Bottom-up Driven Community Empowerment: the case of African Communities in Australia

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Institute for Regional Development,
University of Tasmania,
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June 2014
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The Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee granted this research full application approval (reference number H11705) on 11 June 2011.

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   Components of this paper are located in chapter four.

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Abstract

The idea of community empowerment has emerged as a possible response to the failure of welfare policies. However, there are arguments in the literature that there is a disconnection between empowerment theory and practice and that it is difficult to implement ‘empowerment’ approaches. In this thesis, a conceptual and analytical framework has been developed by integrating empowerment theorisation and institutional analysis to guide the conduct of research. Ethnographic case studies of African communities were conducted in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. For over a year, the researcher participated in community activities as a participant observer, conducted 50 interviews, attended more than 40 events, and collected relevant documents. The study suggests that the empowerment of migrant communities should be theorised in a new way – in relation to migration and settlement, community formation, and interactions among communities, governments and NGOs.

The study demonstrated that contexts such as migration and settlement experiences affect the empowerment of African communities. Community formation is identified as the primary mechanism communities used to attain empowerment. The internal dynamics of communities, social conditions such as community partnerships, leadership and social incidents, cultural and financial resources, and existing rules and policies were found to influence the empowerment of African communities. Social incidents facilitated empowerment by creating political and social context for communities to gain support from governments and NGOs. The study identified governments and NGOs as the key external actors in the empowerment of African communities. These actors developed the resources and structures necessary for empowerment and their interactions with African communities shaped empowerment outcomes.

These findings demonstrate that empowerment is attained through the creation of social, political, cultural and institutional space where power is shared with and not exercised over others – where it is relational and not necessarily confrontational. The study suggests that policies and programs that take into account the contexts and dynamics of communities are likely to succeed in achieving better empowerment outcomes for communities. The study contributes to knowledge both by providing an understanding of bottom-up driven community empowerment and by developing a conceptual and analytical framework that can guide empowerment studies. However, the generalisability of this study should be considered with caution due to its focus on African communities. Further studies that examine the perspectives of other communities and the roles of governments, NGOs and the private sector in the empowerment of disadvantaged communities in Australia are required.
Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge my supervisors, Associate Professor Robyn Eversole and Professor David Adams, whose suggestions and comments provided me with insights that shaped the research and whose academic rigour, commitment and patience enabled me to see the thesis through. I am particularly grateful for Robyn for her continuous encouragement and unreserved support. I wish to thank the Institute for Regional Development for providing me with an Elite Scholarship, the Institute staff who supported me throughout my candidature and the School of Management who provided me with a working space at the Sandy Bay Campus. My appreciation and thanks also goes to Ann Hughes, who generously invested time reading the chapters and gave valuable suggestions.

I would like to thank the African Communities Council of Tasmania (ACCT), African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA) and the African Think Tank (ATT) in Victoria for being part of this study and for providing support during the fieldwork. I am indebted to Dr. Joseph Masika, Dr. Lillian Mwanri and the leaders of the ACCSA for providing me with office space and friendship in Adelaide. I would also like to extend my heart-felt appreciation to all the African community leaders and their members who showed such enthusiasm and allowed me to participate in and observe their day-to-day activities; without whose support and involvement this work would not have been possible.

Finally, I thank my family, my beloved wife Tsige and daughters Tsionawit, Yeabsira and Yididya and my brother Girmay and his family for their support and understanding during these long years of travel and study. I particularly thank my daughter Tsionawit for proof-reading the thesis and giving valuable suggestions. This thesis would not have been possible without their support, encouragement and love.
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Glossary of Terms

**Actor(s):** it applies to individual or organisational agents who participate in the empowerment of African communities or the social space where members of the African communities act collectively to change their situation.

**Action Arena:** refers to the social space where community groups create awareness of problems, solve problems and take action. It includes actors and the situations in which they act.

**Action situation:** refers to a social situation or problem that affects certain individuals or a group of people.

**African community:** the term African community (or communities) is used throughout the thesis as an inclusive term to refer to African people who have settled in Australia and their organisations without any specific reference to a single tribal, ethnic, regional or country-of-origin community group.

**African community group:** refers to a group or an association formed by members of an African tribe, ethnic group, region, country or similar association. I have used the term community group to emphasise the different groupings and kinds of community groups throughout the thesis.

**African community organisation:** an organisation that is formed by Africans and/or African community groups to organise community activities of Africans from various countries of origin. African community organisations can be established as umbrella community organisations (as in African Communities Council of Tasmania (ACCT)), as organisations representing Africans from a particular region in Africa (as in east, west, or southern African community organisations) or other African community organisations (as in African Think Tank). The term African community organisation is used throughout the thesis to refer to these organisations and to emphasise the organisational aspects of their activities.

**Australian governments:** constitutional monarchy governs Australia with a federation of six states and two territories, and there are three tiers of governments – Federal, State and Local. Under the federal system, powers are divided between Australian Government and states. The states have legislative power over all other matters that occur within their borders, including police, hospitals, education and public transport. Local Governments are established by state and territory governments to take responsibility for a number of community services. Their powers are defined by the state or territory government which
establish them. Local Governments are also known as local councils. In this thesis unless specified, the term governments is used to refer to all tiers of governments.

**Autoethnography**: is a qualitative research methodology that allows the researcher to describe and systematically analyse his/her own experience related to an individual social phenomenon (Anderson, 2006; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). It involves self-reflection and the writing of the researcher's personal experience into the research to provide deeper cultural meanings and understandings.

**Bottom-up driven process**: a process where communities participate fully and initiate activities, events and programs to attain their goals, as opposed to top-down processes where institutions with power design and prescribe solutions without the full participation of communities.

**Broader Australian community**: this terms is used to refer to established mainstream communities other than indigenous and migrant communities.

**Case study community organisation**: I have used the term ‘case study community organisation,’ to differentiate the three case study community organisations from other African community organisations. The term is used throughout the thesis to refer to these organisations and to emphasise the organisational aspects of the case studies.

**Citizen participation**: refers to the process in which people take part in actions to influence decisions that affect their community.

**Collective action**: a process by which communities take action to affect social change.

**Community**: a group of people (who may have diverse backgrounds) who are linked by common social ties, experiences, interests and perspectives. The different definitions of community are discussed in detail in Chapter II.

**Community empowerment**: a social change process and outcome in which a group of people (community) use collective action to gain control over resources and decisions to attain their goals. A detailed definition and discussion of the concept of community empowerment is provided in Chapter II.

**Conditions**: the state of communities as they exist in society. The current social condition of a community can be the result of situations in the past or present, structural or otherwise, including laws and practices that modify and influence the way these communities behave.
**Country of asylum**: a country that provide shelter and protection to refugees fleeing their own country due to persecution or fear of persecution.

**Culture**: values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and modified by a group of people bound together by a common history, language, social class, and religion.

**Cultural resources**: resources that originate from a specific culture and can be used and transformed to produce some benefit or accomplish a goal.

**Disadvantage**: the powerlessness to access material, intellectual, institutional and other resources to participate in socio-economic, cultural and political activities in society and the underlying impact of social exclusion, marginalisation and disempowerment.

**Displacement**: refers both to physical movement and a sense of being socially or culturally ‘out of place’; a process that moves people away from their roots/home/place – their original position.

**Emplacement**: the act of place-making in relation to or by maintaining the links to imagined or existing places of belonging by way of recreating familiar scenes, ‘communities’ and organisations both in the countries of asylum and country of resettlement.

**Emic**: an approach of ethnographic research where a social phenomenon is observed from a particular cultural context of a group or from the community’s own perspectives.

**Empowering professional practice**: a form of human agency that values enabling disadvantaged communities to have better control of their own life goals.

**Empowerment**: the process and outcome of gaining control over one’s life goals by building capacity and increasing assets and attributes to gain access to decisions, partners, networks and voice.

**Ethnic group**: a group of people who have common cultural heritage, shared ancestry, history, language or dialect. An ethnic group may also have other common characteristics such as religion, cultural practices, physical appearance, and a common homeland; although it is possible for an ethnic group to come from several nation states or even continents due to historical and other factors.
**Ethnography**: a qualitative research process aimed at exploring cultural phenomena based on direct field observation and interviews where the researcher is involved closely with a social group.

**Institutions**: refers to the different organisations that are involved in social change processes and the rules used to structure patterns of interaction within and among these organisations (Ostrom 2009).

**Mechanism**: ways that provide explanations as to the cause of existing social conditions or structures or an explanatory instrument that makes intelligible the regularities being observed by specifying in detail how they were brought about.

**Power**: the capacity to make a difference or transform a pre-existing state of affairs.

**Refugee**: a person who is outside their own country-of-origin due to or for fear of persecution due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or because of their membership of a certain social group.

**Refugee experience**: life experiences that include persecution, fleeing one’s own country-of-origin and life in the country of asylum.

**Resources**: any source or supply – human, cultural, political, asset, material or monetary – that can be used and transformed to produce some benefit or accomplish a goal.

**Settlement**: the act and process of establishing oneself in a new country or place.

**Structures**: the relationship community groups have between themselves and with other communities and the enduring patterns of behaviour that emanate from these interactions in the social system, and the institutionalised norms or frameworks that structure the actions of these actors in the social system.

**Umbrella African community organisation**: a peak African community organisation that is formed by, brings together and organises the efforts of a range of African community groups (ethnically, regional, country-of-origin, gender-based or other pan-African community groups), in a state or nationally. Example, two of the case study community organisations, ACCT and ACCSA are umbrella African community organisations.
## Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABCSA</td>
<td>Australian Burundian Community of South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCAV</td>
<td>African Community &amp; Cultural Association of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCSA</td>
<td>African Communities Council of South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACCV</td>
<td>African Communities Council of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCT</td>
<td>African Communities Council of Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>African Communities’ Enterprise</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACF</td>
<td>African Cultural Festival</td>
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<td>ACFMC</td>
<td>African Communities Forum Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACNC</td>
<td>Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACOSA</td>
<td>the African Communities Organisation of South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGM</td>
<td>Annual General Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHASA</td>
<td>African Heritage Association of South Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>AHRC</td>
<td>the Australian Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMEP</td>
<td>Adult Migrant English Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>African Think Tank</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCASA</td>
<td>Burundian Community Association of South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALD</td>
<td>Culturally and Linguistically Diverse</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>Complex Case Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIAC</td>
<td>the Department of Immigration and Citizenships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIMIA</td>
<td>Department of Immigration &amp; Multicultural &amp; Indigenous Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DPAC</td>
<td>Department of Premier and Cabinet</td>
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<td>DPMC</td>
<td>Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSCP</td>
<td>Diversity and Social Cohesion Program</td>
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<td>EACACOV</td>
<td>Eastern and Central Africa Communities of Victoria Inc</td>
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<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
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<td>HACN</td>
<td>Horn of African Communities Network in Victoria</td>
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<td>HARDA</td>
<td>Horn of Africa Relief &amp; Development Agency of Australia</td>
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<td>HOA</td>
<td>Horn of Africa</td>
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<td>HSS</td>
<td>Humanitarian Settlement Services</td>
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<td>IAD</td>
<td>Institutional Analysis and Development</td>
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<td>MAFG</td>
<td>Multicultural Arts Funding Grants</td>
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<td>MFOP</td>
<td>Multicultural Friends of Parliament</td>
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<td>MRC</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>MRCSA</td>
<td>Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia</td>
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<td>MTWF</td>
<td>Moonah Taste of the World Festival</td>
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<td>MYSA</td>
<td>Multicultural Youth of South Australia</td>
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<td>NAATI</td>
<td>National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreter</td>
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<td>NFP</td>
<td>Not for Profit</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>SGP</td>
<td>Settlement Grant Program</td>
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<td>STTARS</td>
<td>Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Services</td>
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Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Why community empowerment?

The idea of community empowerment was popularised in the 1990s particularly in developing countries. In Africa, where I worked as a development worker, the popularisation of the idea coincided with the social change that was blowing across Africa following internal conflicts that ravaged the continent. There were noticeable changes in governments across the continent, and poverty reduction and democratisation were high on the agendas of the new governments and those who worked in development. Efforts exerted to tackle poverty were strengthened after the publication of the *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty* by the World Bank (2000). The World Bank started to promote the idea of ‘empowering poor people and investing in their assets’ (Narayan 2002, p. 1). Thus, ‘empowerment’ took centre stage – both as alternative politics and as an effective development strategy (Mayo & Craig 1995).

The idea of empowerment was quickly embraced by other development actors (mainly governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international donors) who were particularly attracted by the capacity of empowerment to mobilise resources and legitimise their work (Cornwall & Brock 2005; Friedmann 1992; Friedmann, Sandercock & Chapin 1995). At the heart of this paradigm shift were two interrelated concepts — the understanding of poverty and disadvantage as social, political and psychological disempowerment (see Friedmann 1992), and the realisation that disadvantaged people have the capability to change their situation through collective action (see Sen 1993). Collective action is an action taken by a group of people or community to achieve common goals (Scott & Marshall 2009). In the empowerment process, disadvantaged people are actors who can mobilise a range of capabilities and assets both at the individual and community level. While, governments and other actors are facilitators who enable the removal of structural barriers that prevent disadvantaged people from taking action to improve their wellbeing.

The situation in Australia and other western countries is different, and empowerment is expressed in two ways. Firstly, the concept of empowerment is linked to broader ideas of citizen participation and community engagement (see Cavaye 2004). These ideas relate to
local communities more broadly and are not necessarily focused on disadvantaged people. Secondly, the idea of empowerment in relation to ‘disadvantaged’ communities (akin to developing countries) is wrapped up in languages such as community building and social inclusion. Thus, it is assumed that normative practices of empowerment are embedded in a democratic system and that representative democracy authorises empowerment.

In other words, there is an assumption that governments create favourable conditions for citizens to participate in the decision-making process fully (Przeworski 1995). In this sense, governments are expected to play a significant role in the democratic process by way of creating a space for communities to participate in decision-making. Similar sentiment was expressed in the UK 2020 Commission’s report, which argued that the delivery of public good needs to shift to a model based on ‘negotiated autonomy’ (The 2020 Public Services Trust 2010). The Commission proposed a shift in public service in three areas—culture, power and finance—and promoted citizen participation as the main mechanism. They strongly argued that the desired shift can only occur if citizens and communities are empowered through engagement and participation in decision-making at the local level.

However, Australian governments have not actively promoted community empowerment as an alternative to welfare and social inclusion policies, and there is little empirical evidence to suggest that governments facilitate bottom-up empowerment. Many policies designed by all levels of governments in Australia to address poverty and disadvantage are based on the Australian welfare state and related social inclusion policies (Adams 2002; Adams & Wiseman 2003; Saunders, Hill & Bradbury 2008; Vinson et al. 2007). Hence it is difficult to find programs and strategies that promote alternative politics of ‘community empowerment’ as may be the case in other countries (Agur & Low 2009; Communities and Local Government 2007; Friedmann 1992). This could be attributed to, among other factors, the shift in Australia from a ‘humanist idiom’ that focuses on social justice and collective empowerment to an ‘instrumentalist idiom’ which focuses on efficiency and managerialism (Kenny 1996, p. 111).

Whilst there is general agreement that government-designed social policies address some social issues, there is growing dissatisfaction with the capacity of these policies and strategies to substantially reduce levels of disadvantage in Australia. Some authors criticise these policies and strategies for their lack of understanding of the needs and aspirations of disadvantaged people (Gidley et al. 2010). Others criticise these policies and strategies for positioning disadvantaged people like people who are ‘deficient’ and who need ‘fixing’ to fit society (Edwards et al. cited in Pease 2009, p. 38). There is also a commentary that these policies are mainly welfare reforms that progress neo-liberal policies through moral
underclass and social integrationist discourses, and that they ignore structural issues that perpetuate disadvantage (Arthurson & Jacobs 2009). In general, these policies are criticised for not addressing the structural impediments to the participation of disadvantaged people to achieve social inclusion in their own terms and for the lack of consideration of the human potential (capabilities) of these groups.

Thus, there have been calls in Australia for alternative theoretical and policy frameworks that allow the removal of structural barriers for the participation of disadvantaged people. As a result, the idea of community empowerment and broader citizen participation is now growing as one response to the perceived ‘failure’ of the centralist welfare state model which is seen to be both disempowering and unaffordable (Cavaye 2004). In some ways, the initial idea for this research was conceived in response to this call, with interest to deepen the understanding of the concept of community empowerment.

The term community empowerment links two concepts ‘community’ and ‘empowerment.’ The concept of community is contested; however, many authors agree that ‘community’ entails a group of people who create relations based on trust and mutuality (see Adams & Hess 2001; Plant 2011). For the purposes of this thesis, community is defined as a group of people, who may have diverse backgrounds and who are linked by common social ties, experiences, interests and perspectives, and who are engaged in collective action, in a certain setting(s) (see also MacQueen et al. 2001, p. 1936; O’Neill 2010; Taylor 2003; Taylor, Barr & West 2001 for various definitions of community). Community is shaped both by experiences and shared social ties and by current concerns and actions, which form the basis for trust and mutuality. It is these common ties, concerns and actions that bind the idea of ‘community’ to that of ‘empowerment.’

Community empowerment is defined as a social change process and outcome in which a group of people (community) uses collective action to gain control over resources and decisions to attain their goals. As a social change process, community empowerment involves self-organising and re-creating a community that can influence its future (Sadan 1997). The process of community empowerment enables a community to gain control over resources and decisions by increasing assets and attributes and building capacities to gain access, partners, networks and voice (Narayan 2002). Enabling, in this case, implies that people cannot ‘be empowered’ by others; they can only empower themselves by acquiring more of power’s different forms (Laverack 2001). The concept assumes that people are their own assets, and the role of external agents or other development actors is to enable, catalyse, facilitate and ‘accompany’ the community in acquiring power. Community empowerment can also be understood as the state of affairs that exists when members of a
community feel empowered to achieve their self-determined goals, with some measure of significant control over the processes and strategies to achieve these (Sadan 1997).

In practice, this kind of empowerment is related to citizen participation, and is concerned with how members of the group are able to act collectively in ways that enhance their influence on, control over, or ownership of decisions that affect their interests (Simpson, Wood & Daws 2003). It is also concerned with the presence of a socio-economic and policy environment conducive to such action taking place. Community empowerment is also prescribed as a remedy to social exclusion since empowerment and inclusion are seen as ‘complementary and mutually reinforcing’ to each other (Bennett 2003). In some countries, community empowerment has been promoted as a process in local governance and service delivery that enables disadvantaged people to create a better future (see Communities and Local Government 2007; Craig & Mayo 1995; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Narayan 2002). It is used as a useful currency in political discourse and as an organising concept in policies and programs of countries and international agencies such as the World Bank (Agur & Low 2009; Communities and Local Government 2007; Narayan 2002). The World Bank has particularly espoused the concept as a key framework of development to change the situation of disadvantaged people in both developed and developing countries (see, Barr 1995; Mayo & Craig 1995; Narayan 2002).

Historically, some authors claim that ‘empowerment’ draws its philosophical and ideological roots from the European enlightenment of the 1700s and the idea of identity and freedom (Beeker, Guenther-Grey & Raj 1998, p. 831). However, current conceptualisations of the term and its popular use in political rhetoric can be credited to the American civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s (particularly Alinsky’s work in community organising); the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire; the feminist movement; the articulation of the concept in community psychology; and the work of the World Bank and other development agencies (Alinsky 1971; Beeker, Guenther-Grey & Raj 1998; Freire 1970, 1973; Rowlands 1997).

In the early writings of empowerment, issues around black political empowerment in America were hotly debated and the focus was on how organisations mobilise their resources to promote the interest of their community (Jones, MH 1978). In both the Freirian and feminist conceptualisation, empowerment is considered as a radical project of social change with a focus on personal and inner dimensions of empowerment (Luttrell et al. 2009). Community psychologists, on the other hand, conceptualise empowerment in its ecological sense by integrating the understanding of empowerment as the value that orients practice and a theoretical model that informs understanding of the concept both as
a process and outcome (Zimmerman 2000). To the World Bank, however, empowerment is simply an effective strategy for cost-saving and project efficiency (Narayan 2002). Although these concepts are divergent, there is convergence in the literature in terms of subjects of study. Disadvantaged communities, including indigenous and migrant communities, and women are at the heart of much of the debate in community empowerment.

To date the term community empowerment has continued to enjoy widespread popularity in the social science literature across different disciplines: anthropology (Cheater 1999), community development (Mayo & Craig 1995), community psychology (Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988), education (Freire 1970), political theory (Lukes 2005 [1974]), sociology and social work (DuBois & Miley 2005; Payne 2005), and other disciplines. However, the theoretical developments in these various social science disciplines are divergent and compartmentalised. Debates are compartmentalised, either based on the dimensions of power relations—economic, political, cultural, or human and community empowerment—or based on the level of organisation that operationalises empowerment: as personal, organisational, community or social empowerment. Besides this divergence, the social science literature also lacks well-developed conceptual frameworks that can guide policy and practice or be tested empirically.

Some critics point out that these divergent, complex and normative bodies of knowledge have limited empirical support and are difficult to translate into practice as some theoretical values are lost in translation to policies (Bebbington et al. 2007; Cooke 2003). Those who examine programs and policies that claim to be based on empowerment question the relationship between theory and practice (Perkins 1995). There are also those who express concern that empowerment is misused in both neoliberal discourse and leftist rhetoric as a ‘buzzword’ and has lost its effectiveness (Ellsworth 1989). Such concern may partly be explained by the contestations in the concept of power and the elusive nature of the theory of empowerment. It can also be argued that the problem lies in the way we understand empowerment and the way we explain observations about community empowerment. Empowerment is often studied through a single level of analysis without considering the institutional or organisational aspects.

Whilst there is an agreement in the broader literature that community empowerment is a useful concept, writings on community empowerment practices particularly in relation to disadvantaged communities in Australia are sparse. As discussed earlier, in Australia the concept of community empowerment is linked to broader ideals of citizen participation. Thus, it has a different etymology to the literature that comes out of the 1970’s as discussed above. Therefore to understand community empowerment as an alternative
theoretical and policy framework to welfare and social inclusion approaches, one that argues for the removal of structural barriers for the participation of disadvantaged communities in the Australian context, it is necessary to study disadvantaged communities. Thus, it is legitimate to look at case studies of African communities as one example of disadvantaged communities in Australia. Studying how African communities use collective action to gain control and attain their goals will provide insights to understanding empowerment.

The term ‘bottom-up’ refers to a process where disadvantaged communities participate fully and initiate activities, events and programs to change their own situation; as opposed to top-down processes where institutions with power design and prescribe solutions without the full participation of disadvantaged communities. The term ‘bottom-up’ differentiates community empowerment as presented in this thesis from top-down programs driven by institutions with power. The effect of a top-down process is to direct policy and resources and limit access of these resources only to invited groups (Shaw cited in Turner 2009). On the other hand, ‘bottom-up’ refers to programs, initiatives and processes driven by grassroots community organisations. Bottom-up driven programs, initiatives and processes could either be initiated directly by the community or in collaboration with other actors through consultation to enable the community achieve its own goals (Dinham 2005; Popple 1995; Turner 2009). In a bottom-up process, the involvement of disadvantaged communities stimulates collective action and enables their engagement with governments and other actors. The participation of disadvantaged communities is initiated by the community groups themselves from the bottom-up.

While there are some empirical studies of community empowerment internationally, many start from the top-down rather than bottom-up perspective. The literature on bottom-up processes is often scant in part because bottom-up processes are ‘frequently characterised as informal and chaotic with learning rarely documented’ (Turner 2009, p. 233). Cognisant of this fact, this thesis proposes to describe bottom-up driven community empowerment processes from what is called the ‘emic’ perspective from within a particular cultural context – the African communities’ perspective using three ethnographic case studies. The study provides insights for researchers, policymakers, practitioners and community groups by presenting a description and analysis of grassroots activities and community collective action to show what the empowerment process looks like in specific cases. It also provides a platform for further research and program development by providing a conceptual and analytical framework to study community empowerment.
1.2  Aim and Research questions

The main aim of this study is to provide an understanding of bottom-up driven community empowerment in Australia using three ethnographic case studies of African communities. The study will provide insights as to how the African communities sought to gain control over resources and decisions to attain their own goals through the process of collective action.

The primary research questions are:
1. What are the contexts under which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment?
2. What are the mechanisms through which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment?
3. What are the conditions, resources and structures that contribute to the attainment of empowerment?
4. Who are involved in bottom-up driven community empowerment and why and how?
5. What is the contribution of bottom-up driven community empowerment to wider social change?

1.3  Study approach

Ethnography is the main methodology employed in this study. Ethnography may be defined as a qualitative research process aimed at exploring cultural phenomena based on direct field observation and interview where the researcher is involved closely with a social group (Hay, I 2010). It is employed to understand the nature of agency, social structure and underlying mechanisms and the different layers of interaction between individuals, groups and organisations and other social actors and the social system (Alvarado & Íñiguez-Rueda 2009). Through description, comprehension and explanation of the ethnographic data collected, the study provides an ‘emic’ account of bottom-up driven community empowerment (Descola 2005). I have also employed autoethnography to include my own experiences to enrich discussions in community formation and provide context to the study (Anderson 2006; Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 733). Autoethnography may be defined as a qualitative research method involving self-reflection and the writing of the researcher's personal experience into the research to provide deeper social meanings and understandings (Hay, I 2010).
The study uses multi-sited ethnographic case studies to make sense of the community empowerment process in relation to the social context among different African communities (Gallant 2008). As a researcher and participant observer, I was socially and physically immersed in the activities of the African communities studied to understand the process of community empowerment. Such practice is common in ethnography where researchers are understood as actors who act from the inside as well as from the outside, never fully detached from the object of study while always somewhat removed within the confines of their activity. During the fieldwork, I participated in the activities, meetings and events of the three case study communities as a participant observer. I took extensive field notes and reflected on my experiences as a participant observer afterwards. My participation and observation were useful in understanding the layers of interactions and the hermeneutics of events that occurred (Alvarado & Íñiguez-Rueda 2009).

This study is based on three case studies of African communities in three states: South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. Given the different etymology of community empowerment in Australia, the choice of African communities as case studies is justified. The majority of Africans in Australia are Australian citizens, albeit they are humanitarian entrants who have endured substantial challenges in their countries of origin and asylum, and still face considerable challenges in Australia. The majority arrived with limited education, English language and skills putting them at disadvantage from the beginning. The cultural differences between the African communities and the broader Australian community also created a barrier for their full participation (Reiner 2010, pp. 12-13). These challenges were the basis for these communities to develop grassroots organisations to organise their effort to change their situation.

The community organisations formed by these communities actively use the term empowerment and espouse community empowerment as their core organising principle. African communities in each state have formed umbrella African community organisations called African community councils. These organisations organise the efforts of African communities collectively. For this reason, African Community Councils in each state were included in the study. However, once I started to plan for fieldwork, I found out that the African Communities Council of Victoria (ACCV) was no longer functional. Thus, it was replaced, for the purposes of this study, by the African Think Tank (ATT). The ATT is a grassroots community organisation run by prominent Africans. It is not an umbrella organisation although it does work with the majority of African community groups in Victoria.

The three community organisations selected as case studies are the African Communities Council of Tasmania (ACCT), the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA)
and the ATT. The selection of the three states was purposive (Clammer 1984). Besides the feasibility of conducting fieldwork and the scope of the study, the selection of the three states was dictated by the size of African community population and the stage of organisational development of the African community organisations in each state. A full description of these case studies is provided in chapter IV.

Participant observation and ethnographic interviews were the key methods of data collection used in this study (Atkinson et al. 2001; Clammer 1984; Tedlock 2005; Urry 1984). As a participant observer, I spent over a year between April 2011 and March 2012 with the three case study communities and their organisations. During the fieldwork, I observed and participated in the activities of the community groups and carefully documented observations and conversations in field notes on a daily basis. Some of the participants were interviewed, and interviews tape recorded with their permission. These ethnographic interviews were instrumental in collecting group histories, individual community members’ experiences, and the various accounts of the process of empowerment as it unfolded. The interviews were analysed to understand the mechanisms of bottom-up driven community empowerment and the context under which the activities of each community group were carried out.

To facilitate smooth entry into the community groups and to build rapport with them and participate in the organisational activities, I volunteered with the ACCT and ACCSA. However, it was not possible to obtain similar access in Victoria with the ATT as the structure of the organisation was different. During the study period, over 50 participants across the three groups were interviewed, and I attended over 40 events and activities, and collected a number of documents both from the participating community groups and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who worked with them. These documents include minutes of meetings with records of decisions made by the groups studied, strategic plans and project documents showing intentions of the groups, memoranda of understanding showing partnership arrangements made, and historical documents.

The focus of the fieldwork was to observe community activities and processes carried out by the participants that included community organising, negotiation, key committee meetings, decision-making processes and other activities and events planned by the community group. I also attended and participated in community activities that involved NGOs and interviewed some NGO staff who worked with the community groups. Throughout the participant observation, the focus was on the social structures, participants’ interpretations of their own action, and the context of the action (Gobo 2008).
There are some limitations in this study. First, there are certain theoretical limitations. The international literature in community empowerment is a complex and normative body of knowledge drawn from multiple disciplines with limited empirical evidence. This underscores the need to develop a coherent conceptual framework to guide the current study. The conceptual and analytical framework developed to guide this study is presented in Chapter II.

Secondly, there are some methodological limitations. As is common in ethnographic studies, I have spent substantial time with the three case study community organisations and their member community groups as a participant observer to understand community empowerment from the perspectives of the African communities themselves. The focus on in-depth dynamics in the communities meant that there was limited opportunity to document the understanding and actions of other social actors (governments and NGOs) from their own perspectives, except in cases when and where they interacted with the African communities studied during the fieldwork. Thus, further research is required to understand community empowerment from the perspectives of other social actors involved in the process.

The use of ethnographic methods can also introduce some challenges in regards to balancing subjectivity and objectivity including unconscious biases that might have arisen due to my identity and experience. As an African studying African communities, it was particularly difficult for me to achieve a balance between ‘involvement and detachment’ at the beginning of the research. However, I made conscious effort to balance subjectivity and objectivity by accepting the existence of this dilemma and taking corrective measures. Throughout the research process, I reflected on my observations and analysis made to check for possible biases.

Thirdly, the choice of African communities as case studies has also introduced some limitations related to the nature of the community groups. These community groups are disadvantaged communities and hence provide an opportunity to study community empowerment. However, there are certain social, cultural, political and economic elements that differentiate these communities from other disadvantaged community groups in Australia. These differences may limit the generalisability of some of the findings of this study. The Africans have only settled in Australia in reasonable numbers in the last two decades. Thus, some of the challenges faced by these communities may not necessarily be shared by other disadvantaged community groups. Therefore, the applicability of some of the insights drawn from the study across different disadvantaged communities needs to be considered with care.
1.4 Thesis Overview

The first three chapters introduce the study, canvass the theoretical context and outline methodology. Chapter IV provides contextual background to the study and responds to the first research question; Chapter V responds to the second research question; Chapter VI responds to the third research question and Chapter VII responds to the fourth and fifth research questions. The final chapter concludes by emphasising the significance of this research and its contributions to knowledge.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature. The main aim of this chapter will be to understand key concepts in community empowerment, identify gaps in knowledge and develop a conceptual and analytical framework. It defines key concepts and provides a critical overview of debates on power and empowerment, and summarises current research studies in community empowerment in Australia. Following discussion of conceptualisations in empowerment and institutional analysis, the chapter presents a conceptual and analytical framework to guide this study by integrating conceptualisations in empowerment with institutional analysis.

Chapter III describes the design of the research, methodology and methods used in the research. It provides a justification for the choice of the methodology and methods of research, data collection and analyses. The chapter also reflects on the ethnographic journey taken working with the three case studies and some of the observations made during the study as a way of recording and retaining experiences and insights about doing ethnographic studies in Australia. It discusses the challenges and opportunities that the choice of ethnography as a method posed. In addition, the chapter documents some practical challenges encountered during the fieldwork and analysis of data that includes the ethics approval process.

Chapter IV provides contexts to the African communities in Australia and describes the three ethnographic case studies. The chapter highlights the migration history of African people in Australia, the nature of disadvantage and disempowerment, their attributes, and the norms, policies, legal structures, and power relations (institutional arrangements) that affected their action. Actual stories of Africans collected through ethnographic interviews and information from secondary sources are incorporated to provide both cultural and socio-economic background. The three case study organisations are described by presenting their activities, resources they used and their achievements. The chapter
addresses the first research question by describing the historical background of African communities and highlighting contexts in which they used collective action to attain empowerment.

Chapter V presents community formation as a mechanism for and constitutive element of empowerment. Community formation is the process of self-organisation and the formation of ‘community groups’ and ‘organisations.’ This chapter presents an ethnographic account and analysis of the process of self-organisation and the formation of ‘community groups’ and ‘organisations.’ Taxonomic typologies of African community groups highlight the differences in different community groups. The chapter also discusses how African community groups form, factors that influence their formation and how community formation influences their empowerment. It answers the second research question by looking at the mechanisms through which African communities attain empowerment.

Chapter VI addresses the third research question by analysing the conditions, resources and structures that contribute to the empowerment of African communities. The chapter makes the point that community organisations and leadership, partnership and collaboration, social incidents and conflicts create a favourable environment for community empowerment. The chapter argues that resources such as refugee experiences, know-how and skills, culture, leadership, financial resources and assets play crucial roles in the attainment of empowerment. Social structure is presented as one of the key factors that influence the empowerment of the community. In this context social structure is defined in its sociological and anthropological sense and include the relationship of African communities to each other and with other communities and the patterns of behaviour that emanate from these interactions in the social system, and institutionalised norms that structure the actions of these communities.

Chapter VII responds to the fourth and fifth research questions by describing and analysing the role and action of actors (governments, NGOs and community groups), their interactions and the outcome of these actions and interactions in the empowerment of community groups. The chapter provides in-depth analysis of the interaction among the different actors, institutional formats through which interactions occur, and underlying factors that influence the extent to which these interactions occur. It highlights emerging patterns of interaction and their contribution to the attainment of empowerment. By highlighting interactions between the community groups and their larger institutional environment, the chapter also responds to the final research question about broader social change.
The concluding chapter summarises key findings, highlights the contribution of this study to theory, policy and practice and provides conclusive remarks by drawing lessons from the three case studies. The chapter concludes that contexts and formation of communities play significant roles in the empowerment of communities. It notes that community empowerment requires an enabling government and the NGO sector that facilitates the participation of disadvantaged communities to achieve their own goals. It also notes that random and unpredictable events—critical social incidents—play a role in the empowerment process by drawing the attention of actors and institutions to the action situation. Cultural resources are also considered as key elements in the empowerment of African communities.

The chapter suggests that practitioners and policymakers need to pay attention to these factors when working with African communities and when designing policies and programs to address disadvantage in these communities. The chapter also points out some of the limitations of the study and provides directions for future research. It suggests that community empowerment studies need to include institutional analysis to allow researchers to analyse the dynamics between action and structure. It also suggests the need for further studies to understand community formation and social incidents and their application to wider social change.
Chapter II

Power and Empowerment: Review of the Literature

Empowerment is a multidimensional, multidisciplinary and multi-level concept, hence this chapter draws upon theoretical developments in different disciplines to understand the concept and develop a conceptual and analytical framework to guide this study. It particularly draws on theoretical developments in anthropology, community development, community psychology, education, feminist theory, political theory, public policy, sociology and social work. The starting point for the exploration of the literature is the claim that bottom-up driven community empowerment transforms the lives of disadvantaged people and enables them to attain their goals.

This chapter provides the context and historical background to the theory and practice of community empowerment, reviews current knowledge and practices, summarises significant contributions from different fields of study, points out gaps and limitations, and finally develops a conceptual and analytical framework to guide this study.

2.1 Empowerment: historical background and contemporary context

The concept of ‘empowerment’ has a long and diverse history both in academic and policy circles, from political theory to community development and from community organising to social inclusion. The origin of the concept in political theory can be linked to the American labour movements of the 1930s and 1940s and the American civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Beeker, Guenther-Grey & Raj 1998). A notable influence in community empowerment in this era was the work of Alinsky (1971) in ‘community organising,’ which provided directions for political activism in the USA and other countries. Alinsky (1971, p. 114) saw power as ‘the reason for being of organisation’ and stated that empowerment and organisation were interdependent, ‘one and the same,’ rather than mutually exclusive entities.

Public health commentators claim that the origin of empowerment goes beyond the American labour movement, back to the mid-1800s when the discipline was established.
and that the concept draws its philosophical and ideological roots from the European enlightenment, especially the idea of identity and freedom (Beeker, Guenther-Grey & Raj 1998, p. 831). Commentators in education also provided their own account of the origin of the concept, pointing to the work of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970), who draws influence from the work of Franz Fanon in critical theory and black empowerment (Fanon 1963). Anthropologists’ theoretical preoccupation with empowerment, on the other hand, is related to spiritual power in traditional communities or the concept of charisma as power, and focuses on the involvement of communities in social change processes and is strongly tied to the emergence of alternative development paradigms in the 1980s (Friedmann 1992; Gardner & Lewis 1996, p. 116; Swanson 1973). Alternative development approaches criticise the failure of state-led and market-led developments to improve the conditions of disadvantaged people and promote ‘development from below,’ which refers to the involvement of communities and NGOs in development. Empowerment approaches that emphasise autonomy in decision-making, self-reliance and participatory democracy are central to ‘alternative development’ that focuses on the rights of citizens particularly the ‘disempowered’ (Friedmann 1992; Pieterse 1998).

Current conceptualisations of ‘empowerment’ and its widespread use in political rhetoric can be credited to the influence of three interlinked developments. These include radical projects promoted by the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the American organiser Alinsky and the feminist movement; the adoption of empowerment as a core concept in community psychology and the consequent influence in public health research and policy; and the popularisation of the term by the World Bank and other development agencies.

Both Freirean and feminist conceptualisations of empowerment consider it to be a radical project of social change with an emphasis on personal and inner dimensions of empowerment (Freire 1970, 1973; Rowlands 1997). Public health and community psychology theorists, on the other hand, conceptualise empowerment from an ecological perspective. The ecological perspective refers to the idea that the physical and social environments and culture have reciprocal relationships with people, they affect and are affected by human development and functioning, and must be understood as such. Empowerment is, therefore, viewed at different levels, psychological, organisational and community levels, which is broader than personal and inner dimensions promoted by Freirean and feminist conceptualisations (Rappaport 1984, 1987; Serrano-García, López & Rivera-Medina 1987; Zimmerman 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988).

To key international organisations such as the World Bank, empowerment is an effective strategy for development. The World Bank’s uses empowerment as a strategy to implement
what it calls the ‘five areas of poverty reduction’ including access to basic services, improved local governance, improved national governance, pro-poor market development, and access to justice and legal aid (Narayan 2002). It was the failure of the Bank’s structural adjustment programs in several developing countries in the 1980s coupled with its interest in cost-saving and project efficiency that encouraged the Bank to see empowerment as an effective development strategy (Mayo & Craig 1995). Moreover, the use of the term by development agencies and the Bank to mobilise resources and legitimise their work popularised the term (Cornwall & Brock 2005; Friedmann 1992; Friedmann, Sandercock & Chapin 1995).

Despite the early roots of the concept of empowerment, the use of the term in the academic literature is fairly recent. For example\(^1\), between 1945 and 1980, the number of journal articles, books and conference papers published that used the term ‘empowerment’ in the title were only 14 (see Cheetham 1979; Chestang 1977; Conyers 1975; Dobelstein 1977; Jacobs, M 1980; Johnson 1979; Jones, MH 1978; Jorge 1978; Oconnell 1978; Perlman 1979; Perry 1980; Petitemanns 1978; Swanson 1973; Tonn 1980). This number grew steadily in the 1980 and more than 200 journal articles, books and conference papers published used ‘empowerment’ in their titles between 1981 and 1990. The number increased exponentially in the 1990s to the 2000’s and between 1991 and 2010 there were over 3000 journal articles, books and conference papers published that had used the term ‘empowerment, in the title. There was also a notable increase in the number of journals and disciplines that used the term.

One of the first journal articles to include the term ‘empowerment’ in its title was Swanson’s paper, ‘Search for a guardian spirit – process of empowerment in simpler societies,’ which appeared in the anthropological journal *Ethnology* in 1973 (Swanson 1973). The use of the term ‘empowerment’ in the article was mainly related to Max Weber’s (1947) concept of charisma as power. It presents ‘the search for guardian spirit’ as a process that empowers the individuals, not only to transit from childhood to adulthood but also to assume an ‘office’ and act according to their social responsibility. Similar conceptualisations of empowerment can be found in political theory; however, this focus primarily on cultural acceptance of charisma as a source of power and empowerment. The second journal paper to use the term ‘empowerment’ in the title was John Conyers’ (1975) paper, ‘Toward black political empowerment – can the system be transformed.’ The article appeared in the journal ‘*The Black Scholar*’ in 1975. The first book to be published with ‘empowerment’ in the title was

\(^1\)The number of articles was determined by running an advanced online search for ‘empowerment’ in titles of journal articles, books and conference papers in Sociological Abstracts, the Web of Knowledge and JSTOR. The process was repeated for all the time periods indicated.
Barbara Bryant Solomon's *Black empowerment: social work in oppressed communities* (1976). In both cases, black empowerment is understood as racial empowerment (Calhoun-Brown 1998). These publications and others that followed ignited numerous articles discussing empowering the black community, and sparked the use of the term in other circles since the 1980s.

In the early writings of empowerment, black political empowerment in America dominated the debate. For example, following Conyers' first paper, Mack H. Jones, a Professor and Chairman of the Political Science Department at Atlanta University, published a paper entitled ’Black Political Empowerment in Atlanta: Myth and Reality’ in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* in 1978. In his article, he argued that ideological clarity and the existence of a disciplined community organisation are key elements to the political empowerment of blacks in America. He was particularly interested in how organisations mobilise their resources and their members to promote the interest of their community by electing their own members to government offices, or other candidates who will support and promote their agenda and ensure that their interests are reflected in policies (Jones, MH 1978). The debate on black empowerment continued until 1990 and beyond (Bobo & Gilliam 1990; Conyers 1975; Hanks 1987; Headley 1985; Kantor 1990; Solomon 1976).

Towards the end of the 1980s, there was a shift towards women’s empowerment influenced by the feminist movement. For example, Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgen published a book in 1988 that provided 12 case studies of women’s empowerment and discussed the political empowerment of women and the interplay of gender, class, race, and ethnicity in women's modes of resistance. The focus of the book was on women’s action at the personal, familial, and political level and the empowering effect of such action (Bookman & Morgen 1988). The book received several reviews (see, for example, Bolles 1988; Douglas 1988; Ferguson 1989). The writings in women’s empowerment that followed spanned from education to sexual health (Coate 1990; Douglas 1990), to physical exercise (Kagan & Morse 1988) and to women in development (Boyd 1989; Nzomo 1989).

During this period, the concept of empowerment was also central to the writings of several academics in the fields of education (see Carbone 1989; Lightfoot 1986; Rosow 1990; Schwarz 1990; Troen & Boles 1988; Whitaker & Moses 1990); social work and social policy (see Hegar 1989; Jacobs, JL 1989; Mainiero 1986; Pecorella 1988; Solomon 1976); health (see Jacobs, JL 1989; Jesani 1990; Kapp 1989), and management (see Conger & Kanungo 1988; Culbert & McDonough 1986; Mainiero 1986; Rosow 1990). The use of the term empowerment in each field of study is slightly different as will be discussed in detail in
section 2.1.3. In education, empowerment is about liberating oppressed people through experiential social learning; in social work and policy it is about increasing power so that individuals, families, and communities take action to improve their situations; in health it is about gaining mastery over one’s life, and management focuses on involving employees in decision-making to improve productivity.

Current debates in community empowerment in Australia are mainly related to citizen participation. Citizen participation refers to the process in which ordinary people take part in the decision-making process to influence outcomes that affect their community. The focus is on how a group of people are able to act collectively and participate in public life to enhance their influence on, or control over, or ownership of decisions that affect their interests (Bennett 2003; Simpson, Wood & Daws 2003). Other authors argue that community empowerment is a process in local governance and service delivery that enables local communities to create a better future (see Craig & Mayo 1995; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Narayan 2002). While others present empowerment as a central theme of policies and programs of countries and international agencies (Agur & Low 2009; Communities and Local Government 2007; Narayan 2002). The World Bank has particularly espoused the concept as a key framework of development to change the situation of disadvantaged people (Barr 1995; Mayo & Craig 1995; Narayan 2002).

In summary, current concepts of empowerment are influenced by conceptualisations that consider empowerment as a radical project of social change and there is convergence towards analysing power relations of disadvantaged people. However, the debates are highly compartmentalised. Some emphasise the dimensions of power relations in empowerment as economic, political, cultural, or human empowerment; while others deliberate on the level of organisation that operationalise empowerment at personal, organisational and community empowerment. In addition, the overview points out that there is a lack of coherent conceptual frameworks that can guide this study. Thus, the following sections will review the literature with the aim of addressing this gap and developing a conceptual and analytical framework that can guide this study.

The first three sections (sections 2.2 – 2.4) will review current definitions and theorisations of power, empowerment, community empowerment and bottom-up community empowerment. These will be followed by a thorough discussion of three core conceptualisations of community empowerment namely progressive stages, components and domains of community empowerment (section 2.5). These conceptualisations illustrate that community empowerment occurs in stages that there are community attributes that can
be used to identify community empowerment theoretically, and that there are areas of influence or operational domains that can be understood and measured empirically.

Whilst these core conceptualisations provide a basic outline to understand community empowerment, I argue that they lack the complexity required to explain the multifaceted institutional arrangements that contribute to community empowerment. Thus, to complement these core conceptualisations in community empowerment, I will present institutional theory and analysis in section 2.6. Flowing from these discussions, I will develop a conceptual and analytical framework in section 2.7 by integrating the core conceptualisations of community empowerment and institutional analysis. Finally, I will review the relationship between community empowerment and social transformation in section 2.8, and present current research in community empowerment in section 2.9.

2.2 Definitions and theorisations of power and empowerment

The claim that ‘empowerment’ enables disadvantaged communities to manage their own lives and make the ‘desired’ change in their social, cultural, economic and political environment is appealing to academics, policymakers and practitioners. Such a concept of empowerment as an enabling process has been deliberated in the literature in various fields of social science, to organise policy responses and initiatives at various levels from local NGOs to national states to international organisations. Public health initiatives of the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Wallerstein 2006), development programs of the World Bank (Narayan 2002) and government policies in the UK (Agur & Low 2009) can be cited as examples of initiatives that apply ideas of citizen participation with the intention of reducing poverty and social disadvantage.

However, despite good intentions and promises of empowering disadvantaged people, these initiatives have not always succeeded in achieving their intended outcomes. Some critics argue that this is due to the difficulties that arise when attempting to translate ‘empowerment’ into policies and government practices (Bebbington et al. 2007; Cooke 2003). Others who study programs and policies based on empowerment question the fundamental relationship between theory and practice (Perkins 1995). Such disconnect between theory and practice can be partially explained by the contestations in the concept of power and the elusive nature of the theory of empowerment. Thus, in order to understand empowerment it is necessary to understand the concept of power. In the following subsection, I will review the basic tenets of power and their underpinning theories to contextualise empowerment.
2.2.1 Definitions and theorisations of power

A single and agreed upon definition of power does not exist in one discipline or across disciplines. However, Hindess (1996, p. 1) posits that early discourses on power from Hobbes to Foucault can be brought together into two concepts of power: one that conceptualises power as the capacity to act, and a second more complex understanding of power seen as the capacity and ‘the right to act, its presence is implicit rather than explicit’.

The first concept, power as simple capacity to act, as Hindess and Lukes (1996, p. 1; 2005 [1974]) point out, is the dominant concept in western political thought. Much of the debate on community power in American society in the 1950s and 60s was based on such a concept (Bachrach & Baratz 1962, 1970; Dahl 1961; Lukes 2005 [1974]; Mills 1956). Other debates on social power in other societies, such as Mann’s (1986) were also based on this conception of power that is relational and is theorised in terms of that nature of power called the ‘zero-sum’ capacity of power. It is based on the assumption that, at any given time, the amount of power in any society is relatively fixed and implies that if a person or group of people accumulates power, it can only be done at the expense of another person or group for the totality of power to remain constant (see Read’s (2005) discussion of the works of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Clausewitz, and Foucault).

However, Foucault’s (1980, 1982) concept of power is slightly different from other authors within this group. He argues ‘power comes from below’ and essentially exists in all social relations (see Schaap 2000 for discussion). Therefore, no one is ever without power, and everyone is subject to the effects of power, which Foucault (1980, 1982) argues is more often productive than prohibitive, hence variable rather than zero-sum.

Talcott Parsons, on the other hand, embraces the second concept, power as a legitimate capacity, and defines power as the

… generalised capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organisation when the obligations are legitimised with reference to their bearing on collective goals and where in case of recalcitrance there is a presumption of enforcement by negative situation sanction—whatever the actual agency of that enforcement (Parson 1969, p. 237).

In this second conception, power is viewed as a resource that can vary at any given time in society. It could increase or decrease depending on the ability of the society to mobilise its resources to realise its collective goals. This is called the ‘variable-sum’ concept of power, and it is considered as the basis for many of the theories of community empowerment.
Based on this concept, those subject to the power—disadvantaged communities—can increase their power by supporting leaders who promote the realisation of collective goals. However, Parsons’ concept of power is criticised for assuming the prior existence of collective goals, and his failure to account for the role power can play in the exploitation (Wang 1999).

In the following subsections, I will review the different theories of power from Mills’ elite theory to Giddens’ idea that power is an enabling concept, in order to highlight some of the debates. I will particularly argue for the utility of Giddens’ concept of power and his structuration theory as a basis for community empowerment. I argue that Giddens’ (1982, 1984) view of power as relational and transformative capacity where the action of a group of people makes a difference to a pre-existing situation is crucial to the understanding of community empowerment discussed in this thesis.

The intention of this section is not to survey all existing theories of power, it is rather to review prominent theories of power in the social sciences with a particular focus on theories that can serve as a basis for conceptualising community empowerment. A reasonable number of the early theories of power discussed throughout this section are grounded in political theory, and political philosophy (see Read 2005). Such a focus on political theory and philosophy is reflective of the history of power theorisation rather than a bias on my side.

### 2.2.1.1 Power elite theory

One of the early theories of power is the ‘power elite’ theory promoted by Mills (1956). At the heart of this theory is the argument that elites of corporate, military and political institutions, who have institutional and personal ties and who are able to move between these institutions monopolise power (as decision-making) in America (Mills 1956, p. 31). Mills observed that elite individuals, not several competing interest groups, make most of the decisions. The elites only pass minor managerial matters to what he calls ‘the middle level’ and almost nothing to the citizens. In a way who you are, your reputation defines who has power (Taylor 2011). The concern is the unequal and unjust distribution of power.

Although elitist theorists were concerned with the inequality of power distribution in society and the demise of the public as an independent force in civic affairs, they did not offer alternative means of action. Nor did they provide a mechanism by which the ‘passive spectators’ participate in issues that affect their lives and empower themselves.
2.2.1.2 The pluralist theory of power: the one-dimensional view

Dahl (1961) criticised the elitist and promoted a pluralist theory of power arguing that power is not held by an elite, but rather dispersed among various interest groups. The pluralists assume that interest groups compete on an equal footing. The basis for this assumption is the conviction that the checks and balances that exist in a democratic system are adequate to ensure no single interest or group dominates (Dahl 1961). Dahl's idea is that any coalition is likely to negotiate or bargain and compromise issue by issue, and may succeed in one issue and lose in another. He clarifies this by saying: 'my intuitive idea of power, then, is something like this: A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something B would not otherwise do' (Dahl 1957, pp. 202-203). Thus for the pluralist power is behavioural in nature – it is about participating, and is defined in terms of outcomes achieved through participation (Taylor 2011). This is called the first face of power, or as ‘one-dimensional view’ of power and the emphasis is on observable conflict in decision-making.

Lukes (2005 [1974]) criticises the pluralists' focus on behaviour in the decision-making over key issues involving actual, observable conflict. He indicates that the pluralists consider policy preference as interest and hence the conflict of interests is equivalent to a conflict of preferences. He explains that pluralists 'are opposed to any suggestion that interests might be unarticulated or unobservable, and above all, to the idea that people might be mistaken about, or unaware of, their own interests' (2005 [1974], p. 19).

Gaventa (1980), on the other hand, points out that pluralists assume that because people act upon recognised grievance, in an open system, for themselves or through leaders, then non-participation or inaction is not a political problem. In fact, Dahl (1961) suggests that non leaders—common people or homo civicus as he calls them—are not to be active in political action. In other words, the primary role of common people is to work and earn money. This shows that such a model does not lend itself well to theories of empowerment, which mainly focus on the action that homo civicus could take rather than their passive inaction.

2.2.1.3 The second face of power (two-dimensional view)

Arguing that power had a second face that pluralists were unable to detect by their methods, Bachrach and Baratz (1962, p.948) assert that:

Power is exercised when A participates in the making of decisions that affect B. But power is also exercised when A devotes his energies to creating or reinforcing social and political
values and institutional practices that limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to A. To the extent that A succeeds in doing this, B is prevented, for all practical purposes, from bringing to the fore any issues that might in their resolution be seriously detrimental to A’s set of preferences.

They argue that any form of political organisation is biased. Citing Schattschneider (1960), they claim that the organisation is the mobilisation of bias because it mobilises certain issues or conflicts into politics and suppresses and organises other issues and conflicts out of politics (Bachrach & Baratz 1962). Thus, ‘non decision-making’ becomes the second face of power.

Critics of the second face of power point out that by emphasising observable conflicts, Bachrach and Baratz (1962) have neglected the prevention of such a conflict from arising in the first place. To this end, Gaventa (1980, p. 6) suggests that there may be other processes of non-decision-making power that are not explicitly observable that involve non-event rather than an observable non-decision. He lists two examples including the ‘decisionless decision’ that grows from the institutional inaction, and where B, with a greater power, decides not to make demands upon A. Theorising empowerment based on the concept of power as ‘non-decision-making’ is problematic as empowerment is premised on the action that the disempowered can take to change their situation rather than the inaction of the powerful.

2.2.1.4 The third face of power (three-dimensional view)

After studying the debates in power since the 1950s, Lukes (2005 [1974]) in his highly cited book Power: a radical view proposes that there is a third dimension to power, ignored by all of the above approaches. He describes the third face of power as the power ‘to prevent people to whatever degree, from having grievances by shaping their perceptions, cognitions and preferences in such a way that they accept their role in the existing order of things’ (Lukes 2005 [1974], p. 11). Thus, in such a case power can also be exercised by preventing people from having grievances in the first place. Thus, certain issues never arise, nor do decisions to include or exclude them from the political agenda. Lukes asserts that no theory can be adequate unless it can offer an account of the third face of power. The main theme in the third dimension is that decision-making and agenda construction are not the only ways in which power is exercised. Power could operate at a deeper, more invisible, level through political socialisation where actors unwittingly follow the dictates of power even against their own interests.
For Lukes (2005 [1974]), power can be seen as various forms of constraint on human action, but also as that which makes the action possible. He argues that competing concepts of power reflect differing moral and political values concerning the creation of interests. Power is, therefore, ‘essentially contested concept,’ subject to irresolvable dispute between theorists with differing values. His radical view denies that interests are simply consciously expressed wants, for these may be shaped by a social system which serves the powerful by suppressing people's awareness of their interests.

Lukes’ scheme has attracted some critics and his revised 2005 book responds to some of these critics. According to Swartz (2007), Lukes addresses five limitations of his earlier edition by adding two chapters in the new edition. Swartz (2007, pp. 104-105) summarised these additions as: 1) the idea that power is a ‘dispositional concept’: that power needs to be conceptualised as capacity or ability including both resources and exercise that may or may not be activated; 2) the admission that all power is not necessarily negative and zero-sum, and that there are other kinds of power; 3) the consideration of situations in which ‘power over can be productive, transformative, authoritative and consistent with dignity’; 4) the admission that actors have multiple interests instead of unitary interests, and some may be conflictual, and finally 5) the fact that there may be situations where there are multiple actors with differing interests.

Although Lukes seems to admit some of the shortcomings in his theory and suggest that power is not necessarily zero sum, he still assumes that power is finite. This does not provide much room for empowerment. Another criticism of Lukes' theory is that it is difficult to operationalise as he does not show how systems of power involve shaping actors’ very sense of self or the role of individual autonomy (Cairncross, Clapham& Goodlad 1992).

### 2.2.1.5 The fourth face of power: Foucault

The critique that Lukes' (2005 [1974]) theory does not explain how systems of power involve shaping actors' very sense of self, led researchers to look for what is called ‘the fourth face of power’, a term inspired by the work of French scholar and intellectual historian, Michel Foucault (Spicer 2007). Of course, this is in part because the question that Foucault (1982) asks is different from the questions asked in the other three faces of power. As Digeser (1992, p. 980) explains,

> Under the first face of power, the central question is, "who, if anyone, is exercising power?"
> Under the second face, "what issues have been mobilized off the agenda and by whom?"
> Under the radical conception, "whose objective interests are being harmed?" Under the fourth face of power the critical issue is, "what kind of subject is being produced?"
The answer to this question also marks a significant departure from the other theorists. Gaventa (2003, p.1) notes that Foucault’s writing ‘marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas.’ In Foucault’s analysis, ‘power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them’ (Foucault cited in Gaventa 2003, p. 1).

Foucault (1998, p. 63) argues ‘power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’ and thus is not an institution, a structure, or possession; it is a rather ‘complex strategic situation’. Such conception challenges the idea that power is exercised only through the act of domination or coercion as suggested by Lukes and others before him. Foucault (1991, 1998) portrays ‘power’ as dispersed and pervasive, something that permeates society, and is constantly changing; it is an everyday socialised and embodied experience. This implies that power is extant in all social practices and transactions: politics, religion, business, work, family life and the like; in other words, power mediates social life.

Foucault (1980, p. 220) notes that power is ‘the total structure of action’; the focus is not how decisions are made or not made; it is rather on the subjects and systems or ‘structure’ of decision. The subjects to the effects of power are free because they exercise power on their own account (Hindess 1996). For this reason, some commentators point out that Foucault’s theory does not account for agency or structure and that there is little or no opportunity for practical action (Hayward 1998).

Foucault also argues that power is not simply relational, does not exist, and, therefore, is not a function of consent. He explains:

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others. Which is to say, of course, that something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures. This also means that power is not a function of consent. In itself, it is not a renunciation of freedom, a transference of rights, the power of each and all delegated to a few (which does not prevent the possibility that consent may be a condition for the existence or the maintenance of power); the relationship of power can be the result of a prior or permanent consent, but it is not by nature the manifestation of a consensus (Foucault 1982, p. 788).
By removing the reference to interest, Foucault indicates that power should not necessarily be viewed in terms of conflict of interests or its coercive nature, but rather as a productive and positive force in society (Foucault cited in Gaventa 2003; Philp 1983).

Another important concept of power in Foucault’s (1980) writing is that of ‘power/knowledge’ and discourse. He asserts that power and knowledge are inseparable; they are intertwined in existence and function, and it is difficult to exercise power without the use of knowledge. Discourse is also both the instrument and effect of power. It transmits and produces power and reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it (See Gaventa 2003). As Digeser (1992, p. 982) posits:

We are its vehicles because power is conveyed through our practices and interactions. It is put into operation when we participate in discourse and norms and does not exist independently of those practices.

As discussed above, although some of Foucault’s concepts are essential to this study, basing a community empowerment framework entirely on his work is problematic. To start with Foucault considers power as non-relational, while empowerment is based on the relational nature of power that exists in society. Secondly it is problematic because his theory does not account fully for agency and structure, and does not provide an opportunity for collective action upon which empowerment is based (see Hayward 1998).

### 2.2.1.6 Gaventa’s theory of power

Gaventa (1980, p.3) studied the phenomenon of ‘quiescence’ and tried to answer the questions: why resistance or rebellion does not occur in a situation where there is tremendous inequality and deprivation, what is preventing issues from arising grievances from being voiced, or interests from being recognised, why in an oppressed community where one might intuitively expect the upheaval, does one instead find, or appear to find, quiescence, under what conditions and against what obstacles does rebellion begin to emerge?’

Gaventa (1980) found that those in power use it to prevent social disturbance from occurring and to maintain quiescence. He notes that ‘in situations of inequality, the political response of deprived groups or class may be seen as a function of power relationships, such that power serves for the development and maintenance of the quiescence of the non-elite’ (Gaventa 1980, p.4). Thus, he argues that the very lack of conflict and rebellion by the non-elite is an indication and a consequence of deliberate use of power by the elite.
Geventa’s power theory is an attempt to integrate the three faces of power to explain power and powerlessness in situations of social inequality as ‘the purpose of power is to prevent groups from participating in the decision-making processes and also to obtain the passive agreement of these groups to this situation’ (see Sadan 1997, p.39). The key contributions of Gaventas work are the fact that he tries to understand power ‘from the bottom-up’ from the perspectives of the disempowered, and he offers a multi-dimensional model for analysing community power. The utility of his theory as a basis for conceptualising community empowerment in this study is, however, limited as it does not consider wider issues of structure and institutional arrangements that enable and/or constrain power.

2.2.1.7 Clegg’s circuits of power

According to Clegg (1989), power is a circular process that flows in three channels which he calls ‘the circuits of power’—the overt, the social and the systemic-economic circuits of power—which are relational, ever-changing and complex. Using an electric circuit board as a metaphor, Clegg asserts that there are three distinct and interacting circuits—episodic, dispositional, and facilitative—which operate at three levels, two at the macro and one at the micro level.

Clegg offers a postmodern theory of power ‘where what power does is more of interest than what it is’ (Murray 1999, p. 30). His theory highlights the importance of context in understanding power theory. He makes the argument that context can influence access to resources of power and the ability of an actor to use power. Although Clegg’s Circuits of Power (1989) integrates different perspectives on power from sociological, organisational and political theories, his definition is distinct in looking at power as a central element in sustaining and providing stability to the social system (Cairncross, Clapham& Goodlad 1992; Silva & Backhouse 2003). As Foucault (1982), he argues that power is relational, that there are no specific centres of power, and that no-one is particularly powerful or powerless. Instead, Clegg (1989, p. 224) explains that power is materialised at the ‘obligatory passage points’ as it flows through the circuits of power.

Cleggs’s conception is different from the way Giddens conceptualise power. While Giddens (1984, pp. 14-15) links power to action, particularly to the ability of an agent to make a difference to a pre-existing state of affairs or to what he calls ‘transformative capacity,’ Clegg considers power beyond actions, which stabilises pre-existing state of affairs.
2.2.1.8 Structuration theory and Giddens on power

Giddens (1982) considers power to be primarily relational, and views it both as transformative capacity and domination. Transformative capacity refers to the action of a group of people or an individual to make a difference to a pre-existing situation, or in other words the capacity of an agent to transform the social structure to bring about social change. Empowerment theories and practices are based on this transformative capacity (Gaventa 2003).

Giddens’ structuration theory revolves around agency and structure whether one or the other influences social life. Agency refers to the capacity of individuals or groups to act to make a difference to pre-existing situations while structure refers to patterned rules and resources that actors draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities. The duality, the connection and inseparable nature of structure and agency or what he calls the ‘duality of structure’ is the crux of Giddens’ theory. For him, action shapes, sustains and transforms structures; while structures affect actions. He defines structures as rules and resources involving human action. The rules constrain human actions, and resources make it possible. It should also be noted that the reverse could also hold true: rules can facilitate action and the lack of resources limit or constrain the possibility. Giddens tries to ‘reconcile active human agency with the existence of persisting social structures that shape and constrain action’ (Read 2012, p.17). This understanding is vital in analysing the context of community empowerment in this study.

Structure can limit, or enable action by providing common frames of meaning. Although Giddens (1982) suggests structures to be stable, he contends that they can be changed through the unintended consequences of action, when people start to ignore them, replace them, or reproduce them differently. In this interplay of structure and agency, Giddens sees power as an important part of social structure created by human agents, which influences and constrains their actions. This duality of structure and agency integrates two approaches of power: power as a voluntary human activity, and power as a structural element or quality of society rather than a person or persons (Hajer 1989 cited in Sadan 1997).

Gaventa (2003) notes that structuration theory could be applied to the development and social change process because Giddens defines power as capability and transformative capacity, which in some ways is similar to Sen’s (1993) capability approach. His argument that people have implicit knowledge about their situation and his capacity to integrate both concerns of agency and structures of power is also beneficial to the conceptualisation of
empowerment. Giddens' theory is useful for this study because it emphasises the duality of agency and structure that are important in conceptualising empowerment.

For the above reasons, I have adopted Giddens' conceptualisation of power as a basis for my understanding of community empowerment. This does not, however, mean that Giddens' theory of power is ideal for empowerment theorisation. As Murray (1999, p.31) notes, there is 'no agreement on ideal power theory from which to develop theories of empowerment.' All theories discussed above have their limitations. Likewise, Giddens' conceptualisation has some limitations. It does not explain how dominant forms of power are perpetuated, nor does it fully appreciate how human action and interaction produce norms and rules to change the social structure. Thus to enhance the utility of Giddens' conceptualisation for the purposes of this thesis, I have used institutional theories and Haugaard’s (2003) work.

Institutional theories 'cast further light on the way in which dominant forms of power are perpetuated' and 'explain the ways in which human actions and interactions produce rules that regulate activity and norms that set out expectations of appropriate behaviour' (Barnes et al. cited in Taylor, 2011, p. 117). Combining Giddens' insights on power with Haugaard’s (2003) work on how power is created and perpetuated enhances the explanatory capability of Giddens’ idea. Haugaard’s work complements Giddens’ work by synthesising the different concepts of power discussed above and by explaining how different forms of power are perpetuated. It also provides depth to Giddens’ theory of structuration by introducing the concepts of restructuration and confirming-structuration.

**2.2.2 Ways of creating power**

In the preceding sections, I have reviewed the concept of power and provided commentary on the relation of each concept of power to empowerment. In this section, Haugaard’s (2003) presentation of the different ways of creating power is discussed to complement Giddens’ conceptualisation of power and to provide a basis to build a better conceptual framework for the study of community empowerment.

Haugaard (2003) integrates the work of many of the theorists discussed above and others to provide a social theory of the creation of power. He proposes seven ways of creating power: social order, system bias, systems of thought, false consciousness, power/knowledge obligatory passage points, discipline and coercion. He also points out that there is relationship between these modes of creating power. I will summarise each mode of power creation briefly.
In the first mode of creating power, social order, actors drive power from the society by being part of it (see Arendt 1970; Barnes 1988; Clegg 1979, Giddens 1984; and Parsons 1963). That is to say social order comes from ‘social structures which lend order to action through the reproduction of meaning’ (Haugaard 2003, p.90). In this context, action is not a personal affair because it 'is not only linked to intention but presupposes the recognition of the act as intended' (Haugaard 2003, p.90). Such conception stretches Giddens’ idea that structuration produces structure. The reproduction of the structure not only presupposes the structuration by actor A, but also a recognition that it is meaningful for actor B; that is to say ‘structuration is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reproduction of social structure’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 90).

Thus, it is not only the intent of the actor and his action that produces social order or meaning, but the understanding and validation by others as so, or to use his words the ‘confirming-structuration’ that reproduces social order or meaning. The idea of meaning has implications for empowerment practice as the reproduction of social order is contingent upon the consensus of recreating meaning through confirm-structuring practice, or in other words to the very nature of empowerment as a relational process. It supports the idea that community empowerment occurs when other actors such as governments and NGOs collaborate with the disadvantaged community (Friedmann 1992).

In the second way of creating power, system bias, one actor imposes structural constraint over the other (see Bachrach & Baratz 1962). Structural constraint is the process by which those who threaten the status quo by new structuration are met by non-collaboration of others in the reproduction of these new structures. This means the key to the structural constraint is failure of confirming-structuring practice by others. For this reason, Haugaard does not consider structural constraint as negative and repressive as he believes constraint can also facilitate the creation of power through social order because the reproduction of the structure presupposes structural constraint. He argues that destructuring others perform an essential functional role by maintaining the possibility of social power and avoiding meaninglessness although this occurs at the expense of freedom.

As Bachrach and Moratz (1962) clarify, in complex administrations, some issues are made areas of non-decision-making so that power cannot be created about certain controversial issues (through structural constraint). To keep the order of things, those in power will declare inability to confirm-structure a non-issue as dealing with the issue may change the rules of the game and cause destabilisation. Thus, as one can understand, structural constraint can be used to disempower others.
Thus Haugaard (2003, p. 95) advises that:

In reaction to disempowerment, those who wish to raise a new issue have to try and expand the conditions of possibility of social order. They will have to build consensus on new meanings so that novel structuration practices will be confirm-structured.

He continues:

If successful, the social order will then be changed, and a capacity for action will be created relative to issues which previously lay outside the conditions of possibility. This process entails empowerment which is the creation of a capacity for action (‘power to’) with respect to new issue areas which, in all probability, empowers agents who were previously disempowered.

Again, this clearly illustrates that empowerment and social change are premised upon consensus, and supports the argument that a bottom-up driven community empowerment requires top-down support or consensus. This consensus could be achieved in some issues – when structuration meets confirming-structuration, and not in others – when it encounters disconfirming-structuration or destructuring. Haugaard mentions bureaucracy (government policy and programs) as an example of this type of power creation suggesting that the bureaucracy plays a vital role both in empowering and disempowering disadvantaged people.

The third mode of creating power is through systems of thought or social consciousness systems that sustain structural practice. This aspect of social power creation suggests that social meaning only be maintained if it is in harmony with the current system of thought (see Foucault 1970). In other words, meaning is relative to the current horizon of interpretation (Haugaard 2003, p. 98). For example, in well-developed democracies, considering the commensurability between the process of empowerment as a new structure and democracy as a system of thought is essential.

The fourth mode of creating power is akin to what Lukes (2005[1974]) calls ‘false consciousness.’ It involves the relationship between tacit and discursive thoughts. Lukes’ discusses the idea of increasing consciousness through the conversion of practical consciousness knowledge into discursive consciousness knowledge. Practical consciousness knowledge is what enables us to go on in day-to-day life, and discursive consciousness knowledge is knowledge that can be put into words. Haugaard (2003) comments that the idea of ‘false consciousness’ is problematic because it presupposes true consciousness, and he asserts that the conversion of practical consciousness knowledge
into discursive consciousness knowledge is not a matter of truth and falsity, rather a matter of recognition. Once it is recognised, people can choose to evaluate it, use it or ignore it.

On the other hand, dominant groups use practical consciousness knowledge to empower themselves and disempower the less powerful by reproducing the social order. However, it should also be noted that the less powerful also have ‘the possibility of empowerment,’ by ‘changing the modalities of power production, through the ability to objectify certain beliefs and interpretations by making them discursive’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 102). The process is similar to what may be called giving voice to the disempowered by actively objectifying existing beliefs in a democratic society and by making them issues of debate in the community one can cause a condition of possibility to create a new social order.

In the fifth way of creating power (see Clegg 1979 and Foucault 1980, 1988), Haugaard (p. 102) notes ‘reification constitutes an important mode of stabilising power relations’. In this case, the conversion of practical conscious knowledge into discursive knowledge is often expected to destabilise social order. However, when disadvantaged people are aware that they are reproducing structures that disadvantage them, destabilisation does not necessarily occur. The reason for this is that the actor believes that structures reproduced are not ‘merely’ social constructs. In other words, ‘reification stabilises structural reproduction by making the structures appear more than social constructs’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 102). In traditional societies, tradition performs this function as things are the way they are because they always have been that way. In contemporary societies, ‘scientific truth’ or knowledge can serve as reifying factors (See Foucault 1988).

Although the idea of reification is necessary to maintain social order and that scientific truth could be used to maintain power, it does not mean that what people claim to be true is necessarily false. It is also essential to learn from this discussion that the use of truth to reify certain structural practices is central to legitimation.

The sixth way of production of power is disciplinary power. Disciplinary power as a means of enforcing routine and creating social power is discussed by Foucault (1991) and is central to the concept of disciplinary power. By instilling repeated behaviour, it is possible to reproduce appropriate actions and reactions as reflexes. In other words, by physically insisting on routine, those in power are able to create an actor who displays a particular set of actions through ‘practical conscious knowledge’ that the powerful determine. However, if this does not happen, Haugaard (2003, p. 107) notes ‘the object of discipline becomes entirely unpredictable,’ once the physical constraint of the routine is abandoned.
The seventh and final way of power production is coercion. In agreement with Arendt (1970), Haugaard takes the position that coercion as physical power is not the ultimate form of power and that its use represents the failure of power. He argues, ‘once the sovereign has to draw their sword it is because the Leviathan has failed to create social power. In a well-functioning Leviathan, this is a relatively infrequent occurrence compared with routine compliance’ (Haugaard 2003, p. 108).

In summary, Haugaard presents a compelling and applied synthesis of the different theorisations of power. He also takes Giddens’ structuration theory further by providing a corrective step – confirm-structuration which is central to his theorisation and instrumental in bringing all the other concepts together. For a summary of his theory see Table II-1: Forms of power production below.
Table II-1: Forms of power production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Power/Power created by</th>
<th>What does it do</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Social Order</td>
<td>Social order creates power through predictability that is a consequence of actors structuring and confirm-structuring relative to specific meanings.</td>
<td>Causal predictability created through the reproduction of meaning; theorised as structuration and confirming-structuration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Systems bias</td>
<td>Particular social orders create specific forms of power with respect to specific issues consequently creating possibilities of empowerment and disempowerment through structural constraint.</td>
<td>Order precludes certain actions: de-structuration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Systems of thought</td>
<td>These systemic biases are based upon certain meanings that are maintained by knowledge derived from specifically interpretative horizons that comprise conditions of possibility of power creation.</td>
<td>Certain acts of structuration are incommensurable with specific interpretive horizons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Tacit knowledge</td>
<td>The relationship between power and a system of thought they have internalised may not be obvious to the actors who structure and confirm-structure primarily from practical consciousness knowledge; hence this tacitness benefits the powerful but, conversely, translation of this knowledge into discursive form will empower the powerless.</td>
<td>‘Power over’ based upon social knowledge that is not discursive. Empowerment through the transfer of knowledge from practical to discursive consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Reification</td>
<td>If a system of thought is discursive and strengthens power relations it may still be subscribed to by the relatively less powerful if it is considered other than simply arbitrary convention, so reification is a central mode of stabilising social order as a source of power.</td>
<td>Social order has to appear as non-arbitrary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Discipline</td>
<td>Because practical consciousness knowledge stabilises social life, socialisation through discipline can be used to ensure that actors have established and appropriate practical knowledge to secure the reproduction of structures for existing power relations.</td>
<td>Routine is used to make actors predictable through the inculcation of practical consciousness knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Coercion

If none of this works? Well, the creation of social power will fail relative to these agents, especially if it is 'power over' that is in demand, thus physical power has to be in its place.

Natural power as a base: violence and coercion as a substitute for the creation of social power.

Source: adapted from Haugaard (2003, p. 109)
2.2.3 Definition and theorisations of empowerment

It is problematic to understand empowerment without any reference to power. For this reason, I have reviewed theories of power and pointed out that the concept of ‘power’ used in this study is informed by Giddens’ (1982 & 1984) concept of power and Haugaard’s (2003) idea of how power is created and perpetuated. As I argued earlier, Giddens’ (1982) definition of power as ‘transformative capacity’ can be used as a basis for understanding community empowerment because it can be applied to the development and social change processes. His argument that people have implicit knowledge about their situation and his capacity to integrate both concerns of agency and structure are particularly important.

However, as I pointed out earlier Giddens’ conceptualisation does not explain how dominant forms of power are perpetuated and how human action and interaction can influence change in the social structure. Thus, to complement his work, I have included Haugaard’s (2003) seven ways of power production and will later integrate this with useful concepts drawn from institutional theories (see DiMaggio 1988; Ostrom 2009; Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994) to develop a conceptual and analytical framework for this study (see sections 2.6 and 2.7).

In this section, I will review empowerment theories in different disciplines to shed light on the arguments in the different disciplines, with the aim of providing a working definition of empowerment for subsequent discussions and the formulation of the conceptual and analytical framework. An appropriate start for the exploration of empowerment is to define the concept (Murray 1999). However, it is worth noting that there are a plethora of definitions and ways of understanding empowerment in the literature. Thus, I will first explore the different ways in which empowerment is understood in different disciplines in order to provide a working definition of empowerment for this thesis.

The social science literature presents empowerment both as a theory and value. As a theory, it is argued that empowerment incorporates both process and outcome: how people and organisations become empowered (process), and the result of such a process (outcome) (see Zimmerman 2000; Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988). There are, however, disagreements as to whether these two aspects of empowerment—process and outcome—are better considered together or separately (Bernstein et al. 1994). For example, while Zimmerman (2000) encourages the distinction between outcome and process in theorising empowerment, Alsop and Heinsohn (2005) promote the use of frameworks that combine both process and outcome in understanding empowerment. I argue that combining both
process and outcome is a better approach to understanding community empowerment. Community empowerment is both a process and outcome of social change. It is the process through which a person, group or a community gain control and make decisions to attain goals; and at the same time empowerment is an outcome that people attain by applying such a process.

The literature also points out that it is essential to make a distinction between empowerment as a theory (process and outcome) and as an approach (value) to comprehend the theoretical positions taken in different disciplines (Zimmerman 2000). This is a vital distinction both methodologically and empirically. An empowerment approach or value influences practice and guides the practitioner to design, implement and evaluate certain activity for social change or development. The focus here is explicitly on practice and practitioners. Whether a practitioner is a community psychologist (Zimmerman 2000), a community planner (Sadan 1997), a social worker (Miley, O'Melia & DuBois 2013), or community development worker (Taylor 1995, 2011), the ways through which a practitioner understands social problems and addresses them is influenced by the values that the practitioner holds. These values may include ways of thinking about the context of disempowerment (Miley, O'Melia & DuBois 2013; Zimmerman 2000) and ways of dealing with these challenges. However, as the emphasis of this study is on understanding community empowerment from the perspectives of the disadvantaged communities rather than from the perspectives of practitioners, much of the discussion will focus on empowerment as a theory.

Having explored the different approaches to understanding empowerment, I will now explore the definitions of empowerment in selected social science disciplines, and show how I am drawing these together by considering the interconnections between these different theories and their relation to the definition of power I canvassed.

As noted earlier there is no shortage of definitions of the concept of empowerment in the social science literature; however, ‘despite (or perhaps because of) these many definitions, there remains little agreement as to what constitutes empowerment’ (Murray 1999, p. 20). Different disciplines seem to have different definitions and uses of the term (Cornwall & Brock 2005). The confusion is, perhaps, associated to the complexity in defining the root word ‘power.’ For this reason, writers such as Rappaport (1984) suggest that the concept of empowerment should be defined in its absence, meaning in terms of disempowerment and powerlessness. In other words, one can define empowerment by identifying changes that empowerment as a process or outcome impact on the knowledge, attitude (behaviour and motivation) and practice (action) of disempowered individuals, groups and organisations.
In community psychology empowerment is understood both as a core value and key theory (a process and outcome) in the discipline (Maton 2008; Rappaport 1984; Zimmerman 2000). Theorists in this discipline define empowerment as ‘the mechanism by which people, organisations, and communities gain mastery over their lives’ (Rappaport 1984, p. 3). At the centre of this definition is the term ‘control’ and as Zimmerman explains the definition suggests, ‘participation with others to achieve goals, efforts to gain access to resources, and some critical understanding of the socio-political environment are basic components of the construct’ (Zimmerman 2000, p. 44).

In this view, the causes of social problems that lead to disempowerment are extrinsic, hence structural, such as unequal distribution of and access to resources. Thus, empowerment is both a process of changing inequality and the outcome produced by this process. For instance at the individual level, a process aiming at learning decision-making skills (agency) could have an empowering potential and may create a sense of control (perceived or actual) of one’s own environment (structure) as an outcome. This sense of control could be expressed in increased participation in community organisation. At the community level, the process could be access to resources and the outcome, organisational coalition.

This type of conceptualisation has been used to design public health strategies and policies in mental health, substance abuse prevention activities, weight reduction and other health problems (Laverack & Wallerstein 2009). Since the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion identified community empowerment as a central theme of health promotion in 1986, empowerment has become central to many policies and programs in health. The burgeoning literature on empowerment in health reflects the centrality of the concept in the field.

Such a concept of empowerment draws certain elements of Giddens’ (1982, 1984) idea of power as transformative capacity and contributes to the conceptual and analytical framework developed by showing the relationship between the external environment (structure) and internal action of individuals, groups or communities (agency) to change the environment. However, the concept of empowerment in this tradition has been criticised for being individualistic and conflict-oriented, and for its emphasis on control rather than on cooperation and community (Rigers 1993). It is also criticised for placing more emphasis on the individual practitioner as an agent of empowerment and the ‘disempowered’ or ‘clients’ as passive recipients of empowerment. Commentators argue that such conceptualisations contradict the intention of empowerment and perpetuate the status quo (Cheek 2003; Traynor 2003).
In political science, the main concern revolves around who has power, and how it is exercised; hence power is domination (Bachrach & Baratz 1962; Dahl 1961; Lukes 2005 [1974]; Mills 1956). Thus, empowerment in political science is more about the process of giving power back to the people, citizen participation (Nelson 2002 cited in Hur 2006). Political scientists are interested in the participation of community members (citizens) especially those who are disadvantaged and disempowered in the political process (Banducci, Donovan & Karp 2004; Clark & Morrison 1995; Gilliam 1996). Key concerns in the political science literature include how citizen participation and empowerment can create the possibility for social change.

These discussions are rooted in deliberative democracy ideas (Risse 2000). Those who argue that representative democracy is an imperfect method to determine preferences or interests seem to push for a more inclusive policy deliberation mainly to rectify the social inequalities they perceive exist within a society (Gaventa 2006). Others seem to consider empowerment in relation to the election process; drawing from a study of some cities in the United States of America, for example, Clark & Morrison (1995) note that there are two modes of local empowerment, what they call empowerment through ‘dominance’ and ‘influence.’ Dominance occurs when a minority group is the majority of voters in a single election district, and influence, when a minority group gains ‘influential minority’ status in several districts. In both modes, the undercurrent is participation in political processes through action, electing of representatives or supporting the election of those who promote one’s interest. Such political conceptualisation of empowerment is the theoretical basis for much of the debates in black empowerment in the 1970s, in the USA.

Whilst the concept of empowerment in political theory is mainly based on the zero-sum conceptualisation of power and does not include the transformative capacity of power, the disempowered can create the possibility for change by building consensus around an issue (Haugaard 2003). Such conception is important to this study because disadvantaged communities including the African communities in this study are able to raise new issues and expand the possibility for change by building consensus. They are able to do so by using the democratic process to influence elected members to give new meaning to issues raised or by what Haugaard (2003) calls confirm-structuration.

Feminists conceptualise empowerment as part of processes of social change, as a political process focusing on the role of the individual as political, mainly drawn from popular education in the feminist movement (Hanisch 1970). Feminist theorists argue that the reason for disempowerment is primarily political and not psychological (as is the case in community psychology) (Carr 2003). Discussions of empowerment in feminist discourse
especially in relation to development were mostly about women in development and gender and development, thus on the role of gender in empowerment (Moser 1993).

One of the significant contributions of the feminist writers to empowerment theory is Rowland’s categorisation of power into four forms: power over, power to, power with and power from within (Rowlands 1997, p. 13). She defines ‘Power over’ as the controlling power or the ability to influence or coerce; ‘power to’ as generative or reproductive power, the power to create change through organisation; ‘power with’ is about tackling the problem together or collective action; and ‘power from within’ as the inner strength or capability of the individual consciousness. Empowerment is conceptualised differently based on the different forms of power, and it incorporates the participation of citizens in economic and political structures and decision-making processes that consider the ‘full range of human abilities and potential’ (Rowlands 1997). While Rowland’s work, particularly ‘power to’ and ‘power with,’ contributes to this study, it is mainly focussed on individual consciousness and power while this thesis is primarily concerned with collective action.

In community development and social work, empowerment is a means to obtain needed social change to meet human needs; a process of increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power so that individuals, families, and communities can take action to improve their situations (DuBois & Miley 2005; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Kenny 2011; Payne 2005; Pigg 2002; Simon 1990). Community empowerment is a process through which personal and organisational capacity to bring about real change and progress in society can be built (Craig, Mayo & Taylor 1990). The role of community development worker or social worker in the process of empowerment is considered as a facilitator, partner or a trainer who relies on the clients’ capability, experience and participation to support them to change their own situation (Breton 1994; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Kenny 2011; Miley, O'Melia & DuBois 2013). There are also concepts of empowerment as a tool for advocacy, spiritual enlightenment, access to democracy and leadership (see Servian 1996).

In the field of education, one of the founding scholars, Paulo Freire (1970), sees empowerment as a means to liberating oppressed people. He believes that the disempowered already know a great deal about their oppression and what must be done to overcome it. What they do not have is a methodical approach to translating this knowledge into action. To do so Freire (1970) proposes three progressive steps of empowerment: ‘conscientising, inspiring, and liberating.’ According to Freire (1970, 1973), the oppressed or the disadvantaged can become empowered by learning about social inequality (i.e., conscientising), encouraging others by making them feel confident about achieving social equality, and ultimately liberating them. Whilst Freire’s conceptualisation is rooted in
education, his influence on empowerment theory and practice is in other disciplines is evident (see for example O’Gorman 1990; Rees 1991; Rose & Black 1985; Simon 1990, 1994).

On the other hand, anthropologists’ involvement in empowerment emanates mainly from their interest in social change processes and the emergence of alternative development in the 1980s (Friedmann 1992; Gardner & Lewis 1996, p. 116). Empowerment is also discussed in relation to spiritual power in traditional communities and the concept of charisma as power (Swanson 1973), which is related to how power works in society either as an attribute of a person, the ability to impose one’s will, or control of the organisation (Wolf 1990). There is also a growing interest in understanding community-level social organisation (social stratification, hierarchy and forms of social organisation) for social change (see Benavides 2004; Cheater 1999; Heyman 1995, 2003). The understanding of empowerment in relation to forms of social organisation is particularly relevant to this study and will be used to shed light on community formation and empowerment.

The term empowerment is also popular in business management particularly, in relation to employee involvement initiatives and the distribution of power in decision-making to improve the productivity of workers and the profitability of firms (Rosenbluth & Peters 2002; Wilkinson, A 1998). Such conceptualisation of empowerment has, however, been labelled as pseudo-empowerment mainly because it is seen as a means to an end – an instrumental objective to extract the maximum surplus value from employees (Davies & Mills 1999). This thesis is not concerned with such a concept of empowerment.

This brief review of empowerment theorisation in different disciplines illustrates that the different conceptualisations of empowerment have differing emphases (see table II-2). Each discipline has enriched and contributed to the conceptual and analytical framework that I have developed (see sections 2.5 and 2.6 below). For the purposes of this study, empowerment can be defined as the process and outcome of gaining control over one’s life goals by building capacity and increasing assets and attributes to gain access to decisions, partners, networks and voice.
Table II-2: Empowerment theorisation in different disciplines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fields</th>
<th>Processes or outcomes of empowerment</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>Strengthening representational links and giving power back to the people</td>
<td>(Hur 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation of disadvantaged and disempowered community members in civic affairs</td>
<td>(Banducci, Donovan &amp; Karp 2004; Clark &amp; Morrison 1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Development, Sociology and Social Work</td>
<td>Increasing personal, interpersonal, or political power</td>
<td>(DuBois &amp; Miley 2005; Gutierrez, Parson &amp; Cox 1998; Payne 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Conscientising, inspiring, and liberating</td>
<td>(Freire 1970, 1973)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand reality, fostering competence, and employing confidence to voice one’s concern</td>
<td>(Parpart, Rai &amp; Staudt 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Studies (Feminist theory)</td>
<td>Power within, power with, and power to Political process focusing on the role of the individual as political</td>
<td>(Hanisch 1970; Rowlands 1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women in development, gender &amp; development</td>
<td>(Moser 1993)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Psychology and Health Studies</td>
<td>Gaining access to resources and understanding one’s own situation</td>
<td>(Zimmerman 2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A mechanism to gain mastery over life</td>
<td>(Rappaport 1984)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Involving employees in decision-making to improve productivity</td>
<td>(Rosenbluth &amp; Peters 2002; Wilkinson, A 1998)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>Social organisation for social change</td>
<td>(Benavides 2004; Cheater 1999; Heyman 2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s adaptation of Hur (2006, p. 526)

2.3 Community empowerment

As a subset of empowerment, community empowerment combines two highly contested terms – community and empowerment. Both terms hold much promise and invoke hope and goodwill. However, to understand why community empowerment is different from individual or organisational empowerment, it is necessary to review the literature on community to understand the concept of community and provide a working definition for this study.
Community may mean different things to different people, and these different meanings reflect the context in which the term is used: for instance, ethnic communities, migrant communities, virtual communities, community policing, community organisations, community sector, and so forth. The literature on community also reflects these differences in meaning. For example, an early work on community shows that there were 94 different definitions, although social interaction, geographic area and common ties are elements included in the majority of these definitions (Hillery 1955).

The German sociologist Tonnies (1957) is credited with providing an analytical abstraction of the term community, suggesting that all intimate, private and exclusive living should be understood as life in the community (gemeinschaft). To him community is ‘a perfect unity of wills’ void of conflict. He presented community as an organic entity as opposed to society (gesellschaft), which he considers to be mechanical. The concept of community as a harmonious group of people is common both in the literature and everyday use and is associated with hope and the idea of resolving social issues by bringing people together.

As Zygmunt Bauman (2001, pp. 1,3) puts it, the word ‘community’ has a good feel to it; it is ‘a cosy and comfortable place’ and – “community”stands for the kind of world which is not, regrettably, available to us – but which we would dearly wish to inhabit and which we hope to repossess.’ Community invokes good feeling, and is appealing, that even sociologists ‘wanted to live in a community’ convinced by what they felt the community should be – ‘normative prescription’ rather than what it is in reality – ‘empirical description’ (Plant 2011, p. 65). The word ‘community’ is not, however, necessarily always warm, harmonious and void of conflict; neither is it immune from further conflict and contestations (Bauman 2001). As Friedmann (1992, p. 7) notes, ‘fault lines run along communities.’

The term community invokes the sense of ‘cooperation, fraternity, participation, egalitarianism … and membership’ (Plant 2011, p. 71). Community is inclusive and exclusive at the same time. It includes those who feel secured by the fraternity and membership and the mutual links that it offers, and it excludes others by identifying its members. Community can be defined as a group of people with shared common characteristics (Taylor, Barr & West 2001), common interest (Taylor 2003), or common experience (O’Neill 2010). It can also be defined as a symbol (Cohen 1985), as a value (Plant 2011), a social movement (Green 2008; Popple & Shaw 1997), a political concept (Little 2002) or social network and social system (Allen et al. 2008; Lee & Newby 1983; Putnam 2001) among others.
However, there are debates that contemporary theoretical understanding of ‘community’ should go beyond the idea of place, and place-attachment (see Brennan & Brown 2008). Bradshaw (2008, p. 5) argues that community should not be defined by its attachment to place, rather it should be conceptualised out of place as ‘the post-place community’ – ‘network of people tied together by solidarity, a shared identity and set of norms, that does not necessarily reside in a place’. The argument is that social relations work across geographic locations and not necessarily within a specific place, which is a continuation of the idea of ‘community without propinquity’ (Webber 1963) and related concepts of ‘virtual community’ (Calhoun 1998). Whilst the idea of post-place community is useful to describe and examine the characteristics of a community, it does not provide theoretical or methodological structure to account for collective action that links community to concepts of empowerment. Policies and rules that operate at the community and neighbourhood level are essentially place-based and operate under certain jurisdiction. However, Bradshaw (2008, p. 14) argues that this problem can be resolved by considering relationships as ‘nodes in the post-place world where relations tend to organise but remain fluid’.

There are also arguments that ‘community is a moving target’ which acquires an ever-changing meaning as the interaction in the global world changes; thus one should understand the context that shapes the lives of the members in the community to conceptualise community as a way of belonging socially in a certain place at a certain time (Goodsell et al. 2008, p. 19). ‘Community is best conceptualised as imagined representations of a social collectivity, an idealisation that is dynamic and subjective’ (Goodsell et al. 2008 p. 34). This is similar to the concept of transnational communities where there is a growing literature (see A-Ali Black & Koser 2001; Al-Ali & Koser 2003; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007; Portes 1996). The idea of transnational communities applies to migrant populations living in a country other than their country of origin but with ties to the country of origin is more applicable to this study.

At one level, this concept is relevant to this study in the sense that one could argue that the African communities are transnational communities or imagined representations of communities that were (and are no longer). These communities are constantly being redefined and reconfigured by the experiences of their members and expectations of the broader communities in Australia. However, these communities are also essentially the outcome of individual and coordinated social action that occurred at a certain time in a specific place—here in Australia—and hence are place-based (Green 2008).

Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, community is defined as a group of people (who may have diverse backgrounds) who are linked by common social ties, experiences,
interests and perspectives and who are engaged in collective action in a certain setting(s). Community is shaped both by experiences and shared social ties and present concerns and action. It is assumed that a community shares a common view and set of norms; shares mutual links – social, political, or cultural connections; participates in activities to maintain the mutual links, and advances common values and interests to serve its own vision of the future. This definition does not preclude the fact that individuals can belong to different communities at the same time. Individuals can belong to different groups of people as they can have different interests that they share with others who have similar interests (Taylor 2011).

Thus, community empowerment can be defined as a social change process and outcome in which a group of people (community) uses collective action to gain control over resources and decisions to attain their goals. Community empowerment is both a process and outcome of increasing the control of decisions important to a certain group of people who are bound by common social ties, experience, interest and perspective. It is collective human activity that has structural and organisational aspects, aimed at changing social systems and creating structural alternatives. The focus is both on changing current social systems and providing alternative structures. It is a social change process which involves organising and creating a community that influences its future (Sadan 1997, p. 145). This implies that the ‘process develops a sense of responsibility, commitment, and ability to care for collective survival, as well as skills in problem solving, and political efficacy to influence changes in environments relevant to their quality of life.’ (Sadan 1997, p. 145).

Community empowerment has continued to enjoy widespread popularity in the social science literature, policy documents and political rhetoric both in developing and developed countries. It is particularly popularised in the context of active citizen participation, poverty reduction, and social inclusion (Kenny 2011; Mayo & Craig 1995). Some authors consider community empowerment as a process in local governance that promotes citizen participation and effective service delivery (Bennett 2003; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998). Others argue that community empowerment can be dominated by decentralisation with a focus on autonomy, multi-level organisation and solidarity (Forrest 1999). Some espouse community empowerment as a key framework of development to change the situation of the disadvantaged (Barr 1995; Mayo & Craig 1995; Narayan 2002).

As a social change process, community empowerment involves self-organisation and enables the community to influence its future to attain its goals by gaining control over resources and decisions. There are three main ideas here – resources, decisions and enablement. The acquisition of resources is a critical step in community empowerment
processes and Sadan (1997) suggests that resources be drawn from two sources; individuals who are willing to act for the common good in addition to realising their personal goals, and external agents (governments and NGOs) who contribute by providing rules and resources of meaning, legitimation, and power, which support the creation of a community. Decisions imply both internal decisions and the participation of the community in decision-making processes to influence decisions that affect their community. The focus is on how a group of people are able to act collectively or participate in society to enhance their influence on, or control over, or ownership of decisions that affect their interests (Bennett 2003; Simpson, Wood & Daws 2003). Enabling, in this case, implies that people cannot ‘be empowered’ by others, they can only empower themselves by acquiring more of power's different forms (Laverack 2001). It assumes that people are their own assets, and the role of external agents or other actors is to catalyse, facilitate or ‘accompany’ the community in acquiring power.

Community empowerment is also an outcome – the state of affairs that exists when members of a community feel empowered to achieve their self-determined goals, with some measure of significant control over the processes and strategies to attain these (Sadan 1997). An empowered community is a community that takes the initiative to improve its situation by responding to challenges in the community and providing an opportunity for its members to participate in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of society (Zimmerman 2000). An empowered community is one where a group of people work together to change their situation by identifying the main concerns in their community, developing a strategy to deal with these concerns and taking action to change their situation.

### 2.4 Bottom-up community empowerment

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the term bottom-up refers to the process where disadvantaged people participate fully and initiate activities, events and programs to change their own situation; as opposed to processes where institutions with power design and prescribe solutions without the full participation of disadvantaged people. The term ‘bottom-up’ differentiates community empowerment as presented in this thesis from processes mainly driven and controlled by institutions with power at the macro-level and designed, prescribed and in some cases ‘imposed’ on disadvantaged people without their full-participation or involvement.
The purpose of a top-down approach is to direct policy and resources from the top to be accessed by invited groups (Shaw cited in Turner 2009). On the other hand, ‘bottom-up’ refers to programs, initiatives and processes driven by grassroots at the meso and micro-level. These programs, initiatives and processes could either be initiated directly by disadvantaged communities on their own or in collaboration with other external actors such as governments and NGOs to enable disadvantaged communities achieve their own goals (Dinham 2005; Popple 1995; Turner 2009).

The main argument of a bottom-up empowerment approach is that for disadvantaged communities to achieve their own goals and sustain empowerment, their full participation from the bottom up is necessary. The assumption is that bottom-up driven community empowerment is a better approach than top-down empowerment, and is more likely to succeed in enabling disadvantaged communities achieve their own goals. However, this does not indicate that the efforts of disadvantaged communities do not require external or top-down support. External agents may support disadvantaged people from the top-down by providing the resources and legitimation they need to change their situation (Haugaard 2003). For example, governments are able to create empowering relationships between government institutions and disadvantaged community groups (Labonte 1996). The rationale is that governments can empower its citizens from the bottom up by providing opportunities for communities to participate in the decision-making process (Dinham 2005).

The above discussion shows that a bottom-up driven community empowerment is assumed to be a better approach, more successful and normatively more appropriate in comparison to top-down approaches. However, the literature on bottom-up driven community empowerment is limited, ‘in part because of the informal and chaotic nature of bottom-up processes where learning [is] rarely documented’ (Turner 2009, p. 233). This study hopes to contribute to filling this knowledge gap by documenting the process of bottom-up driven community empowerment among African communities in Australia.

2.5 Current conceptualisations of community empowerment

Conceptual models and frameworks of empowerment can be categorised into three broad categories: one-dimensional, two-dimensional and multi-dimensional models (Murray 1999, p.22). One-dimensional models conceptualise empowerment as a multi-level continuum (see Arnstein 1969 and Wilcox 1994); two-dimensional model conceptualises empowerment through unidirectional causality (see Barnes & Walker 1996; and Martin 1996); and multidimensional models conceptualise empowerment as multi-level and...
multidimensional concept (see Hur 2006; Labonte 1990; Laverack 2001; Prestby et al 1990; Sadan 1997, Schults et al. 1995).

In this section, I will present three multi-dimensional conceptualisations of community empowerment that are prominent in the empowerment literature; namely stages, components and operational domains of community empowerment. The concept of ‘stages’ indicates that community empowerment is a progressive process, components are community attributes that can be used to identify whether community empowerment is occurring or has occurred, and operational domains are organisational aspects of a community that can be used to recognise empowerment at an operational level, particularly in programs and activities.

These conceptualisations are ideal type theoretical frameworks of community empowerment that were developed by synthesising multidisciplinary concepts (Hur 2006; Laverack 2001, 2006; Sadan 1997). In the following subsections, stages, components and domains of community empowerment will be discussed to illustrate how empowerment has been conceptualised and to enable the development of a conceptual and analytical framework to guide this study. The reason for choosing to incorporate analytical dimensions to the conceptual framework is to add rigour to the study and to allow the researcher to analyse human actions and interactions in the field. The framework will be instrumental in highlighting the dynamics between action and structure by explaining the complex power relations and institutional arrangements that shape community empowerment and contribute to social change.

2.5.1 Stages of community empowerment

The idea that the empowerment process is a continuum or that it takes place through several theoretical progressive stages is well-established across the disciplines discussed above (Hur 2006; Laverack 2001; Sadan 1997). However, different authors suggest slightly differing terms and numbers of stages in the process. For example, Hur (2006) suggests that there be five progressive stages including existing social disturbance, conscientising, mobilising, maximising, and creating a new order; while Sadan (1997) suggests six progressive stages including frustration, the presence of conducive social structure, ability and resources, mobilisation of will, conscientising, maximising, and mobilisation of resources/new order. Each author also provides slightly differing meanings for each term in the continuum. A model that integrates both authors’ progressive stages is presented in Table II-3 below.
Table II-3: Progressive stages of community empowerment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing social disturbance</td>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Dissatisfaction, disadvantage, oppression, alienation, stratification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of conducive</td>
<td></td>
<td>The existence of minimal level of ability and resources to initiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social structure, ability</td>
<td></td>
<td>change and conducive social structure and system that enable this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&amp; resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mobilisation of will</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness and resolve to obtain resources and develop abilities to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>achieve one’s own goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientising</td>
<td>Conscientising</td>
<td>Developing critical consciousness of (pre)existing situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilising (organising)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mobilising collective action, sharing power with others by joining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organisations and movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximising</td>
<td>Maximising</td>
<td>People’s belief in their own abilities, self-efficacy, self-organisation to achieve their own goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a new order</td>
<td>Mobilisation of resources/new order</td>
<td>Securing an ongoing ability to participate in decision-making and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>influencing the system by creating organisations that transform old institutions and structures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above summary shows the differences in meaning attributed to each stage by each author. It also shows how the two approaches complement each other and can be integrated logically into an empowerment continuum with seven stages. The seven stages include existing social disturbance/frustration, presence of favourable social structure and reasonable ability and resources, the mobilisation of will, conscientising, mobilising, maximising and creation of a new order.

2.5.1.1 Existing social disturbance or frustration

‘Existing social disturbance’ or ‘frustration’ is a sense of powerlessness that causes social disturbance and starts with some dissatisfaction created due to the gap between what one expects of life and what happens in life (aspiration and the challenges faced to realising it) (Sadan 1997). Frustration or social disturbance is the beginning of the empowerment process, which manifests differently in different circumstances. It may include the existence of disadvantage, oppression, alienation, and stratification.
2.5.1.2 **The presence of conducive social structure and reasonable ability and resources**

Empowerment requires the existence of a minimal level of ability and resources to initiate change. The existence of individual and collective resources serves as the bases of power that make the exercise of power and the empowerment of the community possible (Wrong 1979). This implies that if favourable conditions do not exist in the social structure and system to enable empowerment, it may be constrained. In other words, one cannot assume that social disturbances or frustration alone will lead to empowerment unless there are favourable conditions in the social structure and system. Sadan (1997) believes that the availability of resources, which pre-exist actors, determine the ability of actors to act and influence outcomes, and the less accessible the resource, the less able the actors to influence the social structure. Thus, the empowerment process is highly dependent on the existing social reality, and the kind and extent of change that takes place at the individual, community, and systemic level.

2.5.1.3 **The mobilisation of will**

Empowerment begins when people are willing to obtain resources and develop abilities that enable them to achieve their life goals. The mobilisation of resolve and will is considered as the first outcome in the process.

2.5.1.4 **Conscientising**

People’s recognition of their right to express aspirations and their ability to define them is the outcome of developing a critical consciousness of the existing situation (see Freire 1970, 1973). The identification of social disadvantage, or any social problem, given the social structure is conducive to social change, can empower the community to ‘conscientise’ themselves; to be aware of the difficulties and challenges they face and to recognise their ‘limited power’ to change their circumstances.

Hur (2006) indicates that conscientising can occur in two ways: through the intervention of outside agents who are ‘letting the disadvantaged learn’, and by the disempowered themselves creating critical consciousness. Whichever way disadvantage comes to be acknowledged, the key is that some learning about social reality, awareness of one’s disadvantaged position, is necessary for empowerment. It is a stage where awareness of how social and political structures affect individual and group experiences is expected to create ‘power within’ and strengthen the confidence to foster the possibility for change.
2.5.1.5 Mobilising/organising

The fifth step is premised in the understanding that power grows by mobilising collective action or sharing power with others (Parpart et al. cited in Hur 2006). The assumption is if people gain awareness of their situation (disadvantage and powerlessness) and if opportunities for change exist in the structure, they are likely to join a movement or organisation to mobilise collective action to change their situation (see Alinsky 1971). At this stage, members of the community can take initiatives in empowering themselves by joining others (organisations or movements) to mobilise collective action.

2.5.1.6 Maximising

People’s belief in their own ability to achieve outcomes is an achievement in terms of a sense of individual ability to control one’s life. Self-efficacy may become collective efficacy if it is translated into the community’s practical ability to organise itself for a collective effort to achieve outcomes in the environment. Hur (2006) suggests that this step is a turning point that transforms the process of mobilising collective action into that of creating a new order. Citing Gladwell (2000), Hur (2006, p. 529) states that ‘this step is like “the tipping point that little things can make a big difference.”’ Hur assumes that the more power is shared, the greater empowerment becomes circular in nature and that people feel able to utilise their confidence, desires, and abilities to bring about social change.

2.5.1.7 Creating new order

This is about ‘transforming’ old institutions and structures into new ones, or creating a new social order through organisation. This stage can only be realised if policy changes or changes in situations of the disadvantaged occur. Mobilising resources to continue the empowerment process, including resources of knowledge about organising and setting up community organisations, are outcomes that indicate that the empowerment process has established itself. This is a proof that people have secured an ongoing ability to achieve outcomes to control their lives, participate in decision-making, and influence the environment.

Sadan (1997) suggests that the entire sequence of progressive stages may be a hypothetical empowerment process, and each one of the stages is an end in itself and may also be a starting point for a different empowerment process. These stages outline a continuum through which empowerment can be attained; however, one needs to identify aspects of personal, collective and institutional changes that can be observed, in order to
analyse empowerment of a community group. The components of empowerment discussed below, are about observable attributes (both individual and collective attributes) that indicate the attainment of empowerment.

### 2.5.2 Components of community empowerment

Components of empowerment are attributes that indicate empowerment is taking place or has already materialised. Components of empowerment can be observed at the individual and collective level as empowerment takes place at both levels (Hur 2006; Laverack & Wallerstein 2009; Sadan 1997; Zimmerman 1990, 2000). While individual empowerment focuses on personal change, community empowerment includes interpersonal, institutional and political empowerment. The two levels of empowerment could also occur in connection, and Hur (2006) assumes that individual empowerment leads to collective empowerment. However, there is no guarantee that empowered individuals will effectively contribute towards their community’s empowerment (Sadan 1997). As Laverack & Wallerstein (2009, p. 180) argue,

> … individuals who … become involved in program activities may, in fact, not be supported by members and may instead be considered as elites. The dominant minority may dictate the community needs unless adequate precautions are taken to involve as many people as possible.

Thus, individual empowerment can occur without any connection to community empowerment. However, ‘when it occurs in the course of active participation in social change processes in groups and organisations it has a distinctive value for both the individual and the environment’ (Sadan 1997, p. 145). A typical example is the role of leadership in community. Leaders play an active role in the social change process by creating direction and structure for participation.

There is growing evidence for the interdependence of empowerment at both the individual and the community levels, and empowerment on the other often follows that empowerment on one level. For this reason, considering components of both individual and community empowerment is useful for this study. However, it should be noted that this study is about community empowerment and hence the utility of the components of individual empowerment will only be considered in relation to community empowerment.

The four components of individual empowerment are meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact (Thomas & Velthouse 1990).
1. **Meaning** is defined as the totality of human cognitions including one’s needs, values, beliefs, and behaviour (Brief & Nord 1990).

2. **Competence** is the measure of the skills and abilities one possesses that are necessary to perform a certain job or task and is analogous to agency or personal mastery.

3. **Self-determination** is the belief that one has autonomy or control over their life, how one does one’s own work.

4. **Impact** is the measure of the influence to make a difference that one has on strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work or in society. In this sense, impact refers to an individual’s sense of control over organisational outcomes.

On the other hand, Hur (2006) provides a set of four components of community empowerment including collective belonging, involvement in the community, control over the organisation in the community, and community building. These are useful in understanding and studying bottom-up driven community empowerment.

### 2.5.2.1 Collective belonging

Collective belonging is the sense of feeling and being part of a social network. The emphasis here is specifically in interdependence and thus does not preclude autonomy.

### 2.5.2.2 Involvement in the community

Involvement in the community is about taking part in community activities or events that may lead to effecting change by affecting the power structure in the community. It is about participation in the social, cultural, economic and political life of society. Craig & Mayo (1995) consider involvement and participation as routes to community empowerment.

### 2.5.2.3 Control over organisation

Control over organisation in the community is more about the act of influencing representative groups and their effectiveness by way of active collective support and advocacy.

### 2.5.2.4 Community building

Community building refers to creating a sense of community or sense of social cohesion by working together, resolving problems and making collective decisions for positive change.

The outline described above and summarised in the figure below provides a reasonable multidisciplinary model of empowerment that is useful for empirical studies. Note that the
discussion above proceeds from stages to components of empowerment, while the figure below shows these stages in the middle, components of individual empowerment on the left and community empowerment in the right. This helps demonstrate the role that observable individual and community components play in understanding the stages of empowerment and the attainment of empowerment schematically.

**Figure II-1: Stages and components of community empowerment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components of individual empowerment</th>
<th>Stages of empowerment</th>
<th>Components of community empowerment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning</td>
<td>Social disturbance and frustration</td>
<td>Collective belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Conducive social structure, ability &amp; resources</td>
<td>Involvement in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>The mobilisation of will</td>
<td>Control over organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Conscientising</td>
<td>Community building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mobilising/organising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximising</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creating new order</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s adaptation of Hur (2006, p. 536)

**2.5.3 ‘Operational domains’ of community empowerment**

Both progressive stages and components of empowerment provide a structure for understanding empowerment at a theoretical level. Laverack (2001) suggests that it be necessary to identify domains to complement the above theoretical framework and enable the researcher to measure and recognise empowerment at an operational level, particularly in programs and activities carried out by community groups.

After reviewing the literature in health, social sciences and education, particularly the work of three authors (Jackson, Mitchell & Wright 1989; Labonte 1990; Rissel 1994), Laverack
suggests that there be nine ‘operational domains’ (or areas of influence) that need to be considered in studying community empowerment. He clarifies that these domains are organisational aspects of community empowerment that link interpersonal elements of control, social connection and connectedness among community members, and the socio-economic and political context in which the community operates. These are participation, leadership, organisational structure, problem assessment, resource mobilisation, asking ‘why,’ links with other people and organisations, the role of the external agents and program management (Laverack 2001, pp. 138-141). These domains of operation are interdependent to each other, it is also worth noting that they are heuristically related to stages and components in the sense that they are organisational aspects or descriptors of community empowerment that link program activities and actions to the conceptions of stages and components of empowerment.

2.5.3.1 Participation

Participation refers to the involvement of community members in a community organisation and the daily activities of the collective. It is similar to one of the components of collective empowerment.

2.5.3.2 Leadership

Leaders play a crucial role in community empowerment by creating direction and structure for participation; they also take responsibility for the actions of the group and facilitate the resolution of any conflict within the group.

2.5.3.3 Organisational structure

Internal structures in communities such as community associations, committees, church and youth groups and women’s groups are important in the empowerment of the community. These organisational structures enable the community to function as an organisation and provide a structure for people to come together, work on common goals, socialise and address concerns and problems.

2.5.3.4 Problem assessment

The capacity of community groups to identify problems, assign solutions to problems identified and carrying out actions is crucial in empowerment of the community. However, this can be accomplished either with the initiative of members of the community or with the
support of empowering professionals and other actors who facilitate the process and provide skills training.

2.5.3.5 Resource mobilisation

The capability of the community to mobilise resources from its members and access resources from other sources through negotiation and formal processes such as grants and funding arrangements is referred to as resource mobilisation.

2.5.3.6 Asking ‘why’

This refers to the ability of a community group to address social, political, economic and cultural issues that contribute to the disempowerment of the community. In other words, it refers to the ‘critical awareness’ or the process of emancipation through learning (Freire 1973).

2.5.3.7 Links with other people and organisations

Coalitions, partnerships and voluntary alliances that the community tries to establish to address problems indicate the links that the community has with other people and organisations.

2.5.3.8 The role of the outside agents

External agents such as empowering professionals who facilitate collective action through various means, which include, but are not limited to training, creating or raising awareness, technical expertise, lobbying and financial support play a role in the empowerment of the community. It is important to identify and recognise the role these external agents play.

2.5.3.9 Program management

This refers to the full participation and control of community members over the decision-making in key program processes and activities such as planning, implementation, evaluation, finances, administration, reporting and conflict resolution.

The progressive stages and components of empowerment, as indicated above provide a theoretical outline for understanding empowerment. The domains of community empowerment complement these conceptualisations by providing a list of domains that link programs and activities to the stages and components of empowerment. In sum, these three conceptualisations provide ‘ideal type' theoretical approaches that enable the study of
community empowerment. However, these conceptualisations do not highlight the dynamics between action and structure. In other words, there is no clear explanation as to how human actions and interactions that produce and reproduce norms and rules in the social structure are accounted for in these conceptualisations.

To develop the conceptual and analytical framework that can be used to analyse community actions and interactions that produce and reproduce social structure and to explain the complex power relations and institutional arrangements that shape community empowerment and contribute to social change, I will draw on institutional theories, particularly institutional analysis (discussed in section 2.6 below). This will further contribute to the development of the conceptual and analytical framework.

2.6 Institutional analysis in community empowerment

In the above section, I presented progressive stages, components and operational domains of empowerment. These conceptualisations reflect current theoretical perspectives for understanding community empowerment. These perspectives enable the researcher to identify and define key concepts and variables in community empowerment that need to be taken into account. However, these conceptualisations are silent on the dynamics between action and structure, thus lack the sophistication required to explain the complex power relationships and institutional arrangements that contribute to social change. In order to explain the power relationships and institutional arrangements that affect community empowerment, it is necessary to analyse the broader institutional context of disadvantage, collective actions and interactions; and norms, laws, power relations and structure that regulate these actions and interactions.

Analysing the dynamics between action and structure is important to this study because community empowerment is premised on changing current social systems and providing alternative structures. The change in social systems could loosely be termed as a change in institutional relationships. In fact, Narayan (2002) notes that community empowerment is founded on the collective action of communities exerted towards changing institutions that affect their lives. Institutional theorists define an institution in two ways: as norm or organised external patterns of action and as internal formal structures or aspects of organisations (DiMaggio 1988; March & Olsen 1984; Zucker 1988). The term institution refers to the different organisations that are involved in social change processes, which community empowerment is, and the rules used to structure patterns of interaction within and among these organisations (Ostrom 2009).
Thus, institutional relationships encompass formal and informal relationships among actors that participate in community empowerment processes. Community empowerment in this regard is premised on changing existing institutional relationships through self-organisation and collective action. Institutional theorists posit that whenever more than one organisation and various institutions are involved in processes, the likely outcome of their interaction is complex and often greater than the sum of the actions of the individual actors (Gilchrist 2000; Rowan & Miskel 1999; Zucker 1988). In other words, social change is not only the function of the sum of the actions of each actor and institutions involved, but also the result of interactions of these actors and institutions.

As indicated above, community empowerment is premised on such complex interactions of actors and institutions. Thus, to explain the complexity in such social change processes and to understand the role of each actor and the ways in which the actions and interactions of actors contribute to the empowerment of the community, I will deploy institutional analysis. I will particularly draw from the Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) approach to develop a conceptual and analytical framework through which community empowerment can be studied and understood (Ostrom 1998, 2009; Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994).

The IAD approach is a conceptual map for analysing and testing hypotheses about institutional change and understanding ways in which rules, conditions and attributes of a community affect the structure of collective action and the resulting outcomes (Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994). To clarify the utility of the IAD approach in developing a conceptual and analytical framework for this thesis, I will highlight the challenges, concepts and parts that constitute the IAD approach (Ostrom 1998, 2009; Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994).

2.6.1 Principles and challenges in the IAD approach

To understand the IAD approach, Ostrom, Gardner & Walker (1994) suggest that the following principles and challenges need to be clarified.

a) The term institution in the IAD approach refers to organisations and the associated rules, norms and strategies used to structure patterns of action and interaction within and across these organisations. Rules refer to shared prescriptions that are mutually understood and enforced by agents responsible for monitoring conduct and for imposing sanction. Norms mean shared prescriptions that tend to be enforced by the community members themselves. Strategies are regularised plans
that individuals or groups make within the structure influenced by rules, norms, and expectations.

b) Institutions are fundamentally shared concepts including implicit knowledge, which may not be in a written form. Thus, to identify institutions the IAD approach suggests that one need to consider the rules-in-use rather than rules-in-form. *Rules-in-use* are ‘the dos and don’ts that one learns on the ground that may not exist in any written document’ (Ostrom 2007, p. 23).

c) In the IAD approach, it is understood that decisions are made at different levels, the individual, community and societal levels. When individuals interact in social settings; they may be in operational situations that directly affect the community and society, ‘or they may be making decisions at other levels of analysis that eventually impinge on operational decision-making situations’ (Shepsle cited in Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994, p.3). For these reasons, it is noted that it is necessary to conduct an analysis at multiple levels and understand the relationship among the different levels.

d) In analysing social change, it is suggested that the problem under study be separated into different parts, and each part examined independently. However, it is also noted that the separate parts are not necessarily independent of each other and change in one can have an impact on other parts and the overall outcome. For this reason, institutional analysts suggest that one need to know the value of change occurring in each separate component part to have a clear understanding of the overall change.

### 2.6.2 Components of the IAD approach

The IAD approach is a multidisciplinary, multi-level framework involving the study of relationships among rules, relevant aspects of society, and cultural phenomena that underpin institutional arrangements. The IAD approach enables the identification of structural variables that are present in institutional arrangements that affect power relationships. These can be represented schematically as in Figure II-2.
2.6.1.1 Action Arena

The first step in analysing a problem in the IAD approach is to identify a conceptual unit called an action arena. The term action arena refers to the social space where community groups create awareness of problems, solve problems and take action. An action arena is inclusive of actors and the situations in which they act. The action arena affects and is affected by the patterns of interaction and the outcome of the actions and interactions that occur.

The term action situation refers to a social situation or problem that affects certain individuals or a group of people. Understanding the action situation enables the researcher to isolate and explain community actions that are intended to reform or change the situation. It is suggested that an action situation be analysed by identifying key actors and their roles, actors’ actions and their linkage to outcomes, the level of control each actor has over its own action, the information available to actors about the nature of an action situation, and the costs and benefits—which serve as incentives and deterrents—assigned to actions and outcomes by each actor (see Ostrom, Gardner & Walker 1994, p. 6).

Actors can be individual or organisational agents that participate in the action arena. The term action refers to those human behaviours to which an acting individual or group attaches a subjective and instrumental meaning. In analysing the behaviour of actors, Ostrom (2009) advises that the analyst make assumptions about the resources that actors bring to an action situation; how and what value the actor assigns to actions; the way actors acquire, process, retain, and use knowledge contingencies and information, and the processes and mechanisms institutionalised by actors to select particular courses of action.
Both components—the situation and the actors in the situation—are important to identify and elucidate actions and outcomes. Ostom, Garder & Walker (1994) suggest that the analyst take two additional steps after making an effort to understand the initial structure of the action arena. The first step is to identify contextual factors that affect the structure of the action arena, which include the rules used by participants to order their relationships, the conditions acted upon and the attributes of the community (see the left side of the IAD approach). The second step is to investigate how these contextual factors affect the action arena.

### 2.6.1.2 Predicting outcomes within an action arena

Depending upon the analytical structure of a social situation, and the particular assumptions made about the actors involved, the researcher can make inferences about results, likely patterns of behaviour and outcomes. However, this may not easily be done in action situations, such as community disempowerment, where various factors are involved in influencing actors’ choices of different courses of actions. In these situations, instead of making completely independent decisions, actors may choose broader ranges of approaches or strategies. Further, they may change their approaches over time as they learn about the outcomes and consequences of past actions. Thus, Ostrom, Garder & Walker (1994, p. 9) suggest that the ‘analyst examining these more open, less-constrained situations makes weaker inferences and predicts the patterns of outcomes that are more-or-less likely to result from a particular type of situation.’

### 2.7 Developing a conceptual and analytical framework

To complete the conceptual and analytical framework for this study, I have drawn from both empowerment theorisation (section 2.5) and institutional analysis (section 2.6). The main reason for this is to ensure that the broader institutional contexts of actions and interactions of community groups and the norms, laws and structures regulating these actions and interactions are accounted for. The framework assists me, as a researcher, to recognise institutional arrangements that create opportunities for the empowerment of the community groups and contribute to wider social change.

The purpose of this conceptual and analytical framework is to guide the conduct and analysis of research. The framework is specifically developed for studying bottom-up community empowerment in African communities, but it can also be applied to other similar studies. The framework has three key components namely contexts, action arena and
interaction and change. The framework relates to the research questions and provides a schematic representation of the contexts of action, the action arena, and patterns of interaction and change. The framework can be presented schematically as below.

**Figure II-3: Conceptual and analytical framework for community empowerment**

Source: I have used Ostrom (2009) and Di Gregorio et al. (2008) to develop the framework.

This framework provides a structure to identify the action situation, (which, in this case, is the disempowerment of African communities), identify actors who participate to change the action situation, observe and analyse the patterns of the actors’ actions and interactions and make deductions about the likely outcomes. These outcomes are then thought through or subjected to the core conceptualisations of community empowerment, which are described in section 2.5 to understand the relationship between the contexts, action arena, and the interactions and change.

I will now summarise the key components of the framework and how the dynamics of the framework enables exploring the process of community empowerment.

### 2.7.1 Contexts

**Contexts** refer to pre-existing social situations and norms that influence the behaviour of the community groups and other actors. These include migration and settlement history,
disadvantage, culture and attributes of the community groups under study, and norms, policies, legal structures and power relations that influence their behaviour.

The framework provides a structure to identify and examine the contexts of disempowerment, what and how contexts affect agency and structure, and the empowerment of communities. The identification of established norms, migration and settlement history, disadvantage and other contextual backgrounds should be analysed in relation to stages, components and operational domains of empowerment. The contexts of disadvantage affect the action arena and in turn are affected by the action arena. At this stage, it is also necessary to analyse how contexts affect the behaviour of actors involved, the action resources actors bring to the action situation, the mechanisms used in the empowerment of the communities and the patterns of action that emanate from these interactions.

An action situation is determined by the nature of participants in the action, the level of awareness of the situation by the community groups, the level of influence these community groups have in changing their situation and the likely outcome of collective action that these community groups may initiate. In analysing the actors and action situation, it is possible to look for factors that affect the action arena. Ostrom (2009) suggests that these factors be rules used by the community group to order its relationship, the nature of the situation that is acted upon (disadvantage), and the nature of the broader community (society) within which any particular arena is placed.

2.7.2 Action arena

The term *action arena* in this framework refers to the social space where community groups interact with each other and other actors to understand and resolve issues. According to Ostrom (2009), an action arena includes an *action situation* and *actors* in that situation. In this framework, I have assumed that the action situation is given; hence it is not shown in the schema. I commenced the study with the assumption that the African communities in Australia are disadvantaged and that their disempowerment is an action situation that needs to change (see discussions of the African communities in Chapter III and IV). Thus, the action arena in this framework is used to analyse and predict the behaviour of the actors who participated to change this situation and the ensuing institutional arrangements.

In analysing the action arena, all actors involved in the community empowerment process need to be identified. Actors can be individuals or organisational agents that participate in the action arena. Once actors are identified, it is necessary to look into the behaviour of
each actor by identifying the action resources actors bring into the action situation, institutional formats through which these actors interact, the factors that influence how actors select certain actions to effect change and the occurrence of interactions, and the rules-in-use. It is also important to analyse the patterns of interactions and the outcomes of these interactions.

To analyse the structure of the action arena, the contextual factors that affect the action arena should be taken into account. For the purpose of this study, the contextual factors that affect the structure of the action arena include migration and resettlement history, disadvantage and challenges, community attributes, and norms, policies, legal structures and power relations that influence the behaviour of the community. This framework also obliges, the researcher to look into the conceptualisations of community empowerment to analyse the action situation and actors in that situation.

### 2.7.3 Interaction and change

The *patterns of interactions* are used to analyse emerging institutional arrangements and their outcomes. To analyse patterns of interactions systematically, naming the actors in the action situation is an important step. This occurs in the action arena, and once the actors are identified, patterns of interactions can be studied in binary by looking at the actions and interactions of two actors and the outcomes of these interactions in the empowerment of a community group. It is also important to deepen the analysis further to see whether the outcomes of these interactions have contributed to change in the circumstances of the community under study and the wider society.

*Empowerment outcomes* in this framework refer to indicators of community empowerment that can be expressed through change in the situation of the communities studied and the social system in which they exist. In analysing outcomes, the researcher may assess the outcomes that are being achieved as well as those that could be achieved under alternative institutional arrangements. In this regard, progressive stages, components and operational domains of empowerment can be applied as evaluative criteria to both the outcomes and the processes of achieving outcomes to see the alignment between theory and practice.

### 2.7.4 The utility of conceptualisations of community empowerment

The three core concepts of community—stages, components and operational domains—are used to analyse and identify the process and outcomes of community empowerment within the three case studies. The stages of community empowerment help analyse the
position of each community group in the empowerment process, components are used to evaluate whether a change is taking place or has taken place within the community groups, and the operational domains are used to identify actions and activities that link community action with community empowerment.

The overall purpose of these core conceptualisations is to serve as conceptual references to inform the analysis of contexts, action arena and interaction and change. The core conceptualisations provide ideal theoretical approaches that the researcher can use to reflect upon the analysis of the contexts, action arena and interactions and change to understand the complex dynamics between action and structure. The interplay among these is important in understanding community empowerment.

2.8 Empowerment and social transformation

One of the underlying assumptions in this thesis is that a bottom-up driven community empowerment brings about social change and transformation. It is anticipated that empowerment creates a possibility for social change and transformation although the nature of change could differ depending on the contexts for change, the attributes of actors, their actions and interactions. ‘Transformation’ in this context refers to change in institutional arrangements and social relations that enhance the capacity of disadvantaged communities to attain their own goals.

The literature canvases empowerment as a process aimed at transforming existing institutional arrangements at the local level to enhance the capacity of disadvantaged people (Hickey & Mohan 2004). It promotes a wider perspective of social transformation and change that includes strengthening the capacity of disadvantaged communities to participate in decision-making and bargain through partnership and by being part of the social system (Cornwall 2004; Maton 2000; Springett 2010). Some also promote the notion that the transformative capacity of empowerment is both ‘people-changing and structure-changing (see Murray 1999, pp. 90-99).

As a ‘people-changing’ process, empowerment transforms individuals, groups and communities by increasing their capacity to deal with and resolve social problems (see Evans 1992; Murray 1999). This implies that the personal transformation is essential to the empowerment process. This is consistent with Friere’s (1970) concept of conscientisation whereby the individual, group or community learns to think critically about their circumstances and take action to change it. The assumption is that people-changing
empowerment can provide a route to wider social change. On the other hand, structure-changing is about transforming the social, cultural, political, economic and institutional structures and relationships. Structure-changing approaches can be characterised by transformative action that challenges the social structure itself (see Karl 1995; Kieffer 1984). People-changing and structure-changing approaches are ‘interdependent rather than mutually exclusive’ to each other (Murray 1999, p.92).

Although it was not possible to locate empirical studies in Australia that show the link between community empowerment and social transformation, the broader literature available offers some examples but fails to question the capacity of empowerment to contribute to the transformation of existing social systems. The focus of empirical studies on the topic tends to be on the characteristics of the change that occurs rather than the process of change. For example, in Cheater (1999), some authors including Wendy James, Sigridur Duna Kristmundsdottir and Richard Werbner show how an empowerment program might be disempowering and hence the transformative outcomes negative, or contrary to what were expected outcomes – ‘empowering the disadvantaged.’

For community empowerment to bring about transformative and empowering social change, reinforcing systems of meaning, power and legitimation are necessary on the level of the social structure (Haugaard 2003). It can be assumed that ‘democratic regimes’ provide better possibilities for transformative and empowering social change by creating reinforcing systems of meaning based on democratic values such as liberty, justice and equity. However, everyday human experiences show that even in a democracy there is no guarantee of fairer or more equitable power relations. A democratic system can provide the legitimation and moral endorsement for structured powerlessness. Thus, the context of action and the dynamics of the interaction among the different actors is more important than the political regime in which communities exist or the quantity of power resources available (Sadan 1997).

For example, two empirical studies from South Africa show that empowerment creates a possibility for social change and transformation. Khosa (2001) discussed the apparent link between empowerment and transformation by highlighting the possibilities of change that were apparent after the fall of apartheid due to the consequent change of the social order in South Africa. The author reports that there was positive transformation in South Africa due to the change in the social order, although he notes that the outcomes were unevenly distributed with the negative consequences of globalisation adding complexity to the change.
In a separate but related study, Iheduru (2003) reports that the change in the social order and the empowerment and mobilisation of elite black women had transformed the position of black women in business in South Africa. The study attributes this transformation both to the personal initiative of the women who went into corporate business following the transition from apartheid to black majority rule on their own (individual empowerment), and also to the support they received from the government (change in social structure) and occasional cooperation from white businesses.

Murray (1999, p. 92-94) reports that some of the organisations she studied in Scotland were able to contribute to social transformation through personal and interpersonal developments, which contributed to effective community action and political change. It was reported that the organisations sought personal change through liberation education using Freirian discourse to enable the individuals and groups in the local communities to learn about their own circumstances and take collective action (Freire 1970; 1973). These empowerment projects endeavoured to politicise individuals in their projects and change people’s expectations to enable them to contribute to wider social change (Murray 1999).

Other studies in Nicaragua and Tanzania have also shown that empowerment strategies and activities carried out in communities led to broader social transformation and change (See Kroeker 1995; Mung'ong'o 2003). Thus referring back to my conceptual and analytical framework, there is ample evidence to suggest that empowerment of the community can be linked to wider social transformation and change. The empowerment processes and outcomes influence social change and transformation by influencing the contexts of action. This raises the question of the extent to which community empowerment can influence the broader social context.

2.9 Current research in community empowerment

Although reasonable number of studies on empowerment can be traced in the literature, the majority tend to focus on non-community-led empowerment programs. For example, in Australia, the ‘Empowerment Research Program’ has produced voluminous publications and reports (see Haswell-Elkins et al. 2005; James Cook University 2010; Smith et al. 2005; Tsey et al. 2002; Tsey et al. 2005). Many of these empirical studies are studies of government funded empowerment programs which are aimed at addressing the social determinants of health in indigenous communities. These programs are designed and controlled by state and Australian Government institutions.
In the USA, community empowerment research is mainly focused on community organising. For example, McMillan et al. (1995) conducted research to identify individual characteristics related to psychological empowerment and organisational characteristics related to collective empowerment. The study used data from members of 35 community coalitions that were organised for the prevention of alcohol and other drug problems. The researchers found that at the individual level, psychological empowerment was most strongly related to an individual’s participation level, sense of community, and perceptions of a positive organisational climate. At the group level, net benefits of participation, commitment, and positive organisation climate were the strongest predictors of collective empowerment while both psychological empowerment and positive organisational climate were the two predictors of organisational effectiveness (empowered organisation).

In another study, Perkins, Brown and Taylor (1996) studied three cities (New York City, Baltimore, and Salt Lake City) in the USA using a particular ecological framework of physical, economic, social and environmental predictors of citizen participation with the aim of understanding the value of these factors to grassroots community participation and empowerment. They examined the predictive value of those factors across different cities, levels of analysis, and time lags. They conducted over 2500 interviews with residents of 150 blocks in the three cities, at both the individual and block levels of analysis, and over multiple time lags and found out that, income, home ownership, minority status and residential stability were positively, but inconsistently related to participation. The study also found that community focused social cognitions (organisational efficacy, civic responsibility, community attachments) and behaviours (neighbouring, volunteer work through churches and other community organisations) were consistently and positively predictive of participation at both the individual and community levels.

Their study showed that participation in grassroots community organisations had a cause and effect relationship with community empowerment (see Perkins, 1995; Zimmerman, 1990). The findings of their study are consistent with the outcomes of a study conducted by Shultz et al. (1995) who were mainly interested in the development of the theory of empowerment that explores the relationships among different levels of analysis (individual, organisational and community). Their findings indicate that participation in organisations and the belief that taking action is an effective means to influence community decisions are correlates of perceived control at the organisational and community levels.

In the UK, empirical studies in community empowerment are mainly reports of the government driven programs that were designed to promote active citizenship and public involvement in governance (see Adamson 2010; Agur & Low 2009).
Whilst empirical studies cited above, and others in the literature are considered as examples of community empowerment research, none of them provides empirical accounts of bottom-up driven community empowerment. Many of these studies report accounts of programs and processes driven by institutions with power at the macro-level. Turner (2009, p. 233) indicates that the literature on a bottom-up process is often scant ‘in part because of the nature of bottom-up processes, frequently characterised as informal and chaotic with learning rarely documented.’ The term ‘bottom-up’ is a significant qualifier in this study, and it refers to programs, initiatives and processes that are driven from grassroots at the micro-level and that are concerned with the primary interest of the communities that initiate the empowerment process (Dinham 2005; Popple 1995; Turner 2009).

Thus, the current thesis aims to fill this gap in knowledge by documenting a bottom-up driven community empowerment process from the perspective of the community, or what is called the ‘emic’ perspective, using ethnographic case studies of three African communities. The conceptual and analytical framework developed guides the conduct and analysis of research. I will now discuss the research design and methodology.
Chapter III

Research Design and Methodology

As pointed out in the previous chapters, the main aim of this study is to provide an understanding of bottom-up driven community empowerment in Australia. Bottom-up driven community empowerment refers to the social change process through which people initiate collective action to gain control over resources including decisions that shape their lives by self-organising and re-creating a community that influences its future (Narayan 2002; Sadan 1997). The study entails an examination of how disadvantaged community groups use collective action to change their situation. These include an examination of their organisation, function, activities and also an understanding of the context under which these community groups operate from their own perspectives, or what is called the ‘emic’ perspective. As indicated in the conceptual and analytical framework, contexts include migration history and disadvantage; culture and community attributes; and existing norms, policies and legal structures.

In accordance with the nature of the inquiry and also my philosophical assumptions about understanding reality (see section 3.1), I have chosen an ethnographic case study method and a mix of ethnographic and autoethnographic methodologies within the framework of qualitative research approach. The use of ethnographic case studies is driven by the need to understand complex interactions, from a bottom-up perspective to make sense of complex social phenomena in relation to the social context (Baxter & Jack 2008; Gallant 2008).

In view of the main aim of the study and the conceptual and analytical framework developed, the study tries to answer five research questions. These are:
1. What are the contexts under which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment?
2. What are the mechanisms through which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment?
3. What are the resources, conditions and structures that contribute to the attainment of empowerment?
4. Who are involved in bottom-up driven community empowerment and how?
5. What is the contribution of bottom-up driven community empowerment to wider social change?
These research questions have direct linkage with different components of the conceptual and analytical framework. The first research question is connected with contexts of action in the framework. The second research question examines the mechanisms component of the action arena in the framework. The third research question explores the conditions in the action situation that influence actors, the resources that each actor brings to the action situation and the structures and institutional arrangements in the action arena. The fourth research question focuses on the actions and interactions of the actors in the action arena while the last question is related with the interaction and change component of the framework. The way these research questions are articulated has influenced the design and conduct of research including the methods of data collection and analysis employed and the questions asked in the field.

This chapter will describe the research design and perspective, the research methodologies and the rationale for choosing these methodologies followed by a detailed discussion of data collection methods, selection of case study communities, data analysis processes, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

3.1 Research design and perspective

The initial ideas for this research originated from my experiences and my assumptions about ways in which disadvantaged communities can create opportunities to change their situation. Inherent in these assumptions is the philosophical perspective or the ontological and epistemological positions that inform my methodology and overall conduct of the research. Colin Hay (2002) indicates that our ontological position and underpinning assumptions about what is knowledge influences our epistemology—what and how we think we can know—and in turn our epistemological position influences our methodology and methods (see Figure III-1).

Ontologically, I perceive that there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions that are knowable (Danermark et al. 2002; McEvoy & Rechards 2006). Epistemologically, I perceive community empowerment as a social phenomenon that can be studied and understood by analysing the social context, the action arena and the interaction and change that occurs when disadvantaged community groups try to gain control over resources and decisions that are necessary for them to attain their goals through collective action (Danermark et al. 2002; Denzin & Lincoln 2005; Sayer 1992). As a researcher, I see myself as part of the knowledge production process and I accept that my activities are mediated by the values that I hold, be they theoretical or
philosophical. I have influence on what I study and am influenced by it also. My research design is influenced by these theoretical and philosophical positions.

**Figure III-1: Schematic representation of the research process**

![Schematic representation of the research process](image)

Source: Hay, C (2002, p. 64)

The fundamental questions asked in this study are concerned with both social structure and collective action and thus fit in with qualitative research. Ethnography as a methodology is used in this study because it provides in-depth understanding of the different layers of interaction between individuals, groups and organisations; and other social actors and the social system. Ethnography is seen as a methodology that privileges the ‘social’, and also considers the ‘individual’ (Alvarado & Íñiguez-Rueda 2009). The use of ethnography helps understand how community and organisational narratives are related to the experiences, capabilities and resources of the individuals in the group and how these stories affect both agency and social structure (Rappaport 1995). Through description, comprehension and explanation of the ethnographic data collected, and the explanation of some of the underlying mechanisms and institutional arrangements pertaining to community empowerment, I will provide an account of a bottom-up driven community empowerment process (Danermark et al. 2002; Descola 2005). The study also employs autoethnography to include my own experiences to enrich the knowledge production process (Anderson 2006; Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 733).

I used multiple (multi-sited) ethnographic case studies to conduct the research and understand bottom-up driven community empowerment in the Australian context. Three African communities, in South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria, were selected as ethnographic case studies. The literature notes that the use of ethnographic case studies allows the researcher to make sense of complex social phenomena in relation to the social
context in a relatively shorter time (Baxter & Jack 2008; Gallant 2008). The use of multi-
sited ethnographic case studies also allows the researcher to explore differences within
and between cases (Baxter & Jack 2008; Yin 2008). I consider the study of community
empowerment as complex social phenomena that warrant multi-sited ethnographic case
studies and have adopted such a method to enable me to understand community
empowerment.

For the purposes of this study, no hypothesis was made at the initial stage of the research.
This was intentional; firstly as an ethnographic case study my focus was on investigating
the nature of ‘community empowerment,’ rather than setting out to test a hypothesis
(Atkinson & Hammersley 1994). Secondly, I wanted to avoid the likely influence of
established hypothesis, or ‘preconceived ideas’ that might limit my observation and
analysis to the specified hypothesis (Malinowski cited in Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p.
29). However, it should be noted that having defined research questions also frame or limit
the observation.

3.2 **Unit of study and selection of community groups**

At the beginning of the study, my intention was to include three disadvantaged community
groups in Tasmania—an African community, an Aboriginal community and another
disadvantaged community group—to develop a deeper understanding of the process of
bottom-up community empowerment. However, discussions with my supervisors and
further consultation of the literature showed that such a diverse group could introduce
unwanted variability and make the task of synthesising and comparing data difficult if not
impossible (see Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Fetterman 1989; Patton 2002). Thus, it was
essential that I study a community with shared interests, knowledge, beliefs, and/or
behaviours. Thus, I agreed for the research to focus on one community across three
jurisdictions to provide a rich data source to explore bottom-up community empowerment.

Therefore, given my experiences and interests (see section 3.6), I chose to study African
communities across three states. Whilst my interest mainly drove the choice of African
communities over other disadvantaged communities, it was also influenced by the nature of
the African communities and the opportunities these communities offer to the study of
community empowerment. Firstly, as new and emerging communities, African communities
in Australia were at a development stage where organising and mobilising for collective
action was highly relevant to daily life, at the individual, group, community and
organisational levels. Secondly, as migrant and to large extent refugee communities with
different cultural backgrounds from the broader Australian community, these communities were exposed to heightened risks of exclusion and vulnerability or to what Hur (2006) calls ‘social disturbances.’ These two characteristics show that empowerment was a core business to these communities.

As the main focus of this study is to understand bottom-up community empowerment in Australia, a unit of analysis for this study is a community or communities (to be specific the African communities in Australia). The idea of ‘community’ as a field of study is common in social science (see Arensberg 1961; Morton 1972; Tonnies 2002). Community as a field of study is recognized as a unit that represents part of the society and enables the researcher to learn about the society in general.

The concept of community is central to the conduct of research in this study. As such community is defined as a group of people (who may have diverse backgrounds) who are linked by common social ties, experiences, interests and perspectives and who are engaged in collective action, in a particular setting(s) (see section 2.3 of Chapter II for a detailed definition). Adopting this definition as an operational definition for this thesis is important for five reasons.

To start with, it incorporates the recognition that African community members are individuals and hence diverse. Acknowledging diversity at the outset has implications for both data collection and analysis. Secondly, the definition highlights the presence of social ties. Social ties in the sense of interpersonal relationships are important in developing trust, and are critical to the functioning of a community. Thus, social ties can be considered as constitutive elements of empowerment. Thirdly, common interests and perspectives that bind a community together lay not only the ground for empowerment, but also the basis for a community to exist and operate as a cohesive unit. These shared interests can create a sense of community (Jewkes & Murcott 1996). Fourthly, collective action is both a source of community cohesion and identity and also a constitutive element of empowerment, and hence links the idea of community to community empowerment. Finally, geographic location or setting indicates that a community occupies a place or places and hence has some boundaries, contrary to the concept of virtual communities. This concept of locus helps to delimit the study area, and provide the basis for collective action and interactions to take place within the social structures, and be observed in a certain jurisdiction where the community operates.

The above characteristics are inherent in the three African communities selected for this study. These communities were considered disadvantaged. Disadvantage is loosely
defined following the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) definition of the concept of relative socio-economic disadvantage in the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), in terms of relative ‘access to material and social resources, and ability to participate in society’ (ABS 2006). Although the SEIFA has an inbuilt income variable, the emphasis here is not mainly on the lack of resources to meet basic needs, but rather on the lack of ‘resources’ to participate in socio-economic, cultural and political activities and the underlying impact of social exclusion and marginalisation that disempower a person, group or community in society (Schetzer, Mullins & Buonamano 2002). Thus, when I refer to disadvantaged community groups, it is to indicate that the focus is on those communities which are relatively excluded, marginalised and disempowered.

The case studies selected for this study were three mainly due to the scale and scope of the study. Ethnographic methodology requires that the researcher spends reasonable time with each group, and thus, it was necessary to limit the numbers to three groups given the time span of conducting doctoral study (Clammer 1984; Urry 1984). Purposive sampling particularly criterion, opportunistic and convenience sampling was used to select the three case studies (Patton 2002). Sampling was guided by population information; the structure of each community, logistics and convenience to access each community. Such a selection process is common in anthropology (Clammer 1984). The three African communities selected were instrumental to developing deeper understanding of community empowerment and underlying mechanisms, structures and conditions.

It is estimated that there are over 245,000 Africans in Australia (ABS 2008), and the majority organise themselves under community groups and organisations which come in different forms and sizes. The majority of Africans in each state organise themselves under different community groups (tribal, ethnic, regional, country-of-origin groups). These community groups have formed umbrella African community organisations that act as the peak bodies and bring a range of African community groups in each state together. Two of the three case studies selected, the African Communities Council of Tasmania (ACCT) and the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA), were umbrella community organisations, while ATT was an African community organisation managed by prominent Africans. ATT was selected because there was no other functional umbrella African community organisation in Victoria during the study period. A detailed description of each case study is provided in Chapter IV. The reason for preferring umbrella African community organisations as case studies to other African community organisations was to ensure that these organisations provide wider access to the African communities in each state. Getting
access to as many African community groups as possible was important, as the unit of study was community, and African communities were the primary focus of the study.

The selection of informants or participants in each state was primarily guided by the structure of the case study community organisations. Office bearers of each case study community organisation were identified as eligible informants or participants in the research. In addition, informal leaders who actively participated in the activities of the case study community organisations were included in the study. These informal leaders were, in many cases, leaders of ethnically, country-of origin, region and/or gender-based African community groups who are members of the ACCT, ACCSA or former members of the ACCV. The formal leaders of the case study community organisations were elected office bearers while the informal leaders were elected leaders of their respective community groups.

By limiting my focus on key informants or participants, I was able to participate in, observe, and follow-up community activities and processes carried out by these informants and other community members such as community organising, negotiation, key committee meetings, decision-making processes and other activities and events. However, as the study was about the empowerment of African communities, it was necessary for me to participate in, attend and observe community activities carried out by community groups and their members who are members of the case study community organisations and former members of the ACCV. The study involved observing the participation of individual community members in these groups, and interviewing staff members and managers of NGOs that worked with the African communities in each state. These diverse activities and sources have allowed me to collect broader data on community empowerment.

### 3.3 Research strategy

To understand the different concepts and theories of empowerment, I have reviewed empowerment and institutional theories in the literature and developed a conceptual and analytical framework for this study (see Section 2.7). The framework incorporates fundamental concepts in the empowerment literature such as stages, components and operational domains of empowerment and components of institutional analysis drawn from the IAD model. The research questions are linked to the framework, which guides the way the questions are answered by providing a structure for analysis. In answering the research questions, the various components – the contexts of action, action situation, actors and their actions and interactions – are thought through iteratively. Moreover, the stages,
components and operational domains of empowerment are utilised as conceptual references through which the elements of the framework are understood and defined in relation to the empowerment of African communities.

The research questions are qualitative questions concerned with the social structure, collective action and experiences including institutional relationships, which are crucial in empowerment studies (Hay, I 2010). Institutional relationships include formal and informal relationships among different actors and institutions including the African communities. Community empowerment is premised on changing existing institutional relationships through self-organisation and collective action. Thus, a study of community empowerment requires an in-depth understanding of the different layers of interaction among different actors and institutions that go beyond identifying patterns. It requires the researcher to analyse how community and organisational narratives relate to the experiences, capabilities and resources of the community groups and how these stories influence both agency and social structure (Rappaport 1995). The methodology of ethnography is suited for such in-depth study.

I chose ethnography as my main methodology for this study because it is a perspective that privileges the social, but considers the individual (Alvarado & Íñiguez-Rueda 2009). Ethnography enabled me, as a researcher, to observe the individual and the collective constantly acting in concert with institutions. In the ethnographic perspective, researchers are perceived as actors acting from the inside as well as from the outside, never fully detached from the object of study while always somewhat removed within the confines of their activity. To develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding of community empowerment, I have used an approach that combines empirical investigation and theory construction to analyse the contexts, underlying mechanisms, structures and relations that affect the empowerment of a community group (Banfield 2004; Houston 2001; McEvoy & Rechards 2006; Porter & Ryan 1996; Yeung 1997).

Ethnography is also the methodology of my choice because it seeks to answer fundamental questions concerned with the ways in which or under which people live their lives. The research questions in this study are concerned with how African communities function in the Australian context. Thus, the data collected to answer these questions are mainly extensive descriptions and analyses of social life and cultural phenomena relevant to community empowerment processes in the African communities. Ethnography is suited for such study because it is a holistic view founded on the idea that humans are best understood in their natural setting where they interact in the social, economic, political, environmental and cultural spheres naturally (Fetterman 1989; Gobo 2008).
I have also employed autoethnography to include my personal experiences to highlight some of the narratives and to complement the ethnographic data. Autoethnography is a methodology that allows the researcher to describe and systematically analyse their own experience related to particular social phenomenon (Anderson 2006; Ellis & Bochner 2000). It involves self-reflection and the writing of the researcher's personal experience into the research to provide deeper cultural meanings and understandings. Autoethnography is an appropriate choice given my identity, and professional and lived experiences (see section 3.6).

Participant observation, interviews, and document analysis were used as methods. The method of participant observation was used extensively during the fieldwork to gain an ‘emic’ perspective, or the ‘African communities’ point(s) of view’ of community empowerment without imposing my own perspective. Ethnographic interviews were used to complement data obtained through observation. During the interviews, I asked specific but open-ended questions to allow a person or persons interviewed to answer without limiting through pre-defined choices. In most of the cases, the discussions were extended, and purposeful conversations followed spontaneously without any specific agenda in mind (Fetterman 1989; Gobo 2008). I also received project documents, government reports, newspaper and magazine articles, minutes and other documents to complement the data.

3.4 Methods of data collection

As is common in an ethnographic research, I have used a variety of data collection methods and techniques simultaneously. The researcher in ethnographic studies is often regarded as an essential instrument in collecting, validating and analysing data in the field. As a researcher I have collected, validated and analysed the data and engaged with the data. I have observed individuals in the communities and the collective constantly interacting with institutions, and participated in their activities from the inside as well as from the outside.

Fieldwork was conducted among three African communities in three states for almost a year between June 2011 and June 2012. Although the fieldwork was carried out during the year across the three community groups, the amount of time spent with each community group varied. I spent over three months (May–Aug 2011) with ACCT in Tasmania, over five weeks (Aug–Nov 2011) with ACCSA in South Australia and six weeks (Nov–December 2011) with ATT in Victoria for the initial fieldwork. In addition, I went back to Victoria (twice)
and to South Australia (once) and spent extra time in Tasmania to reconfirm some of my observations and to report back to the communities some of the observations and insights.

During the fieldwork, I observed and participated in activities and events organised by the case study community organisations and their member community groups. I took extensive field notes, conducted interviews and collected relevant documents. Overall, I have attended and observed more than 40 community events, meetings and activities; interviewed more than 50 participants; and collected a number of relevant documents such as project documents, reports, event protocols, minutes of meetings, memoranda of understanding between communities and NGOs, and newspaper clippings.

3.4.1 Participant observation

Participant observation was used as the primary method to collect and analyse data. Participant observation is regarded as a technique that simultaneously combines direct participation and observation. In my case, it involved not only observing people and their activities in different settings, but also interacting with them and engaging in their day-to-day or routine activities (Bernard 2006; Fetterman 1989; Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Schensul & LeCompte 2013). Through participant observation, I was able to participate in the day-to-day activities and through this process of full engagement I was able not only to observe community members in action, but also to experience what it is like to be in a situation or be part of the community. The unique blend of ‘involvement and detachment’ is what enriches an ethnographic account and provides the researcher with what is called an ‘emic’ perspective.

The method of participant observation was used to gain an ‘emic’ perspective of bottom-up community empowerment in African communities. Participant observation was helpful in understanding the institutional arrangements around the African communities and to describe social situations and behaviours (Fetterman 1989). The emphasis in the emic perspective required of me that, as a researcher, I recognise and accept the existence of multiple realities that emerge from the ethnographic encounter rather than imposing these from existing models. An ‘etic’ perspective, on the other hand, refers to external, more distant view on reality (Fetterman 1989). The emic world view, which is different from the ‘etic,’ is a unique and essential part of anthropology.

Traditionally, to conduct participant observation, ethnographers often live among people they are studying for an extended period, participating overtly or covertly in people’s everyday life (Fetterman 1989; Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Tedlock 2005). Most
ethnographers conduct their research in cultures different from their own and often in foreign countries. However, the use of ethnography in this study is different from this tradition. I did not travel to a foreign land nor study a different culture. Instead, I am an African, who studied different African communities in Australia. While studying the different African communities, I have engaged as much as possible in local daily life, including meetings and social events while also carefully observing everything about these communities. As a researcher, I was both a participant and observer, someone who can describe the experience with a measure of ‘detachment.’

Throughout the participant observation, my focus was on understanding the social structures under which each activity was occurring, participants’ interpretations of their own actions, and the context of action (Gobo 2008; Schensul & LeCompte 2013). My participation ranged from minimal involvement to complete participation and being a member of the group. For example, I had acquired membership of the ACCT that allowed me to participate in all their activities. With ACCSA, I joined in their day-to-day activities as a volunteer and as a researcher. My involvement with ATT was minimal.

At the beginning of the study, to develop rapport with the three case studies, I registered as a volunteer and requested formal consent to attend initial meetings (Fetterman 1989). Where legally and ethically permissible, I accompanied community leaders and members in meetings and participated in their day-to-day organisational activities. My participation was useful to create an environment where members of the African communities considered me as part of the team rather than an outsider.

During the fieldwork, I participated in and observed community activities including events, meetings and informal gatherings. Observations occurred both formally and informally and various methods were used to record observations. I documented my observations, conversations and informal discussions in field notes and I also used digital audio recorder to record conversations and events with the permission of the participants. In my field notes, I maintained detailed records of both my objective observations and my subjective feelings and reflections, and the setting. The field notes were helpful in understanding the layers of interactions and the hermeneutics of events that occurred (Alvarado & Íñiguez-Rueda 2009). Thus as a researcher and participant observer I was a participant, observer and somehow in-between depending on the situation.

In general as a participant observer, I participated in events including cultural festivals, traditional and political events; meetings including internal meetings organised by the
community groups and external meetings organised by NGOs and governments; and informal gatherings.

3.4.1.1 Event and meeting observation

I observed how communities work around issues and attended their meetings and activities. The events attended included cultural festivals, Independence Day celebrations, project events and activities, internal community meetings and those organised by external actors. I recorded some of these events and meetings on audio. In these events and meetings, I observed community leaders and members in action, noted how communities organised themselves, what resources were used, who was involved, what decisions were made, who made those decisions, what rules were in place or used, who supported the community and how, and the nature of the interaction among the different actors involved.

Gobo (2008) suggests that these events be observed in three ways: by 1) classifying activities, 2) starting from the key concept and 3) following an object. Classifying activities means identifying and separating essential activities related to the social phenomena and starting to observe those activities. The idea of starting from a key-concept is different from classifying activity, as the researcher is expected to operate in the inverse direction starting from the identification of a key-concept in the social phenomenon under study and observing any activity that is linked to the concept identified. The third option is to select an object of study and follow the participants with this purpose in mind letting their action define the boundaries of the contexts of observation (Gobo 2008, p. 165).

In this study, all three techniques have been used in some form, although starting from key concepts was predominantly used. At the beginning of the fieldwork, particularly in Tasmania, I tried to classify the main activities carried out by the community in relation to empowerment into three – internal activities, external activities and advocacy. Internal activities are those that were carried out by the African community to set agendas and build consensus within the group. External activities are those that involve other actors such as NGOs and government bodies. Moreover, advocacies are activities through which the community group actively pursued an agenda to lobby NGOs and government bodies. However, as a community group was working on several issues concurrently, it was difficult to follow and observe separated activities continuously. Thus, I found it convenient to organise my observation on key concepts of the study and to develop the themes and objects to make sense of what was happening.
The choice of observation by key concepts is also informed by the conceptual and analytical framework developed for this study (see Chapter II, Section 2.7). The framework is designed with the main research questions in mind and provides key concepts such as contexts of action, action arena, and patterns of interaction and change; and the stages, components and domains of community empowerment. This framework was used to inform my observation of events and meetings organised by the case study community organisations and their member community groups to identify actors who participated in the action situation, observe and analyse the patterns of actions and interactions, and make deductions about the possible outcomes.

### 3.4.1.2 Informal observation/discussion

Informal discussion or observation was a continuous process throughout the fieldwork. I observed community leaders and those who work with them during events, festivals, meetings and other activities; even over lunches and other informal events. I recorded my informal observations, discussions and reflection in my field notes.

Hammersley & Atkinson (1983, p. 147) suggests that the researcher regularly ask among other things, ‘what to write down, how to write it down, and when to write it down,’ when writing notes. As an answer to these questions, they suggest that the researcher ‘should aim to take notes as soon as possible after the observed action that is to be noted’; and that these notes be ‘as concrete and descriptive as possible’ and direct quotations be clearly differentiated from the researcher’s summaries and that the records should include ‘who were present, where, at what time, and under what circumstances.’

In my case, most of the notes from informal observations and discussions were taken immediately after the event took place rather than while the event or discussion was occurring. It was difficult to take notes while having candid conversations with people as it tended to stop their train of thought. To avoid this, I decided to take notes immediately after these informal observations and discussions occurred.

### 3.4.2 Ethnographic interviews

In conjunction with participant observation, data was also collected through unstructured and informal interviews. Ethnographic interviews are different from other interviews for two reasons. Firstly, at the time of the interview, as a researcher, I had reasonable acquaintance with the interviewees, and in some cases had meaningful conversations with them, and secondly interviews were arranged impromptu as conditions dictated (Gobo
The interviews emerged serendipitously from the participants’ comments and our conversations (Fetterman 1989, p. 49). However, I also conducted interviews with some community leaders because they demanded to be interviewed, after receiving reports from other leaders who were interviewed.

All interviewees were asked to sign informed consent or provide consent orally before the meeting could proceed. I also requested their permission to record the conversation and gave participants the option of not being recorded in audio or remaining anonymous within the research (Bernard 2006). These interviews were instrumental in collecting group histories, individual community members’ experiences, and the various accounts of the process of empowerment as it unfolds.

Although interviews were carried out as follow-ups to observation to solicit further explanation about an observed phenomenon (Gobo 2008; Schensul & LeCompte 2013), after a few interviews it was clear that many of the issues participants raised were similar. Thus following Kvale’s (1996) work and my conceptual and analytical framework, I developed some lists of key points to guide my interviews and used them for the rest of the fieldwork with some flexibility (see Appendix V).

3.4.3 Documents

Documentary sources are considered secondary sources in ethnographic studies (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). As secondary sources, the inclusion of a document was highly dependent on its relevance to the community empowerment process, or to the community groups and their activities. I collected relevant documents including newspaper articles, letters, diaries, mass media products, reports, policy documents, project documents, internal minutes and other documents that recorded decisions of the community groups, their history and project activities.

Among others the documents collected include four field reports which documented African communities’ experiences namely the African Resettlement Conference report compiled by the African Think Tank (ATT), the African Communities Speak Out report compiled by the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA), In Our Own Words report compiled by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), and unpublished report of a community forum in Tasmania entitled Transforming Our Lives…Community Voices (ACCSA 2008; ATT 2007; AHRC 2010).

These documents were analysed, and their contents studied to understand the values and practical implications they may have. In analysing these documents, caution was had to
ensure that some biases introduced by the authors due to the nature of the documents were removed (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). Some of the documents were written to solicit funding while others were written to advocate a cause or promote an individual activity; hence authors seem to have introduced some biases by putting particular glosses on the account. In analysing documents Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, pp. 142-143) suggest that the following questions be asked:

How are documents written? How are they read? Who writes them? Who reads them? For what purposes? On what occasions? What outcomes? What is recorded? What is omitted? What is taken for granted? What does the writer seem to take for granted about the reader(s)? What do readers need to know in order to make sense of them?

The exploration of collected documents in such a manner helps to examine the documents and their use for the study.

With appropriate caution, these documents were utilised in several ways. They were used to help identify elements and topics related with key concepts in my conceptual and analytical framework on which to re-focus the observation and interviews, to ascertain some of the assumptions made and to furnish information which improved understanding of what has been observed (Gobo 2008, p. 130). These documents were also used for comparing the groups and for comparing with interview and observation findings. Some of the documents furnished useful information on groups and settings that allowed the elaboration of ‘perspectives and incongruity’ (Burke; Lofland; and Manning cited in Hammersley & Atkinson 1983, p. 133).

### 3.5 Data analysis

The main sources of data for analysis for this study include field notes from participant observation, interview records and relevant documents. Although analysis was conducted at the end of the research period, in ethnography analysis is not necessarily a distinct stage as the researcher regularly goes back and forth to make sense of every-day life as it unfolds in real time, in the natural setting (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). Analysis of data as a process in ethnography is iterative, and it feeds into the process of research design and data collection although it progressively gets focused over the course of the research.

The framework developed was used to analyse data (see section 2.7). To support my framework and analyse data using the different concepts identified in the conceptual framework, I have used a combination of Gobo’s (2008, pp. 227-237) three stages of
analysis, Spradley’s (1980) domain, taxonomic and componential analysis and Porter & Ryan’s (1996) idea of ‘seeking to go beyond agents’ conceptualisation of events.

At the beginning of the analysis, I used Gobo’s three stages of analysis namely open, axial and selective coding to explore the data in light of the key concepts identified in the literature review and the framework in Chapter II. During the open coding process, new emerging patterns and concepts such as ‘coming together’ were identified and included in the coding. The process I followed is similar to what Hammersley & Atkinson (1983) call concept generation; I read the text and ‘used it to think with,’ to see if there were developing or emerging patterns. I went through this process in an iterative fashion to identify the emerging patterns and ideas that required further attention and exploration and proceeded to investigate those concepts further.

At this stage, Gobo (2008) suggests that three main approaches be used that include: a) using a checklist or conceptual grid to ‘interrogate’ them; b) using a framework; or c) classifying. In my case, I used the framework developed and employed fundamental concepts that I drew from both the empowerment and institutional literature to identify elements that can be used as indicators of community empowerment. The conceptual and analytical framework was used to analyse fundamental concepts and their interrelation to understand bottom-up community empowerment by understanding the contexts of action, identifying actors and their attributes, the patterns of interaction and making deductions about the possible outcomes.

At the axial coding stage, I assembled the concepts developed into a new pattern, the aim being to construct a framework. Gobo (2008) suggests that this be done through the proposed model that has five components, namely causal conditions, phenomenon context, intervening conditions, action/interactional strategies and consequences. In my case I used the analytic framework developed in Chapter II, which accounts for context, action arena, interaction and outcomes.

Hammersley & Atkinson’s (1983) idea of developing typologies also resonates with axial coding. I have particularly used their approach and Spradley’s (1980) method of domain, taxonomic and componential analysis to develop typologies to identify concepts that may seem to be sub-types of a more general category and to analyse interactions between the categories. As can be seen in the proceeding chapters, once emerging patterns and concepts were identified, I have tried to categorise some of the typologies (for example, typology of community groups) in an orderly manner.
At the selective coding stage, I analysed the emerging themes or theories and investigated whether what was emerging had some evidence to support it (Gobo 2008) by referring back to the framework developed and the broader literature in community empowerment. This is the stage where I tried to construct a story and paint a picture that explained the phenomena. Having constructed a story, I went back to the data collected and the literature to confirm if the story made sense. My focus was on validating data through reflexivity and triangulation (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983). In this regard, it was vital for me to think through the social context in which the data was collected and the sequence of the interactions. There was also a need to go back to the community groups and validate the story in some cases. By triangulation, I am particularly referring to the process where the links between concepts and components are checked by recourse through other related ideas or data (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983).

As I indicated above, I have also used some analytical tools from critical realist ethnography to develop deeper levels of explanation and understanding. As Porter and Ryan (1996) point out, participants’ accounts are only a starting point and not the end of the research process. Thus, it was necessary for me to go beyond agents’ conceptualisations of events and look at social structures to explain certain concepts. My duty was to identify patterns of social behaviour and ask what social structures must exist in order for those patterns to occur. Once I established some of the patterns, I looked at the underlying factors and multiple interactions of social structures to explain the phenomenon. The assumption is that human action is both enabled and constrained by social structures, and at the same time reproduces or transforms those structures (Haugaard 2003).

Thus, while my analysis was mainly focused on emic understandings, I had to look at wider issues of structure to explain how agency maintains or transforms these structures. Such approach was very useful to identify underlying factors that influence action (Porter & Ryan 1996, p. 416).

3.6 Researcher’s profile: my positionality and background

Personal and professional identities shape ethnographic fieldwork. For this reasons, I will state my own place in this study to address the issues of unconscious bias that might have arisen and influenced the types of information collected, or the way in which I interpreted the data (Fetterman 1989).
I am an Ethiopian, who recently arrived in Australia. I have the lived experience of being a refugee and experienced the challenges in settlement firsthand. I have also learnt about African communities by being part of the community and through my professional work. I have worked with African communities in refugee camps and cities, in countries of asylum, and in Australia, both with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Nairobi (2004-2006) and the Migrant Resource Centre (MRC) in Hobart (2006-2008). Through my work with IOM, I have travelled to refugee camps in Kenya, Sudan and Uganda and trained over 2000 refugees from nine countries of origin in the camps and cities to prepare them for their lives in Australia, Canada and the USA. I have also supported several hundred humanitarian entrants (including Africans) in Hobart through my work as a Community Development Officer for the MRC.

Through my work with the MRC and as an African community member, I was involved in the initial discussions of the formation of the African Communities Councils of Tasmania (ACCT). I have also carried out a phenomenological study of the lived experiences of Africans in Hobart, as part of a Masters Degree in Environmental Management at the University of Tasmania between 2007 and 2008 (see Hiruy 2009). These lived, professional and research experiences have given me an in-depth knowledge of both the African communities and the institutions that work with them. I also know that such experiences can introduce an inherent bias in collecting and interpreting data. Thus in this research I do not claim that my work is entirely objective or neutral.

Being an ethnographer studying my own cultural groups had certain advantages; it also had its challenges. As a member of the African communities, creating a rapport with each case study community was easier and smooth, as I was considered as part of the community. The good rapport has provided a unique opportunity for the study and has allowed me to observe and participate in the activities of the African communities in their natural setting. It has also brought some challenges associated with my positionality in the research shaped by my life history and experiences.

However, as an ethnographer I was constantly aware of my positionality and have attempted to be self-reflexive throughout the research by critically describing my own experiences as part of the research process. My own identity as an Ethiopian, African and former refugee who has worked with African communities both in Africa and Australia has influenced the research. It has influenced the way I observed and thought about my own feelings, assumptions, personality, and actions, which have been invaluable sources of data. My own reflections are included throughout the thesis. This constant reflexivity and
the ways in which I have included my experiences, I believe, has strengthened this research by providing insights that would otherwise be overlooked by other researchers.

3.7 Methodological limitations

In the Introductory Chapter, I indicated that there are some methodological limitations in this study. These limitations are related to the choice of ethnography as a methodology, participant observation as a method and the selection of African communities as case studies.

The first methodological limitation is related to the choice of ethnography particularly the emic perspective as a way to study the social phenomenon, which dictated how the three case study communities were studied or what data was collected. As my choice was to look at the social phenomenon from the emic perspective to understand community empowerment from the perspectives of the community groups themselves, this has implications for what was left out by design. I did not collect data on the perspectives of, or understanding and actions of, other social actors (governments and NGOs) in the empowerment process, except in circumstances where these actors were in contact or working with a case study community organisation or member community groups.

The second limitation is related with the method employed in the study. The main method adopted is participant observation. Central to this method is the claim that the researcher can achieve a balance between ‘involvement and detachment.’ Philosophers, however, argue that it is impossible to achieve this balance because society and people are so organised that the goals of scientific and empathic understanding (access to meanings) are competitive in principle. It may not be possible to be a participant and scientist simultaneously (Schwartz & Jacobs cited in Gobo 2008, p. 7).

This argument is also extended by the Austrian philosopher Alfred Schultz (cited in Gobo 2008) who noted that this cognitive impossibility goes beyond the researcher/scientist and affects the social actors that the researchers wish to study; because these social actors retrospectively reflect on their past act, they tend to observe themselves hence are not the same actors anymore. They are ‘temporarily and cognitively different from the actor who observes.’ Another paradox noted by the Italian anthropologist and linguist Alessandro Duranti (cited in Gobo 2008) is that the more ethnographers are immersed in the social reality of the people they study, the more likely that it becomes difficult for them to interpret the behaviour from the perspective of the ‘outsider.’
It was difficult for me to achieve a balance between ‘involvement and detachment’ at the beginning of the research. As a recent African immigrant, the issues that the African communities raised were pertinent to me. Thus, detaching oneself entirely from these issues was difficult. However, as I gained more experience, I was able to find a balance between my identity as a researcher and recent immigrant. As a migrant, I am able to exploit the cognitive privilege of the immigrant, which consists in the ability to see the intersubjective nature of behaviours and beliefs which for ‘the natives’ are natural, obvious, taken-for-granted and normal (Schutz cited in Gobo 2008).

It is also essential to note that accepting the existence of these paradoxes and the difficulty of achieving balance in ‘involvement and detachment’ helped me to be reflective, take notes, and check my own biases and reactions throughout the research process. This awareness also forced me to use techniques such as ‘estrangement’; by intentionally distancing myself emotionally from the day-to-day activities and events when deemed necessary, I was able to observe the phenomenon under study with clarity (see Gobo 2008). However, I have also

The use of participant observation as a method and the time and resource constraints associated with conducting a Ph.D. study also meant that I was only able to observe and document activities that I could observe at the time of fieldwork, except in cases where there was documentary evidence describing the activities and events. The limitation meant that activities and events that may have been useful to provide additional information to understand community empowerment might have been missed. The fact that I could only be in one place at a time also indicates that activities and events that were carried out concurrently across the three case studies could not be observed. Thus, it is important to note that the scope of this study is limited to what has been observed during the fieldwork except in cases where it was possible to obtain historical data recorded in minutes of meetings and other documents. Ideally, this study could have benefited from three ethnographic case studies carried out concurrently across the three community groups over a period of a year. However, this was not possible given the scope of the study and the time and resource that was available.

Thirdly, the choice of African communities as case studies has also introduced some limitations related to the nature of the community groups. At the beginning of the research, umbrella African community organisations in South Australia (ACCSA), Tasmania (ACCT) and Victoria (ACCV) were selected as case studies. However, few months into my candidature, I found out that ACCV was no longer functional and hence had to be replaced with another case study, the ATT. ATT is organisationally distinct from the two other case
studies, and this may have limited the possibility of observing similar activities and events that were observed in the other two states. However, to compensate for this shortcoming, I have observed some African community groups in Victoria, which, under ordinary circumstances, might have been members of the ACCV and interviewed some leaders who had been members of the ACCV.

Besides this practical limitation, the nature of the African communities as migrant communities with certain social, cultural, political and economic elements has also limited the generalisability of some of the findings. Other disadvantaged community groups may not share some of the challenges faced by these communities. Therefore, the applicability of some of the insights drawn from the study across different disadvantaged community groups needs to be considered with care.

3.8 Ethical considerations

In conducting fieldwork, ethical considerations were taken seriously from the outset. These considerations span from values and principles to research governance (NHMRC 2007). A full ethics application was submitted to the Tasmanian Human Research Ethics Committee on 7 March 2011, and approval was granted on 11 June 2011 (see Appendix II). The approval process took more than three months to obtain and delayed the fieldwork.

Detailed information sheet and consent forms were prepared prior to conducting fieldwork. The information sheet included complete information about aims of the research and associated risks, and this was sent to all participating grassroots community organisations with a letter seeking their agreement to participate in the study. I also provided the information sheet to individuals whom I interviewed. Working with community groups, however, suggested that consent should be obtained at two levels – at the collective level and the individual level. At the beginning of the research, I acquired collective consent mainly in writing from the three community groups as organisations. The organisational or group consent was used to allow me to work with the study communities and participate in their meetings, events and ceremonies. The group consent was not, however, good enough to cover individual consent; hence I had to request additional consent from individuals whenever I interviewed them or observed them as individuals within the group. During the conduct of the research, informed consent was obtained both orally and in writing (see Article 2.2.5 of the National Statement on Human Research Ethics).
The study was conducted with care and all necessary precautionary measures to minimise risk and ensure the wellbeing of participants were taken. Benefits and associated risks including any discomfort that may arise due to interviews and the presence of the researcher were explained. The possibilities for accessing counselling and other services to manage such issues were also indicated. Efforts were also made to ensure equal participation and wellbeing of people with cognitive impairment, intellectual disability or mental illness who were willing to participate in this research.

The above three chapters have given the background to the study including the problem statement, the main aim and research questions and review of current knowledge in power and empowerment. In addition, I have presented a conceptual and analytical framework developed to guide the conduct of research and analysis in Chapter II and set out the research design and methodology in Chapter III. Employing both the chosen methodology and the conceptual and analytical framework, I will now present the results of the study and respond to the research questions.
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**DOI:** 10.1177/0969733012475252
Chapter V

‘Coming Together’: Community Formation as a Mechanism for Empowerment

This chapter responds to the second research question, what are the mechanisms by which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment? Using the conceptual and analytical framework developed, it analyses the primary mechanisms African communities use to mobilise action and the underlying factors that influence their actions and interactions.

To establish the mechanisms by which African communities organise themselves, it is necessary to first identify the different African community groups and their formation. Thus, I will first present a taxonomic analysis of African community groups in Australia and the underlying factors that influence the formation of these community groups. These will be followed by the discussion of the interplay between contexts (identified in Chapter IV), norms, policies, legal structures and power relations, and the formation and actions of the different kinds of community groups.

5.1 Taxonomy of African community groups in Australia

As noted in Chapter III and IV, the African community groups take different forms and can be categorised in various ways. The differences in the African communities in Australia emanate from the ethnic and cultural diversity in these communities (Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock 2002). The diversity in these communities can also be attributed to the social, economic, and political contexts that shape their attributes. A taxonomic analysis of African communities in Australia shows that there are different kinds of African community groups with observable differences in their goals, organisation, and capacity to mobilise resources and make decisions. The African community groups included in this analysis are members of the three case study communities, and they have a recognised name and structure.

Some of the community groups were incorporated, while others were not. Using Spradley's (1980, p. 113) taxonomic analysis as a model, I have identified five kinds of African community groups; namely: ethnically, country-of-origin, region, gender and pan-African or continent-based community groups (see Figure V-1)
The different kinds of community groups have different goals and capacities to affect change, and the resources available to them are also different. In other words, each community group has its own constraints and advantages in mobilising its members and others to take collective action to change its situation. There are also differences in how the different communities were formed depending on how community members identify themselves—their perceptions of who they are—that are influenced by various external and internal factors (see section 5.3). I will now define and discuss each kind of community group.

**5.1.1 Ethnically-based community groups**

These are African community groups whose members are from one ethnic group. For the purposes of this thesis, an *ethnic group* is defined as a group of people who have common cultural heritage, shared ancestry, history, language or dialect. An ethnic group may also have other common characteristics such as religion, cultural practices and physical appearance. An ethnic group can also have a common homeland although it is possible for an ethnic group to come from several nation states or even continents due to...
historical and other factors. For example, the Fulani Friends Association is an ethnic group representing the Fulani, an ethnic group who live across several African nation states including Mauritania, Ghana, Senegal, Guinea, the Gambia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Liberia, Niger, Chad, Togo, Sudan and Egypt.

Analysis of the different community groups has demonstrated that ethnically-based community groups are more cohesive than other community groups within the African communities in Australia, however, their capacity to mobilise their own members and others beyond socio-cultural issues was found to be limited. The group’s source of cohesion is their cultural heritage and language. Hence their activities revolve around celebrating significant cultural events in their own community, participating in cultural shows in the broader community and teaching their children their cultural heritage and languages. Ethnically-based community groups often join and work with region, country-of-origin, gender and pan-African-based community groups to achieve broader goals in the community.

5.1.2 Country-of-origin-based community groups

Country-of-origin-based African community groups comprise Africans who originate from one nation state. As such country-of-origin-based community groups are, in most cases, made up of several ethnic groups that came from a single country-of-origin. The formation of these kinds of community groups is common among migrant communities in Australia, including European migrants who have strong nation state-based community groups such as Italian, Greek and Polish community organisations in each state.

The formation of country-of-origin-based community groups is the commonest among African communities in Australia. For example, there are Burundian, Congolese, South Sudanese, and other similar country-of-origin-based community groups across Australia. These kinds of community groups are popular among governments, politicians, settlement agencies and the broader community, primarily because it is easier to identify people by their country-of-origin rather than their ethnicity. However, the majority of African ‘nation states’ are comprised of different nationalities and ethnic groups, and, as a result, it is not unusual to find community groups that belong to one African nation state preferring to organise themselves by ethnicity and religion rather than country-of-origin. Such an occurrence was particularly prevalent among members of African community groups whose context of migration to Australia included ethnic conflict and in some cases genocide in their country-of-origin.
5.1.3 Region-based African community groups

These are African community groups that have members who originate from one African nation state or several nation states that belong to one or different cultural group. The formation of regional groups is influenced by cultural and social ties and needs, cultural history of the group and geographical location where the group came from. A regional group may draw its members from an area within a single African country, or the group may consist of members from several countries within a region of the African continent.

For example, the South Sudanese Equatorial community in South Australia is made up of several cultural groups within the Eastern, Central and Western Equatorial regions of Southern Sudan. Members of the community groups include the Acholi, Azande, Bari, Baka, Buya, Didinga, Dangotono, Itempo, Kakwa, Kaliko, Kuku, Longo, Lokoya, Lopit, Lugbwara, Lotuko, Luobo, LukuroMadi, Makaraka, Moro, Mundari, Nyangwara, Pojulu and Topsa. On the other hand, the Eastern and Central African Communities of Victoria Inc is an African community group formed by African-Australians from Eastern and Central African countries.

5.1.4 Gender-based community groups

These organisations are established on gender basis to promote gender equity and advocate for gender issues that include social, political, economic and cultural issues that affect one gender or the other. All gender-based community groups observed in this study were created by African women for the aforementioned purposes. Gender-based community groups are formed by individuals or African women’s groups and community organisations from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Gender-based community groups are organised around gender inequalities, thus work on social, political, economic and cultural issues that affect African women. Some gender-based community groups are organised at the state level while others operate nationally.

5.1.5 Pan-African or continent-based community groups

Pan-African or continent-based African community groups are formed by individual Africans or African community groups from diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, country-of-origin, religion and gender). Examples of pan-African community groups in the three states studied include AHASA and ACOSA in South Australia, the African Community Development Centre and the Ballarat African Association in Victoria among others. The three case studies can also be called pan-African or continent based community organisations.
The analysis of the data collected from the three case study communities shows that the work of pan-African community groups was focused on social, political, economic and cultural issues that affect all Africans within their particular jurisdictions. Pan-African community groups are ideal for mobilising African community members to work on broader issues that affect the community. As noted above, pan-African community groups can act as umbrella organisations that bring other community groups together. For example, two of the case studies ACCT and ACCSA were umbrella community organisations that brought a range of community groups in each state together.

5.2 Factors that influence community formation

While different kinds of African community groups operate in Australia, little attention is paid in the literature as to how these community groups are formed or the contexts of their formation. The taxonomic analysis results provided in section 5.1 make evident that there are different kinds of African community groups with different purposes. A componential analysis of the ethnographic data also showed that the different kinds of community groups had different purposes. This analysis identified patterns in the purpose and activities of the different kinds of community groups. Ethnically and country-of-origin-based community groups and to some extent regional groups were observed providing social and cultural support to their members while pan-African and gender-based organisations were focused on wider social, economic and political action including advocacy and lobbying.

For example, the Fulani Friends Association, an ethnically-based community group in South Australia was established primarily with the purpose of providing support to members of the Fulani ethnic group in the state. As one of the community leaders put it:

…when we arrived in South Australia, we start realising that the number of our people was growing. The increase in a number [of members of an ethnic group] was initially the main factor for us coming together because we wanted to make sure that we give people some moral support when they newly arrived in Australia. Pragmatically we started like that, I think it was four or five of us who started meeting and the first thing we started doing was to help new arrivals. That is all, which was the main objective (Interview 027).

For this community leader and his community group, the initial purpose of ‘coming together’ was to provide social, emotional and material support to new arrivals from that particular ethnic-group. The group was formed around a boundary of ethnic identity with a shared language and culture. The community group was incorporated as an association in 2008,
and it had over 56 adult members from five African countries (Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Senegal and Nigeria) at the time of the fieldwork in 2011.

The objects of the Fulani Friends Association were similar to country-of-origin-based community groups such as the Zambian Community Association of South Australia. These kinds of African community groups were primarily established with the objective of providing social and cultural support to their members. As one of the founders of the Zambian community in South Australia explained, the purpose for which his community group was formed was similar to that of the Fulani community group.

The increase in the number of Zambian students and people working here was the main reason for us to form a community group. There was no formal platform where people can connect and come together, and I and others thought that it was important to create a platform where others can connect and come together. When someone dies back home, we need to come together to deal with those issues, and these are some of the reasons for the formation of the association. We formally registered at the middle of this year [2011] (Interview 035).

Attention to social and cultural support was common among ethnically and country-of-origin based community groups. However, pan-African and gender-based community groups had different focuses; they were formed mainly to work on collective social, cultural, economic and political issues that affected African community groups.

For example, ACCSA was established by various African community leaders who felt that there was a need for them to establish an organisation that would represent all Africans in South Australia and enable them to work together around common issues. As discussed in Chapter IV, ACCSA had over 42 registered member African community groups and it managed several programs which included support services for newly arrived African migrants and refugees, African festival, leadership and skills training, and advocacy.

Among the gender-based organisations, the African Women's Federation of South Australia drew its members from women who belonged to all African community groups in South Australia and it worked closely with ACCSA. As a gender-based community group, it worked exclusively with and for African women. The group had a support and advocacy role, and it supported newly arrived African women and advocated for African women in South Australia.

A further analysis of the data to develop deeper levels of explanation (see Porter & Ryan 1996) shows that there are different underlying factors that influence the formation, purpose and actions the different kinds of African community groups identified. There are at least
four interlinked and complex factors that are related with the migration and settlement experiences that affected the formation of African communities (see O'Neill 2010). This thesis demonstrates that understanding these factors is important to explain the action situation and the actors in that situation. The four interlinked factors are:

1. Refugee experiences which include forced displacement and emplacement and experiences in countries of asylum;
2. Resettlement needs and experiences which include cultural and social needs, practical needs, and responsibility and concerns for children;
3. Political and ideological influences; and
4. External influences which include the power of government and politicians, expectations and interferences of resettlement agencies, expectations and perceptions of the host community, and practices of other migrant communities.

5.2.1 Refugee experiences and community formation

The impact of refugee experiences on the resettlement of migrant communities from a refugee background is documented in the literature, particularly the diaspora, migration, refugee and resettlement literature (Behnia 2007; Rees & Pease 2007). However, it is not clear as to how these experiences affect community formation in countries of settlement. This factor is particularly relevant to this thesis as the majority of the members of the African communities studied have a refugee background. In this section, by drawing from previous studies, through autoethnographic reflections and fieldwork data, I have presented key elements of refugee experiences that influence community formation and ultimate empowerment of the African communities in Australia. Elements of the refugee experience include forced displacement and emplacement, experiences in countries of asylum and politics in the country-of-origin.

5.2.1.1 Forced displacement and emplacement

As discussed in Chapter IV, the majority of the members of the African community groups have a refugee background. They left their countries of origin through forced displacement, be it caused by government-sanctioned violence or other forms of persecution. Displacement is, however, a term that applies to all migrant situations and all forms of migration; whether it is caused by environmental degradation, development or conflict. Displacement ‘refers both to physical movement and a sense of being socially or culturally “out of place”; a process that moves people away from their roots/home/place – their original position’ (see Hiruy 2010, p. 45). Such displacement, particularly forced
displacement is also a trigger for the process of place-making or emplacement. Emplacement is the act of place-making in relation to or by maintaining the links to imagined or existing places of belonging by way of recreating familiar scenes, ‘communities’ and organisations both in the countries of asylum and country of resettlement (Turton 2005).

Forced displacement and the phenomenon of emplacement have greatly influenced the way in which African community groups form and organise themselves, both here in Australia and in the countries of asylum. The term ‘countries of asylum’ is used in this context to refer to countries which receive refugees and provide temporary protection (according to the UN 1951 Refugee Convention), but do not provide a lasting solution in the form of permanent resettlement. On the other hand, the term ‘countries of resettlement’ is used to refer to countries, such as Australia, which provide a lasting solution in the form of permanent resettlement to refugees who are unable to return to their countries of origin.

For example, the majority of the Burundian community group members in South Australia were living in refugee camps in Tanzania for more than a decade after fleeing the conflict in Burundi. Some of the young members of the community told me that they were born and bred in Tanzania. The community tried to recreate the ‘lost’ homeland by creating similar organisations including churches and dance groups and by telling stories of the homeland to the young ones who were born in the refugee camps in Tanzania. This process of emplacement has continued here in South Australia. The majority (over 70%) of Burundians in South Australia live in the northern areas of Adelaide in the Cities of Playford and Salisbury where they have their own community organisation – the Australian Burundian Community of South Australia (ABCSA) with an office in Davoren Park. The community group has male drummers, the Burundian Women Dancers Group, and an International Choir which perform across South Australia. In the community group’s own words ‘[these groups] keep Burundian culture alive and showcase Burundian heritage to the broader community in order to contribute to the Australian multicultural society’ (ABCSA 2012).

Many of the activities that the Burundian community group carry out in South Australia were influenced both by their experiences and imaginings of what the community used to look like both in Burundi and experiences in the country of asylum in Tanzania. During my visit to Davoren Park in 2011, one of the community leaders told me that the community group was in the process of acquiring land to start cooperative farming as they did in Tanzania.
…we are trying to create a kind of community cooperative recognised by the government. The goal is for community members to contribute a certain amount of money fortnightly. We have now collected about ten thousand, and we want to apply for a loan so that we can buy land to establish a community farm to keep some cattle and grow some crops. Once the project is running we hope to employ our people who have been farmers. (Interview 031)

Emplacement or the process of recreating what has been lost or what you long for is common among forced migrants. In a meeting of the Congolese community in Hobart, one of the community members referred to the newly formed Congolese community group as ‘the small Congolese embassy’; as a country outside his country. This metaphorical representation of one’s own community group as an ‘embassy’ can be considered as an expression of one’s emotional attachment to and desire to bring back what has been lost – the ‘homeland’ or ‘home country.’ For this person emplacement or the desire to recreate ‘the country-of-origin’ or ‘home’ was the primary drive for forming and being part of the Congolese community group. He expressed how he felt at ‘home’ when he spent time with the community be it dancing, singing or celebrating certain events. Again ‘home’ in this case is metaphorical and is used to mean ‘Congo’ or the country-of-origin.

A similar phenomenon was also observed among the Ethiopian community groups in the three states. The majority of Ethiopian community group members in Hobart had lived as refugees in Sudan, and many of the young people were born in Sudan. As a Cultural Orientation Trainer for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), I had the opportunity to visit one of the refugee camps in Sudan called Abu Rakham Refugee Camp in 2005. The majority of Ethiopian community group members in Tasmania had lived in this and other refugee camps in the Sudan for decades. In the refugee camp, I noticed that community activities and events were focused on recreating what many had left behind such as traditional and religious places, events and artefacts, and the community group’s role was to ensure that these activities and rituals were carried out in an orderly manner. At the centre of the refugee camp they had built an Orthodox Church, which acted as a ‘hub’ for the community. Many of the community meetings took place around this building. The community also carried out rituals and events that were common in the country-of-origin.

In Tasmania, although there were other observable factors at play, displacement and emplacement played significant roles in the formation of the Ethiopian, Congolese, Sudanese and other community groups. The desire of the community members to recreate rituals, events and activities and in some cases places that they used to have, or interact within the home country were important considerations in the way these community groups are formed.
Such influence is also apparent both in Victoria and South Australia. When the first African humanitarian entrants—26 Ethiopians—landed in Melbourne in the 1980s, there were no others before them to receive, comfort or support them during their early settlement. The new arrivals stayed in proximity to each other, and helped one another culturally, socially and economically. As the number of people coming to Melbourne increased, they began to organise themselves better and receive new arrivals. With time and an evident increase in the population, sub-groups started to emerge along ethnic lines, political allegiances and religious persuasions, influenced by their displacement experiences. Some community groups were formed around the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and the Ethiopian Pentecostal churches. During the fieldwork, I have observed these community groups and found their activities to be similar to what such churches in the country-of-origin carry out. It is also worth mentioning that Melbourne is host to over 30 Ethiopian restaurants and traditional stores which are part of this place-making process. As one community leader told me:

I like to come to the restaurants in Footscray and eat kitfo [traditional Ethiopian dish] and talk to people and have coffee. It reminds me of back home. I feel that I am back there (Interview 049).

Although these restaurants do not belong to a specific Ethiopian community group in the organisational sense, the above expressions indicate the role such place-making through restaurants plays in invoking a sense of place and community and the influence they may have in community formation.

The above accounts demonstrate how displacement and emplacement as refugee experiences influenced the formation of African community groups. As David Turton (2005) and later Paolo Novak (2007) alluded to, for those who moved from their places or homeland against their will, the act of ‘coming together’ or community formation in the country of resettlement is highly motivated by a desire to recreate or to re-establish the places and experiences of the past in the new place of the present, the country of resettlement.

5.2.1.2 Experiences in countries of asylum

In the above section, I have discussed how displacement and emplacement influenced community formation both in the country of asylum and the country of resettlement. In this section, I will explore how life experiences in the countries of asylum influenced the formation of a community in the country of resettlement. The refugee journey is not linear. As people migrated to different countries, they learnt new languages, adapted to different cultures and reconfigured their own way of doing things. In some cases, children were born
and raised in the countries of asylum and the culture the children knew and experienced was the culture of the country of asylum. Thus, while their parents expected them to understand, practice and abide by the traditions of the parents’ country-of-origin, for the children the culture they knew best was the one they learnt in the country of asylum.

In the countries of asylum, there was a substantial exchange with the host communities, and it was common for refugees to learn the languages of the asylum country. Life continues in refugee camps within the countries of asylum. People raise children and create a sense of community shaped by the unique socio-political situation around them. These unique experiences continue to shape peoples’ choices in terms of whom they associate with and what kind of community they form here in Australia.

The influence of experiences in countries of asylum has an impact on the formation of particularly an ethnic-based community groups. For instance, the majority of the Acholi community group of South Sudan lived as refugees in Northern Uganda with other Ugandan Acholis. On arrival in Australia, these communities have formed an Acholi Community group while at the same time being part of a wider Sudanese community group. There are incorporated Acholi community groups in South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

5.2.1.3 Living here, politicising there

We have not landed yet; you know although our people are physically here in Australia, they still live emotionally in their home country. They talk and dream about the home country; the only food they want to eat daily is their traditional food. Our people spend much of the time talking about politics back home. That is what makes them happy. However, no one seems to be concerned about life here in Australia and the future of our children. The majority of our young people are not attending universities and training to acquire trade. This does not seem to worry the adults; they are preoccupied politicking about their home country (Interview 055).

This excerpt shows that migrant communities are emotionally engaged in the affairs of their countries of origin. The fieldwork data also revealed that the emotional engagement of African community groups in the affairs (particularly political affairs) of their countries of origin had directly influenced the formation of those community groups in Australia. As I alluded to in my first example, the Ethiopian community in Hobart was divided into two groups after mass extrajudicial killings of students by government forces were reported by the media during the 2005 Ethiopian elections. I was told that this incident angered the Ethiopian community in Tasmania at the time, and some proposed that all community members rally and demonstrate against the actions of the Ethiopian government in front of
the Tasmanian Parliament House. The idea was supported by some and opposed by others, who reasoned that the Ethiopian Community Association of Tasmania was apolitical and hence should not engage itself in such political activity. Unable to resolve the disagreements, the Ethiopian community in Hobart were divided into two incorporated community groups, who to this day are unable to work together.

In a similar event, the Congolese community group in South Australia were divided due to politics in the country-of-origin. While the community started off united under one community organisation, division within the community emerged in response to political changes in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There were two incorporated Congolese community groups in South Australia during the fieldwork.

Refugee experiences influence community formation for three interrelated reasons: forced displacement and emplacement, experience in countries of asylum and domestic politics in countries of origin. The interplay among these different and interrelated factors affect the community formation process and how communities operate in Australia.

5.2.2 Resettlement and community formation

The second underlying factor that influenced the formation of African community groups in Australia were the practical resettlement needs of Africans in Australia. These can be expressed in several ways including cultural and social needs, practical needs, and the desire to raise children in one’s own culture and language.

5.2.2.1 Cultural and social needs

In addition to the factors discussed above, the desire to connect with, give to and receive social support from people who belong to one’s own ethnic groups or country-of-origin also influenced how African community groups were formed. African community groups in Australia were formed to create a sense of belonging and to provide cultural and social support to their own members. This may include getting support from one’s own ethnic group during illness and celebrating cultural events with those who belong to that group.

Cultural and social needs were found to be the major influences of African community group structure in Australia, at least at the initial stages of community formation. The leaders of many of the country-of-origin, ethnically and region-based African community groups interviewed cited fulfilling cultural and social needs of their community members as the primary reason for them to ‘come together’ or for the formation of their respective community groups. In other words, receiving and comforting new arrivals, helping members
of their group who lost loved ones, visiting and supporting those who are unwell and those who may have weddings were primary preoccupations in such community groups. As one community member noted:

we come together for the New Year, Christmas and welcome newcomers and when there are other public festivities we participate. Now we have a dancing group that does traditional dancing, and they participate when they are invited. However, I think as a community; we come together when there are significant events – like New Year, newcomers, and we get to know each other, so it is more like a big family (Interview 032).

Notice the emphasis ‘major events’ and ‘big family,’ the events mentioned are mainly social and cultural events and the desired outcome is ‘to get to know each other, so it is more like a big family.’ In other words, the primary purpose of these events was to create a sense of community and belonging. This view was not peculiar to one community. Another community leader commented,

… When we arrived in Australia the number was growing, initially, that was the main factor for us coming together because we wanted to make sure that. We give people some moral support especially when they newly arrived in Australia. They did not know much about the place and the culture and how things are done …we wanted to help new arrivals; that was the main objective (Interview 027).

Again in the second account, the idea of ‘moral support’ particularly to new arrivals is mentioned. Such support included comforting people when they lost loved ones, helping them out with organising weddings and other family functions and celebrating cultural festivities. In both accounts the actual functions upon which the community groups were formed were mainly socio-cultural in the sense that they were about including members of the group in the ‘big family,’ providing moral support (especially for new arrivals), helping people understand ‘how things are done’ and providing assistance. In most of the cases ethnically, country-of-origin and region-based community groups were primarily created with the intention of fulfilling cultural and social needs of their constituents – those who are currently in Australia and those who might arrive after them.

In summary meeting one’s own and other members’ cultural and social needs had been instrumental in forming particularly ethnically, country-of-origin and region-based African community groups in Australia. Fulfilling cultural and social needs was the primary driver and purpose for their formation at the initial stages of the formation of these community groups. However, as many community leaders reported, with an increase in the number of people arriving and joining these community groups, some of the significant country-of-origin-based community groups became concerned with practical settlement needs.
5.2.2.2 **Practical settlement needs**

Practical settlement needs are needs which are necessary for the settlement of individuals and families in a place, which may include, but are not limited to education, training and skills acquisition, income and employment and housing.

One of the reasons that the majority of pan-African and gender-based African community groups and some country-of-origin and region-based community groups were formed was to meet the resettlement challenges that their community members face in Australia. These challenges are discussed in detail in chapter IV and are primarily related to practical settlement needs such as employment, skills acquisition, education, English language and housing. For this reason, the provision of practical settlement needs was one of the primary functions of particularly pan-African and gender-based African community groups.

For example, as shown in Chapter IV, ACCSA manages Settlement Grants Programs (SGP) to support newly arrived African migrants and refugees including advocacy, information and referral. The SGP is an Australian government competitive grants program aimed at enabling humanitarian entrants and refugees to become self-reliant and participate in Australian society after arrival. Using funds from the SGP, ACCSA provided welfare services including counselling and assistance with housing and employment. It also provided information and education programs for women and children, young people and men, and other skills development programs include driving, sewing, arts and crafts. All these functions were geared towards meeting practical settlement needs.

In the same way, ACCT and ATT also had the intention to provide similar services to African communities in their jurisdictions, although they did not have services to the scale of those of ACCSA. This intention is expressed in the constitution of both ACCT and ATT. The ACCT constitution indicates that the objectives of ACCT included advocating for the wellbeing and settlement of its members, for better employment, education, health, housing and other key outcomes and assisting the social and cultural settlement of families and individuals within member communities in Hobart. On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter IV, ATT worked to meet practical settlement needs of Africans in Victoria by developing policy advice to government and NGOs in regards to employment, capacity building, education and effective settlement service delivery.
5.2.2.3 Generational continuity – heritage

Migrant communities, particularly the first generation migrants are known to have concerns about ‘loss of culture.’ To counter such concern some African community groups studied created ethnic schools, and opportunities for their children to learn the parents’ language and cultural practices. These African communities were concerned about their children’s cultural values; whether their children would be able to speak their native languages or follow their parents’ religious practices. For some community members, the aspiration to educate and raise their children in a traditional way of life was a primary consideration in forming community groups.

One of our objectives is for our children to learn our language. To do so, we approached schools as a community and asked if we can use their facilities in the weekends. Most of our members do not work in the weekends and thus were able to bring their children. What’s happening right now is that we have school facilities that we are using on the weekends from 4 to 6pm. For two hours, members take their children to the school and then we teach them our language in those classes. We are doing this for the sake of our children (Interview 027).

For this group, teaching children the traditions and language of their parents was a factor in the formation of their group and primary function of the group. Other African community groups had also established their own ethnic schools, musical groups and related activities to ensure that their children appreciate and follow their parents’ traditions.

In summary, the discussion above and the examples provided demonstrate that the need to meet one’s own socio-cultural and practical settlement needs has influenced the formation of African community groups. It was also evident that the desire to raise children with traditional ways of life influenced the formation and function of African community groups. While the development of ethnically, country-of-origin, and region-based African community groups can be said to have been highly influenced by cultural and social needs, the formation of pan-African and gender-based organisations was influenced by practical settlement needs. The strength of the influence that these factors have on community formation varies with each group.

5.2.3 Political and ideological influences on community formation

The three case study organisations described in Chapter IV organised people from the African continent that comprises 55 nation-states with numerous ethnic groups, nations and nationalities. I argue that, in addition to the factors discussed above, the formation of the
three African community groups is also influenced by political and ideological factors that include pan-African ideals and the existence of an organisation such as the African Union (AU) that promotes such ideas.

Pan-African ideals have influence on how African communities organise themselves in the countries of settlement. Pan-African ideals revolve around the notion that the solidarity of Africans both on the continent and in the diaspora is vital for progress of African communities both within Africa and out of Africa. It is based on the belief that Africans not only share a common history but also a common destiny. The ideology has been promoted since the early 1900s by many key figures including the African American W. E. B. Du Bois, the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, the Beninese Kojo Houenou-Tovalou, the Trinidadian George Padmore, and the Ghanaian Kwame N'krumah (M'Baye 2008). These ideologies are ingrained in the minds of many Africans and influence how Africans want to organise themselves. Thus, I argue that one of the reasons why pan-African community organisations such as ACCSA, ACCT and ATT exist in Australia is because of pan-African ideological influences.

The existence of the AU as a viable organisation influences the way pan-African or continent-based African community organisations organise themselves in Australia. The existence of such African organisation based on the ideology of bringing African nation states together has some structural influence in the way some pan-African community groups are organised in Australia. Such influence is evident in the constitution of ACCSA – its rules of representation follow a similar structure to that of the AU. The AU is an organisation where all member African nation states have one seat and a vote, similarly in ACCSA one African nation state can only be represented by one person at ACCSA irrespective of the existence of several community groups from that country-of-origin. It can also be reasoned that the tradition of naming African communities as ‘African’ such as African Think Tank as opposed to names based on single African nation state as in ‘South Sudan…’ is influenced by pan-African ideals which promote solidarity of Africans in their struggle to change their circumstances to support each other.

There were also other ideological and political influences which foster ethnically-based African community groups. These were often related to the causes of some brutal conflicts experienced in the countries of origin. The Rwandan and Burundian conflicts and the genocide that followed are often described as political and/or ideologically driven ethnic conflicts between two groups – the Hutus and Tutsis. The Sudanese conflict is also described as a conflict between Arabs and Muslims in the north and the ethnic Africans.
(who are mainly Christians and traditional religion followers) in the south. The plight of Oromo people in Ethiopia and other conflicts in Africa that produced the majority of Africans in Australia also have political, ideological and religious influences.

Many of these conflicts have been carried into the countries of asylum and the refugee camps where these forced migrants flee. In the camps, there was a constant configuration and reconfiguration of identity both forced by their past and also due to the international process of ‘refugee making’, or refugee status determination. For example, from my personal experience, I understand that the majority of ethnic groups in Ethiopia often inter-marry, live and socialise together within Ethiopia. However, this is not the case in the refugee camps where some ethnic groups dissociate themselves from other groups.

Political and ideological influences play a role in the formation of African community groups. Pan-African ideals of solidarity of Africans and the existence of the AU as an organisational structure based on these ideals influences the way pan-African community groups are formed and organised in Australia. Other ideological and political beliefs based on ethnicity also affect the formation of ethnically-based community groups. Identifying these influences is important as they also affect the collective action of such groups.

5.2.4 External Australian influences on community formation

Besides the pre-migration experiences, settlement needs, and political and ideological influences, other external factors are also at play in influencing the formation of a community group. As Robert Redfield (1995) points out in his seminal work ‘The Little Community,’ the African community groups are ‘community within communities’ whose formation and function are modified and influenced by other communities. In this respect, the influence of government agencies and politicians, NGOs, the views and actions of the host community, the media and other well-formed migrant groups in Australia is particularly noticeable. These are external influences that arise from the Australian contexts, as opposed to political and ideological influences that arise from the contexts within the country of origin and the migration history of Africans. These external influences permeate the life of the African community groups and play a role particularly in the reconfiguration of community groups and their collective action beyond the initial settlement years.

5.2.4.1 The influence of governments and politicians

Often governments and politicians have a preconceived idea of how new and emerging communities ought to organise themselves. These expectations are prescriptive in nature
as they are driven from current laws of incorporation and association which are designed to avoid conflict or preserve solidarity in the Durkheimian sense. That is to say that they are designed to maintain social integration by regulating the relations between different community groups and their members through the use of contracts or laws. Most of these groups are incorporated under various state based laws such as association incorporation legislation.

In other cases governments and politicians tend to provide indications as to how communities ought to organise themselves. These inferences emanate from the regulatory environments that determine access to resources and services to migrant communities. During my fieldwork, I was told that around 2003, the Sudanese community in Hobart requested government support to start a dance group; the Tasmanian Government officials told them that the government would not be able to support them unless they come together with other Africans. Later in October 2007, I (as a Community Project Officer for the MRC) led a group of African community leaders to the Tasmanian Parliament to meet and present their case to the members of the parliament after a peaceful rally was staged by some service providers and community members in Hobart to express their concern about some of the comments made by the then Minister for Immigration, Kevin Andrews (see chapter IV).6 The community leaders presented their case to the parliamentarians and sought support from the state government. The response from the then Minister for Community Development Michelle O’Brien and other parliamentarians was that the community (the African community in Hobart) would need to form an incorporated association if it intended to seek any state government support (grants and other resources).

On another occasion, at the beginning of my Ph.D. candidature, I attended Sierra Leone Independence Day celebrations organised by the Sierra Leone-Liberian Union, which was created to bring together members of the Sierra Leone and Liberian community groups in Tasmania. The guest of honour was the then Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson. In his speech at a function, he made it clear that it was important for the African communities to unite and come together ‘as one community’ if they wish to work with governments. From the statement, one can discern that small ethnic or country-of-origin-based community groups do not necessarily suit governments’ idea of ‘serving the community’; hence amalgamation of such groups was

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6 Kevin Andrews who was the Minister for Immigration in the Howard government, made some comments about the settlement of Sudanese people in Australia linking race to ability to resettle. He was under a lot of criticism for this and African community members expressed their concern.
desired. Such political pressure and the enticing support in funding have influenced the creation of some African community organisations. For example, such influence has been a key contributor to the formation of the ACCT in Tasmania, ACCSA in South Australia, African Women’s Federation in Adelaide, and several other African community groups or organisations in Australia.

Government and politicians influence the development and function of African community groups primarily by setting the rules and policies of engagement. For example, to access community funds and grants from local, state and federal governments, African community groups must be incorporated. This means the community groups had to create formal organisations with a name and constitution, clearly stipulated objects and structure (with office bearers), and they had to register their organisation with the respective authorities. The African community groups in this study were incorporated. Government and politicians also encouraged the formation of larger and heterogeneous African community groups for ease of managing them or dealing with them. As one participant put it:

Politicians want African communities organised in such a way that they serve the purpose of the government of the day. They think that Africans are one and need to have an umbrella organisation but why can’t they demand the same from the early Europeans, you have Italians, Greeks and so on (Interview 051).

Government officials thought that it was easier to deal with one group that ‘represented’ Africans rather than several ethnic-based or country-of-origin-based groups and encouraged the formation of such groups. This attitude is commonplace in government circles.

… Australian politicians would want to see one leader whom they can appropriate and work with, and then they can say we are working with the leader of this community. That is why they like to see one African community (Fieldnote, 16 September 2011).

In summary, governments and politicians influenced the formation and functioning of the African community group in two ways. Firstly, by establishing the rules of the game under which community organisations are formed and function. And secondly, by indicating their preference to work with and support certain types of community groups and by providing funding or more funding to some kinds of organisations.

5.2.4.2 The influence of NGOs (settlement agencies)

NGOs or settlement agencies as they are sometimes called are contracted to provide settlement services to new migrant communities. DIAC often funds these settlement
services through the Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS) and the Settlement Grants Program (SGP) to provide settlement services to migrant communities, including the African communities. However, the relationship between NGOs and the African communities and other migrants is complex and often extends beyond the initial contractual settlement service provision. It goes beyond the relationship between a service provider and client. The African communities work closely with these agencies, and at times are at the centre of many of the activities that are organised by settlement agencies. Perhaps for this reason, the influence of settlement agencies in the affairs of African communities is high (detailed interaction between NGOs and communities is discussed in Chapter VII).

These NGOs wield significant influence as to how African community groups form and function mainly due to the position they have as service providers. For instance, it was observed that all the Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs) in South Australia, Tasmania, and Victoria were highly involved in organising African communities in their jurisdiction as part of their government subcontracted services. This organising included help in writing constitutions, offering initial office space, or another technical support. In the case of ACCT, the MRC in Hobart provided staff and other resources to support the establishment of ACCT as a community organisation, and provided office space for ACCT to use. At the initial stage the organisation's development, the MRC was funded by DIAC to employ an officer to work for the ACCT on a casual basis. In South Australia, the MRC worked closely and was responsible for facilitating the initial formation of the ACCSA. Although there is no equivalent African communities’ council in Victoria, during the fieldwork it was observed that the several MRCs in Victoria were instrumental in the formation of the several African community groups in the state.

Beyond the formation process, as one of the African community leaders explained, some NGOs had a role in shaping the dynamics of the African community groups by creating a close relationship with one or two African community groups. Different settlement organisations may thus work with different African community groups. The settlement agencies often offered some employment to the community leaders of the African community groups, and in return expected these community groups to provide letters of support when NGOs apply for funding. Such a symbiotic relationship with African communities was considered desirable by the NGOs, as one community leader puts it,

… their [NGOs'] relationship with the community makes them look good before government agencies who provide the financial support for them to provide services (Interview 040).
Through such relationships, the community leader claimed that NGOs control the day-to-day running of those particular African community groups. This idea was also supported by another community member who told me that he did not like the way one of the NGOs influenced ACCSA. He observed that ‘after all these years African organisations are not independent of these agencies’ (Fieldnote, 3 September 2011).

Examples of related ‘symbiotic’ relationships between NGOs and African community groups and the undue influence that members of the African communities felt NGOs had on their organisations and community interactions was frequently discussed during the fieldwork. However, it was not possible to include names and details of African community groups and settlement agencies as they could be easily identified. From the discussions, it was clear that NGOs assumed a steering position during the early organisational life of African community groups and were at the centre of community formation and reformation. As one of my interviewees pointed out,

> these organisations [NGOs] who are serving Africans were at the centre of the formation of new African organisations. They were the ones that caused the division of the community into two and supported the formation of a new one. This is only to ensure that they are funded. I mean; these NGOs are themselves divided and then they divide my community and create new ones so that they get the support they need (Interview 040).

The excerpts indicate that settlement agencies play a role in the formation of new African community groups or the division of existing ones. Some of the Ethiopians in Hobart strongly felt that one of the NGOs in Hobart was at the centre of the division of their community into two hostile groups. They explained that the NGO facilitated the registration of a group because it (the NGO) wanted all groups to receive settlement services from them. The involvement of NGOs in forming and reforming African community groups is indicative of the influence NGOs have in the reconfiguration of African community groups.

The structure of African community groups formed through the support of NGOs was also slightly different from those formed independently by members of the African community. For example, the ATT was formed independently by a group of Africans without a notable and direct influence of NGOs while ACCT and ACCSA were formed with the hands-on support and notable influence of the MRCs in both states. The difference in structure and focus between ATT, ACCT and ACCSA can be attributed to a certain extent to the presence or absence of the influence of NGOs at the formative stage. NGOs, settlement agencies in this case, provide settlement services and their primary purpose in enabling the formation of the African community organisation is to create a body that can work with them representing Africans. This is reflected in how ACCSA and ACCT operate as opposed to
how ATT, which had a strong focus on advocacy and leadership training. ACCT and ACCSA, on the other hand, were stronger on attending to settlement issues by working in partnership with MRCs.

Although the intent of the African communities to ‘come together’ was the primary driver for the community formation processes, NGOs influence the way the process progresses. To start with, the African communities were dependent on the settlement agencies to meet their practical settlement support due to the existence of contractual arrangements between these NGOs and governments. This created some level of symbiotic relationship between African community groups and NGOs. It also provided the ground for NGOs to influence the structure of African community organisations. Secondly, once these community groups were established, it was deemed necessary, by both the community groups and NGOs, to work together. For this reason, formal partnerships were forged between some of the newly formed African community organisations and NGOs to maintain the relationship. This provided NGOs with the capacity to influence community groups. However, the influence of NGOs in the formation process was considered disempowering by some African community leaders. They reasoned that NGOs’ involvement was driven by their own motive to secure funding on behalf of the African community rather than enabling the community to achieve its own goals.

5.2.4.3 The influence of the host community

In October 2009, I was invited to speak at the national annual conference of Neighbourhood Watch Australasia on the issues of peace and diversity in Hobart (see Michael 2009). In the conference, I made the point that there was a need for the broader (host) community to learn more from and about the African communities and work with them closely to build peaceful communities. I argued that fear and misunderstanding could breed problems within communities. My observation was informed by the fact that sometimes when large groups of African youth gather in public spaces; it often sparks irrational feelings of fear and distrust among the onlookers and police. This is influenced by the ‘visibility’ of the group and may escalate to a full confrontation. From the perspectives of the African youth, that is what they do – socialise and hang with their ‘mates’ – even on the streets.

The problem was not that the African youth were or had done something wrong (which is possible); it was rather the understanding of some members of the host community and their preconceived ideas of the identity of these young people and what their intentions were which was the problem. In this instance, the night after my presentation, the Hobart
*Mercury* (24 October 2009, p. 22) reported ‘there was a tension between a group of four ‘African lads’ and ‘a bunch of young white women led by a boisterous white male.’ The paper went on and commented that the scene was a ‘disturbing scene’ and ‘the police were right to intervene.’ Notice here the use of ‘African lads,’ the association of the group with trouble. The young people could have been from one, two, or more countries of origin or ethnic groups; we have no way of knowing from the report. The reality is we do not even have any way of identifying them differently from the outside, to the host community they are just ‘African lads’ and this tends to define them.

For the majority of Africans, visibility (colour) becomes the key identifier. The majority of black persons are called ‘Africans’ no matter what their origin or ethnicity. There is a perception held by the broader community that ‘Africans look alike, and hence they belong together,’ which has influenced the way African communities are organised. A young woman who was arguing for the strengthening of pan-African community organisation in a conference in Sydney in 2011 reasoned, ‘who cares if I am a Ghanaian, to them I am just an African although I was born and bred here [Australia]’ (personal notes). How the broader community identifies a person of African descent as an African despite what the individual identifies themselves as encourages the formation of community groups as ‘African community groups.’

Some African community members join ‘African organisations’ or try to form such Africa-based community groups influenced by the host community’s portrayals of Africans. As one country-of-origin-based community leader justifies his action to join and form an African umbrella community organisation,

…I wanted to see all Africans united because once they see us united it is easy to get assistance. If we are not together as Africans, the majority of the people will lose confidence in us, and they will think that we cannot work together (Fieldnote, 01 October 2011).

For this person, the need to join and form an umbrella community organisation was clearly influenced by what he thought the broader community would consider desirable and what he perceived could attract the support of the host community. On the other hand, as one youth leader points out, the portrayal of the African community by the host community could shape how members of the African community think about their identity and hence the organisations they form.

For us whether we like it or not we are Africans. What is the point you may say, I am Sudanese or Ethiopian, but who cares? Everyone will say, oh that African. I think we are better off to work together as African youth (Fieldnote 16/9/2011).
The excerpts above show how the host community sees or identifies an African influence the way in which African community groups form and what form or identity such community groups take.

5.2.4.4 The influence of other migrant communities

Do you see the Greek Community, they are well-organised, and they have their hall and Church. Why cannot we form our own community and have our own hall and club like them? (Field note, 20 July 2011).

Discussions and ultimate formation of African community groups were also carried out in reference to waves of migrants who settled before the African communities. African communities try to emulate the formation of other migrants and learn how to organise themselves from migrant communities that came before them. For example, in South Australia, the Australian Burundian Association of South Australia (ABCSA) was formally mentored by the Vietnamese Community Association to enable it to emulate the Vietnamese and organise and run its affairs accordingly. Such a process has been beneficial to the Burundian community group as one of the community leaders recounts.

The first year we got a grant of two hundred thousand from DIAC; we were being mentored by the Vietnamese Association. They were mentoring us to see how we would go, so everything went smoothly. During those two years, the project was successful. The purpose of the project was to try to help the Burundian association to become self-reliant and independent. That was the main purpose of that project. So the management committee were having some training in relation to leadership to learn what they need to do to manage the organisation independently without relying on the Vietnamese Association. This year [2011] because the project was successful; we applied for the SGP grant and then we were funded for another year that is good. Now we have employed other three workers who are paid by the Burundian association. We have Office Coordinator, Support Worker and also a Volunteer Coordinator Worker (Interview 031).

There were also plans in South Australia for the Greek community to mentor the Liberian community, although this did not eventuate as planned.

Whether it is through mentoring or by self-directed emulation, the formation and operation of African community groups was influenced, by the way, other migrant communities develop and operate.
5.3 Community formation and empowerment

In the above sections, I have discussed the different kinds of African community groups and the different factors that affect their formation that included refugee experiences, resettlement, ideological influences and external influences. I have also discussed the different ways in which African communities form organisations that enable them to take collective action to ‘advance their interests’ and to change their situations. In this section, I will discuss how community formation contributed to community empowerment. The analysis of the data showed that community formation contributed to community empowerment in two ways. Firstly, community formation was observed to serve as a mechanism for empowerment by bringing community members together and creating the structure they needed to advance their cause. Secondly, community formation was considered as empowerment as it created a sense of belonging, involvement, and control over the organisation in the community (Sadan 1997).

The case studies demonstrate that community formation is the primary mechanism through which African community groups organised themselves and mobilised action to attain empowerment. The term mechanism is used to mean ways that provided explanations for the cause of existing social conditions or structures. In the African community groups observed, community formation was referred to as an act of ‘coming together.’ By creating a ‘sense of responsibility, commitment, and ability to care for collective survival’ through the formation of a community, these community groups were able to come together and take action to change their situation (Sadan 1997).

Community formation was the instrument or mechanism that brought African community members together to advance their cause. As one of the founders of ACCSA explains,

… we had our community [a country-of-origin-based community] going on for a while, but our numbers were small and we could not get anywhere. So we wanted to come together with all Africans to get some resources and projects for all Africans. That is how it begun (Interview 043).

As pointed out by this community leader, one of the reasons for the formation of an umbrella community organisation such as ACCSA was to increase the communities’ power, influence and resources to attain common goals. Country-of-origin-based community leaders also suggested that another reason they wanted to be part of an umbrella community organisation was to enable them to deal with everyday social and political issues in Australia collectively. ACCT, ACCSA, ATT and other similar organisations were
formed in this spirit. In essence, the principal mechanism that these community groups used to attain some level of empowerment was community formation or ‘coming together.’

The factors identified in section 5.2 above influenced what kind of community group was formed; for example, in ethnically and country-of-origin-based community groups where formation was mainly influenced by refugee experience and social and cultural needs, the data showed that the primary concern in the community was the ‘loss of culture.’ Thus, community action and activities in these communities were centred on organising cultural festivals and events. On the other hand, the formation of pan-African and gender-based community groups was mainly influenced by the practical settlement needs, political and ideological influences, and external influences. Thus, the activities of these communities were focused on resolving general issues of a socio-political nature such as unemployment, lack of appropriate housing, inadequate education, and participation of community members in the political process in Australia. Both examples demonstrate that community formation was the mechanism through which the actions of the community groups were ordered.

This thesis has also shown that community formation, as a mechanism, was instrumental in creating social movements among African community groups. These social movements can contribute to wider social transformation and change. As Yaziji and Doh (2009, p. 4) noted,

> When individuals or groups within a society work together to advance a broad common set of interests, and these interests become a significant force in shaping the direction of society, the outcomes of this process are often called social movements.

The formation of umbrella community organisations and other pan-African community organisations has allowed African communities across Australia to focus on common sets of interests such as unemployment, housing, skill acquisition and other social, political and economic issues that affect the majority of Africans. It has also created opportunities to empower community members. As discussed in Chapter IV, the majority of Africans who arrived as humanitarian entrants have a low skill base which makes finding meaningful employment difficult. This problem is compounded by other concerns such as racism and discrimination. African community organisations endeavoured to address these issues by creating awareness through conferences, demanding that governments respond to the issues, and organising and mobilising the African community for the same.

The formation of ACCT, ACCSA and ATT and their effort has empowered their communities by voicing concerns and attracting support from NGOs and governments.
These organisations have also become a significant force in the Australian socio-political scene. This can be demonstrated by the creation of the inaugural African Ministerial Consultative Committee by the Australian federal government in 2012 and the subsequent appointment of 14 African community leaders to the Committee.

An analysis of the formation of the different kinds of community groups in the three states has demonstrated that community formation was a constitutive element of empowerment among African community groups. The formation of community groups gave a sense of purpose and direction to members of the African community and allowed them to create structures to understand issues in the community and mobilise resources to change their situation. Thus, I argue that community formation was a constitutive element of empowerment as empowerment is about understanding collective issues, and mobilising one’s own group to gain control over resources that matter to the community (Narayan 2002; Sadan 1997). In other words, the empowerment African communities are a function of community formation and the action of a community group organised, as a result, of shared interest and intentions (see Oliver 1993).

There is also evidence to suggest that ‘coming together’ was seen by the African communities as an end on its own – as empowerment. This is mainly related to the sense of belonging that forming a community group or organisation was able to foster by creating a safe place for community members to come together and support each other. As one community leader puts it succinctly,

… our community, [is] where we help each other in times of death or bereavement or even in times of happiness, in joyful times like weddings. I am happy with our community because we decide what to do by ourselves, and I get to be involved in my community and participate in our events. You know you feel that you belong there (Interview 043).

From this excerpt, it was clear that the community leader felt that being part of the community gave him the opportunity to be involved and to participate in his community. He also mentioned the fact that the community had control over the community organisation. These are all components of community empowerment. As Hur (2006, p. 533) explains, the sense of feeling and being part of a social network (collective belonging), taking part in community activities, and events that may lead to change (involvement in the community) and the ability to influence actions in one’s own organisation (control over the organisation) are all components of community empowerment.

The research also points out that the formation of a community and being part of that community can create a state in which community members feel empowered to achieve
their self-determined goals. The control that members have in these community groups or organisations enables control over the processes and strategies they use to attain their goals (Hur 2006; Laverack 2006; Sadan 1997). The goal of community empowerment is to build a community, ‘so that members of a given community can feel a sense of freedom, belonging, and power that can lead to constructive social change’ (Hur 2006, p. 535). Moreover, community formation as is observed in the African communities can be said to have attained these goals. Thus, this study demonstrates that community formation among Africans in Australia is key to understanding and attaining community empowerment.

5.4 Summary and discussion

The primary aim of this Chapter was to understand the mechanisms through which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment and the underlying factors that influence these mechanisms. The chapter has presented community formation as both a mechanism and a constitutive element of empowerment and has described the different kinds of African community groups and analysed the underlying factors that affect community formation and action. Community formation—coming together—was the principal mechanism that enabled the empowerment of African communities.

The chapter has demonstrated that community formation was also a constitutive element of empowerment that created a sense of belonging, involvement, and control over the organisation in the community. Findings discussed in this chapter provide an answer to the second research question – what are the mechanisms through which African communities organise themselves and mobilise collective action to attain empowerment?

The taxonomic analysis of African community groups in the three states demonstrates that there are five kinds of African community groups that differ from each other in their attributes (organisational structure, goals, and capacity). These are ethnically, country-of-origin, region, gender-based and pan-African community groups. Understanding the contexts and the process of community formation were crucial to understanding empowerment. The formation of the different kinds of African community groups was influenced by underlying factors that included migration and refugee experiences, resettlement needs and experiences, political, ideological and external influences that affect the decision to form a community group.
Although the formation of the different kinds of African community groups can be attributed to the complex interplay of the different factors cited, this thesis has established that there is a link between a certain factors and the kind of community groups. Some factors were observed to have more influence on forming one kind of a community group and not the other. Beyond the formation of community groups, these factors also influenced the way African communities operated and acted. This is an important point, as it implies that the way communities formed have an effect on the agenda setting process in those communities. In other words, the way communities form influenced the way these communities decided individual actions to bring out change, and their interaction with other actors.

For example, the formation of ethnically, country-of-origin and to a larger extent region-based community groups was influenced by refugee experiences and resettlement. Consequently, their activities and actions were primarily socio-cultural such as organising cultural festivals and events. These activities created a sense of cohesion in those community groups by invoking and nurturing a sense of community and belonging. They also created a sense of feeling and being part of a social network (collective belonging), and have provided opportunities for members to participate in community activities that may lead to effecting change (involvement in the community) (see Hur 2006). However, focus on socio-cultural issues in these kinds of community groups has also created some constraints and has limited the scope of these community groups to enable their members to participate in resolving broader social, economic and political issues.

The formation of gender-based and pan-Africa community groups, on the other hand, was mainly influenced by practical settlement needs, political, ideological and external influences. The activities of these community groups were inclined towards resolving broader social, political and economic issues. Thus, these community groups offered better opportunities for community members to participate in changing broader institutional arrangements that affected their day-to-day living by influencing government policy through group representation and advocacy. They also created a broader sense of community and social cohesion by bringing community groups from different ethnic and country-of-origin backgrounds to work together around issues of common concern by resolving problems and making collective decisions for positive change (community building) (see Hur 2006).

The findings discussed in this chapter have demonstrated that from the perspectives of African communities, empowerment was primarily about re-creating a community that can shape its own future. The formation of African community groups facilitated the mobilisation
of resources, the creation of community solidarity, skills and know-how that were necessary to participate in the new society. For most of these communities, migration and displacement had caused the loss of relationships and trust that once constituted a valuable social capital in these communities. The formation of community groups in Australia has enabled these communities to regain what has been lost. Through community formation, they are able to gain resources and capabilities to participate in the new society. This was contrary to the literature where it is assumed that community is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

Current theories in community empowerment assume that community in its organised form is a priori for empowerment and unwittingly exclude ‘community formation’ from the equation. Thus, it is theorised that the empowerment of disadvantaged communities is attained by mobilising community members around certain interests or issues to attain some power to achieve their goals. For example, in both Alinsky’s (1971) and Freire’s (1970, 1973) conceptualisations of empowerment, the existence of community as an organised entity is implicit. They promote the role of organisers and educators as one of creating awareness of existing issues and mobilising these communities around defined interests and issues to attain empowerment. To the contrary, insights from this study demonstrate that community formation was the mechanism that enabled the empowerment of African community groups. It also demonstrates that community formation was a constitutive element of empowerment that creates a sense of belonging, involvement, and control over the organisation in the community.

This chapter demonstrates that community formation was the primary mechanism African communities (as the principal actors in the action arena) used to mobilise action. Community formation influences how African communities selected certain actions to effect change and their interaction with other actors. In the next chapter, I will respond to the third research question, and linking back to the stages, components and domains of community empowerment in the framework, present an analysis of the action situation by identifying conditions, resources and structures that are necessary for the empowerment of African communities.
Chapter VI

Conditions, Resources and Structures that Facilitate Community Empowerment

This chapter addresses the third research question – what are the conditions, resources and structures that contribute to the attainment of empowerment? Building on the conceptual and analytical framework and in response to this research question, I will present an empirical analysis of the action situation by identifying what influences the behaviour of actors in the action situation (conditions); resources used by actors to effect change (resources); and the nature of the society and associated rules within which the African communities function (structure).

The focus of the analysis will be the African communities as primary actors in the action arena and as such the chapter provides a clear picture of conditions, resources and structures that influence bottom-up driven community empowerment in these communities. There are also other actors who interacted with the African communities and provided rules and resources that influenced the empowerment of these communities; the nature of these actors, their actions, interaction and influence in the empowerment of African communities will be discussed in Chapter VII.

6.1 Conditions

The empowerment of African communities depends on, among other factors, the prevailing social conditions that modify and influence the way these communities behave. Conditions refer to situations, structural or otherwise, that modifies and affects the way communities behave and the state of affairs in communities. The analyses of data from the three ethnographic case studies demonstrate that there were at least four conditions that had an impact on the action arena and ultimately the empowerment of African communities. These were community organisation and leadership, community partnership and collaboration, social incidents, and community conflicts.
6.1.1 Community organisation and leadership

The formation of a well-organised community and trusted leadership that provides the structure for people to come together, work on common goals, socialise and address concerns and problems is crucial in attaining empowerment (Laverack 2001). The analyses of the three case studies have demonstrated that community leaders play a crucial role in the empowerment of their community groups by creating a sense of direction and structure that fostered participation. Leaders (as representatives of their community) took the responsibility for actions of the group and facilitated resolution of conflicts within the group.

In all of the case studies, the existence of an efficient organisational structure and leadership were crucial to the empowerment of the African communities. The establishment of umbrella community organisations such as ACCSA and ACCT and other African community organisations such as ATT helped African community members to work together to attain their own goals. These organisations were found to be instrumental in providing the capacity for African communities to make a difference to pre-existing situations, power relations and institutional arrangements. The establishment of these organisations created bargaining power within African communities and empowered them to demand support from governments and NGOs.

On the other hand, the community organisations also provided the legitimacy that government agencies and NGOs required to work with African communities. Well-organised and incorporated African community organisations such as ACCT, ACCSA and ATT attracted more resources from governments and NGOs.

The role of community leaders in these community organisations was also vital to their success. Many of the activities and events carried out by the three case study community organisations were initiated by community leaders who developed and organised activities that brought the community together. They also played key roles in enabling their community organisations to access resources from external institutions that recognise their work and involvement in the community. Community groups that had trusted and experienced leaders who were able to negotiate through complex political systems have enjoyed greater success in gaining access to resources and facilitating better outcomes for their communities. As a community leader in Tasmania puts it:
... the empowerment of the community takes ... responsible leadership, meaning people who are trustworthy, who have the experience, who are willing to pay the price and who have ideas and no other agenda but the community (Interview 034).

6.1.2 Community partnership and collaboration

Current literature on community empowerment supports and promotes the idea that community empowerment is facilitated by coalitions, partnerships, and voluntary alliances that community groups establish to address particular problems (Laverack 2001; Taylor 2011). The findings from this study concur with this view and show that community groups that were willing to work with external institutions were able to create opportunities to share resources and responsibility with external actors to achieve their own goals. The partnerships they created not only enabled them to share resources and responsibilities with NGOs, but they were also important in changing the way NGOs thought about and related with African communities. For example, ACCSA's partnership with NGOs provided an opportunity for the organisation to be considered as an efficient representative African community organisation in South Australia. In a Victorian study, Nsubuga-Kyobe and Dimock (2002) also reported that partnerships between a number of African community organisations and NGOs in the 1990s had played a significant role in enabling the African communities achieve their goals.

However, it is important to note that the nature of the partnership and its outcome is dependent on the relative power and influence of the parties in the partnership. Thus, understanding the relative power and goals of the different actors in the partnership is crucial to understand whether a partnership is empowering or disempowering to a community. One of the case study community organisations reported that an NGO despite having a formal partnership with the community organisation had used the partnership arrangement to its own benefit. The NGO received grants from the Australian Government to establish an African community centre, citing its formal partnership with the African community groups. Once funds were received, and the project was operational, the NGO excluded the African community organisation from the decision-making process and refused to consider the community organisation’s request to take membership of the Project Steering Committee.

In this case, the partnership agreement did not create opportunities for the respective African community to share resources and responsibility with the NGO. Instead, it constrained the relationship between the two parties and disempowered the African
community organisations and its members. The NGO undermined the involvement of the leaders of the umbrella African community organisation in making decisions. Community leaders interviewed were also annoyed by the fact that the NGO was able to negotiate with the funding agency to remove the name ‘African' from its project name to avoid confrontation with the African community. They stated that the funding was justified by the disadvantage in the African communities, and thus should involve the representative African organisation’s participation. The NGO, on the other hand, justified its action by reasoning that the program would be able to provide equitable service to all migrants and refugees if the name African was removed. The NGO succeeded in doing so by justifying its action using languages familiar to the government agency such as all ‘migrants and refugees.’ For the government agency involved, it was easier to agree with the changes and deal with the NGO that is familiar and speaks the language government agencies used and that they can hold the NGO to account for the program.

Nsubuga-Kyobe and Dimock (2002) also reported similar occurrences in Victoria. They reported that African leaders were concerned about the fact that NGOs were using the label ‘African’ to attract funding without a genuine regard to the needs and aspiration of Africans. African leaders complained that ‘the label “African” will achieve funding, but the “African” label is not strictly adhered to when the work is apportioned’ (Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock 2002, p. 193). Thus, understanding where power lies in terms of resources is important in analysing whether partnership enables empowerment or constrains it. The disproportionate use of power by NGOs in a partnership can deny African communities’ involvement in the decision-making process. It can also sway the balance of power away from the community group and create a sense of powerlessness.

The partnerships between ACCSA and several NGOs were significantly different from the case discussed above. ACCSA was able to create partnerships that were mutually beneficial. These partnership arrangements were instrumental in enabling the community group to share resources and responsibilities with NGOs (its partners) and access more government resources. These partnership arrangements facilitated communication between ACCSA and government agencies and enabled the community group to leverage the skills of its partners to manage funds at the initial stages of its development. ACCSA’s collaboration with external institutions created mutual respect and trust that were vital for the community group to create a viable organisation that can lobby politicians and government agencies effectively, thereby
facilitating the empowerment of its members. As the chair of ACCSA points out, ACCSA leveraged its partnership with MRCSA to access Settlement Grants Program (SGP) funding at the initial stage of its development.

When we wanted to address the issue of the resettlement, we used our partnership with MRCSA and joined into a consortium. In the consortium, we had to identify what our role was going to be. We applied for SGP program and were funded by DIAC since 2004. In the beginning, our budget was six thousand dollars, but today it is almost half a million. You can see how far we have come, and it is an achievement for us because we have managed to prove to the government that we can be united, we can be accountable and the government can rely on us under self-governance and self-management to provide those services to our community (Interview 039).

Each of these case studies demonstrates that partnerships with NGOs play a significant role in the empowerment of African communities by facilitating access to external resources including government resources. Such partnership is essential to the African communities as government resourcing is crucial to their empowerment.

### 6.1.3 Social incidents

Theories of empowerment indicate that ‘social disturbances’ or ‘the existence of stratification and oppression’ are necessary conditions to initiate the process of empowerment (see Hur 2006). However, there is no mention of the role played by ‘critical social incidents’ in the process of empowerment. A critical social incident is an emotive event or occurrence (for example a violent event, a racial incident, a political act, or assault) that affects a certain community group negatively and draws the attention and mobilises the reaction of the community affected, NGOs, government agencies, media and the broader community. It could be a racially motivated murder of a person of African descent, the perceived or actual maltreatment of such a person by the police, or it could be the act of ‘self-immolation’ to make a statement against oppression as in the case of the ‘Arab Spring.’

Critical social incidents are highly emotive social occurrences that initiate collective action. In the three states where fieldwork was carried out, there were ‘critical social incidents’ which brought the community together and drew the attention of governments, community organisations and professionals to participate in the community empowerment process. In Tasmania, although the ACCT was established long before the incident occurred, the death of a young African Australian of Sudanese descent and his girlfriend sparked action. The subsequent coverage of the event by the local newspaper and the action of the police sparked angry reactions by African community members in Hobart, service
providers and other Tasmanians (ABC 2011; McKay 2011). These events then led to a series of African community meetings and forums in Hobart.

On 22 March 2011, the Mercury reported that two bodies of ‘a 29-year-old Sudanese man and a 24-year-old woman were found at a house in Dynnyrne, near the University of Tasmania, late on Monday, police said’ (ABC 2011). The paper described the two to have been in a relationship and that the female had suffered knife wounds to her body. Subsequent reports identified the names of the two University of Tasmania students. After the incident was reported, the University of Tasmania, cognisant of the fact that the incident would be traumatising to students, staff and community members sent a letter to students on 23 March 2011. The purpose of the letter was to clarify that media reports which stated that the national origin of the alleged accused were not released by the University and to let students know the options for support or assistance they may have if they were affected by the incident. At the same time the University’s Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Student Support Services extended an invitation to all interested African students to a group discussion session. This informal discussion forum was organised to allow students to talk about the incident, discuss any concerns or impact from the incident, and develop strategies for ensuring students felt well-supported to address these impacts.

Several African and other students attended the meeting and expressed their concerns and feelings related to how the police and the media had reported the incident. Students expressed their concerns about the choice of photos and the heavy emphasis placed on ethnicity in the reporting. Firstly, the students were unhappy that the Mercury used one photo in which the deceased was photographed wearing a T-shirt reading ‘black power.’ The choice of the photo was considered as an intentional act by the newspaper to incite hatred against people of African descent in Tasmania. Secondly the fact that the deceased was represented as ‘Sudanese man’ in the paper was also discussed extensively by the students. They reasoned that by identifying the deceased as ‘Sudanese’ instead of Australian, the newspaper was making the incident ethnocentric. Although subsequent stories tried to rectify some of the negative coverage by including some stories from the Sudanese community perspective, African community members felt anxious, and the case was taken up by the ACCT who called for a community meeting.

The ACCT began to work in collaboration with the MRC in Hobart, and a series of meetings were held. This incident became the central focus of the work of ACCT and MRC for over nine months and was instrumental in bringing various members of the ACCT to work

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7 Mercury is the local newspaper in Hobart, Tasmania
together regularly. It also shaped the ACCT as an organisation at this formative stage of its development. Meetings were regularly held and issues broader than the incident including media representation of African people, the capacity of the police to work with African communities, issues around housing and employment were identified. These led the ACCT to set up various committees to work on these issues. In addition, the MRC and ACCT organised a public forum to raise and discuss some of the community concerns with government agencies and service providers. Overall, the social incident which created cohesion and consensus not only focused on the immediate concern of the community group, but was also the catalyst to further action and participation.

The incident was the catalyst that created the forum that provided an opportunity for representatives of the media, the police, other government institutions and NGOs to discuss wide-ranging issues that affected the African communities in Tasmania. Representatives of the media presented the outcomes of discussions held with African community groups and proposed how they would like to work with the African community in the future. The Tasmanian police, who were at the centre of the saga, also gave their account of what went wrong and what needed to be done to prevent such escalation in the future. On her part, the Minister for Community Development, Cassey O’Connor, talked about some state government initiatives that were designed to help the African communities in Tasmania. In essence, the incident drew the attention of all actors to the wide-ranging concerns of the African community and forced them to be part of the solution. This experience was empowering to the ACCT and its members in Tasmania and created the impetus for the community to demand change.

Some of the changes sought included the consideration of the appointment of an African Liaison Police Officer and the creation of the Multicultural Friends of Parliament. The Multicultural Friends of Parliament (MFOP) was established by the State Minister for Community Development to create opportunities for African and other CALD communities and their members to interact with parliamentarians and advocate for their communities. The MFOP created opportunities for both African community members and parliamentarians to work together on programs that help the African communities.

Critical social incidents and the actions that followed gave the ACCT form and purpose and brought the community together. It was not different in South Australia; a social incident was catalytic in creating community cohesion among African communities. As one of the community leaders recounts:
The issue [incident] was the occasion that helped African communities in South Australia to develop. As they say ‘when bad things happen good things come out of it.’ A Sudanese boy was stabbed by another Sudanese in Greenfield Street, and that issue attracted substantial interest from government and communities. It created a situation where communities and the government began to work together to stop this kind of things from happening again. Meetings after meetings were held to see how people can help prevent this. On top of this, there was another stabbing where another Sudanese died, this time the incident was between a Sudanese and another fellow, an Australian, you know what I mean. These incidents attracted huge community interest, and the government began to work directly with the Sudanese community and other African communities (Interview 040).

These cases demonstrate that critical social incidents not only initiated community empowerment processes but also strengthened collective belonging, involvement and ultimately collective action. Social incidents acted as conditions that influenced the empowerment of a community group in three ways. Firstly, critical social incidents enhanced community cohesion and collective belonging by creating opportunities for community members to be part of a social network and to identify with other members of the network (Boehm & Staples 2004; Itzhaky & York 2000). Secondly, critical social incidents increased the involvement of community members in collective activities. Several community members joined community leaders and took part in community activities or events that led to effecting change. Finally, those who were involved took necessary collective action to overcome some of the obstacles to attain social change (Staples 1990).

Critical social incidents served as catalytic conditions that facilitate the empowerment of African communities by drawing external and internal actors (government, community members, NGOs and others) to participate in the affairs of the African communities. Critical social incidents also created an amicable social environment for all parties to work together to recognise and to remove barriers that create disadvantage. In all the cases discussed above, these incidents led African communities and NGOs to work together to remove barriers and go beyond the immediate cause of the incident by attracting goodwill from the government and other concerned bodies. The frequency and intensity of interaction among the several actors increased when there were critical social incidents that attracted some reaction from the community groups. Critical social incidents can therefore be instrumental in enabling disadvantaged communities to attain their goals, by increasing commitment and goodwill of community members and external actors alike.
6.1.4 Conflict and consensus building

Community formation, consensus building and organising—‘coming together’—have never been easy for the African communities in Australia. Even when they organised themselves well to create a common platform to work from and build their communities, there was no guarantee that their community would be void of conflict and division. As Friedmann (1992, p. 7) notes, communities are not

...necessarily gemeinschaftlich, even when they take part in a moral economy based on reciprocity and trust. Many fault lines run through both rural and urban communities: religious, ethnic, social class, caste and linguistic.

These fault lines are magnified in the African communities, the majority of whom were forcibly displaced from their countries of origin. Conflict is endemic to migrant and refugee communities which have different social, cultural, ethnic and political backgrounds.

Some of these fault lines appear along ethnicity and politics in the country-of-origin. The majority of ethnically and country-of-origin-based community groups were observed entertaining political issues related to their countries-of-origin, which in many cases, were sources of internal conflict. Throughout the fieldwork period and my candidature, I noticed that the more community groups focused on political affairs of its country-of-origin, the higher the likelihood of internal conflict within the community. Such a conflict was observed to be high in ethnically and country-of-origin-based community groups whose countries of origin were going through ethnic and political conflicts. As political divisions and conflict intensified in the countries of origin, these conflicts were brought to Australia through personal communication and exchanges with relatives and friends in Africa and through the various media outlets, and enacted here in Australia.

The information received from outsiders (those in the country of origin) is accepted by the community members in Australia as fact, and such information is used to either alienate or in some cases verbally attack those who belong to an ethnic group that is alleged to be perpetrators of the conflict in the country of origin. As a result, the contestations of who should be inside ‘the community’ and who is to be excluded from it becomes the prime preoccupation of these community groups, and it often results in further division and conflict. As Bauman (2001, p. 13) notes ‘the sameness [that keeps the community together] evaporates once the communication between its insiders and the world outside becomes more intense and carries more weight than the mutual exchanges of the insiders’.
For example, the Congolese community in South Australia was divided because of disagreement over political affairs back in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2009. The Ethiopian communities in the three states were also divided for similar reasons. A focus on political affairs of the country-of-origin was not the only fault line in the African communities studied. Differences in opinions, priorities and goals or what needs to be achieved by the group also contributed to internal conflicts. During the fieldwork in South Australia, the South Sudanese Community Association of South Australia (SCASA) was embroiled in internal conflict. The SCASA is comprised of 22 ethnic-based South Sudanese community groups. Prior to the conflict, SCASA had enjoyed a certain level of success in creating cohesion among the different Sudanese ethnic groups and were also able to secure SGP funding from DIAC amounting to $200,000 over three years. Through this funding, they were able to employ three of their community members and run settlement services for their community.

However, leaders of some ethnically-based groups within the Sudanese community did not agree with how the organisation was run, and this led to some bickering and ultimately forced a change in office bearers. New leaders were elected who had different ideas as to how SCASA should be managed, and resources provided by DIAC should be used. One leader reasoned that disbursing funds to different ethnically-based community groups to spend it the way they saw fit was the best way to use DIAC funds. The change in leaders and the instability concerned the funding agency, which decided to move the funding and associated service and workers to ACCSA. The change created further tension and made the smooth handover of leadership from the outgoing office bearers to the incoming office bearers difficult, the issue remained unresolved at the time of the fieldwork in South Australia.

There were also similar conflicts and disagreements within the Congolese, Ethiopian, Liberian and Somali community groups. These community groups were caught up in wrangles that were personal, political and ideological. While some conflicts arose from differences in individual preferences of leaders, others were caused by differences in values and ideologies of people within the community groups. As one manager of an NGO put it:

… these [internal conflicts] are to be expected, we know that the groups are not necessarily homogenous in terms of politics, and they do not trust each other. Why should we think that they should leave all the differences behind and unite with each other? They have differences, and that will be the case (Fieldnote, 19 September 2011).
There were internal conflicts among group members, some of which led to the division in the community groups while others were resolved within the group. Hence the act of coming together and forming a community does not necessarily preclude conflict or even indicate the complete resolution of these inherent conflicts, it is rather an indication that they had identified the presence of common binding factors that the community can work from. These common binding factors could be common interests, challenges, disadvantage, culture and country-of-origin or ethnicity. It is also worth noting that the binding factor could be temporary or long-term. Thus, the creation and continuation of the group could be dependent on the longevity of such binding factors. For example, the Somali community in South Australia was divided among several country-of-origin-based groups that were antagonistic to each other due to conflict and disagreements that were mainly based on tribal differences. However, after several discussions, the different groups decided to work together and established a single country-of-origin-based community group that brought them together in 2010.

Although conflicts in the African communities are not desirable, they are a ‘necessary evil’ and can be considered as part of the ritual of consensus building. Community groups were regularly meeting to resolve conflicts and disagreements and work on issues that mattered to them. As a Somali community leader recounted, the process through which the community went to resolve the conflict was necessary for his community to identify issues and find common ground. He said:

… our people do not have the same idea; they come from different tribes, but now through various discussions and negotiations our community members knew that unity was essential if we were going to achieve our goals. There are still problems, but we can resolve them with the help of our people (Interview 038).

There is recognition by the leader that differences will always exist, so do the intention to look for common ground that creates community cohesion. The above example and other cases observed demonstrate that in community empowerment, community conflicts can be considered as processional elements of consensus building that act as lynchpins to sustain the process of creating a stable community rather than disruptive and negative elements (Cox, Cooper & Adepoju 1999). In the majority of cases observed, internal conflicts served as means that exposed issues on which consensus was not reached and gave the community groups an opportunity to work together to find ways to resolve these conflicts. In other words, conflicts are the telling sign that there are issues that needed to be resolved to build consensus in the community.

To put it in another community leader’s own words:
I know that there are more issues and conflicts with our communities. However, I believe that these issues and conflicts are what brought people together. People are more driven to work together when they have problems and need to work out a solution. It is unfortunate, but this is the reality. We work together when there are issues and conflicts. So all these things, I mean conflicts and social issues brought people together (Interview 035).

The above excerpt shows that it is possible to understand conflicts in communities as points of differences where consensus has not been reached. It also shows that conflicts and other issues can be understood as conditions that facilitate empowerment. Thus, looking at internal community conflicts as rituals in consensus building offers the opportunity to harness and refocus community energy that exists around conflicts to build consensus and community action. The source of the conflict could be a starting point around which communities can build consensus to organise and mobilise themselves to achieve their goals.

6.2 Resources

Resources are often drawn from human, cultural, social, political and economic capital and used to attain empowerment by producing community benefit and accomplishing community goals. Several resources are likely to enable the empowerment of African communities. This study has demonstrated that refugee experiences, community knowhow and skills, cultural resources, community leadership, external financial resources and assets are resources that were used by African communities to produce community benefit and attain community goals.

6.2.1 Refugees experiences

In Chapter V, I presented refugee experiences as one of the underlying factors that affect the formation of community groups. However, as an experience that affects the behaviour of people, refugee experiences can also serve as a resource not only influencing community formation but also action. Some of the well-organised communities observed were those who had well-established organisational structures forged by refugee experience in refugee camps and countries of asylum. The Burundian community in South Australia was a community mainly forged by refugee experience. In refugee camps members of the community were able to form several community organisation structures such as choirs, dance groups and churches. These organisational structures were successfully recreated here in Australia, and their recreational activities provided the
means to build cohesion and the solidarity the community needed to achieve collective
goals through action.

Refugee experiences also provided an opportunity for community groups to create
solidarity and commitment because of the perceived disadvantage and sense of
powerlessness it created. The dissatisfactions that refugee experiences created due to the
gap between community aspiration and the challenges faced in realising it become the
basis for a community group to work together. Refugee experiences are instrumental in
creating resolve and resilience in the community that is necessary to obtain resources and
develop abilities to achievement one’s life goals.

The mobilisation of resilience, resolve and will, which is forged through the refugee
experience, acts as a resource to facilitate community empowerment in Australia. The
lived experiences of refugees, in most cases, created resilience in communities that
provided emotional strength to pursue their goals. However, the impact of refugee
experience was not always positive. Structural changes that occurred due to the refugee
experiences and migration could undermine the effort of these communities to build
healthy communities. The institutions that underpinned the relationship among community
members that belong, say, to a country-of-origin, in the past, no longer exist. Thus,
interacting with new institutional arrangements disturbed the established social order and
the values that these communities developed through their refugee experiences and
created a sense of inadequacy and loss instead of confidence in their capacity for action.

6.2.2 Community knowhow and skills

Community empowerment as a state of affairs existed when members of a community feel
empowered to achieve their self-determined goals with some measure of control over the
processes and strategies that enable them achieve their goals (Sadan 1997). This
suggests the need for a community to have a minimum level of ability and resources to
initiate change. Community knowhow and skills are amongst the resources that are
necessary to attain empowerment in the community. In all the communities studied, the
knowhow and skills of individual members were considered by those I interviewed as the
most important resources that enabled the communities to attain their own goals. They
reported that community knowhow and skills were resources that enabled increased
control over decisions important to community members. As human resources, community
knowhow and skills also determined how a community responded to the challenge, and as
Zimmerman (2000) points out, a community that can respond to challenges and provide an
opportunity for its members to participate in society is an empowered community.
6.2.3 Culture

Culture was observed to play a significant role in the empowerment of the African communities studied in many ways. It provided the resources necessary for community cohesion, and it served as a binding factor to bring the community together. Many of the African community members felt that they had the same norms, ethos and way of thinking that creates a sense of community. Culture served as social glue that bound the community together by providing a sense of belonging that was necessary for the attainment of empowerment. It created a sense of feeling and being part of a social network. Culture

…consists of the values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created, shared, and transformed by a group of people bound together by a common history, ..., language, social class, and religion (Nieto 2000, p. 139).

Culture not only influenced less tangible indicators such as attitudes, values, and manners, but also tangibles attributes such as dress, music, dance, cuisine and artefacts. These tangible cultural expressions were exchanged in the market place as resources and commodities. Cultural resources also enhanced the empowerment of African communities by creating opportunities for community members to create new businesses and employ their peers. In the suburb of Footscray in Melbourne, Africans have been able to open restaurants and shops that retail, cultural products such as African artefacts, clothes and the like. These businesses have created job opportunities for several African community members.

6.2.4 Community leaders as resources

In section 6.1.1, I have presented community organisation and leadership as a condition that facilitated the empowerment of African communities. Community leaders can also serve as human resources that can be used to attain empowerment by producing community benefits and accomplishing community goals. As discussed above, leaders played a crucial role in the empowerment of their communities by creating direction and structure for participation, taking responsibility for the actions of the group and facilitating the resolution of conflict within the group. Decisions facilitated and made by community leaders made a significant contribution to the empowerment of their communities. This is consistent with Laverack’s (2001) idea of leadership as a key componential domain of empowerment.
Many of the community leaders observed invested time and energy in the community to create awareness around common issues and mobilised their communities to achieve common goals. They also played a key role in enabling their community groups to access resources from external institutions. As observed in the fieldwork, the difference between African community organisations can mainly be attributed to differences in community leadership. Without the effort of resourceful and passionate leaders, initiatives in creating and mobilising grassroots community groups never got far beyond the first get-together or registration as an incorporated association, as can be noted from defunct organisations such as the ACCV, that community members noted were lacking in leadership. As one of the former founders noted,

Although everyone was enthusiastic to establish a community council, once it was registered we [leaders] were all busy, and no one took the time to take the organisation to the next level and slowly we all abandoned the organisation (Interview 053).

African community leaders often served as volunteers, and it was their effort and resourcefulness that sustained and supported the community effort in achieving community goals.

6.2.5 Finance and assets

The literature indicates that the attainment of empowerment is conditional on the existence of a minimum level of expertise and resources (see Sadan 1997; Wrong 1979). This suggests that the availability of resources and the ability of that community to make use of those resources determine the empowerment of a community group. Within the African communities studied, the ability of a community group to act and influence its own future was highly related to the availability of financial resources and assets it can access. That means the less accessible the resources, the less able a community group to influence the social structure.

In all the case studies, African community organisations were able to access financial resources from governments and other institutions, which has played a significant role in enabling African communities to achieve their own goals. African communities empowered themselves by accessing external financial resources and creating assets. Much of the external resources that the communities mobilised to achieve their collective goals were sourced from government funding. Governments in Australia provided financial resources through several policy instruments (see Chapters VI & VII). Using these instruments African communities accessed financial support directly or indirectly to attain their own goals.
For example, ACCSA was funded by the South Australian and Australian Governments to run its settlement program. The availability of these resources and ACCSA’s ability to obtain these financial resources have been instrumental in establishing the African community centre in Adelaide, which has played a key role in creating a sense of belonging and involvement among the diverse African community groups in South Australia. It has also created a new sense of hope and control over their organisation.

This was not an isolated case. In Victoria, ATT was able to obtain Victorian government resources and run a successful community leadership program for African community leaders. In Tasmania, ACCT was able to use financial resources that it obtained from DIAC to build its capacity by setting up an office and employing part-time staff to support the activities of the community organisation. In general, the availability and subsequent access to financial resources by African communities have played a significant role in enabling these communities to attain their own goals.

However, the majority of government funding for African communities were accessed indirectly through NGOs. For this reason, African community leaders interviewed were wary about government resources provided directly to NGOs on their behalf. There was also a general expression of frustration that NGOs only use the settlement needs of Africans as a means to acquire funding and do not necessarily work with the African communities collaboratively, once they acquire the resources. Other researchers have also noted that Africans had growing antipathy towards government funding going to NGOs on their behalf (Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock 2002).

Asset creation and enterprise development were also essential resources that facilitated the attainment of empowerment. During the fieldwork, ACCSA was trying to buy its own community centre to service its members. The leaders believed that having its own property would enable ACCSA and the African communities in South Australia to have more negotiating power with businesses and governments and to provide the resource necessary for community members to build their own businesses. They also reasoned that an asset such as a property would enable ACCSA to generate collective income for a range of member community groups to implement programs that support the empowerment of their members.

In Victoria, some African religious organisations were noted to have built reasonable asset bases. For example, two religious groups of the Ethiopian community own their own worship places. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Zion Church, a Pentecostal Church, both had reasonably sized buildings that they used for worship, meetings and to educate
their children and youth. Although the focus of this study is not on religious African organisations, it should be noted that African communities organised around religion were able to mobilise more resources and support for their own activities than other forms of community organisations. The capacity of these community groups to build assets could be attributed to the community cohesion and level of commitment driven from religious values.

In Tasmania although there were earlier attempts to create an asset base through Afritas and later the Ethiopian Community restaurant as discussed in chapter IV, these enterprises did not last long. However, the belief that the community needs to create its own resource base is widespread in the communities. The majority of the community leaders interviewed were of the opinion that building an asset base that enables the community to raise its own funds and employ its own members is essential in facilitating the empowerment of communities.

6.3 Structures

As indicated in the Introductory Chapter and the literature review, community empowerment is a feature of democracy expressed through citizen participation (see Bennett 2003; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998). Thus, it is assumed that normative practices of community empowerment are embedded in a democratic system and that representative democracy authorises empowerment. In this sense, as a social structure, democracy is expected to enable the empowerment of the community by providing an opportunity for disadvantaged communities to participate in the decision-making process. However, Sadan (1997) suggests that in a democratic structure, it is a strategy employed within the structure that is more crucial in enabling or constraining the empowerment of a community than the structure itself.

Structure refers to patterned rules and resources that actors draw upon as they produce and reproduce society in their activities (Giddens 1982). These include rules and resources involving human action such as the relationships within the African communities, with others and institutionalised norms or frameworks that structure the actions of African community groups. As discussed in Chapter II, structure can either facilitate or constrain the actions of a community; structure can also be changed or affected through the actions of a community group. Given this understanding, government rules, policies and strategies can be considered as structures. In this section, examples of rules and policy instruments and strategies that were observed to affect the empowerment of the African communities...
will be presented. These include the Association Incorporation Acts, settlement and multicultural policies and programs.

### 6.3.1 The Association Incorporation Acts

The Association Incorporation Acts in each state are similar, and they were designed to influence and control the activities of community based groups by providing a legal structure through which they can be governed. It can be argued that there are advantages to being incorporated as an incorporated association can operate regardless of changes to its membership, accept gifts and donations, enter into contracts, apply for government grants, and solicit for charitable donations. Another view would suggest that governments’ interest in creating a legal identity around community groups is to ensure that it has control over the activities of community-based groups. This is evident when one looks in depth into how the rules in the legislation affect the activities of the incorporated association.

According to the *Tasmanian Associations Incorporation Act 1964*, community based groups have to be registered by the Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading to be not-for-profit Incorporated Associations. In order to register, they have to create an organisational structure and constitution. For registration, a community-based group will have to call a meeting of its members and decide who will fill the roles of the Committee (Secretary, Public Officer, President, and Treasurer), vote upon and approve the association’s name, approve the constitution or adopt rules. These requirements can alter the structure of the organisation, and the activities carried out. Once incorporated, associations have to lodge an Annual Return with Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading, which includes income and expenditure statement, a list of names and residential addresses of the committee members, and the Auditor's Report confirming the accuracy of the income and expenditure statement.

All incorporated organisations in Australia have to follow these rules and the Association Incorporation Acts do provide the protection of limited liability that is helpful. However, evidence from this study demonstrates that the Acts can also distort what a community group otherwise wants to do. It is clear that these rules and norms were created by government to influence the behaviour of community based groups and to control their activities. The Acts and associated rules influenced how African communities organised themselves and managed their day-to-day activities. The three case study organisations, which were all incorporated, had to adopt a structure that was commensurate to the expectation of the model rules provided in the Association Incorporation Acts in each state.
They were also governed by these Acts and hence had to abide by the rules of these Acts when conducting their day-to-day activities.

**6.3.2 Settlement policies and programs**

From the perspectives of the Australian Government, the settlement policy is intended to promote economic and social benefits of migration. The policy aims to address the needs of new arrivals by developing the knowledge and skills they need to become active and independent participants and by enabling governments and society to be responsive to the cultural, linguistic and religious diversity of migrants (DIAC 2012). The settlement policy guides some of the programs and initiatives that enable governments to provide support to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants directly or indirectly.

Each year the Australian Government settles thousands of refugees and humanitarian entrants through its Offshore Humanitarian Program. To support the settlement of these entrants, the Australian Government provides grants programs through a competitive funding process. These programs are expected to help refugees and migrants settle successfully and connect with the broader community. These programs are expected to create favourable structures in which African communities can build their community by accessing services. However, the structure and function of these services are very complex, and the outcomes may not always enable African communities to achieve their goals (Nsubuga-Kyobe & Dimock 2002). As discussed in the case studies in Chapter IV, some African community members find the settlement services hard to negotiate. Community leaders interviewed expressed their concern that the hierarchy created by subcontracting settlement programs created barriers for their communities to raise and discuss community issues directly with government agencies.

Secondly these programs were designed to respond to the needs of disadvantaged migrant communities by providing resources to connect with the broader community. However, as pointed out by many of the community leaders interviewed, if these programs were to succeed and support the settlement of Africans, the broader community would have to connect with African communities. Perhaps this is better summed up in the following response from a community leader in Adelaide when asked about the current settlement programs.
We are happy for the government to help us through the various programs, you know. However, you cannot make a stable and peaceful home in someone’s backyard without them agreeing for you to be part of their neighbourhood. I think they need to create opportunities for the Australian community to know us better instead of trying to help us to learn the way things work in Australia all the time (Interview 023).

During the fieldwork, several NGOs were funded in the three states by DIAC through the settlement policy. DIAC funds several programs including the AMEP, HSS, SGP and Complex Case Support Program (CCS).

AMEP is a program that enables adult migrants, including Africans, who hold a permanent visa to learn English with an AMEP service provider (NGO). Access to AMEP also extends to some temporary visa holders as specified in a legislative instrument for ‘English Courses for Holders of Certain Temporary Visas.’ As part of the program, the majority of adult members of the African community groups are entitled to 510 hours of English lessons to enable them achieve functional English. Although this program is useful in the empowerment of African communities, evaluations of the program show that Africans are disadvantaged due to the way the program is carried out.

The HSS is designed to assist humanitarian entrants in their early settlement period. The HSS program focuses on capacity building; building community confidence and ability to participate economically and socially. It is intended to equip humanitarian entrants with the knowledge and skills they need to access services. The majority of African community members had accessed HSS at the early stage of their settlement. Support through the HSS is often tailored to individual needs, including the specific needs of young people.

Services provided through a coordinated case management approach under the HSS program include on-arrival reception and induction, assistance with locating short term and long term accommodation, information about and referral to mainstream agencies and to other settlement and community programs and onshore orientation program. As indicated above, the majority of African humanitarian entrants have participated in this program.

The CCS is a program that delivers specialised and intensive case management services to humanitarian entrants with special needs. CCS is specifically targeted at supporting clients whose needs extend beyond the scope of other settlement services, such as the HSS program and the SGP. It is designed to work in partnership with settlement and mainstream services to address barriers that humanitarian entrants face in settling in Australia.
CCS services are delivered by a number of organisations across Australia to refugee entrants, Special Humanitarian Program entrants, and protection visa holders as well as persons who hold or have held a Temporary Protection visa. Community members who are supported by CCS have several critical needs that require access to multiple services including mental health (including torture and trauma services), physical health, family violence intervention, personal, grief or family relationship counselling, special services for children or youth, support to manage accommodation, financial or legal issues. Although the African community leaders interviewed felt that the program ought to be implemented in collaboration with African community organisations, it was often presented as an individualised program without community participation.

6.3.3 Multicultural policies and programs

The Australian multicultural policy is another policy instrument that influences the empowerment of African community groups. It is driven particularly by the acknowledgement that Australia is a multicultural country with diverse cultural groups and that there is a need to respect and promote cultural, religious and linguistic diversity in the society (DIAC 2011). The policy is designed to foster harmony among diverse cultural groups and to provide a platform for people from diverse cultural backgrounds to practise and share their cultural traditions and languages (DIAC 2011). The policy also commits the Australian government to ensure that people from CALD backgrounds can access public services equitably (DIAC 2011).

Key actions of this policy have been observed to create structures for African communities to attain their goals by providing guidelines and resources through several programs and strategies. These include the establishment of the Australian Multicultural Council, National Anti-Racism Partnership and Strategy, Strengthening Access and Equity, Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants, and Multicultural Youth Sports Partnership Program. However, as examples, I will demonstrate how programs such as the Multicultural Arts Funding Grants (MAFG) and the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP) contributed to the empowerment of African communities.

6.3.3.1 Multicultural Arts Funding Grants

One of the key initiatives of the Multicultural Policy launched in February 2011 was to provide funding for Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grants (MAFG). The main objective of the MAFG was to encourage social cohesion and mutual understanding by providing opportunities for Australians from different backgrounds to come together and share and
experience different cultural heritages and traditions. As part of this funding, DIAC provided funding of up to $5000 to various organisations in the year 2011-2012, to hold several events.

In Tasmania, DIAC funded the Glenorchy City Council (local government) to organise the ‘Moonah Taste of the World Festival (MTWF).’ The MTWF is a one-day event offering food stalls with a wide variety of cuisines supported by images depicting cultural practices relating to the preparation and presentation of food distinctly. The festival was intended to attract diverse community groups particularly those from new and emerging communities to participate. The Moonah Taste of the World Festival 2012 was held on Sunday 25 March. In the 2012 MTWF, several African community groups and their members participated in the event through music and dancing, cooking demonstrations, craft and other activities.

The Madi Community Association of Tasmania, one of the ethnically-based community groups that belong to the Sudanese community and is a member of the ACCT, was also funded by the MAFG to organise the Madi cultural festival. By accessing resources from MAFG, the community hosted the Madi Cultural Festival, which was used as a vehicle to engage the host community with the Madi community through cultural dance, food and music as well as performances from other new and emerging communities.

In Victoria, events that showcase cultural diversity were funded and carried out. The Greater Shepparton City Council in Victoria was provided with a grant of $3,000 to hold a Refugee Week Lunch and Celebration in Shepparton. It is reported that the one-day festival showcased talents of emerging local performers from diverse backgrounds (including Africans). The festival was also instrumental in providing an opportunity for African and other CALD community groups to provide multicultural cuisine, and share their refugee experiences. The South Sudanese Community of Australia was also provided with $5,000 in grants to celebrate South Sudan Independence in Melbourne. The celebration of the independence of South Sudan brought other African communities and the wider community together.

6.3.3.2 Diversity and Social Cohesion Program

The Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP) is an Australian Government initiative that evolved from the 'Living in Harmony’ program established in 1998. The program is a major component of the Government's approach to cultural diversity, and its principal objectives include the cultivation of the culture of respect among Australians; promoting cultural diversity in society and the fair treatment of all Australians; creating opportunities
for people to participate equitably and to create a sense of belonging through inclusion, and building the capacity of disadvantaged communities.

The DSCP provided funds to several organisations that met the criteria set by the department to carry out projects. The department funded several projects that had direct or indirect effects on the empowerment of African communities in the three states in the fiscal years 2010-11 and 2011-12. Some of these projects are listed below.

In Tasmania, the DSCP funded the Glenorchy City Council for the Young Women's Multicultural Leadership Program. The program provided an opportunity for several young African women to participate in training aimed at improving leadership skills. It also allowed them to engage with other young women from CALD background. The participants in the program were from the Afghani, Congolese, Burundi, Sudanese, Malawi, Cambodian, Burmese, Nepalese and mainstream Australian cultural backgrounds. The program conveners emphasised that the cultural diversity within the participants was essential to the success of the program to foster social inclusion. The ACCT was also granted a fund to enable it to work to improve the link between African community groups in the north and the south of the state. The project aim was to build the capacity of leaders from the African communities in Tasmania to participate in working groups and more adequately represent the African community with particular emphasis on engaging women and the elderly. The project was also expected to develop better relationships with the police and the media and promote the African communities by telling positive stories to increase understanding within the wider community.

In South Australia MRCSA and MYSA were funded by the DSCP. The MRCSA was funded for their ‘Hand in Hand – Visualising our place in Australia’ project in Adelaide. Through this project, they were able to bring young people of refugee background (particularly Africans) and indigenous youth together through the production of an album of visual dialogue between themselves. MYSA organised an event called ‘Cultures of Taste’ in Adelaide that was designed to address racism in schools through early intervention and cross-cultural awareness program. This project targeted young people in selected South Australian schools, in class groups; year 8, 9 and 10 between the ages of 12 and 16. Schools were assisted by MYSA to develop presentations that capture cultural diversity using food, arts and music. Workshops were made available for interested schools in such subjects as anti-bullying and change management and a selection of the young people’s work was showcased in Harmony Day celebrations.
In Victoria, there were several organisations funded through the program. The Centre for Cultural Partnerships was funded for its African Voices of Carlton project in Southbank. The project’s aim was to foster inter-cultural dialogue and cultural awareness between the Horn of Africa (HOA) Carlton Estate residents and the wider Carlton community. The project was also expected to create a partnership between the University of Melbourne and the HOA Community Network and the Carlton Estate HOA community in order to address the needs of the community. The DSCP also funded the Centre for Dialogue, La Trobe University for its Inter Community ‘Dialogue for Social Cohesion’ project in Bundoora. The project conducted inter-cultural dialogue among 15 community leaders, including African community leaders. Mission Australia was funded for their ‘Richmond Respect Project’ in Melbourne. The project intended to address the increasing incidence of violence in the North Richmond Housing Estate between Vietnamese and African youths. The project was aimed at addressing the issue of social disharmony and promoting cohesion by engaging with young people to find positive life pathways and support connection with the broader community.

6.4 Summary and discussion

This chapter has responded to the third research question – what are the conditions, resources and structures that contribute to the attainment of empowerment? The findings from these case studies have highlighted that the empowerment of a community group is dependent on the prevailing social conditions, resources and structures. Social conditions such as community organisation and leadership, community partnership and collaboration, social incidents and conflicts contribute to the way African communities behave, and facilitate processes of empowerment. Resources such as refugee experience, community know-how and skills, culture, community leadership, finance and assets were also instrumental in attaining empowerment among African communities by producing some community benefit and accomplishing community goals.

One of the key findings of this chapter is that critical social incidents serve as catalytic conditions that facilitate the empowerment of African communities by drawing external and internal actors to participate in the affairs of the African communities. However, the literature across disciplines seems to assume that community empowerment is attained through rational, systematic and organised intervention (see for example Banducci, Donovan & Karp 2004; Clark & Morrison 1995; DuBois & Miley 2005; Freire 1973; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Hanisch 1970; Hur 2006; Moser 1993; Parpart, Rai &
The literature ignores the possibility that random, episodic and emotive social incidents can facilitate the empowerment of the community by creating amicable social environment for all actors to work together and interact with each other.

This study has shown that unpredictable, random and highly emotive social incidents can influence actors’ behaviour and facilitate empowerment of the community. Critical social incidents have created a condition whereby resources of external actors are focused on the issue of the African communities and thus provided an opportunity for African communities to attain their goals.

Another important finding in this chapter is that the culture can serve as a resource to empower communities beyond the sense of ‘power as charisma’ as suggested in the literature (Swanson 1973). Cultural resources enabled African communities to participate in the market economy. African communities deployed cultural resources to create restaurants, cultural music and dance groups, African artefact and souvenir shops, and specialist African retail stores. These firms employed and empowered members of the African communities. However, the impact of these culture-based businesses goes beyond employment. They were able to draw the attention of other actors to participate in the activities of African communities and created opportunities for social and political engagement. Members of the broader community who may not necessarily have had particular interest in African communities were able to engage with African communities through cultural interaction and exchange.

In summary, using the conceptual and analytical framework, this chapter has responded to the third research question and demonstrated that prevailing social conditions, resources and structures play important roles in the empowerment of disadvantaged communities. This chapter has also shown that critical social incidents acted as catalytic conditions that facilitate the empowerment of African communities by creating a favourable social environment for all actors to enable African communities achieve their own goals. It has also demonstrated that culture can serve as a resource that African communities could employ to empower themselves. Building on the conceptual and analytical framework and in response to the fourth and fifth research questions, the next chapter will identify the actors in the action arena and present an analysis of their action and interaction and the ensuing empowerment outcomes and change.
Chapter VII

Actors, their Interaction and Change

This Chapter addresses the fourth and fifth research questions – who are involved in bottom-up driven community empowerment, why and how?; and what is the contribution of bottom-up driven community empowerment to wider social change?

This Chapter identifies the various actors involved in the empowerment of African communities and analyses their actions, interactions and the ensuing social change. It provides in-depth analysis of the interactions among the different actors and the institutional formats through which these interactions occur, as well as factors that facilitate and catalyse interactions. It also analyses the patterns of interactions within and across the various institutions in the action arena and the overall outcome of these interactions.

The purpose of the analysis will be to show the power relations of each actor and the factors that influence how actors choose actions and the empowerment outcomes that actuate change in the social system. The main argument of this chapter is that the empowerment of African communities is not only the outcome of the actions of the community groups, but also the outcome of the actions of other external actors and their interactions with the African communities. External actors can play an empowering and a disempowering role depending on the existing power relations, institutional arrangements, the value they attach to their action, the resources they bring to the action situation, and the rules used to structure patterns of interaction.

7.1 Actors of community empowerment

The literature demonstrates that community empowerment is a process of social change predicated on the ability of disadvantaged communities to self-organise and create a community that can determine its own future (Hur 2006; Laverack 2001, 2006; Sadan 1997). However, disadvantaged communities can only determine their own future by changing institutional arrangements that affect them by participating in the affairs of society or by being part of it. In other words, as noted by Narayan (2002), the empowerment of disadvantaged communities is not only predicated on the action of the disempowered communities, but also on the actions of other actors involved and their interactions, rules of legitimation, and structures. The conceptual and analytical framework illustrates that in
analysing the action arena, it is important to identify all actors involved in the community empowerment process and the relations between them in a particular historical setting.

For the purposes of this study, actors are individual or organisational agents who participate in the social space where African communities take collective action to improve their situation (Giddens 1984; Ostrom 2009). In other words, actors are agents who influence the empowerment of African communities through their action and interaction by changing existing institutional arrangements and power relations. Actors assign value to their activities and institutionalise mechanisms to select courses of actions to change existing institutional arrangements and power relations.

In the case of African communities studied, both individual members and outsiders including government and NGOs were instrumental in the empowerment of the community. External actors helped create the institutions, structures, rules, and resources that influence the empowerment process and their interaction define the outcome of the process. For instance, the creation of SGP and associated rules and funds by the Australian Government through DIAC has provided an opportunity for the three case study organisations to use funds from SGP to provide services to their members. By using resources obtained from this program, one of the case study organisations, ACCSA, has also been able to advocate for its members on issues such as housing, health care, education and social assistance.

In the course of the fieldwork, four types of actors were identified: the African communities, governments and government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector namely. However, the engagement of the private sector in the activities of the African communities was insignificant to substantiate a full representation of the private sector as an actor. For this reason, the private sector is excluded from the analysis. The following sub-sections will present the remaining three actors and analyse their roles in the empowerment of the African communities, including their attributes, resources they contributed, their actions and their interaction with other actors. The study will also include identifying emerging patterns of interactions and resultant changes. This analysis will continue in-depth in the next section (section 7.2) to illustrate the patterns of interaction between the different actors.

7.1.1 African communities as actors

The African communities are the primary actors in the action situation in the sense that they recognised the existence of disadvantage and disempowerment in their community and initiated action to improve the situation. African communities ‘came together’ because of
these perceived or actual disadvantages and disempowerment which can be referred to as ‘existing social disturbances’ or ‘frustration’ (Hur 2006; Sadan 1997). Existing disadvantage and feeling of disempowerment served as a basis for African communities to work together on common goals and served as a springboard from which they can mobilise action to improve their situation.

The idea of empowerment and its trajectories carries an embedded assumption that ‘disempowerment’ of some form exist in the community and that it is recognised by members of the community group. The conditions of disadvantage in African communities, as discussed in Chapter IV, arose, as a result, of the complex interplay of factors such as migration and refugee experiences, differences in cultural background and poor education, and as outcomes of current structures and existing social situations in Australia. These conditions of disadvantage were the outcomes of the gap between expectations and achievements in life or aspiration and the challenges faced by African communities to realising them (Hur 2006; Sadan 1997). These conditions of disadvantage created the impression that African communities do not have the abilities and resources to realise their life goals and the way these communities organise themselves to gain access to resources and decisions to attain their own goals.

As shown in the conceptual and analytical framework, these conditions of disadvantage also define the action situation and create conditions for African communities and other actors to work together to change the situation. However, as discussed in Chapters IV and V, disadvantage in one kind of African community group may not necessarily be the same as a disadvantage in another kind of a community group. For this reason, there were notable differences in the type of activities carried out by the different kinds of community groups. In fact, as demonstrated in Chapter V, the structure and rules used by each community group to order their relationships were different.

For example, ethnically, country-of-origin and region-based community groups were organised around cultural and national identity. Thus, their activities were mainly focused on cultural and social issues. On the other hand, pan-African and gender-based community groups were organised around common issues, race and gender and their activities were designed to address socio-economic and political issues. All community groups used community meetings and consultations to build consensus and make decisions, and to order their relationship with other actors and institutions.

Through meetings and consultations, the groups were able to organise themselves to share information and create awareness around challenges and mobilise collective action to
attain empowerment. They held meetings and consultations internally and also participated in meetings and consultations organised by external actors. Meetings and consultations were used for various reasons including organising events and activities such as cultural festivals and National Day celebrations, to discuss challenges and disadvantage in the community, to resolve internal conflicts and to build consensus.

Meetings and consultations were vital to the functioning of the African community groups and their empowerment; meetings were the ‘soul’ of the empowerment process. Community members argued a case, articulated their intentions and built consensus through meetings and consultations. Meetings and consultations created the platform for leaders and other individuals in the community to make their point and organise the community around common issues. Critical decisions that enabled the community to take action were made in meetings. In fact, meetings were not only the genesis of collective action, but in most cases meetings were the embodiment of collective action. For example, actions taken by ACCSA, ACCT, and ATT that had a significant impact on policy were all made in internal meetings and later shared or negotiated with government officials.

African community members also participated in external meetings and consultation organised by NGOs and governments. These external meetings and consultations had different purposes to internal meetings and consultations organised by the African communities. The purpose of external meetings and consultations will be discussed in more detail in section 7.2.1.

7.1.2 Government and government agencies

Governments in Australia were key players in the empowerment or disempowerment of African communities. Governments have the capacity and power to play significant roles in enabling African communities achieve their goals by providing resources, involving the communities in the decision-making process and by legitimising community actions. Thus, they were actors in the empowerment of African communities. As actors, governments used policies and programs as institutional mechanisms through which they ordered their actions and interactions with African communities and NGOs. There were government policies and programs designed by governments in Australia to enable Africans and other disadvantaged communities to create a better future for themselves by creating an environment fit for their social participation (DIAC 2009, 2011, 2012).

As noted in the previous chapter, as part of the Australian Multicultural Policy, DIAC funded the Multicultural Arts and Festivals Grant (MAFG). In Tasmania, the Madi Community
Association of Tasmania (one of the Sudanese community groups and a member of ACCT) was funded through the MAFG in 2012. The association used the funding to organise a cultural festival that showcased Madi dance, food and music. The community group engaged with NGOs, politicians and the local community through this festival. Other projects such as the Young Women Multicultural Leadership Program in Tasmania, the Hand in Hand – Visualising our place project in South Australia and the African Voices of Carlton project in Southbank, Victoria, funded under the Diversity and Social Cohesion Program (DSCP), can also be cited as examples. These initiatives, as discussed in Chapter VI, provide opportunities for African communities to participate in developing leadership skills, addressing racism and fostering inter-cultural dialogue and cultural awareness which contribute to their empowerment.

The Australian Settlement Policy is another instrument used by the Australian government to provide support to African communities. It provided funding for programs such as AMEP, HSS, SGP and CCS. As indicated in Chapter VI, these programs contributed to the empowerment of African communities by providing resources and policy instruments that play a key role in building African communities. The Australian Government’s social inclusion strategy also created an opportunity and support for African communities to participate in economic and social life (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2009). The policy was designed along empowerment principles and recognised disadvantaged communities as key players in social inclusion. Each of the three states included in this study had their own social inclusion strategy to guide activities that were intended to tackle disadvantage. African communities studied had direct contact with programs and activities that were designed to implement these policies. These policies and programs connected NGOs, governments and the African communities.

7.1.3 Non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Australia worked with African communities as settlement and community development services providers. NGOs provided essential information and referral services and support to African and other migrant communities. They facilitated the successful integration of these communities into the wider Australian society and enabled African communities achieve their goals. Thus, they were actors in the empowerment of African communities.

NGOs in Australia are diverse, and they are called not-for-profit organisations (NFPs), charities, non-profits, non-governmental organisations, community and social services organisations, community organisations, voluntary organisations, social welfare
organisations and third sector organisations (Fisher 1997). Their role in the socio-economic landscape is also considerable. It is reported that there are approximately 600,000 NGOs of which around 59,000 are considered to be economically significant with a $43 billion annual contribution to Australia's GDP, and eight per cent of employment in 2006-07 and 4.6 million volunteers working in the sector with annual wage equivalent value of $15 billion (Productivity Commission 2010). According to IBIS World Report, the revenue of these organisations has been increasing by an average of about 3.5% per annum and was expected to reach $105 billion by the year 2011-12 (IBISWorld 2012).

This study is, however, concerned with a subset of organisations called Community and Social Services or Community Organisations which I refer to as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). The choice of the use of the term NGOs is strategic for two reasons. Firstly, using the term NGO makes it easier to differentiate these organisations from and avoid confusion with African community organisations that are formed and operated by the African communities. Secondly, the term NGO has currency in community empowerment and international development literature and hence facilitates better understanding.

The history of these NGOs is interlinked with government funding. As a government report on the Review of Settlement Services for Migrants and Humanitarian Entrants, indicates some of these NGOs were created by the Department of Immigration & Multicultural & Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) to provide migrants with settlement information and to promote community development (DIMIA 2003, p. 224). Following the Galbally Report recommendations in 1978; the Australian Government established program to fund these NGOs (Galbally 1978). The aim was to facilitate community building by providing a space from which migrant communities could work locally and service their needs through various resettlement programs.

The majority of NGOs working with African communities are funded through a settlement program and other funding facilities. These settlement programs are funded by the Australian government to address ‘the needs of new arrivals to help them develop the knowledge and skills they need to become active and independent participants in Australian society’ (DIAC 2012, p. 3). A number of these NGOs provide community development and social services to facilitate a successful integration. NGOs provide basic information and referral services and support community groups in employment, housing, health and other socio-economic services. NGOs also claim to represent disadvantaged communities and advocate on their behalf. In addition, they conduct research on a range of cultural and community issues and consult governments on migrant and community issues.
Whilst these NGOs perform activities that are beneficial to the African communities they work with, their activities were often limited by the terms of their funding (government funding). Some of the activities through which NGOs interacted with African communities and governments were also driven by government policies and associated strategies and programs. This undermines the empowerment process because it forces NGOs to focus on short-term goals to ensure access of funding that may not align with their longer-term vision to promote the empowerment of disadvantaged community groups.

### 7.2 Interactions among different actors of empowerment

African communities in Australia have built strong grassroots community organisations that connect them with each other. The creation of these communities has created a sense of belonging and solidarity that cannot always be translated to more employment, better housing, better education and better access to services unless the self-organisation and action of African communities and their interaction with other actors and institutions provided opportunities to change existing power relations and institutional arrangements. As acknowledged in the conceptual and analytical framework, the empowerment of African communities is premised on the actions and interactions of all actors, their institutions and social networks that order the rules and command resources. In the above section, the three principal actors have been identified and described. The purpose of this section is to understand the patterns of interactions of the various actors including African communities.

To understand the patterns of interactions, and how that relates to the empowerment outcomes, I will start by analysing the institutional formats and arrangements through which interactions occur. These will help reveal the power relations among the different actors, and it will be followed by a discussion of factors that enhance and catalyse the interactions and the patterns of interaction within and across the various institutions and the likely outcomes of these interactions.

#### 7.2.1 Institutional formats through which interactions occurred

African communities, governments and NGOs interacted with each other in many ways. Moreover, there were some formats that were institutionalised by actors as common formats through which they ordered their actions and interactions in light of the empowerment of African communities. The common institutional formats identified in this study include community meetings, training and consultations, partnerships, and grants.
In some cases, these formats were used to enable African communities attain their own goals and hence had an empowering effect. In other cases, these formats were used to impose structural constraints on the capacity of African communities to participate in and influence the decision-making process and hence had disempowering effects. The outcomes of institutional formats utilised were dependent on the contexts of actions and interactions, the value that each actor attached to their actions, the resources each actor brought to the action situation, and the process they used to take action.

7.2.1.1 Community meetings, consultations and trainings

Governments and NGOs often organised community meetings, consultations and trainings to inform, engage and train African community members. These meetings, consultations and trainings had different structures and purposes compared to internal meetings and consultations organised by the African communities, which were used to discuss community issues, resolve internal conflicts and build consensus (see section 7.1). External community meetings and consultations, on the other hand, were institutionalised and organised by external actors (governments and NGOs) to build consensus, provide information and to enforce compliance among African communities; while trainings were held to impart some knowledge and ‘life skills.’ This section will focus on external community meetings, consultations and training as formats through which interactions among the different actors occurred.

During the course of the fieldwork, there were several consultations held by government agencies and NGOs. These included a meeting held to discuss issues around family violence, a consultation held to create consensus around community support to new arrivals, and a meeting/consultation held to enforce compliance among African community members, among others. For example, both in South Australia and Victoria, the Police in collaboration with NGOs organised community meetings to discuss concerns with the African communities regarding altercations between African youth and other youth groups in the area. In Tasmania, similar meetings were held by one of the NGOs funded by the Australian government to provide settlement services. In another case Police, in collaboration with NGOs, organised meetings and workshops to ensure that African communities understand and comply with road rules.

These community meetings and consultations were useful as they provided the community with useful information on legal, political or other matters and provided African community members with the opportunity to meet and express their concerns directly with authorities. However, it should be noted that these community meetings and consultations were also
used to perpetuate dominant forms of power by setting out expectations of certain behaviours that the organisers see as appropriate (Haugaard 2003; Taylor 2011). Community meetings and consultation were organised by those in power to solicit consensus and legitimise their decision rather than involving the African communities in the decision-making process. Governments and NGOs can use practical consciousness knowledge to empower themselves and disempower the African communities by reproducing the social order (Haugaard 2003).

Training events were also other formats through which interactions among the different actors occurred during fieldwork. Training workshops were mainly conducted by NGOs and included parenting workshops, conflict resolution workshops, leadership training, rental property information sessions, law and order information sessions, and other similar trainings. For example, parenting workshop funded by the Australian Government was conducted by one of the NGOs in Tasmania with the aim of equipping African parents with parenting skills. The NGO might have designed the training workshop with good intentions, and the responsible government agency might have funded the training in good faith. However, African communities for whom this training was designed were not consulted to ascertain the need for such training that angered some African community leaders who attended the workshops. The African community leaders argued that the manner in which the training workshop was framed and presented was essentially condescending, paternalistic and disempowering. They pointed out that the workshop was based on an implied lack of parenting skills and that it did not consider African communities’ own values.

African community leaders raised these concerns directly with the NGO and, as a result, workshops were re-designed to foster mutual learning by involving African parents and mainstream Australian parents to discuss common challenges around parenting. The NGO changed its delivery strategy, and these parenting workshops were conducted as experience sharing workshops where mothers and fathers from both cultures—mainstream Anglo-Saxon and African cultures—met to share challenges and strategies used to raise children in Australia. This approach was more empowering as it provided parents from both cultures with the opportunity to learn from each other on equal footing without prejudice. The new approach provided a forum that acknowledged the differences as well as similarities between the two cultural groups and was, therefore, more empowering than the previous approach.

In general, the outcomes of the use of community consultations, meetings and trainings can be empowering or disempowering to African communities depending on the contexts, resources available and values assigned by governments and NGOs to each meeting,
consultation and training. In some cases, community meetings, consultations, and training were used to impose structural constraints on the capacity of African communities to participate in and influence the decision-making process and hence had a disempowering effect. In other cases community meetings, consultations and trainings were used to enable African communities to attain their own goals and hence were empowering.

### 7.2.1.2 Partnerships

In Chapter VI, I have considered community partnership as a condition that facilitated the empowerment of African communities. In this section, I will present partnership as one of the institutional formats through which interactions among the different actors occurred and through which opportunities for African community groups to participate in decision-making and resource sharing could be created (Taylor 2011). The nature of partnerships was observed to shape the patterns of interaction by influencing resources each actor brought to the partnership, the value that each actor attached to the partnership, the relative power of each actor and the process used to manage relationships. Thus, partnerships can be both empowering and disempowering depending on the intentions and relative power of each actor in the partnership and the rules used to materialise the partnership.

For example, ACCSA’s partnership with three NGOs formed the basis for interaction with those NGOs. Expectations and responsibilities were articulated in formal documents that stated what the role of the parties in the partnership would be. The written partnership documents specified that ACCSA is to cooperate with these NGOs in the provision of services to African communities and support the advocacy work on behalf of disadvantaged communities in South Australia. These formal arrangements also created resource-sharing arrangements allowing ACCSA to use MRCSA office spaces among others. It also created opportunities for ACCSA to have day-to-day interactions with these NGOs and influence decisions pertinent to African communities. By entering into meaningful partnerships, ACCSA was able to share certain resources with NGOs and government agencies and influence the decision-making process in those institutions.

Similar formal partnerships were also observed in Tasmania and Victoria. However, the patterns of interactions created through these partnerships varied. For example, ACCT’s partnership arrangement with one NGO in Tasmania (discussed in chapter VI) created a hostile pattern of interaction where the two partners entered into conflict. This behaviour was not necessarily an outcome of the written rules stipulated in the partnership agreement, but the rules used by the NGO to take that course of action and the endorsement of the action by the responsible government agency (see Section 6.1.2).
7.2.1.3 Grants and other financial resources

Governments at all levels often create grants that community groups (including African communities) can access. Governments design grant programs to implement and in some cases impose certain policy positions in society. Thus, grants were accompanied by rules and guidelines that guarantee funds are dispersed for the intended purposes and that the outcomes of the activities carried out align with the policy positions stipulated. On the other side, NGOs access these grants to achieve certain organisational objectives, while African community groups access these funds to create the ability and resources they needed to initiate change (Sadan 1997). In this manner grants and other financial resources acted as institutional formats through which governments interacted with other actors. Depending on the transactions between the rules used to govern grants and the outcomes of actions carried out using these funds, grants can have an empowering or disempowering effect on African communities.

During the fieldwork, several NGOs and community groups were funded by DIAC through its various grant programs including HSS and SGP. Through these programs, among others, the MRSCA in South Australia, Centacare and MRC South and North in Tasmania, and several NGOs in Victoria were funded to help humanitarian entrants and refugees to become self-reliant and participate equitably in Australian society. Whilst these different NGOs had different organisational set-ups and different ways of doing things, the activities carried out by the NGOs funded through these programs include:

- on-arrival reception, assistance and accommodation for humanitarian entrants,
- support and assistance in developing community networks,
- advocacy and community awareness promotion including running information sessions and providing consultancy services to mainstream agencies,
- community leadership training,
- community capacity building through skills training and
- specialist immigration assistance.

The nature of these activities and conditions of associated grants were instrumental in shaping the interaction among African communities, NGOs and governments. The contractual obligations associated and the competitive nature of these government grants often shape the way African communities, NGOs and governments interact with each other in conducting these activities. These interactions were primarily driven by governments who entered into a contractual agreement with NGOs to outsource services to African communities. These agreements maintained power relationships by creating complex
institutional relationships fostered by contractual obligations including the insertion of ‘gag-clauses’ in contracts. These arrangements shaped the way NGOs worked and interacted with African communities and their ability to advocate for these disadvantaged communities. This study has found that these contractual arrangements had created situations where NGOs’ independence and their ability to voice the concerns of African communities were weakened.

For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, in Tasmania leaders of the ACCT reported that one of the NGOs they worked with ignored the ACCT’s request to be included in the Steering Committee for a community project for fear of losing government funding provided for the project. In other cases, NGOs found themselves entering into conflict with other NGOs and African communities they work with and for. Although the activities carried out through these programs were essential for the empowerment of African communities, this study has shown that NGOs’ effort to promote the empowerment of marginalised communities in Australia had been compromised by the structural arrangements through which NGOs access government funding. While both the Australian Government and NGOs aim, in principle, to support the empowerment of disadvantaged communities through their programs, the results from this study show that the outcomes could be to the contrary.

In South Australia, African community leaders reported that two NGOs entered into conflict with each other, and later this conflict spilled over to African communities when one was awarded a competitive tender for SGP, and the other lost its contract. These were NGOs that supported the African communities but as one of the leaders noted ‘they instigated division among Africans instead of working with them and advocating for them’ (Interview 040). This demonstrates how contractual arrangements and processes set by government around grants could shape the interactions of the different actors in the empowerment of African communities.

In addition to such direct division, community leaders also reported that once their community groups started to be well-organised, they were seen by NGOs as competitors and hence were antagonistic. The competitive nature of funding (access to resources) brought them to loggerheads with NGOs that had been working with the community. On the other hand, their relationship with government improved as they were seen as more capable organisations. Therefore, they were able to have direct access to government officials and government funding to support their members in their own right.
In general, these complex interactions were created by the nature and structure of grants that were designed by government policy. Rules established to govern a grant have the ability to influence the action of each actor involved, their interactions and ultimately the outcomes of empowerment. In some cases, grants can empower African community groups by providing the resources they needed to initiate change and attain their goals. In other cases, grants, particularly the rules associated with grants and the way they are managed, can impose structural constraints on the capacity of African communities to participate and hence have disempowering effect. Thus, grants can be used either to empower or disempower communities depending on the policy positions grants serve, the rules designed to manage grants and the outcomes of actions carried out using the grant funds.

7.2.2 Factors that influence the extent to which interactions occur

In the above section, I have demonstrated that there were some common institutional formats that were used by the different actors, African communities, NGOs and governments, to direct their actions and interactions with each other in relation to the empowerment of the African communities. Whilst these institutional formats were used as mechanisms through which interactions occurred, the conceptual and analytical framework developed suggest that as a researcher, I must also look further into the factors that influenced how the different actors selected certain actions to effect change and the occurrence of their interactions to attain empowerment.

A further analysis of the action arena showed that there were other factors that catalyse the actions of the African communities, NGOs and governments and expand the spheres of interactions among the different actors in the empowerment process. These catalytic factors were the organisational strength of the community groups, the external empowering professionals and ‘critical social incidents.’ These catalytic factors enhanced the interactions of the different actors in the empowerment of African communities.

7.2.2.1 Internal organisational capability

Across the three states, African community groups that were well-organised and had competent leadership were able to attract more resources compared to those that were perceived by external actors to be, less capable and less organised. Among the community groups observed, the less capable and less organised had greater need. However, they were also the community groups that were less likely to receive resources. At first glance, this seemed counterintuitive; nonetheless proved the fact that having more capacity and
resources was crucial to the empowerment of the African communities as it increased the bargaining power of these communities. Community groups that had capable leaders established organisational structures and internal financial resources and the bargaining power to interact with and attract external support. They were able to participate in government and NGO decision-making processes as their leaders received various invitations to join different government and NGO decision-making bodies.

This finding is consistent with the literature, which considers the existence of well-developed internal organisational structure as a crucial enabling factor for a community group to mobilise collective action to transform its situation (Hur 2006; Laverack 2001). Having well-developed internal organisational structures within the African communities studied was found to catalyse the actions of the communities themselves and other actors and expand the spheres of interactions among the different actors in the empowerment of African communities. African community groups with established organisational structure were able to create opportunities for individuals within the group to mobilise personal resources and skills necessary to forge inter organisational links and play on the institutional turf of funding bodies and government programs. For example, the Sudanese Community Association of South Australia was funded by DIAC to the order of $250 000 through the SGP and employed three of its members to provide services to its community members. The community leaders reported that this was so because Sudanese community leaders of the time were able to travel to Canberra and convince DIAC officials that they had the ability to operate programs.

In general, capable African community groups were able to command more support and benefit from resources appropriation that came from the notion that they were ‘well-organised’ and hence would be able to use and manage funds wisely and write reports on time. Government agencies and NGOs quickly picked them as winners who would not fail the government or the NGOs which wanted to work with them. It was evident across the three case studies that well-organised communities had more opportunity to interact with governments and NGOs. A similar phenomenon was also reported by Awortwi (2012) in a study conducted in twenty-nine African and Latin American communities. The study showed that communities that had better socio-economic status tend to participate in the development intervention and play a leading role and hence attract more support and benefit from the process compared to those who remove themselves from the arena.
7.2.2.2 The role of external empowering professionals

Analysis of the different community groups within the three case studies has revealed that some African community groups were able to interact with governments and NGOs due to the facilitative role of individual professionals who are not necessarily members of the African communities. These individuals can be called empowering professionals (see Sadan 1997). Empowering professionals include individuals whose profession can be termed as empowering in the sense that they, as individual professionals, apply an analytical approach to enable the empowerment of individuals and communities (Sadan 1997). Empowering professionals may work for and with NGOs and governments.

Empowering professionals played a key facilitative role in the empowerment of some African community groups by catalysing actions of the various actors and enhancing the interactions among the actors. They were observed to do so by creating opportunities for African community groups to work with governments and NGOs and access resources to attain empowerment. Some empowering professionals were also observed to intervene methodically by catalysing and encouraging processes of individual and community empowerment through community training and capacity building. They facilitated the empowerment of African communities by using their skills to create supporting processes, provide an environment for self-awareness, and organise activities that enabled people to achieve their life goals. Their activity was empowering because it was motivated by facilitating the process for disadvantaged community groups to achieve their goals.

During the fieldwork several community groups reported that there were individuals (mainly lawyers, social workers, public servants and activists) who supported the community groups to achieve their goals. A common attribute of these individuals as described by the participants interviewed was that they believed in and valued enabling disadvantaged community groups. Such view was supported by the literature that points out that empowering professionals support community groups to attain their goals through awareness creation, organising and advocacy (Freire 1973; Sadan 1997).

For example, in the case of the Burundian Community Association of South Australia (BCASA), both internal capability and the support of empowering professionals were at play. The presence of committed community leaders and support from empowering professionals who decided to help the community enabled the group to secure funding from DIAC and employ two of its members to provide settlement services. Once BCASA was able to show the ability to manage funds, other resources and support both from government and NGOs began to flow.
In general, empowering professionals played a significant role in the empowerment of African communities by catalysing action and expanding the spheres of interactions among the different actors. They facilitated the opportunity for African community groups to interact with governments and NGOs. They also acted as resource persons for the community by organising communities around key challenges, educating communities, and advocating on their behalf.

7.2.2.3 Critical social incidents

The roles of ‘critical social incidents’ and other conditions in the empowerment of African communities were discussed in chapter VI. In this section, I will use some of the stories told in Chapter VI to demonstrate that social incidents were instrumental in shaping the interaction between the different actors in relation to the empowerment of African communities. In Tasmania, the highly emotive murder-suicide case of 2011 brought African community leaders, government representatives and NGOs together and strengthened ACCT as an umbrella African community organisation. It brought the media, police, concerned individuals, NGOs, government agencies and the African communities together and provided a platform for them to work on issues that were beyond the incident itself (ABC 2011; McKay 2011). To some extent, this incident was also instrumental in enabling ACCT to acquire financial resources from government to work around the issues following the incident in 2011.

Similar cases in South Australia have also brought the different actors to work together and enabled change in government policy and program. As indicated in Chapter VI, in South Australia it is reported that a 14-year-old Sudanese Australian boy was stabbed to death after a wild brawl broke out among Sudanese Australian teenagers in Greenfield Street in Adelaide in November 2008. The Greenfield incident sent shockwaves across the wider South Australian community, and attracted the interest of African communities, NGOs and government agencies in South Australia. It also created an opportunity for the ACCSA, governments and NGOs to work together. After the incident, series of meetings between ACCSA, NGOs and government bodies including the South Australian Police were held. Again this incident strengthened ACCSA and provided an opportunity for ACCSA to lobby government for the employment of an African Liaison Police Officer. This was taken up by the South Australian government of the time, and the first African Police Liaison officer was appointed.

In Dandenong, Victoria, African community leaders reported an increase in collaboration between the broader community, governments, NGOs and African
community groups after the Noble Park incident. In September 2007, a nineteen-year-old Sudanese Australian man was beaten to death by a small group of non-African youth near the Noble Park railway station. The case outraged the broader and African communities. In the aftermath of the death, a flurry of government, media and police activity distressed young Africans in the area. African community leaders came together to express their concern at the treatment by the police and media reports of the incident.

The Noble Park incident attracted broad interest, and there were discussions around race, the role of the police in responding to the tragic event, and the availability of support to African youth. Later, government resources were mobilised to Dandenong to create programs and activities that involved both young Africans and the police. The only difference in the Victorian case was that the resources were channelled through NGOs that were working with African communities and not to African community organisations such as ATT. This could be due to the absence of an umbrella African community organisation in Victoria. In general, all these separate incidents in the three states demonstrate that, however tragic, critical social incidents were instrumental in bringing the different actors to work together to resolve issues.

In section 7.2.1, I have explained that various institutional formats that had both empowering and disempowering effects on African communities. In section 7.2.2, I have identified those catalytic factors that played a key role in influencing how the various actors selected actions to effect change and the occurrence of interactions. In the following section, I will focus on the analyses of the patterns of interaction and change in the empowerment of African communities.

**7.2.3 Patterns of interactions**

By employing the conceptual and analytical framework, I will explain the patterns of interactions that emerged from this study and present these patterns of interaction in binary, as in interaction between African communities and governments, African communities and NGOs and NGOs and governments. The focus of this section will be to analyse the extent to which each set of interactions created opportunities for the empowerment of African communities with reference to the framework developed.

The purpose of the analysis will be to demonstrate how the different patterns of interactions affect the existing power relations and institutional arrangements and the extent to which they created empowerment outcomes.
7.2.3.1 Interactions between African communities and governments

Some authors have argued that the relationship between governments and disadvantaged communities could be mutually empowering (Wang 1999). This is perhaps a proper argument in the sense that governments have the ability to enable community empowerment by providing resources and legitimacy required for communities to achieve their goals. However, this study has demonstrated that the ability of governments to enable disadvantaged communities is dependent on the emerging institutional arrangements and patterns of interaction created by policy and administrative choices governments make.

The interaction observed between African communities and governments can be classified into three interrelated emerging patterns. These include direct, contractual and indirect engagement through NGOs.

a) Direct engagement

In all the three states, governments engaged African communities directly through community leaders, through the participation of elected politicians in African community functions, and through formal meetings and consultation by creating advisory groups or other similar institutions. For example, in South Australia the state government had an established unique process through which African communities were involved in the decision-making process. Multicultural South Australia (state government agency) played a facilitative role between African community leaders and heads of government agencies by organising what the African community leaders call ‘African Leaders’ Roundtable.’ The roundtable meetings were instrumental in enabling African community leaders in the state to articulate their goals and negotiate resource acquisition with government agencies. These roundtable discussions provided structure for community groups to engage government directly.

The Multicultural Friends of Parliament (MFOP) discussed in section 4.3.1 can also be cited as another example of this emerging pattern of direct engagement through consultation. The MFOP provided African communities in Tasmania a direct and structured access to the Tasmanian Parliament to raise and discuss community issues. A third example is the creation of the inaugural African Ministerial Consultative Committee. The group advises the Australian Government on affairs of Africans. The creation of this new institution provided African communities with the opportunity to directly access government at the local and national level.
In addition, governments also organised consultation meetings with African communities to seek their participation at the planning stage of projects. As discussed in section 7.2.1.1, external consultations were also held by government agencies to provide African communities with useful information on legal, political and other important matters. These direct consultations were useful and offered African community members the opportunity to meet with and express their concerns directly to those in power. However, African communities expressed concern that the likelihood of implementing community aspirations and expectations that were aired during consultations was remote.

As the above examples have demonstrated, direct engagements, particularly those institutionalised by African communities and governments as in the cases of the African Leaders Roundtable and the MFOP have created a fertile ground for a bottom-up community empowerment by providing African communities with access to resources and decision-making processes. On the other hand, although this study has pointed out that consultations offered African communities the opportunity to participate and influence policy, community leaders interviewed also expressed their concerns that there was no guarantee that whatever was written into policy after consultation could be implemented. Policies and programs designed to help African communities, and other disadvantaged communities could be conditional and ad hoc.

For example in the case of Tasmania, after a broader consultations involving disadvantaged communities including the African communities was carried out, the Tasmanian Government established the Social Inclusion Unit in March 2008 to progress the social inclusion agenda. After this new institutional arrangement was made, politicians started to publicise the program and inform the public ‘the good they have done for the disadvantaged. However, there was no evidence to suggest that the programs created by this Unit translated to the empowerment of the communities involved. Besides, some of the programs were axed prematurely, and funds reduced when economic circumstances changed in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and what has been hailed as a ‘good’ deal for the disadvantaged started to disappear after two years of policy writing and consulting communities. This may be due to the communities’ lack of bargaining power or inability to lobby government. Regardless, it confirms the concerns of the community leaders that policies written after consultations may not come to fruition and implemented.

In relation to the UKs ‘New Deal for Communities’ program, Dinham (2005, p. 310) reports ‘governments’ failure to think through the tension between the aspirations of delivery and the realities of community risks actively damaging the communities it seeks to serve by accentuating existing strife’. Similar situations have also been observed among African
community members in Australia. Community members saw community engagement practice (applauded by politicians and civil servants) as 'events organised to allow Africans to vent their frustrations, not opportunities to bring their aspirations to reality.' As an African community leader notes:

They ask you to come to a meeting, and you talk all about the problems and solutions. You feel good about the meeting because you were able to unload what was on your chest, a year later they call you again for another meeting to talk about the same stuff. No one even bothers to tell you what had happened to the things you told them last year. It is a waste of time (Interview 042).

This is often referred to as consultation fatigue. However, there is a need to go further and ask whether government culture of consultation (particularly consulting disadvantaged communities) is about enabling these communities to participate in the decision-making process, or whether it is about giving the appearance of participation without the substance in order to control citizens.

b) Contractual relationship

The second emerging pattern is direct funding of African community groups by government agencies. As shown in the above section and to a certain extent in Chapter IV section 4.3, I have indicated that the three case study community organisations were directly funded both by state and Australian Governments. Although this relationship and interaction between the three African community organisations and governments was primarily contractual, this kind of arrangement created opportunity for African communities to engage directly with governments and achieve their goals.

Many of the government programs that were accessed by African communities studied were programs designed to promote the settlement of Africans and remove barriers to their participation in social, economic and political spheres of life. These programs were also designed to help create what governments in Australia called 'viable communities.' In this regard, as others have argued, it can be seen as prescribing 'community' to the disadvantaged (Taylor 2011). However, as community leaders of these organisations claimed, accessing funds from these programs did not necessarily create opportunities to remove barriers to participation or enable African communities to achieve their own goals. Many leaders said that the aspirations of their communities and what was on offer did not always match. They also noted that contractual relationships in some cases created structural constraints for their communities to achieve their goals and attain empowerment.
c) **Indirect engagement – engagement by proxy**

The third and prominent pattern was engaging African communities indirectly through NGOs that served as proxies. Governments’ resources and support apportioned to African communities were often provided to them through NGOs. Thus, the relationship between governments and African communities was not direct; it was rather indirect facilitated through market transactions. The logic, from the government side, was that by making contractual arrangements to outsource public goods through NGOs, efficiency can be had, and value for money can be achieved. For this reason, African communities were relegated from direct involvement in decisions that affected them.

One of the complaints of the community leaders interviewed was that even when there were stable government policies and programs that were intended to assist the African communities, these programs were implemented through a third party (NGO or private sector) and did not offer opportunities for their communities to engage directly with responsible government agencies. Although governments were able to create opportunity structures for African communities to participate, it can only be translated to a bottom-up empowerment if African communities themselves participated directly and had ownership in the programs.

**7.2.3.2 Interactions between African communities and NGOs**

Based on the perceptions of African communities, the interaction between African communities and NGOs can be categorised into at least three patterns – NGOs as proxies, NGOs as helpers and NGOs as partners of African communities. These different patterns of interactions indicate the level of the maturity of relations between African communities and NGOs. I will discuss and analyse the implications of each pattern for the empowerment of African communities.

a) **NGOs as proxies**

In the above section, I noted that the dominant emerging pattern of interactions between African community groups and governments was engaging African communities by proxy through NGOs. This was reflective of governments’ views of African communities, it was also indicative of what orders the behaviour of NGOs and their relationship with African communities. In section 7.1.3, I noted that NGOs were often called ‘community

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8 Components of this sub-section have been included in Hiruy, K and Eversole, R, 2014, ‘NGOs and grassroots community organisations in Australia, *Third Sector Journal, (submitted manuscript)*.”
organisations’ and the sector was often called the ‘community sector’ in the Australian context. The term ‘community’ suggests that NGOs are considered as organisations that represent ‘communities’ in a broader sense. There was also a tendency, at least on the government side, to consider these NGOs as proxies for disadvantaged communities. Thus, funding allocated towards the activities of NGOs was presented in political rhetoric as a resource allocated to the needy – the disadvantaged communities.

However, this conjecture does not reflect the reality on the ground. It was true that the majority of the ‘community organisations’—NGOs—that worked with African communities were not-for-profit organisations, and their missions herald social justice and support for disadvantaged communities including African communities. Their activities were also about providing services to and advocacy work on behalf of disadvantaged communities including African communities. Despite this, it does not mean that they represent the African community groups. An analysis of the governance of NGOs that worked with African communities in the three states illustrate that these organisations (NGOs) do not have the representation of African communities or any other disadvantaged community group they serve for that matter.

This study shows that some of these NGOs have contributed to the ‘disempowerment’ of African community groups they work ‘with’ and ‘for,’ mainly due to the competitive nature of the funding model. The nature of competitive tender for government funding has pushed some of these NGOs to work against African community groups they claim to support. African community leaders interviewed have labelled some of these NGOs as their foes rather than their supporters or partners, and expressed their feeling that these NGOs denied them the opportunity to have more control of programs and activities that supported their communities by dealing with governments on their behalf without their knowledge.

As one of the community leaders puts it:

We know that there is an underlying fear within the NGOs in the market place, who provide services. …our empowerment scares them because if we are able, we become the service deliverers ourselves and that takes away all the NGOs have. I think that is the complexity of the situation (Interview 038)

This participant described NGOs as dishonest, shrewd and benefit-seeking organisations. It is perhaps a harsh and one-sided characterisation of the work of NGOs, many of whom are well-meaning and work relentlessly on behalf of African communities. Nonetheless, it indicates the tension that exists between NGOs and the African communities they intend to support. As the participant indicated, the situation is complex; on one side NGOs have a
mission based on altruistic principles, and they want to facilitate the empowerment of individuals and communities they serve. On the other hand, they have to maintain a level of funding they receive every year both to maintain staff and service levels.

Hence NGOs compete with and even work against the empowerment of the very communities they work ‘with’ and ‘for’ by playing politics, and sometimes magnifying the division and cracks in African communities. Such activity had a detrimental effect on the empowerment of community groups both by creating disunity and conflict in African communities and by putting barriers to the access of resources from government and other actors.

b) NGOs as helpers

NGOs are also viewed as helpers by African communities and hence the interaction exists within a helper and helped dichotomy. This view of NGOs as helpers was also held by NGO workers interviewed. They saw their role as one of helping the African communities settle well in Australia. Thus this belief of helping others created patterns of interactions that, in some cases, created a dependency between African communities and NGOs. When many of the African humanitarian entrants first arrived in Australia, they received initial settlement services from NGOs such as MRCs and this created loyalty and a sense of indebtedness on the African communities’ side. Perhaps the fact that both the ACCT and ACCSA were organised with the help of the MRCs in those states indicate that this was the case. For example, this was implied in the reflection of how ACCSA came about, provided by one of the leaders:

> When we arrived, the MRCSA helped us to settle. So when we thought of forming an organisation, we all agreed that we needed to get help from somewhere. Moreover, the first stopping point was MRCSA. They were keen to help us, and they supported us from then on. That was how we started (Interview 043).

This idea of NGOs as helpers shaped the interaction of African communities particularly at the initial stage of their organisational development. However, as pointed out earlier, once African community groups were at a stage where they were able to stand on their own feet and compete for funding the interactions changed. The reality was that in some cases, NGOs were forced to work against African community groups to continue funding, and this changed the nature of interactions among the African communities and the NGOs into an antagonistic one.
c) NGOs as partners

Considering NGOs as partners and building relationships based on meaningful partnership also created a different pattern of interaction between African communities and NGOs. In section 7.2.1 (2), I have discussed partnership as a mechanism through which African communities interacted with other actors. Through the descriptions of the three case studies in Chapter IV section 4.3, I have illustrated that ACCT, ACCSA and ATT all had some form of partnership with NGOs. In the discussion in Chapter VI section 6.1.2, I have identified community partnership as one of the conditions for community empowerment. In this section, I will show the link between partnership and the empowerment of African communities.

As can be gleaned from the abovementioned sections, by building partnerships with NGOs, African communities were able to create opportunities for their community to participate in decision-making and share resources with NGOs. Partnerships with NGOs also enabled African communities to strengthen their capacity and to bargain for power. For example, as noted in Chapter VI section 6.1.2, ACCSA’s partnership with several NGOs provided ACCSA with an opportunity to bargain on behalf of African communities in South Australia.

However, the outcomes of the interactions in partnerships were dependent on the relative power or influence African communities had in the partnership. The case reported in Chapter VI section 6.1.2 can be cited as an example. Although the umbrella African community organisation was in a formal partnership with the NGO, the NGO refused to include the African community organisation in the decision-making process (Steering Committee). The case shows that the NGO’s relative power and influence was greater than the African community organisation’s influence and that the partnership was not built on common goals. It also illustrates that the NGO entered into a partnership agreement only to show funding agencies that it had a partnership with these communities.

7.2.3.3 Interactions between NGOs and governments

As mentioned in section 7.2.2, the main purpose of this section is to analyse the extent to which the interactions of the different actors contributed to the empowerment of the African communities with reference to the framework developed. As such the analyses of interactions between governments and NGOs are beyond the immediate scope of this thesis; however, it was evident from discussions in section 7.2.2.2 that the interactions between NGOs and African communities was influenced by the interaction between governments and government agencies with NGOs in relations to the empowerment of
African communities. Thus it was important to highlight how governments and NGOs interactions and relations have affected the interactions of NGOs with African communities and their empowerment.

As discussed earlier governments and government agencies justify the necessity of working with NGOs to deliver services for disadvantaged communities on grounds of efficiency or value for money. The creation of new initiatives for the ‘disadvantaged’ was often welcomed by NGOs as these programs created new opportunities to expand NGO activities, and with it more power and influence. These programs were also good for governments as they provided an opportunity for governments to pass some of their responsibilities to NGOs in the name of community empowerment. Despite the justifications provided, the grounds for these justifications must be questioned.

As Cockburn (1977) argues, community empowerment, for governments, is largely the refocussing of responsibility for service provision and maintenance away from government to the community or preferably to NGOs. This argument is also supported by Mowbray (2011, p. 132), who noted that government programs and policies in Australia that were intended to engage the community in an ‘inclusive and empowering’ manner were ‘effectively about containment and control.’

Because of these outsourcing arrangements, NGOs are recognised by the government as third party contractors of public service in the market place. The government uses its contractual relationship with NGOs as proxy to work with disadvantaged communities. Such juxtaposition of a third party (contractor) as a proxy for disadvantaged communities renders NGOs ineffectual not only by imposing some gag clauses, but also by forcing NGOs to act as for-profit businesses (corporatisation).

In sum, it is undeniable that the work of NGOs is integral to governance and instrumental in promoting social justice and advocacy for disadvantaged communities in Australia. However, over the years the mode of operation and hence the power relations between NGOs, governments, and disadvantaged communities has changed significantly (Boston 1995; Shergold 2008a, 2008b). Historically, this change can be attributed to the popularity of economic rationalist ideals such as efficiency and value for money that led to outsourcing public services in the 1990s, and to the belief that NGOs have close relationship with disadvantaged communities. Thus, governments in Australia of all stripes and persuasions have tried to leverage NGOs’ close relationship with disadvantaged communities to achieve their social goals by outsourcing and contracting programs to NGOs. However, this increased interest has brought ‘silencing of dissent’ to NGOs through public denigration,
the inclusion of gag-clauses in government contracts and the de-funding of organisations critical of the government (Edgar 2008). Moreover, this has affected the capacity of NGOs to facilitate the empowerment of disadvantaged communities including the African communities.

Section 7.1 has demonstrated that there are various institutional formats, catalytic factors and patterns of interactions that played an empowering or disempowering role depending on the contexts of actions and interactions, the values that actors attached to their actions and resources mobilised, and the process used. A further analysis of the interactions demonstrated that different patterns of interactions had varying effects on existing power relations and institutional arrangements and the possibilities for creating empowerment outcomes. In the following section, I will discuss the contributions of these empowerment outcomes to wider social change.

7.3 The contribution of community empowerment to wider social change

This study has shown that power relationships within the communities and with external actors have created opportunities for African communities to bring about change in the social system beyond the particular communities. The formation of the umbrella and other African community organisations across Australia and their activities are reordering the institutional arrangements and power relations in Australia. The social movements initiated by African communities are also impacting institutional arrangement and governance that order their action. Given this evidence it is clear that community empowerment can contribute to wider social change which is an important feature of empowerment.

The formation of the umbrella and other African community organisations such as ACCT, ACCSA and ATT created opportunities for African communities across Australia to work together on common goals. These community organisations have also paved the way for African communities to advocate for themselves and lobby governments to change the structure of services such as employment services. Through lobbying and other political activities these community groups were also able to influence the way governments worked and created possibilities for institutional change and transformation.

At least four examples can demonstrate this: the formation of the inaugural African Ministerial Consultative Committee, the institutionalisation of MOFP in Tasmania and the African Community Leaders Roundtable in South Australia, the creation of African Liaison
Police Officers at least in two states and the flourishing African businesses and restaurants across Australia.

The collective lobbying of African communities and their supporters has been instrumental in the creation of the inaugural African Ministerial Consultative Committee by the Australian Government and the appointment of 14 African community leaders in August 2012. The purpose of this group was to advise Ministers of the Australian Government on affairs of African communities. The creation of this new institution has the potential to shift power relations between governments and African communities to more direct, fluid and flexible relationships that provide African communities with access to more material, moral and political resources. These changes in power relationships can also impact on the relationship of government and NGOs and the African communities.

The development and work of both the MFOP in Tasmania and the African Community Leaders Roundtable in South Australia (see discussions in Chapters IV and VII) had also created new institutional arrangements and transformed the power relations between African communities and government. In both cases, African communities were able to get access to decision-makers and negotiate resources for their communities. Both of these new institutional arrangements had reorganised existing structures and provided new structures for African communities to engage governments directly.

The institutionalisation of the position of Police Liaison Officers observed in two of the study states is also an example where a new structure was created in the social system due to the collective action of African communities. The creation of these new positions can transform the power relations between African communities and the police and the broader community. Lastly, the creation of new and thriving African businesses has also created the capacity to shift power relations in society and transform the social order by providing financial, moral and political resources for African communities to participate in the affairs of society.

In sum, this study has demonstrated that the formation of African community organisations has created opportunities for African communities to shift power relations and change current institutional arrangements. The change in the power relations exhibited can be explained by Giddens’ (1982) concept of power as transformative capacity. The change in the social structure is the outcome of the actions of the community groups and other actors in power who play a significant role by accepting the action of the community as meaningful. Haugaard’s (2003) explanation of how meaning is reproduced to transform the social structure is instructional in this regard. Any change in structure requires an agreement by
those in power that the new social order is meaningful. Haugaard (2003, p. 90) points out ‘structuration is a necessary but not sufficient condition for reproduction of social structure’. In other words, it is not only the actions of the African communities that produces social order or meaning, but also an understanding and validation by government and NGOs that it is acceptable and meaningful that reproduces social order and meaning.

The creation of the abovementioned new institutions can provide an opportunity for African communities to bring about positive social change by reinforcing systems of meaning, power and legitimation in the social system. The formation of African community organisations has contributed to the change in social structure, at least in the margins. These changes in institutional arrangements and power relations also enhance the capacity of African communities to attain their goals and contribute to wider social change. Thus, I argue that community empowerment contributes to wider social change which in turn creates a more supportive environment to ensure the empowerment of African communities is sustainable. However, it should be noted that social change is a continuous and incremental process, and the impact of the activities of African community organisations and their social movements on the broader social structure is likely to increase with time as the communities attain more power and influence and penetrate wider social networks and institutions.

7.4 Summary and discussion

This chapter set out to answer the fourth and fifth research questions: who are involved in bottom-up driven community empowerment, why and how? What is the contribution of bottom-up driven community empowerment to wider social change? Using the framework developed, I have identified key actors in the empowerment of African communities and the resources these actors brought to the action situation and analysed their interactions. African communities, governments and government agencies and NGOs were identified as the principal actors in the empowerment of African communities. The actions and interactions of these actors were vital to the empowerment of African communities. These actors created the resources and structures necessary for the empowerment of African communities and their interactions defined the empowerment outcomes in these communities.

African communities, as actors, created various organisations to enable them to change the situation through their action. They also used meetings and consultations as institutional formats to order their relationship internally and externally. Meetings were used to make
decisions and participate in decision-making processes. Through meetings, African communities were able to organise and mobilise collective action. On the other hand, governments used policies and programs as key institutional formats to foster an environment where African communities are able to create a better future by ensuring that opportunities to participate were made available. Policies such as the Multicultural, Settlement and Social Inclusion policies and related programs were used to create an environment that encouraged the participation of African communities.

Governments funded the majority of NGOs that worked with African communities through the settlement program and other funding facilities. These NGOs aimed to facilitate a successful integration of new and emerging communities and to enable African communities reach their full potential. NGOs provided essential information and referral services, and supported community groups in employment, housing, health and other socio-economic services to achieve these goals. NGOs claimed to represent the African communities and advocate on their behalf. Whilst these NGOs performed activities that were beneficial to the African communities, their activities were often limited by the terms of their funding (government funding). They were also observed to negate their mission—the empowerment of community groups—possibly forced by the competitive tendering and associated gag clauses.

Each of the actors played vital roles in the empowerment of African communities. Moreover, interactions among the different actors and institutions were instrumental in changing the power relations among the different actors. These interactions were ordered by mechanisms that included external meetings and consultations, partnership arrangements and funding mechanisms. The study also showed that other factors such as critical social incidents, the capability of African communities and external empowering professionals were important in influencing the nature of the interaction among these actors.

This study has shown that the interactions among the different actors were patterned and took the form of direct engagement, the contractual engagement through funding and indirect engagement by proxy through NGOs. The emerging patterns of interaction between African communities and NGOs can be categorised as NGOs as proxies, NGOs as helpers and NGOs as partners of African communities. The interaction between governments and NGOs was found to be mainly through funding arrangements perpetuated by the idea that NGOs are proxies for disadvantaged communities. In general, the emergence of competitive tendering with its ‘contractual obligation’ and the ensuing contractual relationship between government and NGOs has changed the way NGOs operated. Competitive tendering has created a situation where the predominant pattern of
interactions is where NGOs became contractors that work with governments and African communities.

Consistent with the empowerment literature, the findings from this chapter demonstrate that power is primarily relational and that the empowerment of disadvantaged community groups is a function of power interdependence among the different actors. The support of other actors is necessary for the empowerment of disadvantaged communities (Friedmann 1992). The ability of African communities to create interdependent relationships with actors in power who give meaning to their action is crucial to their empowerment.

African communities had built strong organisations with strong internal ties, and this was important in organising and mobilising the community. However, this was not the only factor that contributed to the empowerment of the African communities. The empowerment of African communities was also dependent on the interaction of African communities with governments, NGOs and the broader community and the actions of these external actors. The resources African communities needed to build their communities and attain empowerment were often in the hands of governments and NGOs and other social networks that were beyond their immediate reach. These external actors had the resources and the power to establish the norms of society where the African communities operated. Thus, the possibility for African communities to access resources and social networks was found to be highly dependent on their ability to create meaningful relationships with governments and NGOs.

Each actor contributed to the empowerment of African communities; however, institutional theorists posit that the outcome of the interactions of actors and institutions is greater than the sum of the actions of individual actors (DiMaggio 1988; Ostrom 1998). Of course, this does not mean that the outcomes of the interactions were always empowering to communities. The evidence from this study suggests that in some cases the outcomes of the interactions could be disempowering, as reflected in one of the emerging patterns identified where governments engage African communities indirect through NGOs, and where NGOs undermine the effort of African communities to attain their goals.
Chapter IX
Conclusion

This study has made two fundamental contributions to knowledge on the topic of community empowerment – the development of a conceptual and analytical framework and empirical analysis of bottom-up community empowerment in Australia. A conceptual and analytical framework was developed to guide the design and conduct of research by integrating conceptualisations of empowerment with institutional analysis. The framework enabled the analysis of the dynamics between action and structure and the explanation of complex power relations and institutional arrangements that affect empowerment and contribute to social change. The study has also provided an empirical analysis of bottom-up community empowerment of African communities in Australia, from the perspectives of the African communities themselves.

The findings show that contextual factors such as migration and settlement history, conditions of disadvantage, and internal community attributes affect the way African communities organised and mobilised action to attain empowerment. It has also demonstrated that community formation was used as a key mechanism to attain empowerment and that the empowerment of African communities was predicated on conditions that influenced the way these communities behaved. These include organisational structure and leadership, institutional relationships, the nature and existence of community conflicts and social incidents. The role played by social incidents was particularly unanticipated. Social incidents served as catalytic conditions that facilitated the empowerment by creating situations where governments, NGOs and African communities work together. The study also illustrated that refugee experiences, community knowhow, culture, community leaders and financial resources were valuable resources that African community groups used to produce community benefits and attain empowerment.

Finally, this study has demonstrated that the empowerment of African communities is dependent not only on the actions of African communities but also on the actions and interactions of NGOs and governments. The findings align with the idea that power is fundamentally relational and that the empowerment of African communities is a function of the interdependent relationships with actors in power, who can give meaning to the community’s actions. These external actors have the resources and power to establish social and organisational norms that African communities operated within. Thus, African
communities’ access to resources and social networks was dependent on their ability to create meaningful relationships with these external actors (governments and NGOs).

These findings and the use of the framework have methodological, theoretical, policy and practical implications.

### 8.1 Methodological and theoretical implications

This study has made methodological contributions to community empowerment and related fields of studies by developing a novel conceptual and analytical framework. The framework provides conceptual rigour to community empowerment studies (and perhaps also other similar studies) by enabling the researcher to analyse norms and patterns of actions in communities and the structures of these actions and interactions (DiMaggio 1988; March & Olsen 1984; Zucker 1988). The framework also allows the researcher to contextualise and analyse broader structural issues that are expressed in institutional relationships and changes, while still analysing actors in the action arena. This framework also enables the researcher to account for the likely outcome of interactions among different actors and institutions which are often greater than the sum of the actions of the individual actors (Gilchrist 2000; Rowan & Miskel 1999; Zucker 1988).

A primary observation within the study is the role of community formation in the process of community empowerment. The literature presents community organising as part of the empowerment continuum (see Hur 2006; Laverack 2006; Sadan 1997), thus community empowerment is theorised in relation to ‘mobilising interest’ (Alinsky 1971) and ‘creating critical consciousness’ (Freire1970). The role of community formation within these perspectives is largely neglected and often considered to be exogenous due to the underlying assumption that disadvantaged communities are already established communities within the social system. This study, contrary to the established literature, shows community formation as both a mechanism for and a constitutive element of empowerment. This has significant theoretical implications.

Community formation enabled Africans to organise themselves into groups that served to create a sense of belonging among members, and enabled them to access the support of external actors such as governments and NGOs that could provide them with resources and legitimise their actions. In order to forge interdependent relationships with external actors, African communities used formal partnerships and other institutional formats. Community formation was a vital process that enabled the establishment of relationships
with external actors that wielded economic and social resources that could empower the community. Thus, it is important that theories of empowerment account for both the formation of a community and the internal dynamics of the community as key determinants of empowerment.

The evidence from this study affirms Friedmann’s (1992) view that empowerment is a relational process, based on the interaction of interdependent actors. The empowerment of African communities required the collaborative effort of other actors such as governments and NGOs. It was through the relationships they forged with external actors that African communities were able to act and create opportunities to shift power relations and change current institutional arrangements. The reproduction of social order is contingent upon the consensus of recreating meaning though confirm-structuring practice, which occurs in an action arena with interdependent actors. Thus, this suggests that a bottom-up driven community empowerment need to be theorised as a process in which power is relational, actors are interdependent and that the transformation of social structures is a function of relational power and interdependent action.

### 8.2 Policy and practice implications

The study has shown that the contexts and institutional arrangements in which they operate have affected the way African communities behave and act. This has wider policy and practice implications. Firstly it suggests that policies, programs and strategies that are intended to facilitate the empowerment of disadvantaged communities need to start by understanding the social contexts and the conditions of disadvantage in the community. Secondly it is important that these policies and programs be designed to address, remove or change these (pre)existing social conditions.

Different communities may have different contexts and different structural, social and economic barriers that challenge their empowerment. Therefore, policies, programs and strategies intended to facilitate the empowerment of disadvantaged communities must first have a good understanding of the social contexts and conditions of disadvantage that exist in the communities they seek to empower. What is deemed appropriate policy designed to address disadvantage in other communities within Australia may not necessarily address disadvantage in African communities. There are no blanket policy solutions that can facilitate the empowerment of all disadvantaged communities, policies and programs designed to address disadvantage in African communities need to reflect the particular contexts of disempowerment in these communities. Conditions of disadvantage such as refugee and migration experiences, cultural background, and discrimination and racism are
prevalent in African communities in Australia. Thus, programs should be tailored according to the context of each community.

Community formation was presented as the primary mechanism through which African communities attained empowerment, the way African communities have formed; their organisational structures and their internal dynamics have effect on their empowerment. The nuanced differences in the way communities form, their organisational structures and internal dynamics are often ill understood by policymakers; policies and programs are often designed based on blanket recommendations and are thus ineffective in addressing issues of disadvantage. It is crucial for practitioners to consider community formation as the focal point of community empowerment in order to understand the underlying factors that influence community formation.

Empirical evidence from this study also suggests ‘social incidents’ can create situations where governments, NGOs, African communities and members of the wider community support African communities by creating an environment for all parties to work together and focus on solutions. This implies that policies in some instances are reactive, and policymakers need to understand ‘social incidents’ as valuable opportunities in community empowerment. The ways in which the emotional energy around ‘social incidents’ is channelled to contribute to social change, needs more exploration.

In practice, predicting social incidents is difficult and hence defies normative ideas of planning for action. Organisers, community leaders and those interested in the empowerment of communities can position themselves to harness the emotional energy around ‘social incidents.’ In this respect, some parallels can be drawn from a surfing analogy used by Warren (1995) who points out that the surfer cannot create the tide but can recognise the wave, catch a wave, and ride it. The role of community leaders in regards to managing social incidents is similar to that of a surfer, their role is not to create the social incident, but to recognise the potentials of these incidents, and use them to mobilise the community.

In analysing interactions between the different actors, the research has pointed out that community groups that were perceived to be well-organised by governments and NGOs attracted more external resources. This is mainly related with the ability of community groups to communicate their needs and demonstrate capability to acquire funds and establish accountability. Community groups that had a higher need and may have required most support were not necessary receiving support that they needed until they developed
the ‘perceived capability’ to manage resources. There is an ‘unwritten threshold’ above which community groups are able to receive support.

In theory, the purpose of government programs and policies discussed in the context of this study is capacity building of disadvantaged community groups so that they are able to attain their goals. However, the empirical evidence suggests that these policies and programs did not necessarily build the capacity and provide support to the most disadvantaged. Instead, governments and NGOs picked ‘winners’ and directed their support towards community groups that were perceived to be well-organised in managing resources.

An analysis of the patterns of interaction has also shown that the dominant pattern of interaction between the African communities and external actors was through NGOs who were considered as proxies. NGOs act as intermediaries and conduits for service delivery, and are also the institutions through which African communities can access social and economic resources. Such institutional arrangements are characterised by contractual obligations that create a gap between local governance institutions and the communities they intend to serve. By creating communication barriers between African communities and governments and their institutions, the use of NGOs as proxies constrained the effort of African communities to participate in social, cultural, economic and political affairs to attain their goals. Such institutional arrangements have also transmuted NGOs from mission-focused civil society organisations that have traditional allegiance with disadvantaged communities to contractors who act on behalf of governments bound by contractual obligations.

Institutional arrangements that promote direct communication with and allow disadvantaged communities to access resources and support directly are critical for the empowerment of disadvantaged communities. Thus, capacity building should take precedence over efficiency and monetary considerations. The outsourcing of funds to NGOs is conducted with little or no attention to the social dynamics and accrual of social return on investment. Policy and programs should consider directly resourcing disadvantaged communities in their effort to attain empowerment.
8.3 Conclusion and directions for future research

This thesis has presented an account of bottom-up driven community empowerment among African communities in Australia using multi-sited ethnographic case studies and has contributed to the rather sparse writings on bottom-up driven community empowerment practices. It has demonstrated that ‘bottom-up driven community empowerment’ is different from broader community empowerment processes which are often driven by institutions with power at the macro-level and designed and prescribed for disadvantaged communities without their full-participation. The principal actors in a bottom-up driven community empowerment are disadvantaged communities.

The study has shown that community empowerment requires an enabling government and the NGO sector that facilitates the participation of disadvantaged communities to achieve their own goals. The basic tenet here is that African communities and other disadvantaged communities are their own assets, and the role of external agents or other development actors is to catalyse, facilitate or ‘accompany’ the community in acquiring power. The participation of African communities from the bottom-up creates a sense of community, which is crucial in developing cohesion and mutual responsibility based on shared meaning and value. It stimulates collective action and enables communities to engage with governments, NGOs and other actors. In other words, bottom-up driven community empowerment is expressed through interrelations and institutional linkages that are forged from the bottom-up through the collective action instigated by disadvantaged communities.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to the evidence base by providing an empirical analysis of bottom-up community empowerment in the context of African communities in Australia. It has also demonstrated a methodology for research in this context by developing a conceptual and analytical framework, which allows the researcher to analyse the dynamics between action and structure, and explain the complex power relationships and institutional arrangements that affect empowerment and contribute to social change.

Despite the usefulness of the aforementioned contributions, the choice of African communities as case studies and ethnography as a methodology introduces some limitations to the study. The focus on in-depth dynamics of African communities and their interaction with other actors may limit the generalisability and applicability of the findings across different communities. Thus, there is a need for further research to deepen the understanding of bottom-up community empowerment in other migrant and non-migrant communities.
The empowerment literature implies that there is a connection between social context and empowerment, but does not provide empirical evidence to explain the relationship between context and empowerment. Insights from this study indicate that contextual factors and pre-existing social situations play a key role in the empowerment of disadvantaged communities by influencing community action and creating structural constraints. More research focusing on the correlation between social context and community empowerment in both migrant and non-migrant communities will be useful for a robust understanding of community empowerment processes.

Similarly, community formation is an area of community empowerment that needs further attention in order to understand how different ways of community formation and organising can affect collective action and thus, affect empowerment outcomes. The current literature on empowerment supports the notion that community organising and empowerment are linked, but holds community formation to be exogenous to the process of empowerment. This study has illustrated that community formation was used as a mechanism through which African communities create social solidarity and knowledge to act collectively to change their situation. The formation of communities has also created a sense of empowerment by providing a focal organisational structure that members can take ownership of, and use to mobilise collective action.

This study has also established that culture plays a significant role in the empowerment of African communities by providing the resources necessary for community cohesion and unity. Cultural resources serve as a vehicle to create opportunities for African communities to participate in society. Further research is required to understand whether culture both as a resource and as instrumental value plays a significant role in the empowerment of other disadvantaged communities.

Finally, the findings suggest that critical social incidents play an important role in the empowerment of the community by rallying the attention, support, reaction and interaction of African communities, NGOs, government agencies, media and the broader community around certain issues. Critical social incidents also strengthen collective belonging, involvement and collective action. However, the literature tends to focus on normative ideas of planning for action and does not seem to account for the phenomenon of critical social incidents. It would be useful to conduct further studies to understand the nature and the wider implication of social incidents in community empowerment and public policy.
Appendices

Appendix I: Full social science research ethics application

Social Science HREC
Full COMMITTEE Application

Important
Please email an electronic version of this application plus the supporting documentation as Microsoft Word documents to: Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au

A .pdf attachment is acceptable for appropriate documents, eg., advertisements, posters, etc.
A signed hard copy must also be sent to: Marilyn Knott, Private Bag 1, Hobart, 7001
We will use the electronic version to meet agenda deadlines and the signed copy can follow in due course, once signatures have been obtained.

If you have any questions, please call: 6226 7479

1. Title of proposed investigation
Please be concise but specific. Titles should be consistent with those used on any external funding application.
Bottom-up Driven Social Empowerment and Inclusion in Regional Australia: Case studies of African communities.

2. Expected commencement date: Expected completion date of project
1 June 2011 31 March 2013

3. Investigators:
CHIEF INVESTIGATOR
Note: This is the researcher with ultimate responsibility for the research project.
The Chief Investigator cannot be a student.
Given Name Robyn Surname Eversole
Staff Position: Director Qualifications: PhD,
Staff ID: 02366747
School & Division: Institute for Regional Development
Contact Address: University of Tasmania - Cradle Coast Campus
Private Bag 3528, Burnie, Tasmania 7320
Telephone: +61 3 6430 4519 Email: Robyn.Eversole@utas.edu.au (Required)

A. CO-INVESTIGATOR(S)
### Investigator(s):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Given Name</th>
<th>Surname</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kiros</td>
<td>Hiruy</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Gender:** Male  
**Date of Birth:** 26/10/1967  
**Preferred Title:** Mr  
**Student Number:** 082747  
**Level:** PhD  
**Contact Address:** 9 Norwich Lane, Howrah  
**Telephone:** 6226 1959  
**Email:** kiros.hiruy@utas.edu.au

### Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Preferred Title:</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mr / Ms / Miss / Mrs /Dr</td>
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</table>

**Student Number:**  
**Level:**  
**Contact Address:**  
**Telephone:**  
**Email:** (Required)

### Approval

#### 4. Is this a student project that requires School approval (eg., program of study approval)?

| Yes | No |

**If yes, the project has been:**

- a) Submitted
- b) Not yet submitted
- i) Approved
- ii) Not yet approved

#### 5. Approvals from other Departments / Institutions
Does this project need the approval of any institution other than the University of Tasmania and/or the Department of Health and Human Services (e.g., Department of Education, particular wards in hospitals, prisons, government institutions, or businesses)?

No ☒ Yes ☐

If yes, please indicate below the Institutions involved and the status of the Approval.

Name of Other Institution(s): ____________________________ Status: ____________________________

Does this project need the approval of any other HREC? No ☒ Yes ☐

If YES, please indicate below which Human Research Ethics Committee, and the status of the application.

If NO, why not?

Other HREC(s): ____________________________ Status: ____________________________

6. Is the investigation a follow-up of a previous study? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, what is the ethics reference number of that study?

What was the title of that study?

7. Funding

Under the National Statement (2.2.6) a researcher must disclose:

- the amount and sources or potential sources of funding for the research; and
- financial or other relevant declarations of interest of researchers, sponsors or institutions

Is this research being funded? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please detail amount and source of funds (NS 5.2.7)

If this application relates to Grant(s) and/or Consultancies, please indicate the Title and Grant Number relating to it

If no external funding has been obtained, please indicate how any costs of research will be met:

Requests for support to cover research costs including travel and accommodation will be made to the Institute for Regional Development. Additional grants to attend conferences are also available through the Graduate Research Office.

Do the investigators have any financial interest in this project? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, please give details:

8. Keywords

Please provide definitions for any technical terms and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Lay Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>The process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives; which include increase in assets and attributes and building capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/or a voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Group</td>
<td>A group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>The capacity and the right to act.</td>
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K. Hiruy | Institute for Regional Development | Appendices 232
## 9. Rationale and Background for the Project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has the research proposal, including design and methodology, undergone a peer review process?</th>
<th>Yes ☒ No ☐</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If YES - provide details:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A draft research design and methodology has been discussed within the supervisory team</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>If NO – please explain why:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Please give a plain English description of the <strong>aims</strong> of this study.</td>
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The main aim of this ethnographic study is to gain insight into the processes that may lead to the empowerment of ‘disadvantaged’ community groups in Australia, by looking closely at case studies of African communities in three states. The specific aims of the case studies are to:

- understand how these disadvantaged community groups create awareness, organise and mobilise collective action to change their situation,
- identify the types of resources that are necessary for a community group to attain a certain level of empowerment or ability to influence change,
- gain insight into the social conditions that contribute to the attainment of some level of empowerment by community groups,
- identify some of the types of control community groups could attain to empower themselves, and
- understand the degree to which such empowerment may or may not contribute to wider social change and transformation.
Community empowerment is considered as a process that has both structural and organisational aspects aimed at changing social systems and creating structural alternatives beyond one’s own situation (Sadan 1997). As such it is a social change process which involves self-organising and re-creating a community that is able to influence its future. This implies that the process of empowerment develops a sense of responsibility, commitment, and ability to care for collective survival among members of community groups, as well as skills in problem solving, and efficacy to influence changes relevant to one’s quality of life. Such a concept of community empowerment has gained currency in the last three decades in government policy-in local governance and service delivery across the globe with a particular focus of enabling vulnerable community groups to take charge of their own development agenda (see Craig & Mayo 1995; Gutierrez, Parson & Cox 1998; Narayan 2002).

This study will contribute to the current debate in “community empowerment” by highlighting some of the mechanisms by which community empowerment is mediated and the social structures and conditions that are necessary for its effectiveness. The study will also provide insights to policymakers, practitioners and community groups by highlighting how grassroots activities or community collective action shape community empowerment. This study is also significant because it contributes to better policy development and practice by giving policymakers and practitioners insight into community empowerment process and the potential roles that different actors may play in enabling and encouraging collective action by ‘disadvantaged’ communities. The research also provides practical tools for disadvantaged community groups by highlighting the key determinants of empowerment. It may also provide a platform for further research and program development by providing empirical evidence on key enablers of vulnerable communities’ capacity to act, or to take collective action to improve their current socio-economic circumstances in the Australian context.

Please list the most relevant and recent literature references, both by the investigator and/or by others, that support the justification for the study.

### 10. Participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>How many participants do you intend to recruit?</td>
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</table>

Provide justification for the number of participants you intend to recruit.

As an ethnographic study, the main method will be participant observation and this means the researcher will spend substantial time with each group over extended periods of time (Clammer 1984; Urry 1984). Thus, given the scope of the study and the number of community groups included in the study, the number of participants is assumed to be from 10 to 20 for each community group, which brings up the total number of individual participants to an estimated 30-60.

It is possible that each community group will have from few hundreds to few thousands members. The key participants will, however, include formal and informal leaders, who have active participation and influence in the organisational activities of the community groups, and others who may have direct or indirect influence on the collective action of the group.

By limiting the focus to the participants, the researcher will be able to observe organisational activities and processes carried out by the participants that may include community organising, negotiation, key committee meetings, decision-making processes and other activities and events planned by the community group. It may also be necessary to attend community activities that involve the whole membership as a participant observer and interview the participants and officers of other organisations which work with the community groups.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Selection of Participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly describe the experimental and, where relevant, control groups. Include details of sex, age range, and any special characteristics (ethnic origin, demographic details, health status etc).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Give a justification for your choice of participant group(s).</td>
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</table>
10. Participants

The choice of African community organisations in the three states namely South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria is purposive and was guided through contact, advice from supervisors, convenience in terms of travel time and stay and other factors. Such a selection criteria is common in Anthropology (Clammer 1984) and is consistent with purposive sampling, particularly criterion, opportunistic and convenience sampling (See Patton 2002).

Such a selection of different cases (three African community organisations in three states) purposively, is expected to enable the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study, and is also instrumental in obtaining information on “the importance of various conditions for producing the particular phenomenon under investigation” and analysing how the mechanisms operate under different settings (Denermark et al. 2002).

The choice of African Communities as study cases can be justified on two grounds. Firstly, it can be argued that as community groups, the African communities offer a fertile ground for community empowerment studies. This assertion is valid for two reasons. On the one hand, as new and emerging communities, these communities are at an organisational stage where conscientizing, organising and mobilising for collective action and other indicators of empowerment are highly relevant to daily life. On the other hand, as migrant communities with different cultural backgrounds to the host community, these communities are exposed to heightened risk of exclusion and vulnerability or to what Hur (2006) calls “social disturbances”. Both these two characteristics provide the community groups the foundation to initiate collective action in the hope of creating a better condition for themselves. Secondly the decision has also been influenced by the interest, skills and experiences of the researcher who have extensively worked with Africans in Australia.

As an ethnographic community empowerment study, there are no control groups. However, to avoid unnecessary variability among the community groups, we have endeavoured to select community groups with similar structure and set up. All the community groups selected are African Community Councils, who promote “community empowerment” as one of their major objectives.

As these community groups and their membership are new and emerging migrant communities, providing accurate numbers of their population by state is difficult. The ABS data put the number of Africans in each state as Africa-born or by their ethnicity(see Hugo 2009) and this may not give an accurate number. Even if it does, it will still be difficult to determine the number of active community members represented in these community groups at this stage as some could choose not to be part of a community group. It is, however, hoped that it will be possible to provide a better picture on the demography of the membership of the community groups included in this study as the study progresses.

The selection of the three states namely South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria is mainly dictated by the size of African population who reside in those states, the activity and stage of organisational development of the African Community groups in each state and the logistics of conducting research. For detailed information see the attached explanatory note.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Possibly</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Pregnant Women?</td>
<td>(NS 4.1)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>(b) Minors, i.e. children under 18 years of age?</td>
<td>(NS 4.2)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒</td>
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<tr>
<td>(c) People highly dependent on medical care who may be unable to give consent?</td>
<td>(NS 4.4)</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>(d) People with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or mental illness?</td>
<td>(NS 4.5)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>(e) People who may be involved in illegal activities?</td>
<td>(NS 4.6)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>(f) People in other countries?</td>
<td>(NS 4.8)</td>
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### 10. Participants

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<tr>
<td><em>(g)</em></td>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?</td>
<td>(NS 4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(h)</em></td>
<td>People who are identifiable by their membership of a cultural, ethnic or minority group?</td>
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For each “Yes” or “Possibly”, show how your research complies with the relevant section in the *National Statement*. If you answered “Yes” to *(g)* you must also attach a statement indicating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sensitivities will be recognised (see the following publication for guidance: [http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm](http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e52syn.htm))
10. Participants

The study does not have any intention to particularly recruit pregnant women, people with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability, or mental illness, people who may be involved in illegal activities or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, it is possible that the researcher could engage directly or indirectly such persons either because they are members of the African community organisations selected for this study or because they have an active working relationship related to the study with these groups. In such an event all necessary cautions will be taken.

This research is not health research, thus the likelihood of any associated risk on pregnant women or the foetus *in utero* is negligible. However, all necessary precautionary measures to minimise risk and to ensure the wellbeing of the participant and the unborn child will take priority over the research project’s aim. Benefits and associated risks including any discomfort or inconvenience that may arise due to the presence of the researcher in organisational activities or due to follow up interviews will be explained and the possibilities for accessing counselling and other services to manage such issues will be indicated.

Efforts will be made to ensure equal participation and wellbeing of people with a cognitive impairment, an intellectual disability or mental illness who are willing to participate in this research. The researcher will be attentive in cases where a person appears to be experiencing physical, cognitive, psychological, sensory or emotional difficulties. In such circumstances, care will be taken to consider people’s capacity to receive or understand the information provided and their capacity to consent to the research by clarifying the possibilities through discussions with that particular person in the presence of an Advocate, person of trust, a legal guardian or a community leader, as the case may be. If concerns remain about the individual’s capacity to give consent, and the person is willing to participate, consent will be sought from the legal guardian or any person or organisation authorised by law. Care will also be taken to minimise any discomfort or distress caused by the research activity by way of understanding people’s circumstances and avoiding unnecessary pressure on them that may cause any distress.

Again the research is not intentionally exploring illegal activity but it is possible that some participants could have been involved in unlawful activity. It is, however, less likely that such involvement would be brought to the attention of the researcher as the research does not focus on illegal activities by individuals or groups, and is confined to observing and discussing the visible day-to-day activities of legally constituted community groups. It will, however, be explained to participants that confidentiality may be compromised if the researcher were to be made aware of illegal activities, especially if there is a legal obligation or order to disclose information.

Care will also be taken to ensure that the research is conducted in a respectful and inclusive manner should Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be engaged due to their association with the community groups in the study. This sensitivity will be guided by the six values mentioned in “The Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research” namely: reciprocity, respect, equality, responsibility, survival and protection, and spirit and integrity. In addition to these, the research will also consider the principles of justice, beneficence and respect as laid in the NS 4.7.1 - 4.7.12. As an ethnographic study, efforts will also be made to develop trust and a sense of equal research partnerships with all the community groups (NS4.7.5).

The three African Community organisations are identified as cultural or ethnic minority group. However, the researcher is also from an African cultural background and has worked with different communities groups for over 10 years. He has also conducted a research with African communities in Tasmania, which has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. For details see HREC Reference Number **H9954**.
### Recruitment of Participants

How will participants be recruited? From where will your participants be recruited? Give specific details about how participants will be recruited. Some questions to consider include:

- Are you recruiting through advertisements? If so, indicate where they will be placed and append a copy.
- Are you recruiting through 3rd parties like associations, schools or clubs? If so, detail how you will approach the organisations and the process that the stakeholders will use to pass on information to potential participants. Please attach copies of letters of introduction, emails, and telephone preambles if appropriate.
- Are the participants University or DHHS staff, or regular patients in a particular clinic? If so, detail how they will be approached i.e. through personal invitation, email etc.

The number of the participants is assumed to be from 10 to 20 from each selected community group. The justification as to the choice of case study community groups is provided above. However, it is worth noting that the following qualifying criteria have been used in identifying or recruiting the community groups:

- African communities in Australia with diverse membership who have organised themselves as community organisation and have community empowerment as one of their organisational objectives;
- groups having common social ties in the sense of interpersonal relationships, a common interest and perspectives that may create sense of community (Jewkes & Murcott 1996);
- and community groups that are involved in some sort of collective action.

With these basic criteria three African communities have been selected and preliminary discussion is already underway to work with the African Communities Council of Tasmania (ACCT) and the African Communities Council of South Australia (ACCSA). In Victoria the researcher was unable to establish contact with the African Communities Council of Victoria (ACCV), however, discussions is underway with a similar African community organisation.

Once the community groups are selected as discussed above and initial contact is made through telephone and emails, the purpose of the research will be explained to the elected representatives of each group, an information sheet will be provided, and formal permission to include each group in the study will be sought following each group’s protocols. For instance in some groups the president may ok it and in others the Board’s approval may be necessary. This will provide access for the researcher to work with the community group, although it does not constitute individual consent to participate in the research.

The selection of participants in each group will be guided by the structure of each community group as the “leaders” or office bearers of each community group become eligible to participate in the research as “participants” mainly because of their position and assumed involvement in conscientizing, organising and mobilising their members for collective action. In addition to these formal leaders who could be board members, management committee members or community council members depending on the structure of each group, informal leaders who seem to have tangible impact on the activities of the community groups will be eligible to be included in the study as key informants. The informal leaders will be identified both by asking the formal leaders who they think has/have tangible impact in the activities of the community groups and through participant observation by the researcher. Once identified, participants will be contacted both collectively through their community group and directly one-on-one by the researcher to seek their permission to participate in the study. All participants will be provided with information sheet for them to keep; and if they agree to participate in the research, they will be asked to sign and return a consent form.

### 11. Data Source and Identifiability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does the project involve information sourced from databanks?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(NS 3.2)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
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</table>

If yes, state which one(s) and indicate what permission for access is required. Include a...
11. Data Source and Identifiability

Is the data collected about individual participants:

a) Non-identifiable?
Non-identifiable data is data which have never been labelled with individual identifiers or from which identifiers have been permanently removed, and by means of which no specific individual can be identified. A subset of non-identifiable data are those that can be linked with other data so it can be known that they are about the same data subject, but the person’s identity remains unknown.

b) Re-identifiable?
Re-identifiable data is data from which identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code, but it remains possible to re-identify a specific individual by, for example, using the code or linking different data sets.

c) Individually Identifiable?
Individually identifiable data is data where the identity of an individual can reasonably be ascertained. Examples of identifiers include the individuals name, image, date of birth or address, or in some cases their position in an organisation.

12. Federal Privacy Legislation

The following questions are part of the requirements concerning federal privacy legislation.

(a) Is this project medical research (including epidemiological research?)

If yes, will you require the use or disclosure of information from a Commonwealth agency?

If yes, will the information to be disclosed be personal information, i.e. identifiable information?

If yes, will you be obtaining consent from the individuals to whom the information relates?

(b) Is this Research relevant to public health or safety, or to the management, funding or monitoring of a health service?

If yes, does the research involve the collection, use or disclosure of information from a private sector organisation?

If yes, will you be collecting, using or disclosing health information?

If yes, will consent be obtained from the individuals to whom the health information relates?

13. Procedures

Describe the procedures to which participants will be subjected or the tasks they will be asked to carry out (please detail exactly what you will be doing).
As participant observation is the primary method to collect and analyse data, I intend to fully immerse myself in the day-to-day activities and try not only to observe and understand the phenomenon under study, but also experience what it is like to be in the situation or be part of the community.

Throughout the participant observation, my focus will be on the social structures, interpretations of participants’ own action, and the context of the action (Gobo 2008). I will keep detailed field notes, conduct interviews based on open-ended questions, and gather whatever site documents might be available in the setting. My participation will—however—range from a minimal involvement with people or activities, to complete participation, to becoming a member of the group being studied; for instance with one of the groups I would like to study – the African Communities Council of Tasmania, I have already acquired a partial membership to enable me to participate in all their organisational activities.

To facilitate a smooth entry into the community and to build rapport with them, I intend to register as a volunteer with the communities themselves or with community organisations that work with them (Fetterman 1989). Where legally and ethically permissible, I will accompany my informants in their organisational activities and in some cases it may be necessary to spend time in their day-to-day organisational activities. In all circumstances, I will seek to obtain their individual consent.

I will use various techniques to record my observations. In addition to carefully documenting observations, conversations and informal interviews on a daily basis in a field note; I may in some cases tape record interviews and events with the permission of informants to supplement my field notes. Generally my involvement with the participants will take three forms: event/meeting observation, informal observation and interviewing.

**Event/Meeting Observation:** I will observe how the community groups work, particularly the “participants”, around issues and attend their meetings and activities. This will include attending management committee meetings and/or regular organisational activities including: strategic planning meetings, project events and activities designed to create knowledge and skills to enable community members to take control of their own destiny, activities organised by the group to attain some objectives, the community groups’ interaction with other bodies including government, supporting organisations, professionals or similar groups with whom they work, and so on. I will take notes and record some of these events and activities on audio whenever permissible.

By observing these events, activities and meetings, I will collect stories, narratives and discourses that may provide evidence about key determinants of empowerment and other objectives of the project. These may include observing: the presence or absence of “existing social disturbances” (see Hur 2006) (disadvantage, exclusion and the like) and whether or not such conditions serve as the basis for the initiation of collective action; whether and how the group “conscientize” themselves to strengthen the “power within” and foster possibilities for change; whether and how the group “mobilises” collective action to change their situation; whether and how the community groups “maximise” the opportunities that exist to bring about “change”; and whether and how community groups create or contribute towards the creation of a new order by “transforming” old institutions and structures into new ones. I will also look for clues and indicators if the activities and programs of the community groups lead to collective belonging, involvement in the wider community, and community building as indicators of social inclusion. I will seek to understand the aspirations and aims of the community groups and individuals in the groups; their understanding of social inequality or one’s own disadvantage, and observe who is making the decision; the different roles participants play, interaction among individuals in the group and the like.

**Informal Observation/Discussion:** This is a continuous process and I intend to observe groups and their membership around organised activities and discuss with formal and informal leaders, those who work with them and in some cases their members during their organisational activities.
over lunches, during events and workshops, and other informal events. The main purpose of such an observation is to see if key indicators of empowerment are exhibited in the group and to triangulate some of the data collected through formal observation and interviewing of the participants in each community group.

**Ethnographic interviews:** In conjunction with participant observation, data will also be collected through unstructured and informal interviews. This is different from other interviews in that firstly, at the time of the interview, I, as a researcher and the interviewee must have had known each other for some time and perhaps also had opportunity to have a meaningful conversation before the interview; and secondly unlike other interviews the interview would be arranged impromptu as conditions dictate (Gobo 2008). In fact, Fetterman (1989, p. 49) notes that these interviews are likely to emerge serendipitously from participant’s comments or conversations.

Although formal agreement of the community groups for the researcher to work with them would have been obtained through their elected representatives, the purpose of the study will be explained to all interviewees and an information sheet will be provided for them to keep. Once participants agree to participate in the study, consent forms will be provided for them to read - sign and return before the interviewing and/or observing process begins. These interviews are expected to take up to one and half hours and participants will be asked follow up questions which will often emanate from the activities they carried out prior to the interview. With the permission of the participants, some of the interviews will be taped and this will only be used for accurate transcription of the interview and effort will be made to ensure that all participants remain anonymous within the research (Bernard 2006). Anonymity could, however, be difficult to achieve in this circumstance as the participants could be identified due to their position in the community group and this risk will be communicated to all interviewees.

### 14. Data

| Will photographs be taken? | Yes ☒ No ☑ |
| Will video-recordings be made? | Yes ☒ No ☑ |
| Will interviews or focus groups be tape-recorded? | Yes ☒ No ☑ |

If you answered “Yes” to any of the above, please describe the information to be collected. See section 13 and attached methodology for details.

### 15. Disclosure and consent:

| Does the project collect information from which individual participants can be identified? (NS 2.2) | Yes ☒ No ☑ |
| If yes, could the research be conducted using non-identifiable information? | Yes ☒ No ☑ |

| Does this project use any form of implicit or passive consent? (NS 2.2.5, 2.3) | Yes ☒ No ☑ |
| If yes, please describe how your research complies with the relevant section of the National Statement. | |

| Will there be any deception of participations including concealment and covert observation? (NS 2.3.1, 2.3.2) | Yes ☒ No ☑ |

### 15. Disclosure and consent - continued . . .
Describe how participants will consent to participate in this study and how they will be informed of their rights (NS 2.2.1-2.2.7). Attach copies of your Information Sheet and Consent Form (where relevant) or give an explanation of the process by which you will obtain consent. (Pro formas for Information Sheets and Consent Forms are available on our website at: http://www.research.utas.edu.au/human_ethics/social_science_forms.htm)

Details of the research including its benefits, risks, time required, methods used, and their voluntary participation will be thoroughly explained in an information sheet which will be provided for all participants to keep. Consent will be requested from each participant and individual consent forms will be provided for their signature if they agree to participate. Participants will not be coerced or pressured and it will be clearly stated that participation is voluntary and that participants have the right to withdraw at any time.

The information sheet and consent form are attached as separate documents to this application.

16. Reimbursement

Is any reimbursement, payment, or other reward (outside of course credit) being offered to participants in the study? (NS 2.2.10)
Yes ☐ No ☑

If yes, please state what will be offered, what amount will be offered and for what purpose (e.g. a voucher as a prize, reimbursement to cover expenses etc).

17. Intrusiveness

Are there any aspects of the study that are intrusive in areas ordinarily considered personal and private, or that could create apprehension and anxiety for participants? Yes ☐ No ☑

Are you collecting personal details or private information? Yes ☐ No ☑

Is there any kind of dependency relationship between the researcher and any of the participants? Yes ☐ No ☑

If you answered “Yes” to any of the above, please explain in more detail.

Although the focus of observation and interviews is mainly organisational activities, the nature of “observation” and the participation and continuous presence of the researcher could possibly create some intrusiveness and may possible cause some apprehension and anxiety. It is also possible that participants could reveal personal and private information when talking about the aims of their participation in their group activities and this may trigger anxiety. When such apprehension or anxiety occur, the wellbeing of participants will take priority over the research, and participants will be reminded and reassured that they may withdraw from the study at any time and that all data they provided may also be withdrawn. Details of counselling services that each community group may access in their state are also provided in the information sheet.

There is no obvious dependency relationship between the researcher and any of the participants in South Australia and Victoria. However, some Tasmanian participants may feel so due to the past position of the researcher who worked between 2006 and 2008 with migrants through The Migrant Resource Centre in Hobart. To minimise the impact such feeling may have on the outcome of the research, participants will be reassured that their participation is voluntary and that there will not be any consequence to them if they decide to discontinue participation at any time.

If it becomes evident that the presence of the researcher during organisational activities or any of the interviews evokes anxiety or lead to recall of painful memories, the participants’ wellbeing will take priority over the research and the participant will be reminded that they can withdraw from the study at any time. They will also be advised to access counselling services. Details of counselling service that they may access in their state is provided in the information sheet.
## 18. Potential benefits, risks and harms (NS 2.1)

(a) What are the possible benefits of this research to:

(i) The participant?

The study will provide external analysis of the community groups’ activities which can help the groups to reflect, understand and reorganised themselves better. This is expected to provide significant leverage in terms of continuous improvement in activities carried out by providing the community groups insights to the process of empowerment and enhance their capacity to attract more resources due to better understanding of the environment they operate in. The regular provision of the summary of researcher’s analysis to each group will also create a learning environment not only between members of community groups, but also with the researcher.

(ii) The wider community?

This study is expected to contribute to the current debate in community empowerment by highlighting some of the mechanisms through which community empowerment is mediated and the social structures and conditions that are necessary for its effectiveness. The study will also contribute to the understanding of how grassroots activities or community action may be supported both by action of government on the one hand and that of professionals on the other hand to enable communities take collective action to improve their own situation.

It may also potentially contribute to better policy development by enabling policymakers understand community empowerment and the different actors in empowerment better and provide a platform for further research and program development by providing some empirical evidence for community empowerment.

(b) What are the possible risks or harms of this research to the participants? (NS 2.1)

Could your research evoke anxiety or lead to the recall of painful memories?  
Yes ☒ No ☐

Will participants be asked to provide any information or commit any act, which might diminish self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment or regret?  
Yes ☐ No ☒

Will any procedure be used which may have an unpleasant or harmful side effect?  
Yes ☐ No ☒

Does the research use any stimuli, tasks, or procedures, which may be experienced by subjects as stressful, noxious, or unpleasant? (NS 2.1)  
Yes ☐ No ☒

Will you induce or create physical pain beyond mild discomfort?  
Yes ☐ No ☒

Are there any other possible risks or harms of this research to the participants?  
Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please list other possible risks or harms.
### 19. Monitoring

What mechanisms do you intend to implement to monitor the conduct and progress of the research project? (NS 5.5)

The approved research proposal will serve as a blue print and relevant UTAS policies and guidelines and the national guidelines will be adhered to ensure that the conduct of research conforms to the proposal and is carried out ethically.

The supervisory arrangement is the primary monitoring mechanisms. The direction of the research will heavily depend on the feedback received from supervisors to verify that the conduct of research conforms to the approved proposal and that the research is being conducted as per the required quality and ethical standards. Towards this end the researcher will provide reports on the progress of the research including:

- progress to date,
- maintenance and security of records, and
- compliance with the approved proposal.

In addition to this, through the current structure and candidature requirements set by the Graduate Research Office including timeframes, progress reviews and milestone checks, the progress of the report will be monitored and reviewed with supervisors.

To ensure researcher safety and manage risks that may arise in conducting this research, UTAS OHS policy, travel guidelines and other policies and procedures will be adhered to. To minimise and mitigate risk, the researcher will ensure that detailed itinerary of travel and schedule of the field work with contact numbers is provided to supervisors. The researcher will also seek regular feedback from the community groups to monitor the “researcher – participant” relationship and any outstanding issues or unexpected outcomes. The lines of communication will be open and participants and others involved in the research encouraged to make contact in such a case. If such issues and unexpected risks arise, the researcher will report promptly to the supervisors and the HREC and put in place mechanisms to deal with such an expected risk.

The research will comply with the requirements of the HREC and provide annual progress reports and final report to the HREC.

### 20. Feedback

What feedback will be given to participants?

How will feedback be given? (NS 1.5)

All participants will be provided with the transcripts of their interviews to review and correct after each interview. In addition to this, all participants will be provided with insights of the analysis of the observations made, a summary of the study results, and access to the complete study results via the UTAS Library thesis collection. This will provide opportunity for participants to provide comments timely.

### 21. Data Storage

Please state how and where your data will be stored, and for how long it will be retained. Address any issues of data security.

**Please note: Data must be stored for at least five years beyond the date of publication and then destroyed. All data must eventually be destroyed, unless explicit consent has been obtained from the participants to archive their data.**

Written and taped data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Institute for Regional Development in Burnie. The data will only be accessed by the Supervisors and the Researcher during the study period. After the study period, the data will be stored for five years after which it will be destroyed.
22. Other Ethical Issues

Are there in your opinion any other ethical issues involved in the research?  Yes ☐ No ☑

If you answered “Yes”, please explain in more detail.

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### 23. Declarations

#### a) Statement of Scientific Merit:
The Head of School or the Head of Department is required to sign the following statement of scientific merit:

“This proposal has been considered and is sound with regard to its merit and methodology.” The Head of School’s or Head of Department’s signature on the application form indicates that he/she has read the application and confirms that it is sound with regard to:

(i) educational and/or scientific merit; and
(ii) research design and methodology.

This does not preclude the SSHREC from questioning the research merit or methodology of any proposed project.

If the Head of School is one of the investigators, this statement must be signed by an appropriate person. This may be the Head of School/Department in a related area or the Dean. The certification of scientific merit may not be given by an investigator on the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Professor Janelle Allison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Director Cradle Coast campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>3rd March 2011</td>
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#### b) Conformity with the National Statement

The Chief Investigator is required to sign the following statement:

I have read and understood the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007. I accept that I, as chief investigator, am responsible for ensuring that the investigation proposed in this form is conducted fully within the conditions laid down in the National Statement and any other conditions specified by the HREC (Tasmania) Network.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dr Robyn Eversole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer (Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>3 March 2011</td>
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#### c) Signatures of other investigators

I acknowledge my involvement in the project and I accept the role of the above researcher as chief investigator of this study.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor David Adams</td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
<td>07/03/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiros Hiruy</td>
<td>[Signature]</td>
<td>03/03/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
<td>Signature:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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</table>
CHECKLIST

Please ensure that the following documents are included with your application:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Type</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information sheet/s (if not attached ensure you have explained why in Section 10)</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent form/s (if not attached ensure you have explained why in Section 15)</td>
<td>☑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview schedules (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A copy of any permissions obtained i.e. Other HREC, Other Institutions (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>All documents relevant to the study, including all information provided to subjects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone Preambles (if applicable)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment Advertisements (if applicable)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Email Contents (if applicable)</td>
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TO SUBMIT THIS APPLICATION:

You must email an electronic copy of this application form (can be unsigned) and all supporting documents to: Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au

(Please submit as Microsoft Word documents)

.pdf versions are acceptable for appropriate documents, eg., posters or advertisements, some questionnaires etc.

1. You must also send a signed hard copy of this application form and all supporting documents to Marilyn Knott, Private Bag 1, Hobart, 7001

Has the 'Statement of Scientific Merit' been signed ☑

Have all investigators signed the form? ☑

References:


Appendix II: Ethics letter of approval
14 June 2011

Dr Robyn Eversole
Institute for Regional Development
Private Bag 3628
Burnie Tasmania 7320

Student Researcher: Kiros Hiruy (PhD)

Dear Dr Eversole

Re: FULL ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL
Ethics Ref: H0011705 - Transforming the odds: bottom-up driven social empowerment and inclusion in regional Australia

We are pleased to advise that the Tasmania Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee approved the above project on 14 June 2011.

Please note that this approval is for four years and is conditional upon receipt of an annual Progress Report. Ethics approval for this project will lapse if a Progress Report is not submitted.

The following conditions apply to this approval. Failure to abide by these conditions may result in suspension or discontinuation of approval.

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval, to ensure the project is conducted as approved by the Ethics Committee, and to notify the Committee if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.

2. Complaints: If any complaints are received or ethical issues arise during the course of the project, investigators should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 03 6226 7479 or human.ethics@utas.edu.au.

3. Incidents or adverse effects: Investigators should notify the Ethics Committee immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
4. **Amendments to Project**: Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval is obtained from the Ethics Committee. Please submit an Amendment Form (available on our website) to notify the Ethics Committee of the proposed modifications.

5. **Annual Report**: Continued approval for this project is dependent on the submission of a Progress Report by the anniversary date of your approval. You will be sent a courtesy reminder closer to this date. **Failure to submit a Progress Report will mean that ethics approval for this project will lapse.**

6. **Final Report**: A Final Report and a copy of any published material arising from the project, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of the project.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Katherine Shaw
Acting Executive Officer

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A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Bottom-up Driven Social Empowerment and Inclusion in Regional Australia: Case studies of African communities

You are invited to participate in a study that is designed to gain insights into the processes that may lead to the empowerment of community groups in Australia. Empowerment refers to the process by which people gain control over the factors and decisions that shape their lives; which include increase in assets and attributes and building capacities to gain access, partners, networks and/or a voice, in order to gain control.

The study is being conducted in partial fulfilment of a PhD for Kiros Hiruy under the supervision of Dr Robyn Eversole, Graduate Research Coordinator, Institute for Regional Development, University of Tasmania and Professor David Adams, School of Management, University of Tasmania.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to understand the empowerment of community groups in Australia. Key to this understanding will be to gain insights as to how community groups make decisions, organise and mobilise collective action to attain certain level of empowerment and the conditions in which such empowerment is carried out.

Your eligibility to participate in the study

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a member of one of the African community groups which are considered to have “community empowerment” as one of their main objectives or you work directly or indirectly with such a group. The study will include three African community groups from three states namely South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria. Approximately 30-60 participants are expected to participate in the research.

Procedures of the study

As a researcher, Mr Hiruy intends to participate in your community group’s day-to-day organisational activities to observe and understand the phenomenon of empowerment, and experience what is like to be part of your community group. These may include attending group meetings, training, community organised events such as festivals and other activities carried out by the community group and members to attain group objectives. At times he may also seek permission to speak with you individually.

The individual interviews are expected to take up to one and half hours and these conversations will either be held immediately after or while community group activities are being carried. Alternatively, Mr Hiruy may organise a convenient place to meet or travel to a place of your convenience to hold these conversations, which will usually be a follow-up on your community group activities that he observed. If you wish, you will be given a transcript of your interview so that you may amend or change any part you wish to.

Regarding his participation and observation in your group activities, the frequency and length of time that he would spend with your community group on a daily basis is dependent on your activity and
the overall plan is to spend with your community group up to a total of 40 working days. Mr Hiruy intends to take field notes and with your permission, tape-record some of the interviews.

It is important to understand that your group’s and your personal involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you or your group if you decide not to participate. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. No information will be disclosed to anyone. Your name or the name of your group will not be used in any publication arising out of the research, unless you give permission to do so.

**Possible benefits from participation in this study**

It is expected that the study will provide external analysis of your group’s activities which can help your group reflect, understand and reorganised itself better. It may also provide significant leverage for continuous improvement by providing key insights that may enhance your group’s capacity to attract more resources. The regular provision of the summary of researcher’s analysis to your group and yourself is also expected to create a learning environment that will be beneficial to you, other participants and the researcher.

We expect that the findings from this study will provide valuable information to policymakers, planners and practitioners like community development and social workers and others working with your community group and other similar groups within Australia. This information is also expected to lead to improved government services and hence benefit your community group and other similar groups. It may also provide the opportunity to share experiences with other community groups and learn from each other. We will also be interested to see if you experience any other benefits from this study.

**Possible risks from participation in this study**

There are no significant risks anticipated with participation in this study. However, you should be aware that the presence of the researcher during your organisational activities may be intrusive and create apprehension and anxiety. It is also possible that you may feel distressed due to the nature of the interviews and/or feel uncomfortable to discuss some issues which are private to you. You may also feel that there may be a dependency relationship between you and the researcher. In some instances, there could also be the possibility that participation in the research may evoke anxiety or lead to recall of painful memories.

If you find that you are becoming distressed or feel that the research activities are affecting you, please notify the researcher and contact counselling services for migrants in your area indicated below:

- **South Australia**: the Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) located at 12 Hawker Street, Bowden can be contacted on ph (08) 8346 5433.

- **Tasmania**: The phoenix centre in Hobart is located at 191 Liverpool Street, Hobart and can be contacted on ph (03) 6234 9138.

- **Victoria**: The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (VFST) located at 6 Gardiner Street, Brunswick can be contacted on ph (03) 9388 0022.

You may also decide to discontinue your participation at any time. There will be no consequences to you or your group if you decide not to participate.

**Confidentiality**

Effort will be made to ensure confidentiality to protect the identity of community groups and individual participants by assigning false names unless the community group or the individual agreed for its name to be used. However, please note that pseudonym for the group or individual may not
guarantee anonymity due to the small number of African community groups in Australia or the position of the individual within the group.

Written and taped information of the study will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked room at the University of Tasmania and be accessible only to the Co-Investigators and Researcher; and the information will be stored at the University of Tasmania for five years, after which it will be destroyed by deletion or shredding.

**Queries about this research**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Dr Robyn Eversole on ph (03) 6430 4519 or Mr Kiros Hiruy on ph (03) 6226 1959. We will be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once the study is complete we will send or organise to read to you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the whole study.

This research has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study, contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote HREC Reference Number **H11705**.

**Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.**

If you wish to take part in this study, please sign the attached consent form.

**This information sheet is for you to keep.**
Appendix IV: Statement of consent form

STATEMENT OF CONSENT FORM
Bottom-up Driven Social Empowerment and Inclusion in Regional Australia: Case studies of African communities

1. I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study.
2. The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
3. I understand that the study involves continuous presence of the researcher to observe our community groups organisational activities up to 40 days in the course of the research period. I also understand that the interviews will take up about one and half hours of my time at a time and the nature of the discussion will be in regards to my involvement in my community group. I further understand that with my agreement, the conversation will be tape recorded.
4. I understand that my participation may create some apprehension, distress and anxiety due to the intrusive nature of the participation and observation of the researcher in our community group activities. I also understand that some of the discussion and interview may lead to recall of painful memories. In such an event, I am advised to contact counselling services in my area and notify the researcher to mitigate the risks involved.
5. I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for a period of five years. The data will be destroyed at the end of five years.
6. Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
7. I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.
8. I understand that the researchers will maintain my identity confidential and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research. However, I also understand that due to my position in my community group, the researcher cannot guarantee complete anonymity.
9. I agree to participate in this study and understand that I may withdraw myself or my data at any time without any effect. I also understand that I will have an opportunity to review the transcript of my interview, the summary report and access the complete study result via the UTAS Library thesis collection. If I so wish, I may request that some or any of the data I have supplied be withdrawn from the research.

Name of Participant:

Signature:______________________Date:______________________

Statement by Investigator

I have explained the project & the implications of participation to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of investigator:______________________

Signature of investigator:______________________Date:______________________
Appendix V: Interview schedule

Interview Schedule – guiding points

- How and why did these community groups form?
- What are the historical, social, cultural and political contexts of their formation?
- What sorts of activities do these community groups undertake?
- How do members involve themselves in these community organisations’ activities?
- What benefits do these organisations provide to their members?
- What are the challenges for these community groups?
- How did the groups resolve these challenges?
- Are there particular community activities that community groups consider critical to their empowerment?
- What mechanisms are used by these community groups to organise themselves and mobilise action?
- What are the conditions that help these community groups attain their goals?
- What kind of resources do these community groups utilise to attain their goals?
- Where do these resources come from? Who provides what?
- What kind of structures supports these communities to attain their goals?
- What kinds of actors and institutions are involved in the empowerment of these community groups?
- How do community groups assess their relationship with other institutions – NGOs and government?
- What are the interrelationships among these actors and their institutions?
- What kind of interrelationships do these actors have with community groups?
- Are there any institutional arrangements and interrelationships that community groups consider particularly important to their success?
- In what way do these interactions and interrelationships benefit community groups?
- What partnerships have these community groups forged? How do these partnerships work?
- Are there any community assets that the community considers critical to their empowerment?
- What have community groups achieved? What kinds of changes were accomplished?
- What kinds of resources are most important to achieving these changes?
- What is the contribution of bottom-up driven community empowerment to wider social change?
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