This chapter traces the evolution of the e-governance for development discourse, describes key applications and reviews current research on this topic. It then presents a conceptualisation of e-governance for development drawing on key issues raised from earlier discussions of development and governance. The conceptual framework has different levels of analysis. At the macro level, of interest are the development policy priorities which exist within a particular context and the strategies adopted for their achievement. At the micro level, of interest is the ability of individual community members to benefit from improved governance services which includes analysing cultural norms within the community. In between these two levels are local administrative, political and social ‘intermediaries’ who provide a crucial interface between the formal and informal governance structure to bring about developmental benefits for communities.

e-Governance is perceived by international development agencies as a key policy priority and an important element of the good governance agenda. Decades of evidence from the private sector in developed countries showed that IT investment could lead to economic growth through increased productivity gains, refuting earlier concerns about the productivity paradox (Brynjolfsson and Hitt, 1998; Dedrick and Kraemer, 2003; OECD, 2002). However, more recent evidence shows that these findings do not have universal validity. Dewan and Kraemer (2000) identify a marked difference in terms of the structure of returns from capital investment between developed and developing countries. In the context of developing countries, their study shows that returns to capital IT investment are not significant while returns to non-IT capital investment are significant. Further, the growing significance of the internet in all activities of economic and social life is providing an opportunity for using technology to reduce the role of the state in favour of market-led development. A widening of the label from ‘e-government’ to ‘e-governance’ appeared in the literature providing scope for public sector IT projects to incorporate private and non-profit
organisations for the delivery of public services by means of outsourcing and partnerships (Riley, 2003).

e-Governance encompasses a portfolio of different types of applications described in the literature in terms of a ‘stages of growth’ continuum (Bhatnagar, 2009; Heeks, 2001; Ranerup, 1999). The first stage in this continuum known as e-administration is described as the use of ICT to improve the internal efficiency of government through automation of back-office functions and the introduction of management information systems (MIS) to support the planning and monitoring of development programmes. At the second stage, known as e-services, it is generally assumed that many of the back-office functions and databases are already in digital format, and the focus is switched to publishing information for citizens through websites which are used to provide a direct entry point for citizen services. As the technologies matured, the level of interactivity and integration has increased. At the third stage of the continuum, known as e-participation or e-development, it is assumed that implementation of back-office digitisation is already complete and that a computerised interface exists for citizens to interact with government. The focus of e-governance now switches to usage of ICTs to foster wider public participation in policy-making processes through such means as electronic voting, petitioning systems and virtual discussion forums. The idea of e-governance implementation proceeding in stages finds expression in the various ‘maturity models’ that have been developed to help governments identify their state of advancement with regards to e-governance based on their technical, organisational and managerial competence (Baum and Maio, 2000; Gronlund et al., 2006; Layne and Lee, 2001). One example of a maturity model proposed by Gronlund et al. (2006) helps developing countries identify their stage of e-governance maturity with regards to their organisational, institutional and policy environment. More recently, the term ‘transformational’ governance has been used in the literature to represent a stage of e-governance maturity that displays a culture of sharing data, infrastructure, resources and standards (The Cabinet Office, 2005).

There is now accumulated evidence to suggest that many e-governance projects implemented in both developed and developing countries have not resulted in significant improvements in citizen services and welfare (Benjamin, 2001; Gartner, 2002; Heeks, 2003, 2006; Kanungo, 2003; Sify Business, 2004; Symonds, 2000; UNDESA, 2003). In cases where usage is low, a generic problem has been lack of equity in providing access to e-governance applications. But even when access is provided, many citizens have not considered these applications relevant for their lives. Various approaches have been proposed for improving our understanding of why e-governance projects have not resulted in improved public service delivery. Stakeholder theory has been found useful to identify the different actors involved in planning and implementing a project and their various interests such as different levels of government, private