the form of relief and aid after disasters. Many of the interviewees discussed the role of the United States in supporting the territory during disasters, and some of them pointed to the direct relationship this has with development, as in this exchange:

So from what you’re saying it seems like disasters have done a lot for development here

Well you say that as an observation but actually it’s a running joke here. When its financially hard here people say ‘damn I wish we had a hurricane’, I mean that’s horrible to say, but people say it a lot. But it’s true it does get a big infusion of money into the territory. (Interview 27, Civil Society)

The support also helps to incrementally build state institutions over time, as many programs and projects manage to secure repeat funding and resources after they have been established. As one interviewee pointed out, this gradual expansion also happens within departments of the bureaucracy:

We went from an office of 7 people total, to an office of 30 people, the tsunami was so huge that we had to bring in that many people. Now we are slowly downsizing, we haven’t hired as people left. We have about 24 now. (Interview number withheld, Government)

Managing these infusions of money is a large part of the work of government, and over time this has led to particularly hierarchical and centralized modes of governance within the state.

Like all families in American Samoa, the structure of the government is exceptionally hierarchical, and decision-making power resides primarily with the top of that hierarchy, with the Office of the Governor. Article IV of the American Samoa Constitution indicates the extraordinary extent of the powers and duties of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor. These include the power to: control the means of violence including the military; enact regulation; create policy and procedure for all executive departments; if not create law, then grant pardons and reprieves; and hire and fire officials within the executive and the district and county governments. As the following interviewees pointed
out, these powers translate to highly centralized decision-making power in terms of the bureaucracy as a whole:

*Well the governor office is the department – everybody works under the governor’s office direction. Different departments and organisations might bring in resources, personnel and tools but all the instruction comes from here about where that gets deployed to and how. This is where all those decisions are made.* (Interview 35, Government)

*Right now, everything, I mean everything is under the governor’s control and it’s as frustrating as can be. It’s micromanaged with a 100-mile screwdriver.* (Interview number withheld; Traditional Leader)

*They micromanage everything... I feel for my director, because they are just puppets. Because remember they are picked by the governor, so they are just yes men and yes women.* (Interview number withheld; Government)

Among the 46 agencies, a few, such as the American Samoa Power Authority and the communications agencies are designated as semi-autonomous, meaning they have more control over departmental policy and decision making on expenditure. However as one interviewee pointed out this autonomy is more evident in principle than in practice:

*We still listen to the governor. We have our own human resources and pay systems but really the board and the CEO follow what the governor says.* (Interview number withheld; Government)

So, within the executive and across the extensive bureaucracy, the structure of the state is both hierarchical and centralised, and is underpinned by extensive legal provisions to govern.

The power of the territorial government to govern is not simply a matter of financial capacity and legal mandate, it is also partly enabled by the legitimacy it is afforded by the American Samoan people, and in many ways, this continued legitimacy can be explained by the proximity of the government to people’s lives. Unlike many large continental states, every person in American Samoa knows someone who works for government in some capacity, and most families rely on the income of the regular, secure wages of bureaucratic employment. As Chapter 7 will outline further, government activities are also a regular part of daily life on the island. For example, Figure 43 shows a government
information day in which families are invited for games, music and food. Government
departments also have sporting tournaments and regular activities that involve
employees’ families, such as the regular fautasi boat training and racing shown in Figure
44.

Figure 43: Family Fun Day, American Samoa 2015
The extent of the government apparatus and its entanglement in people’s lives elicited mixed responses from those interviewees who discussed the subject. From one point of view, the size and proximity of the government apparatus gives it a significant amount of power over American Samoan society, which as this interviewee argued was a reason for concern:

*If you challenge the government or you challenge a person that is connected to the governor then you better be ready for the government not to help you in the future. Cause I’m telling you, government here is a big, big force.* (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

For most interviewees though the large government was understood more as a valuable employer in an otherwise fragile economy, as this interviewee expressed:

*So many people work for government here, it’s a big employer - thank god - it’s a big part of our lives.* (Interview 31, Government)
The following section discusses the small economy of the territory and explains how the large government presence serves to construct particular relations and modes of governance between the state and the private sector.

7.2.2 A Constrained Private Sector
As with many very small island territories, the opportunities to develop a diversified economy and a large private sector in American Samoa are limited. The physical conditions of the territory’s geography (discussed in Chapter 4) preclude agricultural or mineral industry development and this, combined with limited investment in tourism has meant that there are few large-scale opportunities for growth of the American Samoan economy. After the decline of the copra trade and the closure of the coaling station in Tutuila, the only industry to gain a foothold in the territory has been tuna processing, which was originally established to take advantage of the significant tax exemptions of the territory’s status, and the access to US markets for Asian fishing companies which are not permitted to offload tuna in other US ports. As former governor Togiola stated in a letter to the editor of Samoa News in 2015, this industry has since the 1950’s been an unparalleled, vital aspect of the islands economy:

“We must always remember the fact that fish is our gold, and fisheries is our biggest and only real major industry in American Samoa. And I dare say, it will be our only major industry for many years to come. It’s not for lack of trying for God knows we have looked; we have tried; but we have mostly failed to sustain any other major industry to support the base of American Samoa’s economic development.” (Sagapolutele, 2015)

Along with the revenues that come directly from the canneries, the industry also supports an important secondary economy of retail, hospitality and entertainment for the fishermen and workers. That secondary economy would otherwise rely only on the infrequent and brief visits of the large cruise ships that come to Pago Pago harbour.

While the fishing industry is clearly crucial to the political economy of the territory, it is also vulnerable, and this vulnerability constrains its ability to act as a significant player in the territory’s governance. In 2009, the American Samoan tuna processing industry suffered heavy losses following the closure of one of its two largest canneries. As Chapter 4 discussed, this closure was in fact scheduled for the day after the tsunami, which only
served to compound the impact on the island’s economy. More recently, the viability of the remaining cannery-based businesses has been threatened by the introduction of incremental increases in the minimum wage in response to changes in United States federal government policy (GAO, 2016).

The private sector in American Samoa is also constrained by a lack of diversity in small to medium enterprises. Aside from the tuna canneries, employment is fairly evenly distributed among small, and particularly very small companies, across private sector categories including transportation and utilities (6.5% of total employment) retail (6.5%), and wholesale trade (2%) (Department of Commerce Statistical Division, 2014). There are however very few independent, locally financed medium enterprises in the territory, which was explained by a number of interviewees as being due to combination of limited markets and an excess of government bureaucracy:

*It’s very difficult to start a small business here, I tried but the paper work from government is enormous and it’s very difficult to get financial support from the banks. Interest rates are very high. It’s much easier in Hawaii where there is much more support for the economy by the government.* (Interview 46, Government)

Some interviewees also put the limitations of the sector down to problems with infrastructure and communications that are characteristic of small, remote locations. For example, as one interviewee stated, the development of their business was significantly hindered by the lack of access to affordable and reliable internet services:

*The internet access is so dear... we are so isolated internet wise and that is the reason why my business isn’t completely different.* (Interview 9, Private Sector).

Some interviewees also pointed out the it was difficult to get finance due to the small financial sector on the island, which in turn was limited by cultural restrictions around land ownership and family lending practices (discussed further in Chapter 7):

*One of the reasons that the foreign banks find it difficult to make any money here is because they don’t understand that all money here is tied to land and families. One of the biggest ways a bank can make money is to loan money for mortgages. That doesn’t happen here.* (Interview 15, Private Sector)

Those medium enterprises that do manage to thrive are usually connected financially or by way of franchise to larger companies or corporations in the US. Figure 45 for example,
shows the flags outside one of the two McDonalds on the island, which neatly depict the reliance of larger private enterprises on both the territorial government and the United States economy.

Figure 45: McDonalds and State Flags, American Samoa

With a private sector this small then, the potential role of private actors in governance can also be assumed to be limited in that, apart from the tuna canneries, there are very few wealthy private sector actors that have the capacity to challenge the size and power of government in steering collective issues. However, while the sector is far from encroaching on government responsibilities, it does interact with the state in governance practices and processes in interesting ways, which are outlined in the context of governance during the 2009 disaster response and recovery in the following section.

7.2.3 The Relative Roles of Public and Private Sectors During the Tsunami
As the previous sections have shown, there is already a large disparity between the size and capacity of public and private sectors on the island, and this gap only grew during the
governance of the 2009 tsunami. As Chapter 5 showed, the role of government in managing the response and recovery of the 2009 tsunami far outweighed that of the private sector in all stages of the disaster. This is perhaps unsurprising considering the weight of financial and institutional support that was behind the American Samoan Government response. For example, as Figure 46 shows, the emergency support functions of each of the American Samoan Government departments were augmented by institutional support from equivalent departments in the US federal government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESF #</th>
<th>Emergency support function</th>
<th>American Samoa ESF Coordinator</th>
<th>Federal ESF Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESF 1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>AS Department of Education (DOE)</td>
<td>Department of Transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 2</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>AS Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA)</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 3</td>
<td>Public work and Engineering</td>
<td>Department of Public Works</td>
<td>Department of Defense and Army Corps Engineers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 4</td>
<td>Firefighting</td>
<td>Department of Public Safety – Fire</td>
<td>US Department of Agriculture and US Forest Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 5</td>
<td>Emergency management</td>
<td>ASDHS/TEMCO</td>
<td>DHS/FEMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 6</td>
<td>Mass care, housing and human services</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>DHS/FEMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 7</td>
<td>Logistics (resource support)</td>
<td>ASDHS/TEMCO</td>
<td>General Services Administration &amp; DHS/FEMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 8</td>
<td>Public health and medical services</td>
<td>DOH, DHSS and LBJ Medical Centre</td>
<td>Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 9</td>
<td>Search and rescue</td>
<td>Department of Public Safety – Police</td>
<td>DHS/FEMA US Coast Guard and Department of Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 10</td>
<td>Oil and hazardous materials response</td>
<td>AS Environmental Protection Agency</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Agency &amp; DHS/US Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 11</td>
<td>Agriculture and natural resources</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>US Department of Agriculture and Department of Interior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 12</td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>American Samoa Public Power Authority</td>
<td>Department of Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 13</td>
<td>Public safety and security</td>
<td>Department of Public Safety – Police</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 14</td>
<td>Long-term community recovery</td>
<td>ASDHS/TEMCO</td>
<td>DHS/FEMA and Small Business Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF 15</td>
<td>External affairs</td>
<td>ASDHS/TEMCO</td>
<td>DHS/FEMA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 46: Emergency Support Functions and Coordinating Agencies, Source (US Army Corps of Engineers, 2012)
With the establishment of the Emergency Operations Centre, as well as the public and private assistance measures taken by FEMA (outlined in Chapters 5 and 6), there was little room for significant involvement from the private sector from an institutional perspective.

Similarly, the extent of the financial support provided by FEMA meant that there was little need for private sector involvement in individual assistance, as is often the case in disasters with less capacity for state based relief and recovery provision (Cozzolino, 2012). As Chapter 5 outlined, FEMAs approach was to ‘turn on the taps’ of financial aid, and in the words of American Samoa Congressman Eni Faleomavega at the time "President Obama is putting his personal stamp (on this recovery) to prevent a repeat of Hurricane Katrina" (Samoan News, Oct 3, pg 16). This ended up being significant in terms of per capita assistance; as of 2012, with the exception of Hurricane Katrina, the 2009 American Samoan tsunami was the highest per capita obligation for a federally declared disaster in the preceding 11 years, with more than $3,700 obligated per person (United States Government Accountability Office, 2012). Beyond just the amount, the individual assistance covered a significant range of needs for those who had been affected, including:

- Rental payments for temporary housing
- Grants for home repairs and replacement of household items
- Grants to replace personal items, and for expenses relating to medical, dental, funeral, or other disaster related costs
- Unemployment payments for 26 weeks for workers who temporarily lost their jobs - in total 243 applicants approved for payments of $40,400
- Low interest loans to cover residential losses not covered by insurance
- Loans of up to $US2 million for small businesses
- Loans of up to $500,000 for farmers, ranchers or aquaculture operators (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2012).

While there were some tensions around conditionality (discussed in Chapter 5) and some problems with delivering aid to those who were in American Samoa illegally (Interview 44), most interviewees reflected that in terms of individual assistance at least, the FEMA-American Samoan Government partnership provided adequate assistance for almost everyone who was affected.
While there was less explicit need for private sector involvement than in many disaster situations, the tuna canneries and small businesses did respond in two important ways that say much about the entanglement of the private sector with both the territorial government and the United States. Firstly, despite the promises of FEMA to assist the survivors, the larger businesses such as the cannories and US franchises donated significant amounts to the relief effort, and many contributed practically by aiding in the delivery of supplies or donating in-kind support and labour. Importantly though, the majority of the large donations were leveraged through partnerships with off-island companies and corporations. For example, the American Samoan based Reid family of companies used its connections with US principle partners such as Coca-Cola and Ford Motors to raise over $US120,000 for the Red Cross Appeal. This demonstrates one of the important ways in which the connected economies of the United States support and enable private sector activities in American Samoa.

Secondly, small operators such as construction and transport businesses played an important role in providing the equipment and labour to clear debris and repair roads and infrastructure during the initial phases of the disaster. What is interesting about this role from a governance perspective is that it was a contracted one; the involvement of these actors was facilitated by the American Samoan government, and was enabled by the financial support of the United States government. The following two interviewees explained this partnership:

*It was good because they had the private sector to help. These private companies sent equipment like backhoes you know, and they helped to clear debris. The key there was the companies had to document everything they did and then FEMA could punch in the hours and equipment and reimburse them.* (Interview 19, Government)

*When we call them in it is more or less like a partnership. There is a level of understanding that when we need help, we can use their equipment and manpower. If it is a declared disaster then FEMA will pay them after the disaster, but if it isn’t federally declared then it’s coming out of our pockets.* (Interview 43, Government)
Again, what this demonstrates is the reliance of the private sector on the two-tiered state to support and enable involvement in critical governance issues such as disasters. The interviewees who spoke about this type of partnership were positive about its outcomes for governance in the immediate stages of disasters but admitted that it was not a usual relationship, and that mostly the private sector did not play a large role in governing collective issues in the territory.

7.2.4 Summary
In both form and function the 'state' in American Samoa is quite different to those described as shrinking, rolling back or dispersing in the governance literature. Like many small island states, the government of American Samoa is large in terms of personnel, institutions and resources. This is primarily due to the consistent and significant financial support that comes from the United States government as part of the agreements of the terms of cession discussed in Chapter 6. Over time this assistance has served to build the capacity of the American Samoan government to support development in the islands, effectively increasing both the mandate and legitimacy of the state to play a key role in governance. The apparatus of government is, as with other institutions in American Samoa, distinctly hierarchical, and as such, the Office of the Governor is the head that steers the bureaucratic body. This hierarchy clearly looms large in people's lives, and while some interviewees expressed concern about the power the state has to govern many aspects of daily life, most of them acknowledged that the role of the government as an employer and provider was critical considering the limitations of the private sector in the territory. As Chapter 4 established though, the state is not a singular actor in the territory’s political landscape; the following section explores the way in which the state interacts with the churches and civil society institutions including NGOS and voluntary organisations.

7.3 Civil Society, Church and State
As the previous section demonstrates, the state is a dominant player in the governance of American Samoa, however it does not govern on its own, and as Chapter 4 introduced there is an active and influential 'civil' sector in the territory in the form of churches and chiefs. These actors are however, quite different to the mainstream governance literature’s characterisation of the sector which is mainly concerned with non-government organisations, volunteer associations and social movements (Radcliff,
While there is a vibrant NGO sector in American Samoa, it is exceptionally small compared to the faith-based organisations on the island. This section analyses the relative roles of secular and faith-based civil society institutions in governance of the territory. It also explores the way in which the long-standing close relationship between church and state serves to structure a very different role for civil society than that of the ideal described in the governance literature as an independent check on government power. Finally, the section outlines the way in which the relations between the state and these two distinct civil society sectors played out following the 2009 tsunami.

### 7.3.1 A SMALL SECULAR CIVIL SOCIETY

When the mainstream governance literature refers to civil society, it is, in most cases, referring to organisations and groups in the non-government, not for profit or voluntary sectors. From this perspective, the civil society sector in American Samoa is very small, made up of four or five organisations that aim to provide services for women and families at risk of domestic and sexual violence; a small number of health services such as community gym programs or youth facilities; and the American Samoan Red Cross (ASRC).

The American Samoan Red Cross (ASRC) is the largest NGO in the territory, and is the main international NGO with a local branch on the islands. It employs 2 full time staff and 3 full time volunteers, and there are 200 casual volunteers registered for times of need. However, the size of the offices of this, the territory’s biggest NGO (shown in Figure 47), is telling of the space this sector occupies in the landscape of island-wide governance (compared to say, the size of any single church)\(^{25}\). The small size of the sector is not unusual in this part of the world, as on the whole, formalised civil society is relatively new to the Pacific Islands and has only a short history of influence in governance (if at all) (Crocombe, 2001). In the American Samoan context, along with being a new player in the

\(^{25}\) However, at the time of writing the ASRC were building new offices complete with boardroom, and multiple counseling and meeting rooms. This new building was being funded by international branches of Red Cross, with additional local donations of money and labor from the American Samoan Government and local churches.
game, there are significant challenges that prevent many of these organisations from gaining significant authority in island-wide governance regimes.

As in many parts of the Pacific, the NGOs that have the strongest foothold in American Samoan governance are those that have institutional and financial connections to larger international organisations, such as the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. These connections provide valuable sources of funding and some institutional stability, but as a number of interviewees explained, there are trade-offs in terms of local autonomy in decision making and particularly spending. The ASRC for example, does not have its own bank account with which to manage funds; both funding and operational directives come from the accounts of the Red Cross office in San Diego.
As one interviewee explained this adds a degree of vulnerability to the organisation's operations and limits its potential to respond to local priorities:

*It's difficult for us because, for example if something happens in Tonga, we have a Tongan community here and they ask us to help and we have to say “we can’t spearhead it for you” because we don’t decide these things. You know, they don’t want to send it back into the big pot and then have the US send it to Tonga. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)*

There are also distinct challenges in meeting the expectations of western standards (and funding conditions) of independence and impartiality, particularly with respect to government. For example, while American Samoa has a robust set of media institutions, with multiple state and private radio stations, a privately-owned daily newspaper with wide circulation, plus a reputation for principled journalism that is willing to criticise both the chiefly system and the government, size remains a challenge to independence and neutrality. As one interviewee stated:

*It is really challenging to operate independent media on this island, it’s just so small. (Interview 9, Private Sector)*

For NGOs, this is also a problem from an organisational perspective. In a conversation with one interviewee about the propensity for government leaders to be on the boards of NGOs, they pointed out that remaining separate (and therefore impartial) from government institutionally is next to impossible:

*It’s just such a small place so you know? I experienced that when I was working with other (international non-profits) and they were so anti-government, and I was like ‘we can’t separate ourselves from government’. It’s just government, church and a bit of business. If someone finishes a government job, they go into the church, and then into business. It’s just how it is. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)*

Quotes like this stress the importance of understanding the interconnected nature of governance in American Samoa, and reinforce the findings of Chapter 4 about entangled systems of authority.

This issue of a lack of understanding of local conditions on the part of the international institutions is also partly a product of small size of the American Samoa and its apparent obscurity in the international arena. As one interviewee explained:
The tsunami was the only time anyone in the National Red Cross knew that we existed. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

This lack of knowledge about local conditions can also bring operational challenges when the provision of resources is not tailored to local conditions. For example, a volunteer Red Cross worker recounted a story where the national Red Cross branch introduced credit cards to deliver donated funds to individuals. As the interviewee explained it was difficult to communicate the problem with this strategy to a centralised office:

I had to say to them that we only have one, sometimes two working ATMs here, so that’s not going to work, and they said “oh no, we can see on google that there are 10 ATMs on the island” (laughs). So, things like that are frustrating. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

This is not to say that NGOs with international connections are entirely hamstrung by local conditions. For example, as Chapter 5 outlined, the ASRC played a significant role in the emergency and immediate recovery stages of the tsunami and continues to be an important player in governance where major disasters have been declared. In ‘normal’ circumstances though, international organisations face the same challenges as local civil society organisations on the island, primarily around the difficulty of raising funds and staffing volunteer-based projects and programs.

For most NGOs in American Samoa the challenge of raising funds is a constant one, made more difficult by the scale of the territory’s economy and society. For example, for the ASRC, local fundraising from collection cans at stores makes up the majority of their funding for non-disaster related projects, and amounts to only US$20,000 a year. For both local NGO’s and those with international ties, it is exceptionally difficult to raise funds locally. Many of the interviewees explained that this was partly a function of a small population:

We are such a small island that – I think you’ll hear this from others that try to raise money – we kind of recycle each other, we tap people out. It’s donation fatigue. You have to hit them up at the right time during the year. We hear that regularly; all the businesses are tapped out. (Interview 13, Civil Society)

Additionally, American Samoans already give extensively to both the church and their families, both in terms of financial contributions and service, and as a number of
interviewees explained this makes communicating the value of volunteering and thus
building a secular civil society sector very difficult. Indeed, as one interviewee noted, the
concept of ‘volunteering’ is so ingrained in the conception of tautua that it almost seems
redundant as a separate activity for people beyond their village obligations (which are
many already), and therefore there is often an expectation in the form of some pay or
reward:

*At first our people say ‘ok well what are you going to give me for free if I volunteer’
(laughs) So trying to explain volunteer in Samoan is kind of difficult! It doesn’t really
work. (laughs). (Interview 5, Government)*

For the voluntary based organisations such as Rotary and the Lions Club this has an
impact on membership numbers and nationalities, with many members having grown up
outside of the Samoan islands. The Samoan attitude towards secular, nationally
orientated volunteering points to the importance of understanding the spatial aspects of
governance in American Samoa, and particularly the importance of village-based
governance systems, which are explored in detail in Chapter 7.

For many of the civil society interviewees though, the limitations on their sector’s
influence in governance could simply be explained by its relative size, and the fact that in
both form and function, secular civil society is crowded out by both the church and the
state. Significantly, in Pacific contexts, faith based institutions often perform many of the
governance functions that are traditionally undertaken by secular civil society in western
political contexts (Nunn, 2017). For example, in both disaster and non-disaster contexts,
churches provide shelter and pastoral care, as well as offering a non-state alternative to
resource distribution and service provision. Add to that the dominance of a well-
supported government in issues of public policy, and the possibility of a large diversified
civil sector is limited, as indicated in these comments:

*Here, when it comes to big projects it is just all government. And we’ve been
conditioned to live within a government-run landscape, where the government
provides for everything, you know, medical, education etc. Because there was no
exposure to civil society and NGO's – because government took care of everything
there was no initiative to set up a non-profit. (Interview number withheld, Civil
Society)*
It's always tough for NGO's here because they are supposed to be separate from government but that's hard because government is like an 800-pound gorilla in the room – you can't really work around it (laughs). (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

The role of secular civil society in governance is limited then by the dominance of both the churches and the government in the management of collective issues. That said, as the following section will argue, it is not simply their individual existence that crowds out the civil sector but rather their long history of entanglement and co-legitimation, which as the following section will discuss is a highly valued aspect of governance in American Samoa.

7.3.2 A CONNECTED CHURCH AND STATE
As Chapter 4 outlined, there are multiple and significant connections between the Christian churches and the state in American Samoa, both in principle and in practice. As many interviewees explained, this is a long standing, accepted and highly valued part of the governance system of the territory.

The Christian church’s influence on the Samoan islands began with the landing of the London Missionary Society’s Reverend John Williams in Upolu 1830, and continued throughout the century with missions by the Wesleyan Church, the Mormons and the Marist Missions of the Roman Catholic Church (Shaffer, 2000; Sunia, 2009). Roughan (1994) argues that by way of these missions, the churches have in fact been a governing structure far longer than the state in most Pacific places. The early missionaries to the Samoan islands were almost universally accepted by the local populations, many of whom had already heard of the teachings of the church from Tahitian visitors (Shaffer, 2000), and there was very little resistance to the introduction of most Christian customs and practices. Chapter 8 discusses the way in which the institutions of the church intertwined with traditional political norms and practices in order to increase the power of both the matais and the church leaders to govern at the village level. When the matais began to build the institutions of government in the territory, much of this reverence for religion and faith-based practice was carried into the symbolism and procedures of the state, and these remain a visible part of the operation of government today.
The official state motto of the territory, “Samoa, muamua le atua” or “Samoa, God is first”, is perhaps one of the clearest indicators of the role of religion in the operation of the state. A number of the interviewees who were legislators or high-up in the executive made a point of explaining this to me with statements such as:

*I guess I’m not sure if you know the foundation of this government? It’s God. So, the church plays a most important part of government.* (Interview 40, Government)

In many ways, this foundation is present and visible in the daily workings of the government. Most of the government meetings that were attended for this research began with a prayer or a hymn, or referenced God in the phraseology of a speaker during the meeting. Figure 48 shows a photo of a government timetable, with a common depiction of religious belief in written phrases or stickers around the workplace. Similarly, and perhaps more poignantly, as Figure 49 shows, the members of the legislature have bibles at hand when creating and revising the laws of the territory.

![Figure 48: Religious Message on a Government Calendar, an office in the American Samoan Government, 2015](image-url)
However, as a number of interviewees explained, there is a line (however fine), between being a religious legislator and having religion dictate decisions on key governance issues. This issue goes to the heart of different placed-based interpretations of the principle of the separation of church and state. As two high-ranking traditional and government leaders explained, the difference between American understandings and those of American Samoans are subtle and relate more to practice than to principle:

*The American way of church and government dealings, is to not have the opening prayer because that is bringing religion into the state. That’s got nothing to do with it. Yes, we pray but we don’t ever say “ok we’re going to do this because our god said we needed to do this.” That doesn’t happen.* (Interview 38, Traditional Leader)

*The church and the state, they don’t mix but they are there together at all times. Right, so they don’t mix – that’s very difficult for people like you to understand but try to understand. When we pray we acknowledge that god has the authority over all of us, then we go over to the fono and do our thing.* (Interview 42, Government)

Observations of meetings in the fieldwork for this study confirmed this point; that while prayers were said at the beginning of meetings, those meetings quickly moved into
secular bureaucratic practices and then in some cases, back to a final prayer at the end. None of the many meetings that were observed discussed government business with specific reference to religion, aside from the opening prayer. It was clear that while the participants in these meetings were comfortable with the blending of religious practice (prayer, language, signifiers) into state governance practice, they were also adept at moving between secular and non-secular modes of speech and actions.

While most of the interviewees who discussed this nominally support the normative principle of the separation of church and state in the United States state system, they are also proud and positive about the fact that those principles do not strictly apply in the territory. One interviewee explained the value of these blurred boundaries in the following exchange:

> Well, you know, in the (US) constitution there needs to be the separation of church and state – well here in Samoa that’s a kind of unique interpretation (laughs).

> So, it’s not separated?

> Well in some cases it is but there is a lot of cross overs.

> And do you think that is a good thing?

> I think it is one of the most important parts of our lives as Samoans... If we changed our status we might have to change. It’s ok now though, we can say our prayers in public places and in government we can start every meeting with prayers and hymns. You can’t do that in other places! I’m so thankful for that.” (Interview 41: Civil Society)

This was a common sentiment amongst most of the interviewees, all of whom are devout Christians and believe strongly that religious practices and principles should be integral to every part of the institutions that structure their lives. The more high-level connections between the church and state however, in terms of the influence that comes from individuals being leaders in both, was a more contentious topic.

As Chapter 4 introduced, individual churches in American Samoa also have considerable direct political power. As one interviewee put it though, this is not so different to many parts of the world including the United States:
“Well the Church is very powerful. They can influence elections. They will support their own village candidates. But that also happens in the U.S. – it happens everywhere.” (Interview 39: Traditional Leader)

However, the connections between the leadership of government and the large churches is in many ways stronger and more overt in American Samoa, where the strict terms of rank and hierarchy mean that the leadership pool in both institutions is limited and results in significant overlap, particularly at the highest levels. For example, many matai serve as senior members of the church bureaucracy, and positions like deacon, pastor, treasurer, and secretary are often held by matai (Gershon, 2006). Similarly, because church leaders were traditionally highly educated, there is a strong tendency for political leaders to come from families involved in church leadership. As one interviewee points out, the relationship between education, religion and power is still influential in determining leadership and status in governance:

The strongest influence on our island is the church, but you know, us Samoans have turned that into a political issue as well. Prior to the arrivals on the island we only had clans, and how you made names for yourself was through war. With the event of Christianity there’s a new element to bring in another element of power if you can say you have god with you too. Another thing they brought with them was education. So, a lot of the powerhouses here, like the Sunia family, their father was a faife‘au he came from Western Samoa and was one of the great faife‘au here, and so their roots are not from a matai family, but the children were extremely well educated, including the girls. (Interview 15; Private Sector)

For the most part, leaders will hold either a government or a church position at one time due to the demands of each job, however there are instances where leaders will hold two senior positions at the same time. For example, at the time of the fieldwork for this thesis, the Governor was also on the board of the large and powerful Latter-Day Saints (LDS) church.

There were conflicting opinions about the extent to which this poses a normative problem for governance. These two exchanges with senior government and church leaders show the differences in those opinions:
So, in the churches can you be a matai and work for government and be a pastor at the same time?

*It depends, in some churches yes. But in most, you choose one. They are both big jobs. Also, the matai’s are very political (laughs) so it might be a bit conflicting. It would be like being a pastor and a lawyer at the same time!* (Interview 41, Civil Society)

...What about a faife’au holding a high government position?

*I still don’t see the conflict there. If you are a faife’au you are the pastor of the church. You go home and your time in the church is Sunday and weekends, and then when you go to work you do as government regulations require you to do. I have never come across a situation where someone turned against a government regulation or rule or anything because of their church duties.* (Interview number withheld, Government)

As one interviewee pointed out though, the practice does serve to challenge some of the foundational principles of liberal democracy:

*Well because the United States constitution demands that there shall be a separation of church and state. But here you see that the leaders of government are usually leaders of the church. There is so much influence. And it goes the other way, whoever becomes the speaker they find a key position in a Christian organisation to give to him you know more power... it bothers me, choose the people because of their merits not because he’s a faife’au.* (Interview 23, Government)

On the whole though, while there was little agreement about the merits if this concentrated leadership across the church and state, it was generally accepted that interaction between the churches and the state was a fundamental part of governance in American Samoa. The following section outlines the various ways that the interaction between the two institutions played out during the 2009 tsunami response and recovery, and explores the extent to which the strength of this partnership influenced the role of the small secular civil society.

### 7.3.3 Civil Society Engagement in Disaster Relief and Recovery

As Chapter 5 showed, both secular and religious civil society institutions played important roles in the relief and recovery phases after the 2009 tsunami. The churches were critical in village-based mass care and shelter in the emergency phase, as well as the
organisation and distribution of donated goods and services. Similarly, NGOs such as Red Cross played an important role in the oversight and coordination of relief supplies arriving into the territory, as well as direct psychological care and financial support for the tsunami survivors and their families. There were differences, however, in the relative role that these two sets of actors played, and much of this is explained by the relationship that each has with government.

Considering the long-established strong connections between the government and the churches in American Samoa, it is perhaps not surprising that state-civil society interaction was most clearly expressed through partnerships between the churches and the government following the 2009 tsunami. Most government interviewees mentioned the critical role of the church, particularly in the early stages of the disaster, and the cooperative way that government worked with them. As many interviewees explained, the government relied heavily on church leaders to guide the affected communities through the psychological challenges of grief and loss. As one pastor explained:

_Our role is to say that there is hope. Not only to strengthen them and counsel them but also to tell them that there is hope. Sometimes there is nowhere to turn but to God. There is a lot of pain for these people after a disaster, when they've lost their families and their homes, and livelihoods – it's hard to bare. If we can help generally beyond what the government has done for them then we do. But the most important thing for a Pastor is to keep their spirits high and help with the spiritual side._

(Interview 41, Civil Society)

At a national level the churches partnered with government in this role, holding multidenominational memorial services and appearing together in public meetings and events.

The discourse that surrounded government-church partnerships at the time was overwhelmingly positive. The media analysis for this thesis found over 26 public references by government leaders to the ‘good work’ of the churches in the months following the tsunami, and the government cemented the involvement of some of the larger churches by way of multiple appointments to the American Samoa Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC), which was set up by the Governor’s Authorized Representative (GAR) following the finalisation of FEMA recovery efforts. While there are
far fewer secular organisations on the island, the weighting of faith-based groups on the long-term recovery committee is notable, and is indicative of the relationship that those organisations have with government. As Figure 50 shows, 10 of the 13 organisations on the committee are faith-based entities. The other 3 represent a mix of national and international civil society organisations26.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member Organisations of the Long-Term Recovery Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calvary Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Reformed World Relief Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talofa Tunoa Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Day Adventists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Baptists Convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showers of Blessings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Figure 50: Member Organisations of the Long-Term Recovery Committee, (Federal Emergency Management Authority, 2015).

At the other end of the spectrum, while secular civil society groups played an important role in disaster recovery, this was generally downplayed by most of the government interviewees. When asked, government interviewees were mostly ambivalent about their interaction with these groups, as shown in these two conversations:

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26 The Rotary Club is a non-religious international member funded entity; the Pualele foundation is a quasi-government organisation set up as a crisis counselling training service out of a federal disaster preparedness grant; and Teen Challenge is a NGO funded through US federal grants.
Well yes, there was the Red Cross, and I know that there were some small local NGO’s but I’m not sure which ones. I can’t remember. (Interview 5, Government)

So do NGO’s play a big role?

Not really. We had Red Cross involved but ok, we always do. We had a few other NGO’s but they were really not that effective in helping the people and working with the government. (Interview 22, Government)

For some NGO organisations it was precisely the lack of relationship with government that enabled their involvement in the disaster recovery, as this interviewee explained:

So how we got involved was through our donors who reached out to us and said that they didn’t trust the American Samoan government, but they trusted our organisation and they trusted me to receive donations both in dollars and in materials and to get them delivered.

And where were your donations coming from?

Off island and from the private sector here locally. They said ‘we can’t get these things out there, can you do it for us”. So, we just took our trucks and went out there. We tried to connect to other government organisations but when we called the bureaucracy was so bad that we couldn’t. And there was also a very non-welcoming sense from the government that we shouldn’t have a role in delivering assistance and that we needed to bring it all to them. We had to explain that our benefactors specifically asked for them not to handle it, which meant that they didn’t want to tell us the affected areas. In the end, we just had to look at where the wave hit and go there independently. (Interview number withheld, Civil society)

Overall though, this situation was rare; non-government organisations were mostly required to work within the bounds of government coordination of resources and supplies and, as this interviewee explained, the secular civil society institutions were at the end of the line for people seeking help:

For us, we were there for those who did not receive any other sort of assistance, and then we were able to help them. So that was the set up. You go through TEMCO, you go through your church and then you go through us. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)
This role was clearly essential for those who did not have access to other sources of assistance, and it shows the difference in relative authority of various types of organisations within civil society in the territory.

7.3.4 SUMMARY
Civil society in American Samoa is quite different to that of other, larger political systems, and this affects the way in which the sector’s individual components interact with the state in the process of governing collective problems. Due to the dominance of both the church and the state in key aspects of governance there is very little room (if not need) for a large and diversified sector of secular non-government organisations and voluntary associations concerned with the governance of collective issues. Unlike in other western political contexts, these institutions are also relatively new players in governance and, as this analysis shows, they face multiple challenges in attempting to gain the means and mandate to govern. Unlike the secular organisations, the churches have a long history of authority within island politics, and this is embedded in the strong partnerships that the sector has with government and serve to strengthen the legitimacy of both in the management of large scale problems such as the 2009 tsunami. The fine line between church and state is, however, not the only blurred boundary at this scale of governance, and the following section explores the way in which the blending of traditional authority and government also has the effect of supporting the continued role of the state in American Samoan governance.

7.4 TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE STATE
The cultural governance system of the fa’asamo’a has been the foundational system underpinning the social and political life of Samoans at individual, community and inter-islands scales for centuries. As Chapter 5 outlined, when the chiefs of American Samoa ceded the islands to the United States they negotiated the protection and preservation of both the fa’asamo’a and the fa’amatai, and over time they worked to embed the practices and principles of the cultural governance system into the institutions of the emerging state. This section explores the results of that process in contemporary governance practices and processes, and argues that in both form and function, the state and the fa’asamo’a are intimately intertwined. It examines the ways in which the line between the two systems is blurred by the multiple and often conflicting roles and responsibilities of those working within the territory’s government, particularly the role of the chiefs in
working with and within the state. It also examines the way that the systems interact in practice, both in the process of daily political processes, and in times of disaster.

7.4.1 The Fa’asamo and the State
As Chapter 4 discussed, the fa’a samo a has for centuries been the foundation of social and political life in the Samoan islands, and while many of the interviewees acknowledged that some of the more traditional cultural practices are changing, there is no doubt that the fa’a samo a remains a powerful part of daily life in American Samoa. As one interviewee explained:

Samoans still have a very strong tradition and culture and we also have very strong customs that we need to follow, which is from our ancestors till now, that we are still following and we need to pay attention to that every day. (Interview 7; Government)

Importantly from a governance perspective though, cultural practices and processes are not confined to the home or the ‘local’ village, they are also a fundamental part of the form and function of the state. Like the blending of government and religion discussed in the previous section, the inclusion of culture into the business of government is not at all clandestine. In fact, cultural symbols are evident even in the most overt forms of state representation. For example, as Figure 51 shows the legislature of American Samoa is designed to resemble a village fono meeting house, highlighting the continued importance of traditional decision-making practices at a state level.
Similarly, traditional dress is worn in many the ceremonies of government, and important cultural symbols of rank are worn in the official photos of senators and senior military figures (Figure 52). Cultural signifiers are also on display in the offices of directors and executives in the bureaucracy (Figure 53), which demonstrates the overt intertwining of cultural and political authority.
As one interviewee noted, these symbols are an important way to signify (especially to foreigners) the continued role of traditional governance practices within government:

_Within government if we have distinguished visitors we will have an ava ceremony to welcome them, and to show the importance of our customs before we do government business – even though they are here to do government business not cultural exchange we have to show that these things are part of everything we do. So, that part of the welcoming shows the importance and influence of culture in official government business._ (Interview 35, Government)

In this context then, there are two main ways that government and cultural systems of authority have become entwined as joint modes of governance.
First, as discussed in Chapter 6, the protection of land and culture has been a fundamental part of the agreement between the United States and the matais since the cession of the islands over 100 years ago, and as the territory began to assert more autonomy, measures to preserve cultural norms and practices were embedded into the territory's political institutions. The most striking example of this is the upper house of the legislature, which is still only open to membership from the island’s top matai, despite periodic debate about the appropriateness of that in a liberal democracy (discussed in the next section). Within government then, those who are charged with making laws are also responsible for protecting cultural ways of governing. In one sense, this has the effect of upholding and underpinning important aspects of the Samoan political system, as one interviewee explains:
It preserves the traditional organisation of Samoan families. Because they are selected, well they are voted, but they are selected in the Samoan sense. (Interview 29, Traditional Leader)

From another perspective, what it does is connect the two institutions in a profound way, and give the Samoan political system real power within the state:

Having the two houses in the fono means the Samoan system is brought in to government. Because in the treaty it ensures that the Samoan way of life will be protected, and this is one of the ways of doing that. If you don’t have the two houses you won’t have a check and balance on our government and our culture. They go hand in hand. (Interview 16, Traditional Leader)

The culture really does play a major role in the way government operates, it has strength and teeth in government. (Interview 35, Government)

The Office of Samoan Affairs is another institution that has the explicit role of incorporating culture into state practices, and will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

Second, beyond the institutions themselves, it can be argued that cultural practices and norms are ‘carried’ by those who populate the institutions of the state. For most Samoans, culture (and its expression through custom) is not just practiced but is embodied, and in that sense is impossible to disentangle from governance - if governance is to be understood as constructed by the practices and behaviours of people working within institutions. Anthropologist Ilana Gershon argues that in the Samoan context this is particularly important in the context of the social hierarchies that are embedded in the cultural governance system:

“from a Samoan perspective, people embody social order, they don’t mediate social orders. In Samoan contexts, they will interpret and anticipate each other’s behaviour based upon each one’s structural place within a context which is determined by categories such as the hierarchical position of one's family, one's gender, age, religion and marital status” (Gershon (2006 pg 538)

Many of the people interviewed in this research supported this notion that culture is embodied, as shown in these interviewee’s statements:
The fa’asamoa is great, but it’s not a choice, it’s something that’s inside of you. You grew up with it; it has to do with loyalty, respect, being a humble, god-fearing person. (Interview 20, Government)

We just cannot step out of the cultural part of us. It’s in us. We are Samoan. (Interview 35, Government)

Perspectives such as these suggest then that the cultural values which serve to mediate governance processes are not chosen as political strategies for good governance processes, but rather are the product of more fundamental ways of being and doing that are linked to traditional social and political practices that are reinforced and reproduced daily.

One of the most important of these is the concept of fa’aaloalo (respect), which is an integral part of the traditional system that aids in the promotion of political order (Iati, 2000). So’o (2000) lists some of the most important forms of respect that mediate day to day relations, which include: respect for title holders generally and a mutual respect between matai; more specifically, the respect of an ‘aiga to their matai; respect for village authority and the fono; respect for elders, especially among children; and respect for church leaders. As a number of the interviewees explained this has consequences for the way things are done within government, particularly at an interpersonal level:

Samoans are a very sensitive culture, they expect to be treated with all sorts of respect. So sometimes there are difficulties dealing with chiefs for example. In some cases, we need to refer them to upper management. This is really because in our culture the higher members of the community – meaning the chiefs of the village – expect to be treated a lot better than anyone else. (Interview number withheld, Government)

Similarly, if a government employee is given a title, it can change the nature of their decision-making power, as this interviewee explained:

If you get a title, it gives you prestige in your office. It doesn’t lessen your responsibilities but it gives you a bit more recognition. (Interview 20, Government)

The respect for rank and hierarchy also has the potential to affect how decisions are made within the bureaucracy. As one interviewee described:
The governor is a matai, so are the leaders of the fono. So, when some of these decisions are made – good, bad or otherwise – people will just go along with it because you know the matais and the leadership have spoken. (Interview 22, Government)

Beyond the issue of respect for individuals, this tendency to follow the decisions of senior leaders points to another key concept of the fa‘asamoa; the principles of soālaupule (joint decision making) and ‘autasi (consensus) (So'o, 2008).

Within the context of the village fono decisions are reached when consensus has been reached, and as Tcherkézoff (2000a pg 116) explains, this leads to very different modes of governance than those influenced by liberal democratic institutions and principles:

“In consensus, influential people naturally have unequal weight compared to younger or newer people, and this can appear undemocratic. But many Samoans consider that the voting process is disadvantageous because it reduces each person’s relative experience, and respect gained through experience to one person – one voting system... Many also consider that the voting system introduces a winner/loser dichotomy which creates division.”

When this predilection for consensus is combined with the Christian principles of forgiveness there are real pressures on people working within politics and government to avoid dissension, and as these two interviewees explain, this impacts governance practices and processes within the state:

“It's always something that crosses your work... for example in managing people, you will always have a little tendency to love and forgive people before you reprimand people. It weighs on decision making. You still have that custom inside of you. (Interview 19, Government)

So, you sort of just recycle people. That's the issue with the whole Christianity thing in government. In Christianity, you kind of have to forgive people, even if they've done bad things. It's in our nature too, our culture, we're supposed to be friendly and forgiving people and we're not supposed to malign people or hold grudges. (Interview 24, Government)

Of course, this does not mean that there are not disputes and debates in American Samoan politics, rather this analysis aims to show that the embodied nature of culture
means that people bring their culture with them when they undertake the work of
governance at a state level, and this has impacts on the modes of governance at particular
scales. There is however debate about the extent to which bureaucrats and politicians
should ‘allow’ culture to influence their work, and this debate is analysed in the following
section in the context of the multiple roles of the matai in government.

7.4.2 Debate About the Role of Matai in Government
Arguably, the matais carry the heaviest weight of responsibility for the preservation of
cultural authority, and at the same time they also hold most of the senior positions in the
legislature, executive and the judiciary so that while individual matais are revered, there
is considerable debate about their role in government. At the most fundamental level, the
debate about their role revolves around the tension between the liberal democratic
principle of merit based, elected appointment for leaders in the key institutions of the
(western) state, and the institutionalisation of exclusive membership of non-elected high
matai in the upper house of the legislature. For many in American Samoa the original aim
that this arrangement would protect cultural practices and customary land tenure is
enough to justify the organisation of representation in the senate, as this former senator
explained:

*The make-up of the Senate is required to hold on to Samoan culture and control over the land. That is the key, that’s the most important. When I was a Senator and a new law was proposed basically I would look at it and work out if it hurt Samoan culture, did it infringe on the traditional style of living? That’s our role, we are supposed to understand the culture and preserve it.* (Interview number withheld, Traditional Leader)

For some also, the fact that matais are in fact elected to represent large extended families
means that, from a system perspective, many of the concerns about representation and
accountability are ameliorated. That said, for the most part this opinion was qualified
with the recognition that accountability of individual senators was not guaranteed, as in
this exchange:

*So, what do you think about the fact that the senate is made up of high matai?*

*To me it’s a good thing because it’s already a democratic system within the families but it also depends on the individual and how they use that responsibility and power that’s given to them along with the title. Because there are individuals that become*
greedy and just have a power trip and they abuse it, and then the system doesn’t work for everyone else on the bottom. (Interview number withheld, Government)

For others though, this issue of merit and the lack of collective democratic control over who is appointed is a strong concern, as these statements signify:

*How people get appointed to positions of authority here is a huge problem. Because there is such a blatant conflict of interest in some cases but because of the culture of respect for matais and for ministers, we are putting people in positions that they shouldn’t be in, they didn’t earn it... It’s just inappropriate.* (Interview number withheld; Private Sector)

*Well it’s beginning to change. People are starting to think that we have got to have more educated people in the Senate you know? There is a cultural thing of the old and the wise (laughs) but maybe that’s not it (laughs).* (Interview number withheld, Government)

These tensions have also played out in debates around the extent to which these traditionally elected senators are able to override the decisions of the democratically elected executive.

In 2014 a constitutional referendum was held as part of the general election for the Representative to the U.S. congress. The referendum concerned changes to the constitution to allow the Fono the power to override a veto by the Governor by a two-thirds majority vote in instances where the vetoed legislation had been passed twice by the Fono. Essentially this concerned the final say between the executive and the fono in legislation, and so was hotly debated in government in the lead up to the referendum.

Those *for* the amendment believed the Governor’s veto essentially gave the executive the power to legislate, which is not strictly the role of a lower house, and wanted that corrected. Those *against* argued that the governor, being elected by the people, should have the power to override contentious legislation. Put more simply, the referendum represented a choice about the relative power of elected officials and the high matais of the senate to govern. Over 16,000 people voted in the referendum, and in answer to the question ‘Amend the Veto Override Process?’ over 73% voted no (Election Office, 2014).

This result reflected two previous referendums on the same issue (in 2010 and 2012), and suggests a number of possibilities about how the American Samoan people view the
role of the *matai* in the *Fono*. The first possibility, as suggested by a Radio New Zealand correspondent in 2012, is that people didn’t understand what was admittedly a confusing double negative question (Miller, 2012). The second is that, as suggested by a number of interviewees, there is continued caution amongst the polity about giving the Senate *matais* too much power.

Within the context of discussing the role of *matais* in the bureaucracy (as opposed to the senate), much of the debate is around the ability of senior directors to fulfil the duties of their position, while at the same time manage the responsibilities of their role in the cultural system. Interestingly it was often government interviewees with titles that expressed the most concern about the effects that ‘wearing two hats’ can have on governance practices and processes. For example, as this high-level government interviewee with a *matai* title argued:

> Now this is where everything screws up, because this is a government job right? Work with everybody and love your neighbours and what not but don’t bring the culture in here.

> You don’t think that’s a good thing?

> No.

> Why?

> Because it fucks up everything for our actual work. That’s why when I have functions here I eliminate all that. Also in our work, I don’t apply the fa’asamoa because it fucks everything up. Oh, we all need to say “your highness” in our work? You really lose focus on what we’re here to do when you are like that. I’m talking from experience. (Interview number withheld, Government)

This reluctance to mix cultural and professional responsibilities was also expressed by this titled government bureaucrat who added that dismissing cultural norms like respect for rank can become unpopular with others in leadership:

> Lots of these older guys in here (government) want to call me by my matai title. But I say, I’m at work, don’t call me by my matai. Call me by my first name. My matai title that’s for when I go home, that’s for family gatherings, cultural things with the village.

> And you think that’s the best way to handle it?
It should be because you cannot mix culture and government... but some people get offended, if you don’t address them properly they won’t give you the time of day. But that’s their ego and their pride. (Interview 6, Government)

For other interviewees though, the deference and respect for titles engenders governance practices that are productive and harmonious:

For me it works well together (fa’asamoa and government work) because it helps you relate well to people in your job. It helps you be more kind and understanding. As long as you don’t let the fa’asamoa overtake the rules and protocols.

The delicate balance between the two systems of cultural practice and government protocol is a powerful and recurring theme in the majority of these interviews, and the following section explores the way this balance was discussed in the context of governing disasters in the territory.

7.4.3 Navigating Dual Governance Responsibilities in a Disaster

The scale of the 2009 tsunami and the destruction it caused to families, as well as infrastructure and services on the island, put even more tension than usual on the multiple responsibilities of those working in government. As Chapter 4 outlined, in the immediate stages of the disaster many emergency workers were busy in their villages taking care of their families and neighbours. For those with titles, the responsibilities of being the head of a family during a time of crisis were already significant, but for many they also had leadership positions within government departments and agencies tasked with managing the government’s disaster response. As a number of interviewees acknowledged, in the immediate stages of the disaster, the choice between these two roles was a difficult one:

I didn’t really know where I was needed most. I tried to do both but it was really difficult in those first stages. (Interview number withheld, Government)

As the disaster response moved into the emergency stage, affected families relied on their matais to advocate for assistance and relief from government. As one high matai explained, in many cases this meant interaction and negotiation with senior department heads (often also matais):
Basically, the government handled it and the pulenu’u briefed me but if I was needed to go deal with the higher up’s in government then I would go and deal with them. (Interview 16, Traditional Leader)

While this advocacy and negotiation role is a usual one for high chiefs, a number of the interviewees involved in the emergency response explained that the severity of the situation meant that some of the normal protocols around respect for titles and rank were sidelined, as these two interviewees explained:

During the emergency phase rank and titles don’t matter as much in the operations centre. There is outside discretion. If there is a senator or a high chief that comes in to the emergency operations centre and demands that we prioritise his village – that’s undue influence. We can kick them out, we are allowed to kick out anyone that disrupts the process of us doing our jobs. They’ll get mad, they’ll say ‘do you know who I am?’ and I’ll say ‘yeah you’re the guy who’s going outside.’ (Interview number withheld, Government)

They always want you to prioritise their district or village and that’s ok, but we do our jobs and we prioritise those who need help first. They get angry, and we have to just say, go see the governor. (Interview number withheld, Government)

While this type of response was justified in the emergency phase, a number of interviewees indicated that it became more difficult over time, where family politics and competing priorities became more pronounced. The challenges inherent in this tension between traditional authority and that of the state was outlined by a number of government interviewees, as in the following discussions:

So, you have your Samoan ways and practices, and they are embedded in you. Then here you are you have a job, let’s say you work in an office like Homeland Security, that demands the requirements that are about working there, especially the funding requirements. It’s two separate worlds. You can’t say she’s my relative, can she get served first – which is the culture – but no there are guidelines you know? (Interview number withheld, Government)

It can get difficult if your uncle, say a matai, puts pressure on because when we go home, its these people that we serve, not the government. I’ve been told and trained since I was young, to defer and serve these people. From time to time this happens
and we have to step out of the line and then find ways to come back within the line.

(Interview number withheld, Government)

As this quote suggests, discussions like these were characterised by resignation about the challenges of the blurred boundaries between family and formal politics, and pragmatism with respect to governance practices rather than an overt concern for issues such as corruption. Some even suggested that the family politics of the traditional system could be harnessed within government practices, as shown in these two discussions:

Sometime departments will hire a young person because of the family they come from. Not just as a favour but because it will help you get things done. (Interview number withheld, Government)

There are ways to make it work. So, if there is someone in the office that attends the same church as the director you want to set up a meeting with (but is ignoring you because he doesn’t respect the chief of your village), you get that person to ask for the meeting.

That’s funny, so sometimes you use the church to get around the cultural system within government. That’s convoluted!

(laughs) Yes that’s exactly it – how funny is that?! (Interview number withheld, Government)

In this context, the interviewees acknowledged that the blending of traditional authority, family politics and bureaucracy had its faults from a system perspective, but insisted that people were skilled in managing the complexities of the intersections.

Finally, there was also a common recognition among the interviewees that issues of dual or multiple responsibilities and the resulting tensions in priorities were a product of the small scale of the political system and leadership pool. For example, anonymity as a mechanism of objectivity in decision making is very difficult in such a small place, as these two interviewees explained:

We live in a unique society. If I was standing at the front gate, I could identify probably 85-90% of the people who walked past. Mostly everyone’s related. (Interview number withheld, Government)
It’s hard because they are Senators, they know me, I know them, they know my parents you know? It’s a challenge. I wish there was a formula but there isn’t. At the end of the day you go home and who you see there counts. (Interview number withheld, Government)

For a number of interviewees then it is precisely this combination of the small scale of island’s society and the large size of one’s extended families that makes it difficult to keep a neutral position on issues of governance, as this senior government interviewee explained:

I think that probably is one of the most difficult aspects of being in a ruling position, or a governing position, is how you make sure you don’t compromise your position. Because a lot of people are related, and if you have to decide between a non-relative and a relative you need to make sure that you stay objective and straight. That is one of the hardest things to do. (Interview number withheld, Government)

It also makes it difficult to avoid conflicts of interest in governance priorities and this leads many to view conflicts as unavoidable, as these two perspectives show:

It’s almost like everything is a conflict of interest here - so as it is defined in federal terms but it may not be a conflict to us – because if we really went by conflict of interest everything would have to stop, because we’re all related. (Interview number withheld, Government)

Its unavoidable. (Here?) Anywhere. You can’t separate out the two, you can try to but you can’t...You can tell with the way things play out here. I mean if you are a director of a department, you have to take care of your family. It’s the way things are.” (Interview 38, Traditional Leader)

As this analysis suggests the line that separates the duties of government and the respect and responsibilities owed to families is a fine one that is negotiated regularly on an individual basis by those who work in the territory’s bureaucracy and political system. The following chapter will extend this analysis by taking a step back from subjective experiences to look at the way this line is constructed at scale, and to explore the way that both government and village institutions negotiate that entanglement in governance.
7.4.4 Summary
The principles and practices of the fa’asamoa cultural governance system are entwined with the state in a number of important ways. The process of self-rule involved embedding the cultural governance system in the institutions of the territorial government, effectively entangling the two systems within the apparatus of the state. Beyond the institutional architecture though, the fa’asamoa is also ‘carried’ into state governance practices and processes by way of the people who work there. The fa’asamoa is an embodied system, which makes it difficult to displace social norms and practices such as respect for rank and titles, even if they conflict with the expectations and ideals of liberal democratic government. Thus, those in leadership and bureaucratic positions within government are engaged in a process of constant negotiation between the multiple and sometimes conflicting roles and responsibilities that they have to their work and their extended families. There is debate about the extent to which the two systems should be separate, and much of this debate revolves around the role of the matai in both the senate and the bureaucracy. While there was disagreement about the value of separating cultural and political processes, most agreed that in a place as small as American Samoa, it is unavoidable that the state and cultural systems become intertwined and that conflicts between the two are a difficult yet inevitable part of governance in small islands.

7.5 Conclusion
Returning to Research Question 1 there are a number of differences in the form and function of key governance actors at the territorial scale in comparison to the literature on governance. Like in many small islands, the state in American Samoa is large in relation to the population and compared to other key actors in governance. Reinforced by the financial and institutional support of the United States, the institutions of the state are well resourced and centrally organised under a strict hierarchy headed by the Office of the Governor. So, whereas the Anglo-European centric literature on governance asserts that there is a universal rolling back of the state, in American Samoa the large centralised state plays a dominant role in governance compared to the small secular civil society and the specialised and dependent private sector. Because of the scale of the American Samoan governance landscape and the geography of the islands these sectors face significant challenges in gaining the means and the mandate to rival the dominance of the state in governance. That said, they do interact with the state in important ways.
and for most interviewees the lack of influence of these institutions is understandable in the context of small island governance.

In terms of Research Question 2’s concern with relative authority however, this chapter shows that power of the state to govern is not simply due to its size, it is also due to the way in which it is integrated with the other two pillars of governance, the church and the chiefs. Institutionally these connections have been embedded in the form and function of the state since the creation of the territorial government. Connections are also reinforced through crossovers in leadership and the important ways in which individuals carry both religion and culture into the everyday practices of the state. As the analysis of this chapter shows, the interviewees had complex and nuanced opinions on the way in which these boundaries occur, and on the benefits and costs of this in practice. While respondents in this research would at one level concur with the mainstream literature on governance that blurred boundaries are a fundamental part of governing, somewhat contrary to the normative opposition of this in the governance literature, in this case respondents found value in the integration of authority of the three pillars of their governance system in terms of the management of collective problems like disasters.

With respect to Research Question 3, which concerns modes of governance, the analysis shows that while it is clear that the boundaries between the state, the church and the chiefly system are porous this does not mean that the governance at this scale is organised in terms of voluntary, reciprocal networks. As many interviewees pointed out the hierarchies of each sphere of governance remain strong even while they are working in tandem. This means that those who do the work of governance need to be skilled at moving between these entangled hierarchies, navigating multiple and often conflicting roles and responsibilities. As many of the interviewees argued, this is a normal if difficult aspect of small island politics. In these discussions on entangled hierarchies and multiple roles the interviewees regularly mentioned the spatial sphere of the village as a demarcating line where governance roles and responsibilities become more defined. Indeed, the village level cannot be ignored in a study of governance in American Samoa, even though such very local governance activities are overlooked by the mainstream literature on governance. The following chapter explores the concept of the village as a bounded sphere of governance and the various ways in which village institutions interact with the state in the governance of collective issues.
CHAPTER 8: VILLAGE-STATE RELATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION
The boundary between state and village authority is an important delineation in governance in American Samoa. This is not just a matter of the relative authority of particular actors, but also about how that authority changes at scale. As this chapter will show, for centuries the village or *nu’u* has functioned as a distinct political space that encompasses particular governance norms, institutions and practices. This chapter explores the way in which governance relations between the village and the state developed during the early days of naval rule and the various ways that the boundary between village and state governance was codified during the transition to self-governance. It then turns to an analysis of village governance institutions, principles and practices today and the way in which those practices lead to quite different modes of governance at the village level. Finally, the chapter argues that while village governance institutions and practices remain strong, the village is not an autonomous space and there are important moments and mechanisms of interaction that structure the relationship between the government and traditional institutions at the local level. Being the final findings chapter of the thesis, it aims to bring the findings of the previous two chapters to bear on what many of the interviewees saw as the most important dynamic in American Samoan governance, the relative role of the village and the state.

8.2 NEGOTIATING THE BOUNDARIES OF STATE AND VILLAGE AUTHORITY
As a political space, the village has a far longer history than the ‘national’ sphere of modern government in the Samoan islands. Set within a complex hierarchy of titled rights to customary land, the villages of American Samoa have traditionally been politically autonomous spaces, governed exclusively by the *matai*. Over time however, the bounded nature of village authority has changed, most significantly by way of the arrival of the missionaries and the United States government. This section outlines the history of the village as an autonomous sphere of governance and analyses the ways in which the two introduced powers of the church and the modern state sought to interact with village-based authority. Finally, the section explores the relative roles of the village and the state as embedded in the laws of the territorial government, and introduces the various ways that the line between village and state authority are interpreted today.
8.2.1 AN EARLY HISTORY OF VILLAGE AUTHORITY

As many Samoan scholars have noted, the *nu’u* has for centuries been the basic spatial unit of the traditional political system across the Samoan Islands (Amosa, 2010; Huffer and So’o, 2005; Iati, 2000). While there is no accurate translation for *nu’u* beyond village, as So’o (2008 pg 17) notes “a *nu’u* is more than a settlement implied by the term 'village'; it comprises a territory usually defined by boundaries from the central mountain ridges of the main islands to the outer reef. It is an independent political entity comprising a number of ‘āiga and their houses and lands”. The lands of a particular village are determined by the rank of the titled heads of each family and as such, the family’s place on the land is set within the context of a complex history of wars and distributions of titles, which in turn is embedded within the island wide governance system of counties and districts. As one interviewee explained;

*In the Samoan system, every family within and between each village has a place, because it’s organised. Salutations show the connections and how the families are related to one another, through their organisation or their blood ties. Everything is connected.* (Interview 16; Traditional Leader)

While these family groupings have changed over time, most ʻāiga have connections to their *nu’u* that go back hundreds if not thousands of years, and so each village has a particular shared history and powerful sense of collective identity (Levine, 2012).

Traditionally a *nu’u* was a politically autonomous territory governed by the chiefs of the village ʻāiga, and these chiefs had ultimate authority over the daily governance within the boundaries of the village (Meleisea, 1987b). Each *nu’u* had its own *fa’avae* or a constitution, which set out the rules of the village and importantly included the *fa’alupega*, an honorific code that ranks titles and families, and is spoken as a set of greetings at ceremonies and events to establish the hierarchy of participants and maintain order and respect (Iati, 2000). In this context, governance was institutionalised in the village *fono*, through which the chiefs arbitrated on all aspects of village life, from crime and disputes about land and titles, to the norms and customs of daily life (Amosa, 2010). As was outlined in Chapter 4 a great many aspects of this traditional village governance system remain influential to this day.

With the arrival of the missionaries the definitive authority of the chiefs to govern an established territory was challenged and changed in a number of important ways. When
the missionaries arrived in the Samoan islands they were warmly welcomed into the villages, both by the villagers and the political elite. As Meleisea (1987b) argues, the rapid acceptance of Christianity by the matai was most likely due to competition among the highest-ranking chiefs for new sources of sacred power. However, the first intervention of the church in the traditional system was to redefine chiefly authority as secular political authority rather than divine authority. As Sunia (2009) points out, the reorientation to monotheism meant that chiefs could no longer claim sacred powers based on their lineage and Ali’i title, and subsequently “the chiefs continued to lead and receive respect but any suggestion of godliness was abolished”. This had consequences for the differentiation of rank and titles between the Ali’i and the Tulafale, which had lasting effects within the Samoan title system (Meleisea, 1987a). The church also influenced the power structures of the matai system through the introduction of education and particularly, written language (Sunia, 2009).

That said, the matais of the time were strategic in the way they harnessed the opportunity presented by the arrival of the missionaries to increase their own governing power. For example, the chiefs quickly realised that the practice of sermons and preaching brought new opportunities for the talking chiefs to gain power and prestige (Duranti, 1981; Holmes, 1974). As the churches established in the islands, the Samoan chiefs were careful to incorporate the new authority into the political structures and institutions of the village rather than face competition to, or an alteration of their territorial authority (Gilson, 1970). They did this by conferring material wealth and status to the new pastors; fearing the preaching of middle class individualism, the high chiefs bestowed a new title Faife’au, onto the leading pastors and deacons of the various churches (Meleisea, 1987b). This was often accompanied by the provision of the best house in the village and the endowment of respect through regular gift giving and involvement in ceremonial customs. This tactic was extraordinarily effective, as one missionary during the early 1800’s was quoted as saying:

“Instead of accepting Christianity and allowing it to remould their lives, the Samoans have taken the religious practices taught to them and fitted them inside Samoan custom, making them a part of native culture... Christianity, instead of bursting the bonds of the old life, has been eaten up by it.” LMS church Missionary cited in (Shaffer, 2000)
As Hills (1993) argues, in every village and island the missionaries landed they found that they were cleverly used by the local populations and were quickly incorporated within the pre-existing political structures. The two power systems were intertwined most strongly at a village scale, which suited the missionaries, who were seeking to consolidate and ground their power in different districts according to denomination (Meleisea, 1987b). Church activities were therefore organised around individual *nu’us*, and over time the customs of the church began to incorporate the institutions of the village such as the organisation of the *aualuma* (discussed later in this chapter).

As a number of historians have argued, this entanglement was helped by the compatibility of the two systems; the hierarchical structure of the *matai* system was familiar to the church, and since the *matai* could serve as deacons and elders in the church “Christianity provided additional institutional support for the existing power structure” (Gilson 1970: 98, see also Sunia 2009). Similarly, while the missionaries sought to change some of the cultural practices such as dress, dance and sexual and marriage customs, many of the principles of the *fa’asamoa* such as compassion, sharing, and respect were seen to be compatible and in no need of intervention (Sunia, 2009). So, for the better part of the century, villages were governed relatively peacefully by the entangled institutions of religious and traditional authority. As the next section will show however, the arrival of the United States navy brought more change to the balance of village authority and once again presented a challenge to the territorialisation of governance within the boundaries of the village.

### 8.2.2 Negotiating the Politics of Land and Titles under Naval Rule

As Chapter 6 shows, the arrival of the United States was welcomed by the people of American Samoa as annexation was seen by most as a way to end the long and bloody inter-island conflicts, and as a means to establish more autonomy and power within the Samoan governance system. However, the introduction of a new overarching authority to the islands’ already complex governance system did present some challenges, particularly in terms of how an off-island ‘national’ state might affect the decentralised village-based governance landscape. As Olson (2002) argues, this question came down to how the United States navy would approach the politics of land and titles, and the extent to which the chiefs of American Samoa could negotiate compromise in order to retain some autonomy for the governance of individual villages.
As Lilomaia-Doktor (2009) argues, land in particular is a “source of spiritual nourishment and political and economic power for Samoans” and as the High Court of American Samoa has observed, that power has important genealogical roots:

“Land to the American Samoan is life itself. He cherishes the land where his ancestors came hundreds of years ago, and where he and his children were born. Land is the only thing he values above anything else because it belongs to him and will belong to his children, just as it belonged to his predecessors for centuries past” (Craddick v. Territorial Registrar, 1980, 1 Am. Samoa 2d 11, 13).

The control of land then, was always going to be the fulcrum of success in building mutually beneficial governance arrangements, and was the first issue to be negotiated in the early days of the American administration.

At least in principle, these negotiations were guided by the terms of the Deeds of Cession and as such the United States made significant concessions on the issue of land ownership. In the beginning of the administration, Commander Tilly, the first Governor and head of the territory ‘government’, was the sole legislator and Chief Justice (Shaffer, 2000). The first major law he enacted that directly involved local politics was a law that prohibited the alienation of communal land to non-native Samoans; leases were permitted but needed to be approved by the Governor and were capped at 40 years, with the provision that they are used for purpose within two years (Sunia, 2009). This had a twofold effect of reinforcing the power and legitimacy of the chiefs thus ensuring their support, as well as also achieving the Navy’s purpose of restricting outsiders, particularly Germans (Leibowitz, 1989; Morrison, 2013). According to Olson (2002), the Tilly administration recognised the connection between land, legitimacy and the spatial organisation of authority in the traditional power structure, and believed that it was unwise to override that history. Instead he used the Samoan village and districts as a basis for the political districts of the state, thus codifying the traditional alliances that were embedded in the spatial organisation of the fa’amatai (Armstrong, 2009) and reinforcing the importance of the village as a key governance sphere.

The fact that the Naval Administration legitimated the traditional governance arrangements for the management of land was a major win for the matai, which likely encouraged the chiefs to then concede on the desire of the administration to codify the
fa'amatai, and to bring it under the control of the legal system of the state. Laughlin’s (1982) historical analysis of early US administrative policy reveals that the US government strategically intervened in the matai titles system in three key ways during the period of navel rule, by:

1. Handing down the Tiumalu High Court decision (1902), which effectively increased the protection of the matai from forcible overthrow by their 'āiga
2. Requiring matai titles to be registered with the government (1906)
3. Making the splitting of titles nearly impossible through a series of High Court decisions (1920’s-30’s)

The Tilly government also restricted administrative office to high chiefs (not talking chiefs), reinforcing the effect of the missionary’s decision to reorient chiefly authority at the village level. This was due to recognition that talking chiefs had the power to be ‘king-makers’ in the sense that they were able to influence the processes of eligibility for high titles (Meleisea, 1987a). By limiting the power of the talking chiefs the administration were able to enforce the mutual reliance of the state and the high matai (M Olson, 2002). These decisions served the interests of both the US administration and the matais: the US was able to codify traditional authority, thus more closely aligning it with the state system, and at the same time the decisions protected the power of the incumbent matai against new and split titles, which they saw as having the potential to dilute chiefly power.

So, rather than replacing the system of matai control of communal village land, the early administration (like the missionaries) chose to piggy-back on the traditional hierarchies present in the authority structures of village and district councils (M Olson, 2002), which had the effect of tying the state in to the traditional system. In addition, they chose to modify the titles system in ways that reinforced incumbent matai power, which brought traditional authority closer to the control of the bureaucracy. In one sense the intertwining the state and the matai system was both expedient and necessary for an early foreign government that was operating out of a ship in the harbour (M Olson, 2002; Shaffer, 2000). From another perspective, it demonstrated a commitment to the principles of the Articles of Cession to protect the rights of the Samoans to their land.

Ultimately, the various concessions of the naval administrations on land, and the matai on the issues of titles, worked to increase the legitimacy and governing power of both
sets of actors. Whether born of pragmatics or principle, most of the laws and structures that were enacted in the early 1900s remain the basis for government to this day, and as the following section shows have been embedded in legislation and institutions that are designed to preserve the careful balance between state and village authority in governance.

8.2.3 Establishing the Boundaries of Village Governance
As Chapter 6 outlines, the transition to relative self-governance involved the inherently difficult task of balancing authority for governance between the United States government and the emerging territorial government. It also involved establishing agreement about the authority of the state relative to that of the village *fono*, which during the naval regime had continued to control most aspects of daily life (alongside the churches) at the local level (Sunia, 2009). In 1957, after strong recommendations by the US Circuit Court of Appeals, the territory established a centralised judicial system, abolishing the village courts and transferring their jurisdiction to the district courts. As Sunia (2009) argues, although this represented an incursion of the state into village governance, the chiefs were placated by an arrangement for rotating positions on the district courts, and the assurance that those courts would deal with crimes rather than cultural matters. When the chiefs came to draft the territory’s constitution and legal code, this demarcation of authority to regulate and enforce governance, as well as enact punishment and penalties was embedded into law for the territory, and this remains the case today.
### 5.0305 Village regulations—Penalties—Enforcement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The village council of each village may enact village regulations concerning the cleanliness of the village, planting of the lands, making and cleaning of roads, and any other matters of a strictly local nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Regulations enacted by a village council may not take effect until they have been approved by the Department of Samoan Affairs and have been proclaimed publicly and posted in writing by the pulenuu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The village council shall provide in the regulations the penalty to be imposed upon persons found guilty of violating the regulations. Penalties shall be limited to reasonable village work not to exceed 25 hours, or fines of money or property not to exceed $25 in amount or value, or both.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No village regulation may conflict with the Constitution or laws of the United States or with the Constitution or laws of American Samoa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Neither the pulenuu or the village council may inflict punishment upon any offender. Any offender shall be taken before the proper court, and tried and punished in accordance with the law.</td>
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As Figure 54 shows, by law villages are still able to enact rules and regulations for issues of village governance that do not involve crime and are ‘strictly local in nature’. For the most part, these powers correlate to similarly benign governance responsibilities as those in local government in larger liberal democracies, such as rubbish removal and local infrastructure provision and maintenance. For example, as Figure 55 shows, villages often have their own speed restrictions, though laws such as this are required to be authorised by the state.
Penalties and enforcement by the village council are restricted to small amounts of money or community service and importantly, are strictly limited to those issues that are deemed to be village governance responsibilities. Punishment as a mechanism for
governance is restricted to criminal offences, which is then deemed outside of the purview of village fonos, as one interviewee explains:

*The rule of the village council doesn't apply to serious things like crime, if that happens the government police will handle it.*” (Interview 2, Government)

Across all the rules in Figure 54 there are caveats that aim to demarcate state and village law and prevent conflict by establishing a hierarchy between the two. These clearly state that village laws, regulations and governance mechanisms cannot override government ones. However, as Hall (2001) observes in his study, in reality local (village fono) authority often does override that of the government.

The interviewees who reflected on relative authority of village and government agreed that in practice, authority was more often weighted towards village institutions despite official proclamations of formal government-based authority (as reflected in item b of Figure 54). A number of interviewees used the following example to explain that relative authority can be understood not by the rule of law but by who people listen to and obey:

*When you tell a talking chief to summon the village and he just blows the horn or rings the bell and everyone will come right. If a government policeman tries to do the same thing with his car and siren in the village it will take him a long time. You can see the difference.* (Interview 18; Traditional Leader)

Many of these interviewees spoke as well about the fact that while the state police might have jurisdiction over criminal incidents within villages, in practice they can find it difficult to exercise that authority.

*If something major happens the police will come to do their investigations but if they have no personal relationships with the community, they can't get any answers, there's no cooperation there at all. Communities sort of frown on them when they come into their villages.* (Interview 37, Government)

Some interviewees also pointed out that this is similar for government more generally, as this senior government official explained:

*There is a tendency for government agencies to come in and say, by statute and by law we are in control, but BAM (!) that raises the red flag for people. Yes, they are in control, but they have no authority in the village… Recognising the traditional*
cultural boundaries of authority is really important here, but I’m sure it would hold true in any country you know? (Interview 37, Government)

So, the relative authority of the village and the state is blurred in practice of governing, if not in law. The following section will explore these practices and the ways in which the institutions of the village continue to be influential in the governance of daily lives in American Samoa.

8.2.4 SUMMARY
The village has been a fundamentally important part of the traditional Samoan governance system for centuries. More than just a settlement, it is a social and political domain that binds families together through shared histories and common understandings of their place within the island wide hierarchy of chiefly titles and land tenure. While the organisation of this village hierarchy is persistent, the boundaries of village-based authority are porous, and have been subject to major changes over time. Traditionally the matai of each village had ultimate authority over village governance, however the arrival of the missionaries in the 1800’s had the potential to challenge the bounded and absolute nature of chiefly authority. Conversely, both the chiefs and the church recognised the benefits of cooperation and worked to cement a shared governance regime through interdependent leadership and blending of religious and traditional practices and principles. Similarly, during the period of naval rule the negotiation of the politics of land and titles was a cooperative one that (while requiring compromises from both sides) served to enhance the power of both to govern different aspects of the territory’s political system.

Both of these processes of change reinforced the importance of the village as a key site of governance. As the territory transitioned to self-rule and sought to establish a ‘national’ government, the potential for conflict between village and state governance regimes became more pressing, and a number of institutional reforms were put in place to demarcate the relative authority of the two. As a number of interviewees have pointed out however, there are often distinct differences between de-jure and de-facto relative authority between these two scales of governance. The following section takes this analysis further by exploring the contemporary organisation of village institutions and the various ways that governance is practiced at a village level.
8.3 **GOVERNANCE IN THE AMERICAN SAMOAN VILLAGE**

As the previous section has shown the traditional importance of the village as a space of governance is embedded in the history of American Samoan politics, and is recognised in the law and institutions of the state. As Hall (2001) argues, the village also remains a fundamentally important feature of the lives of Samoan people and is the space in which traditional practices of politics and governance have the most resonance. This section outlines the key institutions that govern the village, and explores the way in which these institutions interact through a range of practices that are particular to the customs and traditions of the Samoan governance system. Finally, the section explores the way in which disaster governance at a village scale both reinforced and challenged these practices and processes.

8.3.1 **VILLAGE INSTITUTIONS**

As the previous section shows, the village has long been governed by traditional Samoan institutions and practices, and while there have been changes to village authority over time, traditional modes of organisation still structure much of daily life in a *nu’u*. As many of the interviewees explained, life in an American Samoan village is highly structured; in addition to the hierarchy of the āiga, the community is split into groups that have responsibility for different aspects of governance. Figure 56 lists the main indigenous organisations of contemporary village governance and briefly describes their roles and responsibilities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Socio-political Institutions</th>
<th>Roles and Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matai</strong> - Holders of chiefly titles</td>
<td>Allocates and manages family land, distributes village resources and assets, resolves disputes, represents family interests in councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aiga</strong> - Extended families</td>
<td>Ensures wellbeing of other members of the ‘aiga, serves the matai through financial and in-kind contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aualuma</strong> - Organization of women; women’s group</td>
<td>Provides hospitality to village guests, village presentation, cleanliness and sanitation and health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aumaga</strong> - Organization of untitled men</td>
<td>Maintaining the village grounds and infrastructure; heavy labour; fishing and planting crops, enforcing village regulations, maintaining safety</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 56 Samoan Institutions and Roles and Responsibilities, Adapted from Rumbach and Foley (2014); Huffer and So’o (2005); Shore (1982); the American Samoa Constitution 1967

Chapter 4 showed that the authority of the chiefs to govern is fundamentally connected to the family grouping of the *āiga*. Therefore, understanding governance also requires understanding the structure of these Samoan family units, which are commonly regarded as the principle unit of Samoan social life (Tcherkézoff, 2000a).

The ‘āiga family unit is a cognatic group in which all members trace decent through either males and females from a common ancestor who defines the group (SW Tiffany, 1975). Members of an ‘āiga co-operate by preserving the name of that founding ancestor and respecting the ritual obligations associated with that name (Tcherkézoff, 2000b). Varying in size from a dozen people to over 1000 (Laughlin, 1980), an ‘āiga is more than a household unit, it is a grouping of people, that no matter where they live, recognise and acknowledge a commonality that is practiced through daily duties to serve the family (Tcherkézoff, 2000b). In the American Samoan context of migration between the islands and the United States, more often than not this means that families are spread over large distances. As this interviewee explained though, the mobility of families combined with
their commitment and loyalty to the āiga means that, even for those families that are spread over large geographical distances, the connections remain strong:

I would say there isn’t a family in American Samoa that doesn’t have a family out there in the United States. They have two families, one here and one there, but they are connected and they go over there all the time. So, we’re not like, cut off or isolated. The only reason we don’t go over more is because the planes don’t fly that often and it’s expensive. (Interview 38, Government)

Section 8.3.3 explores the way in which these links between on and off-island families serve to structure governance in time of disaster.

Beyond the organisation of the āiga, untitled men and women are organised into groups called aumaga for men and aualuma for women, both of which play important roles in village governance. Traditionally, the aualuma was reserved for young, unmarried girls who belonged to the village by birth, however in most contemporary Samoan villages the group comprises mostly young women, but can include wives of matai and women born outside the village who have married untitled men (Amosa, 2010). They are responsible for the healthcare and sanitation/presentation of the village, and they also play a pivotal role in the customs of hospitality within the āiga and village, which is an especially important aspect of the fa’asamoa, and is discussed further in the following section of this chapter. Figure 57 shows members of a village aualuma delivering trays of food to guests during a village ceremony.

Figure 57: Members of the aualuma distribute trays of food to guests at a village ceremony
On the other side of the gendered organisation of the village is the *aumaga*, which is often called *malosi o le nu’u*, or ‘the strength of the village’. Traditionally the *aumaga* were responsible for hunting and fishing as well as the protection and security of the village, internally in times of peace, and as the village army during times of war (Meleisea, 1987b). In recent times the *aumaga* still perform security and policing functions within the village; as one interviewee explained:

*The aumaga are the kind of local civil defence entity in the village* (Interview 21, Government)

As is discussed later in this chapter, the *aumaga* are also critical first responders in times of emergency.

As the previous section establishes, the churches are also an integral institution at the village level, and much of the work of the *aumaga* and *aualuma* revolves around the preservation and presentation of the church grounds and buildings. As one interviewee explained, the village church is integrally linked to the cultural (as much as religious) identity of the *nu’u*:

*Ok let me get this straight, let’s make sure we are on the same page... In every village, there is a church and that is the village pride and joy. That building is important, they give it everything they have. That is because, when Samoa was converted to Christianity it was a 100% conversion. All of us accepted this new God and became Christians. So, the church is not so much a place of worship but a place to demonstrate the pride and faith of the village* (Interview 38, Government)

As in the discussion about leadership at the state level, many interviewees pointed out that the indigenous and church based institutions are linked together by interdependent leadership, as well as through joint practices of governance. As this interviewee explained:

*The culture and the church kind of (pause) go together. The same chiefs that run the village are the same chiefs that are at the church, they govern together.* (Interview 46, Government)

The custom of enforced curfews (called *sa*) is a particularly revealing example of the way in which the power of the church to govern daily lives is supported by the traditional
authority of the village. In most American Samoan villages mid-afternoons are by far the most social and active time of the day. Large groups of children arrive back from school by bus, teenage boys play American football in the open fields of grass between the houses, and the young women of the village watch young children playing. At around 5.30pm however, the aumaga, dressed in uniform lavalavas (traditional skirts) and white shirts walk up the road and position themselves at a series of ‘village bells’ (old scuba tanks hanging from frames or trees (Figure 58). The aumaga then use a large stick to sound the bells for sa\textsuperscript{27}, which is understood to be the time where everyone in the village is inside their homes, having nightly prayer with their family.

Figure 58: The village bell used for to announce sa, village ceremonies or emergencies.

\textsuperscript{27} There is a warning bell at 5.55pm that signals for everyone to go inside, and then another at 6pm which marks the beginning of so, and another about fifteen minutes later to signal that the curfew period is over.
The aumaga are responsible for enforcing sa, including making sure no cars enter the village during the curfew. As Hall’s (2001) study on American Samoan curfews highlights, the matais and village council can, and do enforce curfew by means of fines and extra village work for violations. In addition to the early evening curfew, on most nights there will also be an evening bell; this time a conch shell blown loudly by one of a few aumaga riding through the village in the back of a pick-up truck. This nighttime bell serves to indicate the time when all children should be in bed and teenagers should be at home. As Hall (2001) argues, the two curfews serve different purposes in terms of governing village life. The first serves religious and cultural purposes - to enhance family connections and solidify the practice of prayer into daily life. The second night-time sa functions more as a mechanism for controlling and preventing crime and delinquency. In either case what is clear is that in terms of daily practices of village governance “The fa’asamoa and the church are connected, they are hand in hand” (Interview 18; Traditional Leader).

The final main governance institution at a village level is the pulenu’u, or mayor of the village. Established as an intermediary between the naval government in the first years after the partition, the role of the pulenu’u is nominally similar to that of a mayor in other liberal democratic contexts in that they are responsible for leading on local governance issues, keeping records, and reporting back to higher levels of the government (Figure 59).
While the duties of the *pulenu'u* are extensive, some interviewees pointed out that the role does not carry as much authority as the term ‘village mayor’ might suggest:

*Well you know, they call it a mayor, which sounds important, but really, they don’t have any power. We call them ‘messengers’. (Interview 20, Government)*

*It’s weird because the name has ‘pule’ in it, which means authority but they are not, when it comes down to it they still need to go through the higher chiefs for authority…. You have to be a matai but they are often small fry. (Interview 16; Traditional Leader)*

That said, they do play a pivotal symbolic role in connecting the state to the polity, and as is discussed in Chapter 4, they are key actors in times of emergency and disaster. The final
section of this chapter explores further the way in which the role of the *pulenu’u* and its connection to the department of Samoan Affairs blurs the line between state and village governance. The following section explores some the ways that these village-based institutions interact to construct quite particular modes of governance at the village scale.

8.3.2 PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES OF VILLAGE GOVERNANCE

As discussed throughout this thesis the cultural beliefs, customs, practices and principles of the *fa’asamoa* are primarily concerned with maintaining social and political order (Iati, 2000), and are thus critical to village governance, especially in that they determine the roles and obligations of people and groups in relation to one another (Gershon, 2006). As Chapter 4 introduced, the principle of *tautua*, or service, is a powerful one that underpins the accountability of *matai* to their *āigas*. Service within and between *āigas* also forms a crucial part of the political system at a local level, as explained by one interviewee:

> The strength of the family comes from the support, the service that is given to them by the people who are part of that family. In the old days that’s how you won wars, not only through your alliances but also from the back. And that’s what tautua is. (Interview 15 Civil Society).

Traditionally, service was rendered most regularly in the form of labour and participation in the institutions of the village, but was also paid to head *matai* in the form of food and ‘*ie tōga* (ceremonial fine mats) in times of need known as *fa’alavelave*, a particularly Samoan concept described in the following exchange:

> Can you explain fa’alavelave for me?
> I don’t want to say a disaster, but it is kind of a disaster. So, like a funeral everyone comes together. But it’s not always a crisis, weddings are fa’alavelave too. So, it’s anything that would cause a lot of burden on one individual, where instead people come together.” (Interview 12, Government)

In a contemporary context *fa’alavelave* are still an important practice in the lives of almost every Samoan, and ‘coming together’ in times of need is still very much focused on the distribution of food and the giving of gifts. Figure 60 shows the wedding of a daughter of a senior government official, and the distribution of over 40 intricately decorated wedding cakes to people of high status in order of their rank.
These customs of recognising rank through gift giving are a part of large weddings and ceremonies, as Ioane (1983 pg 527) argues:

“hardly is there an occasion anywhere, be it private or public, without the appropriate exchange of gifts... The giving and receiving of gifts therefore is an important social activity whose role, especially in connection with status-building, is a recognised vehicle through which power (both actual and imaginary) is transferred throughout the complex hierarchical structure of Samoan society.”

As many Samoan scholars have noted though, the rise of cash economies in both Samoas, and the responsibilities of service for families living overseas have meant that tautua is often paid in the form of cash.

Whether in cash or kind, the principle of tautua supports a distinctly communal mode of governance in the villages of American Samoa, and the practice of fa’alavelave is designed to underpin a communal approach to the distribution of resources. As the paramount chief of American Samoa explained, this is quite different to the models of wealth distribution and welfare in many other liberal and capitalist democracies:

So, you’re a palagi (Caucasian foreigner) right, if I give you $1000 what are you going to do with it? Probably go buy a new phone, pay off your credit card, it’s all
about taking care of you. You give me $1000, I’ll go give some to the pastors first ok? Then I’ll give some to my wife, make sure she gives some to my immediate family. But I’ll take most of it and keep it for my extended family, for fa’alavelave. Then of course if there is a government function I’ll give to that. Now here’s the catch, if I have a fa’alavelave my family will give it back, and the pastor will pray for me. In your case, you just have yourself. It’s like a machine, or a recycle system. It goes out and comes back in. (Interview number withheld; Traditional Leader)

Incidentally, while this quote says much about the role of structured moral economies in steering governance at a village level, it is also a telling description of the relative authority of village institutions in the order that the money is distributed. As the description notes the practice relies on reciprocal service to the family and the community, and this is very much tied to the rights to live in the village, as the following interview explained further:

That is fa’alavelave. If you don’t (pay service), after a while the matai can evict you. You can’t just go and live there and shut your doors and say don’t bother me I’m watching TV. No, no, no, it’s a communal lifestyle. (Interview 38, Government)

As will be discussed in the following section this principle of communal responsibility structures particular modes of governance in times of disaster.

Importantly from a governance perspective though, the concept of the collective, and the responsibilities of service is not generally considered from a ‘national’ or island wide perspective, rather it is confined to the āiga and the village. As one interviewee explained:

The traditional Samoan culture tends to dwell on bonding; on relationships, exchange, reciprocity rather than on a sense of community as a whole. So, it’s like, “this is my village, my county and you are from your village and your county”. Do you see the difference?"

Yes, that’s interesting. Do you have an example?

Yes, an example is in the villages the aumaga and pulenu’u keep the village clean and tidy but in between villages, on the roadsides and beaches, people don’t care as much and we’ve had big problems with littering…So people are community minded, you know, people will donate money and time to build a church, but it is a church for that
village. To build a swimming pool for the whole island, for everyone, that’s very tough. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

This explanation was also reflected in the decentralised and delineated approach of many villages to social services and community development. For example, Figure 61 shows a banner advertising the Nu’uuli village youth program aimed at governing youth behaviour within the village.

Figure 61: Banner advertising the Nu’uuli Village Youth Coalition Program

The following section takes up this point about the bounded nature of village governance, and explores the way in which village institutions responded to the governance challenge of the 2009 tsunami.

8.3.3 Village Governance in the Tsunami

As Chapter 5 shows, the pulenu’u, the aumaga and the aualuma were critical first responders in the initial stages of the disaster, and for many of the interviewees, the
success of the village response was due to the established hierarchies and organisation within and between the institutions of the nu’u. As one of the very many interviewees who shared this opinion explained:

*Islander people work in teams. Culturally and traditionally they work in teams. Those teams are functional groups that are already in place, and they are disciplined groups. So, this is how people will function and respond in disasters. Each group with its own responsibilities will sweep through the village doing what they need to do and they will meet up with the other groups knowing exactly what those other groups are doing as well. They will have command posts, but not like you would think of a command post – mostly they’ll be standing under a breadfruit tree, or what’s left of it, and they don’t need to be referring to a plan at that point.* (Interview 37, Government)

When asked about their role in disaster governance most of the senior matai interviewees indicated that their main role was to ensure the organisation of the village structure, as this interviewee explained:

*I just needed to tell the village police and the mayors ‘be aware of what your functions are and do that, if you have a problem come to me and I’ll sort it out’ but each has a role and I don’t need to do it for them.* (Interview 16, Traditional Leader)

Other interviewees echoed this perspective with an emphasis on the practiced nature of village organisation and governance:

*When a big wave comes, the aumaga and everybody run in to help. It’s a community thing, as it is all over the world. But, more so with us because we practice it all the time. We practice all the time through, fa’alavelaves and the fa’asamoa generally.* (Interview 17, Traditional Leader)

The value of these village based institutions and practices in emergency management has been highlighted in a number of studies since the disaster (Binder et al., 2014; Lindell et al., 2015; Rumbach and Foley, 2014).

The disaster response also confirmed the importance of familial connections in structuring governance practices within and beyond the village, and in the early stages of the tsunami these were integral. For many of the interviewees these family networks were understood to be the key to community resilience, and some made comparisons to
other parts of the world where collective familial governance practices are not as strong, as in this discussion:

*We’re thankful for the culture and having tight knit families because it makes us very resilient people. Yes, something horrible can happen but we will do what we need to do to overcome that, and that’s all because we have that village system where we can lean on one another. It’s not like the US mainland, and I lived there, you don’t have that, there is a disconnect. You can’t rely on your neighbours. They’re not going to come and offer you the help like you can get here.* (Interview 30, Government)

While people from unaffected parts of the island came to help members of their families, most of the survivors wanted to remain in their villages despite the damage, as one interviewee explained:

*People didn’t want to be relocated, they wanted to be close to their people and in that aspect villages really embraced their own people. For us it’s always been this way.* (Interview 20, Government)

This again shows the importance of the spatial boundaries of the village in the governance of collective issues.

While village-based activities remained central, the practices of familial care and welfare provision also extended to the international diaspora of American Samoans. In fact, as many interviewees explained, families in the United States were connected and involved with the disaster from the immediate impact:

*Everyone has families off-island and from the moment it happened you could not call here because you had so many people calling in.*

I heard that some people didn’t know there was a tsunami until they got calls from their relatives.

*Yes absolutely. And now-days you can see it straight away on Facebook and on the news in California and Honolulu.* (Interview 26, Government)

The interviewees explained that international families of the survivors contributed significantly to their financial support by way of fa’alavelave, although little is known about the amount of financial relief this contributed in total, as it was controlled and
distributed by the matais of each family rather than a central agency, as this interviewee describes:

So, money comes in from people’s families off-island to help with the recovery. It’s important to recognise that that money comes from extended families for extended families, it’s not individual to individual. It goes to the head matai, and the government infrastructure there backs away because we know that that is a family to family exchange. Now that matai has to distribute that money for the good of the family. (Interview 37, Government)

Interestingly though, it seems that the scale of the disaster was such that the assistance from the American Samoan diaspora went beyond the family-to-family wealth transfers that are typical of fa’alavelave. As the analysis for Chapter 4 revealed, donations from off-island made up a large part of the relief effort, and much of this came from the American Samoan communities in places like California, Utah, Washington and Hawaii (DOI 2). Overall, 110 individual donations totalling around $US488,270 were taken by the American Samoan Government’s Disaster Relief and Recovery Program Fund (ASG 2), and interviews with those who managed the fund confirmed that the majority of these came from individuals and organisations that were American Samoan and had familial ties to the island. Even for these centralised donations though, there was a sense that during the disaster, for those off-island, the concept of family took on broader connotations. This was eloquently expressed in the condolences that were sent by American Samoan inmates in Washington’s McNeil Island Correctional Facility who wrote:

“To the islands of my race. I am very sorry for your loss. Much alofa to you all. We are all āiga, we are all suffering together.” (Samoa News, October 24, 2009, pg 1)

Both the fa’alavelave and the donations and condolences show the prevailing strength of the connection between families on the islands and the United States, and the different mechanisms that the diaspora will use to participate in the governance of a local disaster. They also demonstrate that while the village is a somewhat bounded space with its own institutions and a propensity for exclusive governance practices, there are circumstances in when governance becomes an island wide concern. As the following section will outline, there are also circumstances when the line between village and state authority is blurred, and disasters are a valuable window into that process.
8.3.4 Summary
The village and its institutions continue to be of fundamental importance to the American Samoan political system. While the organisation of a village is tightknit and seemingly networked, it is in fact made up of highly structured groups (such as the āiga, the aualuma, the aumaga and the village church), which are hierarchically organised both within the institutions, and between them. These hierarchies are reinforced by structured moral economies that are supported by practices of reciprocal service and distribution of resources within family groups. Both the organisation of the villages, and the practices that support that organisation, are revered by American Samoans, and, as many of the interviewees argue, serve communities well in times of disaster. The importance of families as institutions of governance was markedly revealed during the response and recovery from the 2009 tsunami, and demonstrates the different ways governance can be organised both socially and spatially. While it is clear that villages in American Samoa tend towards exclusivity in the governance of their own āiga, the tsunami demonstrated that this spatial demarcation is not entirely fixed. As the following section will show, there are blurred boundaries between village, state and international governance spheres, and this affects any analysis of the relative authority between the state and the village.

8.4 The Blurred Line Between Village and State Governance
As this chapter has shown there is a distinct delineation between state and village governance spheres that is embedded in both the laws and the practices of governance in the territory. While this separation remains fundamentally important, the line between the two spheres is far from concrete, and relative authority at scale is, like most aspects of American Samoan governance, the product of negotiation and change over time. This section outlines the institutions that have been designed to cross the state-village divide, and explores the way that they construct particular joint governance practices that reveal much about relative authority in this scalar context. It also explores the way in which broader societal and economic changes are rendering the distinction between village and state governance less significant, particularly in the context of an increasing reliance on the United States, as epitomised in disaster relief funding.
8.4.1 Bridging Institutions and Practices

As Chapters 6 and 7 outlined, the transition to (relative) self-governance and the development of the territorial government catalysed the codification of a line between the authority of the village and that of the state. The section also argued that, while the law remains clear on the relative authority of the government over village councils, in practice it is far less straightforward. In many ways, this is because from the beginning of the relationship with the United States, institutions such as the office of Samoan Affairs and the pulenu’u have been designed for the specific purpose of linking village and state governance. As a number of interviewees argued, in the early 1900s this was an operational necessity for the Navy.

*It’s been here since the beginning with the initial administrators, which was the navy. They saw the need for Samoan Affairs from the very beginning as a group that would assist them to explain and keep the culture and bring it in to the fold of government, and help them deal with issues that are unique to Samoan culture. Not everything is subject to the US law you know.* (Interview 22, Government)

The responsibility to arbitrate between law and custom remains crucial today, and as this senior government interviewee explains, the department’s main role of resolving disputes around land and titles is enabled precisely by the blend of legal and customary authority afforded to the leaders of the department:

*Now they (Samoan Affairs) are not there as judges to determine who’s right and who’s wrong like judges. Their purpose really is to find ways to make sure people live with themselves peacefully. So, you and I might argue over a boundary line for where to plant trees on communal land after a change of chiefs. So, this is a case where you would go to Samoan Affairs and they would say ‘Listen is it really your cousins land? And is this why the head of Samoan Affairs needs to be a paramount chief?*

*Yes. It has to be that way because culturally there is respect for our high chiefs.*

*Which gives them the power to negotiate?*

*Well the power is provided by law, but the respect is provided by their titles. So, you can go in to those negotiations, and since they are not really about law, you could say to Samoan Affairs well it’s none of your business if me and my cousins are*
fighting. But no one does that over here because you are talking to a high chief and you listen. (Interview 38, Government)

The fact that this role is nested within the apparatus of the state but relies operationally on the authority of the cultural governance system is a significant example of the bending of village and state governance from an institutional perspective.

In a more practical sense, the mandate of Samoan Affairs sanctions the connection of village and state governance through the role of the pulenu‘u or village mayor. This political post was similarly instituted by the Naval administration and persists today with over 100 pulenu‘u serving in villages across the islands. From one perspective, the role and function of the political post can be seen as a means for the state to control villages through oversight, and an explicit mechanism for the state to reach in to village based governance (Va’a, 2000), and the rules around reporting village fono decisions (Figure 62) would certainly suggest that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.0307 Village records and reports.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The pulenu‘u shall record in a book all matters discussed by the village council in all meetings. Each pulenu‘u shall report the resolutions passed at meetings, and also his general work, to the county chief, who shall transmit them to the Governor through the Office of Samoan Affairs. Such reports shall be made at the beginning of each month.</td>
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Figure 62: Village Records and Reports, American Samoa Code Annotated §5.0307

However, as the previous section outlined, most people consider that in practice mayors have little power to influence the state beyond these reporting functions. For most of the interviewees who discussed the role, the pulenu‘u were an important (if not influential) bridge between ‘national’ and local scales of governance. This was seen as particularly important for collective governance issues like disasters, which manifest at a local level and require immediate action from the villages.

As Chapter 5 showed, the pulenu‘u were extremely influential in managing the evacuations of villages and the American Samoan Government is careful to support this role. Figure 63 shows a meeting of the pulenu‘u at the offices of Samoan Affairs in which the mayors were receiving training on the best ways to evacuate in the event of a tsunami.
Since the tsunami there have also been various programs aimed at training the aumaga in medical emergency treatment and technical first response activities.

In fact, emergency management training in American Samoa is particularly revealing of the way in which departments of the government deliberately harness village institutions in order to elevate their power to govern at both a state and local level. As a senior government emergency manager explained, the power of the church at the village level makes it a valuable partner in facilitating community engagement with state activities:

_We always have them in our meetings. There is always a representative of faith-based communities in our meetings. We go straight to the main congregations, the Methodists, the Mormons, the LDS and the Catholics. We try to include each denomination in our meetings. (Why is that?) Because for our events they help to get a good turnout. They are good partners in that way. They have a very strong influence on the community. They are very strong._ (Interview 4, Government)
This pragmatic recognition of the value of the church in bridging the state-society divide was mirrored in a number of village outreach sessions that were attended as part of the participant observation of this research. Figure 64 shows an emergency evacuation training session jointly conducted by the Department of Homeland Security and National Weather Service (American Samoa). As the facilitators of these events explained, in order to reach the people of the village, the government needed the support of the church and the chiefs, and this was best attained through the village church, a space where these two authorities are typically intertwined, and one where the community is used to receiving direction about the governance of collective issues.

![Image: Figure 64: Village outreach session on emergency preparedness run by Homeland Security's Territorial Emergency Management Coordinating Office and NOAA's National Weather Service American Samoa]
As one outreach officer explained, an essential part of this process is acknowledging the hierarchies of the village:

*When you go to a village you need to have a very good view of who is who – who is the high chief, the talking chiefs, and you need to know exactly how to address all these people. And the same thing with the church, you need to know the hierarchy... There are two levels of language that you need when you go into villages. You need to do a Samoan introduction, pay respect to the important people of that village. At the end of doing your outreach – if there is any food served or water given by the village during the outreach you have to stand and use formal language to thank them for their hospitality.* (Interview 46, Government)

As these perspectives suggest and the events themselves showed, representatives of government departments are deferential to village practices and institutions when conducting outreach in villages. While they are clearly leveraging the power of institutions like the church to engage the community, they are also well aware that, at a local level at least, the organising principles and practices of the village have more resonance than those of the state. As many interviewees pointed out though, the strength of village institutions to govern the bounded space of the village is changing through a number of processes, which are explored in the context of disaster governance in the following section.

**8.4.2 Changing Governance Practices**

There is a growing literature that focuses on the way in which cultural governance practices and processes are changing in independent Samoa due to a range of forces including: increasing integration into global economies, increased mobility, and subsequent changes in social norms and work practices (C MacPherson, 2013; C MacPherson and L MacPherson, 2011; Thornton et al., 2010; 2013). While there is not an equivalent literature in the American Samoan context, interviewee discussions around disaster governance and community resilience pointed to similar patterns of change. Most significantly, the interviewees argued that the formative status of village structures and institutions, and therefore their relative authority in people's lives, were beginning to change. As this interviewee added after explaining the institutional organisation of the village:
Although that is changing. Now we have to tell the young guys to do things more. It's just about the world we're living in, the new modern world... there's a changing of people's roles, because people are working when they get home they don't want to do the villages chores as much. (Interview 19, Government)

A number of other interviewees agreed that the cash economy and full-time work has put pressure on the reciprocal practices of kinship governance, and while they are still observed by most, there is a growing disillusionment with the monetary and time burdens of these practices. Some institutions are trying to combat this by lowering the expectations of practices like fa’alavelave, as this pastor indicated:

I've been trying to tell my congregation that they don't need to keep spending more and more on fa’alavelaves. Especially with weddings, they are just so expensive. There will be tiers of 30 or 40 cakes (laughs)! From the Christian perspective, from the spiritual perspective, it's too much. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

The financial pressure on families to keep up with the obligations of the cultural economies of the village were highlighted by many interviewees, and by the advertisements on the local radio stations for (high interest) short term loans available for fa’alavelave.

As the structure and organisation of the village changes, so too does the relative authority of local governance institutions, and this has implications for the balance of relative authority within the village and more broadly. Within the village, a number of interviewees noted the growing inclination towards more individualistic lifestyles is affecting all the major governance institutions:

There are frictions between both the matai and the churches with communities as things change. As people get more stable they don't need the church as much, and as people become more individual they don't need the extended families of the matai as much. The extended families are very important in our culture but that has changed too. (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

More broadly there was a strong sense among the interviewees that the reliance on the United States was having a significant impact on the practices and institutions of village based governance; an effect that can be seen most clearly through the provision of disaster relief. As a number of interviewees argued, the repeated interventions of the US
government in disaster relief is having lasting effects on the power of local governance institutions and practices to lead the recovery process:

_Oceania people are good at working in groups, harmoniously helping each other in these types of situations, and there is still a trust that is left in that process, trust in your neighbours and looking after one another. But there is increasingly a tendency to move away from that since major agency responses have started to make people think ‘oh well, they will bring everything’, which they will … they will even rebuild you house for you – and people then forget what they were taught and what their parents were taught about what you can do for yourself._ (Interview 37, Government)

The reliance on the United States is not just monetary however, and as a number of interviewees pointed out, the technology and expertise of the federal government is also shifting the scales of relative authority on some issues. As one interviewee put it:

_Well you know some of the changes in our lives recently, it seems that we are heading towards being more American than being Samoan. The technology these days, it really shows where our culture is going._ (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

An interesting example of this is the sirens that were installed following the tsunami to provide an island wide warning system for all types of emergencies. As Figure 65 shows, these high-tech sirens are prominent in the landscape of the villages, and are a reminder that the technologies and information of the United States are ever present in the governance of the islands. From a more poetic perspective, the photo shows the overlay of cultural and political change in the oversized flag flying next to a traditional village _fale._
For many interviewees, the expectation that the United States would take care of them in times of disaster has led to changes in both mind-set and behaviour of the population in American Samoa. A number of interviewees lamented that the ease of disaster relief claims in the past had caused some to make misleading claims more recently, as this interviewee explained:

*I mean you know, every time there is an event, and I’ve been here since hurricane Ofa in the 1980’s, we all joke that your shack is now down – that’s odd cause it was up right after the hurricane! ... the issue was that people claimed that the little fales that they had for napping you know, they claimed those as houses and then brand-new FEMA houses came up afterwards. That’s not right. I saw that happening in hurricane Olaf and hurricane Val. And then hurricane Hector come along in 2003 and then FEMA got smart.* (Interview 30, Government)
For others, there was concern that the reliance on the United States was affecting the resilience of the people more broadly, by breaking down the systems of self-reliance and autonomy that are inherent in the village system:

*It’s not free. I don’t think many people understand that. But it’s the mind-set that comes with that too. Like I don’t have to do anything to protect myself from any kind of disaster or anything because someone is going to come and take care of me – when did we become that type of people, that rely on outside help? When did we stop relying on ourselves to do the most that we are capable of doing before we accept outside help? I guess that would be my bigger question.* (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

There was little debate among the interviewees about the idea that there were risks to overreliance on American support in times of disaster, and otherwise. However, for the most part the interviewees were unconvinced that the cultural practice of village-based governance would be abandoned altogether, as expressed by this interviewee:

*I believe the parts of the culture that deserve to survive will. Things are always changing and we always adapt in some way.* (Interview number withheld, Civil Society)

Like with so many aspects of American Samoan governance the balance of relative authority for governance at scale is itself subject to change, and is just one part of the evolving mix of practices and processes that make up the island’s governance regime.

**8.4.3 SUMMARY**

While the village remains an important site of governance in American Samoa, the *nu’u* is by no means an island. Since the beginning of the relationship with the United States (and hence the introduction of the state), institutions such as the *pulenu’u*, and arms of the state such as Samoan Affairs, have served to blur the boundaries of governance at local and national scales. In contemporary governance, many departments of the state are concerned with bridging the state-village divide, and practices of emergency management outreach show the way that the state harnesses institutions such as the village church to govern collective problems at a local scale. While its clear from the behaviours of state officials in these settings that village customs and practices take precedence and are to be revered, many interviewees reflected that the prominence of the village structure is also changing by way of social and economic circumstances, not
least a potentially increasing dependence on the United States, shown most prominently in the island reliance on US disaster relief. In this way, change itself is having the effect of blurring the boundaries of governance at scale, however as many interviewees argued this is simply part of the ongoing processes of negotiation and change in the American Samoan governance system.

8.5 CONCLUSION
As this chapter has shown, the village in American Samoa is more than just a settlement, it is a political and cultural space in which the institutions of the traditional governance system have evolved over centuries yet remain strong in day-to-day governance. These actors and institutions are different from those proposed in the mainstream governance literature in many ways; they are organised around networks of kin and based on cultural and religious principles such as respect and service, as well as practices such as gift giving and reciprocal economies. In contrast to much of the mainstream literature on governance, which tends to see ‘local’ governance as being far less hierarchical, the village in American Samoa is strictly stratified. In fact, each institution such as the aumaga or the āiga has its own internal hierarchy, which then forms part of the broader hierarchy of the village system, which in turn is grounded within a broader island-wide hierarchy of chiefly titles to land and districts. Thus, hierarchy is certainly not dead in the Samoan context. For most of the interviewees this hierarchical mode of governance is not seen as an antiquated form of organisation (as is the case for most governance theorists) but instead the structured order of the village is viewed as a fundamental asset of their culture that leads to effective governance (as in times of disaster), and underpins resilience in times of change. While these village-based institutions are overlooked in the literature it is clear from this analysis that they continue to play an extremely important role in governance.

The village is also a space that has been subject to change in the types of actors that govern it and the boundaries that delineate relative authority. Once the exclusive domain of the chiefs, the village has faced multiple incursions on its autonomy over time, and the history of relations with both the missionaries and the early naval administration shows that the chiefs embraced change and compromise in order to keep control over land and authority at the village level. This process involved codifying the relative authority of the village council and the state, however as the analysis of this chapter shows, there are
often differences in legal and practiced aspects of that authority. The emergence of a territorial state led to the development of bridging institutions such as Samoan Affairs and the *pulenu’u* that connect the villages to the state, and these continue to function in contemporary governance processes to blur the boundaries between the two.

While it is clear that the village remains a fundamental sphere of governance, it continues to be subject to change and is influenced by processes at international and island-wide scales. In this sense, the analysis of the village as a space of governance brings together the findings of the previous chapters on the relative role of the state and the relationship with the United States to show the connected and relational nature of governance in American Samoa over time and across scales. The final chapter of this thesis will review those findings and draw some conclusions on the value of this study as a comparative study of difference in governance theory.
CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This final chapter of the thesis aims to draw together the findings of this research to reflect on the way in which governance in American Samoa compares to the claims of and debates in the governance literature. It reiterates the key elements of the conceptual framework of the study and reviews the findings of the study in terms of the three research questions that relate to that framework. Following this summary of the thesis, the chapter turns to the contribution of these findings to the key debates, claims and theories of governance as well as the practice of the study of governance. Finally, the chapter suggests some future directions for research of this kind.

9.2 THESIS SUMMARY

The rationale for this research is based on an emerging critique from a small group of political scientists and geographers who claim that there is now a universalising consensus across the political and social sciences in thinking about governance. Importantly, they argue that this consensus is influenced by normative bias and deserves critical reflection, especially considering the narrow empirical focus of the core literature and the apparent reticence of key theorists to look beyond the Anglo-European (and American) contexts of the origins of the theory. Principally, they suggest that there is a need for comparative and grounded research on governance in diverse contexts in order to question some of the assumptions of the mainstream literature. This thesis seeks to contribute to this aim by taking a political geography approach that seeks to look for difference in the theory and practice of governance in order to potentially disrupt grand narratives about its form, function and influence on the world.

The thesis does this by using American Samoa as a comparative case that stands in distinction to the large continental, industrialised northern states that the governance literature is focused on. Being a small non-sovereign island in the middle of the Pacific, the points of difference are stark. The aim of the approach then was to investigate the ways in which a different scale, space and place might mediate governance in practice. This idea of ‘in practice’ is critical, as while there are many and varied ways to define the key concepts of governance this thesis understands it in terms of the more nuanced definitions of governance as an activity that is practiced by actors operating within and
through institutions at different scales for the purposes of achieving collective goals. This activity is an inherently complex one to study, involving multiple actors and sectors – themselves difficult to define and subject to much debate across the social and political sciences – operating at multiple scales. Additionally, considering that one of the key claims of governance theory is that there is an increasing blurring of boundaries between these actors and scales, there are significant epistemological challenges in trying to ‘see’ and analyse governance in practice. This thesis therefore draws on multiple perspectives on the study of governance to layer different understandings and build a more comprehensive picture of governance in a particular place.

It does this by first taking a historical approach to understanding governance in American Samoa, drawing on secondary accounts of the territory’s political history and primary documents that outline and archive the negotiations over the authority of different actors at key points in time. However, very little has been written about the nature and practice of contemporary governance regimes in American Samoa, and so the thesis also needed to take an interpretive approach to the subject, which involved understanding governance as constructed by the way it is viewed and practiced by American Samoans. So, the research for this study was heavily reliant on semi-structured interviews and throughout this thesis direct quotes were used frequently to privilege the voices of the interviewees in the characterisation and explanation of their own unique system of governance. The empirical work for the study also involved participant observation of governance practices and processes to ground the study’s interpretation of the participants perspectives. Finally, the thesis also approached the 2009 tsunami in American Samoa as a window into some of the more dynamic aspects of governance in the territory. This threefold approach to understanding the practice of governance in American Samoa is unique among governance studies, and has provided a triangulation of evidence and rich empirical data upon to which to answer the aim and research questions.

The structure of the thesis reflects the logic of this threefold approach, layering complexity in the story of governance in place and over time. As such Chapter 4, begins with an analysis of the form and function of the key players in the American Samoan political system. The chapter finds that the governance landscape of the territory is dominated by three key actors; the chiefs, the church and the state, each of which are
characterised by formal and informal governance functions that are distinctly hierarchical in nature yet intertwined in both history and practice. This is followed in Chapter 5 with an introductory analysis of their roles in the response and recovery of the 2009 tsunami. It finds that interactions between the key actors were mostly cooperative in practice, but that relative authority differed at different stages of the disaster. These two chapters essentially give preliminary answers to all three research questions about the form and function, relative authority and modes of governance in the territory. It is preliminary, however, in that while useful in outlining the actors themselves and the issue to be governed, analyses such as these fall short of examining the relations between political actors, which is the key object of inquiry for governance theory.

The thesis therefore moves to a more detailed, historically grounded exploration of key relationships at different scales. These chapters are designed to identify the key players at that scale, to explore the history of relations and practices of governance that operate at that scale, and to analyse opinions and debates about modes of governance within that context. In that context Chapter 6 examines the relationship between the United States government and the hybrid institutions of the territorial government. It finds that while the territory remains legally dependent, the long history of negotiations on the issue of self-governance has led to complex institutions and practices that defy a simple top down reading of governing authority. The chapter also establishes the importance of the relationship with the United States to the people of American Samoa, as well as the way in which it structures relationships between key actors at a territorial or ‘national’ scale, which is the subject of Chapter 7. This chapter finds that due to the institutional and financial support of the United States the American Samoan government remains a powerful actor in governance and this is only reinforced by the small size of the territory which both amplifies the role of a well-supported government and crowds out both private sector actors and formal civil society such as NGOs. As the analysis in this chapter (as well as that of Chapter 4) notes however, the two-tiered state is not the only governing authority. Religious and cultural institutions have significant roles at both the national scale but most significantly at the hyperlocal level of the village, and Chapter 8 then explores the relationship between village governance institutions and the state. The analysis finds that cultural and religious institutions of the fa’asamoa, the fa’amatai, and the various Christian churches play incredibly significant roles in American Samoan
governance at all scales and that delineation between village and government governance institutions was complex, often contradictory and changeable.

Each of the chapters of the thesis ends with a brief reflection on the way in which these findings compare to the key claims of the governance literature, but these have been brief in order not to interrupt the narrative of the thesis and to focus the analysis on American Samoa itself. The next section returns though to the aim of the thesis which is to compare the practices and processes of governance in American Samoa with the claims and debates of the governance literature.

9.3 Aim and Research Questions

The analysis of this thesis was guided by the following aim:

To further a geographical understanding of difference in governance practices and processes by examining how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa compare to the key claims of the governance literature.

In order to achieve that aim the thesis established three broad research questions that guide the comparison between the key claims outlined in Chapter 2 and American Samoan governance practices and processes; they are:

1. What types of actors and institutions dominate are involved in governance in American Samoa and what is their form and function?
2. How is relative authority between key actors articulated in practice?
3. What modes of governance do these actors and practices produce?

On the whole the study showed that there were some similarities between the way governance is practiced in the territory of American Samoa and the way it is characterised in the governance literature, but that overall the differences were stark across all three research questions.

Research Question 1 asks about the types, form and function of the governance actors in American Samoa and the analysis from this research revealed three important points of comparison. First, and perhaps most striking, is the fact that the types of governance actors in American Samoa are very different to those described in the mainstream governance literature. Where the Anglo-European governance literature assumes a
secular, (neo)liberal-democratic triumvirate of private sector actors - the state and not-for-profit actors (mainly in the form of NGOs) - the key actors in American Samoa include chiefs who represent traditional authority, and churches that govern by way of religious authority. These are not peripheral actors by any means; they govern at all scales and are influential in both the daily lives of people in the territory as well its formal political practices, processes and institutions. The fact that these actors are not included in the Anglo-European literature presents a problem of comparison and shows the limits to universalised explanations of governance.

There is also an assumption in the governance literature about the type of state that is involved in governing, which is almost universally considered to be sovereign, large and continental. The state in American Samoa is not and never has been a sovereign, centralised, territorial state. Instead the apparatus of the state is spread across the territorial government and that of the United States, and the institutions of the state have evolved to reflect the mechanisms of indirect rule by an off-island government. As the analysis in Chapter 6 in particular shows, this has resulted in complex governance institutions that blur the boundaries between domestic and international governance processes. In this sense it could be argued that the case supports theories of multilevel governance that emphasise the power of extraterritorial governance actors to ‘reach-in’ to domestic politics. However, unlike in most of the narratives of globalisation, it is not private sector nor non-state actors that have blurred that boundary but a metropolitan state through the interventions of both a navy and a sovereign government. This has consequences for the type of multi-level governance that develops in place and is perhaps better characterised through narratives of relations of dependence rather than by way of debates around globalisation or multilevel governance.

Secondly, the form of the governance actors in American Samoa also presents some stark differences with those of the governance literature, which speak to the construction of their relative authority. This is particularly so with respect to the size of the state, which far from shrinking remains large in terms of the number of people it employs relative to the population, as well as in terms of the number and diversity of its intuitions. Unlike the cases that preoccupy Anglo-European governance theorists, there was no significant rationalisation of the state in American Samoa and the political economy of the territory, underpinned as it is by MIRAB relations of economic dependence (Bertram, 1999) has
prevented the growth of private sector and not-for-profit actors, leaving both of these sectors relatively small and disjointed with a heavy reliance on the state for funds and legitimacy. So then, instead of a state that is shrinking, ‘rolling back’, ‘flattening’ or ‘thinning out’, with concomitant growth in the role of the not-for-profit and private sectors, in American Samoa there is a stable and dominant state. Importantly, this is not seen by most to be a significant problem for governance, and normative assessments of the relative size of state and non-state actors were rare in the interview data collected for this study. For most this was seen as an avoidable consequence of the size of the territory and one that caused few major problems in day-to-day governance of collective problems.

The third key point of comparison is between the function of the governance actors in this case and those claimed in the literature. In many ways the state in American Samoa functions much the same as those described in the governance literature: it creates laws and operates under the institutional conditions of presidential democracy; it regulates the economy and provides public services; and it polices crime and provides protection and support in crises such as the 2009 disaster. Because of the territory’s unique history however, the American Samoan government also functions to protect and preserve Samoan customs and religious and cultural traditions. Far from an incidental function, this role is considered one of the most important of the territorial government’s responsibilities and is embedded in both the institutions and practices of the state. This has led to a blending of the three pillars of American Samoan governance, with the upper house of the legislature restricted to chiefs, and a constant revolving door between the leadership positions of the church and the state. Again though, this is not seen by most to be a fundamentally ‘bad’ thing for governance. In fact, for many of the interviewees in this research the entanglement of church, chiefs and government strengthens the position of the state to undertake the preservation of the Samoan way of life, which they saw to be the primary function of the state in governance. For others it made the other, more commonly understood functions of the state more difficult. The interesting point here is that while the preservation of cultural and religious custom is most likely a key prerogative of most states in the world it is not something that is overtly discussed in the governance literature and so limits the possibility of comparison on these issues. The following section of this chapter discusses the implications of this for normative theories of ‘good governance’.
Research Question 2 asks about relative authority in practice, of which the research revealed two interesting points of comparison. The first is a point of agreement, in that like the Anglo-European context, relative authority in the American Samoan governance system is articulated through complex mechanisms of both formal and informal governance practices. For example, the analysis shows that there are distinct differences in formal articulations of relative authority, such as laws, rules and regulations, and the ways in which that authority is practiced. This is perhaps most evident in the analysis of the many and varied ways that the territory exercises self-governance, despite the formal designation of an unorganised, unincorporated dependent territory. It can also be seen in the relative authority of the key actors to govern at a national level. As Chapter 7 shows, despite the principles of separation of powers, the church and the cultural system have real authority within the government, and those systems are influential in both the institutions and practices of governance at that scale. Similarly, while there are clear laws that give ultimate authority over village governance to the state, the practice of governing localised collective problems often favours and reinforces the authority of village institutions such as the matai and the fono. The literature on governance, particularly the second wave of theorising (see Chapter 2), also recognises the importance of both formal and informal governance practices and this finding supports the call by Bevir and Rhodes (2011) and others to take an interpretive approach to understanding the nuance of the differences between the two.

The second key point about relative authority between key governance actors in American Samoa is that it is changeable, and in many ways, depends on both the issue to be governed and the scale at which governance occurs. The analysis of the response and recovery of the 2009 tsunami showed that at a local level and in the early days of the emergency response phase, village institutions such as the aumaga, the aualuma and the matai commanded significant authority in disaster governance. In contrast, in the later phases of economic recovery and rebuilding it was the state, particularly the United States government that exercised authority in decision making. Similarly, the analysis in Chapter 8 shows that on issues of local collective importance such as security and public order the chiefs exert authority via the institutions of the village fono, whereas at a national scale the United States Government, in conjunction with the territorial government is the authority on issues of territorial security. As Chapter 2 notes, the
Anglo-European debates around relative authority have mostly been framed around changes over time and the findings from this research agree with the main contention of that debate; that relative authority is not fixed. However, it would also suggest that narratives of large, linear shifts such as those in the literature – a rolling back of state authority, a gradual increase in civil authority, a rapid increase in private authority – fall short of explaining the complex and changeable combinations of authority in practice. In the case of American Samoa relative authority is far more changeable according to issues and shorter time scales than that suggested by the mainstream literature, which in turn suggests that there is scope for more focused attention on this in research on governance.

The final key point on relative authority is that in practice there are very few clear delineations between American Samoan governance actors with regards to their authority to steer on issues of collective importance. In many ways this supports the claim of governance theorists that the lines between the authority of key sectors are becoming less clear. However, the important point of comparison that this research offers is that in American Samoa this is hardly a new phenomenon, nor is it a nascent outcome of the forces of recent macro and micro changes in neoliberal political economies. In fact, the historical analysis of key relationships in this thesis has shown that for centuries the churches and the chiefs have deliberately sought to blur the boundaries between religious and traditional authority as a way of increasing their own power to govern at both local and territorial scales. Similarly, the entanglement of the state in these established relations of shared authority began at the beginning of last century. Importantly, this occurred not because the state ceded authority to other actors as the governance literature describes, but because it was in fact the newcomer in the territory’s governance landscape and needed to gain legitimacy in the established processes of political relations. As the analysis from Chapter 8 shows, these mutually beneficial and shared forms of authority continue today in practices such as government agencies delivering disaster preparedness programs through the church, and bureaucrats employing traditional authority figures to facilitate government processes. Clearly, the history of the emergence of key actors and the reasons for the development of regimes of shared authority matter for understanding relative authority in governance today, and the next section of this chapter will discuss the potential for more comparative and differential studies of political history in this context.
**Research Question 3** asks about modes of governance and aims to provide the basis for comparison on the most enduring and pervasive claim of the mainstream governance literature - that there has been a large scale shift from hierarchies to networks across all the world’s political systems. While there is some debate around the extent of this shift, most see hierarchy as an anachronistic mode of governance that is to a greater or lesser extent diminishing in importance in contemporary governance regimes. Yet, the findings from this research suggest that hierarchy remains both an important and valued aspect of the American Samoan governance system.

Each of the key actors in American Samoan governance is hierarchically structured, and structure remains one of the key organising principles in the both the political and social systems of the territory. At a local level, villages are organised in groups that each have a role in an organised structure of governance institutions. Each family is led by a *matai* who holds a position within an island-wide hierarchy of chiefly authority, which in turn determines the allocation of land and resources across the territory. The churches and the state are similarly organised by way of institutional hierarchies that stretch over the boundaries of the territory to the United States. Perhaps more than the form of these institutions though, it is the practices and principles of Samoan culture that underpin the persistence of hierarchy as a mode of governance in the territory. As the analyses of chapters 4 and 8 show, Samoan culture has for centuries been based on the *fa‘asamoa*, which governs almost all aspects of Samoan life and is based on inherently hierarchical principles such as respect, rank and service. It is unsurprising then that these principles underpin the practice, as well as the formal principles of governance institutions in the territory. So then, the findings of this thesis suggest that the wholesale shift away from hierarchy as a dominant mode of societal organisation might not be as certain in places where hierarchical principles are embedded in daily cultural, religious as well political practices.

Another finding of this research is that hierarchical modes of governance in the American Samoan context are not as top-down in nature as the governance literature assumes. Within the *fa‘amatai* the principle of *tautua* results in relational processes of service that structure the management of collective problems not just for the benefit of those at the top of the hierarchy. The rules and customs around *matai* leadership also mean that while the hierarchy is fixed, incumbency is not, and there is movement of individuals through
the hierarchy (although this is not available to everyone). Similarly, with respect to the state, the thesis has found that the structures and formal roles of each tier of government certainly conform to a distinctly hierarchical structure, however this does not mean that power necessarily flows from top to bottom.

The analysis of the negotiations for self-government, of day-to-day interactions, and of disaster relief and recovery in the case of the 2009 tsunami all show that lower levels of government are able to negotiate up the hierarchy and to make decisions independently from it. While there was a great reverence for the principle of hierarchy with respect to both of these systems, most of the interviewees saw the structure of both the state and the chiefly system as dynamic in that it could be negotiated in creative and pragmatic ways to enact different forms of governance in the territory. This suggests that there is scope for the Anglo-European governance literature to not only consider the perseverance of hierarchy but also the possibility of different types of hierarchies in which there may be multidirectional power flows and permeable strata.

As research question 2 found though, the hierarchies of church, chiefs and state do not function separately and there is significant interaction and entanglement between the three pillars of American Samoan governance. In some ways, these interactions could be considered ‘networks’ as the mainstream governance literature characterises them. As the historical analysis in Chapters 6 and 8 shows, relations between each of the three main actors have been characterised by negotiation and bargaining and are certainly based on principles of trust and reciprocity. The Deeds of Cession are a poignant artefact of that form of governance. The post-tsunami response and recovery also showed the extent to which key players were able to interact through co-operative and collaborative means. Also, as discussed, in many cases of American Samoan political process, authority between the main actors is practiced by informal rather than formal means. These are all hallmarks of network governance described in Chapter 2, which in light of the first finding around the persistence of hierarchy, raises the question of whether the two modes of governance are mutually exclusive. As discussed in Chapter 2 the governance literature remains divided on this, and some scholars (eg Boege 2008) have begun to think about the possibility of multiplicity in modes. This thesis gives weight to this perspective and suggests that the two modes can and do exist together in regimes that consist of multiple hierarchies that operate in networked ways. In any case, to return to the main claim of
the literature, the findings of this thesis do not support the claim that there is a wholesale shift from hierarchy to networks – at least not in this part of the world.

Combined with the detailed analysis of the preceding chapters, these answers to the three research questions satisfy the main part of the overall aim of this thesis, which was to examine how the dynamics of governance in American Samoa compare to the key claims of the governance literature. The following section explains the way these findings contribute to furthering a geographical understanding of difference in governance and suggests some ways that this could be extended in future research.

9.4 Contributions to the Literature and Future Research

The findings from this thesis have three main implications for governance theory, which in turn speak to the need for further research. The first is that place matters fundamentally. Returning to the definition of place as locations or locales that are imbued with a sense of meaning and belonging, which are socially and culturally constructed over time and experienced through common, everyday practices (Agnew, 2011; Cresswell, 2004), the findings of this thesis show that each of these elements has important effects in the construction of governance. For example, the fact that American Samoa is located in the South Pacific - a region that has experienced centuries of indirect rule by metropolitan powers - has led to international relations of dependency that structure governance in the territory. These relations are however, imbued with nuance and meaning that come from long and particular histories of governance that cannot be reduced to totalising narratives of political change (i.e. colonialism or imperialism). Being a small island also leads to particular forms of personal politics and entangled modes of governing within which the effects of culture are paramount to the construction of governance practices and processes. These effects have long histories and need to be understood in the context of relations between actors and institutions that develop over time.

In short, the particularities of place mean that governance is different in different places and while this is not a new idea for economic and urban geographers, the approach of studying a different type of space in a different type of place offers opportunities to diversify geographical understandings of modes of governance. For example, there is an opportunity to deepen the analysis in this thesis of the ways in which religious and
cultural practices operate in order to bring it into conversation with post-structural theorisations of governmentality as a mode of governance (see Dean 2010) and to ask questions about the appropriateness and utility of this approach in places like American Samoa. Similarly, this thesis’ account of the particular political economy of a dependent territory offers an interesting counterpoint to the nuanced but decidedly western (Pollard, 2009) accounts of neoliberalised modes of governance in economic geography. It also offers a chance to compare the extra territorial and hybrid modes of governance in dependent territories with those of post-colonial contexts to support the call for more variegated understanding of ‘dependence’ made by some post-colonial theorists (eg Bhabha, 2012; Radcliffe 2005). Finally there is an exciting opportunity to conduct more in depth comparisons of the emergence of hybrid modes of governance in tandem and comparison with the insights emerging from the new geographies of governance literature in urban geography (Gross 2017). While deep engagement with these particular disciplinary perspectives was beyond the scope of this thesis it is clear that a comparative analysis of the importance of place could contribute to more nuanced theorisations for both governance and geography.

The second contribution of this thesis is that what is ‘different’ with respect to Anglo-European accounts of governance is not necessarily different to many other parts of the world. This is to say that even if accounts based on the Anglo-European experience are accurate, these countries may be exceptions rather than the norm. Post-colonial theorists have been making this case for some time, arguing that it is not unusual for social science disciplines to assume the widespread empirical relevance of their (mostly western) ideas and to (implicitly or explicitly) relegate ‘provincial’ case studies to the margins of theorising, even if those cases represent the ‘ascendant majority’ of people, practices or processes (Robinson, 2003). As theorists such as Larner (2006) have argued however it is the seemingly ‘quirky cases’ that can expose the empirical norm and challenge the tendency towards universalism in theorising. In many ways, American Samoa can be seen as the epitome of a quirky case in governance. Its political status and relationship with the United States is unique, set apart even from other dependent territories by a highly particular history of negotiation, cooperation and benign neglect. The relative role of the state and other actors is due in part to the organisation of the matai and their ability to capture the institutions of the state early in the transition to relative self-governance,
which in itself led to a unique set of formal and informal governance arrangements. Similarly, the cultural governance norms and practices of American Samoa are of course specific to place, and the role that they continue to play in daily governance is dependent on a complex history of negotiation for control of the systems of land and titles that underpin the fa’asamoa and fa’amatai.

That said, the findings of this case study point to a number of important aspects of governance that are seemingly shared by a large number of places outside of the liberal democratic, large, western state context. For example, the role of religious and cultural institutions in governance have been shown to be significant in many, if not most political contexts of the global south, particularly in postcolonial places where the institutions of the state came after and were layered upon the pre-existing political institutions of family, clan, church and chiefly systems (Merry, 1991). Indeed, as Sassen (1995) argues, the secular expectation of governance in western contexts is in fact unrealistic considering the historical influence of religion on the development of the state in places like the United States and in many parts of Europe. Similarly, the hybrid modes of governance that emerge from the historical process of indirect rule in American Samoa have been shown to be present in many post-colonial political contexts which make up many of the world’s states. Equally, the particular aspects of governance outlined in this study that come with small places are likely applicable to most small states, which far from being geopolitical obscurities, actually make up the majority of United Nations member states.

Taken together, this suggests that the geopolitical context in which the main theories of governance developed may in fact be the point of ‘difference’ in governance practices and processes across the world. If nothing else, this implies a need to join up the work of post-colonial studies, which focus on subaltern theories of political development, with those that seek to explicitly speak back to the development of theories of governance such as this thesis, in order to further a more geographically nuanced, and empirically grounded theory of difference in governance.

The final contribution of this thesis is to point to the need for a more agnostic view about governance. As Chapter 1 and 2 have argued, the development of governance theory has led to relative consensus on the legitimacy of the types of actors involved in governance
and the normative value of networks over and above hierarchy as modes of governance, which in turn have come to influence the idea of ‘good governance’ for collective problems such as international development. While there is criticism of the neo-liberal and neo-imperial foundations of this paradigm, there is less attention to the normative nature of governance theory in this context. This research suggests that there is scope to broaden the types of actors that could be considered legitimate in governance practices and processes. For example, while the interviewees of this study were nuanced and considered in their assessments of the involvement of chiefs and the church in governance processes, most acknowledged that the role of cultural institutions in the management of collective problems had real value in many ways. At the very least, it is clear that these institutions continue to play important and meaningful roles in the day to day governance of American Samoa, and cannot be ignored simply because they do not fit into the parameters of a secular and western conception of a ‘good’ governance narrative.

Similarly, and particularly in the context of disasters, the findings of this research show that while hierarchy continues to be a dominant mode of governance across all scales of the American Samoan political system, this does not mean that governance in the territory is ineffective, inefficient nor does it lead to exceptional levels of inequality. This study did not seek to speak to the normative evaluation of ‘good’ governance practices and processes as this would have needed a framework for evaluation that was beyond the scope of the research. However, at a broad level the extent to which American Samoa has negotiated their self-governance, developed their political institutions and handled large scale collective problems like disasters despite of and perhaps because of their differences in governance practices and processes points to the need for more research that seeks to study governance systems for what they are rather than what they should be.

In conclusion, governance is indeed a matter of hierarchies and networks and multi-level processes, but this thesis’ analysis of governance in American Samoa suggests that these characteristics are by no means as uniform in form and function as the mainstream literature suggests. Studying governance in different contexts such as this thesis has done is therefore important to bring the heterogeneity of political relations in the world into the mainstream of knowledge about governance, which can improve the explanatory
power of the theory as well as inform an appreciation rather than normative problematisation of the broad repertoire of governance systems found in the world.

REFERENCES


Hooghe L and Marks G (2001) Types of multi-level governance. *European integration online papers (EIoP)*.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICS AND PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

Research Project

Investigating State-Society Relations in American Samoa

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Responsible Researcher

PROFESSOR JON BARNETT, SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY
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Associated Researcher

Elissa Waters, School of Geography
Phone: (03) 90358546, elissa.waters@unimelb.edu.au

Project Overview

This project, entitled Investigating Governance in American Samoa, is being undertaken by researchers in the School of Geography at the University of Melbourne, and is funded by the Australian Research Council. The project and the interviews that you have been invited to participate in today have been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.
The aim of the research is to explore interactions between state institutions and civil society/private institutions in the governance of complex social problems. We are interested in the way that different public and private groups (the government, businesses, non-government organisations, churches) interact with one another normally and in disasters. This includes the way the relationships between different organisations during and after the 2009 tsunami.

The results of this research will be written in a final student thesis and possibly in academic journal articles. The anonymity of interviewees will be protected throughout all stages of the project, including the final written reports and papers.

Your Participation in the Project

This interview will take no more than an hour. We would like to ask a range of questions about your organisation’s role in governance, and on the role your organization played during and after the tsunami. The questions will be open ended, which means you will be able to say as much or as little as you like. With your permission we will record the interview for the purposes of analysing the results at a later date.

Your responses will be kept confidential and the audio file of the interview will be stored at the University of Melbourne in a secure location. In the final report, your identity will be protected using a pseudonym. We will make every attempt to exclude comments or quotes that could identify you, however in some cases this may be unavoidable. There is a chance that, under Australian law, responses and data can be subpoenaed and be subject to freedom of information requests, however we do not think that is likely for this project.

The results of the research will be presented in a student thesis, which can be sent to you if you provide us with your address at the end of the interview. The findings may also be presented at conferences.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you can skip questions or stop the interview at any stage without needing to give a reason. If you agree to participate the researcher will record your verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. If you would like to stop the interview we will also delete the recording.

Questions or Complaints

If you have any questions following your interview today please contact either of the researchers listed above. Should you have concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, phone (+61 3) 8344 2073, or email HumanEthics-Enquiries@unimelb.edu.au.
## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Interview Guide

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Project code</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project title</td>
<td>Investigating State-Society Relations in American Samoa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible researcher</td>
<td>Jon Barnett</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student researcher</td>
<td>Elissa Waters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Consent

1. Before we begin, can you confirm that you’ve read and understand the Plain Language Statement, and that you are happy to participate in this recorded interview?

### Role of your organization or institution generally

2. Can you tell me about your role here?

3. Tell me about (insert name of group/institution). How do you see the role of this institution? What does it aim to do? Both specifically and broadly?

4. Which other institutions act in this space? (the government, businesses, NGO’s, the church, the village)

5. How does the role of your institution compare to the roles of these others?

6. How would you describe the relationship of your institution with these others? (prompt on each mentioned in questions 4 and 5)

7. Are there challenges in these relationships? (Prompt: things like money, personalities, institutional issues, communication)

### The 2009 Tsunami

8. What did your organisation do during the tsunami? Tell me about how this role (repeat stated role) played out?

9. What roles did other organisations play?

10. Who was in charge of what? Was this normal?

11. Did your organization’s relationships with the state/other institutions work well during and after the tsunami? (Prompt: In what ways? What do you think explains why it did or didn’t?)

### Since the Tsunami

12. Did the tsunami lead to major changes for your organization? (Prompt: for example in its goals and values? Or in what it was responsible for?)

13. Did it change relationships with other organisations?
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Author/s:
Waters, Elissa

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Placing theories of governance: a political geography of American Samoa

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2018

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