

**HYBRIDISING (E)-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA:
THE INTERPLAY OF POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE**

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ABSTRACT

This research, based on a neo-institutional model explores how a techno-managerial variety of e-governance reform as espoused by a transnational governance reform agenda affects the level of governance that hinges upon a dynamic relationship between state and society. Since such a research endeavour focuses on the relationship between technology and governance, a social constructivism approach is deployed to explicate how this relationship is mediated through an array of political, social and cultural factors which further calls for a context-specific analysis of e-governance. Consequently, a detailed analysis of e-governance policies and practices in India along with a case study of the Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme under the National e-Governance Plan of the Government of India has been undertaken. Such analyses often denotes substantial gap between the macro-policies of reform and their actual impact which is further explained through the analytical category of hybridity. Hybridity shows how both policies and practices go through a process of hybridisation in negotiating the hiatus between ‘imported’ institutional set up and the ‘inherited’ social set up in the post-colonial context of India. Thus, the implication of e-governance in India goes much beyond in explaining (e) governance as a complex interplay between politics, technology and culture. Hence, this research transcends the specific context of India firstly in explicating the relationship between technology and governance and secondly, by devising a unique yet holistic methodological approach to address the entanglement of politics, technology and culture in the complex whole of governance.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Casting the Context

“[G]overnance, more than the innate cohesion of Indian society and culture, or the specific context of colonial rule and transfer of power, is the key to India’s resilience” (Mitra, 2006; 2)

The above statement unequivocally hints at the instrumentality of the concept of governance in explaining the strength and sustainability of a post-colonial nation such as India. However, undoubtedly it is not just an Indian problem. The significance of governance as a political and social problematic has caught the fancy of policy-makers, academicians, developmental practitioners and social activists with similar rigor and severity. Consequently, in recent times one can witness an increasing focus on governance across developed as well as developing countries, albeit varying in terms of their origin and contexts.

International political scenario essentially changed since 1989 as the bipolarity of the Cold War period gave way to multipolar locus of power in the world politics. This was soon reflected in the shift in the international development discourse. The focus was now on democracy, participation, efficiency, accountability and so on. Unlike the previous decade, 1990s brought the limelight back on state and institutions and consequently ‘governance’ moved into the agenda across an wide range of discussion involving academicians, development practitioners, politicians, bureaucrats, private sector entrepreneurs and civil society activists . This swing became more prominent in most of the changing societies of post colonial and post communist nation-states where governance reform became a priority for governments and a prerequisite for economic development.

However, this new agenda setting around governance (or governance reform) in the international political and development discourse and the issues emerging from these debates were already confronted in most of the Western democracies already in 1970s. Three main concerns of these debates were focussed on three main functions of the state, namely regulation, welfare and development which in turn addresses the issues of ungovernability related to distrust and disagreement with the state, crisis of welfare state in the face increasing demand related to public sector deficit and lastly the incapability of the state to perform unilaterally to solve social and economic and other developmental problems (Kooiman; 1993). These concerns led to different measures by different states, which found its expressions in terms like privatisation, deregulation, agencification, decentralisation,

development of policy networks, public administration reform and so on (Kjaer; 2004). Parallel to these reshuffling in the role of the state was a growing citizen demand for better and more responsive public service delivery which also resonated in the mounting power of the media and the influence of the civil society (Fritzen; 2009). In post Cold War times, these issues became relevant in most developing and changing societies which was further fortified by a renewed interest in democracy and sustainable development. Evidently, while the recent focus on governance in western developed nations rose more or less from the internal issue of governability, in developing nations the impetus came mostly from external forces such as the international donor agencies.

Amidst myriad attempts at governance reform, the concept of governance went through considerable reconfiguration. On one hand international development paradigm and policy-makers take predominantly a techno-managerial position in addressing the issues of governance, while on the other hand social science research maintains to view governance as a function of orderly rule and a synchronised relationship between state and society. Although these spectrums by no means suggest an exhaustive account of all the possible perspectives on the concept, they nonetheless demonstrate the contentious nature of the concept. This research places itself in the threshold of both sides of the aforementioned continuum of conceptualising governance. That is to say, it explains how governance reforms of a techno-managerial variety can improve the level of governance which hinges upon the state-society dynamics. In illustrating this broader argument, the study draws on the case of India and the e-governance as a specific field of strategic reform¹ in the Indian context. The basic research question that drives this study is: “Does strategic reform matter in improving the level of governance? This broader question is followed by two corollaries: Why some strategic reforms are successful in enhancing governance while others fail? Does the gap between policies and practices of reform necessarily denote a legitimacy deficit in governance? In answering these questions, a careful combination of neo-institutional, social constructivist and transcultural perspectives is deployed. While the neo-institutional model of governance explains the role of strategic reform in determining the level governance, social constructivism demonstrates how social and cultural factors embedded in the local contexts influence the effectiveness of reform initiatives. This implies a probable hiatus between the intentions and outcomes of reform which could be symptomatic of a legitimacy deficit. Here,

¹ Strategic reform in the context of this research can be defined as a broad sectoral reform which emerges as a deliberate shift in the policy regime initiated by the elites as strategies of welfare in order to harness legitimacy of the rule.

transcultural perspective enabled with a conceptual tool of hybridity leverages the analysis of governance by mending the hiatus between policies and practices of reform. In short, state-centric as well society-centric approaches are coalesced to understand the dynamism of the concept of governance and this dynamism is further explicated within a transcultural analytical/methodological framework. Overall, a conscious attempt has been made to combine public policy approach to governance with that of comparative politics approach. The public policy approach perceives governance as an interactive process and serves to understand the material context of the actors involved in the processes of interaction. The comparative politics approach on the other hand renders the analysis of governance more contextually embedded. However, before delving further into the specific dimensions of governance and governance reform that this research undertakes to investigate, it is worthwhile to dwell a little deeper into the concept of governance itself at the outset.

1.2 Governance: Concepts and Connotations

The basic dictionary meaning of governance describes it as an act or manner of governing of a state or an organization (Oxford Dictionaries Online; 2011). The term has often been used synonymously with government which changed during 1980s when political scientists included civil society actors into its definitions. Even within political science, different subfields treat the concept rather differently. Scholars in public administration and public policy while talking about public sector reform refers to governance as self-organizing network involving a plurality of actors and organizations which further blurs the traditional boundaries of public and the private (Kjaer;2004).

For the theorists of international relations, the focus is more on global governance which refers to a system of rule at all levels of human activity aimed at decision-making of transnational nature (Rosenau; 1995). Of course, the definition of global governance is conceived differently by its proponents, even though the spotlight remains on the creation of global organizations such as WTO and growth of non-governmental movements and institutions outside the purview of the nation-state.

In the subfield of comparative politics, which largely engages in the systematic comparison of the political system, during 1980s state institutions and their effects became a common theme. This was different from its previous preoccupation with political culture, parties, electoral behaviour and so forth. While bringing back state institutions into focus comparative politics, in recent times became seriously engaged with the state-society interactions. Governance, in

this sense, is about managing the political rules of the game both at the formal and informal level (Kjaer; 2004).

Needless to say that, despite its different usage in different approach governance as a concept frequently transcends these analytical boundaries. Therefore, “governance can be conceptualized in terms of how authority, resources and power are distributed among the public, private and people sectors and various levels of government (from a supranational to community level)” (Fritzen,2009, pp:1). This definition of governance implicates all the three approaches discussed above at the same time. Governance can also be referred to as the “development of governing ‘styles’ in which boundaries between and within public and private sectors become blurred. The focus in this case is on governing mechanisms that do not rest on recourse to authority and sanctions, but draw their legitimacy from popular consent” (Mitra; 2006). This public policy meets comparative politics definition of governance definitely hints at the democratizations process which is more pertinent in the context of changing societies². Moreover, since public policy is affected by both domestic and international politics and affairs, international relations notions of governance also stands relevant. Here, governance also becomes a relevant topic for other disciplines such as institutional economics, development studies, organizational studies, and political sociology and so on.

Besides having overlapping zones of understanding, all the approaches conceive of governance as something broader than government which is concerned about the rules of the game. Their preoccupation with rule-making also grows out of their common orientation towards institutions and institutional change. There are many versions of institutionalisms which are albeit based on two basic assumptions about human behaviour. The first is rational-choice approach where preferences are exogenous to individuals and an individual chooses from a list of alternative actions to maximise utility. The second is sociological where preferences are endogenous and the individual behaviour is determined by certain values and norms he or she is socialized into. Both these assumptions are crucial to explain two basis questions that institutionalism set out to address; i) how institutions affect political behaviour?, and ii) how institutions emerge and change. This latter concern of institutionalism has caught much fancy of the governance theorists (Kjaer; 2004).

²Following Mitra (2006) ‘changing societies’ are taken to represent societies in which formal institutions are mostly of exogenous variety and lack roots in the inherent social structure. This feature of changing societies put them in sharp contrast to the post-industrial, stable democracies at large. .

Institutionalism conceives governance as setting, application and enforcement of rules which not only determines the framework in which citizens, government and politics interact but also shapes the spheres of civil society (Kjaer; 2004). This way of defining governance combines the structure of rules with agency of change. Therefore, governance as a process lies in the interplay of structure and agency in which state interacts with society. More precisely, “governance, conceptualised as the overlap of the thin norms of the state and the thick perceptions of social groups is the interface of societies and institutions” (Mitra; 2006, pp:21). This is further elaborated in the figure 1.1 below.

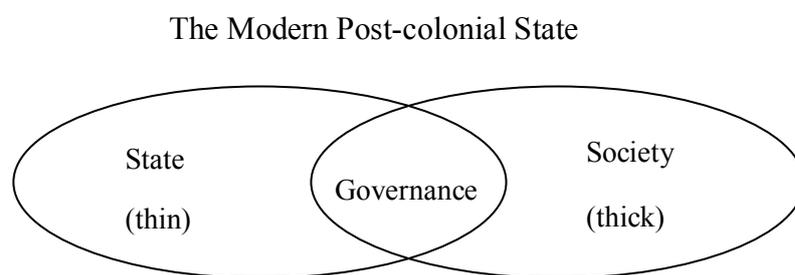


Figure: 1.1: State, Society and Governance in Modern State

Source: Mitra (2006)

Until now it becomes clear that recent developments in governance theory has opened up alternative ways of looking at political institutions, domestic-global linkages, transnational co-operation, and different forms of public-private exchange (Pierre,2000). However, one fundamental point which needs to be addressed here is the contradiction inbuilt into the very concept of governance. Governance is always perceived differently by those who govern and those are governed as they belong to the opposite ends of social distribution of power. The immediate question that one tends to ask is how orderly rule is achieved in spite of this inevitable hiatus between perceptions. The answer lies in conceptualising power as productive, technical and positive. Power needs to be visualised as a productive network which runs through the entire social body surpassing its mere negative function of repression (Foucault; 1980). In Foucault’s own words,

...from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries onwards, there was a veritable technological take-off in the productivity of power. Not only did the monarchies of the Classical period develop great state apparatuses (the army, the police and fiscal administration), but above all

there was established at this period what one might call a new 'economy' of power, that is to say procedures which allowed the effects of power to circulate in a manner at once continuous, uninterrupted, adapted and 'individualised' throughout the entire social body. These new techniques are both much more efficient and much less wasteful (less costly economically, less risky in their results, less open to loopholes and resistances) than the techniques previously employed which were based on a mixture of more or less forced tolerances (from recognized privileges to endemic criminality) and costly ostentation (spectacular and discontinuous interventions of power, the most violent form of which was the 'exemplary', because exceptional, punishment). (Foucault, 1980, pp: 119)

Even while talking about modern state, he maintained the same perception of power which goes much beyond the juridical-legal aspect of the state and focuses more on the relations of power already existent in the society. According to him,

To pose the problem in terms of the State means to continue posing it in terms of sovereign and sovereignty, that is to say in terms of law. If one describes all these phenomena of power as dependant on the State apparatus, this means grasping them as essentially repressive: the Army as a power of death, police and justice as punitive instances, etc. I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations. The State is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth. True, these networks stand in a conditioning-conditioned relationship to a kind of 'meta-power' which is structured essentially round a certain number of great prohibition functions; but this meta-power with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power. (Foucault, 1980, pp: 122)

Relating this Foucauldian notion of power to the understanding of governance in modern state becomes specially relevant as it reiterates the fact that orderly rule is derived from the broader acceptance of governing mechanism despite the hiatus between the governed and those who

govern. And the hiatus is bridged by addressing the interactive relationship between state and society and harnessing the significance of governance in manoeuvring this complex and dynamic relationship.

All the definitions discussed above delineate certain concepts which become crucial for general understanding of governance. These concepts are as follows: legitimacy, democracy, efficiency and accountability (Kjaer; 2004). It is not only important to understand each of these concepts, but also to realize their interconnectedness in relation to the concept of governance. Legitimacy is considered to be one of the prerequisite of the governing system in a democratic set up. It can be derived through democratic procedures as a common agreement or acceptance of the governing authority³. Legitimacy can also be derived through effective policy implementation geared towards common good. This relates legitimacy to the concept of efficiency on the part of the governing elites involving both public and the private realm of governance. The issue becomes more complicated when applied in a democratic set up, since, sometimes in a democratic set up decision-making might become slow due to involvement of many stakeholders. Then, pertinent question becomes: Is it possible to achieve both democracy and efficiency at the same time or the presence of one eludes the other? Governance scholars, however, stress the importance of both in enhancing governance as efficiency will increase democratic legitimacy by policy implementation and democracy will ensure more effective and citizen-centric policy outcome (Kjaer, 2004). The elite-strategy for reform could also be an instrument to tackle the issue of legitimacy in governance (Mitra, 2006). This particular aspect of the relationship between democracy and governance holds

³ Democracy is broadly understood as rule of the people which is also linked to governance as suggested by the institutionalism thriving on both the rational-choice and sociological model. In the rational approach, where the preferences are exogenous, political actors turn individual needs and resources into collective action through bargaining, lobbying, coalition formation, etc. This is a aggregative model of democracy which is built on a set of institutional arrangements, civil and political rights and regular free and fair elections (March and Olsen; 1995). For the sociological approach, that emphasises endogenous nature of preferences, individuals act more according to the appropriate norms rather than personal interests. This is an integrative model of democracy which is based on participatory processes furthering democratic identities (ibid). There are, of course, many more forms of democracy such as representative democracy, deliberative democracy, associative democracy. However, the point here is not to select between these different forms of democracy but to recognise the extra push on concept such as efficiency (Kjaer; 2004) or simply the 'capacity to get things done' (Mitra, 2006). This treatment of democracy is also echoed in the public policy approach towards governance, as mentioned earlier.

special relevance in the current research endeavour as it investigates the importance of strategic reform and policy implementation in enhancing governance.

In recent times, given the alternative approaches towards governance which promote the role of non-governmental actors, the concept of accountability has become extremely crucial. Involvement of private sector and civil society actors in decision-making and public service delivery processes, development of policy networks, decentralization of government, growth of transnational organizations, all contribute to complicate the chain of accountability and problematise the issue of who is accountable for what, when there are too many actors involved. In general, governance studies have been preoccupied more with efficiency. Nevertheless, democratic accountability has also caught serious academic attention and is getting due importance by governance scholars along with the facets of efficiency.

There are two more characteristic features of governance which have been repeatedly mentioned in almost all the literature and therefore needs a little more elucidation in the introductory section. The first of these two features is the public-private linkage. Governance being an interactive process seeks to build a partnership model between public and private as none of the sphere has the necessary knowledge or resources for unilateral action to obtain effective performance (Kooiman; 1993). There are different models of such partnership: i) principal-agent model in which the principal (one side) hires the agent (the other side) to perform a certain task; ii) inter-organisational model rests on negotiations between organisations on either side to better achieve their respective goals; iii) systemic coordination model establishes shared vision and joint capacity between the partners through embedded mutual understanding which eventually culminate into self-governing network (Mitra; 2006).

The other notion which has been implicitly present in all conceptualisation of governance is that of agency. It is through the notion of agency that governance theory addresses the issue of institutional change and also promotes the participatory processes involving citizens and civil society which purportedly compliment parliamentary democracy. As far as governance research is concerned, it is important to hold the focus on agency since it would be instrumental in exploring the changes in political practices across societies and their implications for governance rather than being sabotaged by overwhelming attention to the neo-liberal policy (Kjaer; 2004). Keeping the basic research questions in mind, the concept of agency plays a crucial role in understanding the process of policies and practices of strategic reform and the subsequent impact on governance. It is the concept of agency on part of all the

stakeholders that explains how policies are formulated, implemented and received in a specific context, which can also called “strategic evaluation of rules by the stakeholders” (Mitra, 2006: 2)⁴.

1.3 Shifting from Government to Governance

The context in which governance came to the fore in much of academic and development discourse has been already been touched upon in the previous section. It is nonetheless imperative to invest a little more attention on this aspect as this context is particularly instrumental for the shift that has taken place in the lexicon of governance. Moreover, mapping the different trajectory of the governance discourse in developed and developing part of the world is also crucial for comprehending the politics of governance.

The most fundamental paradigm shift in this regard has been the moving focus from government to governance. This does not mean that the conceptual difference between government and governance is a new theoretical development. What it actually means is that this difference has been highlighted in recent times and the focus is now more on the governance than on the government. Moving from a purely abstract level of analysis (as done in the previous section), one feels compelled to ask what does this shift actually imply in real terms?

In discussing the government, the focus remains primarily on the sphere of state and its institutions and a structural-functional approach is mostly deployed in analysing the realm of state. This structured based understanding of the state was slowly replaced by a process based conceptualisation of governance where two other spheres got considerable importance, namely the market and the civil society. The growth of market and civil society has sometimes coincided with the shrinkage of state or at least ineffectuality of state.

As has already been mentioned, governance forms a complex whole (Figure.1.2) of interconnected spheres of public (which includes the state), private (which includes market) and citizens (which includes the civil society) in which the relationship between these spheres vary according to the distribution of power, resources and authority among them (Fritzen; 2009).

⁴ Following Mitra (2006:2), this research also describe stakeholders as groups of people who “affect and are affected” by policies and practices of strategic reform.

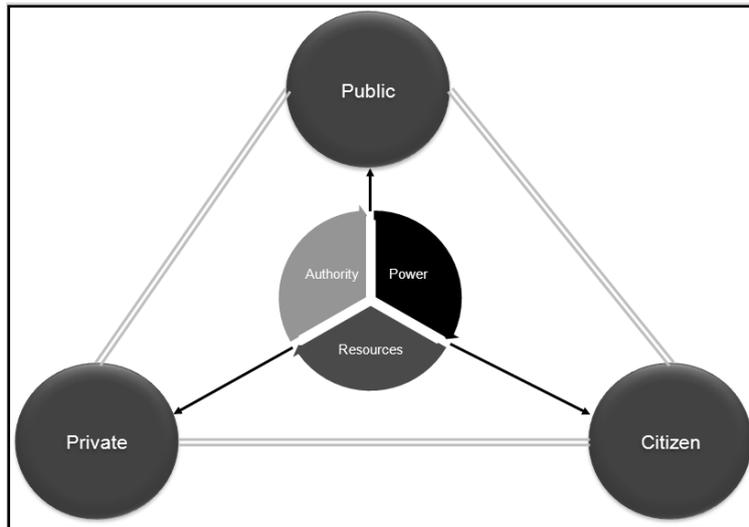


Figure: 1.2: The Complex of Governance: the emerging paradigm

Source: Author (Adapted from Fritzen, 2009)

It can be conferred that until the power, authority and resources were monopolised by the public sector, government was the focus of all analysis either in welfare state model of most democracies or centralised planning model of erstwhile communist states and its followers. However, since 1980s even the public sector started changing considerably with the introduction of differentiated levels of governance ranging from village (local) to supranational (global) governing bodies. This development coincided with the popularity of the neo-liberal philosophy which propelled the free reign of market and shrinkage of the state. This of course, changed the way different spheres of governance were related and also their respective roles in the system.

Since early 1990s, with the collapse of Soviet bloc, centralised planning and its close followers who relied on mixed economic model in a democratic set up opened up more to the liberal economic policy. This created different repercussions in different set up which was in turn shaped by the specific historical and contextual trajectories of those regions. The common development that was experienced across region was emergence of identity politics and social movements involving civil society and peoples' participation (Jayal and Pai; 2001.). Furthermore, by this time, the free market policy was slowly being replaced by 'retreat back to state' approach which again changed the balance of relationship between public, private and citizen. Hence the discourse shifted its focus from government to

governance dealing more with the changing patterns of relationships between multiple spheres of governance.

After scrutinizing the generalized context in which this broader and heterogeneous concept of governance has emerged, it is time to map the North- South divide in the entire trajectory. This is important in order to understand the factor of path dependency of certain events and concepts which would later help building right perspectives to merge Area Studies in general theorization. In most Western democracies, privatizations, deregulations and cut down on public expenditure were direct effects of fiscal crisis which pushed most of the governments in these countries to search for new public management system. They wanted to employ new strategies of management to reform public administration which in turn meant reorganizing the state along the line of private sector. These developments were not so much about reducing the role of the state but including private actors (in delivering public services) who were supervised and monitored by state bureaucracies according to the financial and performance criteria. Another major development in reorganization of state's role was the creation of European Union and other even wider institutions which tried to introduce a global regime in trade and environmental regulations. These national and transnational events questioned the role of state as regulator of economic and other policies, as a sole provider of basic services, but not so much as a broker of social consensus (Jayal and Pai; 2001). This definitely points towards the importance of state-society relations in governance analysis.

In most of the non-Western nations (some of which were actually very new), on the other hand, the governance discourse did not grow out of an existential reality of those nation-states. Like many other conceptual realities it flew from the Western debate on governance in a manner which closely resemble modernization theory of development. Focussing strictly on the last two decades of the twentieth century, it becomes fairly evident that most of the shifts in governance debate and practices in the developing world have been prescriptive in nature, as imposed by the aid conditionality of donor agencies, mainly World Bank. A World Bank document in 1989, on sub-Saharan Africa suggested that most of bank's programmes and policies are failing due to the crisis of governance in that region. Hence heavy governance reform packages were recommended as a development management mechanism, which later became popular under the umbrella term of 'good governance' (Jayal and Pai; 2001).

Following, the East Asian crisis in the latter half of the 1990s, the excessive dependence on market oriented development was questioned and role of the state again came under much

discussion and the relationship between state and plurality of actors outside the state became more significant for broadening the governance paradigm. Newer notions of the processes of governance started addressing the core of the governance. The thrust was not only on including multiple actors but also to attend to qualitative aspect of governance. Therefore, it was not enough to have civil service reform, new public administration management strategies and privatization of services, but it was now impending to take account of factor such as participation, decentralization, responsiveness and more broadly social justice and equality (Jayal and Pai; 2001). It seems clear here that new parameters of measuring governance in changing societies have emerged. However, these parameters are also not completely divorced of prescriptive flows of reform agenda closely associated with democracy and sustainable economic development.

At this point, it becomes quite clear that for developing countries, recent shifts in the governance discourse comes in a package of good governance, however, problematic that may appear. In order to deepen one's understanding of governance especially in the context of changing societies, it is important to debunk the notion of good governance and unravel the politics of its language and outcome. Before doing so, a brief overview of the concept is imminent.

1.4 *Good Governance: The Agenda and Its Implications*

Following the aftermath of the Cold War, the last decade of the twentieth century witnessed renewed interest in democracy, participation, transparency and efficiency (Woods; 1999). This wider context of political transition coincided with the massive failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in most of the developing countries. Henceforth, international development community especially World Bank woke up to a new realization that governance reform is the key to all developmental problems in underdeveloped and developing nations. Unlike SAPs which emphasized the role of market as opposed to the state, this new approach towards reform brought the role and capacity of the state and institutions under serious consideration (Joseph; 2001). Interestingly enough the governance reform agenda became quietly complementary with two related themes of democracy and economic development. Together they formed a triad of a magical solution to all the anguish and distress associated with underdevelopment. This triad focused together on political system, institutional structures and governance processes within a framework of public-private partnership (Santiso; 2001). All these new developments became popular under the umbrella term of "good governance". In last two decades good governance has become the

buzzword in the international development community. The term is packaged in such codes of morality that it seems to be devoid of any politics at all. However, quite contrarily in marrying the free market with a strong civil society, good governance promises to provide new standards of rule which protect the citizens from the political societies and undemocratic governments (Corbridge; 2005).

As has already been mentioned, good governance emerged alongside (or as a result of) a set of other agendas which challenged the prevailing ideas on the state size, locus of authority relationships and the way government authority is organized. Privatization, decentralization, global governance, participatory democracy (democratization), deregulation, public administration reform – all these agendas play out simultaneously in the current debate on governance and culminates into the popular approach of good governance. There is as such no definition of good governance. It is rather an ideal-typical construct (somewhat in a Weberian sense⁵) which delineates the parameters of governance through certain indicators. The qualifier “good” clearly denotes the better standards of such a formulation and hence the imperative to achieve them. The World Bank has identified three discrete aspects of governance which needs to be emphasized for reform: “i) the form of political regime; ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development; and iii) the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions” (Bandopadhaya; 1996). Four key dimensions of this reform are as follows: public sector management (capacity and efficiency) which involves civil service reform and privatization initiatives; accountability which would enable institutions to hold the government accountable, for example an ombudsman; the legal framework for development which implies making and enforcing rules to control the market, for example enforcing private property rights; and information and transparency which hints towards free media, publicising public expenditure, for example right to information (Jayal and Pai, 2001; Kjaer, 2004). This implies significant changes in the ways power, authority and resources would be allocated and aligned with close links between democracy, economic development and good governance. As far as the criteria of good governance are concerned, UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) sets out eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable,

⁵ Ideal type is a analytical construct which represents a “methodological utopia” to denote conceptual purity without any claim to reality. (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber> retrieved on 21.09.2012)

transparent, responsive, effective & efficient, equitable & inclusive and follows the rule of law.

Five Principles of Good Governance	
The UNDP Principles	UNDP text on which they are based
1. Legitimacy and Voice	<p>Participation – all men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intention.</p> <p>Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively.</p> <p>Consensus orientation – good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures.</p>
2. Direction	<p>Strategic vision – leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.</p>
3. Performance	<p>Responsiveness – institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.</p> <p>Effectiveness and efficiency – processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.</p>
4. Accountability	<p>Accountability – decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external.</p> <p>Transparency – transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.</p>
5. Fairness	<p>Equity – all men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their wellbeing.</p>

	Rule of Law – legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.
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Table: 1.1: Principles of Good Governance

Source: Graham, Amos, Plumtre; (2003)

Now the question arises as to how can we understand these broad and general norms in specific political and cultural contexts? Or how to transform such a normative concept into an operational concept of governance? This new agenda of good governance, though based on the premise of early liberal theories puts emphasis on a market concept of equality which strives for empowerment of citizens by making them economically self-sustaining and enabling them to enter into market transactions. The cooperation of private agencies and NGOs are crucial for this purpose. Under this new found concept of equality and active participation of different actors citizens are often viewed as end users or customers whereas the government acts as the service providers. Improving the quality of these services and reaching out to a wider base of customers with the help of the private and non-governmental stakeholders are the central objectives of the governance reform projects and calls for complete overhaul of public administration (Joseph; 2001). Therefore, as an issue of public policy good governance has moved not only into the agenda of World Bank but has also become a common parlance of national governments and local political actors. In short good governance provides a universal recipe with a gradually growing mix of deregulation, privatization, civil service reform and decentralization (the associated agendas of reform) which are deemed to produce better governability across societies (Corbridge et al., 2005).

However, international development community soon realised that supporting institutional reform was more difficult than implementation of a particular project. The domestic politics in developing countries started becoming explicitly dependent on external influences of the international development agencies. For example, World Bank's demand for economic austerity could trigger of social protest which would then bring changes in the regime structure. On a more subtle note, some donor- supported programmes could strengthen one ministry over the other and thereby influencing internal institutional structure of the government. In this way, good governance programme and its implementation across societies raised serious debate about the role of external actors in processes of state-building (Kjaer; 2004). Good governance agenda touched upon the sensitive aspects such as distribution of power and resources in developing societies which were anyway fraught with

internal issues of growing ungovernability. This agenda was much more political in nature than earlier interventionist approaches of the international development community and hence created much more resistance in the local community and institutional set up. As a result, they changed their agenda in certain ways. The movement was from demanding good governance ex ante, i.e. governance reform being a conditionality of aid, towards ex post selectivity; i.e., taking good governance as a qualifier to receive assistance. The usage of good governance has changed from being something to be promoted in developing countries to rather being a requirement before which loans could be disbursed. In short, these practices of international institutions as far as governance is concerned raised two very important issues in the debates within comparative politics: i) how external forces influence domestic politics?; ii) whether it is at all possible to transfer the models of ‘good governance’ built on Western ideas to non-Western setting? (Kjaer; 2004)

These are pertinent questions which turn our focus to developing societies where model good governance has made its foray into public policies and developmental initiatives of the State. In most of the post-colonial and post-communist countries the good governance or governance reform agenda has significantly impacted not only the state policies but also the overall governance structure and practices which manifest in changing contours of state-society relationships. In order to understand how a transnational agenda of governance reform influence the national rhetoric of governance, we bring a context-specific understanding of governance into the forefront of analysis. Here, India serves as a case of those changing societies where transnational governance reform strategies have shifted the national discourse on governance. The motivation behind choosing India is neither to establish an Indian exceptionalism in governance analysis, nor to ignore cultural idiosyncrasies embedded in the Indian context. In fact the aim is to reemphasise the context-specific understanding of governance. Keeping the basic research questions in mind, the Indian case elucidates how far reform initiatives inspired by transnational paradigm can take root in the local contexts of governance. Taking a critical stand against the good governance paradigm, this research nonetheless seeks to trace the impact of reform strategies promoted by the same paradigm.

1.5 *Politics of Governance Reform: The Changing Patterns of Governance in India*

The fall of Soviet Union in 1989, put serious question mark on the feasibility of centralized planning which was coincided with a cynicism against the mixed economy as India continued to struggle with problems of poverty, unemployment, lower rates of growth. This led the Indian state to adopt International Monetary Fund (IMF) driven Structural Adjustment

Programme (SAP), which inaugurated economic liberalization in India in 1991. These transformations of India's political economy manifest not only in liberal economic reforms but also in the political realm such as the increasing influence of Hindu cultural nationalism and mobilisation of identical politics through empowerment of historically subordinate sections of the populations, decentralisation of governance through constitutional amendments (73rd and 74th) and strengthening of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs) (Ruparelia et al, 2011, Farrington et al, 2009; Jayal & Pai, 2001). The impact of such wide-ranging economic and political reform is still unfolding and is fraught with much ambivalence. However, all these trends have serious implications for the issues of governance. Identity politics and subsequent political mobilization do claim recognition of the state while challenging the particular regime and its legitimacy. Though they do not question the role of the state as such, nevertheless they do call for some reform of the state institutions. The processes of economic reform on the other hand, challenge the role of the state especially in the productive and redistributive aspects of the social order and stress the sphere of market. At the same time, a series of social movements and institutional experiments have taken up some of the responsibilities traditionally bore by the state, such as sustainable development, alleviating poverty and other such social causes. This definitely shifts the balance between state, market and civil society and also their sphere of influence in the society (Jayal and Pai; 2001). While pointing out the need to look beyond the mere economic aspect of the reform, Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, aptly argue,

While much energy has been spent on sorting out these issues, too little attention has been paid to what is lacking in the current orientation of economic policy in India. The removal of counter-productive regulations on domestic production and international trade can form a helpful part of a programme of participation and widely-shared growth, but it may achieve relatively little in the absence of more active public policy aimed at reducing the other social handicaps that shackle the Indian economy and reduce the well-being of the population. The absence of real reform in the field of basic education is a telling illustration of the government's neglect of that part of the agenda. (Dreze and Sen; 1996, pp: 187-88)

One obvious change of all these interconnected events was weakening of the omnipresent status of the state and rise of extra-state spheres. The impetus for change, although, were both exogenous and endogenous. The exogenous factor was definitely the intervention of

international development community and the consequent adoption of economic liberalization policy that primarily benefited the market in general and transnational corporations in particular evidently at the expense of national bourgeoisie. Endogenous factors of change were manifold. Firstly, it was the weakening of the central power followed by the rise of regional political parties, regionalization of the political system, increasing demands for separatism and political mobilization along caste/ethnicity axis. Secondly, with state's inability to tackle issues of poverty and development, there was a boom of civil society organization taking up the social and developmental causes. Thirdly, tendency towards deinstitutionalization has increased through unparallel cases of corruption and failure in law enforcement (Jayal and Pai; 2001). However, the decline in state authority and rise of private and people sector should not be seen as state versus extra-state spheres. In fact, changing parameters of governance have led to more cooperation between all these sectors, even though, neither the process of partnership nor the outcomes of such partnership have been smooth and devoid of controversy.

Jayal (2001) captured these diverse changes in six models of governance that emerged in the political discourses of India post economic liberalization in 1991. Jayal described these models of governance as being alternative to the "pre-existing centralized (albeit formally federal) structure of governance, and its twin, the command economy with centralized planning" (Jayal, 2001; 133). The first model of governance is described as rolling back the state which was part of the economic reform agenda. This model manifested in a mixed form in India. There has been a significant cut-down on the public expenditure in the social sector, albeit without much downsizing or disinvestment of the state. However, exogenous factors of globalisation posed serious challenge to state capacity to intervene within society and beyond. The second model is purported by practices of social movements challenging the state discourse on development. Often debated as the 'new social movements' of India these movements, on one hand delegitimise the modernising elitist tendencies of the developmental state and on the other hand, promote the idea of a citizen-centric participatory democratic polity. The third model of governance is characterised by capturing of the state power by dalit parties such as Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) which views economic inequalities as functions of political inequalities. Hence, the state as the main agent of redistributive system needs to be controlled by the disadvantageous *dalits*. The fourth model of governance is built on the notion of franchising the state where increasing number of national or international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) take over the developmental functions of the state either

as a substitute of the state or as a franchise or as a public service contractor. The fifth model is based on the growing incidence of partnership between the state and the community based organisations (CBOs). These partnerships can be both top-down state initiatives and bottom-up approach where the state follows up on the path charted by the CBOs. Both the fourth and the fifth model hint at the emergence of a significant sphere of civil society and their changing relationship with the State. The sixth and the last model is that of a state-driven decentralised model based on 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1992.

This major reform policy in the governance and administrative sector is one of the crucial yet usually sidelined in the general discussion on reform (Mooij, 2005). The 73rd and 74th amendments made way for a two-three tier panchayat system in every state with provision for direct elections in village, block and district levels thereby strengthening institutions of local self-government. The principal features of such decentralising measure were: representative to all the three levels were to be elected for a five-year term; one-third of the seats were reserved for women; mandatory reservations for scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) proportional to their population were introduced; the *gram sabha* or the voting public attained the constitutional status as the formal deliberative body at the village level; provisions were made for individual states to enact further reservations for other backward groups (Farrington et al, 2006). Another important aspect of the village *panchayats* is that they act as local mechanisms to increase transparency and accountability in government functioning. For example, distribution of governmental schemes is often fraught with stories of corruption, nepotism and misallocation. Through the decentralised model, village panchayat are expected to play a positive role to salvage such misappropriation as they enjoy considerable authority in identifying beneficiaries for most governmental schemes (ibid, 2006). However, in an interesting observation Jayal pointed out, "...though these Amendments were intended to bring about both the democratization and the decentralization of governance, democratization – through the provisions for reservations for women as well as for members of the scheduled castes and tribes – clearly appears to have outpaced decentralization" (Jayal, 2001; 149).

The above-mentioned models of governance quite painstakingly summarise the changing patterns of the state-society relationships that emerged in the political landscape of India following the economic liberalisation in early 1990s. Another important aspect of the reform process that some of these models suggest that there has been a conscious effort on the part of the state to initiate significant strategic reforms, be it in specific sector or in reforming governance networks (e.g. by including extra-state spheres) or in changing orientation of state-

institutions (e.g. by adopting citizen-centric delivery models). In short, governance reform has occupied a significant place in state planning and programmes. It is in this planning mode that there has been considerable attention on information and communication technologies (ICTs) for revamping the operations and functioning of the entire system of governance by contriving the technical as well as developmental role of the state. This strategic reform orientation of the Indian state towards electronic governance can be captured under the label of e-governance for good governance or e-governance for development (Sreekumar, 2008; Madon, 2009). The following section illustrates the general state and importance of e-governance reform in India as a broader part of the governance reform agenda.

1.6 E-Governance in the Strategic Reform Agenda of the Indian State: An Overview

On 15th August 2002, on occasion of the India's Independence Day, Prime Minister announced 15 important initiatives to be endorsed by the Government of India. E-governance was placed under this list of initiatives which stated, "The Ministry will implement a comprehensive programme to accelerate E-Governance at all levels of the government to improve efficiency, transparency and accountability at the Government-citizen interface. ..." (Mathur et al, 2010). In the same year, the Prime Minister's statement at the National Development Council (NDC) in December 2002 asserted that, "E-Governance, which can contribute significantly to better governance, is a major thrust of the Tenth Plan." (ibid, 2010).

The thrust on e-governance is emblematic of a major shift of discourse from government to governance in the rhetoric of the Indian state. This shift reflects across a range of policy documents and government reports. National Human Development Report (2001), published by the Government of India dedicated a whole chapter on 'Governance for Human Development' which reinforced the importance of governance and 'good governance' for sustainable development and promoted subsequent adaptation in the current governance practices by changing the scope and role of the state in relation to the market and the civil society (Choudhary, 2007). Similarly, in the Tenth Five Years Plan (2002-2007), and the Eleventh Five Years Plan (2007-2012), governance received special attention of the policy-makers and thereby was allotted a separate chapter unlike previous planning documents. A close look at these chapters brings out two important dimensions of this shift of focus from government to governance. Firstly, there is a growing importance of the market and the civil society and secondly, this burgeoning State-orientation towards governance is mandated by the transnational paradigm of good governance. The Tenth Plan defines governance as the

management of processes within a society that raise individuals' choices for realising their capabilities in a conducive environment. It further reiterates that,

[Governance] covers the State, civil society and the market, each of which is critical for sustaining human development. The State is responsible for creating a conducive political, legal and economic environment for building individual capabilities and encouraging private initiative. The market is expected to create opportunities for people. Civil society facilitates the mobilisation of public opinion and people's participation in economic, social and political activities. ...With the acceptance of market liberalism and globalisation, it is expected that the State yields to the market and the civil society in many areas where it, so far, had a direct but distortionary and inefficient presence. ...With the growth of markets and the presence of an aware and sensitive civil society, many developmental functions as well functions that provide stability to the social order have to be progressively performed by the market and the civil society organisations. It means extension of the market and the civil society domain at the expense of the State in some areas. It also implies an increase in the area of their respective overlaps. (GOI, 2002)

As the Tenth Plan acknowledges the influence of market liberalism and globalisation on the framework of governance, similarly the Eleventh Five Years Plan talks about improving the quality of governance within the broader framework of good governance which is argued to be covering "all aspects of interface between individuals and business on the one hand and government on the other" (GOI, 2007; 223). Elaborating on some distinctive features of good governance the Eleventh Plan document stresses factors such as accountability, transparency, efficiency of service delivery, decentralisation, rule of law or sound legal framework, and inclusiveness and so on. The issues and strategies of reform discussed in these Plans range from narrow administrative reform to broader political reform and include right to information, civil service reform, procedural reform, judicial reform, using information technology, people's participation, decentralisation, partnership approach with extra-state spheres and so on (Choudhary, 2007). There is another side of this governance reform trajectory which directly relates to issues of economic reform such as privatisation, deregulation, disinvestment, corporatisation and social sector reforms (ibid). The underlying agenda of all the discussions concerning reform in India is 'institutional reform' which is further illustrated through themes such as decentralisation, simplification, transparency, accountability and e-governance (ibid, 2007). These common themes have gradually made

their way into the checklists of all government ministries and departments under the broader framework of governance reform. Consequently, both the Tenth and Eleventh Plan talk about e-governance for ‘good governance’ and better service delivery (GOI, 2002, 2007).

As it emerged from the above discussion, e-governance has taken up an important position in the State initiatives for overall governance reform in India in recent times. There are many conceptualisations of e-governance. Most of these conceptualisations are formulated either by International Organisations or developed countries which have made considerable progress in the field. The term e-governance is often interchangeably used with the term e-government. The 11th Report of the Second Administrative Reform Commission (2008) on E-Governance attempts to summarise some of the basic definitions of the term. The World Bank’s definition of the term says,

E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions. (11th 2nd ARC Report, GOI, 2008;8)

The UNESCO defines the concept in relation to the broader concept of governance as it argues, “Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs, including citizens’ articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-Governance may be understood as the performance of this governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities.” (ibid; 8-9). The Council of Europe refers to e-Governance as “the use of electronic technologies in three areas of public action: relations between the public authorities and civil society, functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy) [and] the provision of public services (electronic public services)” . (ibid; 9). The United States E-Government Act 2002 defines it as the “the use by the Government of web-based Internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies, to (A)

enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other Government entities; or (B) bring about improvements in Government operations that may include effectiveness, efficiency, service quality, or transformation”. (ibid; 9)

In an attempt to adapt the concept to the Indian context, former President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam promoted the idea of “A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen.” (ibid; 10)

By conjuring up all these diverse formulation of the term e-governance can be defined as deployment of information communication technology (ICT) for improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective through greater coordination among private sector and civil society organizations (Vasu Deva, 2005). It is also important to distinguish between the concepts of e-government and e-governance. E-governance is a broader idea which encompasses a political as well as a technical dimension. The political dimension relates to the State’s institutional arrangements, decision-making processes, implementation capacity and the relationship between, the government with citizen, businesses and the civil society. The technical dimension refers to the issues service delivery and public management. E-government, though sharing some goals with e-governance, is better understood as a subset of e-governance concentrated on increasing administrative efficiency and reducing corruption (Bhatnagar, 2009). The other two terms which need some elucidation here are ‘change-management’ and ‘business-process re-engineering’. These two terms appear quite extensively in most of the literature and they are crucial in understanding both e-government and e-governance. “Change Management is a structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organizations from a current state to a desired future state. It involves a series of changes beginning with vision, introduction of skills, adding incentives and resources and designing an action plan bringing positive results” (Sachdeva, 2009; 109) Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) “is the redesign of business processes and the associated systems and organizational structures to achieve a dramatic improvement in performance...(It) requires...an agency to implement substantive reform in organisational structure, initiate a change in culture and mindset, train and improve skills of its people and put in place an appropriate supporting ICT infrastructure to enable online processes that are timely and efficient to both the user and the government agency” (Bhatnagar; 2009; 78).

E-governance has been one of the strategic sectors of reform in India since late 1990s under the rubric of ‘good governance’ agenda promoted by International Organisations. Since 1991, India’s policy focus changed towards economic liberalization, deregulation, and privatisation proliferating domestic and foreign investment. IT (Information Technology) has been one of the leading areas for such heightened investment. Though the Indian government has been taking interest in IT infrastructure development and computerisation of public administration already since 1980s, until the late 1990s, the use of ICTs in public service delivery has been pretty low. It is around 1997-98; using ICT tools oriented towards development goals became more and more popular within the public sector. However, majority of these reform initiatives were initially aimed at urban middle-class citizens for improving their experience of public service delivery. This picture slowly changed as the potential of ICTs for rural development caught the fancy of policy-makers. Hence, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, comprehensive policy frameworks have been formulated at the national level to implement e-governance across India reaching out to even remote rural areas. The policy goals of such initiatives are two folds: to widen the outreach of public services and to improve the quality of public services (Sreekumar,2008; Madon,2009). This policy-orientation towards e-governance reached its crest with the approval of the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in May 2006 which envisages “[To] Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets, and ensure efficiency, transparency, and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man” (GOI, 2006). National e-Governance Plan along with 27 Mission Mode Projects and 8 components adopts a holistic approach to streamline all e-governance initiatives across the country. This marks a shift in the governmental approach towards e-governance as most of the initiatives before NeGP was tackled in an isolated manner with individual impetus. There was a severe problem of sustainability even for successful initiatives and there was hardly any scope for sharing the experiences. Evidently, NeGP addresses these gaps by bringing in an integrated approach to all e-governance initiatives. Besides engaging in the administrative reform by improving public service delivery model, NeGP also deals with broader issues of governance reform espoused by the Government of India. One such example is the public-private partnership model and thereby the active role of private sectors in the implementation of most of the initiatives undertaken under the NeGP.

Having explored the recent policy shifts towards e-governance as a strategic sector of reform by the Indian State, the next step is to understand the impact of such strategic reform on the

basic level of governance. This understanding hinges upon resolving the analytical puzzle involving politics, technology and culture in a intertwined relationship. In addressing this analytical puzzle, it becomes imperative to debunk the theoretical underpinnings that add to the explanatory framework of this research.

1.7 Politics, Technology and Culture: An Analytical Puzzle of (e)-Governance

Governance as a social and political concept traverses state and society, those who govern and the governed. Hence, governance can be manipulated by both the ruler and the ruled depending on the context of the rule. This implies a continuous interaction between the structure and agency, between the state- institutions and the stakeholders (those affected by the institutions) which transform the system of governance and thereby renders it a dynamic concept. The basic question that this research sets out to investigate is how strategic reform affects the level of governance, or in other words, how can the state-society interface be influenced by strategic reform policies and practices. Policy-making and its implementation by the state institutions lie on one hand of this spectrum. The other side involves the reception and adaptation of such policies among the stakeholders. Both sides of reform, that is policies and practices involves a set of actors who are embedded in a particular cultural context. As this research focus on reforms initiated in the sphere of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), understanding the impact of technology also adds to the broader research question. In order to analyse the impact of e-governance reform on the level of governance it is important to establish the link between politics, culture and technology. Thus, the analytical puzzle of e-governance in this research links politics, culture and technology in a complex and overlapping relationship. In resolving this puzzle three theoretical and methodological perspectives have provided the significant heuristic devices. They are neo-institutionalism, social constructivism and transcultural perspectives. Although these academic dispositions are discussed in much detail in the chapter on theories and methodology, it is absolutely necessary to pronounce the relevance of these scholastic principles for the current research endeavour.

Neo-institutionalism engages with both formal rule-bound state institutions and informal matrix of values and norms embedded in society in order to understand the impact of institutions on political behaviour and also institutional change. Therefore, it provides a theoretical model to investigate on one hand how rules are made and applied, and on the other hand how rules are simultaneously manipulated by different actors (Kjaer, 2004). In other words, it explains how structure of rules originates and gradually shifts through agency of the

actors. These actors include not only the elites who can directly influence the institutional set up but also average citizens who usually reside on the receiving end of the institutional rules. Applying these basic principles in our specific research problem neo-institutionalism explains how reform policies are initiated and implemented through elite strategies and how they are perceived and received by the stakeholders. While exploring e-governance reforms, neo-institutionalism also probes why and how it became a part of the elite strategy in the post-economic liberalisation years in India. Neo-institutionalism becomes even more relevant in the context of post-colonial states like India where elite strategies serves as significant tools to leverage the gap between imported categories of colonial institutional structure and embedded inheritance of cultural norms (Mitra, 2006).

By now it has been reiterated that cultural norms and values embedded in a societal context influence the behaviour of the actors engaged in the system of governance irrespective of their power position. When technology is added to this well-knitted relationship between governance and culture, neo-institutionalism cannot provide sufficient explanatory rigor. Therefore, the complex interplay between governance, culture and technology is analysed through the critical lens of social constructivism. Social constructivism serves a two-level analytical purpose. At the first level, it explicates how both institutions and actors being socially constructed are entangled within the historically produced and culturally bound web of meaning, rules and preferences (Barenett, 2005). At the second level social constructivism, as opposed to technological determinism expounds how actors and contexts determine the impact of technology. Social constructivism therefore shows how ICTs policies are formulated and received in India depending on the different subject positions of the actors and their respective contexts (Sreekumar, 2008). While measuring e-governance, the 'e' part which denotes the technological contribution to the 'governance' needs to be disaggregated. This implies taking up a social constructivist orientation towards technology instead of relying on technological determinism. In simple terms, the basic assumption in this analytical frame is that technology does not automatically improve public service delivery or enhance governance.

Needless to say, both neo-institutionalism and social constructivism aid in the context-specific understanding of governance albeit from different theoretical lens. However, both theories, having their roots in Western/ European history and context bear the risk of misrepresenting a non-Western, post-colonial system of governance. Such Euro-centric grand theories often explain India either as an ever catching up deficient state or as a society of exotic aberrations.

Instead of absolutely rejecting these theoretical models, this research strives to strike a balance by introducing a transcultural perspective which stands as an outright challenge to the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge system. A transcultural perspective as a transdisciplinary methodology analyses social, political, cultural and historical phenomena as a product of a multi-directional trans-cultural flows of concepts and categories which acquire different meaning in different local contexts through active agency of the actors (Mitra, 2012). In comprehending such entangled trajectories, transcultural perspective presents a analytical and methodological toolbox comprised of concepts such as “flows”, “asymmetry”, “hybridity” and so on (ibid, 2012). Given the post-colonial attribute of the Indian state and society, hybridity plays the most instrumental part in understanding governance within the India context. Hybridity, though originating in biological sciences has taken up an important position in cultural studies, humanities and social sciences. Postcolonial studies, particularly writings of Homi Bhaba have made hybridity a popular concept by perceiving it as a political strategy in the hands of the governed (Bhaba, 1994) or simply the ‘weapon of the weak’⁶. It is this notion of hybridity which is directly linked to the notion of political agency that strikes a chord with context-specific analysis of governance and also links it to the basic framework of neo-institutional and social constructivist approaches. However, hybridity in this study is meant to serve a broader purpose. Firstly as a political strategy, it shows how in post-colonial context, the gap between imported institutional set up and inherited categories of social norms are mend through a continuous yet non-linear process of hybridisation and how they culminate into different hybrid institutions in order to alleviate the level of governance. Secondly as an analytical category, it espouses how the state-society relationships being entangled in multidirectional trans-cultural flows are manoeuvred by different actors in different contexts. This latter application of the concept goes well beyond the post-colonial contexts and shows a historical yet non-linear precedence of hybrid institutions emerging out of the process of hybridisation (Mitra, 2012). In terms of understanding the impact of e-governance reform on the level of India’s governance, hybridity explains how both e-governance policies and practices in India go through the process of hybridisation and create hybrid institutions which in turn help to increase the level of governance. Furthermore, it also shows how a e-governance as part of a transnational/trans-cultural agenda of governance reform takes root in the Indian context by resorting to hybridity.

⁶James Scott used this concept in his book by the same title “Weapon of the Weak: Everybody Forms of Peasant Resistance (Yale University Press, 1985) to understand how subaltern peasants in Malayasia could exercise their agency in their everyday practice to resist ideological and material hegemony.

These three analytical perspectives combined together create a compact base for addressing three basic research questions which are closely related to each other: a) does strategic reform help improving the level of governance; b) why some reforms initiatives are more effective while others fail; and c) how the gap between state and society, between policies and practices can be understood not merely in terms of legitimacy deficit but as contributing to the resilience of governance. In order to resolve these questions, e-governance policies and practices and their impact on India's governance is analysed here. Importantly, it is crucial to mention here that though e-governance policies form a substantial category in the analysis; this research does not intend to focus exclusively on policy outcomes of e-governance in India. Instead it strives to analyse e-governance as a strategic reform sector in its entirety, that is, why and how e-governance reform came into the policy discourse, how these reform initiatives gradually changed the policy networks, how introduction of e-governance impacted the governing styles and how practices of e-governance are slowly taking root into the contextual realities of India. Therefore, this study does not merely evaluate the impact of a particular e-governance policy, but rather e-governance serves here as case in point to reflect how certain strategic reform agenda (propagated by transnational and national institutions) take shape in the material and cultural contexts of a society and impacts its overall governance mechanism. For this overarching understanding of e-governance reform and its impact on governance, it was only importunate to move beyond the policy-outcome approach and to devise a rather complex analytical frame combining different theoretical and methodological perspectives. With the basic understanding of the premise of this research, the following section will directly approach to the actual matrix of evaluating e-governance in India.

1.8 *Evaluating (e)-Governance: Linking Politics, Culture and Technology*

In order to evaluate if the strategic (e) governance reform can enhance the level of governance four main theoretically informed conjectures are formulated within the context of ICT policy and e-governance initiatives in India. They are as follows:

C1: E-governance reforms that make public service more easily and regularly accessible for citizens will improve the level of governance.

C2: Improved coordination among all the stakeholders of e-governance reform will improve the level of governance.

C3: E-governance initiatives that take social and cultural factors embedded in the specific contexts into consideration improve the level of governance.

C4: E-governance reform that improves the delivery mechanism of public service will improve the level of governance.

In order to evaluate these conjectures, e-governance policies and practices with particular emphasis on a case study of the CSCs scheme (which is one of the pivotal national e-governance projects in India) has been analysed in depth. Each of these conjectures is evaluated in terms of the indicators which link them to the level of governance, namely accountability, adaptability, participation, predictability and transparency. Each of these indicators is further defined according to certain attributes (Table 1.2). The careful combination of these indicators with the four basic conjectures would formulate an analytical grid for evaluating governance within the framework of this research endeavour.

<p>Indicators: Increased citizen Participation (C1, C3), Increased Predictability in Service Delivery (C1, C4), Increased Transparency in the system (C1, C2), Increased accountability in the system (C2, C4), Adaptability to suit local contexts (C3)</p>	
<p>Attributes</p>	
<p>Participation: Numbers of footfall per CSC, Preference of CSC over other delivery outlets, Integration of VLEs as rural entrepreneurs</p>	<p>Predictability: Speed of delivery of services, Compliance to committed time frame, Standardisation of the quality of services</p>
	<p>Transparency: <u>Availability of information of services, Options for accessing information, Quality of information, Simplification of procedures</u></p>
<p>Accountability: Availability of public grievance redressal mechanism, The quality of public-private partnership, Attitudes of public servants, Eliminations of intermediaries, Responsible engagement of VLES</p>	<p>Adaptability: use of local languages, catering to specific social groups, integrating social and community goals, use of innovation by stakeholders</p>

Table: 1.2: Defining Indicators of improved level of governance

Source: Author

To fully comprehend the analytical frame of this research, it would be worthwhile to elaborate on each of these theoretically informed conjectures.

C1: E-governance reforms that make public service more easily and regularly accessible for citizens will improve the level of governance. According to this conjecture, accessibility of public services is crucial for improving the level of governance as it makes the system more inclusive and effective. In a densely populated country like India, where accessibility of public services poses serious administrative and infrastructural challenge, ICTs bear the potential of taking these services to the doorsteps of the citizens even in the remotest corner. Availing of public services by more and more citizens renders state institutions and machinery more efficient; it makes distributive function of the state more adept and thereby ensures enhanced legitimacy of state institutions. All these factors hint towards improved interaction between state and society and hence improved level of governance. To denote that e-governance reform leads to better accessibility of public services and hence to improved level of governance three indicators are deployed: increased citizen participation, predictability of services, and transparency of processes.

C2: Improved coordination among all the stakeholders of e-governance reform will improve the level of governance: As described earlier governance as a concept is consisted of both ruler and the ruled which represents different power positions. Being at the core of differential power distribution, it often embodies conflicting interest groups. Given the inherent inequality of the concept, lack of transparency and absence of clear accountability structure might lead to mismatch of expectation and performance among different stakeholders involved in the complex of governance. As e-governance reform has the potential to make service delivery process more transparent, the interaction between state, market, civil society and citizens can resultantly become more transparent. Similarly transparency of processes also helps create clearer structure of accountability among stakeholders through introduction of ICT tools, change-management and business-process re-engineering. Thus, better transparency and accountability serve as the indicators of improved coordinators among stakeholders which in turn will have a positive impact on the overall system of governance by making it more efficient and effective.

C3: E-governance initiatives that take social and cultural factors embedded in the specific contexts into consideration improve the level of governance: As governance lies at the intersection of state and society, it is not enough to render the public service delivery

accessible and efficient through intervention of ICT tools. At the same time it is important for e-governance reform to take root into societal structure. In other words, such reform initiatives need to take local social and cultural factors into consideration in order to be effective. Without such considerations, even reform initiatives with best of intentions can fail at the grassroots levels of implementation. Hence, it can be inferred that e-governance reform that are better adaptable to the local context will ensure greater participation by all stakeholders. These will increase the acceptability and legitimacy of such reform initiatives and consequently the level of governance.

C4: E-governance reforms that improve the delivery mechanism of public service will improve the level of governance: The first conjecture reflects on how citizens can access public services in a better way. However, public service also requires improvement in delivery model which implies internal improvement within the state- machinery. E-governance reform holds the capacity to revamp the delivery mechanism of the public services through the use of ICT tools and related public administration reform tools such as change management, business-process re-engineering, training modules and so on. The impact of such reform on the state machinery that delivers public services can be indicated through higher predictability of services and better accountability within the delivery chain.

It is pertinent to mention here that most of the indicators described here are also present in the 'good governance' paradigm as espoused by the World Bank and the United Nations organisations. Nonetheless the difference remains in the approach. The 'good governance' as a top-down approach outlines these indicators as universal normative standards of governance without much regard for context-specificities. To counter this gap adaptability as an additional indicator is deployed conjointly which brings the significance of contexts to the forefront of inquiry. Consequently, quite contrary to the 'good governance' approach, this governance analysis focuses on the legitimacy of the rule by converging rulers' category with the perceptions of the ruled.

These four main conjectures that drive this research infer that introducing information communication technologies would lead to better predictability of service delivery, higher transparency in the rules and processes of public administration, greater accountability of the service provider and enhanced reach of public services or inclusion of wider mass into service delivery mechanism. However, they also stress the importance of adapting to embedded social conditions and cultural values in fully realising the potential of these technologies and the

counter-productive forces of technologies. The vital challenge here is to incorporate these social and cultural factors into a comprehensive frame of analysis in a systematic manner.

E-governance initiatives in India are comprised of both policies and practices. Hence, besides exploring the major policies, a case study of one of the major e-governance projects in India called the Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme was incorporated into the framework of analysis for a better understanding of the cultural context in which e-governance initiatives are materialised. An extensive four-state fieldwork was conducted based on qualitative interviews involving all the stakeholders, both at the state level and at the national level. As the CSCs scheme is formulated as a structured project, the stakeholders were predefined. In addition, a group of experts specialising in e-governance in different capacities have been interviewed. Hence the sources of the study can be classified into four broad categories, such as case study, expert interviews, policy and other relevant project documents and lastly the relevant secondary literature on e-governance reform. The primary data, which is comprised of respondents' interviews and policy documents, were collected on the basis of a purposive sampling⁷. Moreover, the interviews conducted during the fieldwork do not follow a standard format (due to their qualitative nature) and also total numbers of interviews (116) do not exhaustively represent the selected states or the groups of respondents. Hence, the analyses developed from these data do not put forward any claim to quantitative inferences. However, some quantitative patterns are drawn to support the arguments build upon qualitative interpretations of the sources (Table 5.2).

1.9 Research Design: The Structure of the Dissertation

The overall research design which gradually unfolds through this dissertation is driven by the four broader theoretical conjectures mentioned above. . There are two major areas of e-governance which have been studied in order to evaluate those conjectures , namely policies and practices of e-governance in India. Before exploring these two areas, an extensive literature review has been conducted to familiarise with state of the art of the research on governance, governance reform and e-governance in general and in the particular context of India (Chapter 2). The following chapter outline some of the major conceptual categories and

⁷Purposive sample is selected through a deliberate and non-random manner in order to achieve a certain goal. For example, in this research, a pool of policy documents was selected through purposive sampling in order to establish the significance of e-governance in recent policy making. For the case study, the four sample states were chosen firstly, to cover four major geographical cluster of India (North-South-East-West) and secondly, to showcase states with different success rate in project roll out (very low-low-high-very high). Correspondingly, only CSCs which were regularly operating were selected. Similar methods were adopted throughout the study starting from the selection of case study to choosing the experts and so on.

theoretical paradigms related to governance and the aptness of the perspectives adopted in the research design to analyse e-governance in India (Chapter 3). One important section of this chapter spells out the methodological challenges associated with the context-specific analysis of governance and also present some of the probable resorts attempted in this study.

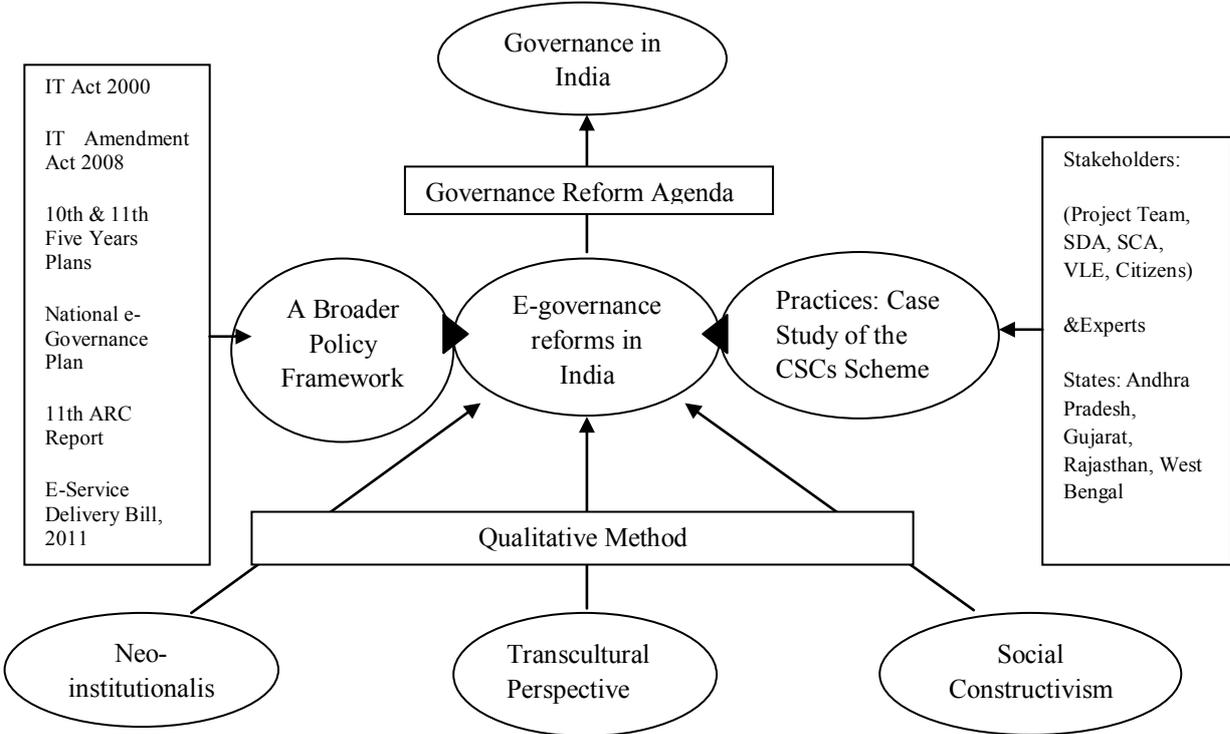


Figure: 1.3: Research Design

Source: Author

The next two chapters engage in describing the state of e-governance in India through policies and practices. In the first step, the policy documents related to such strategic reform are analysed which include Information Technology (IT) Act 2000; Amendment to the IT Act 2008; National e-Governance Plan (2006); 11th Report of the 2nd Administrative Reform Commission (ARC) 2008; selected chapters of the Tenth and Eleventh Five Year Plan (2002-07 & 2007-2012); and E-service Delivery Bill (presented in the Parliament in 2011). A qualitative research method has been adopted to derive at an in-depth understanding of the policy directions and guidelines and their potential impact on the framework of governance stretching across almost a decade (Chapter 4). These policy documents are analysed mainly within theoretical framework of neo-institutional model of governance and helps to discern

the policy framework for e-governance reforms in India. The next chapter elaborates on the practice of e-governance in India with a particular focus on one of the important pillars of National e-Governance Plan, that is, Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme (Chapter 5). The CSCs scheme is placed within the wider environment of reforms initiatives in e-governance in India. The details of the case study are presented through selected narratives of different regional states and account of their comparative status in the project implementation. Besides providing a more descriptive overview of the project and its context, this chapter also accounts for limitations of the case study.

The overall analysis of policies and practices described in the previous chapters are finally presented in the following chapter (Chapter 6). This chapter evaluates to what extent the initial conjectures about the relationship between e-governance reform and overall governance can be supported by the policies and practices elaborated in the previous chapters. On the basis of the findings, a regional comparative narrative is drawn to further illustrate the context-specific understanding of governance even within a national scale. To grasp the overall impact of the CSCs scheme on existing governance practices, a social constructivist approach to analyse the interplay between the technology and governance has been adopted. Additionally, the patterns of adapting to e-governance with the specific local context is analysed with the conceptual tool of hybridity framed within a transcultural perspective. The summary of observations is elaborated in the Conclusion which also explains how e-governance research can enrich governance research and how the Indian context holds wider implications for overall understanding of governance issues. The entire research design envisages capturing how e-governance as a strategic reform aids in the process of overall governance reform agenda and hence impacting the level of governance in India and indicates some further avenues of researching e-governance.

1.10 Conclusion: Scope and Limits of the Research

Governance being the interface of state and society can be analysed from different academic approaches and from different perspectives even within the same disciplinarian boundary. For example, social anthropology and political science would approach the problematic of governance quite differently. Similarly within the purview of political science, public policy and international relations theorists would focus on different aspects of governance. Though this study of governance often transcends these scholastic boundaries, nonetheless it strives to combine the public policy approach with comparative politics approach within the broader framework of political sociology. This implies that it examines how particular public policies

harness the state-society relationship in an effective manner. In doing so, it looks at policy formulations, policy implementation as well reception of policies. Such multi-faceted focus renders the analysis of governance both state-centric and society-centric as it not only explores how political elites initiate policies, but also how bureaucrats implement these policies (sometimes with help of private actors) and how finally these policies are received by the citizens. All these processes take place in a particular political, social and cultural context which shapes the behaviour of all the actors and ultimately their interactions with each other. The interlocking of these political, social and cultural factors makes the policy process a complex yet a crucial node in the analytical puzzle of governance.

Following the economic liberalisation in India in 1991, there were several major policy reforms which went much beyond economic sphere. One such reform was in the field of Information Communications Technologies and its subsequent impact on the public service delivery model and the system of governance, in other words e-governance reform. Given its significant impact on governance e-governance reform has been critically scrutinised starting from e-governance policy formulation, implementation and its reception by the stakeholders. Hence both governance and e-governance are treated as conceptual variables where latter's impact on the former are considered to be of considerable significance. Having clearly setting the scope of this study, it would be only imminent to draw the circumference of the enquiry as well.

Governance as a conceptual variable lies at the crossroad of politics, culture, economy and society. Consequently, there are myriad categories that can contribute to the quality of the governance. In other words, indicators of good or bad governance can range from law and order management to the state of justice, from public service delivery mechanism to social discrimination, from developmental schemes to economic inequality and so on. This research by no means claims to present an exhaustive account of all the factors which either enhance or reduce the quality of governance. Instead it confines its attention to one particular strategic reform which is considered to have a positive impact on the level of governance. The other limiting element of this research is its heavy reliance on qualitative data. Though treating governance as a conceptual variable, the analytical frame deployed here is based on purely qualitative data. Therefore, while evaluating the quality of governance in terms of the outreach and effectiveness of the strategic reform, an attempt has been made to look for gaps in the policy documents and its subsequent implementations. However, all the gaps are not interpreted automatically as a failure of the policies but weighed carefully to see how

sometimes these gaps in fact help a policy to be absorbed in the local context. In other words, instead of finding simple explanations for policy effectiveness or policy failure, the focus is more on the conflicting zones of policy processes instigated by a certain reform agenda and the way apparent policy deficits can be actually turned into policy resolve. The final point of contestation is the India-centric analysis of governance. Rather than denying the specificities of the Indian context the study attempts to counter this bias in three ways: firstly, by adding the four federal states as additional layers of regional complexities which make the Indian case study more dynamic; secondly, by presenting India as only a case in point (not the case) to facilitate a context-specific understanding of governance; and thirdly, like many other post-colonial and post-communist societies, in India the domestic as well as international impetus to governance reform appears to be well pronounced.

E-governance and its impact on overall quality of governance is a rarely studied field within academia. Hence, despite its limited scope this study intends to make an important and original contribution to the existing body of research on e-governance and governance in general. In addition, by connecting the Indian case study to the general theories of governance this piece of work attempts to demonstrate how area studies can contribute to the process of theory-building.

2 State of the Art: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction: Mapping the Research

As we already witnessed in the introduction, governance has led to different connotations and conceptualizations in different context. Although, it has been predominantly a field of study for Political Scientists (albeit in an array of diverse subfields), governance has acquired equal significance among international development practitioners, policy makers, and civil society organizers in recent times. Therefore, any research on governance could be colossal because of the diversity and vastness of approaches deployed in its analyses and also consequently the vast literature available on the same. This implies that there is a need to delineate the most relevant literature according to the research problem this thesis intends to address and hence calls for mapping the existing research on governance leading in due course to the research on good governance and e-governance in general and in the particular context of India. Given this task at hand this chapter will divide the relevant literature in specific sections in accordance with the concepts and issues they deal with. While devising these sections, however, the focus remains on the implication of these literatures on the specific research questions set out in the beginning. Needless to say, some of the literature will have a direct bearing on the topic whereas others will only indirectly touch upon the important issues; some will determine the theoretical underpinnings of the thesis and some will elucidate on the practical and methodological aspect of the study and some even will address more than one issues dealt in this study. The first section will focus on the Political Science literatures that explore the concepts of governance in two relevant subfields, namely Comparative Politics and Public Administration. Though a few literature consulted during this research endeavour have dealt with the issue of governance within the subfield of International Relations, this stream of the governance discourse have not been taken into account of the analytical grid of this research and hence the literature discussed below will not reflect on governance research within the academic ground of the International Relations. Instead of getting into the third subfield of International Relations, the next section will look into the International Development research on governance as it will make the due inroads into next section on good governance discourse. This section on good governance will not only elaborate on the literature available on general trends of good governance but will also look at similar research done in the Indian context and here the next section will bring the light on the specific issue of e-governance as an extension of good governance studies within the Indian context. The following section will deal with the literature that have direct and indirect implications for

building up the transcultural perspectives on the issues dealt in the previous sections. At the end an attempt would be made to conjure up some methodological studies that have helped shaping up the course of the research and its wider framework.

2.2 Governance in Political Science

At the onset, before entering into intricate alleys of the vast literature of governance in Political Science, it would be worthwhile to attend to the notion of power and its relevance for the analysis of governance. Governance as a concept as well in practice hinges on the power relation between the governed and those who govern. The analysis of this power relation is best explained in the writings of Michel Foucault, particularly in *Power and Knowledge: selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77* (Harvester Press, 1980). In the chapters titled *Truth and Power* and *Power and Strategies*, he eloquently elaborates on the nature of power in the social body that surpasses the juridical-legal aspect of the state. While conceptualising power as productive, technical and positive he subverts the mere repressive nature of power and focuses mostly on the mechanisms through which the meta-power of the state need to be rooted in the entire gamut of existing networks of power relations invested in the society, starting from the body, to family, to kinship, to knowledge, to technology and so on. It is this understanding of power relations that holds the state-society relationship in the modern state and hence implicated evidently in any further analysis of governance in this study.

The treatment of the term Governance in different subfields of Political Science is well summarised in the book by Anne Mette Kjaer titled *Governance: Key Concepts* (Polity, 2004). Kjaer establishes that a close scrutiny of Institutionalism holds the key to a deeper understanding of the common ground of the concept of governance that permeates all sub-disciplines. Notwithstanding its different versions, according to Kjaer, Institutionalism sets out to answer to key questions: 1) how do institutions affect political behaviour? , and 2) how do institutions occur and transform? As most institutional theories occupy itself with the first question, it is governance theory which focuses on the question of institutional change by combining structures of rule with that of human agency. This underlying preoccupation with Institutionalism, in Kjaer's opinion, determines the perception of governance discourse across all sub-disciplines of Political Science.

The chapter titled *Governance in Public Administration and Public Policy: Steering Inter-Organizational Networks* deals with governance debate within the Public Administration field which explicitly impact the public policy deliberation. In doing so, the chapter traces the

reform in the public sector since 1980 which marks a clear shift from the Weberian principles of bureaucratic hierarchy to development of policy networks. While taking a critical view of the traditional public administration model Kjaer explains the emergence of the concept of governance in the process of public sector reforms in 1980 and 90s. This reform process which is sometimes referred to as the New Public Management (NPM) Reform is typically characterized by privatization, decentralization and ushered in policy networks geared towards efficient public service delivery. However, Kjaer does not stop at the mere description of this reform process which brought significant changes in the role of the state, but also attempts to further her attention to the issues of democratic governance by raising questions about accountability and rule setting within the policy networks which now governed the public policy-making.

This book dedicates two chapters in describing the concept of governance in the field of Comparative Politics. As it explores the journey of Comparative Politics as a subfield of Political Science (since pre-War era to the recent times) starting at the systematic comparison of different political systems based on the national constitutions, to input oriented study of the political system such as political culture, electoral behaviour, interest groups and so on, to further comparisons of the state institutions based on the policy outcomes, the book shows the trend which start with a focus on the state, move towards the political culture and behaviour and finally bring the state back in the frame while focussing on its relationship with the society. This recent focus on the state-society relationship also hints at the phenomenon of democratization and its analysis. The chapter titled *Governance in Comparative Politics I: The State and Economic Development* engages in a comparative political economy which explores the role of the state in setting the rule of the public policy-making either through state institutions or through networks of public and private stakeholders. This latter process of policy making leads to the debate on democratization that is elaborated in the next chapter titled *Governance in Comparative Politics II: Theories of Democratization*. The debate around democratization, according to the author is two-fold, as it is a normative as well as an analytical issue. The normative aspect of the debate focuses on the concept of legitimacy and efficiency which would help developing the working models of governance applicable across different social, cultural and economic background. This stream of thought has direct bearing on the concept of good governance which would be explored in a separate section later in this chapter. The analytical side of the debate emphasizes the relationship between state and society, the structures and the actors in the process of democratization and hence look at the

roles civil society, political elites, and international organizations play in the decision-making process of the state/ regime.

It is the latter aspect of the democratization debate that builds on the main argument of the book titled *The Puzzle of India's Governance – Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (Routledge, 2006) by Subrata K. Mitra. This book conceptualises governance as the interface of the state and society from a neo-institutional rational choice framework. Mitra argues that governance is embedded in the normative and material conditions of the society and therefore, context bound, especially in transitional societies where often the institutional structures are imported in origin and exhibits a hiatus from the inherited societal norms and values. This hiatus becomes crucial in bringing institutional change and a comparative model of governance occupying the overlapping zones of thick perceptions of the social actors and groups and the thin norms of the state structures and institutions forms the focal point of such a process of change. This book stands out to be specifically relevant for a number of reasons. Firstly, while bringing the culture and context into the analytical framework, Mitra never refrains from his focus on politics. Culture and contexts plays a role in developing the factors of path dependency of certain political institutions and behaviour rather than turning the uniqueness of inherent cultural attributes into explanatory factors of politics. Secondly, this book also bring out the notion of plurality involved in an understanding of governance by pulling together agency of rational actors and strategic politics of elites into the decision making process of the state. Thirdly, even with its strong analytical root in the comparative politics that locate governance within the state-society relationships, this book deals with notion of legitimacy and effective orderly rule in changing societies such as India in a manner that goes beyond one-size-fit-all approach of the normative model of comparative politics and the democratization debate and still manages to draw generalizations of broader theoretical implications. Fourthly, in its quest to solve the puzzle of resilience of India's institutions, the book uniquely and quite seamlessly marries comparative politics' perception of governance with that of public policy approaches which obviously adds to the dynamism of its neo-institutional model. As Mitra describes, governance from a public policy perspective is based more on popular consent rather than authority and sanctions for legitimacy. Therefore, governance becomes more of an interactive process of public-private partnership where the government is open to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide more efficiently (This aspect of public policy approach is instrumental in emergence of e-governance which would be discussed and explained later). Last but not the least, this book quite successfully

characterizes governance as a conceptual variable which can be measured in terms of both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The uniqueness of this book's approach lies in its grand attempt to combine study of institutions, policies, elites strategies and mass attitudes into a single framework of understanding that connects the concept of governance to the state-centric political economy approach as well as to the society-centric pluralistic democratization approach excluding its normative bias.

In another book titled *When Rebels become Stakeholders- Democracy, Agency and Social Change in India* (Sage India, 2009) Subrata K.Mitra and V.B. Singh again look at the agency of rational actors and cultural context in the backdrop of democracy and social change in India. They devise the concepts of *stakeholder* (people who consider their agency to be efficacious and recognise institutions to be legitimate) and *rebel* (who knows their political influence while refuting the legitimacy of the political system) to understand the process of social change in India through a rare combination of 'neo-institutional model based on structural parameters of action and the logic of individual perceptions of values, choice and strategy' (pp.13, 2009). Adding to the dynamism of this model of social change is the role of the political elites and their policy initiatives that collate both sanction and welfare with the flair of customs and cultural continuity. By locating governance in the interface of state and society, this book draws on the reciprocal relationship between them to elucidate how the state (in the Postcolonial context of India) has impacted social transformation and how the processes and outcomes of such changes have had implications for the state. The myriad notions of human agency, elite strategy, legitimacy and efficacy of the political institutions, culture, context and path dependency have played a crucial role in understanding this causal and reciprocal relation between state and society and thereby enriched the understanding of governance.

A similar approach is found in an earlier book by Subrata K. Mitra titled *Culture and Rationality: the politics of social change in post-colonial India* (Sage India, 1999). Though the book is looking at politics of social change rather than the concept of governance, it is the underlying approach of the book which makes it relevant for our understanding of governance in comparative politics. This book takes an approach of critical traditionalism to look for the sources of change in the preferences of the actors. These preferences are further embedded in the culture, context and the historical frame in which they are entrenched. Yet, it is through the individual rationality of the actors that culture and history unfold and not just by themselves. This abstract rational-choice model combined with empirical categories of actors'

preferences percolates in Mitra's analysis of governance where he places the concept at the juncture where legality of state coincides with the legitimacy of the society and explores the role of the multitude of actors and groups in such an interactive process which again is informed by broader assumptions of comparative politics.

Mark Bevir and R.A. W. Rhodes in their book *The State as Cultural Practice* (OUP, 2010) follow a similar line of argument while talking about governance. In the chapter *Rethinking the State*, they argue that 'governance is constructed differently by many actors working against the background of diverse traditions' (pp.82, 2010). Instead of providing a historical survey of the concept, they focus on the recent developments in the analysis of state which traces the shift in the patterns of state authority moving from a hierarchic government to network governance, to metagovernance and then to the decentred governance. Bevir and Rhodes identify three separate waves of governance in the course of this change.

The first wave which they term as the Anglo-governance school focuses on the public sector reform of the 1980s driven by the neo-liberal reform strategy of the state. As an outcome of these reforms the role of markets, quasi-markets and networks increases in public service delivery which was further intensified by the global changes such as emergence of transnational organizations or rise of regional institutions such as European Union. Consequently, the state power and authority becomes simultaneously dispersed among different networks ranging across local, national and supranational levels of governance.

The second wave of metagovernance disputes this dispersal of state authority albeit its recognition of burgeoning influence of markets and networks. In the wake plurality of networks, state's role of direct governance shifts to metagovernance of different modes of interventions through indirect steering and guiding of chains of somewhat self-governing stakeholders. A clear attempt to bring the state back is evident in this phase.

However, Bevir and Rhodes counter this metgovernance with a third wave of decentred governance which focuses on human agency and social construction of individual practices. Within this wave governance is constructed through individual actions of a plurality of actors embedded in their beliefs rooted in diverse and overlapping traditions. Rather than the state the point of departure becomes the "various traditions that have informed the diverse policies and practices by which elite and other actors have sought to remake the state" (pp.82, 2010). In developing their analysis of decentred governance, they also firmly refute generality as they argue that governance is contingent upon the agency of the actors ensconced in culture,

context and history. Here this book exhibits a close resemblance to the approaches adopted by Mitra in his book, *The Puzzle of India's Governance – Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (Routledge, 2006). They both look at the issue of institutional change or changes in the pattern of state authority through the politics of elite strategy and individual agency deeply rooted in the complex web of values, norms and beliefs enmeshed in the critical juncture of diverse culture, contexts and history.

A similar notion of decentred governance is found in Kooiman's idea of social-political governance. Jan Kooiman in his edited volume titled *Modern Governance- New Government-Society Interactions* (Sage, London, 1993) tries to develop new conceptual framework to analyse the emerging patterns of interactions between the government and the society and find recourse in the notions of governance and governing. He terms it as a novel form of *interactive social-political governance* which means "setting the tone; creating the social-political conditions for the development of new models of governing in terms co-management, co-steering and co-guidance" (pp.3, 1993). In his opinion, these social-political forms of governance and governing of course spreads way beyond governments to include continuous yet shifting interactions between social actors, groups, state, market, civil society organizations. Though he directly does not talk about networks, but he argues in the same line as the notion of decentred governance. The chapters in this book look at both the issues of conceptualizations of socio-political governance and governing and also their empirical manifestations, especially in the Western European context. The theoretical paradigms range from system-theory, to public administration and public management theories, from communication theory to the theories of state and theories of inter-organizational networks. Irrespective of their different theoretical dispositions, the papers in this edited volume focus on three common area of analysis: the patterns of interactions between state and society; growing notions complexity, dynamics and diversity of the societies they study and their implications; and the issues of governance, governability and governing at analytical as well as empirical levels. In a later book called *Governing as Governance* (Sage, London, 2003), Kooiman maintained the same line argument, however, only broadening the scope of his analysis by viewing governance as a social quality to be shared by public and private actors. Like his previous work, he argues that governance is a *mix* of different kind of interactions between a multitude of actors growing out of increasing complexity, diversity and dynamisms of modern societies, though the nature of this *mix* (as a continuously changing element) varies depending on the context and level of governance and in turn affects the process of governing

itself. This changing pattern of governance does not totally write off the traditional role of governments, it rather points out the limitations of the role of the state and its traditional government interventions. The awareness of this limitation on the part of the state only reshuffles the role of the government rather than shrinking it. As Kooiman explains, “In diverse, dynamic and complex areas of social activity, no single governing agency is able to realise legitimate and effective governing by itself. Such governance is achieved by the creation of interactive, social-political structures and processes, stimulating communication between actors involved, and the creation of common responsibilities next to individual and separate ones. There is a need to restructure governing responsibilities, tasks and activities, based upon differentiation and integration of various concerns and the agents representing them” (pp.4, 2003). Though wearing a close resemblance with the approaches taken by other authors discussed above, the uniqueness of Kooiman’s approach remains in its focus on the socio-political aspects of the interactions between government and society and the shifting nature of such interactions.

Mark Bevir’s *Key Concepts in Governance* (Sage, London, 2009) plays an important role in providing a holistic description of the concept and establishing the link between the social science and international development discourse on governance. This text starts with a conceptual history of governance in social science, in neo-liberal philosophy, in civil society movement, in New Public Management (NPM) finally culminating into an idea of a *New Governance* which rose in prominence since 1980s with the rise of non-state actors, policy networks and changing role of the state. While tracing the conceptual history of the concept, Bevir also explores the theoretical paradigms attributing to various interpretations of governance. He presents a vivid account of governance in theories of Rational Choice, New Institutionalism, Social Constructivism and also in System theories and Regulation theories. While tracing the conceptual and theoretical roots of governance, Bevir addresses the significant implications of new governance on issues of public policy and democracy. The role of the state in managing non-state actors, the questions of accountability along with the notion of legitimacy and efficiency, issues of social inclusion and justice, the role of international organizations in implementing governance reform – all these become relevant research concerns in the context of *new governance*. Therefore this text serves two purposes, firstly in providing strong theoretical grounding of the concept of governance and secondly, in contextualising the significance of governance analysis in the development discourse.

The other two texts, which also helps in creating the link between Political Science and development paradigm on governance are *Transforming Asian Governance: rethinking assumptions and challenging practices* edited by M. Ramesh and Scott Fritzen (Routledge, 2009) and *Democratic Governance in India: Challenges of Poverty, Development and Identity* edited by Niraja Gopal Jayal and Sudha Pai (Sage India, 2001).

The first book starts by recognizing the myriad and even contradictory ways of conceptualizing governance and therefore attempts to focus on the contextual factors of the governance debate in the recent times. The basic presumption which the book takes as its point of departure is that governance is determined by the way authority, power and resources are allocated within the public, private and people sector ranging from local to supranational level. Given this basic understanding of governance, Fritzen summarises four general trends which given rise to the governance debate both in academia and development community. They are: fiscal crisis within the government, growing citizen demand for better quality of services along with a responsive government, lack of trust in the competence of public agencies, and failure of state-driven development initiatives (especially in the context of developing countries). These trends implicated the size of the state, locus of authority and the distribution of authority between state and other sectors which in turn brings the focus on the associated notions or rather agendas (as Fritzen describes them) of privatization, participation, decentralization and de-regulations. According to these agendas, there are two ways of viewing governance; firstly, as part of the ‘good governance principles’ which basically developed some universal scales and measure the performance of different countries along these scales; secondly as part of public administration and management which has gone through severe reform in recent years. Though bearing some affinity to public administration discourse, these interpretations of governance forms the undercurrent of the governance debate within the development community. This becomes apparent through many case studies (exclusively focussing on developing nations of Asia) in the volume that explores the impetus of transformation in specific countries along with sector specific trajectories of such a process of change.

Jayal and Pai tries to connect the recent trends in governance in different fields as they starts by arguing that “ current discourses on democratic governance in India are imbricated in and reflects trends international development discourses and policy, as well as Western social science” (pp.12, 2001). They succinctly trace the neo-liberal upsurge in the Anglo-American world in 1980s and its gradual impact in the theories of state and eventually affecting the

developing countries in the post cold war era through intervention of international development community. By capturing the shift from mere government to the governance approach, this book does not stop at the academic trends vis-a-vis governance analysis, but carry forward these trends in concrete empirical ground with a effective comparison of the North-South trajectory. Though the book is constricted to the experiences of India, its overall critical analytical framework of the social science as well developmentalist approaches to governance renders it an instrumental role in shaping the arguments of this dissertation.

2.3 Governance in the International Development Paradigm: Rise of Good Governance Discourse and Governance Reform Agenda

Governance in the international development paradigm is basically understood as a condition of development. The overall theoretical or philosophical underpinning of such an understanding is guided by neo-liberalism that has been on a growing binge since 1980s. There are many literatures on this specific dimension on governance which eventually lead to a normative framework, often described as “good governance” principles. This section will explore the literature that have scrutinized or emphasized this developmental notion of governance and also hinted at the probable manifestations of such approaches towards governance.

The Governance Discourse-A Reader (OUP, 2008) edited by Bidyut Chakrabarty and Mohit Bhattacharya presents a series of papers essaying governance in the context of development and its consequent manifestations (mostly in the context of India). In the introduction to the reader Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya attempt to contextualise governance in the contemporary social, economic and political state of affairs, especially after the collapse of Soviet model which prompted the neo-liberal school of thought as an alternative to the state-directed development paradigm. In their own words “ as the neo-liberal view started downplaying the state and overvaluing the ‘market’, and the trend was to decentre the state from its monopoly status in social control, the idea of ‘governance’ gained in prominence, connoting a plurality of rules replacing the state’s monopoly” (pp. 2, 2008). This shift from the government to governance theories emphasises a process-oriented view of state and politics over the structure-oriented hierarchical approach that intend to improve the technical expertise of the government and hence tries to depoliticise the act of governing. This brings the ‘good governance’ into fore of governance theories within the international development discourse. Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya provide a three dimensional view of good governance: firstly, as a set of principles based on a checklist of criteria for public

management; secondly as a complex process of interaction between state, market and civil society based on a mix of policies, values and institutions; thirdly, as a regulatory capacity of the state inevitable for effective realization of the principles and processes. Tracing the historical and theoretical roots of the governance theories and linking them with the good governance paradigm, this text helps formulating the basic research questions of this study.

A similar line of argument is prominent in Joachim Ahrens's edited volume *Good Governance in the 21st Century: Conflict, Institutional Change and Development in the Era of Globalization* (Edward Elgar, 2011) as he explores the interplay of institutions, economic development and governance. This book is based on the underlying principle of *institutions matters* – a principle that promote a less interventionist yet central role of the state government in successful market driven policy reform. Ahrens argues, “it is not only economic institutions such as secure property rights, competitions rules or bankruptcy regulations which are crucial for a functioning market economy, but political institutions such as the rule of law, federal structures, or organizational modes in public bureaucracies as well” (pp.3, 2011). This is where, he proposes, the entry of good governance as a set of prescriptions for reform in order to implement economic policies according to the new set of rules. He also reiterated the fact that these institutional governance reforms are more significant and more encompassing for the transitional or developing societies where policy reforms should be combined institutional restructuring. In the introduction to the volume, Ahrens formulates the concept of *Market Enhancing Governance Structures* (MEGS) which he then connects to his models and dimensions of governance characterised by the changing role of state and economic institutions vis-a-vis accountability, predictability, participation and transparency. While developing this model, however, he recognizes the problem of linear governance-growth relationship trajectories guided by orthodox liberal economic thinking and therefore tries to account for success as well as failure stories of development models in different country case studies in the volume.

The papers of this volume is arranged in three different parts: 1) *Conflict and Cooperation*; 2) *National Strategies*; 3) *Newly Emerging Global Actors and Networks*. The basic attempt of all the contributions has been to formulate development strategies to better tackle the challenges posed by the recent trends of economic globalization, international conflict and increasingly complex global system in the 21st century. This volume is mainly preoccupied with the economic reform in the global context and takes non-economic factors such as political institutions and social conditions only in their implications for the former. Therefore, it can be

argued that governance is discussed as part of the causal relationship between the exogenous economic reform and the endogenous policy reform and institutional change.

Stephen Knack in his article “Governance and Growth” in the volume *Good Governance in Developing Countries: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* edited by Kerstin Koetschau and Thilo Marauhn (Peter Lang, 2008) documents the way institutional economic approach has viewed governance in a causal relationship with economic performance and hence growth. His vivid exploration of the state of the art was supplemented with the statistical evidences from a cross-country analysis of the role of governance in economic development. However, Knack also identifies the limitation of such statistical analysis in their lack of clarity for governance parameters. Though all these studies point out corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, arbitrary policy-making, lack of enforcement of law etc as attributing to the poor quality of governance, they fail to establish which matters more than the other. The interconnectedness of these parameters also leaves the role of donor agencies in a fix as some of the issues lie within the strict domain of internal and domestic politics and therefore beyond the interventionist reaches of the donors. This article is mainly concerned with the growth – oriented economic policy-making and the role of donors and national governments in facilitating such policy implementations by improving the quality of governance. Knack clearly singles out the hindrances such as over-regulation, corruption, different forms of rent-seeking, in achieving neoliberal economic policies and proposes a set of governance parameters to improve the situation. He uses the term good governance in much of self-explanatory manner and with much emphasis on strategies to achieve it. This rigor for ‘good governance’ as a universal prescription is reflected across a wide range of development agenda in last two decades.

Three other articles in the *International Social Science Journal* (Issue No.155, March 1998) explore the rise of governance in the development paradigms in somewhat similar manner. Bob Jessop’s article titled, “The rise of governance and the risks of failure: the case of economic development” investigate the rise of governance with regard to the changing roles of state, market and co-ordination of partnerships between different sectors and also with the failure of these sectors. Jessop elaborates on different modes of governance with specific reference to tendencies of governance failures and tries to connect them to the notion of meta-governance where state acts as a broker of co-ordination between different sectors. The overall tendency of such a changing role of state and growing interest in governance however remains oriented towards economic development in the global context. The next article in the

same issue named, “Governance and the crisis in the international mechanisms of regulation” authored by Pierre de Senarclens talks about the governance debate in the international organizations as a legitimizing discourse of neo-liberal project. However, he urges to go beyond the role of these international organizations in evolving mechanisms of political regulations and to look at governance debate more as a problem of institutional reform in the changing economic, social and political scenario. Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara, in her article “Uses and abuses of the concept of governance” provides a descriptive account of six different areas of development discourse which deals with the issue of governance with much vigour. These areas are: institutional restructuring for efficient market economy; public sector reform; shifting of power and resources between public, private and civil society; democratization process and issue of social inclusion, justice and human rights; rebuilding war-torn societies and coping with the challenges of globalization. The author also suggests new avenues of change in the governance debate that would mark a departure from the predominant views of the much of the donor community and the development paradigm.

David Craig and Doug Porter in their edited book *Development Beyond Neoliberalism: Governance, Poverty Reduction and Political Economy* (Routledge, 2006) present some further and interesting insights into the development discourse on governance. As the title of the book suggests, this edited volume harnesses the recent shifts in the neoliberal policies of the international development community with burgeoning agenda of pro-poor governance. Craig and Porter trace the historical development of Neoliberalism within the international development community and the shifts in its approach in the wake of failures of Structural Adjustment Programmes in 1980s and crisis of financial crises in 1990s. While these historical failures put a serious question mark on the development paradigm itself, post-developmentalists alleged it to be a grand modernizing agenda serving Eurocentric interests. Entangled in the web of severe criticism and performance failure, development institutions were compelled to change their strategy albeit retaining their philosophical bias towards neoliberalism. This shift was marked by the dramatic arrival of ‘inclusive’ Poverty Reduction and Good Governance agenda which was believed to leverage wider consensus for market-led growth and developing countries’ integration into global capitalism. As Craig and Porter deconstructs the Poverty Reduction and Good Governance agenda, the relation between the two becomes quite apparent – poverty reduction was explained in terms of categories such as opportunity, empowerment and security where good governance became a facilitator by bringing in stability, service delivery efficiency, transparency, accountability, justice,

predictability and equality. Privatization, increasing influence of civil society, decentralization became some of the important aspects of the broader institutional reform under the rubric of poverty reduction and good governance. Therefore, this edited volume presents the narratives of liberal conception of good governance which comes with a promise of poverty eradication for those “who respected, above all, the rule of law, and the property rights of the powerful” (pp.7, 2006). This conceptualization of governance in the recent development discourse is unravelled further in a number of cross-country experiences.

The neoliberal turn developmental policy making and development assistance and its inevitable link to the good governance agenda became a common theme amongst authors late 1990s onwards. D. Bandyopadhyay in the paper titled “Administration, Decentralisation and Good Governance” (*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.38, No.48, November, 1996) focused the on the way World Bank and other international donor agencies have attempted to define good governance and its implications for developing countries and indicted the notion to be a symbol of recolonisation and new imperialism. Sara Joseph’s paper “Democratic Good Governance: New Agenda for Change” (*Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.36, No.12, March, 2001) also explores the neoliberal root of governance in development paradigm and emphasizes the market concept of equality and citizen empowerment backed by a democratic polity with growing interest in civil society organizations. One of the major dimensions of good governance, according to Joseph, is to renders the citizens economically self-sustaining by opening up market-oriented opportunities and to view them more as consumers of public service delivery. This echoes the equivalent relationship between poverty reduction and governance that would come up in Craig and Porter’s edited book in 2006 (already discussed above). In his article, “International Co-operation For Democracy and Good Governance: Moving Toward A Second Generation?” (*European Journal of Development Research*, Vol.13, No.1, June, 2001), Carlos Santiso draws our attention to the close link between democracy, economic development and governance. Both democracy and good governance, geared towards institutional and political reform to enhance the capacity and legitimacy of the state, are propagated as prerequisites of better economic performance or rather market driven growth. Though focusing on sub-Saharan Africa, Rita Abrahamsen’s book *Disciplining Democracy: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa* (Zed Books, 2000) critically examines the development discourse in post Cold War era and its strong connection to the process of democratisation by theoretical and textual investigation of the good governance agenda and its empirical implications. While not completely denying the

difference of development approaches by different donors, Abrahamsen clearly contends that good governance as a uniform agenda is nothing but an “intrinsic part of the technologies of power employed in international politics and one of the ways in which the North maintains and legitimises its continued power and hegemony in the South” (pp.ix, 2000). Rather than focusing on the institutional, bureaucratic and managerial aspects of good governance, this book traces the historically contingent and culturally definite course of development discourse in the shifting balance of power in post Cold War times and hence the ways in which good governance has become an weapon to legitimise certain types of democracy over the others in the African context. An equally critical approach is evident in Pia Ruggirozzi’s book *Advancing Governance in the South: What Roles for International Financial Institutions in Developing States?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Like Abrahamsen, this book also explores the power relations which drive the governance reform agendas of the International Financial Institutions only with a different regional focus on Latin America. However, she looks beyond the simplistic notion of coercive authority of these lending institutions to understand the complex relations of power that emerge and exist through much negotiation, conflict and contestation between the local actors and their international counterparts.

There is another set of literature which directly looks into the common practices of development assistance in international and bilateral donor agencies and contends how (good) governance plays a key role in development assistance since the collapse of Berlin Wall in 1989. *The Politics of Aid Selectivity: Good Governance Criteria in World Bank, US and Dutch Development Assistance* (Routledge, 2007) by Wil Hout debunks aid selectivity as a political concept used to revive contemporary approaches of development assistance from the severe attacks it encountered in late 1980s and early 1990s. The aid selectivity was aimed to bring more legitimacy to development assistance by rendering it more target-oriented, more focused on delivery mechanism and greater emphasis on aid recipients. Over all, there was an emergence of “effectiveness discourse” in the development community which were in tune with the new public management (NPM) approach in many Western nations in the 1980s. This book focuses on the a particular aspect of aid selectivity criteria which was based on governance quality in the recipient country along with the traditional selection criteria of poverty related issues since late 1990s. This newly emerging interest in the governance quality were considered to be a step beyond the simplistic model of development that does not end with the disbursement of aid but also exploits the concept of selectivity to focus on the issues of capacity of the states. Therefore, Wil Hout’s book on aid selectivity brings in fresh

insights into the paradigm shift in the development theory and policy making and the emergence of governance centred aid selectivity agenda in the process.

Eric Neumayer's book *The Pattern of Aid Giving: The Impact of Good Governance on Development Assistance* (Routledge, 2003) can be considered in the same genre of contributions which meticulously explores the pattern of aid giving in the 1990s with a special focus on good governance. By taking aid as a depended variable, this study presents a detailed econometric analysis of aid giving by all major donors between 1990-2000 and why and how good governance played an instrumental role in this endeavour. This quantitative analysis of the patterns of aid giving was well supplemented by an extensive and comparative account of the donor agencies with a special focus on good governance. Needless to say, this book serves as reliable source of understanding development policy making and practices in the recent times with its special insistence on good governance.

There are some literatures which indirectly touch upon the issues of governance or good governance and hence provide useful insights into our research problems. *Global Social Policy and Governance* (Sage, 2007) by Bob Deacon extensively review some significant social policies of the major multilateral agencies, global think tanks and civil society organizations and global business and knowledge networks, in order to understand the emergence of global social policy networks, global social governance and also the emerging mechanisms of global redistribution, global social regulation and global social rights. This understanding global social policies hints at the further political strategies to ensure greater social justice within and between states which somewhat relate to the quality of governance within and beyond states. In the same way, *Going Local: Decentralization, Democratization and the Promise of Good Governance* (Princeton University Press, 2007) by Merliee S. Grindle addresses the issues of decentralization as an intrinsic parts of good governance and its connotations for structural changes aimed at "public good".

Furthermore, there is a number of policy briefs, concept papers, working papers, reports by several multilateral and bilateral donor agencies and International Organizations which talks about governance, democracy, decentralizations, growth and other related issues in a more direct and precise manner. The pioneering text in this regard would be *Sub-Saharan Africa: from Crisis to Sustainable Growth – a Long Term Perspective Study* (World Bank, 1989). This World Bank report identifies the failures of public institutions to be the root cause of economic failure in the sub-Saharan Africa and therefore calls for good governance. Despite

admitting to the importance of the market forces and private sector initiatives, good governance was considered to be the single most imperative factor in achieving sustainable growth in the region. Good governance in this document was characterised by efficient public service, reliable judiciary, public accountability of the administration, and citizen empowerment. There is an over-all understanding throughout that development should be bottom-up which in effect encourage the growth of civil society organization. This documents stands out as one of the first documents to conceive and preset the idea of good governance in development assistance.

The research project *Worldwide Governance Indicators* (WGI) by World Bank published several volumes of the research reports titled *Governance Matters*. The research is spread across 212 countries and territories and measures six dimensions of governance between 1996 and 2007. The dimensions of governance under this project are: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, and regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. These volumes of *Governance Matters* provide a quantitative cross-country analysis of governance indicators and the aim of this research endeavour is to explore causes and consequences of good governance. Daniel Kauffmann in several Policy Research Working Papers of the World Bank has explored the link between economic growth and good governance by introducing different measurement strategies to establish the causal relationship between the two. United Nations Organizations have also defined and described the concept of good governance and connected its importance to the democratisation process. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report titled “Governance and Sustainable Human Development” (1997) has illustrated major principles of good governance which has gained universal recognition and therefore often used across other UN documents and also other development organizations and practitioners. Adel M. Abdellatif’s workshop paper, *Good Governance and Its Relationship to Democracy and Economic Development* (2003) illustrates in considerable details the World Bank and UN discussions on the concepts of good governance, democracy and economic development and their interconnectedness in the development discourse. There is an abundance of literature on good governance not only within World Bank and UN databases but also across all major donor agencies which are widely accessible and clearly delineates basic tenets of good governance along with the guiding principles of its implementation in development assistance. Describing each of this text or a great deal of it would not only be a tedious task but also render the argument rather repetitive. Hence an effort has been made here to focus on

the generalized understanding of governance and good governance in the development assistance literature and underline the semblance in the approach of the donor agencies towards the issues of governance.

2.4 Governance Reforms: The Indian Context

Building on the analysis of governance as a concept and its gradual rise in the development paradigm as a package of good governance, the next imminent step is to contextualise this governance discourse in developing nations where the governance reform agenda has been most frequently implemented. As India has played out the context in this research endeavour, the literature consulted for this part of the research is also India-centred barring a few exceptions.

A group of literature which has discussed the political economy of the economic liberalisation in India are as follows: Robert S. Jenkins' paper "Liberal Democracy and the Political Management of Structural Adjustment in India: Conceptual Tensions in the Good Governance Agenda" (*IDS Bulletin*, Vol 26 No2, 1995), Jos Mooij (ed.) *The Politics of Economic Reforms in India* (Sage, 2005), Sanjay Ruparelia, Sanjay Reddy, John Harris and Stuart Corbridge (eds.) *Understanding India's New Political Economy: A Great Transformation?* (Routledge, 2011), Chandan Sengupta and Stuart Corbridge (eds.) *Democracy, Development and Decentralisation in India* (Routledge, 2010) and John Farrington, Priya Deshingkar, Craig Johnson and Daniel Start (eds.) *Policy Windows and Livelihood Futures: Prospects for Poverty Reduction in Rural India* (OUP, 2006). These edited volumes pull together an array of papers focussing on different aspects of economic reform in India. Their contribution for this research lies in the political analysis of economic reform in India and evaluation of these reforms on different political, social and cultural dimensions of the country. Another paper titled "Politics of Economic Liberalizations in India" (*World Development*, Vol. 17 No.3, 1989) helps in familiarising with the pre-reform political context in India.

Essays on Politics and Governance in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Thailand (Towards Freedom, 2007) authored by Jayanta Kumar Ray and Muntassir Mamoon and *Governance: South Asian Perspectives* (OUP, 2001) edited by Hasnat Abdul Hye - both of these books investigate specific issues of governance mentioned in the previous sections, namely decentralization, civil society, public sector reform and so on, from south Asian or Asian perspective with a number of case studies. The case studies discussed in these volumes bring in fresh insights into the local conditions of the south Asian nations as far as overall

governance or particular sector is concerned. Together these volumes build up better understanding of the context in which broader reform agendas are verified. Another such relevant contribution is found in the well-formulated and insightful article, "Civil Society and Good Governance in Bangladesh" by Syeda Naushin Parnini published in *Asian Journal of Political Science* (2006). The significance of this paper not only in its treatment of historicity and contexts in the analysis of good governance and civil society but also in its efforts to go beyond the top-down approach of western hegemony to formulate workable strategies for better governance embedded in the local culture. Though these contributions are not India-centric, their analysis and perspectives nevertheless, set the tone of further discussions on good governance and governance reform in India.

Kameshwar Choudhary's edited volume *Globalisation, Governance Reforms and Development in India* (Sage, 2007) adeptly contextualises the governance reforms in India under the rubric of good governance agenda of the international development community. There are two areas in which this volume makes a significant contribution. Firstly, despite stressing the neo-liberal bias of the new governance or good governance discourse, Choudhary promises to stretch beyond the mere economic and technical aspect of the reform and incorporates political, social and cultural dimensions with equal vigour. While doing so it also brings in sector-specific analysis of changing faces of governance in India, for example, exploring media, health, information communication technology and so on in the wake of new trends of globalization and governance. Secondly, the contributions to this volume strive to strike a balance between different groups of the society who are affected differentially by these changes in the governance agenda. Certainly, in a deeply fragmented and hierarchic society like India, a particular reform will not have similar implications for the elites and the marginalised. Rather than depicting a generalised pattern of governance reforms, this volume probe exactly into these narratives of rupture and discontinuities that good governance creates in India. As this dissertation also deals with the phenomenon of e-governance in India, this book's specific contribution in terms of Santosh Panda's "Globalization, Culture and Information Communications Technology in India" proves to be extremely relevant.

It is the comparative framework of its analysis that renders the edited volume of *Good Governance, Democratic Societies and Globalization* (Sage, 2004) by Surendra Munshi and Biju Paul Abraham, a pertinent contribution to the discussion on good governance. The book is based on the comparative analysis of European Union and the Union of India as two democratic societies in terms of their experiences of the emerging trends ushered in by

globalization and governance reforms/good governance. In conceptualising good governance, the authors explore multiple contexts of its development by combining the neo-liberal turn and the traditional social democracy with that of progressive governance aimed to provide cushioning to the harsh realities of global economy within the realm of democratic states. However, this emphasis on the *third way* does not lead to a homogenous prescriptive model of governance reforms but instead thrives on a heterogeneity approach to understand the comparative perspectives the volume undertakes. It is widely argued across all the contributions in the volume that governance is not only embedded in the cultural norms but also shaped by the historical trajectories of its emergence which in turn determine the desired social and economic outputs of the governance systems. Therefore, it is important to understand these contexts and their complexities before evaluating the appropriateness of certain governance reform initiatives. The complexity of the contexts not only differs across Europe and India, but also within these broader geo-political constructs. These nuanced comparative narratives reinforce the significance of the heterogeneity approach and brings in the desired reflexivity in the analysis of good governance.

The Indian context plays out in a prominent way in understanding the actor's experience of confronting the state in *Seeing the State: Governance and Governmentality in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) by Stuart Corbridge et al. In their attempt to review main development debates on participation and good governance, they weave the intricate web of local political experiences in rural India with the reform agenda set in the government and wider development community. In other words, the book explore the state-society relationship in the rural setting of India with a bottom-up approach which gives equal attention to the citizens as well as the local political elites. In their words, the purpose is to see "...how the new governance agenda might look from the point of view of some of the key individuals at the Block and district levels who are charged with making it work. Instead of thinking of government actors in impersonal terms, we want to give a stronger sense of their embeddedness in local society." This particular approach makes this study even more relevant for any research on the rural politics in India as it shows the link of grandiose principles of good governance with its microcosmic realm of implementation and also the potential zones of rupture in which they are entangled. Besides critically examining the rural contexts of implementing reform initiatives, this book also draws our attention to the important concept of *political society* as conceived by Partha Chatterjee.

In his book *The Politics of the Governed- Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Columbia University Press, 2004) explores the concept of *political society* in the context of postcolonial societies in sharp contrast to the European polity and its equivalence in the notion of civil society. As in the case of most postcolonial societies, in India the state overtook the role of development for its population aided by grand ideals of international development community and the latest governmental technologies to generate and implement policies. However, colonial categories of caste, ethnicity and religion continue to flourish in both mobilising political demands and formulating public policy which shaped the postcolonial state of India and its relationship with the society. As Chatterjee argues, this narrative of politics in India is markedly different from the European ideas of civil society which is restricted only to a culturally equipped minority of Indian citizens representing only a *high ground of modernity*. Therefore, in order to deepen our understanding of the Indian context, it is imperative to fully explore the concept of political society which does not always fall into legal-rational framework of Western polity but somewhat instrumental in lending legitimacy to the developmental postcolonial state at large. This perception of Indian political context appears to be exceptionally crucial while investigating the implications of rural or local politics for the broader issues of governance or the nature of state-society interactions.

Despite, recognizing the break from the postcolonial notion of political society, civil society remains central to the good governance discourse in most developing societies as well as India. *Civil Society and Governance in Modern India* (East West Books, 2007) edited by V.R. Raghavan stresses the same. This volume is a compilation of talks by academicians, civil society practitioners, policy makers at a seminar organized by the Centre for Security Analysis (CSA), Chennai in 2007. All the speakers unanimously underline the role and importance of civil society in realising the goals of good governance and also its potential to support the state in fulfilling the developmental promise for its wider mass.

The developmental role of the postcolonial state, however, has been on decline since the end of Cold War with the emergence of good governance principles in sync with the neoliberal economic policies. T.M. Joseph edited *Governance Reforms- Challenges Ahead* (Kanishka Publishers, 2009) looks at several governance reform initiatives in India as the Government of India recognizes the role of good governance in human development and make adjustments in its role against market and civil society. Referring to Government of India documents Joseph intends to establish the conscious shifts in the way power and resources are allocated and in initiatives which ranges from the local self-governance mechanism to public administration

reform, from ensuring right to information to the spread of information communication technology to increase efficiency and accountability and so on. Each paper in this book aims to provide the exact nature and extent of governance reforms in India under the auspices of good governance as they explore the consequences of reforms in varied sectors such as health, environment, finance, infrastructure etc. A special mention of the paper titled “Good Governance and E-governance: The Case of Revenue Department in Karnataka” by G.M. Dinesh and B.S. Bhargava is needed here as it adequately brings forth the link between good governance and e-governance and hence aids formulating the research agenda of the dissertation.

Further insights on governance reforms in India are drawn from another edited volume *State-level Reforms in India – Towards More Effective Government* (Macmillan India, 2003) by Stephen Howes et al. Before going into content of the book, it would be worthwhile look at the context under which this book is conceived. This book is comprised of the papers presented in a three-day India States Reform Forum: Fiscal and Governance Reforms for Poverty Reduction held in Delhi in November 2000. The forum was co-sponsored by the Asian Development Bank, the Department of International Development (UK), the Government of the Netherlands, the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, the National Institute for Public Finance and Policy, the Planning Commission, Government of India, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the World Bank. This background information provides an interesting outlook of the governance reform initiatives in India, that is, most of the reforms are taken under the paradigm of good governance aided by the International donor agencies and development assistance. The book is divided into three parts: the first part sets the overall tone of the central and state government framework of reforms in India; the second part emphasises on lessons in particular reform programmes from international experiences and the third and final section investigates into actual cases of fiscal and governance reforms in India. Like other literature discussed earlier in this section, the compilation contextualise the Indian nature of governance reform agenda and takes it to next level of state government’s role in the process of such a paradigmatic shift in the governance structures and procedures. Nonetheless, the focus remains mostly on state (both at the central and regional level) and its role in the reform process. The book does not delve much into other quarters involved in the reform process. Most importantly, even this volume acknowledges the importance of e-governance in the Indian context.

A need to formulate integrated public policy in India in the onslaught of privatization, globalization and liberalization is the underlying theme of the edited volume *Nationalising Crises – The Political Economy of Public Policy in Contemporary India* (Atlantic, 2007) by Bhabani Shankar Nayak. In compiling a range of interdisciplinary research papers, this book asserts the state of crises in Indian development and policy scenario confronting the global challenges. The papers in the volume therefore examine the politics of public policy in India from different vantage point and address important issues in the debate around inclusive, people-centric and culturally sensitive policy-making. As public policy forms an important mainstay in governance, this book presents a critical view of the neo-liberal agenda of governance and explores alternative policy realms in the Indian context.

Citizen's Report on Governance and Development 2007 by Social Watch India (Sage, 2007) addresses the very dilemma that Nayak's volume raises – the dilemma between growth and justice, between intention and implications, between rhetoric and reality. By evaluating the different institutions of governance in India, such as the constitution, parliament, judiciary, local institutions of self-governance and policy making, this report attends to the difficult and ambiguous zones of policy formulation that render governance problematic by putting question marks on issues of legitimacy and accountability. In the wake of shifting role of the state under the universal appeal of good governance agenda, marginalized sections of the society and neglected peripheries of policy areas become more vulnerable which need to be addressed in order to avert the threat of democratic deficit in the governance of a postcolonial state.

2.5 E-governance in India: A Strategic Governance Reform

This broader theme of public policy debate in India in the context of liberalization need to be further narrowed down to particular areas of policy initiatives and reforms. It is in this context that emergence and evolution of e-governance in India has been discussed. *E-governance for Development: A Focus on Rural India* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) by Shirin Madon fits the framework of this analysis as it inexorably relates broader issues of governance and development with e-governance with the help of specific case studies in India. The most important aspect of this book is its focus on the political economy of e-governance rather than the technological aspect which is a major gap area in the current research trends on e-governance. In the case studies, this book focuses on the e-governance applications that assist in key social sector reforms such as rural development, health and agriculture with an overall motive of transforming the existing system socio-political processes. To fully explore these

transformational potential, Madon draws on macro-level analysis of policy-making process that are shaped by larger political and socio-economic factors and also micro-level analysis of social systems manifested in the local administration and governance structures that interface between e-governance application and citizens. This contribution is also significant in compiling the recent research on e-governance in connection with governance and development.

ICTs and Indian Social Change: Diffusion, Poverty, Governance (Sage India, 2008) edited by Ashwani Saith et al is another contribution which needs a special mention for its unique approach to the study of technology, especially Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in this regard, as an agent of change. The volume pulls together an array of papers focusing on the relationship between new technologies and social transformation within the realm of public policy and other governance reform initiatives. This relationship, however, is explored from two distinctly contrasting theoretical dispositions. The first is a liberal conception of technology which views technology as a neutral tool producing desired and predictable results depending on the input of the users. Second view comes from social constructivism that perceives technology to be constructed by and in turn constructing social relationships and conditions. As the latter view is rarely accounted for in the policy domain, this book promises to initiate a dialogue between these divergent perspectives. Therefore, the contributions in this volume enrich the public policy debate and governance paradigms under the current regime of neo-liberal reforms in India which undoubtedly emphasize deployment of ICTs in major sectoral reform programmes under the rubric of e-governance.

Another edited volume titled *The State, IT and Development* (Sage India, 2005) edited by R.K. Bagga et al looks at the policy environment in India in terms of evolution, potential and impact of ICT tools in governance and developmental issues. After setting out the general developmental potential of e-governance and establishing its link with good governance, the papers look at specific initiatives of e-governance in different Indian states to address some major social and organizational issues such as digital divide, corruption, e-readiness and also to chart out a future trajectory of e-governance in India across sectors. The contributors to this volume are mostly acting or retired bureaucrats and consultants who are primarily concerned with the administrative and managerial aspects of e-governance laden with much zeal and optimism.

Vasu Deva in his book *E-governance in India - A Reality* (Commonwealth Publishers, 2005) also takes a rather buoyant approach towards e-governance since he perceives good governance as the sole purpose of e-governance and strongly recommends digitisation of the government administration by network technology as a prerequisite to achieve citizen-centric governance. It is with this good governance approach that each chapter in this book unfolds a particular dimension of e-governance, such as globalisation and ICT and development, Information Technology and democratic governance, combating corruption, role of leadership, role of women, innovation and knowledge management, sustainable human resource development and so on. While focusing on the Indian context of e-governance, the author constantly draws on experiences from other developed and developing countries to address the major issues, challenges and strategies in the process of realising the full potential of e-governance. C.S.R. Prabhu, a technocrat by profession, exhibits his expertise and experiences in his book *E-governance – Concepts and Case Studies* (Prentice Hall of India, 2005) as he starts by defining the basic concepts used in the common parlance of e-governance and then gets into the technical nuances of the practices of e-governance. This book is more of a project management perspective on implementing e-governance initiatives and case studies all set in the Indian context further elaborates on the technical and managerial aspect of e-governance. This book is particularly significant in familiarising oneself with the main concepts of e-governance also for an overview of technological nuances presented in a lucid manner. Jayshree Bose' edited volume *E-Governance in India: Issues and Cases* (The Icfai University Press, 2006) combines issues of governance technology, infrastructure as related to e-governance discourse in India. This book discusses some relevant concepts such as capacity building, public-private partnership (PPP) model, and citizen-interface and so on. Furthermore, it draws attention to some key challenges faced by e-governance projects in India with the help of some case studies.

Governance of Rural Information Communication Technologies: Opportunities and Challenges (Academic Foundation Delhi, 2009) edited by Harekrishna Misra is comprised of a pool of papers which were borne out of workshop dealing with the relationship between rural development and infrastructure with a special focus on rural information communication technology. The objective of the workshop and thus of the book is to identify; a) issues and challenges of governance in terms of participation, decentralisation and accountability, b) the role of state, market and civil society in order to achieve good governance and finally c) strategies of effective governance geared towards enhanced capacities and opportunities for

human development and increased social capital. With these objectives in mind, the papers in the volume look at specific issues of IT infrastructure in rural India and try to explore the role of ICT in rural development through various business and governance models.

A similar contribution to the body of literature is R.K. Mitra edited *E-government: Macro Issues* (GIFT Publishing, 2006) which recognises the research gap in the field of e-government and hence tries to provide useful insights into the macro issues in the context of National e-governance plan of the Government of India for policy makers and practitioners. Mitra strives to achieve a balanced approach by giving equal weight to the analysis of technological input and developmental output. In this balancing act, cultural factors surmount in a significant way with cross-cultural country perspectives. As the title suggests, the book focuses particularly on the role of the government or public sector and hence establishes the need to reengineer government mechanism to resolve major macro concerns to produce desirable outcomes from the investment into the e-government system. Jaijit Bhattacharya edited *Technology in Government* (GIFT Publishing, 2006) touches on the same theme but from a different perspective. He talks about e-government primarily in terms of infrastructure, technological model and application management.

One of the pervasive and refined literatures on e-government is Subhash Bhatnagar's *Unlocking E-Government Potential: Concepts, Cases and Practical Insights* (Sage Indian, 2009). This is a practical guide to conceptualise and implement e-government applications starting from local to national spectrum drawing simultaneously from global experiences. The book starts off with conceptual understanding of e-government and its impact on different stakeholders such as citizens, governments, business and other agencies involved. Besides presenting case studies on ten recent e-government projects in India, this book also explores the relationship between e-government and two important issues of transparency and corruption. Though the book takes a rather technocratic and managerial view of e-government it nonetheless establishes the current trends and issues of e-government application in much details and depth.

The papers presented in the ICTD 2009 Proceedings as part of the 3rd International Conference on Information Communication Technologies and Development brings together a wide range of issues linked to the multiples themes around ICTs and development. *E-Government Tool Kit for Developing Countries* (UNESCO 2005) has been prepared by UNESCO, New Delhi, Asia-Pacific Bureau for Communications and Information and National Informatics Centre,

Government of India. The objective of this toolkit is to provide action framework for stakeholders involved in e-government application in developing countries and it is specially meant for policy makers and senior executives in these countries.

In addition to these relevant books, there are a few journals and newsletters which has been extremely useful for this research, namely *Government Information Quarterly*, *International Journal for Electronic Government Research*, *Information Technologies and International Development*, *Information Technology in Developing Countries*, *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions* and *Egov magazine*. One of the most noted author who needs a special mention here is M.P. Gupta for his study of e-government in specific government organizations in India such as Police administration, Indian Central Excise, New Delhi Municipal Corporation and so on. *Information Technology in Developing Countries*, which is newsletter published by Centre for E-governance (IIMA) provides several evaluation studies of several e-government projects. All these papers present significant research in the field of e-government along with framework for evaluation of different projects in India. Hence, they play an important role in conceptualising and planning the case study taken up under this doctoral project. It is imperative to mention here that the case study of the Government of India project was aided by the documents and reports available on the project website and also on the website of the Department of Information and Technology, Government of India.

Another important segment of literature relevant for this research was the review literature of IT policy frameworks in India. One of the key articles under this section is Jyothi Saraswati's paper titled "The Indian IT Industry and Neo-liberalism: the irony of a mythology" (*Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 6, 2008, pp 1139 – 1152). This paper not only summarises the main policy phases in the IT sector starting from 1960s to the present, but also emphasise the instrumental role of the state in promoting IT in India. A few other important literatures that present detailed analysis of policy-making in IT and e-governance reform in India are N. Seshagiri's *The Informatics Policy in India* (*Information Systems Frontiers* 1:1, 1999, pp 107-116); *Tracking the Evolution of E-Governance in India* by M.P. Gupta (*IJEGR*, 6(1), January-March 2010, pp 46-58); a conference paper by Shirin Ahuja titled *Information Technology in India: The Shift in Paradigm* (October, 2010); and *India and Information Technology: A Historical and Critical Perspective* by Ramesh Subramanian (*Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, 2006). Additionally Shirin Madon's book *e-Governance for*

Development (2009) mentioned earlier also provide crucial insights about e-governance policy framework in India.

In order to capture the wider scenario of e-governance applications some more literature has been crucial. A cross-country comparative study of e-governance application along with challenges of innovations across region have been documented extensively in Christopher G. Reddick edited *Comparative E-government* (Springer, 2010). A similar comparative study is found in Hanna Nagy et al edited World Bank Discussion Papers titled *Diffusion of IT: Experience of Industrial Countries and Lessons for Developing Countries* (World Bank, 1995). Roland Traunmueller edited *E-Government* (Springer, 2003) is a series of papers pulled together from an international conference on e-governance and covers an wide range of issues on e-governance, e-democracy, electronic service delivery, change management, knowledge management, models and methodology of e-government research and much more across a large geographical span. *ICTs, Citizens and Governance: After the Hype!* (IOS, 2009) edited by A. Meijer et al analyse innovations in public sector in general and the role of ICTs in public administration through case studies across a number countries. *ICT Policies and e-Strategies in the Asia-Pacific* is book published by UNDP- Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme in 2004 and brings together ICT policies adopted in the region along with the thematic priorities in policy formulation and subsequent development processes.

Around these focussed studies, reports and manuals of e-governance and e-government in India and a few other countries, there is a pool of literature which deals with the larger issues of politics of communication technology, diffusion of IT, innovation and knowledge management, digital divide and so on. These literatures do not directly addresses the issues of e-governance, but explicate the broader spectrum of innovation, technology, communications in terms of social, cultural and policy concerns.

2.6 Theory and Methodology

In terms of theories this research project is primarily rooted in the Political Science theories of Rational Choice and Neo-institutionalism and which has been discussed in much detail in the literature already mentioned under the section *Governance in Political Science*. In addition to the extensive list of literature elaborated earlier, two other volumes needs a special mention here which addresses the major theoretical stands taken here along with other important issues of political sociology. The first is the *Blackwell Companion to the Political Sociology* (Blackwell, 2001, 2004) edited by Kate Nash and Alan Scott which not only introduces one to

the major theoretical paradigms of power and politics but also deal with the issues of state formation and governance. The second is Subrata K. Mitra et al edited *Political Sociology-State of the Art* (Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2010). Instead of presenting any radical or new approach, this edited volume reemphasizes the importance of traditional theoretical approaches such as actor-oriented, structuralist and institutionalists in their capacity to connect political with the social. Furthermore, the authors also address the methodological concerns of triangulation by which multiple analytical factors can be combined in one method with the aid of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Joachim Ahrens' chapter "Governance, Development and Institutional Change in Times of Globalization" in *Good Governance in the 21st Century* edited by Ahrens et al (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011) adds to the methodological framework of this study specially in terms of its analytical models and overall dimensions of governance in the emerging discourse on governance reform. The literature dealing with liberal concepts of governance and the neoliberal roots of governance reform agenda have also been discussed in the earlier sections where governance, governance reform and e-governance have been explored. Therefore, even though most of the literature in those sections have been crucial in concept and theory building, will not be repeated here.

As has already been mentioned earlier in this section, the social constructivist view of technology is an important yet neglected perspective in the policy debate. Therefore, an effort has been made here to address this perspective with much verve. A few literature has been selected to understand social constructivism as a theoretical disposition and the way technology can be analysed under the lens of social constructivism. The overall purpose has been to excavate new areas of research on technology as an instrument of social change.

Understanding social constructionism per se is imperative in order to indulge in social construction of technology. Andrew Feenberg's work on this field of enquiry has provided substantive insights for the argumentation of this research. He, defying the essentialism of technology, argues that technology is mediated through local social and cultural practices as the initiator and users of technology is embedded in these contexts. Viewed from this perspective, technology is never neutral. Therefore, Feenberg proposes a "democratic politics of technology" where all actors irrespective of their subject positions could engage in manipulating the technology to best suit their interests. A few of Feenberg's work which has been referred for our research are namely, "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, power

and democracy” (*Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 35, Issue 3-4, 1992) and *Questioning Technology* (Routledge, 1999). *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirring in Theory and Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2010) by Andy Lock and Tom Strong is a collection of essays which presents different theoretical and disciplinary approaches to social construction as such. The unique approach of the book is that while unfolding a different stream of social constructionism in each chapter, it does not only explore what is social constructionism and its implications but also the thinkers and the cultural contexts in which such thoughts emerged. In doing so, the book provides not only a better understanding of social constructionism as a distinct school of thought, but also raises important issues of methodologies in social science.

A Companion to the Philosophy of Technology (Blackwell, 2009) edited by J.K.B. Olsen et al can be described as an anthology of interdisciplinary contributions on technology involving humanities, natural science, social science, sociology, psychology, engineering sciences and so on. This encyclopaedic volume is divided in seven major parts, namely, history of technology, technology and science, technology and philosophy, technology and environment, technology and politics, technology and ethics, and finally technology and the future. Through each of this section the *Companion* intends to present different dimensions of technology and its manifold roles in the modern complex society. The philosophical approach in the anthology ranges from pragmatism to phenomenology, from analytical philosophy to other epistemological genres. Though traversing through many theories and subjects, the focus remains to understand the consequences of technological impact on the environment, the society and the human existence. In short, the *Companion* serves as a pertinent starting point for research on technology in its myriad ramifications.

After developing familiarity with the philosophy of science, the next step is to get acquainted with Science and Technology Studies as a specialised field of study. Sergio Sismondo’s book *An Introduction to Science and Technology Studies* (Blackwell, 2010) does exactly fit in here as it provides a basic understanding of the field of research enriched by the works of sociologists, anthropologists, historians and philosophers who are interested in the process and impact of science and technology. Besides presenting a comprehensive introduction to the world of Science and Technology Studies, the author forthrightly provides a clear cut understanding of the two different domains of research in this field at the very outset. The first domain known as science and technology studies is concerned with issues of science and technology in the public sphere and public interest in science and technology policy making.

The second domain known as science, technology and society is more concerned with dynamics of science, technology and medicine. This book is ideal for those who are least familiar with the field of studies and yet need to develop some basic ideas on the same.

With these basic overviews, it is possible then to look more closely at the “black box” of technology and society which W.E. Bijker et al in their edited volume *The Social Construction of Technology: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology* (MIT Press, 1987/1993) describes as “thick description” (1993,5). The volume sets out by exploring technology as a combination of the artifacts, processes, and know-how and presenting onward these basic concepts in all three relevant approaches, namely, sociology of scientific knowledge (which deconstruct technology both in terms of the usage and the content); historical or systemic approach (that views technology as an integration of technical, social, political and economic aspects); and action-network approach (which breaks down the separation between human actors and the natural phenomena and treats them as elements in action-networks). Relating these approaches and their basic concepts, the book presents a number of case studies which help explore these emerging concepts in the empirical context. As the aim of the book is to weave the seamless web of connection between technology and society, it stands as a relevant reference for this dissertation.

W.E. Bijker and John Law made another equally important contribution in *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change* (MIT Press, 1992). While arguing for social construction of technology, this book establishes two important points; firstly, technology at the same time embodies and reproduces the society in its complex interplay of between technical, social, economic, political, professional and cultural factors; secondly, the development of technology is definitely path-dependent or historically contingent and therefore defies any inner technological or scientific logic. Depending on these two assumptions, an effective understanding of technology as shaped by society and also as an agent of social change can be further developed.

Science, Technology, and Society: A Sociological Approach (Blackwell, 2006) by Wenda K. Bauchspieset.al presents a sociological approach on science and technology. While recognizing other approaches in all their vitality, the authors trace the classical sociological theories in developing the sociology of science and technology and eventually preoccupy themselves with addressing science as a culture. This view of science as culture leads to the treatment of technoscience as social institutions which can then be compared with other

institutional practices such as religion. Within this conceptual premise, the issues of technological change, innovation, technological adoption, cultural convergence are dealt with in the context of both colonisation and globalization.

The last but not the least significant contribution in this section is made by the book written by W.E.Bijker et al, titled *The Paradox of Scientific Authority: The Role of Scientific Advice in Democracies* (MIT Press, 2009). Although, serving an important scholarly agenda in the field of science, technology and society studies, the significance of the book for our research endeavour lies in its political agenda. In this latter agenda, the book explores the importance of science and technology in the process of decision-making in modern democracies. As they call for new practices to deal with politicization of science, the authors raise a few important questions: “*how can scientific advice be effective and influential in an age in which the status of science and/or scientists seems to be as low as it has ever been? What role is there for scientific advice to play in political deliberation and policy making? How technological elites are checked and held accountable? What is the merit of scientific and engineering expertise in relation to other forms of expertise?*”(2009, 2). It is through these questions that the paradox of scientific authority in modern and complex democracies comes into full view. This is undoubtedly a significant literature in bringing the politics of the relationship between technology and policy making into forefront of scientific analysis.

Now moving more closely to the methodological issues, a few books on qualitative research method and community research would be introduced. However, before introducing these literatures, it must be recounted here that the most important resource in shaping up the methodological design of this study has been Subrata.K. Mitra’s *The Puzzle of India’s Governance: Culture, Context and Comparative Theory* (Routledge, 2006). It has not only provided the guideline for combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a seamless way, but also unravelled the possibilities of measuring governance as concept while not losing focus of other factors such as culture and contexts. In short, the research method described in this book skilfully demonstrates how actors’ categories can be merged with that of the observer.

As this study has been based on a case study driven by qualitative methods of data collection, it would be worthwhile to draw our attention to a few relevant ones. There are more than one edition of the volume *Qualitative Research: Issues of Theory, Method and Practice* (Sage, 1997, 2004, 2011), edited by David Silverman, out of which the second edition (2004) and the

third edition (2011) have been consulted. In addition to providing basic introduction to qualitative research method, both these editions strives to present recent cutting edge research methods in terms of the emerging patterns of sources, techniques and topics. The contributions to both the volumes prove insightful not only in methods of data collections such as interviews and focus groups but also in data analysis depending on the sources and quality of data. Moreover, some of the papers also delve into the issues of validity, creditability, reliability of data and styles of data representations. Overall, these two editions can be described as practical guides to methods throughout the study.

Another book by David Silverman and Amir Marvasti *Doing Qualitative Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (Sage, 2008) is more focussed with a clear target at graduate students. This book meticulously explores each and every stage in doctoral research starting from writing the proposal to fieldwork, from data analysis to writing up with a special focus on qualitative research method. As the title suggests, rather than dealing with abstract issues of qualitative method, this book preoccupies itself with most pragmatic aspects of doing research.

Studying Elites Using Qualitative Methods (Sage, 1995) edited by Rosanna Hertz and Jonathan B. Imber a combination of papers using qualitative methods for elite interview across a wide range of topics albeit in the tradition of sociological analysis. The most relevant section of this book is the section dealing with community and political elites which demonstrates different dimensions of qualitative research in different context and different elite groups. *Citizen Participation in Rural Development* (Oxford and IBH Publishing, 1982) authored by H.R. Chaturvedi and Subrata Kumar. Mitra brings out important insights in terms of measuring citizen participation in the rural Indian contexts which are of particular importance to the current research project besides presenting useful guide into sampling and interview techniques and methods of comparisons.

Besides these general texts on methods there are a number of case studies on e-governance in India which has relied both on quantitative and qualitative methods. Review of these case studies also form an important framework for methodology. The earlier section e-governance has already captured much of this literature.

As we draw close to end of this chapter on literature review, it becomes inevitable to lay down the most challenging and probably the most contentious aspect of this research endeavour. During the course of this study, a conscious effort has been to understand and

measure governance as a concept which culturally and historically contingent. In order to explicate this contingency factor a transcultural perspective has been introduced with analytical categories of conceptual flows and hybridity. Since transculturality is an emerging and transdisciplinary perspective, different literature from different field of studies has shaped its framework and content. In a gamut of vast range of research, only studies that helped shaped the transcultural perspective of this particular research, would be accounted for here. It is also important to mention here that the state of art in transcultural studies forms the theoretical and methodological undercurrents of this research. Therefore, the focus in the following paragraphs would be more on the analytical relevance of the literatures rather than their direct bearing on the topics of this research.

One of Mitra's earlier article, titled "Flawed Paradigms: Some "Western" Models of Indian Politics" in his edited volume *Culture and Rationality: The Politics of Social Change in Post-Colonial India* (Sage, 1999) can be taken as a point of departures in this regard. In dealing with the epistemological debates of political science and at large social science discourse in analysing the Indian political realities, he focused basically on two major aspects of the debate. First, how western models and concepts such democracy and secularism can be meaningful in non-Western contexts like India? Second, how new concepts emerging out political practices in India can be mapped into the main framework on political analysis? Therefore, without radically breaking from main currents of academic discourse on political science, Mitra skilfully brings out the zones of epistemic ruptures and thereafter tries to weave these ruptures into the mainstay of political categories.

Arjun Appadurai in his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalizations* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996) wonderfully elaborates on this rupture as he argues,

One of the most problematic legacies of grand Western social science (Comte...) is that it has steadily reinforced the sense of some single moment –call it the modern moment – that by its appearance creates a dramatic and unprecedented break between past and present. Reincarnated as the break between tradition and modernity and typologised as the difference between ostensibly traditional and modern societies, this view has been shown repeatedly to distort the meanings of change and the politics of pastness. Yet the world in which we now live – in which modernity is decisively at large, irregularly self-conscious, and unevenly experienced – surely does involve a general break with all sorts of past. (1996, 2-3)

These epistemic ruptures have been further explicated in the context of politics in India in Sudipta Kaviraj's collections of essays in *The Trajectories of the Indian State: Politics and Ideas* (Permanent Black, 2010). The most relevant paper in this volume is *Modernity and Politics in India* that tries to connect the pre-colonial and colonial political institutions and structures in India in their implications on the postcolonial Indian state and governance. Even though, he does not use the term hybridity in this essay, a similar analytical frame can be discerned in his emphasis on the pluralising embodiment of modernity within and outside Europe. By taking recourse to historical account of the Indian state and politics, Kaviraj deconstructs the concepts of democracy, nationalism in the backdrop of Indian modernity which is markedly different from its Western counterparts. S.N. Eisenstadt's paper "Multiple Modernities" (*Daedalus* 129-1, 2000) argues in similar vein against the canonising project of Western modernity and proposes instead the notion of "multiple modernities" which attempts to view the contemporary world "as a story of continual constitutions and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programmes. These ongoing reconstructions of multiple institutional and ideological patterns are carried forward by specific social actors in close connection with social, political and intellectual activists, and also by social movements pursuing different programmes of modernity, holding very different views on what makes societies modern" (2000, 2). Such alternative constellations of modernity not only make the distinction between tradition and modernity much blurred but also reiterate the significance of other contingent factors embedded in a web of contextualities.

Partha Chatterjee's *Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (Permanent Black, 2004) brings out the contingent roles of the history and contexts in the realization of politics in a similar fashion. As the title suggests, this book looks at *politics from below* or in other words, politics of the subalterns and how this poses a challenge for some models of political analysis and the concomitant concepts with their origin in the historical context of Europe. Chatterjee unravels these complex issues rather concretely in his discussions on the cases from Indian politics. This book is not only important in presenting new concepts like political society as opposed to civil society but also holds ground in its unique narrative approach in analysing political categories.

In a different methodological approach of a more historical kind, Michael Werner and Benedicte Zimmermann in their paper "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisee and the Challenge of Reflexivity" (*History and Theory* 45, 2006) a novel approach of *histoire croisee* with its methodological implications for pragmatic and reflexive inductions. In addition to

underlining the importance of a historical approach both in terms of object and categories of analysis, *histoire croisee* calls for a break from conventional comparative and transfer studies. It aims to bring historicization as a method to reconsider the entanglement between different societies and cultures in all their social and cultural productions. Hence, this text shows new methodological avenues to understand politics in a more historically entangled manner where connections between pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial becomes more prominent.

So far it becomes clear that despite the hegemonic canon of the Western model of modernity, there is a strong site of resistance not only within the academia but also within the actors' world that has the immense potential of subversion. This brings us finally to the concept hybridity which pulls out notion of agency of the 'subaltern' by breaking away from the binary opposition of tradition and modernity.

Originating in the biological discourse, hybridity has come a long way by freeing itself from the limits of racial and linguistic categories. The concept of hybridity has acquired a wider acceptance in the postcolonial studies since 1980s and has reached its height in the works of Homi K. Bhabha. In his book *The Location of Culture* (Routledge, 1994), where he poses hybridity as embodying active agency and political strategy on the part of the actors who finds themselves in the receiving ends of power and authority. The act of resistance that is redefined through hybridity becomes more of a process of negotiation rather than negation. This view finds resonance in Foucault's concept of power as positive and productive. Further elucidation of the concept of hybridity in its explanatory and hermeneutic capacity has been explored in Nestor Garcia Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (University of Minnesota Press, 1995), in Anjali Prabhu's *Hybridity: Limits, Transformations, Prospects* (State University of New York Press, 2007) and in Peter Bruke's *Cultural Hybridity* (Polity Press, 2009). Besides presenting the wide ranging implications of the concept, these authors also cautions against the ambiguity of the term and hence hint at the much needed refinement.

The most relevant and thought-provoking literature which directly addresses some of the issues dealt in this dissertation is Subrata K. Mitra's "From Comparative Politics to Cultural Flow: The Hybrid State, and Resilience of the Political System in India" in P.W. Stockhammer edited *Conceptualizing Cultural Hybridization: A Transdisciplinary Approach* (Springer, 2012). In this seminal paper, Mitra opens up a new analytical toolbox with concepts of hybridity, hybridisation, re-use and conceptual flows which not only gives

comparative politics a sharp edge in considering different polities but also brings out grounded empirical investigations of historically and culturally concomitant factors into broader framework of analysis. It builds on the challenges posed against the Western model of analysis and places them in context of the Indian case across a wide spectrum of time and space to highlight the agency of the actors. However, interestingly Mitra's analysis goes one step further by reiterating the need to coalesce the multiple categories of analysis and bringing hybridization as a strategy of such a merger.

2.7 Conclusion: Taking the Research Forward.

There are a few critical insights that emerge out of the literature review and which form the basis of this research. They could be summarised as follows:

- Conventionally in social sciences, particularly in Political Science literature governance has recurrently been addressed as an interface between the dynamic state-society relationships where the state and its institutions lied at the centre of analysis. Similar reflections were prominent in the developmental paradigm, whereas in the common parlance it was 'government' which was more in use rather than 'governance' and both were often used interchangeably.
- By 1980s, due to crisis of governability and fiscal problem some Western democracies, started shifting towards privatisation, decentralisation, public sector reform which can be situated under the rubric of New Public Management (NPM). These developments brought about significant changes in role of the state and facilitated the emergence of policy networks involving several non-state actors.
- Parallel to these shifts in the developed economies, a considerable number of African countries were suffering from the failure of the World Bank induced Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). This further coincided with the end of Cold War leading to renewed interest in democracy and need to establish strong institutional framework conducive to democracy and economic development.
- Consequently, there emerged a global developmental agenda of 'good governance' which ushered in massive reform initiatives across developing and changing societies implicating paradigm shifts in the way state would function and also the role of non-state actors such as the market and civil society in the system of governance. Alongside a new set of formal indicators such as transparency, efficiency, accountability and so on to measure the quality of governance also rose in

prominence. The overall agenda of good governance is commensurate with neo-liberal philosophy and forms one of the three important pillars of internal development paradigm along with democracy and economic growth.

- In last two decades of post economic liberalization India, good governance agenda found expression in different reform initiatives spreading across health, education, local governance, public administration and many more. One of the major areas of reform in the Indian context has been e-governance where Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have been deployed to improve the service delivery to the citizens. E-governance in India could be crucial in understanding the entire governance reform spectrum in two important ways. Firstly, it is geared towards achieving good governance standards such as efficiency, transparency, accountability etc. and hence sets out a list of formal indicators to measure its quality. Secondly, most of the initiatives in this field operate on a strong public-private partnership (PPP) model that shed considerable light on the way different stakeholders are interacting within the complex of governance.
- Use of ICTs will have significant impact on the society in general and on the existing patterns of governance in particular. These impacts can be analysed both from liberal and social constructivist perspectives. Within the liberal paradigm the impact of technology will be comprised of some predictable outputs which can be neutrally produced through prescribed and desired input of the users. Social constructivism on the other hand perceives technology to be constructed by and in turn constructing social relationships and conditions. This latter conception of technology will be instrumental in understanding the impact of e-governance on Indian's present system of governance.
- Social constructivist view of technology combined with the concept of hybridity and conceptual flow as espoused within the transcultural perspective emphasise the importance of agency of the actors in the constant interplay between structure and agency. Hybridisation as a political strategy serves to understand how imported categories of governance and e-governance are confronted (also resisted) by the inherited values and norms of the actors within a particular cultural context to create a 'third space'. Following from this strategic position, hybridity as an analytical category carries significant explanatory value for understanding the impact of ICTs on the process of transforming governance in India and can therefore contribute to general understanding of governance in changing societies.

As it becomes evident from the above summary, the aim of this literature review is twofold; first to grasp the existing perspectives on a particular theme of research; second to locate one's research in the broader body of knowledge. This implies the attempt to fill in the gaps that previous research has left and to continue the legacy of challenges that previous paradigms have raised. Given this understanding, this chapter on the state of art has tried to present the most relevant arguments pertaining to the research questions it sets out to address. In no way, it claims to be an exhaustive account of all the research done on the theme and the concomitant concepts and methodologies. Moreover, the arguments in the literature are ensconced in the act of representation which carries the burden of researcher's interpretation and hence might have occasionally strayed away from their original content and usage. However, a sincere attempt has been made to keep to the original text and only to sieve out their contribution in accordance to the relevance.

3 Unravelling Governance, Reform and Technology: Theories and Methodology

3.1 Theories of Governance

The governance discourse traverses through academia, international development community, policy practice and civil society activism with similar rigor and assertion. Even within academia it transcends many boundaries starting from political science to development economics from organisational studies to cultural studies. However, as this research is rooted more within the confines of political sociology, only a few relevant theoretical dispositions will be elaborated here. These theoretical frameworks will be discussed in terms of their contribution to the overall governance research which would be followed by their relevance for the current research on governance reform and e-governance in India.

As we have witnessed in the previous chapter, while exploring the state of the art in governance research that even within the political science, governance issues are addressed from different sub-fields such as public administration and public policy, international relations and comparative politics. This leads to different connotations of governance within different intellectual contexts. For example, within public administration and public policy, governance is generally discussed in relation to public sector reform and how emerging policy networks influencing the way of governing. Whereas within international relations, governance theorists are concerned with institutions of global governance dealing with global problems (climate change, terrorism, international trade, migration and so on) transcending national boundaries. On the other hand in comparative politics, governance is always associated with the process of democratisation, economic transformation and changing dynamics of state-society relationship (Kjaer; 2004). Though all these sub-fields address governance from different perspectives, there are some common theoretical framework that underlies the basic tenets of governance discourse across all the sub-fields such as institutionalism. Despite acknowledging the significance of institutionalism for this study, a few other theoretical approaches towards governance need to be explicated here in order to develop a broader perspective on governance research.

3.1.1 Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory attempts to explain social facts or institutions in terms of a micro-level analysis of individual behaviour which presupposes each individual as being essentially rational and hence their actions are always oriented towards utility-maximisation (Bevir; 2009). Following North (1990) and Baldwin (1995), Mitra suggests, “Rational individuals

will be governed if, and only if, they consider being governed worth their while. People stick with rules when they perceive that orderly transactions yield more than they could expect to gain by breaking the rules. It helps in the comparison of alternatives when rules are precise, explicit, transparent, constitutional and comprehensive, characteristics that enhance governance. In some situations, what the rules require and the perception by the players of their interests converge in a manner that contributes to the resilience of the system. In other cases, a gap between the two results in consistent disregarding of the rules, which in turn reduces institutions, and ultimately the state as a whole, to an empty shell” (Mitra 2006; 9). This latter situation of declining of the state brings attention to the notion of ‘bounded rationality’ where individuals’ actions are restricted by lack of complete information about their preferences (Bevir, 2009).

From the above analysis, the relevance for rational choice theory for governance research can be summed up as follows: firstly, it emphasises the rule-bounded nature of governance; secondly, it establishes governance as a variable concept which can be measured in terms of convergence and divergence between those who govern and those who are governed; thirdly, the notion of ‘bounded rationality’ underlines the possibility of different contextual realities within the system of governance; last but not the least, it gives actors on either side of the power relations the status of a stakeholder. While neo-liberals often use rational choice theory to justify privatisation and public sector reform (Bevir, 2009;17), one of the most important thrusts of rational choice theory remains to explain how institutions could function even without strong presence of a law-enforcing higher authority where governance becomes a self-organizing system. This brings us to the next school of thought as developed by Michel Foucault.

3.1.2 Foucault and Governmentality

The basic understanding of governance starts with the preliminary assumption that there is a hiatus between the governed and those who govern them. Now the puzzle remains how a system of governance sustains despite this hiatus. In Foucault’s analysis of power, governmentality involves technologies of government that goes beyond the realm of the state apparatus (mostly expressed under repressive form of power) and penetrates every sphere of life, from family to sexuality, from body to the system of knowledge. Governmentality therefore can be described as a way of thinking about regulating populations which works through both repressive and persuasive forms of power. The laws, constitutions, programmes and other written mandates on which state machinery functions shows only one aspect of

governmentality. The other side of governmentality lies at the regime of knowledge, administration and other techniques of power (such as computing, numbering and so on) that are systematically created to sustain the existing power relations (Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya, 2009). As Foucault himself puts it,

I don't want to say that the State isn't important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State. In two senses: first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations (Foucault, 1980; 122).

This understanding of governmentality reiterates the fact that in order to understand a system of governance it is important to look beyond the realm of the state and explore how consensus is achieved between the state and society through a wide array of technologies of power which are punitive and persuasive at the same time. Hence governance research, besides focussing on formal rules, institutions, also needs to take the actors' perceptions into serious consideration. In recent trends of governance reform where citizens and civil society, international organisations are emerging as important actors, Foucauldian analysis of power and governmentality could provide crucial insights into how modern states and global political systems are actually governed.

3.1.3 System Theory

System theory conceives of governance as a socio-cybernetic system which emerges out of continuous interactions between actors and institutions in a self-organizing fashion. "A system is the pattern of order that arises from the regular interactions of a series of interdependent elements....such patterns of order arise from the functional relations and interactions of the elements. These relations and interactions involve a transfer of information. This transfer of information leads to the self-production and self-organization of the system even in the absence of any centre of control" (Bevir, 2009; 19).

There are two salient features of system theory which are crucial for a comprehensive analysis of governance. Firstly, system theory distinguishes the act of governing from the concept of governance. While the former refers to the goal-oriented act of intervention, the latter suggests the totality of system that emerges from these interventions and interactions of different elements. Secondly, the system theory of governance explicates the limitation of a

state-centric analysis of governance as it emphasises multiple centres of organisations that are related to each other in a functional system. Emerging trends of governance reform thrives on this matrix of multiplicity of actors where the “role of the state is not to create order but to facilitate socio-political interactions, to encourage varied arrangements for coping with problems, and to distribute services among numerous organizations” (Bevir, 2009; 19).

3.1.4 Neo-liberal Economic Theories

The burgeoning importance of governance discourse since 1980s across Western democracies and developing nation-states has been particularly influenced by the neo-liberal economic thoughts which stresses on the expansion of market and a downsizing of the state. This neo-liberal philosophy, in turn is ingrained in the ‘new right ideology’ (Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya, 2009; 21). There are four main schools of thought within this theoretical framework, namely Chicago School, Austrian School, Supply Side and Public Choice. Though all of them talk about a limited role of the state as it should be viewed as only a provider of legal and institutional framework in which other actors can freely pursue their individual interests, the public choice theory is particularly relevant within the purview of this research on governance.

Public choice theory which is often described as ‘the economics of politics’ epitomises the ideology of ‘rolling back the state’ (Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya, 2009; 24). There are definitely some overlaps in basic epistemological assumptions between public choice theory and rational choice theory. Firstly, all social entities are amalgamation of individuals and hence it is individuals who form the unit of analysis. Secondly, all individuals or political actors are ‘utility-maximizers’ who are pursuing their self-interest at all the times. Depending on these two assumptions, public choice school attempts to theorise on public action and public sector decision-making. While there are again many sub-branches within this school of thought, the basic tenets can be summarised in a few points. Firstly, politics is viewed as a system of exchange where public policy should be developed on the basis of consensus among citizens. Secondly, the principle of constitutional economics is deployed to underline the inconsistencies in traditional model of representative democracy as it relies heavily on a state-centric model of policy-making. To counter this inherent fallacy public choice theory suggests alternative decision-making where economics of policy-making is favoured to contain the politics of interest groups and bureaucracy. Thirdly, public choice theory prescribes an array of strategies to limit government and to contain tendencies of over-government. In this regard, constitutional reform, decentralisation and reducing roles of

interest groups on policy-making are conceived of some favourable strategies. (Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya, 2009) Overall, public choice theory promotes increasing privatisation where market and individual interests would take precedence over incessant state interventions. This philosophy, though fraught with some serious limitations, dominates the recent debates on governance which are evidently reflected in the ‘good governance’ school of thought.

However, before getting deep into the discussion on good governance it is also worthwhile to cast a glance on the major caveats in public choice theory. As Herbert Simon argues, the methodological individualism underlying the public choice theory gives an incomplete picture of individual choices. Individual actions are not always driven by self-interest but also ingrained in the norms and interests of the family, ethnic groups, culture, nation and other group identities (Chakrabarty and Bhattacharya, 2009). Politics as exchange between profit-seeking individuals presents too narrow explanations and hence needs to grapple with issues of cross-cutting identities and interests depending on the contextual realities. This brings us to the second point of contestation which focuses on different realities of the West and non-Western developing societies. Given the colonial past of most of the developing nation-states, the institutional framework is too weak for market-driven policy-making and the state needs to play a strong developmental role ensuring fairness in distribution of resources and public justice. This latter gap in rigid neo-liberal principles of minimalistic state can be well captured through the failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in many African Asian countries in 1980s which set out to introduce free market practices in those countries as part of aid conditionality. It is in the context of this massive failure that the present fixation with ‘governance reform’ or ‘good governance’ has come into the forefront of the governance discourse.

3.1.5 Good Governance

Good governance as a paradigm rose in prominence in last two decades since the end of Cold War. It is formulated as a developmental jargon tailored in accordance with neo-liberal economic policies by International Organisations such as World Bank, United Nations and so on to promote wide-ranging programmes of governance reform across all developing nations. World Bank recommends governance reform involving three major areas namely; : “i) the form of political regime; ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development; and iii) the capacity of government to design, formulate and implement policies and discharge functions”

(Bandopadhaya; 1996). Four key dimensions of this reform are as follows: public sector management (capacity and efficiency) which involves civil service reform and privatization initiatives; accountability which would enable institutions to hold the government accountable, for example an ombudsman; the legal framework for development which implies making and enforcing rules to control the market, for example enforcing private property rights; and information and transparency which hints towards free media, publicising public expenditure, for example right to information (Jayal and Pai; 2001; Kjaer, 2004). UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) sets out eight major characteristics. It is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective & efficient, equitable & inclusive and follows the rule of law. 'Good governance', which is also interchangeably used with 'democratic governance', 'governance for sustainable development', 'human governance' and so on has been developed as one of the major criteria for aid conditionality and also a significant field of development intervention.

A few characteristic features of good governance paradigm which have serious implications for the current debate on governance can be outlined here. Firstly, this paradigm is a customised recipe to tackle the problems of governability in post-colonial and post-communist nation states. Secondly, given its target recipients, good governance comes in a full package of democracy promotion and market-led economic growth and development. Thirdly, while criticising the regulatory role of the state it nevertheless recognises the role of the state in providing a stable institutional arrangements and rule of law in changing societies. Fourthly, it conceives of governance as a matrix of interdependent stakeholders such as state/public sector, market, civil society and citizens where the state will function as one of the service providers. Fifthly, it espouses a market concept of equality and empowerment which views citizens more as customers or clients and enables them to enter market transactions in a more non-restricted environment. Lastly, it stresses the importance of public-private partnership in improving service delivery to the citizens. Evaluated on the basis of these tenets, good governance presents a mix of moral and technical fix for shifting the state-centric governance agenda to multi-centred governance reform agenda where politics takes a back seat.

Regardless of the fact that good governance has become such a buzzword among academicians, policy-makers, development practitioners, the inherent ideological bias makes it somewhat a redundant concept. Moreover, its one-size-fits-all modernising approach

renders it unachievable in most of the societies it originally aimed at and puts a question mark on the legitimacy of the paradigm itself. Nonetheless, the influence of good governance agenda as endorsed by international donor agencies on the existing systems and practices of governance in developing societies cannot be completely overlooked. Most importantly, despite promoting private sector growth, it once again brings the focus back on the state institutions and their importance as a steering authority.

3.1.6 Institutionalism

As state institutions and their interactions with social actors forms the most important aspect of governance, it becomes imperative to explore the theoretical trajectories of institutionalism and neo-institutionalism. Institutionalism focused on formal rules, procedures, organisational set up including constitutions, electoral system, and political parties and also on the behaviours of the actors within these institutions. Institutionalism dominated the field of politics and public administration up until 1940s before it was heavily criticised for its reliance on specific institutional settings by some universal theories such as behaviouralist school, rational choice theorists and so on. Neo-institutionalism emerged as a response to these criticisms and in addition to its earlier focus on formal rules, procedures and organisations, it broadened its concept of institutions by including norms, habits and cultural customs. There are many variety of neo-institutionalism such as rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and many more. Rational choice institutionalists studies how institutions shape the behaviour of the rational actors whereas the historical institutionalists explores how past institutional arrangements influence subsequent political processes which can also be referred to as ‘path dependency’. Sociological institutionalism on the other hand, looks at how informal ideas, values and norms shape policy frameworks and in turn the political process. (Bevir, 2009) Notwithstanding their many differences, neo-institutionalism as a whole identifies two basic factors in human behaviour which are either exogenous (as in rational choice school) or endogenous (as in sociological school). March and Olsen (1989) describe them as ‘logic of consequentiality’ and ‘logic of appropriateness’ though they reiterate the fact that in most cases it is the latter that guides human behaviour (Kjaer, 2004). Instead of posing these two categories as binary oppositions, it would probably be more discreet to see human behaviour

as both rational and normative at the same time while keeping in mind the Weberian concept of ‘value rationality’⁸.

In governance research neo-institutionalism becomes extremely crucial as governance is comprised of formal rules, procedures and organisations of state institutions vis-a-vis informal norms, values and customs of the society locked in a complex and dynamic relationship with each other. There are two most important areas of investigation within institutionalism; firstly, the impact of institutions on political behaviour and second the origin and transformation of institutions (Kjaer, 2004). Governance covers both these areas of study as it starts from the setting of the rules (origin of institutions) and follows it through the application and enforcement of these rules which affect political behaviour and political process and finally how institutions themselves evolve in the process.

Neo-institutionalism as a theoretical paradigm becomes even more imperative in the contexts of governing developing countries in the non-Western world. As Mitra (2006) explains, “crucial to the neo-institutional model is the ‘room to manoeuvre’ that the constitution permits the political elite (a democratic regime, as opposed to military rule, offers more scope for negotiation and bargaining) and the political accountability of the elites, which makes it necessary for them to engage in purposeful social intervention” (Mitra, 2006; 16). On the basis of this perspective he develops a neo-institutional model of governance to explain how institutional change can indeed add to the stability and resilience of the system of governance in a changing society where there is a considerable hiatus between the imported categories of state institutions and the inherited values of the culture (This model will be discussed later in much detail while issues of governance reform will be analysed). In addition to elucidating the inevitable and positive link between institutional change and buoyancy of a governance system, this model also points out the importance of policy responsiveness, reform programmes in bridging the gap between the macro and micro level, between national and local contexts, between imported and inherited categories, between rational and sociological and most importantly between governed and those who govern. This particular model of neo-institutionalism and institutionalism in general tries to combine material benefits with normative concerns and this latter transcendental aspect of governance brings us to the next important theoretical paradigm, i.e., social constructivism.

⁸ Value rationality which can also be termed as substantive rationality in Max Weber’s terminology in the context of this research can be described as actions which are determined by the conscious belief in the value (of some ethical, religious, political nature) in itself without much consideration for some utilitarian ends. (Reading Max Weber in <http://www.colorado.edu/Sociology/gimenez/soc.5001/WEBER04.TXT> retrieved on 21.09.2012)

3.1.7 *Social Constructivism*

Social constructivism bears a strong resemblance with sociological institutionalism as discussed above. Social construction denaturalises what is taken for granted, questions the origin of what is now seen as a fact of life and considers the alternative ways could have produced a different condition. Therefore, at the core of social constructivism lies the socially constructed nature of actors and their identities and interests. Instead of assuming that actors are born outside and prior to society, as individualism does, constructivists claim that individuals are produced by their social and cultural environment; and historically produced and culturally bound knowledge comprised of symbols, rules, concepts, categories and meanings shapes how individual actors in the social setting would construct and interpret their world. While perceiving ideas as structurally rooted, constructivism views actors' interpretation of the material reality directly impacting the dynamic relationship between ideas and material forces. There are a few basic tenets of this paradigm. Firstly, it takes the concept of power beyond material facades and explores an ideational notion of power, which allocates differential rewards and capacities through knowledge, fixing of meaning and construction of identities. Secondly, the meanings that are constructed and shaped by the underlying cultures are the central features of politics as they determine the actions and interests of the actors. Thirdly, it places a great importance on institutions albeit as embodied in norm, practices and formal organizational structures.(Barnett, Michael, 2005)⁹ Social constructivists view actors as bound through web of meanings which are inscribed in beliefs, signs, languages, conscious and intuitive knowledge within a cultural context. This web of meanings forms the core of politics and hence the core of governance. There two ways of analysing these meaning that constructivists engage themselves in. On one hand, there is synchronic analysis of meanings abstracted from the realm of history. On the other hand, the diachronic studies explore the development of meanings over time. This latter analytical model explicates how agents could alter and structurally shift the web of meanings while deploying them in a particular context. According to social constructivist paradigm, both institutions and actors are embedded in the conditional system of meanings. Hence governance being an interface between the two also need be understood how these meanings are constructed, deployed and transformed. Therefore, it can be said that constructivists take a keen interest in demonstrating how agents produce structures and vice versa.

⁹ Barnett's discussion on constructivism in this article is predominantly aimed at International Relations discourses. Nonetheless, he lays out the fundamentals of social constructivism in a concise and succinct manner. Barnett, Michael, *Social Constructivism* in Baylis, John & Smith, Steve (ed.), *The Globalization of World Politics – An Introduction to International Relations* 3rd Edition, 2005, Oxford University Press, Oxford

3.1.7.1 Social Constructivism: Linking Technology and Governance

As this research not only focuses on the system of governance but also how this system is shifting through the use of ICT tools, social constructivism as a theoretical framework becomes even more crucial. It presents a view of technology which runs against technological determinism. Technological determinism not only conceives of technology to be autonomous and neutral but also presupposes its quintessential role in economic and social development (Bijker, 2009). Taking a critical stand against this essentialist conception of technology, social constructivists tend to explore how actors and contexts influence technology. They further disaggregate the perception of technology from different subject positions of the actors involved. For example, in disbursing e-governance projects, decision-making elites rationalise to build an efficient system. However, citizens, who are at receiving end of these projects experience and appropriate these technologies varies according to their life world. Hence, the value of information generated by such new information communication technology does not automatically follow from their inherent virtue but is contingent upon the context of their application and the web of meanings that they construe (Sreekumar, 2008).

Social construction of technology is a distinct field of study which rose from three different areas of research, namely, the science-technology-society (STS) movement, the sociology of scientific knowledge and the history of technology (Bijker, 2009). Without going further into the history and development of social construction of technology, it is important here to establish the crucial links between this theoretical framework and this study which touches upon a cross-cutting theme of technology and governance. Firstly, social construction of technology point out the social and political intervention in the course of technology. Secondly, it raises a few concepts such as “interpretive flexibility” and “relevant social groups” which could shape the analytical frame for understanding the linkages between technology and governance. Interpretive flexibility stresses the fact that technology is socially and culturally constructed which makes it open to different interpretation and meaning. The act of interpreting technology within a specific context hinges upon the subject positions of the actors, such as users or producers of technology (ibid, 2009). It is important to mention here that this study should not be viewed as an analysis of e-governance founded within the frame social construction of technology albeit a few heuristic tools have been adopted to understand the constructivist nature of technology. Since both technical subjects and objects are organised in terms of socially and culturally contingent variables, technologies (both in its

design and social incorporation) cannot be fully comprehended without scrutinising its context (Feenberg, 2009).

3.2 Evaluating Governance and Strategic Reform: Actors, Parameters and Problems of Operationalising

Actors: - It is clear by now that governance as a concept does evoke neither a distinct definition nor a single frame of analysis. Therefore, any comprehensive research on governance needs to clearly delineate its conceptual and theoretical/analytical frame of reference at the very onset. This study focuses on governance in relation to institutional arrangements and political processes of formulating and implementing policy reforms involving a diverse set of actors (Ahrens, 2009). Needless to say, although the state still lies at the centre of policy-making and policy reform, a host of non-state actors are linked through formal and informal institutional networks. These networks of national and domestic actors together lay the foundation of the system of governance. This network of actors has been captured quite effectively by Ahrens (2009) in the figure below:

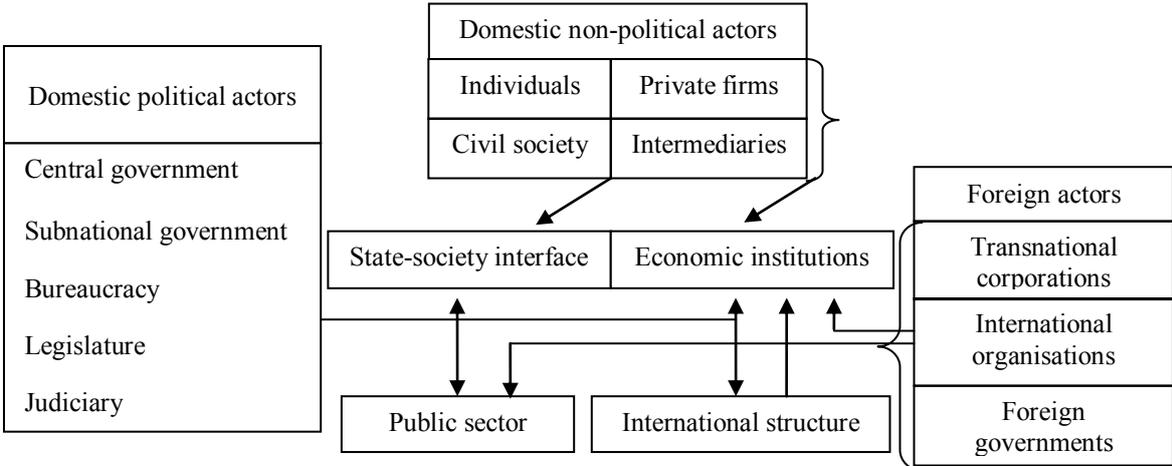


Figure: 3.1: A stylized model of governance: realms and actors

Source: Ahrens (2009)

This model of governance maps all the actors and demonstrates how policy goals are devised and achieved through coordination among these actors. One of the most important aspects of this model of governance is that it emphasise the role of public policy in economic performance and development. The aim of this investigation, however, is limited to introspect how public policy formulation and implementation, particularly in terms of reform

strategies bring structural changes in the system of governance. E-governance initiatives or in other words reform programmes facilitated through information communication technology serves as a focal point for analysing the same. While the ultimate aim of analysing governance differs, Ahrens' (2009) model nevertheless, quite aptly places the actors in the matrix of governance. Hence, by simply replacing "economic institutions" with "e-governance institutions", the same model could be deployed within the purview of the current study. There are two aspects of policy reform and e-governance initiatives which can be traced through this network of actors. Firstly, the foreign actors depicted on the right hand side of the figure present the wider international policy environment and explain the origin of certain policy agendas and reform strategies. For example, the emergence of e-governance as one of the reform areas in India emanates from recent resurgence of 'good governance' agenda across developing nations under the influence of International Organisations such as World Bank. Secondly, domestic political and non-political actors described in this figure narrate how certain policy reforms are rolled out in a particular context. For example, the formulation and implementation of National e-Governance Plan in India is based on public-private partnership model and evidently involved state, private firms, civil society and citizens.

Moving to the issue of governance reform and its impact on the overall system of governance a neo-institutional model of governance developed by Mitra (2006) (which has already been introduced in the section on theories of governance and Institutionalism) needs to be discussed here in further details. This neo-institutional model relates governance as variable concept which depends on political institutions, state-society interface, role of elites and some other variables (as described in the figure below). There are a few overlapping aspects of this model which become crucial in conducting research on governance particularly in the context of developing countries. Firstly, the key to governance, according to this model, is the '**room to manoeuvre**' (Mitra, 1991) that the institutional arrangements provide the political elites with. In a democratic set up this provision for institutional change resolves both the issues of accountability and legitimacy. It explains how political elites being accountable to their local and regional context initiate reform and hence in turn enhance legitimacy leading to the resilience of the system. Secondly, this model suggests an exceedingly significant role of the political elites in the system of governance. As Mitra argues, "(T)he response of the decision-making elites to crises through law and order management, strategic reform and redistributive policy and constitutional change in order to give legitimacy to contested, embedded values,

acts as a feedback loop that affects the perceptions of crucial variables...by people at the local and regional level”(Mitra, 2006; 16). The political elites act as nodal points of political actions connecting national to the regional and local institutions. Thirdly, this model brings out the relevance of policy responsiveness and reform strategies in bridging “the hiatus between the locally embedded values and those espoused by the macro-arena” (ibid; 16).

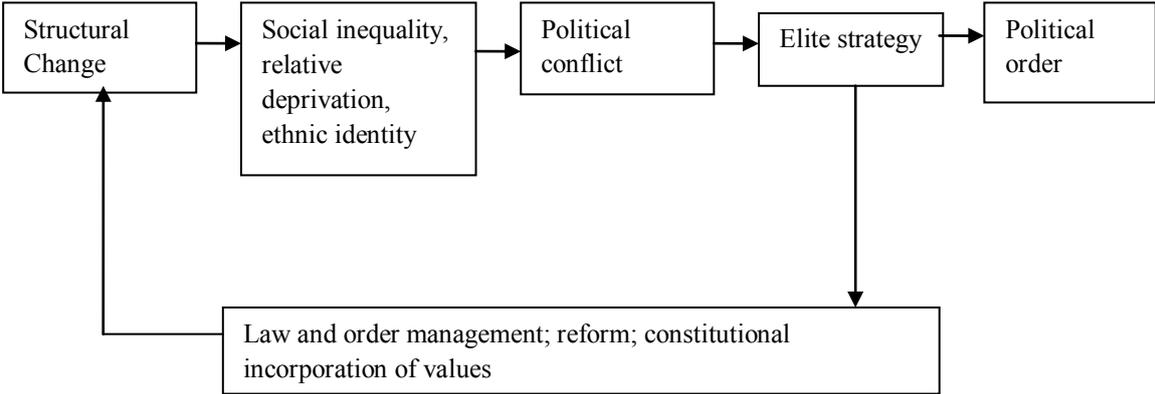


Figure: 3.2: A dynamic neo-institutional model of governance based on elite strategies

Source: Mitra (2006)

However, the question remains why certain policy reform is favoured over the others? At this point, both the above models need to be looked at in conjunction with each other. In the first figure (Arhens, 2002), a policy network of domestic and international, political and non-political actors are hold responsible for policy reform. Whereas in the following figure (Mitra, 2006), domestic political institutions, state-society interface and political elites are described as harbingers of policy reform and institutional change. Combining these two models it can be said that policy reforms are simultaneously influenced by the international political trends and domestic political realities. The domestic politics gets further complicated by continuous political exchange between national, regional and local political elites and non-political actors. Therefore, any process of policy formulation and implementation needs to navigate through these complex nodes of a governance system. Again while reiterating the role of elite strategy in policy responsiveness, Mitra(2006) pertinently points out, “In a case of successful transaction, competing elites choose their options in a manner that maximises benefits and minimises transaction costs, and negotiate on the basis of a complex repertoire that combines

instruments of rational protests with elements of participation such as contacts with high-level decision-makers, lobbying, voting and sending petitions”(ibid;16).

Parameters:- There are generally four parameters of governance under the neo-institutional model: 1) a bureaucratic state machinery delivering policy response as well as maintaining law and order; 2) a series of variables such as election, pressure groups , parties, protests influencing the overall agenda setting; 3) political elites combining a ‘two-track strategy’(Mitra, 1991) of institutional and non-institutional actions; 4) provision of turning constitutional change into a political resource (Mitra, 2006; 18). In his quest to understand the puzzle of India’s governance, Mitra (2006) drew on this neo-institutional model of governance parameters to examine the role of India’s new elites as compared to the traditional leaders. By distancing himself from structural-functional approach which relied more on unique features of Indian society (for example caste system), he explained that order, rule and institutional stability is achieved as stakeholders’ choices are curtailed by constitutions, social structures, cultural norms and political processes.¹⁰

This research takes a neo-institutional approach to scrutinise how policy responses and institutional change influence the level of governance. Hence it draws on at least two of the parameters mentioned above: first, political elites initiating institutional actions and second, the bureaucratic state machinery developing and delivering policy responses. Simultaneously a social constructivist approach is added to the research framework to understand the social and cultural factors in implementing policy solutions. Keeping the actors and realms of governance in the figure 3.1 in mind along with these parameters of governance, a few general theoretical assumptions can be drawn here. However, since this study is primarily based on qualitative data and analysis, it would be difficult to accurately testify such assumptions. Therefore, these assumptions about the impact of strategic reform on the system of governance can be better described as theoretically informed conjectures (as already been mentioned in the Introduction)

¹⁰He further breaks this general assumption into seven hypotheses; “the higher the credibility of sanctions based on law and order management, the higher the expectations of governance; strategic social and economic reform enhance governance; institutional arrangements based on the logic of federalism and consociational forms of power sharing promote governance; effective party systems that institutionalise the link between the state and the individual enhance governance; elite fragmentation reduces the level of governance; if the core values and symbols of a society are constitutionally protected, then governance is likely to be higher; trust, which follows from the absence (or removal) of factors that offend, turns victims into survivors and extends a sense of belonging, and thereby enhances governance” (Mitra, 2006, 18-20).

- C1: Strategic reform that improves life conditions of the citizens enhances the level of governance.
- C2: Policies that cater to the overlapping benefits of all political and non-political actors will enhance the level of governance. This also means that policies which overlook conflicts of interest reduce the level of governance.
- C3: The ability of macro-policies to accommodate embedded values and norms with a local context is directly proportionate to the level of governance.
- C4: The higher the capacity of the state machinery to act on a policy response and absorb institutional change, the better the quality of governance.

The conjectures 1, 2 and 4 combine a public policy and public administration meets comparative politics approach to governance, albeit all are rooted more or less into the rational choice neo-institutional framework, pursuing methodological individualism. The third conjecture nonetheless brings out a social constructivist approach to understand the impact of policy reform on the level of governance. By taking the social structures and cultural norms into account, it conjures up the everyday practices of policy initiatives. In explaining the relationship between governance, policy reform and technological innovation, both neo-institutional and social constructivist approaches are focussing on two basic questions:

- i. Where does the impetus for reform come from?
- ii. How the reform is realised?

Addressing these questions inevitably leads to the dynamics of structure and agency as a heuristic point of reference for any analysis of governance. The structure of governance are embodied in the formal rules and institutions, policy frameworks, strategies for reform whereas the agency lies with actors within the realm of governance who either appropriate, or reject or shifts the structural forces of governance. These actors exert their agencies not only within the limits of structure of governance but also within the normative structures that is comprised of cultural values and socio-political processes. There is a continuous interplay between structure and agency which helps manoeuvring the state-society linkages; balancing power relations innate in the system of governance; and also precipitate the process of transforming governance through institutional change. Therefore, for a policy or a reform strategy to be effective, the embedded values and local contexts need to be leveraged (as depicted in conjecture 3). This structure-agency dynamism becomes even more relevant in the context of a developing society such as India where state-society linkages are further

weakened due to its long colonial past. In India, the structures of governance, be it the established state institutions or the recent trends of governance reform, are originated mostly in the Western context of democratic governance. These imported structures are often confronted with the embedded values, norms, customs which affect the local political context. Both the imported and inherited categories are not static element. Their constant confrontation renders them as well their relationship a dynamic category. Thus, the established categories of governed and those who govern are not sufficient for a context-specific understanding of governance. The imported vis-a-vis inherited categories of governance need to be added to the analytical frame.

Problems of operationalising and measuring: - The above discussion on context-specific analysis of governance hints at the fact that it is not enough to understand how policies/reform strategies are formulated at the macro arena. It is also important to reflect on how these policies/reform initiatives are perceived by the citizens and how these macro-initiatives get altered at the micro-level through active agencies of the actors involved. Bringing this macro-micro continuum into the analysis of governance implies that perceptions of actors need to be converged with meta-narrative of a rule (policy guidelines or formal mandate of a reform strategy in the particular case of this research) in order to arrive at an effective evaluation of the level of governance. All the conjectures depicted above establish governance as a conceptual variable which can be measured on a scale of high to low. Now the challenge remains how to operationalise the concept of governance so that the subjective criteria of perceptions can be merged with the objective structures of institutions and consequently categories of evaluation could be developed.

One of the major threats to a system of governance is the notion of legitimacy deficit. A complete lack of legitimacy would mean a breakdown in the system of governance. There are two ways of looking at legitimacy (Kjaer, 2004; 12). Firstly, the 'input-oriented' view of legitimacy follows from a collective compliance with the mutually agreed-upon rules. This inevitably signals at a democratic system of governance where collective decisions are made through majority principles according to set democratic procedures. On the other hand, the 'output-oriented' view of legitimacy relates to the effectiveness of rules to yield desired results. This dimension of legitimacy is directly concerned with policy responsiveness and its impact on the citizens. If we presuppose the former orientation of legitimacy, that is, if we confine our analysis to a democratic system of governance, then legitimacy can be negotiated through policy responsiveness, strategic decision-making and welfare packages. Therefore,

the underlying assumption of measuring governance within the purview of this research is, higher the efficiency of a policy/reform programme, higher the legitimacy of institutions, the higher the level of governance. This general assumption need to be further broken down into some operational concepts. Moreover, these operational concepts should be directly related to the general theoretical assumptions or conjectures elaborated above.

The inevitable question that emerges at this point is what legitimacy is consisted of? Or, what are the specific qualities that denote legitimacy? In simple terms, what are the indicators of legitimacy? The concepts which have a direct impact on increasing legitimacy of a democratic system of governance are predictability, participation, transparency and accountability and adaptability. Each of these concepts can be indicative of effective policy responsiveness and higher level of legitimacy and hence higher level of governance. Predictability connects a policy/reform strategy to its desired goal; transparency denotes better and equal accessibility of information by all stakeholders and hence evokes improved clarity over rules and processes; accountability establishes sense of responsibility and ownership among the policy-makers and service providers; adaptability ensures the ability to bend the meta-framework of a policy to suit local contexts; affirmative participation of all stakeholders indicates efficiency of a policy/reform initiative and active participation of citizens ensures effectiveness and increasing legitimacy of the same. On the basis of this preliminary frame of evaluation, it is imperative to explore the particular reform area within a specific context. This implies narrowing the research focus on policy response and reform strategies undertaken in the field of information communication technologies (ICTs) in India. As already been mentioned, the case of India is brought not to reflect on the uniqueness of its context but to reinforce the significance of context-specific analysis of governance in a more generalised sense.

3.3 Evaluating E-governance: Linking Reform, Technology and Governance

By choosing e-governance reform in India as the specific research focus, the broader parameters and operational concept need to be adapted to the context of ICT policies and practices and India's governance. For this purpose a framework of analysis with the conceptual variables, theoretically informed specific conjectures, indicators and stakeholders has already been elaborated in the Introduction. However, before proceeding with the policies and practices of e-governance in India, it is essential to take a close look at the policy network of e-governance initiatives in India to better understand how e-governance reforms are formulated, implemented and appropriated. Looking at the aforementioned definition of e-governance (Vasu Deva, 2005), five major actors can be identified. They are as follows: i)

state/public sector, ii) market/private sector (both domestic and foreign), iii) civil society, iv) citizens, and v) international organisations. All these actors together form the policy network for e-governance reforms in India albeit the state still remains at the centre of such network as the main steering authority, coordinating body and as the facilitator.

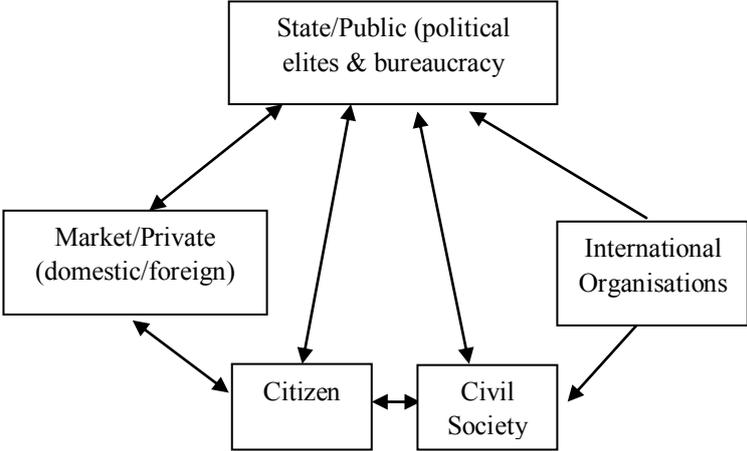


Figure: 3.3: Policy Network of e-Governance in India

Source: Author

Since this study approaches governance from a public policy perspective, it thereby focuses on governance as an interactive process between different actors. The basic assumption behind such an approach is that no single actor has either the capacity or the resources to resolve policy implementation. Yet this interactive process depends on the forms partnership it adopts (Mitra, 2006). For example, there are three basic forms of partnership, such as, principal-agent, inter-organisational negotiation and systemic coordination (ibid; 26). In the principal-agent model one actor (principal) hires or contracts the other actor (agent) to deliver a particular task. In the second model different organisations undertake a joint project by coalescing their capacities and resources through negotiation. The systemic coordination is one step ahead of the first two as it involves a self-governing network where a mutual understanding and shared vision acts as the driving force of the partnership. These different models of partnerships also significantly influence the process of governing. Hence, while mapping the actors and their relationship within the policy network of e-governance in India, it is also impertinent to shed some light on the notion of public-private partnership. This is a

model of cooperation between public sector institutions with private organisations in implementing policy goals and is popularly known as PPP model. The PPP model as it is practised in India within the confines of e-governance follows more or less the first form of partnership, i.e. principal-agent relationship. Usually a state department or a public sector institution either at the national or regional level hires or outsource a particular task (often service delivery) to a private firm on the basis of a formal contract. Though there are other actors and other variety of relationships within the policy network, the PPP model dominates majority of e-governance literature and practices.

After describing the actors and networks of ICT policy formulation and implementation, the immediate task would be to evaluate how these policy agendas influence the system of governance with a special focus on the Indian context. Understanding the linkage between technology and governance renders it difficult to directly associate a policy change with institutional change. Moreover, the Indian context adds to the complexities with its regional and local variation and presents an ever more interesting case for analysis.

3.4 *Methodological Challenges of a Context-Specific Analysis of Governance*

3.4.1. Complex Dimensions of Culture, History and Context: An Analytical Puzzle

Following Foucault's notion of governmentality, it can be established that the point of departure for any governance analysis should be the underlying power relations between the ruler and the ruled (Foucault, 1972). Within any system of governance, this hiatus between the ruling class and its citizens need to be continuously manipulated in order to sustain legitimacy and to maintain the status quo. Within a democratic system of governance, the methods of manipulation have to be bound by rules (e.g. the constitution) and hence are often conjured up in two-track strategies of the elites, such as punishment and welfare (Mitra, 2006). Foucault also talks about socialisation, education, administrative tools of computing, accounting, and the entire system of knowledge as key factors in the techniques of governmentality (Foucault. 1972). However, looking at governance purely from the perspective of elite strategy or focussing only on the techniques of governmentality presents only a partial picture. They present a state-centric approach of governance which renders the citizens powerless receiving agents of institutional rules and structures. Whereas "the complex genealogy of governance explains why its state-dominated understanding, and the panoply of institutions that sustain it, are so often contested by political actors locked in combat against one other, or against the state itself" (Mitra, 2006; 21). This hints at the

duality of the concept of governance which poses similar challenges to the study of both the state and the society. For that reason, it becomes imperative to explore the ‘weapon of the weak’ (Scott, 1985), the agency of the governed to alter the structural forces of governance. The previous analysis of structure-agency dynamics becomes crucial here as well. This research attempts to analyse governance both from state-centric and society-centric perspectives. This means the focus is neither purely on structure nor on agency, but on how these two intersect. The duality of governance as a concept is well captured in the figure below (Mitra, 2006; 21).

Applying this dual conceptualisation of governance in the context of developing societies poses serious analytical as well as methodological challenge. The primary hiatus inherent in a system of governance is further widened by the gap between alien institutional set up and embedded socio-cultural make up in most of post-colonial and post-communist societies. In case of India, its colonial past reflects strongly in its state institutions, starting from administration to legal framework, from judiciary to bureaucracy. Most of these institutions originated in the Western Europe at a particular historical juncture. The history and contexts were both different when they were applied on the Indian soil. Consequently, the process of their adaptation and evolution also took different course which was definitely fraught with conflict, violence and ruptures. To elaborate a little more on this rupture, a simple comparison between the European and Indian context could be illuminating. In Europe, the nation-states were built upon a collective identification with and sense of belonging to a nation. Hence, the modern state followed nation-building. In India, the situation was just reverse. India inherited a modern state at the time of Independence (in 1947) and its ruling elites were left with the daunting task of nation-building afterwards (Mitra, 2006; 208). Evidently, the state and society were not immediately at sync and this made the act of governing further complex. This historical dimension for state-society hiatus acquires a whole new meaning under the cultural logic. The regional and local variations coupled with major cultural rifts based on religion, language, gender and so on renders governance in India an overwhelming experience. With a continuous conflict between modern categories and primordial identities politics becomes relentless process of negotiation and accommodation. Moreover, interestingly enough, the very institution of modern democracy ushered in new networks of shared interests and pressure groups which has injected power into pre-modern identities (Mitra, 2006; 207). This implies a parallel battle between old elites and new elites which might lead to elite fragmentation (Mitra, 2006; 19) and further engendering governance.

3.4.2. Resolving Methodological Individualism: Balancing the Liberal Bias

All these historical and cultural dimensions do not only make the task of governing difficult but also cause enough bewilderment for the observers and analysts of governance. The first methodological dilemma that arises in analysing governance in India and for that matter any developing societies is the issue of methodological individualism. On this issue Mitra (2006) raises a few pertinent questions which need to be dealt with much seriousness in our analysis of governance in India. Firstly, “how appropriate is a model based on methodological individualism to the analysis of changing societies where moral bonds are based on primordial identities?” (ibid; 13) Secondly, “can rules based on individual calculations of benefits gain acceptance in societies based on caste, class, tribe, race, language, partisanship and religion?” (ibid; 13) A rational-choice neo-institutional model of governance exhibits certain liberal bias such as putting individual choice at the core of political institutions which eventually find expressions in a state-centric view of governance. This bias, of course needs to be balanced by a society-centric view where citizens’ perception of rules and institutions affect governance as much. In this research social constructivist approach provides a heuristic balance to the neo-institutional model. Furthermore, in case of measurement the governance indicators are adopted in a way so that they can capture the dual aspects of governance. For example, while assessing accountability of public service delivery system, it is not sufficient to explore the structural aspects of it within the public institutions. It is also crucial to evaluate to what extent citizens can exert their rights to hold a public officer responsible for delivery of certain services. Similarly, it is not enough to make information available through a government website under the transparency clause, whether this information is actually empowering citizens is also equally relevant.

3.4.3. Hybridity and Hybridisation: A Transcultural Methodology of Politics

The problem of balancing the state-society continuum in governance analysis can be accomplished through a skilful combination of a neo-institutional and social constructivist approach. Social constructivist model of governance aids in analysing how institutional change occurs through political behaviours of actors ensconced in particular cultural and social contexts. In other words, it explains how society affects state and its institutions. The neo-institutional model on the other hand helps explain how elites work as brokers between state and society and how they devise strategies (either of sanction or welfare) to accommodate embedded values in imported institutions. An elite strategy in developing societies recognises this asymmetrical relationship between the state and society and strives to

leverage through institutional innovation, in public administration, in legal framework, in social policies. There are many such examples in India which ranges from the provision of personal laws for different religious groups to the provision of constitutional amendment, from introducing *panchayati raj* as a method of decentralisation to positive discrimination or reservation policies for socially marginal groups. These institutional reforms emerge out of the contextual realities of a society where culture, history and politics are all entangled in the same whole. Moreover, these new institutional set-ups often take quite a leap from their imported counterparts. In simple terms, the above-mentioned institutional innovations are meant to promote democratic consolidation in India, yet they are produced keeping the Indian context in mind.

However, most of the analysis of governance in developing societies irrespective of their approach tends to explain shifts and variations in the institutional set up in terms of grand theories of politics which have their historical roots in the Western European contexts. This often leads to misrepresentation of other societies either in terms of a deficiency syndrome with a perpetual imperative to catch up or as an exotic deviant. An evident case of the former perspective is reflected in the ‘good governance’ paradigm which not only sets out universal standards of governance across societies but furthermore, by adding the prefix ‘good’ labels all other forms of governance inadequate. In the latter perspective, the stability (or the absence of it) of a system of governance is explained in terms of the innate cultural qualities (or lack of it) of a particular society. To avoid such epistemological shortcomings, a combination of neo-institutional and social-constructivism is deployed in this research. However, as both of these school of thought also cater to some grand narratives of theory-building, a distinct methodological perspective is required which would address the epistemic ruptures in classical theoretical framework and approach the same realities in a different way. An emerging perspective of transculturality aims to fulfil this search for a noble methodological approach. Even though, it can be deployed across all societies, transcultural methodology becomes even more relevant while studying non-Western societies.

Being an emerging perspective, the scope and limits of transculturality is still evolving and hence makes it difficult to delineate its salient features in an exhaustive fashion. Transculturality *“help(s) us look at our material differently than before, it may be useful to develop new research questions and perspectives, even finding new, hitherto neglected material (because some of it used to be considered “just an Asian copy” of a “European original,” for example). This approach may also open the possibility for letting the hitherto*

silent speak and hitherto unheard voices be heard.”¹¹ Thus, instead of arriving at an all-encompassing definition of transculturality, it would be more prudent to explore how transcultural methodology can enrich analysis of governance.

The underlying assumptions of transculturality are that “even the seemingly most local phenomena are part of trans-cultural flows of concept and things. Cultures are not “social groups or geographies, but social imaginaries that express or create distinction and asymmetrical flows” and “rather than passive consumer of alien concepts, local societies imbue them with meaning in the process of using them (Mitra, 2012; 111). Following these basic postulations transcultural methodology presents a distinct analytical tool box consisting of “flow”, “asymmetry”, “hybridity” which transcends disciplinary boundaries both in terms of its origin as well as applicability. All these concepts are deployed as heuristic devices to add explanatory value to the existing framework of analysing social, cultural, political and historical phenomena. In case of political analysis of governance in post-colonial India, hybridity appears to be one of the most relevant analytical categories.

As transcultural methodology postulates that there are continuous multidirectional cultural flows and that alien concepts acquire new meaning in the local context, it questions the possibility of authenticity in any ideas, institutions and practices. This is where the notion of hybridity becomes pertinent that can be viewed as “the natural consequence of the real world process of institution making, and the adaptation of alien institutions into the native medium” (Mitra, 2012; 112). Hence, hybridity not only underlines the agency of the local context but also becomes an analytical category to explain the hybridity of governance in India rather than its deficiency or uniqueness.

Originating in biological sciences to denote mixing of species, hybridity has further travelled to cultural studies and humanities and social sciences to overcome binary oppositions of categories and represent a “third space”, “which combines elements of the original duality, but folds them together in a functional, coherent way” (ibid, 111). Hybridity became popular concept in postcolonial studies especially in the writings of Homi Bhaba since 1980s. In the context of postcolonial studies, hybridity is viewed as a political strategy in the hands of the governed to exert their agency (Bhaba, 1994). It is this particular conceptualisation of hybridity that renders it an important explanatory tool to analyse governance in India. As

¹¹Cluster homepage: <http://www.asia-europe.uni-heidelberg.de/en/research/b-public-spheres/overview/what-are-the-key-terms-we-use-and-what-do-we-mean-by-them/transculturality.html> retrieved on 17.06.2012

depicted in the dynamic neo-institutional model of governance (Mitra, 2006;16), elites in post-colonial India need to devise noble strategies (through manipulating policy, initiating reform and constitutional amendment and so on) to mend the legitimacy deficit generated between alien institutions and local contexts. As Mitra puts it, “hybrid institutions are necessarily a part of a larger political project, one where elites and counter-elites seek to amend the rules to produce new designs and imbue them with a new spirit, geared to a political goal” (Mitra, 2012; 112). Moreover, he does not confine hybridity only to a post-colonial context; rather arrest the concept in colonial rule, in anti-colonial movement, in democratic transition, in post-colonial nation building and governance (ibid). This application of hybridity as a political strategy is entirely different from the use of the same notion in comparative politics where it is often used to differentiate between authoritarian regimes from the liberal democracies.

Hybridity both as a political strategy and as analytical category assists in understanding of e-governance as a strategic reform and its implications for overall governance in India in some specific ways:

- To understand the application of e-governance as a hybrid political strategy of reform by the elites in India. Here hybridity can add to the analytical framework of neo-institutional model of governance.
- To understand the political agency of the different stakeholders through hybridisation of e-governance institutions and practices at the local contexts. Here hybridisation can explain the process of social construction of technological development.
- To understand how e-governance as a strategic reform leads to hybrid institutions which can further enhance the level of governance in India.
- Hybridity also adds explanatory value to the structure-agency dynamics with the matrix of governance.

In elucidating these particular aspects of governance as political problematic, there are two aspects of the notion of hybridity that need to be understood, firstly, hybridisation as a process and secondly, hybrid institutions and practices as a product of that process. However, at the same time one needs to keep in mind that this is a continuous yet non-linear and discursive process of transforming governance. For example, before consolidation of the colonial state of British India, the East India Company as a private corporation served many state functions such as revenue collections, state-wide accountancy, production of statistical records, etc.,

which were later transferred to the colonial state authority (Kaviraj, 2000; 143). A similar trend could be found in the recent concept of ‘franchising the state’ private corporations and non-governmental organisations, which has risen as one of the alternative models of governance in the recent political discourse of post-liberalised India (Jayal, 2001; 143). Given this past reference, e-governance policy networks involving different stakeholders (discussed in the previous section) can be seen as a continuous yet non-linear process of hybridisation to adapt colonial administrative structure better in the post-colonial local contexts in India. In another example, the concept of ‘political society’ as espoused by Partha Chatterjee (2000) can well represent a hybrid institutions which is equivalent to the notion of civil society, yet somewhat different due to its different historical and political trajectories embedded in the contexts of a post-colonial society. In case of e-governance initiatives in India, rural internet kiosks or telecentres operated by local operators can be projected as hybrid institution geared to mend the digital divide as well as literacy gaps inherent in the local context. There are many such examples that can be cited here. Thus, by adopting a transcultural methodology to critically scrutinise the impact of e-governance reform on the level of governance, this research acquires an analytical edge that sharpens its explanation for a stable system of democratic governance in India.

3.5 Conclusion: From Theory to Practice

This chapter presented the theoretical perspectives on governance in order place the current research into the wider framework of theories and to emphasise the theoretical underpinning of the same. The study of e-governance reform in India is guided by the neo-institutional model of governance. The social constructivist approach is added to this model to explicate how the relationship between technology and governance is mediated through social practices embedded in a particular context. This context-specific understanding of governance faces a serious methodological challenge while Euro-centric grand theories are applied in the non Western post-colonial context such as India. However, the solution does not lie in rejecting these theories altogether but in addressing the gaps in the existing models to render the context-specific analysis of governance possible. In an attempt to counter this analytical problem, the concept of hybridity under the transcultural perspective on politics has been deployed. The analytical category of hybridity explicate how the policies and practices go through a process of hybridisation in order to bridge the hiatus between ‘imported’ institutional set up and the ‘inherited’ social set up. In analysing this process of negotiation, hybridity also emerges as a political strategy dispensed with the agency of the actors

involved. Such a theoretical and methodological combination serve to address the basic research questions elaborated already in the Introduction.

Having enumerated the main theoretical and methodological alignment of the research the next step is to apply them in the specific context of e-governance reform in India. For this purpose, the policies and practices of e-governance in India need to be studied in much depth and details within the broader political, social and cultural contexts. The detailed understanding of the policy framework and concomitant implementation will form the basis of final analysis.

4 E-Governance in India I: An Overview of Policy Framework

4.1 Major Policies in Information Technology (IT) in India: The Pre-liberalisation

Setting

The literature review on governance reform in India establishes e-governance as a major area of reform since late 1990s (Sreekumar 2008; Madon 2009, Gupta 2010). One of the major reasons cited for this gradual growth in e-governance is the Information Technology (IT) boom in India in the post-liberalised years. Even though, it is widely accepted that the state had played a minimalist role as far as the IT sector is concerned in India, a close and careful study of the pre-liberalisation policies reveals quite the opposite (Saraswathi, 2008). State intervention in IT sector took off in 1970 with the foundation of the Department of Electronics (DOE) to oversee IT policy making. Since then there has been contrasting yet considerable interventions by the state in devising IT policy-making which has had significant impact on the way the industry has shaped up (ibid). For the purpose of this research, the focus is more on the current policy framework commencing from the year 2000. However, to acknowledge the role of the state in IT sector growth it is important to shed some light on the history of IT policy-making in India.

Under the rule of J.L. Nehru (India's first Prime Minister), the Electronic Committee or Bhaba Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Homi Bhaba (who was also the head of the Atomic Energy Commission) in the aftermath of India-China war, in order to develop indigenous electronic base for national security and development. Hence, incited by security imperatives and also by recognising the significance of technical advancements in the IT field, this Committee was later replaced by the Electronic Commission (EC) in February 1970 which was followed by the establishment of DOE in June 1970 (Saraswathi, 2008; Gupta, 2010). The EC was the primary policy making body for electronics and computers whereas the DOE implemented those policies and together they regulated the policy environment for electronics and computer-related development in India (Subramanian, 2000; 36). In its attempt to develop and expand an internally competitive software industry through finely customised export schemes, this policy phase is marked by the establishment of two large public sector computer companies namely Electronic Computers of India Limited (ECIL) and Computer Maintenance Company (CMC) and their collaborations with IBM and other transnational computer companies (TNCCs) in order to access latest technologies. The Software Export Scheme of 1972 catered to the management consultancy firms which had diversified into software writing for domestic clients. These firms enjoyed a lower duty on

computer import and also received loans from the government for such imports of computers. The condition was to meet this loan within five years through foreign exchange generated from export of software skills. However, this policy confronted with many logistic bottlenecks, failed to achieve the desired growth rate of software export. Nonetheless, the software export rose from Rs. 8.4 million in 1975 to Rs. 30 million in 1978 (Saraswathi, 2008; 1145).

The next phase of IT policy making commenced with the Janata Dal coming to power in the Centre in 1977. The Minicomputer Policy of 1978 insisted on the state intervention through selective and discriminatory licensing and at the same time regulation of the private sector activities within the IT sector. However, the continuous pressure from the domestic business houses reflected significantly in the way this policy was implemented. “For example, within the first two years of policy, over 40 licences were issued, undermining the economies of scale required for mass computer production and giving recipients of the licences no incentive to reinvest their profits into deepening capabilities via expanding productive capacity and R&D. Furthermore, emulation of the Taiwanese model required not only subassembly but local manufacture and supply of components and peripherals.... importation of Simple Knocked Down (SKD) kits from East Asia allowed, sustaining a subassembly system with little value-added. The DOE even allowed, by stealth, importation of more powerful computers, which was a market supposedly reserved for ECIL” (ibid; 1146-47). Some other such measures were taken which were quite contradictory to the fundamental essence of the policy document. Despite the evident contradiction in its policy implications, Minicomputer Policy in the long run influenced the growth of India’s software industry. With no standardisation in the fragmented hardware industry, hardware firms would not bundle software with their hardware as they did in Taiwan and Japan, but provided separate software services or none at all. As such, independent software firms began to service this burgeoning fragmented market, and hardware firms developed significant software revenue streams. This induced the growth of the domestic software industry, which rose from Rs2.3 million to Rs76.9 million between 1981 and 1985, in contrast to exports, which rose from Rs44 million to Rs280 million over the same period” (ibid; 1147).

This competition between hardware and software market continued well into the next policy phase starting with Rajiv Gandhi’s election as a Prime Minister of India. Though the New Computer Policy was approved by the previous Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, it became statutory under the rule of her son (i.e., Rajiv Gandhi) that this policy took effect

(Subramanian, 2000; 38). Between 1984 and 1986, software industry became the thrust area under the New Computer Policy which was not only propelled by the potential of software export but also by considerable pressure from the business houses to lower the import duties on fully assembled computers and software packages. An Inter-Ministerial-Standing Committee (IMSC) was established to facilitate to ease the process of import restriction. “(T)he policy outcome was a reduction of basic customs duty on hardware from 135% to 60%, while customs duty on foreign software was reduced from 100% to 60%. While the excessively lenient reductions resulted in balance of payments problems and had to be modified in subsequent years, the policy increased the installed hardware base and further promoted the emerging software services industry” (Saraswathi, 2008; 1147). Rajiv Gandhi was a strong supporter of computerisation and use of Informational Technology for nation building. There were significant technological changes in the railways, banking and education sectors during his tenure (Gupta, 2010). Thus, this policy phase can be characterised by wide-ranging computerisation of public sector organisations albeit against strong resistance from the labour unions (Saraswathi, 2008).

A number of important policy initiatives were introduced by the DOE to exploit the export potentials of the software industry between 1986 and 1989. The first such policy was the Computer Software Export, Software Development and Training Policy 1986. Though maintain the overall rhetoric of indigenous development, this policy eased the import restrictions on software packages moving from quota to tariff regime. This was followed by allowing business houses to enter software development market which was restricted earlier under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTP) and also by offering attractive finance and marketing packages aiming at software export development (ibid). In 1988, the Electronics and Software Export Promotion Council was backed by the Ministry of Commerce which was followed by the establishment of a software industry trade association called National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) to provide further marketing support (Subramanian, 2000; 39). The next major policy initiative was the International-Package-Switching-Services (IPSS) by the Department of Telecommunications (DOT) in 1989 which aimed at providing telecommunication infrastructure at a fairly low cost to transfer domestically developed software to foreign countries. Around the same time DOE came up with its Software Technology Parks (STPs) project which besides providing advanced telecommunication infrastructure also made provision for other subsidies such as free water and electricity. STPs also implied that all telecommunications for software export

came under the direct control of the DOE. STPs were a major policy initiative for the development of software export market in India and have thrived ever since. As a result, there are currently 43 STPs across India, albeit in the midst of much dispute and debate over its role (ibid).

Another important state initiative which is even more relevant for the purpose of this research is the establishment of National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1976. By 1975, there was a growing realisation of the potential of ICT in improving government activities and hence overall development. As a result, NIC was conceived and set up with the financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Starting as a miniscule initiative by the Government of India (GOI), NIC has grown exponentially in the following decades to become one of the major government organisations to spearhead the growth of e-governance and informatics-led development in India. “NIC has leveraged ICT to provide a robust communication backbone and effective support for e-Governance to the Central Government, State Governments, UT Administrations, Districts and other Government bodies. It offers a wide range of ICT services” (NIC Website, 2012). One of the milestone project of NIC was the launch of NICNET, a Nationwide Communication Network in 1987. NICNET engaged with “gateway nodes at about 53 departments of the Government of India, 35 State/UT Secretariats and 603 District Collectorates to service ICT applications. NICNET has played a pivotal role in decentralized planning, improvement in Government services, wider transparency of national and local Governments and improving their accountability to the people” (ibid). NICNET was followed by the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) which was an initiative to computerise all district offices across the nation (11th ARC Report, 2008). Till date, “NIC assists in implementing ICT projects, in close collaboration with Central and State Governments and endeavours to ensure that state-of-the-art technology is available to its users in all areas of ICT” (NIC Website, 2012).

Given this historical overview of IT policy-making in India and the institutional framework for ICT-led developments within the public sector a few key issues can be underlined which have a direct influence on the later reform trajectory of IT policy and e-governance. Firstly, quite contrary to popular belief the state played an important role from the inception of IT policies in 1970s. The role of state-led IT policies in the growth of software industry in India cannot be entirely denied. It is in the backdrop of such a policy environment that National Information Technology Task Force was established in 1998 which came up with the Information Technology Action Plan I (Software), Information Technology Action Plan II

(Hardware) and Long Term National IT Policy (Task Force Website, 2000). In 1999, a separate Ministry of Information Technology was established with a specialised Department of Information and Technology (Gupta, 2010). Secondly, the influences of private or business sectors in IT policy formulation and implementation even in the pre-liberalised years are well established. Thirdly, the recognition of the developmental potentials of ICT tools dates back to 1970s in India. However, the massive exploitation of ICT tools in governance reform and other developmental projects is fairly recent. The launch of nation-wide networks such as NICNET or DISNIC played instrumental role in planting the seed of network governance in India. Fourthly, the role of International Organisations such as UNDP in interposing ICT tools in government activities can also be traced back to the 1970s (as noticeable in the formation of NIC). Though, such international donor intervention became rampant in the wake of larger governance reform agenda after the economic liberalisation in 1991. For example, international donor agencies such as the Department for International Development (DFID), G-8, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank have been actively engaged in several policy and project initiatives under the framework of e-governance for development (Sreekumar, 2008; Gupta, 2010). Lastly, navigating its way through the IT industry and ICT-led development, the Indian state (based on the recommendation of NASSCOM) tries to integrate private sector goals with social development goals. Hence the current policy focus in this field are on value-addition to IT as an industry and to take IT to masses (Ahuja, 2000; 2). Under this broader framework of major policy issues and environment that the recent policies pertaining to e-governance reform initiatives in India is discussed and examined in the following sections.

4.2 National Task Force on IT & Software Development, 1998: Implications for e-Governance Reform

The National Task Force on IT & Software Development or as it is popularly known as the National IT Task Force was established in 1998 by the Prime Minister's Office. The Task Force was chaired by the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and its main objective was to formulate a draft National Informatics Policy (Sinha, 2006). There are many recommendations that the Task Force came up with in three Basic Background Reports. However, limited by the research focus of this dissertation only a few relevant themes are elucidated here.

- 1 It recommended the "preparation of Five-Year IT Plans by every department in central and state governments earmarking 1–3% of their budget for applying IT to streamline

- their functioning. It gave the various ministries and departments three months to issue all necessary instructions and amendments to procedures” (Madon,2009);
- 2 At least 2% of the departmental or ministerial budget was expected to be spent on IT development (Sinha, 2006);
 - 3 There was a strong recommendation for international cooperation in terms knowledge sharing and technical assistance in planning and implementation of IT projects (ibid);
 - 4 It suggested reorientation of the civil service towards IT based on training and capacity building (ibid);
 - 5 A Central Repository of Data in government was also recommended (ibid);
 - 6 Citizen-IT interface was one of the focus areas of the Task Force which recommended wider penetration of IT for the masses through application in health, education, trade, taxation and so on (ibid);
 - 7 It also recommended the universalising computer literacy through increasing use of IT and computers in education under the ‘Operation Knowledge’ programme (11th ARC Report, 2008)

In sum, The National Task Force for IT and Software Development marks a paradigm shift in IT policy focus. The shift was from mere computerisation to improved service delivery, better, investment climate and all-pervasive use of IT for development. The outcomes became more important than the input which was reflected in subsequent policy frames.

4.3 Information Technology and the Reform of the Legal Framework

4.3.1 Information Technology Act, 2000: An Overview

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (No.21 of 2000) received the Presidential approval on 9th June 2000. As per the legal document, it is “An Act to provide legal recognition for transactions carried out by means of electronic data interchange and other means of electronic communication, commonly referred to as “electronic commerce”, which involve the use of alternatives to paper-based methods of communication and storage of information, to facilitate electronic filing of documents with the Government agencies and further to amend the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, the Bankers’ Books Evidence Act, 1891 and the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.” (GOI, 2000; 1)

This Act was a developed in direct response to the United Nations resolution on Model Law on Electronic Commerce. Hence the Act states, “WHEREAS the General Assembly of the

United Nations by resolution A/RES/51/162, dated the 30th January, 1997 has adopted the Model Law on Electronic Commerce adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law; And WHEREAS the said resolution recommends *inter alia* that all States give favourable consideration to the said Model Law when they enact or revise their laws, in view of the need for uniformity of the law applicable to alternatives to paper-based methods of communication and storage of information; And WHEREAS it is considered necessary to give effect to the said resolution and to promote efficient delivery of Government services by means of reliable electronic records (ibid; 1).”

The Act has total thirteen chapters and four schedules including a separate chapter on e-governance. In principle this Act ratifies, a) the legal acceptance of electronic communications and documents along with details processes of attribution, acknowledgment and despatch of electronic records, b) legal recognition of digital signature along with details of authentication, certification and regulation of digital signature, c) offences and penalties along with the establishment of Cyber Regulation Appellate Tribunal and Cyber Regulations Advisory Committee, d) the role and power of different authorities involved in the institutional and regulatory framework of the Act. The Central Government holds considerable power under this Act to make rules and make changes to carry out the provisions in this Act.

4.3.2 *Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008: An Overview*

The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act, 2000) was a breakthrough in the Indian legal history as it was the first cyber law to be formulated and enacted. However, being at a nascent stage of cyber law, the Act did not address many such issues that were deemed necessary to strengthen the legal framework. Hence based on the recommendation of the Expert Committee, the Government of India presented an amendment document namely, The Information Technology Amendment Bill in 2006 (Naavi website). After much debate the Bill has been passed by the Parliament to become the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 (IT (A) Act, 2008).

The major thrusts of this amendment Act were issues of cyber security, privacy, cyber terrorism, techno-legal information security and e-auditing. This also meant to refine the terminology, for example, substituting the term “digital signature” with “electronic signature”. It further provided to strengthen the Cyber Appellate Tribunal and to enhance the authority of the Central Government regarding security issues even though the word

“Regulation/Regulations” were omitted from the principal Act of 2000. The provisions for the intermediaries have also been revised under the amendment Act.

4.3.3 The IT Act 2000 and the IT (Amendment) Act 2008 and Provisions for E-Governance

Within the scope of this research the relevance of these legal documents lies in its particular provision on e-governance. Chapter III of the IT Act, 2000 delineates the provisions under seven specific sections.

- Section 4: This section elaborates on the legal recognition of electronic records. Information or any other matter are considered to be legal documents if they are “a) rendered or made available in an electronic form; and b) accessible so as to be usable for a subsequent reference.”
- Section 5: This section confirms the legal status of digital signature to authenticate any information or matter provided that the digital signature is affixed in a manner prescribed by the Central Government.
- Section 6: In this section provisions regarding the use of electronic records and digital signatures in Government and its agencies are specified. Any filing, application and other documents related to any Government authority, body or agency; issue, grant of any licence, permit, sanction or approval by such authorities and the receipt or payment of money made available through electronic form and authenticated by digital signature gains the legal recognition. However, the appropriate Government hold the power to prescribe the manner in which such electronic should be filed and the methods of payment for any such filing and creation of electronic records.
- Section 7: This section provides for the retention of electronic records if “a) the information contained therein remains accessible so as to be usable for a subsequent reference; b) the electronic record is retained in the format in which it was originally generated, sent or received or in a format which can be demonstrated to represent accurately the information originally generated, sent or received; c) the details which will facilitate the identification of the origin, destination, date and time of despatch or receipt of such electronic record are available in the record”.
- Section 8: This section provides for the publication of rules, regulation, order, bye-law, notification or any other matter in both the Official Gazette and the Electronic Gazette

where the date of publication will be the date of the Gazette published first (in any form).

- Section 9: This section specifies that any Ministry or Department of the Central Government or the State Government or any other similar authority or body funded or controlled by the Central or the State Government cannot be persuaded to “accept, issue, create, retain and preserve any document in the form of electronic records or effect any monetary transaction in the electronic form”.
- Section 10: This section details the power of the Central Government to make rules regarding digital signatures, for example, its type, format, and procedures of personal identification, procedures to ensure security and confidentiality of electronic records and payments and so on.

IT (A) Act, 2008 adds several sections under this Chapter on E-Governance. After Section 6 of the principal Act, four more sub-sections were inserted. After section 7 and section 10 of the principal Act some other sections were also inserted.

- The sub-sections sections inserted after Section 6 of the principal Act are as follows: “(1) The appropriate Government may, for the purposes of this Chapter and for efficient delivery of services to the public through electronic means authorise, by order, any service provider to set up, maintain and upgrade the computerised facilities and perform such other services as it may specify by notification in the Official Gazette. (2) The appropriate Government may also authorise any service-provider authorised under sub-section (1) to collect, retain and appropriate such service charges, as may be prescribed by the appropriate Government for the purpose of providing such services, from the person availing such service. (3) Subject to the provisions of sub-section (2), the appropriate Government may authorise the service providers to collect, retain and appropriate service charges under this section notwithstanding the fact that there is no express provision under the Act, rule, regulation or notification under which the service is provided to collect, retain and appropriate e-service charges by the service providers. (4) The appropriate Government shall, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify the scale of service charges which may be charged and collected by the service provider under this section: provided that the appropriate Government may specify different scale of service charges for different types of services” (IT(A)Act, 2008; 4). The service providers under this Act includes “any individual, private agency, private company,

partnership firm, sole proprietor firm or any such other body or agency which has been granted permission by the appropriate Government to offer services through electronic means in accordance with the policy governing such service sector” (ibid).

- The sub-section inserted after section 7 of the principal Act, provides for the “audit of documents, records or information processed and maintained in the electronic form” (ibid).
- The additional section inserted after the section 10 of the principal Act establishes the validity of contracts formed through electronic means.

4.3.4 Changing Legal Framework and Implications for E-Governance

The Information Technology Act, 2000 and the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008, both are crucial in understanding the way e-governance is gaining foothold in the institutional framework of governance in India. There are a few key issues that arise from a careful scrutiny of these legal documents.

- These laws facilitate the overhauling process of communication and documentation within and with the Government agencies in India through legalising electronic data interchange. This has direct implications for communications and transactions between the Government and citizen, between the Government and business and also within different bodies, departments and agencies of the Government.
- The international framework plays an instrumental role in the development of the principal Act as the motive behind this law is described to be keeping uniformity with Model Law on Electronic Commerce adopted by the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law.
- Another motivation behind the principal Act was “to promote efficient delivery of Government services by means of reliable electronic records” (IT ACT 2000; 1). This fits within one of the basic principles of e-governance reform agenda and hence this Act paves the way to such reforms.
- Similar trends are evident in the Chapter III on Electronic Governance under the Act. Through various provisions of legalising electronic records, digital signatures, retention and dissemination of information in electronic format and so on this Act helps to standardised the process of information exchange within the public sector. Moreover, the provisions under the Section 7, that is, retention of electronic records promote transparency of information and harness easier structures of accountability

with the Government. For example, the clause 1a) and b) in this section are particularly relevant in this regard. Even various sections of Chapter IV on Attribution, Acknowledgement and Dispatch of Electronic Records facilitate the same.

- The IT Act, 2000 also makes information on Government rules, orders, and regulations more easily accessible through rendering them available in electronic forms (as specified in section 8 of Chapter III). This also enhances transparency with the Government.
- Under section 10 (Chapter III) and also under section 87 (Chapter XIII) the Central Government gets enough authority to set the format and manner of electronic communication including the digital signature and also to change rules through prior notification. However, there is much ambiguity in the way it outlines under section 9 (Chapter III) that any person cannot demand acceptance, creation or retention of electronic records or any electronic money transactions from any Government authority. It leaves the question of governmental authority to different interpretations.
- The provision for Cyber Appellate Tribunal in both the Acts (though with slight refinement of terminology) further hints at institutionalisation of regulatory frameworks in electronic communications.
- The IT (Amendment) Act, 2008, notwithstanding its major focus on privacy and security issues, make considerable amendments to the Chapter on E-Governance in the principal Act. For example, “for efficient delivery of services the public through electronic means”, this Act not only legalise the privatisation of service delivery mechanism but also legalise the payment of fees for regular public services whereas the responsibility of deciding the scale of such charges lies with the Government (6A.(1), (2), (3) & (4)). Such a legal framework further encourages the model of public-private partnership widely adopted under the governance reform agenda.
- Other amendments provided under the 2008 Act aid in the process of increasing transparency by legalising e-audit (7A) and also the simplification of communication mechanism by recognising contracts generated in electronic form.
- By addressing the issues of cyber security and privacy and data protection, cyber law compliance and so on, this Amendment Act is supposed to affect the IT industry in India in particular and also bring massive changes in the corporate governance system within the country. These changes, in turn, have explicit and implicit impacts on the

issues of transparency and accountability within the general governance structure where the private/corporate sectors have increasingly been involved.

Many view the introduction of such laws in the Indian context as a threshold in India's path to become a digital society (Naavi website). Without delving deeper into the debate of digital society, these Acts can be understood as a legal step towards institutionalising changing nature of communications and interactions among different actors including public sector, private business and ordinary citizens. Hence they set the stepping stones of reform in the complex whole of governance structure in India by making provisions for e-governance.

4.4 *Five Years Plans, Governance Reform and E-Governance*

Five Years Plans in India is one of the leading documents of policy directives which reflect the priority areas of development and strategies of intervention by the Government of India. These plans are developed and approved by the planning commission of India where recommendations from both the state and central governments are incorporated. Analysing these planning documents holds immense significance to understand the overall policy framework as they point out key areas of strategic reform. The two most important documents to deal with governance issues are the tenth and eleventh Five Years Plan as both of them give special attention to governance in general and e-governance in particular. Therefore both the Plans will be analysed in succession albeit only specific chapters on governance will be discussed in details. This narrow focus is required not only to pragmatically tackle such a massive document but also to maintain its link to the main research questions.

4.4.1 The Tenth Five Years Plan (2002-2007): An Overview

The Tenth Five Years Plan clearly demonstrate the significance of contemporary governance reform discourse in India's development planning as it devotes one full chapter to 'Governance and Implementation' (Chapter 6 of the Tenth Plan). It also expresses Indian policy-makers' allegiance to the 'good governance' paradigm at the very outset of the aforementioned chapter which states, "Good governance is one of the most crucial factors required if the targets of the Tenth Plan are to be achieved" (The Tenth Plan; 177). The Plan starts off with a clear notion of governance that "relates to the management of all such processes that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables individuals to raise their capability levels, on one hand, and provide opportunities to realise their potential and enlarge the set of available choices, on the other. These processes, covering the political, social and economic aspects of life impact every level of human enterprise, be it individual, the

household, the village, the region or the national level. It covers the State, civil society and the market, each of which is critical for sustaining human development” (ibid; 177). It also continues to outline the characteristics of good governance: “The universally accepted features of good governance are the exercise of legitimate political power; and formulation and implementation of policies and programmes that are equitable, transparent, non-discriminatory, socially sensitive, participatory, and above all accountable to the people at large. There could however be aspects of governance that are contextually driven and geared to address the local concerns” (ibid; 177). Here, there is evidently an attempt to balance universal notions with local realities that promotes context –specific policy reform.

While disaggregating the concept of governance from that of development, the Tenth Plan demarcates features of poor governance followed by an alternative framework for conceptualising governance. Exploring the contextual parameters of governance in India, it recognises the presence of poor governance even in better developed states. By poor governance it implies: “Poor management of economies, persisting fiscal imbalances, disparities in the pace and level of development across regions and across districts; denial of basic needs of food, water and shelter to a substantial proportion of the population; threat to life and personal security in the face of inadequate State control on law and order; marginalising, exclusion or even persecution of people on account of social, religious, castes or even gender affiliation; lack of sensitivity , transparency and accountability in many facets of the working of State machinery, particularly those that have an interface with the public; lack of credibility-the gap between the intent and the actions –of some institutions in society; inadequate system of incentives/disincentives for people (particularly for a civil servant), subversion of rules, evasion of taxes and failure in getting timely justice; existence of a significant number of voiceless poor with little opportunities for participating even in institutions of local self-governance, despite a visible movement towards decentralisation through the Panchayati Raj institutions; and deterioration of physical environment, particularly in urban areas” (ibid; 177-78).

These manifestations of poor governance can have direct correspondence with economic, political or civic aspects of governance. However, all these aspects together are based on a continuous process of intermediation between institutions, the delivery mechanism and the supportive and subordinate framework of legislations, rules and procedures. The continuous interplay between these predefined elements determines the alternative framework for

conceptualising governance within the Government discourse according to the Tenth Plan (see below Figure 4.1).

Institutions are defined as “adopted or created arrangements, both formal and informal, to bring about predictability, stability and efficiency in managing the social, economic and political transactions in any society ;(For example, the institution of Parliament, the judiciary, or the civil administration)”. The delivery mechanism is viewed as “including the executive apparatus adopted or evolved by the institutions for implementing the agenda and the objectives for which the said institutions have been created; (For example, law courts, hospitals, police stations or the Collector’s office)”. The final element, that is, the supportive and subordinate framework for legislations, rules and procedures are “formulated for delivering and meeting the stated responsibilities of the concerned institutions” (ibid; 178).

For efficient functioning of the system of governance, these three elements have to work in complete harmony. With the changing domestic and global contexts, these elements need to be capable enough to absorb changes and adapt accordingly. Therefore comprehensive policy framework and institutional capacity of the delivery mechanism become crucial in formulating and implementing appropriate projects/plans. As the Plan document reasons, “...the ability to effectively target schemes/programmes towards the most deserving depends critically upon the quality of governance. The better the levels of governance, the more precise can be the targeting. The corollary of this is that in the absence of acceptable levels of governance, it would be preferable to eschew targeted programmes in favour of more generally applicable schemes” (ibid; 180).

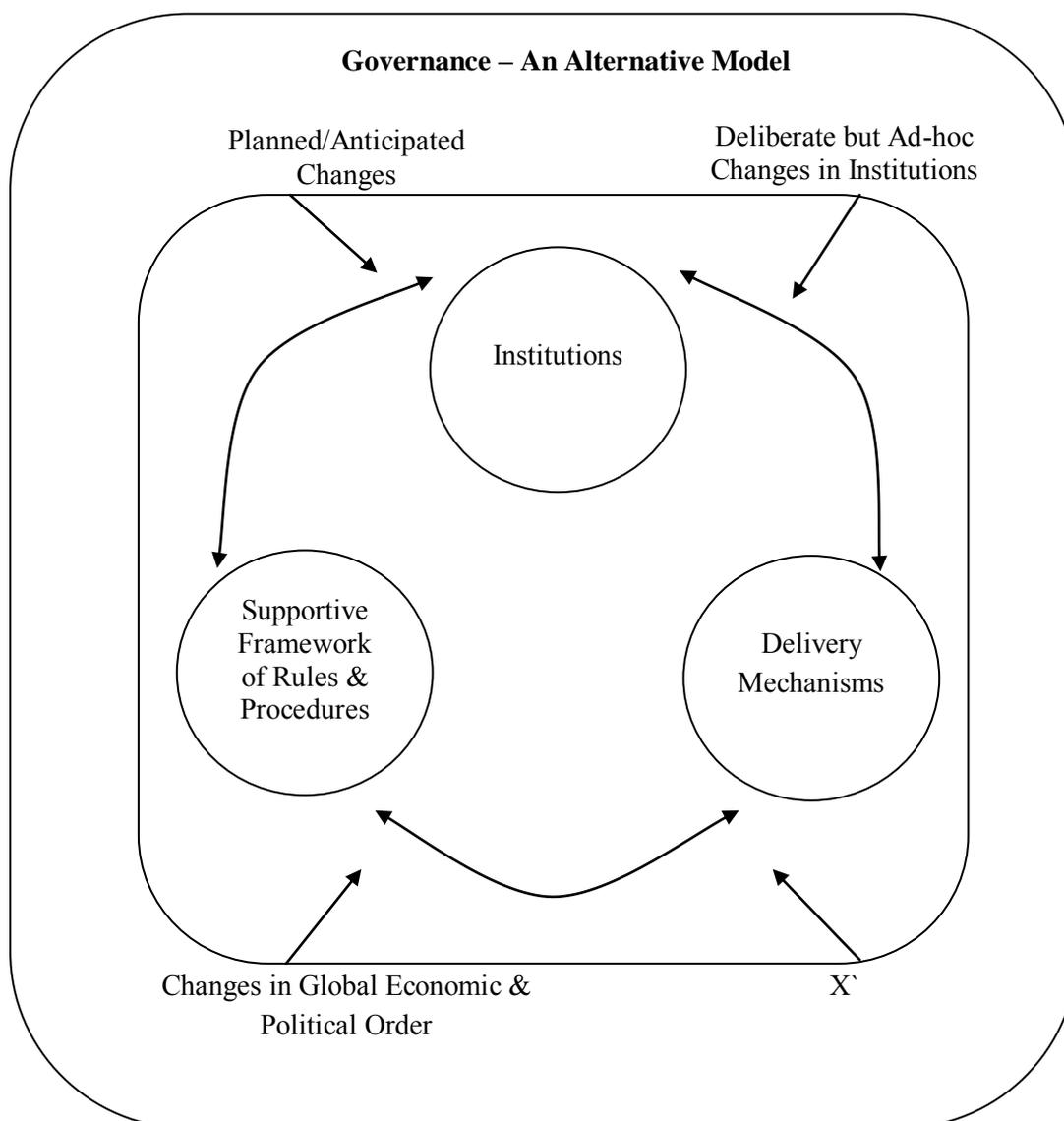


Figure: 4.1: An Alternative Model of Governance developed by the Indian State

Source: GOI (2002)

The changing contexts in the domestic and global level can be manifold. For example in the domestic front, “In the past, with the elected governments lasting their full terms, the tenure of the Government and the term of the Finance Commission were co-terminous. With the changing political environment – premature dissolution of the lower house of the Parliament, coalition governments and different political parties forming governments in the States and the Centre- the working together of such institutions concurrently and in consonance with each other cannot be taken for granted any more....These developments have a bearing on the macro-economic management at the Centre, as well as in the States. Institutional changes

have to be, therefore, thought of to address the resulting issues and provide continuity and harmony in the working of these bodies. Similarly, there are good reasons to devise new instruments that ensure continuity of basic policies on which there is consensus across political parties” (ibid; 178).

Likewise, the Tenth Plan also accounts for changes in the global contexts as it argues, “With the acceptance of market liberalism and globalisation, it is expected that State yields to the market and the civil society in many areas where it, so far, had a direct but distortionary and inefficient presence. It includes areas where the State, for instance, had entered as a producer of such goods and services that are also produced in the private sector. It also includes the role of the State as a development catalyst where, perhaps, civil society presently has better institutional capacity. At the same time, with the growth of markets and the presence of an aware and sensitive civil society, many developmental functions as well as functions that provide stability to the social order have to be progressively performed by the market and the civil society organisations. It means extension of the market and the civil society domain at the expense of the State in some areas. It also implies an increase in the area of their respective overlaps” (ibid: 181). This reformulation of roles of the state, the civil society and the market reflects unerringly in the governance reform trends in India and is well summed up already in the beginning of the said chapter (Governance and Implementation) in the Tenth Plan where the responsibilities of each sphere is explicitly marked. “The State is responsible for creating a conducive political, legal and economic environment for building individual capabilities and encouraging private initiatives. The market is expected to create opportunities for people. Civil society facilitates the mobilisation of public opinion and peoples’ participation in economic, social and political activities” (ibid; 177).

The Tenth Plan admits that in current situation it is impossible for the government to take a completely minimalist role. However, instead of being extremely proactive, the government focuses on certain key areas which would improve governance through efficient use of resources in the public sector and by strengthening personal and community capabilities geared towards sustainable development. These priority areas are: peoples’ participation; decentralisation; right to information; reforms of the revenue system; improving fiscal health of the Central as well the State governments by making necessary corrections in the subsidy and the pricing regime for public provisioning of services; inclusion of civil society as development partners; civil service reform; procedural reform (covering all aspects of government’s interface with public); formulation of programme/project in a more professional

manner; project based assistance to States and development agencies/institutions; synergy and coordination between different public and para-state agencies; stricter mechanism of monitoring and evaluation; rationalisation of Central Sector schemes (CSs) and Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) through convergence, weeding out and transfer to the States on Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB); empowerment of the marginal and the excluded; judicial reform; and using Information Technology (IT) for good governance/E-governance. The underlying aims of all these thrust areas are improving the delivery mechanism, efficient resource mobilisation and effective public expenditure (ibid; 182-87).

4.4.2 The Eleventh Five Years Plan (2007-2012): An Overview

Like its predecessor, the Eleventh Plan also devotes an entire chapter on Governance (Chapter 10) and reasons that “ inclusive growth, reducing poverty and bridging the various divides that continue to fragment our society can only be achieved if there is a significant improvement in the quality of governance” (The Eleventh Plan; 223). This chapter does not attempt to present any definition of governance and good governance (which were already introduced in the previous Plan). It nevertheless specifies the concrete meanings of good governance in the Indian context which are as follows:

- “As a democratic country, a central feature of good governance is the constitutionally protected right to elect government at various levels in a fair manner, with effective participation by all sections of the population. This is a basic requirement for the legitimacy of the government and its responsibility to the electorate”.
- “The government at all levels should be accountable and transparent. Closely related to accountability is the need to eliminate corruption, which is widely seen as a major deficiency in governance. Transparency is also critical, both to ensure accountability, and also to enable genuine participation”.
- “The government must be effective and efficient in delivering social and economic public services, which are its primary responsibilities. ...In our situation, where the responsibility of delivery of key services such as primary education and health is at the local level, this calls for special attention to ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of local governments”.
- “Governments at lower levels can only function efficiently if they are empowered to do so. This is particularly relevant for the PRIs, which currently suffer from inadequate devolution of funds as well as functionaries to carry out the functions constitutionally assigned to them”.

- “An overarching requirement is that the rule of law must be firmly established. This is relevant not only for relations between the government and individuals enabling individuals to demand their rights but also for relations between individuals or businesses. A modern economic society depends upon increasingly complex interactions among private entities and these interactions can be efficiently performed only if legal rights are clear and legal remedies for enforcing these rights are swift”.
- “Finally, the entire system must function in a manner which is seen to be fair and inclusive....Disadvantaged groups, especially the SCs, STs, minorities and others, must feel they have an equal stake and should perceive an adequate flow of benefits to ensure the legitimacy of the State”.

While looking back at the Tenth Plan and its conceptualisation of governance, this Plan lists out the steps taken under the Tenth Plan to improve the quality of governance in India (ibid; 224). This comprehensive list reflects the concrete path of governance reform agenda by the Government of India at various levels.

- The Right to Information (RTI), 2005 was ratified as an Act. This Act aimed to empower citizens, applies to all agencies and societies including Union and local governments which receive public funds.
- In order to promote accountability the All India Service Rules were amended by introducing fixed-tenure provisions for certain posts.
- As part of the major reforms in the tax structure, a new value added tax regime was introduced which considerably simplifies tax system.
- By providing tax incentives to donors and disclosing antecedents of candidates, major reforms for electoral funding were initiated.
- An e-Governance Plan for 27 important areas was adopted to improve service delivery and digitisation of information.
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and other such initiatives were taken to increase participatory governance.
- As recognition of the Voluntary Organisations’ importance in participatory governance system, a new policy for VOs was announced by the central government.

- A National Disaster Management Authority was introduced to strengthen the response system and to bring more concerted focus on the issue of disaster management.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) was founded in 2005 to prepare a detailed blue-print for revamping the public administration system.

Keeping its allegiance to the ‘good governance’ paradigm, the Eleventh Plan proposes two specific measures. Firstly, “the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances has proposed a framework for good governance in the form of a Code Governance. The main components of this Code are: i) improving service delivery; ii) development of programmes for weaker sections and backward areas; iii) technology and system improvement; iv) financial management and budget sanctity; v) accountability and transparency; vi) public service morale and anti-corruption; vii) incentivising reforms” (ibid; 224). Secondly, depending on the federal structure, this Plan proposes a state-wise index of good governance measuring the performance of the States by a high-level expert group. This index can be used for giving incentives to perform and also to bring serious attention to governance issues (ibid; 224).

While maintaining the basic focus on achieving good governance, the Eleventh Plan takes major initiatives in a broad range of areas, such as, decentralisation through strengthening and empowering *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs); decentralisation through introducing district level planning; decentralisation by bringing Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) under the PRIs; participation and harmonising community-based organisations with PRIs; rehabilitation and resettlement; monitoring and evaluation; e-governance for better service delivery and programme design, implementation and monitoring; use of ICT in major flagship programmes; location-specific planning using geographical information system; partnering with VOs; corruption; civil service reform; police and judiciary reform; new regulatory structure with independent regulators.

These initiatives bear direct resonance with the priorities of the Plan; in “providing access to health care and education, particularly in the rural areas and for girls, minorities, SCs and STs, backward classes and BPL families. It also emphasises programmes of employment under the Rural Employment Guarantee Programme. Access to clean and good quality water, sanitation, housing and electricity are also critical. These services are delivered at the local level and this calls for both empowerment and accountability of the relevant authorities and

effective monitoring of service delivery, particularly for low income groups. Effective administration of the rule of law resulting in efficient criminal and civil justice system delivering swift decisions and, particularly, ensuring access to the poor is of extreme importance. An effective security and policing system is required for Naxalite affected and communally sensitive areas” (ibid; 225). Additionally, the Plan identifies corruption as one of major problems of governance and hence deems it extremely necessary to deal with this problem. As already discussed in the Tenth Plan, this Plan also calls for wider participation of private sectors and civil society organisations in matters of governance. Thus the responsibility of the government is to develop business-friendly environment by promoting efficiency and to encourage VOs for developing citizen initiatives and monitoring government systems by promoting transparency (ibid; 225).

4.4.3 The Tenth and Eleventh Five Years Plan and the Scope of E-Governance

Given the overview of the two consecutive Five Years Plans, the overall governance reform agenda espoused by the Government of India over the last ten years become apparent. As both the Plan documents identify e-governance as one of the priority areas, strategic reforms have taken place in this sector. Therefore, it becomes imperative to explore the policy orientations and initiatives taken for e-governance under both the Plans.

The Tenth Plan identifies e-governance as one of the important tools “for achieving good governance especially with regard to improving efficiency, transparency and making interface with government user-friendly” (Tenth Plan; 187). The basic aim of e-governance is to use IT in the government functioning “in order to bring about better governance which has been termed as SMART (simple, moral, accountable, responsive, and transparent)” (ibid; 187). In the Tenth Plan, the focus on e-governance was spread beyond connectivity, network and technology upgradation to re-engineering of processes and rules. In a quest to take IT to the masses, both private and public resources were to be mobilised under this Plan. Moreover, as sustainability, interactivity and standardisation of e-governance activities were prioritised under this Plan, the need for a comprehensive master plan for e-governance with specific time frame was asserted. Innovative, cost-effective solutions to develop G2C, G2B and G2G functionalities which will take local languages, local accessibility infrastructures into consideration were encouraged and promoted. A major step taken under the Tenth Plan was to adopt a National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006 to improve service delivery mechanism to the citizens. This Plan spread across 27 major areas marks a significant difference from the earlier efforts of mere computerisation.

In the Eleventh Plan, the initiatives taken in the field of e-governance become more organised and comprehensive. The Plan reasons, “If attributes of good governance are transparency, efficiency, responsiveness, cost-effectiveness and accountability, e-Governance is the means to attain these attributes through application of technologies” (Eleventh Plan; 231). “The National Knowledge Commission had, in the context of e-governance, suggested that to make an immediate impact on citizens, it is critical to identify and simplify important processes and services, say 15 to 20 to begin with, which are currently cumbersome, bureaucratic and prone to unnecessary delays and corruption. Initially these services could include providing online record of land rights, computerised land registration, computerised transfers, computerisations of social security schemes, birth and death certificates, proof of residence, issue of ration and ID cards, and so on” (ibid; 231). Continued focus was on technology upgradation and process re-engineering for improved service delivery culminated into many important projects under the Eleventh Plan. Some of these projects are: i) Unique identifiers of citizens and businesses, “to create a common platform for service/ programme delivery...a unique ID (UID) in the G2C domain and Corporate Identity Number (CIN) in G2B domain” (ibid; 231-32); ii) Citizens Smart Cards Project to represent “different entitlement groups for which free services or implicit/explicit subsidies are given” (ibid; 232); iii) State-Wide Area Networks (SWANS) in 29 States and 6 Union Territories to establish “an intra-government network with a minimum of 2Mbps connectivity from the State headquarters to block headquarters through the District headquarters” (ibid; 233). This project also provide connectivity for service delivery of different Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) under the National e-Governance Plan; iv) Common Services Centres (CSCS) scheme to establish “100,000 broadband Internet enabled kiosks in rural areas which would deliver government and private services at the doorstep of the citizens” and CSCs scheme “is the first step towards ubiquitous broadband reaching up to the village level”(ibid; 233); v) Connectivity for the last mile through BSNL and Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF); vi) State Data Centres (SDCS) across 29 States and 6 Union Territories along with Disaster Recovery (DR), “in order to provide shared, secured and managed infrastructure for consolidating and securely hosting State-level data and application...The various MMPs, both at the Central level, State level and also the integrated services of the NeGP are expected to use SDCs to deliver their services. This infrastructure would be created during the Eleventh Five Year Plan” (ibid; 233). The State-Wide Area Networks (SWANs), Common Services Centres (CSCs) and the State Data Centres (SDCs) are the three most important pillars of the National e-Governance Plan. Besides these important areas of e-governance activities, Information Communication

Technologies (ICTs) are also being applied in flagship government programmes such as NREGS, Bharat Nirman, PMGSY, for the purpose of implementation as well as monitoring.

4.4.4 Five Years Plans and Implications for e-Governance as Strategic Reform

Taking a close look at the Tenth and Eleventh Five Years Plans establishes two important facts: first is that governance reform geared towards achieving ‘good governance’ standards has become an intrinsic part of government planning and second is that e-governance/application of ICTs in government functioning forms a major part of the governance reform planning. Hence it is important to analyse e-governance as part of the broader agenda of reform including its different other dimensions. One of the crucial aspects of governance reform is the increasing influence of the market and civil society. This not only implies shrinking of the state but also hints at a growing partnership between the State, the market and the civil society in achieving developmental goals. The Tenth and the Eleventh Plans both reiterate this dimension of governance reform through myriad policy directions and project initiatives. In case of e-governance, such partnerships are envisaged to improve service delivery and renders government functionaries more citizen-centric. In all the e-governance projects discussed in the Plan documents, the State plays the role of catalyst facilitating the coordination among all developmental partners. Through process re-engineering, e-governance also promises to change the way government personnel, procedures and rules function at present. Along with simplification of the system, it also assists in increasing transparency, accountability and efficiency of the system while showing potentials to reduce occurrence of corruption. E-governance also aids in other priority areas of the government such as health, education, police and judiciary reform, revenue system reform, professional project formulation, monitoring and evaluation of projects/programmes and so on. Embedding e-governance activities in major social flagship projects such as NREGS enables better implementation. Thus, significance of e-governance lies not only as a mere part of the governance reform programme but in its ability to permeate many other reform initiatives with equal impact.

One of the vital points which both Plans stresses is taking ICTs to masses through increased sustainability, interactivity and standardisation which further push for a master plan. Hence, the Tenth Plan introduces the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) including 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and the Eleventh Plan continues to facilitate the successful implementations of these projects besides adding a few more under the rubric of NeGP. Being

the single most important policy document for e-governance initiatives in India, NeGP demands distinct attention.

4.5 National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), 2006

National e-Governance Plan presents a holistic approach towards varied e-governance initiatives taken at various levels in the country. “During the 1980s and early 1990s, initial attempts towards e-governance were made with a focus on networking government departments and developing in-house government application in the areas of defence, economic monitoring, planning and the development of IT to manage data-intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. These applications focused on automation of internal government functions rather than on improving service delivery to citizens” (2nd ARC 11th Report, 2009). However, there have been many isolated e-governance initiatives in India ranging from the block level to the central level. Even though all such initiatives have not been particularly successful in yielding desired results, lessons learnt from these experiences shaped the e-governance strategy of the country in a considerable manner (Saaransh, 2011). A few such lessons are:

- “Need for political ownership at the highest level and a national vision for e-governance for successful implementation of the programme”;
- “A dedicated team with a stable tenure from within the organization to conceptualise and implement the programmes down the line”;
- “New areas of public-private partnership in making e-governance possible should be continuously explored”;
- “Defined architecture, standards and policies addressing issues of security, privacy, etc.”
- “An urgent need to develop the basic core and support infrastructure for e-Governance, such as Data Centres, Wide Area Networks and the physical access points for delivery of government services, which would be common to all departments and where services could be delivered at the doorsteps of the citizens in an integrated manner”;
- “Need to start with small pilots before scaling-up, as IT projects take a long time to implement and often there are modifications to be incorporated along the way”; and
- “Issues of re-engineering and management of change are of paramount importance in comparison to technical issues associated with e-Governance”.

These basic lessons pointed out the need to have a programme approach towards e-governance initiatives in India with a common vision, strategy and approach. “These would have the added advantage of enabling huge savings in costs, in terms of sharing the core and support infrastructure, enable interoperability through standards etc, which would result in the citizen having a seamless view of Government” (2nd ARC 11th Report).

Given this felt need, the Department of Information Technology (DIT) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DAR & PG) formulated the National e-Governance Plan which was approved by the Union Government on May 18, 2006. Comprising of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and 10 components, NeGP is guided by one common vision, that is,

“Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency and reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man.”

As the NeGP is being implemented as a programme it follows a broad approach which can be illustrated in following points:

- “DIT would create Common and Support Infrastructure(State Wide Area Networks, State Data Centres, Common Service Centres, National/State Service Delivery Gateways)
- DIT would evolve/lay down Standards and Policy Guidelines, provide Technical and Handholding support, undertake Capacity Building, R&D etc. as required for successful implementation of various e-Governance projects
- Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) would be owned and spearheaded by various concerned line Ministries. The Ministry/Department would be entirely responsible for all decisions connected with their MMP
- States would be given the flexibility to identify a few additional state-specific projects (not exceeding 5), which are very relevant for the economic development of the State. In case, Central assistance is needed, such inclusions would be considered on the advice of the concerned Line Ministries/Departments
- E-Governance would be promoted through a Centralized initiative to the extent necessary to ensure citizen service orientation, to realize the objective of interoperability of various e-Governance applications and to ensure optimal utilization

of ICT infrastructure/resources while allowing for and adopting, as a policy, a Decentralized Implementation Model

- Successes would be identified and replication promoted proactively with required customization
- Public Private Partnership (PPP) would be promoted wherever feasible to enlarge the resource pool without compromising on the security aspects” (Saaransh, 2011)

NeGP implementation strategy is based on the programme approach and involves different agencies with well defines roles and responsibilities encapsulated as such:

- “Line Ministries/Departments are responsible for the implementation of the Mission Mode Projects (MMPs)/Components owned by them and work in a project mode within a tight, defined timeframe.
- State Governments are responsible for implementing State Sector MMPs, under the overall guidance of respective Line Ministries in cases where Central Assistance is also required.
- DIT is the facilitator and catalyst for the implementation of NeGP and provides technical assistance to various Ministries and State Governments. In addition, it implements pilot/ infrastructure/technical/ special projects and support components.
- DAR&PG is responsible for Generic Process Re-engineering and Change Management, which are desired to be realized across all government departments. For various MMPs, concerned Line Ministries/ Implementing Agencies are primarily responsible for carrying out the required Process Re-engineering and Change Management.
- Planning Commission and Ministry of Finance allocate funds for NeGP through Plan and Non-plan budgetary provisions and lay down appropriate procedures in this regard” (Saaransh, 2011).

Following the overall approach and a concerted implementation strategy, NeGP is formulated through a rigorous project management structure involving the key stakeholders. The key components of this structure are as follows:

- “Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) for programme level policy decisions.

- A body under the Chairpersonship of Prime Minister with representation drawn from relevant Ministries/ Departments, the National Knowledge Commission, the Planning Commission, experts, etc., to provide leadership, prescribe deliverables and milestones and monitor periodically the implementation of NeGP
- National e-Governance Advisory Group, headed by the Minister C&IT, to solicit views of external stakeholders and to provide inputs to the CCEA, advise the government on policy issues and strategic interventions necessary for accelerating introduction of e-Governance across Central and State Government Ministries/Departments.
- Apex Committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary to oversee the programme and to provide policy and strategic directions for its implementation. In addition it moderates and drives services, process re-engineering and service levels of each MMP wherever required. Further it is empowered to add or delete MMPs as considered appropriate and to resolve all inter-ministerial issues. DIT acts as the Secretariat for
- Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC)/Committee on Non Plan Expenditure (CNE) to financially appraise/ approve projects as per existing delegation of financial powers. The EFC/ CNE headed by Secretary Expenditure would also be recommending to the CCEA the manner in which MMP Projects are to be implemented, i.e. as a Central Sector Scheme, Centrally Sponsored Scheme etc, as well as the financial terms of participation for States.
- Further, considering the complexity of the Programme and the need to look at issues such as overall technology architecture, framework, standards, security policy, funding strategy, service delivery mechanism, sharing of common infrastructure etc. at a program level, the technical appraisal of all NeGP projects is done by DIT, prior to a project being placed before the EFC/ CNE.

State level Apex Committees headed by Chief Secretaries to allocate State level resources, set priority amongst projects and resolve inter-departmental issues” (ibid).

The programme management and project management structures are illustrated in details in the figures below

**Programme Management – NeGP
Overall Government Structure**

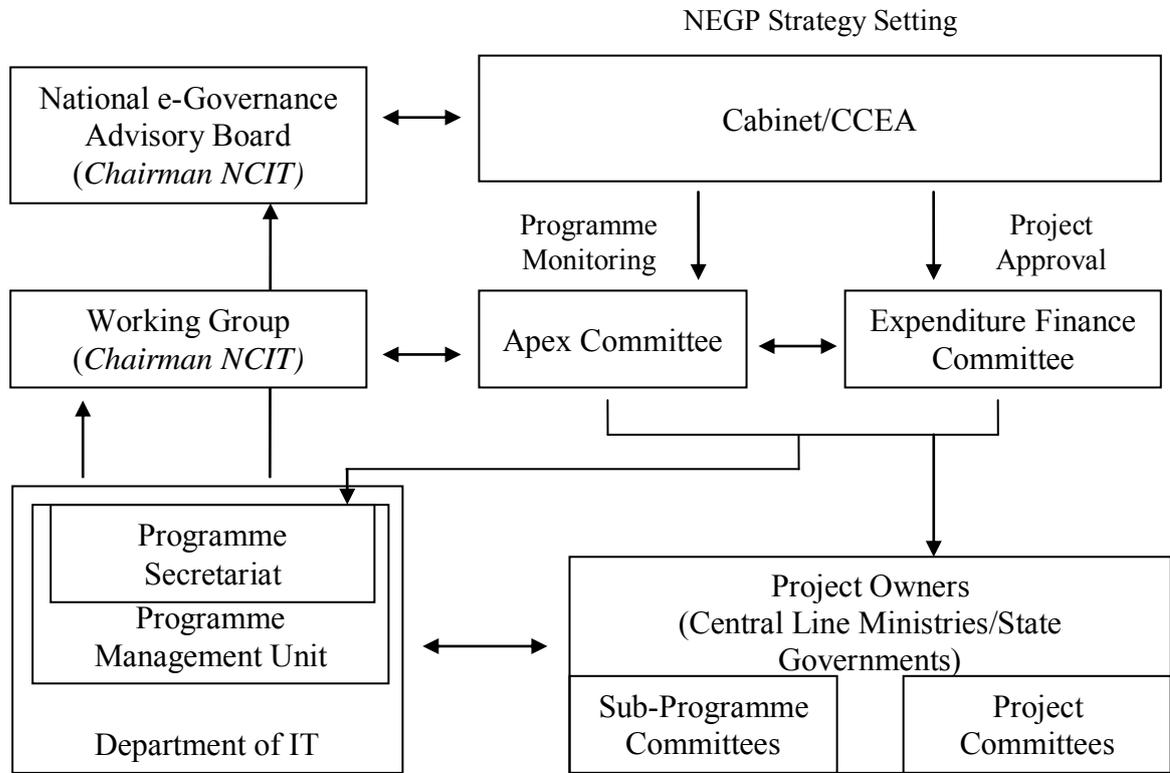


Figure: 4.2: NeGP Programme Management Framework

Source: GOI, (2006)

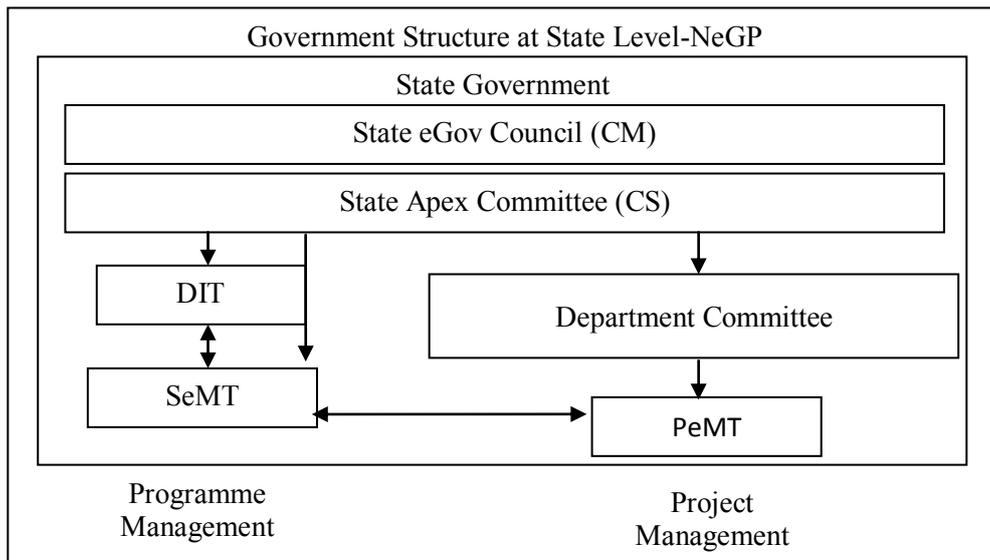


Figure: 4.3: NeGP Project Management Framework

Source: GOI, (2006)

The three main pillars of the National e-Governance Plan are State Data Centres (SDCs), State-Wide Area Networks (SWANs) and Common Services Centres (CSCs). Together they form the common support infrastructure of the NeGP. The SDCs functions as the central repository of the State providing secure data storage which further “consolidate services, applications and infrastructure to provide efficient electronic delivery of G2G, G2C and G2B services through common delivery platform seamlessly supported by the State-Wide Area Networks (SWANs) connecting up to the villages through the Common Services Centres (CSCs)” (2nd ARC 11th Report). There are also 27 MMPs, nine at the Central level, eleven at the State and seven at the integrated project level. Line ministries are responsible for the implementation of MMPs.

#	Central Government Category	State Government Category	Integrated Service Category
1	Income Tax	Land Records	EDI (e-Commerce)
2	Passport VISA & Immigration	Road Transport	e-Bix
3	MCA21	Property Registration	CCSs
4	Insurance	Agriculture	India Portal
5	National Citizen Database & UID Projects	Treasuries	EG Gateway
6	Central Excise	Municipalities	e-Courts
7	Pensions	Gram Panchayats	e-Procurement
8	Banking	Commercial Taxes	
9	e-Office	Police (UTs initially)	
		Employment Exchanges	
		e-District	

Table: 4.1: List of Mission Mode Projects

Source: DIT/COL (2006)

According to Mathur et al. (2009), the overall strategy of the National e-Governance Plan can be summarised as follows:

- “Centralised Initiative, Decentralized Implementation
- Identify services to be targeted
- Prioritise Services (Mission), Identify measurable service goals (Outcomes)
- Identify, Appoint & Empower Mission Leaders
- Create mechanism for effective Private Sector participation
- Put in place a common Infrastructure, Policies, Standards and Framework
- Service Delivery through Common Service Centres
- Think Big, Start Small and Scale Fast
- All services supported by 3 infrastructure pillars to facilitate web-enabled Anytime, Anywhere access
- Connectivity: State Wide Area Networks (SWANs)/NICNET
- National Data Bank /State Data Centres (SDCs)
- Common Service Centres (CSCs) primary mode of delivery” (Mathur et al., 2009)

Given this brief overview of the NeGP, the overall policy and strategic framework for e-governance initiatives in India becomes apparent. Implementations of grand plans in India usually project a different trajectory. In case of NeGP as well, there could be wide gaps between the programme outline and the implementation processes. Nonetheless, the formulation of NeGP demonstrates the earnestness in the governmental attitudes towards e-governance reforms. A similar intensity continues to reflect in the Eleventh Report (2008) of the Second Administrative Reform Commission which concentrates on promoting e-governance in India and lays out a number of recommendations in the field.

4.6 *The Eleventh Report of the Second Administrative Reform Commission, 2008*

The Second Administrative Reform Commission was established in 2005. Since then it has published many reports covering different aspects of public administration system. Its eleventh report titled, ‘*Promoting e-Governance: the Smart Way Forward*’, published in 2008 tries to “analyse the successes and failures of e-Governance initiatives in India and at the global level, in order to extrapolate the best practices, key reform principles and recommendations that can help the government to implement a new paradigm of governance in the country. This new paradigm would focus on the use of information technology to bring public services to the doorsteps of our citizens and businesses on the basis of revolutionary

changes in our institutional structures, procedures and practices that would transform the relationships between our three levels of government, our businesses and our citizens” (2008;i). The Commission in all its previous reports has touched upon e-governance while addressing different aspects of public administration and governance issues. This report takes e-governance as the core issue. This report presents basic conceptual frameworks of e-governance along with its different definitions by different International Organizations and also a definition more suitable in the Indian context. As the report talks about the importance of e-governance in India and the status of e-governance implementation in India, it does so by placing such experiences within the broader framework of international scenario of e-governance. In elaborating different aspects of e-governance, starting from core principles to legal framework, from National e-Governance Plan to knowledge management, this report not only describe the recent state of affairs in India but also lists out a number of recommendations for each of these aspects. Before looking at those recommendations, it is worthwhile look at some of the basic features of e-governance that this report highlights.

The Commission argues that “the purpose of implementing e-Governance is to improve governance processes and outcomes with a view to improving the delivery of public services to citizens” (ibid; i). “While recognizing the potential of ICT in transforming and redefining processes and systems of governance, the Commission had suggested that e-Governance is the logical next step in the use of ICT in systems of governance in order to ensure wider participation and deeper involvement of citizens, institutions, civil society groups and the private sector in the decision making process of governance” (7-8). The main goals of e-governance, according to the Commission are: a) better service delivery to citizens, b) ushering in transparency and accountability, c) empowering people through information, d) improved efficiency within Governments, e) improve interface with business and industry (ibid; iii).

This report also recognises the fact that “the benefits of information technology have not been evenly distributed...that most of the time the benefits of e-Governance are also reaped by the affluent sections of society” (ibid; iii). This calls for a “concerted effort to direct e-Governance reforms towards the common man” (ibid; iii). In doing so, “e-Governance needs to transform all levels of Government but the focus should be on local governments since local governments are the closest to citizens, and constitute for many, the main interface with government...e-Governance based administrative reforms in local governments can have maximum impact on citizens” (ibid; iii).

The report promotes comprehensive e-governance reform which goes beyond the mere introduction of technology as “e-Government is not about ‘e’ but about ‘government’; it is not about computers and websites, but about services to citizens and businesses. e-Government is also not about translating processes; it is about transforming them. e-Government is concerned with the transformation of government, modernisation of government processes and functions and better public service delivery mechanisms through technology so that government can be put on an auto-pilot mode”(ibid; v). A comprehensive e-governance reform includes four important pillars, such as, people, process, technology, resources which are framed as e-governance imperatives in the report:

Process	Simplicity	Efficiency	Citizen-Centricity	Sustainability	Cost-effectiveness
People	Vision	Leadership	Commitment	Competency	Change
Technology	Architecture	Open Standards	Reliability	Scalability	Security
Resources	Holistic	Efficient	Service-Oriented	Sustained	Adequate

Table: 4.2: e-Governance Imperatives

Source: GOI (2008)

Though the report gives much importance the public-private partnership model, it nevertheless reinforces the role of the government both as a leader and a facilitator. It also delineates much needed elements of such a role:

- Developing a national e-strategy, making ICT adoption and network readiness a national priority;
- Undertaking innovative projects that make a difference, to lead by example, adopting best practices;
- Reforming government processes covering areas such as revenues, expenditures, procurement, service delivery, customer grievances etc;
- Tracking, storing and managing information, promoting production of national content online and through electronic media; and documenting “successes” and “failures”;

- According high priority to protection of individual rights, intellectual property, privacy, security, consumer protection etc. and mobilising the civil society; and
- Developing a supportive framework for early adoption of ICT and creating a regulatory framework for ICT-related activities” (ibid; v-vi).

Focussing on the policy initiatives in e-governance the report reasons, “Creating the macro-economic environment for growth and innovation in ICT, including fiscal policies (cost, innovation, investment, and venture capital), legal and regulatory environment (competition, independent regulator, rule of law, intellectual property protection) and channelizing and mobilization of resources for ICT is an important corollary to e-Governance as is implementing an education policy for the right quantum and quality of manpower resources for a network-ready economy-curricula, ICT training facilities and wiring/networking of educational institutions” (ibid; vi). As there are differences within state in e-readiness, the international digital divide is further replicated within the Indian context. Hence, a concerted nation-wide initiative to bring uniformity in e-governance implementation is much required. Therefore, in listing policy priorities, the Commission argues, “Addressing the ‘digital divide’ domestically and internationally, giving signals to markets - articulating a national vision of ICT, according national priority to ICT, undertaking large projects, promoting innovation and risk taking through fiscal concessions and availability of venture capital; creating an investment climate for domestic and foreign investment in ICT sector; championing national interests in international forums etc. are equally important” (ibid; vi).

The Commission also identifies the lag between policy initiatives and accomplishments in India and posits e-governance as a tool to bridge this gap. However, the Commission reinforces that “in any e-Governance initiative, the focus has to be on governance reforms with the technological tools provided by ICT being utilized to bring about fundamental changes in the governmental processes” and in order be effective “e-Governance projects have to be designed for specific contexts and environments” (ibid;176). In this direction, it presents a host of recommendations covering different aspects of e-governance reform which are summarised in the Conclusion of the report. These recommendations include: Building a congenial environment; Identification of e-Governance Projects and Prioritisation; Business Process Re-engineering; Capacity Building and Creating Awareness; Developing Technological Solutions; Implementation; Monitoring and Evaluation; Institutional Framework for Coordination and Sharing of Resources/Information; Public-Private Partnership (PPP); Protecting Critical Information Infrastructure Assets; The Common

Support Infrastructure; Mission Mode Projects; Mission Mode Project on Computerisation of Land Records; Passport and Visa MMP; Unique National Identity Number/Card; Legal Framework for e-Governance; and Knowledge Management.¹²

The 11th Report of the Administrative Reform Commission provides a holistic picture of e-governance in India by connecting earlier experiences of e-governance initiatives to the present status of e-governance reform added with a future policy direction. The report also provides substantial links between the international practices of e-governance and the Indian ground realities. Though greatly laden with recommendation, this document nonetheless presents a glimpse of governmental attitude towards overall e-governance reforms in India. As it becomes evident from most of the policy documents discussed in this chapter, the Government of India takes keen interest in e-governance initiatives and there is a gradual shift in the way government functions. This shift is reflected in the continuous upgradation of the policy and legal framework attuned to e-governance reform. There are many proposed changes in the process to be integrated into the formal policy paradigm. The proposed E-Service Delivery Bill 2011 which has already been presented in the Parliament is one such policy document which has the potential to usher in substantial shifts in the legal framework for e-governance. Even though it is yet to become an Act, once ratified it would have serious implications for institutionalising online public service delivery mechanism.

4.7 *E-Service Delivery Bill, 2011*

The E-Service Delivery Bill is one of the important steps towards establishing a legal framework for the provision of electronic delivery of public services. Doubtlessly, it envisages promoting efficiency, transparency, accountability, reliability and accessibility of public services to a wider mass. The key features of the Bill are:

- It compels the Government to publish a list of public services to be delivered through electronic channels with 180 days after the commencement of the Bill
- It also enforces the grievance redressal mechanism for such services
- It sets a 5 years deadline for all public services to be delivered electronically with an additional buffer period of 3 years
- The Bill sets clear guidelines for simplifying the delivery processes of online services and also provides for required assistance in availing these services

¹²For a detailed understanding of the reports see the 11th Report of ARC 2008.

- The Bill proposes for the establishment of a Central Electronic Service Delivery Commission along with its counterparts in the State Electronic Service Delivery Commissions to overlook the functioning of electronic service delivery specified under this Bill
- The Bill also provides for penalties in case of non-compliance with the Bill and in case of failure to redress a complain

The Bill, once ratified, has the potential to introduce a radical shift in the way government functions and the core principles of citizen-government interface. By providing strict deadlines for online service delivery and providing penalties for non-compliance, the Bill ensures efficiency and better accountability in the system. By making all public service delivery through electronic channels a mandatory provision, the Bill promotes accessibility and efficiency of the delivery mechanism. Finally, the 180 days deadline for publishing all possible services to be delivered through electronic means along with the provision of regular upgradation of such information enhances transparency of the system. Hence, the E-Service Delivery Bill could possibly overhaul the entire public administration in India.

4.8 *From Policy to Practice*

In so far, this chapter has elaborated on the overall policy environment which has been formulated and initiated in harmony with the strategic reform in e-governance. Such policy environment is comprised of legal framework designed for e-governance, developmental initiatives in terms of new projects, schemes and plans, planning documents with clear policy directions, governmental reports and recommendations with e-governance as a core focus and so on. All these policy documents view e-governance as a crucial area of strategic reform in order to achieving good governance in the Indian context.

The basic standards of good governance that e-governance reform is expected to attain are efficiency, transparency, accountability, reliability, equitability, responsiveness, inclusiveness and reduced channels of corruption. According to the governance reform agenda of Indian policy-makers, e-governance, by introducing information communication technology in public service delivery mechanism, ensures promoting these qualities of governance and thereby enhances the level of governance .

Across all the policy documents, the state recognises the importance of non-state actors, such as the market and the civil society in governance as well as e-governance reform agenda. The State plays the role of a facilitator and a leader whereas the non-state actors are treated as developmental partners. There is an emphasis on cooperation among these different partners and also an expectation that the market and the civil society should slowly take on many of the State functions. The increasing influence of the non-state actors become quite apparent across all policy documents, be it in legal provisions or in national schemes for e-governance.

The policy agenda of reform in e-governance also promotes the notion of citizen-centric governance which implies increased participation of the citizen not only in terms of accessibility of public services but also through active participation in decision-making. For example, one of the main aspects of NeGP's vision is to make public services available to all citizens in their locality. Therefore, e-governance reform facilitates the process of democratic decentralisation and makes citizen participation an inherent trait of public service mechanism.

Given a holistic understanding of the overall policy framework in favour of e-governance reform, it is imperative to investigate one of the e-governance initiatives undertaken within such a grandiose national-level planning. Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme, which forms one of the main pillars of National e-Governance Plan, is an appropriate example of the massive initiative taken up by the Government of India spreading across all the States and Union Territories. A case study method has been adopted to investigate to what extent CSCs reflect the policy outlines espoused by the Indian state. Together with the policy analysis (dealt with in this chapter), the case study of CSC serves as the testing ground of the preliminary conjectures that form the basis of this research. The following two chapters unfold the case study and the resulting findings.

5 E-Governance in India II: Case Study of Common Services Centres (CSCs) Scheme

5.1 E-Governance Projects in India: A General State of Affairs

The recent policy drive towards e-governance reform in India has been part of a major developmental goal of taking IT to the masses. This clearly marks a shift from the earlier policy paradigm. Madon (2008) aptly summarises the Indian experience of e-governance in two phases; the first phase spanned from the late 1960s/early 1970s to the late 1990s; the second phase started from the late 1990s and is still in progress. She further drew the characteristic features of both the phases. In her own words,

In the first phase, efforts to develop e-government were concentrated on the use of IT for in-house government applications with a principal focus on Central Government requirements such as defence, research, economic monitoring and planning, and certain data-intensive functions related to elections, conducting of national census and tax administration...the introduction of IT in the public sector did not result in automation of many key departmental activities. In the second phase, the implementation of the (N)ational IT Task Force and state government IT policies symbolized a paradigm shift in e-governance policies towards using IT for a wider range of sectoral applications reaching out to a large number of people in rural as well as urban areas. Moreover, there has been a movement towards a greater input of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector organisations in providing services to public. These projects have been influenced by the increasing focus of international agencies such as DfID, G-8, the UNDP and the World Bank under the banner of 'E-governance for Development (Madon, 2008; 269).

The IT Act 2000 and National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) 2006 were the two important developments in the policy domain of e-governance. They facilitated institutionalising e-governance initiatives and streamlining the investment in the field. National e-Governance Plan introduces a holistic approach towards e-governance reform in India which was hitherto a territory of isolated administrative innovations. Therefore, the NeGP can be easily labelled as a watershed in the Indian e-governance trajectory. However, before NeGP there were many significant e-governance projects operating across different parts of India which held important lessons for subsequent planning and policy formulations. While some of these projects yielded considerable success, some others failed to leave a mark. The 11th ARC Report on E-Governance dedicated one full chapter (Chapter 4) to elaborate on a few such initiatives by classifying them into three main categories, such as, Government to Citizens

(G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Government to Government (G2G). The objective of the chapter was to sieve out some recommendations for future initiatives on the basis of the experiences gained from these projects. Other literature also attempted to capture such initiatives as a compendium of projects. Similarly, NeGP has led to many other initiatives as part of the common infrastructure and Mission Mode Projects (MMPs). It is important to present an overview of these e-governance initiatives here as it helps sketching the background for the case study of the Common Services Centres (CSC) Scheme while providing a sneak peak of the general state of e-governance reform in the country. However, corroborating to the research focus, only G2C initiatives are discussed in some details.

5.1.1 Some Significant E-governance Projects: Pre National e-Governance Plan¹³

- Computerisation of Land Record by Department of Land Resources, Government of India: Starting from 1994-95, the Union Ministry of Rural Development in collaboration with the NIC tried to implement a pilot project on Computerisation of Land Records across 8 States of India in a selected pool of 8 districts. The project was already conceived in 1985. The basic aim of the project was to make the land and revenue administration more citizen-centric, transparent, efficient and reliable by enabling landowners to retrieve authentic computerised copies of ownership, crop and tenancy and updated copies of Record of Rights (RoRs) on demand. Through subsequent scaling up during planning phases, the project base grew extensively. During the Ninth Plan, funds were sanctioned for reaching out to 2787 tehsils/taluks which was further accentuated in the Tenth Plan by adding another 1615 more tehsils/taluks to the list. Different states have performed differently in the process of land record computerisation, some have stopped manual issuance of RoRs, whereas others have completed data entry of RoRs and some others have made these data available on websites. However, despite attempts of scaling up and various recommendations the project is yet to penetrate the entire land and revenue administration of the country even after so many years. So far, only 582 districts, 4423 tehsils/taluks and 1021 sub-divisions have been covered under this project. There are mainly two reasons attributed to the unsatisfactory outcome of the scheme; firstly, the lack of holistic approach to deal with entangled and complex nature of different

¹³Most of the facts presented in this section are retrieved from the 11th ARC Report (2008) and Madon (2009). For further citation details please refer to the Chapter 4: e-Governance Initiatives in India of the Report and Chapter 6: India: Development, Governance and e-Governance in e-Governance for Development: A Focus on Rural India by ShirinMadon, Palgrave MacMillan, UK 2009

administrative components and secondly, the inability to substantiate the existing land records with the dynamic field realities.

- *Bhoomi* Project: Online Delivery of Land Records, the Government of Karnataka: Following the Union Government's efforts of computerising land records, many State Governments undertook land record computerisation projects. Among such State initiatives, Karnataka's *Bhoomi* project turned out to be one of the most successful attempts and hence the Union Ministry of Information and Technology has announced it be national model for country-wide replication. Starting in 2003, *Bhoomi* maintains and delivers 20 million computerised rural land records through 177 public kiosks in Karnataka reaching out to 6.7 million farmers. The land records were extremely crucial for rural citizens as they contained data concerning ownership, tenancy, loans, title, crops grown, irrigation details and so on. Before, the rural land records were maintained by village accountants manually and therefore they held the monopoly to change and manipulate these data. This led to inefficiency, non-transparency and corruption into the system. Under the *Bhoomi* project, this inept system has made way to online delivery of land records and online request for the change of titles in exchange of a user fee. In order to safeguard the data a biometric finger authentication system is introduced and also a back up of data was created through online replication. *Bhoomi* is an ongoing project and is being continuously upgraded for example by introducing digital signatures, linking *Bhoomi* to courts and banks, further decentralising the issuance of RoRs and so on. The strong political will at all levels, effective business process re-engineering, end to end computerisation, well-built back-up mechanism, strong appeal to the rural mass, professional project management team and holistic approach covering planning, implementation and escalation are cited as some crucial factors behind the success and sustainability of this project. One of the main criticisms against the project is that on one hand it exhibits considerable bias towards rich and big landowners requiring bank loans or large sum of credits. On the other hand, by eliminating village middlemen it prevents small farmers and landless labourers to access bank loans and many other developmental schemes sponsored by the State (Madon, 2009).
- *Gyandoot*, Madhya Pradesh: In the year 2000, this telecentres project was initiated in drought-stricken Dhar Distric of Madhya Pradesh to provide information and selected public services to the rural citizens. The project started off by installing computers in twenty village panchayat offices to which 15 more privately owned centres were

added later. These centres were called *Soochanalayas* and were operated by the local rural youth called *Soochaks*. These centres were connected to the Intranet through dial-up lines and were also connected to the District Rural Development Authority in the Dhar Town. The services that were made available through these centres in exchange of a nominal user fee were: daily agricultural commodity price, income, caste and domicile certificates, lists of people below poverty line, public grievance redressal, Hindi e-mail, Hindi Newspapers and so on. This initiative was not sustainable for many reasons such as, poor accessibility of the centres, lack of awareness, user fees for public services, lack of support from local administration, lack of proper infrastructure, inadequate back-end processes and so on (Madon, 2009; 11th ARC Report, 2008). Another major drawback of *Gyandoot* project was that it got entangled into local power structures and social inequalities which defeated the basic motivations of a citizen-friendly e-governance reform (Sreekumar, 2008). Though the project could not raise much sensation, its failure holds significant lessons for future rural telecentres initiatives. It points out the importance of basic infrastructure such as electricity, connectivity, e-readiness of back-end processes, etc. It also brings out the role of local context in shaping the fate of an e-governance initiative. Lastly, engaging citizens by simplifying the IT interface and by raising awareness is also considered to be an important pre-requisite.

- *Lokvani* Project, Uttar Pradesh: This project was initiated in 2004 at Sitapur district of Uttar Pradesh to provide a single window outlet for some essential services to wider rural population. The project was built on a public-private partnership (PPP) model by turning already existing cyber cafes into service kiosks and 109 telecentres were established throughout the district. The system was customised to suit the local contexts by taking into account the use of local language, the factor of illiteracy and lack of computer literacy. The major services available under the project were: land record certificates, information about different government schemes, online government forms, GPA account details for basic education teachers, details of allotted funds to *gram sabhas*, details of food grain allotment to fair price shops, and online registration, disposal and monitoring of public grievances. It is the latter service which gained unprecedented popularity among the users. Hence, despite the infrastructural bottlenecks and other structural issues similar to *Gyandoot* project, *Lokvani* is touted as a success story due to intense response to the grievance redressal component. Another reason for its sustainability is the successful implementation of

the PPP model for which no public subsidies, loans or capital expenditure was required.

- **FRIENDS Project, Kerala:** This project started in June 2000 in the Thiruvananthapuram district in Kerala and was later replicated in other districts in 2001-02. 'FRIENDS' (Fast, Reliable, Instant, and Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services) provides a single window opportunity for citizens to pay taxes and others dues to the State Government through *Janasevana Kendrams* located across district headquarters. This project was launched despite the inadequate back-end computerisation status of many government departments. Instead a hybrid system, combining front-end computerised service delivery with manual back-end processing was adopted. To ease the process, a government order was issued to confer similar status to payment receipts acquired from FRIENDS counters as that of receipts from the concerned departments. Given the success of the project further upgradation plans were conceived.
- **Rural e-Seva, Andhra Pradesh:** This project was initiated by district administration in 2002 in the West Godavari district. Rural IT-enabled kiosks operated by local entrepreneurs and self groups trained by District Rural Development Agency were set up to provide single window service solutions for rural citizens. The services included payment of government bills, issuance of certificates, application for government schemes and loans, accessing district authority bulletin and other public information, public grievance redressal and so on. The project was financially sustainable attributing to support from NIC and to low cost software built by local engineering students. Regardless of the successful pilot phase, the project nonetheless, suffered from lack of administrative institutionalisation and streamlining bureaucratic processes. The public services offered depended highly on the intention and enthusiasm of the incumbent of the District Collector position and thus rendered the entire project volatile.

These e-governance initiatives by no means present an exhaustive account of all major e-governance projects in India. They simply put forward the experiences, processes and methods associated with e-governance projects in India. Although implemented as isolated efforts, all these projects, irrespective of their success rate bring out a few significant policy lessons:

- Need for political ownership at all levels and a national vision with holistic approach towards planning and implementation of e-governance reform;
- The importance of basic infrastructure;
- Seamless coordination between different sections of the government;
- The emphatic role of PPP model
- The need to disaggregate different components of e-governance and phase out implementation
- The significance of local context in both planning and implementation of e-governance projects
- The need to evaluate actual needs of the citizens
- The importance of prioritising process re-engineering and change management over technical issues of e-governance

Based on these realisations, the idea of an integrated programme approach guided by a common vision, strategy and approach was exceedingly endorsed. The idea found more support as it was believed to heavily cut down on the total outlay for e-governance initiatives by creating shared infrastructure, interoperable standards and by averting duplications and overlaps. Consequently, the National e-Governance Plan was formulated by the Government of India with vision to create a seamless view of the government for the citizens. All the initiatives undertaken in the NeGP share its common vision, approach and strategy. Therefore, it becomes imperative to shed some light on the major initiatives undertaken by the NeGP.

5.1.2 E-Governance Initiatives under the National e-Governance Plan: A Brief

Overview

The National e-Governance Plan can be described in terms of a three-tier structure (GOI, 2011, Saraansh). The First tier is represented by the Common Services Centre (CSCs) which is the front end delivery point for providing a range of services to citizens in a transparent manner, at a convenient location and at an affordable cost. Moreover, they create employment/entrepreneurial opportunities for local youth who are running these centres. The second tier of the NeGP is built by the common support infrastructure that links different components of governments with each other and with the citizens. This infrastructure is provided by the State-Wide Area Networks (SWANs) and State Data Centres (SDCs). SWANs provide wide network support from all State/UT headquarters to the Blocks. This

serve as a backbone of network in providing G2G and G2G services under the National e-Governance Plan. The SDCs facilitate IT infrastructure to consolidate applications and data hosted by the State. The third tier is comprised of 27 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) which seek to transform selected high-priority services from manual to electronic mode of delivery. They are called 'Mission Mode' for their definite timeline, clear process re-engineering plans, specific service levels and an assigned project implementation team. MMPs are often portrayed as the future of governance in India. There are 11 Central, 10 State and 8 Integrated MMPs. A brief overview of these MMPs demonstrates the current state of affairs of e-governance initiatives in India. (Fact Sheets in the Annexure)

To illustrate further, 6 out of these 27 MMPs are discussed in some details. Two projects are selected from each of Union, Integrated and State MMP categories. They are selected to demonstrate the wide-ranging scope of these projects and their multi-faceted relevance for different stakeholders. It is important to clarify that the selection of these specific projects in no way intended to suggest any special preferential criteria. The objective is to grasp the nature, extent and processes of e-governance reform under the NeGP.¹⁴

- **Income Tax:** This Union Government MMP provides a set of 18 e-services from the Income Tax Department to the tax payers all over the country. Some of the important e-services under this project include online submission PAN and TAN application, electronic filing of income tax returns, online payment of taxes, status tracking and grievance handling of PAN/TAN application, online tax calculator, downloadable e-forms, downloading challans and many more. The e-filing infrastructure has been fully operation and provides key services to taxpayers. PAN application receipt, digitisation and issue of PAN cards have been outsourced to service providers. Primary Data Centre (PDC) in Delhi, Business Continuity Planning site (BCP) in Mumbai and Disaster Recovery Site (DR site) in Chennai have been established for consolidating database and integrating project roll out. Currently, The All India Income Tax Network (TAXNET) covers all 710 offices distributed in 530 cities across India and more than 13000 users under a single national database (GOI, 2011).
- **UID:** The Unique identification project is an initiative to provide identification for each resident across the country and once achieved it will serve as the basis for efficient delivery of welfare services. It will also help different government

¹⁴The facts and status of the projects are accessed from different documents published by the Government of India.

departments to effectively monitor its various programmes and schemes. This project envisages making UID the single source of identity verification which will produce and issue Unique Identity numbers to all the residents of India and will provide authentication services. Under this project, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) will collect 10 fingerprints, a photo and an iris scan (eye scan) of citizens as part of the biometric data collection exercise. The UIDAI will offer a strong form of online authentication, where agencies can compare demographic and biometric information of the resident with the records stored in the central database. It will support registrars and agencies in adopting the UID authentication process by assisting in defining the required infrastructure and processes. By such process of uniquely identifying citizens, UID project which is also known as *Aadhaar* will help sifting the actual beneficiaries of several public schemes. Hence UID is expected to help in better functioning of developmental schemes such as NREGA, *Sarvashiksha Abhiyan*, *Indira Awaas Yojana* offered by the Union Government and other such schemes offered by the State Governments by minimising the possibility of identity frauds which will further ensure efficient utilisation of funds allocated to these schemes. The long-term outcome of this project is gradual reduction in total expenditure on overall developmental schemes by avoiding duplication and overlap by different departments. By creating a single repository of resident data with identity information need to undertake fresh and frequent population surveys by individual departments can be averted. This will imply a more concerted and cumulative updating of the government databases and thereby a significant reduction in the overall government outlay in generating and maintain databases. For poor and underprivileged residents, UID facilitates entry into the formal banking system and enhances opportunities for availing public as well as private services. The UID also helps migrants to acquire unique identity and hence alleviate the process of mobility. UIDAI expects to issue UID numbers to 600 million (60 Crore) residents by the end of five years of its operations. Currently, the project is in the first phase of its implementation and the budget for the next phase has already been approved.

- *e-Courts*: This Integrated MMP is envisaged to transform the Indian judiciary system with the use of ICTs. It has a clear-cut objective, which is “to re-engineer processes and enhance judicial productivity both qualitatively and quantitatively to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, transparent and accountable” (GOI, 2011). The scope of the project is “to develop, deliver, install and

implement automated decision making and decision support system in courts all over the country” by attaining “digital interconnectivity between all courts from the *taluk* level to the *apex* court” (ibid, 2011). The services to be offered under this project include, firstly, automation of case management processes for example case filing, registration, allocation, court proceedings, disposal, transfer of case etc; secondly, provision of online services such as certified copies of orders and judgements, case status, case diaries and so on; thirdly, information gateways between courts and government agencies such as exchanging information with police, prisons, government departments and distant production/examination of under trial and witness through videoconferencing.; fourthly, monitoring of pendency in the courts by creating National Judicial Data Grid. All these services are expected to equally benefit citizens, litigants, judges and advocates. During the first phase of implementation, the site preparation has been completed at 10,299 courts in 1539 court complexes and 9536 Judges and 36605 court staffs have been given special training (GOI, 2011).

- India Portal: The National Portal of India is an integrated MMP which offers a single window unified interface for almost 6700 government websites in order to make seamless access to government information and services a reality. It coordinates between 35 States/UTs and 63 Central Ministries to develop and compile content on the website. The portal is available in Hindi and English and it serves as a central repository of documents, forms, services, acts, announcements, contract directories, schemes and rules. It has also provided special web interfaces for NGO partnership and RTI complaints and appeals. Besides acting as one-stop source of government-related information, the portal also help in launching and implementing various e-governance initiatives endorsed by the Indian Government, facilitating public participation in the process of governance and in creating policies and standards of publishing information and electronic delivery of government information and services. The National Portal has 70000 registered users and gets about 70 million hits per month from all over the world (GOI, 2011).
- Agriculture: Over the years before NeGP, the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation (DAC) has taken up several IT initiatives such as AGMARKNET, SEEDNET, and DACNET and so on. The States/UTs have also taken up similar initiatives, for example AGRISNET under the broader umbrella of DAC. The Agriculture is a state MMP which strives to integrate all such IT initiatives with the Central Agri Portal (CAP) and the State Agri Portals (SAPs) conceived under the

NeGP. The broader vision of this MMP is “(t)o create an environment conducive for raising the farm productivity and income to global levels through provision of relevant information and services to the stakeholders” (ibid, 2011). The project aims to improve the access of timely and relevant information and services by farmers throughout the crop-cycle, to provide location specific and latest crop management information, to improve government service delivery in agriculture, to better monitor and manage schemes under DAC, to facilitate private sector involvement for the benefit of farmers through integrated service platform. The services to be offered under this project include information on crops, farm machinery, training and Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), forecasted weather, prices, arrival, procurement points, irrigation and marketing infrastructure, soil health, pesticide and fertilisers, drought relief and livestock management and other relevant information, electronic certifications for export and import, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of schemes and programmes. It will also provide online mechanism for stakeholders’ feedback. The project proposes to provide a multi-channel delivery of information, for example through internet, *Krishi Vigyan Kendras*, government offices, *Kisan Call Centres*, Agri-Clinics, CSCs, mobiles phones and others. Implementation in the first phase is rolled out and the second phase is under progress. This project is expected to increase transparency in agricultural services, increase farmers’ participation in information sharing through penetration of information at the grassroots level, enable customisation and personalisation of information suited to the local contexts, facilitate engagement of academic institutions in generating and disseminating information.

- e-District: This State MMP aims to support the administrative unit by enabling electronic delivery of high volume citizen centric government services through back-end computerization. This initiative will ensure optimal exploitation of the three infrastructure pillars of NeGP, namely, State Wide Area Networks (SWAN), State Data Centers (SDC) and Common Service Centres (CSCs) to achieve the ultimate vision of the NeGP, that is, to deliver services to the citizen at his doorsteps. The back-end computerization is expected to reach out up to the sub-district/ *tehsil* level to e-enable the delivery of such high volume services through Common Services Centres (CSCs) in a sustainable and time-bound manner. Traversing through different components of NeGP, this project promises to create significant linkages between the back-end and front-end mechanisms of service delivery. Although, it is still in the pilot phase, this project is proposed to scale up and cover all districts in India. The 5

core services that e-District will initially offer are; issuance of different certificates such as birth, death, marriage, income, domicile etc, social welfare schemes such as pensions, scholarships etc, revenue court services, public distribution system and ration card related services, RTI related services and grievance redressal. In the first phase of implementation, district which has 70% operational CSCs will be selected for pilot roll out. e-District pilot projects have been initiated in 41 districts across 16 States to bring high volume services at the District level, which are currently not covered by any MMP under the NeGP. E-services are launched in 24 districts in 8 States (6 in Uttar Pradesh, 5 each in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, 2 each in Assam, Bihar and West Bengal and 1 each in Jharkhand and Kerala). In Orissa, Mizoram, Haryana, Punjab, Maharashtra, Puducherry, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand the pilot project is being implemented at a high pace.

These MMPs under the NeGP demonstrate the overall of environment of e-governance initiatives. They depict a positive and decisive trend towards diversified yet holistic attempts of radically transforming the public service delivery mechanism and the system of governance. However, this large-scale enthusiasm can easily be marred by the several challenges that are encountered in the processes of implementation of these projects. Some of these challenges are already accounted for in the project planning, some are unprecedented hitches arising from the everyday practices of execution. In order to fully grasp these complex experiences of a project implementation process, a case study of CSCs has been undertaken across a few states of India. The findings of the case study will help in assessing the role of NeGP in transforming governance in India.

5.2 The Case Study of the CSC Scheme

Before proceeding to the details of the case study and the field experiences associated with it is necessary to provide some insights into the CSCs scheme - its scope, strategies and structures- the building blocks of the Scheme and also the real status of its implementation.

5.2.1 What is CSC?

CSC is the primary physical front-end of the service delivery mechanism which forms one of the three pillars of e-governance infrastructure model as envisioned under the National e-governance Plan. The CSC scheme was conceptualised in May 2006 and was approved by the Government of India by September 2006 with a budget allocation of Rs. 1649 Crores which is shared by the Union (Rs.856 Crores) and the State (Rs. 793 Crores) Governments. The

objective of CSCs is to integrate private sector goals with government’s social objectives through a Public Private Partnership model and thereby establish a sustainable business model for achieving vigorous socio-economic change in rural India through the use of ICT (Information Communication Technology). The aim of the CSC Scheme is to establish 100,000 rural kiosks across the country with an equitable distribution - one CSC for every six census villages- thereby reaching out to a network of 600,000 villages across the country.

The CSC Scheme is not just about rolling out IT infrastructure but it also act as an agent of socially inclusive community participation and collective action. CSCs are expected to create rural entrepreneurship and livelihood options by enhancing rural infrastructure and capacities, to strengthen participatory governance by ensuring transparent dissemination of information and efficient service delivery, to improve accountability of public services by eliminating intermediaries and establishing direct links between users and providers. The incremental value-addition of this Scheme is well captured in the figure below:

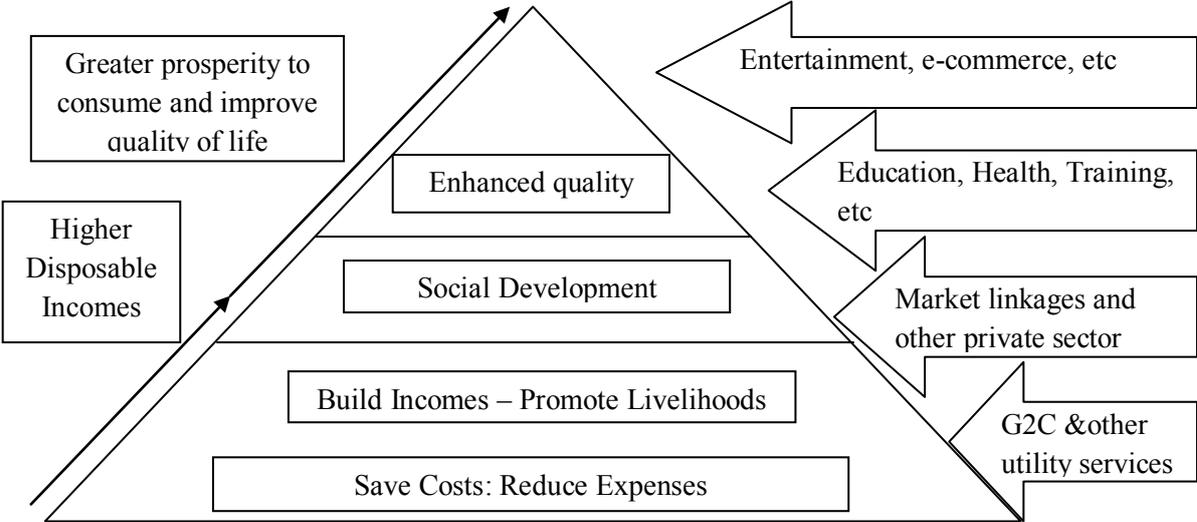


Figure: 5.1: Service Need Matrix of Rural India

Source: GOI (2010)

The CSC has 3-tier bottom-up implementation framework. The first level is comprised of the local Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) who are equivalent to a franchisee and work as the kiosk-operator catering to the rural mass in a cluster of 5-6 villages. They act as a basic contact point for the citizen and both the public and private service providers. At the second

level of implementation lies the private sector partner (franchiser) termed as the Service Centre Agency (SCA). They build and manage the VLE networks and the business. They are positioned to be the prime driver of the entire eco-system of the project. The State Governments appoint the State Designated Agency (SDA) at the third level to facilitate implementation of the scheme within the State, to select the SCAs within the State and to provide policy and regulatory guidelines and other supports to the SCAs and to perform overall monitoring of the project.

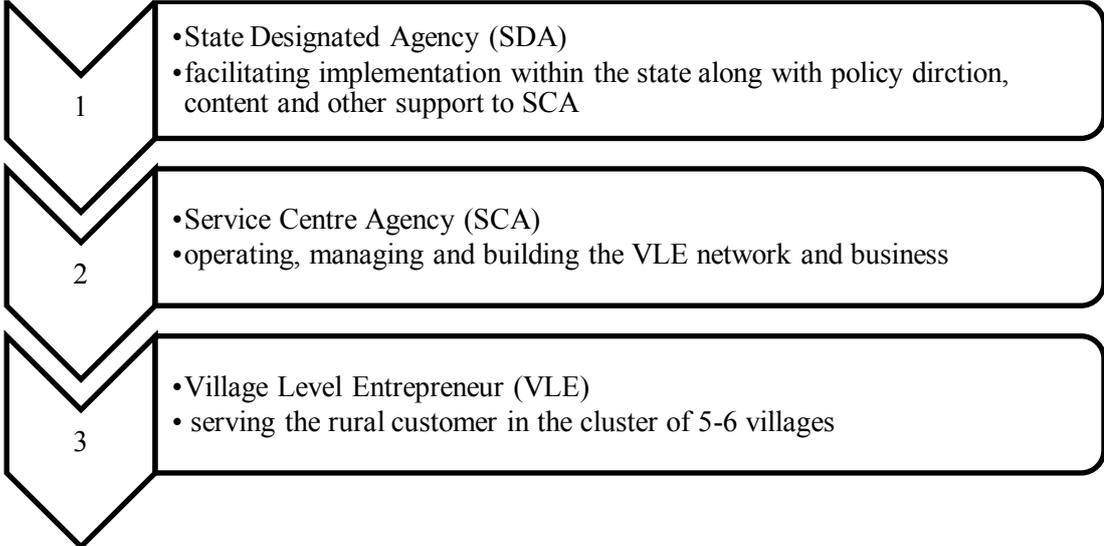


Figure: 5.2: 3-tier Implementing Structure of the CSCs Scheme

Source: Author

The capital expenditure for setting up the CSC and other infrastructure are borne by the SCA. Even though no capital support is provided by the Government, government services (G2C) are expected to cover a part of the cash flow into the CSC. However, to attain sustainability in the face of delayed availability of G2C services, private services (B2C) could provide a viable business solution. Moreover, to overcome problems of financial viability and sustainability, a shared support is provided by the Central and the State Governments in the form of a “Guaranteed Provision of Revenue from Government Services” (GOI).

5.2.2 Status of CSCs Roll Out in India: A Snapshot¹⁵

By September 2010, a total of 84, 830 CSCs had been rolled out across 30 States/UTs. In 21 States, more than 70% of the roll out had been accomplished whereas in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand, the implementation crossed a 50% mark. However, due to lack of adequate numbers of G2C services, termination of some SCA contracts and other challenges some of the CSCs which had been already rolled out became non-operational. (GOI, 2010)

A total of 61, 384 (72%) of CSCs were connected by this time using multiple channels such as public services by VSAT and BSNL, Data Card, WILL or GPRS provided by private companies such as AirTel, Reliance and Tata Indicom. The scheme proposed to extend BSNL connectivity to all CSCs by June 2011. CSC Online Monitoring Tool has been developed to monitor the uptime performance of CSCs. By September 2010, 47728 CSCs were registered under this tool whose performance could be monitored from various locations. (GOI, 2010)

A host of G2C and B2C Services were provided in the CSCs by September 2010. There were many variations in such services from one State to the other.

State	G2C Services in Brief
Andhra Pradesh	Information services of Agriculture & Cooperation Department Utility services (Electricity, BSNL bill payment), Online Form Filing, Form submission, Certificates
Assam	CSCs as stamp vendor for selling of non-judicial Stamp and Stamp paper Certificates, Pension, Grievances, Jamabandi, Utility services (Electricity bill payment)
Bihar	RTI service, Birth Death, Caste, Income and residential certificates , NREGA Services, Public Grievance Redressal System

¹⁵The status updates are extracted from the GOI documents (Background Papers, 2010) that present the status of CSCs as on 30th September 2010. This date is carefully chosen to match with the commencement of fieldtrips in November 2010 onwards. Some other survey data were available from a Mid-Term Assessment of the CSC Initiative presented by IMRB International in February 2010.

Gujarat	Land Records, Utility services (Electricity bill payment), Birth Certificate, Death Certificate, forms
Haryana	Copy of Land Records, Caste, Domicile Certificates, Social Welfare Schemes, Indira Gandhi Vivah Shagun Yojna (IGPVSY), Ration cards
J&K	Financial Inclusion (Banking Correspondents)
Jharkhand	NREGA MIS Data Entry Service, Digitization of national 18th cattle survey data, Jail Sakshatkaar, postal products, stamp vendor
Kerala	Utility services (Electricity, BSNL, water bill payment) Agricultural services
State	G2C Services in Brief
Madhya Pradesh	MP Online Services, Financial Inclusion (Banking Correspondents)
Maharashtra	Land Records, Utility services (Electricity bill payment)
Orissa	Birth and Death certificates, property tax, Utility services (Electricity and BSNL), trade licence
Rajasthan	Utility services (Electricity bill payment), Land Records
Tamil Nadu	Electoral services, Transport, Grievances
Uttar Pradesh	e-District services, Lokvani services , NREGA, Land Records
West Bengal	Registration, Employment Exchange, Awareness campaign, Utility services (Electricity, BSNL payment), Postal services, Agricultural Services

Table: 5.1: Service Status of CSCs

Source: NeGP Background Papers, GOI (2010)

The noteworthy B2C services that were offered by the CSCs included financial services, Mobile recharge, DTH recharge, Railway Ticketing, Matrimonial services, e-Learning etc. State Bank of India (SBI), Punjab National Bank and other commercial banks started using CSCs for delivery of financial products and services including banking and insurance. (GOI, 2010)

In February 2010, M/S IMRB International submitted a Mid-Term Assessment of the CSCs Initiative. The first step of this assessment was a Rapid Assessment Round (RAR) for which 347 villages were visited across 13 States. Out of these 347 villages, CSCs in 226 villages, that is, 65% CSCs were found to be operational. 62% of the CSCs which were found non-operational had not started services yet. One of the major reasons for CSCs not being operational was low footfall generated by the centre. The RAR observed that across all the States villages with operational CSCs had almost double the population than where CSCs were non-operational. In some cases, there were delays on part of the SCAs to provide relevant support to the VLE, while in some cases the delay was caused by the termination of SCA contracts. In some States, incidence of insurgencies kept the traffic to the CSCs low. In States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar issues of power supply and paved roads acted as limiting factors.

The VLEs interviewed during the RAR were found to be well qualified as 98% had cleared SSC/HSC, 54% of them were Graduates and above and 16% were Post Graduates and held even Professional degrees. Only 64% received any training for operating CSCs and most of these VLEs were not satisfied with the quality of training provided by the SCAs. On an average, a VLE had invested about Rs. 75,000 as capital expenditure in setting up the CSC, while only 20% of them were able to get any loan or other financial assistance such as credit schemes. On an average, a VLE was able to earn about Rs. 2700 per month which denotes about 13% increase (from income before opening a CSC) in their monthly household income. Nonetheless it was contributing only approximately 35% to their total monthly household income. Despite a low income generation, 67% of the VLEs interviewed expressed their urge to continue with a hope of better return in the future.

IT infrastructure inside a CSC was found to be satisfactory in the RAR, however, physical space, power back-up and internet speed were found to be critical and required considerable improvement. In terms of services offered, IT/Telecom services were offered by 95% CSCs across States where as 59% of CSCs offered commercial and travel services. Financial and educational services ranked third (44%) and fourth (38%) respectively. Government services were offered by 30% CSCs and agricultural and health services ranked quite low in the list of services. Around 59% of the CSCs during the RAR were able to generate traffic from 5 or more cluster villages and on an average a CSC experienced 13-14 footfalls a day. A large number of CSCs with higher footfall levels were found to be working beyond the requisite 9

hours. Though some promotional activities were adopted by a number of CSCs, they lacked in innovation and depended mostly on village elderly to spread word of mouth.

Based on these above mentioned facts and figures, a qualitative case study of CSCs was taken up from November 2010 to July 2011 across four States of India.

5.3 Why CSC? : Arguing the Validity of the Case Study

The purpose of this case study is to capture the practices of e-governance in India with a pervasive approach and intricate details. Under NeGP, there were many e-governance projects which could have been adopted for a case study. Any of the MMPs involving considerable citizen interface could have served the purpose of this research. Notwithstanding this understanding, however, the CSC scheme was deliberately selected for the case study. The motivation for this selection was influenced by a few cogent factors.

- The CSCs Scheme is the most important front-end physical delivery point for NeGP
- The CSCs not only serve as one of the most pervasive Integrated MMPs but also build the common support infrastructure for e-governance along with the SWANs and the SDCs under the NeGP.
- The CSCs are not only extensive in terms of its geographic spread but also intensive in terms of its penetrative potential down to the villages of India.
- The Scheme becomes a flagship project of the NeGP as it is designed with a bottom-up approach to provide services to citizens within proximity of their households which is the main vision enshrined in the Plan.
- The project is conceived as a potential agent of social change where the spill over effects of ICTs could be manifested in active community participation in the process of governance. Therefore, CSCs serves a perfect case for assessing the wider impact of e-governance reforms beyond mere technological upgradation.
- A PPP Model, combination of rural entrepreneurship with market mechanisms and the physical and technology infrastructure are considered to be the three most important catalysts of change under the CSCs Scheme. Hence, CSCs presents a holistic view of the e-governance initiatives involving all the possible nodes of reform.
- Since CSCs have been actively engaged in absorbing other similar initiatives already operating in some States and in collaborating with other MMPs, it also reflects the states of e-governance in the States in general.

- Finally, this Scheme conjures up all the crucial characteristics of e-governance reforms in India discussed in previous sections and hence presents a complex yet inclusive case of e-governance initiatives in India.

5.4 *The Framework of the Case Study*

Four States, namely, Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, were selected keeping in mind their different roll out status as well as their geographical attributes. For each state a minimum of 2 CSCs were visited while the selection criteria was based on the days of operations. The basic idea was to reach out to CSCs which are considered to be operating quite effectively. However, depending on time and other opportunities, some CSCs were visited without any prior selection or plan. Hence the number of CSCs visited varied from one State to the other. For example, while only 3 CSCs per state were visited in Rajasthan and Gujarat, in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh total 8 and 5 CSCs were visited respectively.

5.4.1 Methods of Sampling

The four states were chosen to as they all represent certain unique aspect as general governance situation and as e-governance status is concerned.

Rajasthan is fairly underdeveloped state which is known for its strong traditional roots. The general perception of governance situation is not very high. As far CSC is concerned, the project was running on a high note even though the rate of roll out was fairly low.

Gujarat is one of the most successful states in India both in terms of economic as well as e-governance reform with relatively high level of growth rate. However, Gujarat is currently governed by a democratically elected Hindu nationalist party Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). The charismatic leadership of Chief Minister Narendra Modi has been able to attract both domestic and foreign private investment. However, this highly developed image of Gujrat is often marred by authoritarian leadership of Modi and also by the poor track record of the state in human development index especially in case of minorities and women. Notwithstanding all these criticism, e-governance reform has significantly improved the public service delivery in the state and Gujarat is one of the few states in India where CSCs roll out status has been 100%.

West Bengal lies on the other spectrum as it was governed by the democratically elected lefts for the longest time in history (34 years). It represents a unique form of democracy where the state machinery is often allegedly controlled by a highly organized party bureaucracy.

However, during the field trip the political environment was quite volatile as the state assembly election was impending in two months and there was general trend of anti-incumbency. This resulted in much political violence along with increasing Maoist influence in some districts of the state. Within months after the fieldwork the Left front lost in the elections and was replaced by a regional party Trinamool Congress (in alliance with Congress). Status of e-governance can be said to have medium success (including CSCs).

Andhra Pradesh is the pioneering state of India as far as e-governance is concerned. The IT sector has been the major growth engine for the state’s economy. However, since the defeat of ex-Chief Minister Chandra Babu Naidu, e-governance reform had taken a back seat as being politically unpopular. This affected the state of e-governance reform in the state and particularly the roll out of CSCs.

Beside these unique features, all the four states represent the wider geographical expanse of India and at the time of the fieldwork they represented different stages of implementation for CSCs. This variation is captured in the figure below (5.3). The sample states were chosen on the basis of the information provided in this figure.

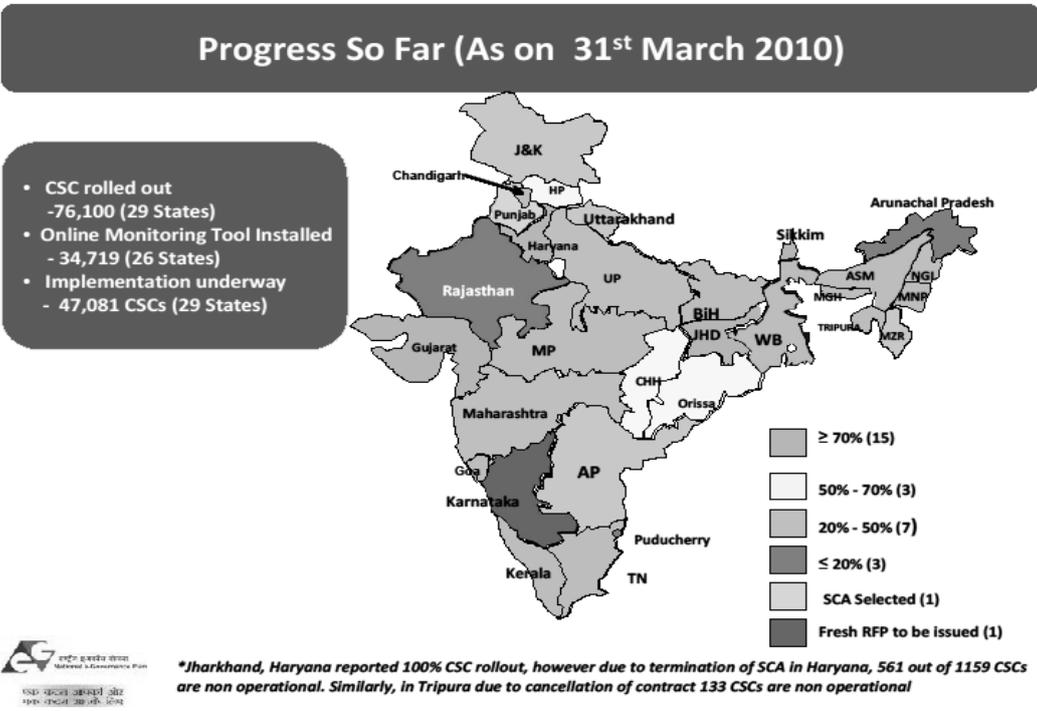


Figure: 5.3: CSCs Roll Out Status (Before Field Work)

Source: GOI (2010)

5.4.2 Methods of Data Collection

The methods of data collection were mainly qualitative interviews along all three levels of implementing structures, i.e. with VLEs, representatives of SCAs and representatives of SDAs. In addition villagers, especially those who visited the centre were also interviewed. Minimum two CSCs have been visited studied in each state. Per Centre 1 Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) was conducted with the villagers, including village leaders. Qualitative Interviews with VLEs, field coordinators of SCA and other officials at both SCA and SDA levels were conducted. While choosing the interview partners the attempt was to keep a balance between implementing partners (project team) and receiving partners (villagers/citizens) and also within the project team a balance between public and private partners was sought. The number of representatives from each of these groups differed from on state to the other. This depended on the availability of such representatives during the field visits. For example, numbers of VLEs interviewed in Rajasthan were more than the actual centres visited. The reason behind this was that the field visit in the state coincided with the VLE workshops held in the state capital which gave access to a large number of representatives associated with the project. In another instant, in West Bengal, the numbers of VLEs interviewed were highest (8) as the project team in Delhi insisted on some interactions with CSCs that were not functioning quite successfully and divided the CSCs in a 4:4 ratio.

A group of experts are being interviewed mainly in Delhi. These experts ranged from university teachers to independent consultant, from researchers to civil society activists, from retired bureaucrats to state ministers, from technocrats in the central ministry to the World Bank professionals specialising in the field of e-governance. The interviews with these experts were not confined to the CSCs Scheme. Rather, the discussion during these interviews revolved around the general issues of e-governance, implications of e-governance on the overall level of governance, the current scenario and future of e-governance in India.

A. Case Study= 107				
Groups of Respondents	Rajasthan	Gujarat	West Bengal	Andhra Pradesh
VLEs	6	3	8	6
SCAs (Private Sector)	3	2	3	4
SDA+ Other Public Sector Representatives	6	4	1	2
Citizens	16	22	11	9
B. Expert Interviews = 11				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Makers: 2 • Technocrats: 3 • Academic Experts:3 • Civil Society Experts: 2 • International Organisation: 1 				
C. Policy Documents& Different Project Documents				
D. Secondary Literature				

Table: 5.2: Sources of Data

Source: Author

All the interviews were conducted face to face. Since most of the interviews were purely qualitative, the course of one interview varied considerably from the other. However, the overall attempt was to focus on certain issues depending on the subject position of the interviewee. Some of the interviews were tape recorded and some were not depending on the situation in which the interview was conducted (e.g. in a crowded place) or according to the comfort of the interviewee (e.g. some of the government officials did not feel comfortable being recorded) or during the focussed group interviews with the villagers (as it involved

multiple number of respondents at the same time) or sometimes purely depending on the technical reasons. In some interviews with VLEs and villagers, additional assistance for translation in local language was required, especially in Andhra Pradesh. In such cases, field coordinators served as the translators and interpreters. All the interviews were loosely structured, that is, though certain core issues were addressed, questions did not follow a strict sequence or pattern. The questions were asked in more open-ended fashion where the interviewee could give their opinion more freely and elaborately on any of the relevant issues.

The qualitative interview data collected were further supported by several policy documents and other primary sources including different project documents and photographs taken during the fieldwork. Besides these qualitative materials some quantitative studies done by independent market research groups and submitted to ministries were also accessible. These quantitative studies on CSCs scheme were conducted mostly as interim assessment or as rapid assessment surveys across the country. Access to these studies was crucial in developing the preliminary conjectures (mentioned in the Introduction) that form the basis of this research endeavour.

Qualitative interviews were selected as the main method of data collection for three specific reasons. Firstly, the entire fieldwork was conducted as an individual endeavour with active support from the project teams. In such circumstances, conducting a survey would imply strong involvement of project members in collecting the survey data. This could have led to serious concerns about the reliability of data collected as such. Secondly, given the time and individual effort it was practically infeasible to collect an extensive amount of data. Therefore, the focus was on the limited yet intensive and in-depth information about the field and the project. Qualitative interviews with all the stakeholders representing different set of interests served as the best available alternative. Thirdly, as already been mentioned, some of the quantitative survey data conducted by independent research group was accessible before commencing the fieldwork. The facts and figures available through these studies provided the necessary points of departure for framing the case study of the CSCs Scheme and sieving out the major issues to be covered by the qualitative interviews.

5.4.3 *Methods of Data Analysis*

The interviews which could be taped were transcribed. For interviews which could not be taped, field notes were deployed for documentation. These transcriptions and field notes were analysed to elicit certain patterns of responses, behaviour and issues across groups of

respondents. Such analyses often expanded beyond mere verbal communication. As most of the interviews were conducted face to face, many audio-visual observations of the space and social interactions were also documented through field notes. For example, most of the VLEs were interviewed within their workspace. Hence, in addition to direct interview their everyday practices in dealing with citizens, private partners (field-coordinators), panchayat officials, their ability to handle the technology, the infrastructural capacity of the kiosks - all these could be documented through close observation. Moreover, photographic evidences also served as an important material of analysis.

The next step was to categorise these patterns in relation to different pre-defined indicators of improved level of governance (Table 1.2, pp.33). As these indicators were well defined in accordance to certain attributes, developing links between the data and the categories of indicators were a rather adept process. For example, speed of delivery of services which denoted predictability of services could be realised by observing the first had service delivery processes within the kiosk and the number of footfall per kiosk which was an attribute of increased participation by citizens could be verified by interviews across different sections of villagers, VLEs and SCAs. Similarly transparency of information could be assessed by availability of information of services as displayed by the individual VLEs and the adaptability could be denoted by the use of local languages in such displays. The photographic materials were crucial evidences in establishing these specific attributes of certain indicators. These are only a few instances to demonstrate the process of analysing the available data. It is important to mention here that these intensive qualitative data with a rather small database could pose some problems of generalisability of the findings. However, by acknowledging this issue this research findings should be taken more as indicative of certain trends in governance practices rather than conclusive of any larger claims on the same.

5.5 Narratives from the Field: An Overview of the Four States

5.5.1 Rajasthan (November,2010)

Overview of the CSCs in the State

In Rajasthan the CSCs scheme was initiated in May 2009. As on August 2009, 500 CSCs were commissioned with a future target of total 6626 CSCs in the State of Rajasthan. In August 2010, 1831 CSCs were rolled out. According to the Report of Department of Information Technology and Communication of the Government of Rajasthan, by end of July 2011, there are 1984 VLEs are providing a pool of G2C and B2C services in all 33 districts of

Rajasthan¹⁶. One unique feature of CSCs in Rajasthan is that the Government of Rajasthan decided that women would be given priority for selection as VLEs in the state. At the time of the visit, there were two SCAs were operating in the region, namely; CMS and Zoom. The SDA was RajComp and in every district there was a District e-governance Society which played an active role in implementing CSCs scheme across the state. One of the major reference points for CSCs implementation team in Rajasthan was the successful implementation of the e-mitra project which was geared towards the urban centres in the state. However, the CSCs Scheme was much more extensive and complex in its scope and hence challenges facing the CSCs were also different and dynamic in nature.

Selected Stories of CSCs:

Jaipur District: The centre in Jaipur district was located in a village market in Khejroli which is about 65 kilometres from the city of Jaipur and took about 2 hours. The location of the CSC was very good as it was a busy market place. Santosh, the VLE and some villagers around were available for interview. However, the person who runs the centre was VLE's husband and he was not available that day. Santosh was 10th passed and her husband has completed the first year of graduation. Santosh seems uncomfortable talking in front of the strangers and she did not have much idea about the operation of the kiosk. According to her there was not much work to be done in there only except during the period of electricity bill deposits which takes place every alternate month. During this period she comes to the kiosk to lend a helping hand to her husband. Santosh's father-in-law had a garment's shop under the same roof. A small portion of that was allotted for the operation of the kiosk. It had enough space to sit 3-4 people comfortably. The kiosk had one desktop computer along with a printer. The online monitoring tool was installed and the centre was considered to be well operational in terms opening hours and transaction.

Most of the villagers in the surrounding area claimed that they pay their electric bills through the kiosk. It actually becomes quite crowded and they have to sometimes stand in the long queue during the bill deposit period. Nonetheless, they consider it to be a better option and want more G2C services such Land and Revenue Records (ROR), Caste Certificates and so on to be available through the kiosk. They have to go to Chomu which is about 22 kilometres away and government offices always required multiple rounds for the work to be done.

¹⁶ Government of Rajasthan: http://doitc.rajasthan.gov.in/e_CSC.asp,
retrived on 1st September 2011

Udaipur District: In Udaipur, the pre-selected CSC could not be visited on account of ‘bad roads’. However, this reason was cited by the accompanying project team and was not verified with any factual evidence. Instead a different centre at Sarada block, which was based at a *Tehsil* level and was situated right opposite to the block administrative building, was visited. This centre was about 62 kilometres from the Udaipur city. The VLE, Mukesh was 24 years old and had a Bachelor’s degree in Information Technology. The CSC kiosk was in the name of his sister, but she got married and moved, and hence he took over. He had a job in the local *panchayat* office and was also working as the block coordinator for the CSC VLEs in Sarada block.

There was quite a rush in the kiosk at the time of the visit. There were two systems along with the printer. The kiosk also had a photocopy machine which attracted a lot of customers, especially given its location opposite the block administrative office. According to the VLE, the earning from the centre was not enough to sustain, only because of his job in the *panchayat* office and his photocopy business that he can somehow manage. He also reiterated that the good location and his personal contacts in the block administrative office and *panchayat* proved to be very helpful in promoting his centre.

Mukesh’s problem was a little different from the previous VLE in Jaipur district. Since this kiosk was situated right opposite the *tehsil* office, villagers would feel reluctant to come to his centres for most of the G2C services, except the electricity bills. So for him unless and until G2C services are channelled only through CSC kiosks, it would be difficult for him to tap the villagers for those services.

Summary of Observations:

The summary of observations is based on the conversations along all the levels of citizens/customers, VLEs, SCAs and SDA. Additionally a VLE workshop in Jaipur was attended for two full days. This workshop was organised by the State Department of Information Technology and Communication and was attended by VLEs across the State, representatives of the SCAs and the SDA.

They are as follows:

- There was high demand for G2C services, but the only consistent G2C service available across the State during the field visit was the electricity bill deposits.

- The footfall varied from one month to the other. For example, in Rajasthan electricity bills were deposited every alternate month. Hence, there was a rush in the centres during the bill deposit dates.
- Most villagers who have used CSCs recognised that it was more convenient than going to crowded government departments and also saved the time and money spent on their trips to administrative offices. However, some of the villagers interviewed within the public service camp in a village school almost 5 km. Away from the nearest CSC were not even aware of its existence. Interestingly most of these villagers were women whose husbands were migrant labourers in some other states.
- Though most of the CSCs franchises (VLE contract) were given to women as a result of the special policy drive of the State Government, most of the VLEs at the ground level were found to be actually male relatives of these women. The CSCs visited reflected the same trend. Even during the workshop only a nominal number of women VLEs were present.
- There was a problem of connectivity across the state which mostly dependent on BSNL. The state government is constantly negotiating with BSNL. However, the bottleneck lies in reluctance among the ground level employees owing mostly to their lack of awareness about CSC.
- There was also a problem of power supply for which it becomes almost imperative for the VLEs to arrange for back-up power sources, such as inverter or generator. This definitely turns out to be an additional financial burden for most of the VLEs.
- There was considerable amount of confusion among VLEs about the financial management system run by the SCAs.
- There was a problem of sustainability for VLEs given the slow arrival of G2C services
- There was a growing frustration among VLEs as some of them had taken a loan to set up the CSC and now running the shop at a loss.
- In a number of cases, there was lack of coordination between departments of government. For example, there were some centres which faced problems in collecting electric because there was already the same service available at the electricity board very close to their kiosks. Despite repeated request, this did not stop and the VLEs were losing out on their customers.
- In terms of the G2C services, VLEs also faced the problem of credibility as they were perceived as merely private franchise lacking the authenticity of public offices.

5.5.2 Gujarat (December 2010)

Overview of the CSCs in the State:

The *eGramVishwagram* project was initiated in 2003 in Gujarat by the State government. Given the success of the project, the Government of India decided to integrate these e-gram centres with the CSC scheme. By February 2010 13695 existing eGram centres were integrated into the CSC scheme and CSC monitoring tool was being installed in all of them. Since *eGram* started before CSC it followed a little different implementing structure than the standard CSC structure. Each *eGram/CSC* is situated in the village *panchayat* office and the VLE is known as Village Computer Entrepreneur (VCE). Then there is Technical Support and Training Service Provider (TSTSP), which in addition to providing technical and training support and assistance to roll out G2C and other e-services, monitor and implement integration of *eGram* with CSC. They have a team of district level and *taluka* level coordinators. The TSTSP team visit each centre every month and present a monthly MIS report. There is a smooth communication chain from the state, to district, to *taluka*, down to the village level and monitoring of the project is very high from bottom to top, mainly through video conferencing.

As of December 2010, all 13,695 Village *Panchayats* had been equipped to provide a host of G2C and B2C services through VSAT Broadband connected PCs (along with Printer, UPS, Web Cam, VoIP Phone). G2C services offered at the time of the visit included Birth Certificate, Death Certificate, Document for Caste Certificate, Income Certificate, Tax Collection Receipts, Land Right Records Services (RoR- 7/12 & 8A), Application Forms of various development Schemes through Gujarat Portal, ITI Application Form, Data Entry work for Govt Departments like Health etc, Electricity Bill Collection. Some rolled out B2C services during this time were- Ticketing of Railways, Airlines, Utility Bill payments (Telephone, Mobile, DTH etc), Market linkages for Agriculture Commodities, DTP work.

Selected Stories of CSCs:

Gandhinagar district: This visit was not planned and more of an attempt to understand the basic features of an eGram centre. This centre was in the gram *panchayat* of Vavol which was only about 5-7 kilometres from the Gandhinagar Secretariat. The name of the VCE was Jawesh Rawat. The Talati and some villagers were present at the kiosk which was situated in the Vavol *panchayat* office. Jawesh, at the moment was giving only two G2C services,

namely, Land Record Certificates (ROR) and electricity bill deposit. The birth and death certificates were also issued. He roughly makes 200 copies of Land Record certificates a month. Only these two G2C services earned him about five thousands rupees a month. In last one year the connectivity had improved considerably due to broadband instead of earlier dial-up connection. Therefore, he would now focus on B2C services, such as e-ticketing for railways, online application forms, telephone bills, insurance premium, DTH etc. He had been running this centre for last centre for 4-5 years. Despite initial few years of hardship due to infrastructural and technological issues, he had been able to sustain quite well, while in last one year things have improved considerably. The strategic location of the centre and the support from the *talati* and *sarpanch* helped him gain the credibility among the villagers.

Talati and villagers, all had the same opinion that this centre eased their life in many ways. First, getting certificates through ICT tools made the system efficient and quick. Moreover, it saved them the trouble of travelling to *taluka* office (which is about 5 kilometres away) where things moved rather slowly. Villagers were looking forward to the B2C services such as railway ticketing, online application forms for educational and employment purposes, telephone bills deposit, some limited banking facilities, insurance. These services together would make their lives self-sufficient within the village. The *talati* believed that there are a lot more services which can be made available through this platform and which might be difficult for the villagers to imagine at present.

Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) Area: This centre was located in the Santej gram *panchayat*, almost equidistance from Ahmadabad and Gandhinagar in the GIDC area. There were many factories on the way to the villages. Being within an industrial belt, the village experienced a huge influx of workers from other parts of India, especially Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

The centre was as usual located inside the gram *panchayat* office and has been run by the VCE, Jivanji Thakur for two and a half year. He finished his Bachelor's degree. Here also the most demanded services were Land Record Certificates (ROR) and electricity bill deposits. Being in the industrial area helped the centre in two ways. Firstly, the influx of labourers increased the number of electricity bills along with the larger commission on the higher electricity bills of the surrounding factories. Secondly, since the most of the villagers were into agriculture, they all had their own land. At wake of industrialisation land prices have gone up manifold leading to frequent land dealings which in turn increased the demand for Land Record Certificates.

Beside these two G2C services, he also did entries for birth and death certificates and other data entry jobs for the *panchayat* office. The villagers who were interviewed said they did not have much idea about how the process worked. Nevertheless they did not feel uncomfortable availing these services as they trusted Jivanji and also the fact that he sits in the *panchayat* office. Jivanji earned up to fifteen thousand rupees per month. He earned most through Land Record certificates. However, in his opinion in a small village where land is not so important, it would be difficult for the VCE to earn that much.

Rajkot District: The centre visited in this district was in gram *panchayat* MotaGundala, which was 70 kilometres from the Rajkot city and 12 kilometres from the Jethpur block town. The name of the VCE was Kalpesh who was pursuing Bachelor's degree. At the moment he was solely dependent on the electricity bill deposits which take place every alternate month. The Land Record with thumb impression used to be available in the centre. But then it started taking too long to arrive from the *taluka* office. Therefore, villagers started going to *taluka* office on their own. There is a high demand for this certificate and they hope after the entire process is digitised (end to end solution), it would ease their current problem and also improve the VCE's conditions who is struggling to sustain. Even though, he was providing some B2C services such as mobile recharge, there was hardly any demand for such services from his centre. He was awaiting and looking forward to the NREGA data entry work. Overall, Kalpesh seemed low on motivation and opened the centre only 4-5 hours a day.

According to the District level coordinator who, was present there during the visit, Klapesh also took the minutes of gram *sabha* meetings that takes place every three months and put them online that can be further accessed at the district and state level. He also projected Government programmes and schemes to the villagers through the facilities available in the centre. The *talati* said the VCE also helped with *panchayat* official work and he insisted that his work pressure could be minimised by various services accessible via this centre. The level of education and awareness appeared to be low in the village and hence the demand from the centre was also low. The main demands of the villagers were ROR and electricity bill deposits.

Summary of Observations:

These observations are based on the conversations along all the levels of citizens/customers, VCEs, Technical Support and Training Service Provider team at district and state level and the representatives of SDA.

They are as follows:

- The state government has played and still playing a very active role despite adopting the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model
- Given the strong role played by the Gujarat government, there is commendable coordination between government departments which in turn made the implementation smooth
- The bureaucracy appeared to be extremely organized and efficient, which also reflected not only in the implementation of the project but also in the neatness of the information available on the project
- There is a strict centralized monitoring mechanism of the entire project
- Availability of the sites were controlled so as to keep up the speed of connectivity
- CSC/eGram centres thrived more on the G2C services
- The general traffic to the centre was consistent, the location was convenient and the VCEs were making profit.
- Even though the project is running since 2003, only by 2009 all connectivity issues were resolved
- Overall, despite initial ups and down, the project is running with much success and consistency in the state.

5.5.3 West Bengal (March 2011)

Overview of the CSCs in the State:

In West Bengal, the CSC scheme was initiated in 2007 by the name of *TathyaMitra* with a target of 6797 centres across the state. According to the West Bengal Panchayat and Rural Development Department sources, as of 31st May 2010, 5211 CSCs had connectivity and were operational. The main SCAs which were selected in the beginning of the project were SREI *Sahaj* e-Village Limited and Reliance Communications Limited. They had a target of 4937 and 1860 centres respectively. However, at the time of the visit only SREI was working as the SCA, since the contract with Reliance was already terminated in response to their poor performance. CSCs in West Bengal were offering only two G2C services in March 2011, i.e. Electricity Bill Deposit and BSNL bill deposit. Most of the other services offered were mainly B2C. The main B2C services offered were: Internet Surfing, Digital Photography, DTP, Computer Education, e-Learning courses, Railway Ticket Reservation, Mobile top ups, Insurance premium deposit, Photo capturing for NREGA job card, etc. The Online

Monitoring tool had been installed in more than half of the operating CSCs in the state by SREI by May 2010.

Selected Stories of CSCs:

District North 24 *Parganas*: This centre was in the North 24 Parganas almost at the outskirts of the city of Kolkata. The gram *panchayat* was called Ganganagar and the name of the VLE was Biswajit Mazumdar. He had been running this centre for 3 months. There was one computer and one printer in the kiosk. The online monitoring tool was installed. He has a parallel business as a private cable TV service provider. He came to know about this franchise through personal contacts of his father in the local electricity board office. The only G2C services he offered was electricity bill deposit. On a daily basis he deposited around 30 bills. There are two problems that he mentioned about this G2C service. Firstly, he was receiving some of the factory electricity bills of huge amount which he refused. The reason being, his commission on the bill amount remained fixed irrespectively and hence he concentrated only on household electricity bill deposit. Secondly, a lot of his customers came after the due date which he is not allowed to submit. Therefore, he would have preferred a commission in a certain percentage of the bill which would increase his profit share for the larger bill amount and also he would have liked to be allowed to submit the bills beyond due dates. He could not deposit BSNL telephone bill as the locality has the same exchange as Kolkata and that was integrated into the system as yet. The B2C services that he provided was mobile top ups, railway reservation (which was temporarily suspended during the time of the visit). But he did not seem to be too keen on B2C services as he has his own business to look after. When asked, he said he was running in loss. Nonetheless, since he has just started he would rather give it some more time to take off and wait for other G2C services to arrive.

District Howrah: This centre belonged to block Uluberia II and gram *panchayat* of Baribaon and the area was known mostly as Rajapur. The centre had a very good location inside the premise of Block Development Office. The VLE, Imran Kazi was 21 years old and a student of B.A. final year. He had been running the centre for last two years. He had two laptops, 2 printers and also a photo printer. He had both an inverter and a generator, but he said the inverter had been more than sufficient. He was connected through VSAT. He would have liked a Broadband connection which is currently beyond his affordability. He came to know about the CSC franchise through a newspaper advertisement and went to the Howrah district office to apply. West Bengal government's department of *Panchayat* and Rural Development

requested the erstwhile Block Development Officer (BDO) to provide Imran with some space inside block office premise. Accordingly, Imran got this office space with a NOC (No Objection Certificate) from the BDO. Since then he has to get the lease agreement every now and then depending on the agreement he has with the BDO.

Like most other VLEs in West Bengal, Imran also offered electricity bill deposit as the only G2C service. On a monthly basis he deposited 500-700 electricity bills. Initially this was not the case. He used to get only about 250 bills per month. However, recently the nearby electricity board office had been removed which increased his business. Though he earned the most from electricity bill deposit, Imran also focussed on some B2C services. He offered about 5 e-learning courses which cost 1000 INR per month each, insurance from NIC and DLF, online form download and fill-up, result publications, print outs, etc. The current BDO gave him some work on NREGA data entry and other office work including print out for his office. However, Imran thought this is only temporary and could change any time if there was another new BDO. According to Imran, he run the centre on a no profit no loss basis. He would like to have more G2C services such as voter card, pan card, driving licence, ration card, birth and death certificates. There was, in his view, high demand for these services and this would definitely make the kiosk profitable.

Summary of Observations:

Although total 8 centres were visited in West Bengal almost all the VLEs narrated similar experiences. An attempt has been made to summarise the issues on the basis of the experience in all centres and conversations with all stakeholders related to CSCs in the state.

- Though the project has been initiated in 2007, there were hardly any G2C services available in the state.
- There appeared to be a problem of e-readiness in most of the government departments which delayed the process of channelizing G2C services through CSCs.
- There was a temporary problem on the *Sahaj* Portal during the field visit which was attributed to system upgradation.
- There was mounting frustration among VLEs regarding G2C services.
- The B2C services and especially e-learning was quite popular among the citizens.
- There was a talk of turning CSCs into local banking agents.

- Beside the Online Monitoring Tool, there was lack of strong monitoring mechanism at the state level.
- There was more room for training for the VLEs

5.5.4 Andhra Pradesh (July 2011)

Overview of the CSCs in the State:

In 2003, Government of Andhra Pradesh started an initiative to convert STD/PCO booths in rural and semi urban area into ICT kiosks which are called Rural Service Delivery Points (RSDPs). Service provider of RSDPs was AP Online which is a joint venture company between Government of Andhra Pradesh and Tata Consultancy Services. Another initiative called Rajiv Internet Village (RIVs) by the AP government started in 2005 in order to establish 11000 ICT kiosks in rural areas excluding the RSDPs. Given this context in the rural Andhra Pradesh, CSCs started in the state in 2008. Besides opening new centres under CSCs, many of RSDPs and RIVs had been converted into CSCs and the process is still on. Right now the SCAs operating in the state are CMS computers Ltd (in 11 districts) and SreevenInfocom (in 3 districts). Sreeven was relatively new as they signed the contract only Contracts with two SCAs, 3i Infotech and TIMES, operating previously have been terminated. Therefore, the centres operating under these SCAs became non-functional and delayed the roll-out plan of the CSC scheme in the state.

The G2C services offered in the state vary from one district to another. For example, Visakhapatnam had more G2C services than any other district. In general, the most widely available G2C service was electricity bill payment on revenue share basis between AP Online and the SCA. The other common G2C services were BSNL bill payment and public service commission *challans*. The district of Visakhapatnam offered revenue services such as, Income certificates, land record certificates, residence proof, birth and death certificates. These revenue services under G2C started online in this district since March 2011. The main B2C services in the state were railway reservation, mobile recharge, post-paid bill payment of mobile connections, DTH services, private insurances, Western Union money transfer services.

Selected Stories of CSCs:

Centre 1, District Visakhapatnam: This centre earlier used to come under the Madhurawada gram *panchayat*, however, since 2008 Madhurawada was relocated under the Greater

Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC). Despite being known as such it is surrounded mainly by villages and so the CSC here caters to these surrounding villages. The centre was run by two VLEs in partnership namely, Lakshmi and Karuna. Both of them were part of the state government run self-help groups for STD booths and were selected through interviews for the RIV centre in 2004. This RIV centre was integrated into the CSC scheme in 2008. Both Lakshmi and Karuna had a B.A. degree. The centre had two desktops and two printers. One was laser printer which also had a scanner. One of the desktop along with a colour printer was given by the AP government and the other system and the laser printer were bought by the VLEs. They had BSNL broadband connection and had the Online Monitoring tool installed. They are open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day except on Sundays. They have power-cuts only during summer months which last 1-2 hours a day. They don't have an inverter or generator, but they have a ups which give them back up for 4 hours. The space for the centre is given to them by the AP government on 800 Rs. monthly rents.

The G2C services they offered were electricity bill deposits, BSNL bill deposits, public service *challans*, revenue services including land record, income certificates, birth and death certificates, residence proof and so on. For revenue services, the citizen will come to CSC and apply online and in return get an acknowledgment receipt with a delivery date. Then the VLEs will collect the certificate from the *Tehsil* after all the required inspection is done. They mentioned two problem regarding G2C services. Firstly, the government has opened a call centre for electricity bills since last year affecting their revenue collection which was even doubled by a collection centre very close to their centre. Secondly, there was no Joint Collector for last 3 weeks (at the time of the visit) where as the new Collector joined only 3 days back. This coincided with many transfer in the local revenue office. As a result, revenue services offered through CSCs were arrested temporarily causing delay in the process and eventually agitation among the customers. Besides these two problems, there was also high demand among the citizens for especially two more G2C services, namely, road tax and driving licence.

Among B2C services they offered railway reservations, mobile recharge, DTH services, LIC insurances. They earned about 10-15 thousand rupees per month. During March to June, due to school and college admission season, their income might go up to 30 thousand rupees a month. However, before the introduction of the revenue services they faced severe problems in terms of survival.

Centre 2, District Vizianagaram: This centre came under the Mandal headquarter as well as *gram panchayat* of Jami. The name of the VLE was K.Srinivasa, who had a B.A. degree. He started the centre under RIV scheme in 2006 which was later converted into CSC in June 2009. He had two desktops along with the printers, one of which was bought by him and the other was given by the state government. He had BSNL Broadband connectivity and he had no complains about it. However, he was facing some problem with the CMS server. Power-cuts were frequent during the summer months. Therefore he had arranged for a inverter which lasts up to 6 hours. The space for the centre was privately acquired by Srinivasa on a monthly rent of 1500 rupees. The online monitoring tool was not installed and he did not seem to have much clue about it.

The only G2C service that this centre offered was electricity bill deposit. However, there was another electricity bill collection centre, only half a kilometres away from the centre. Since this centre catered around 10-15 villages, the VLE still got enough electricity bills to deposit. Among B2C services, this centre offered mobile recharge, DTH recharge, railway reservation and LIC insurance. The LIC was quite popular among the villagers around. The VLE earned about 3000 rupees per month which is not enough for survival. According to him, without availability of some G2C services, especially revenue service, survival of the centre will be a serious concern.

Summary of Observations:

In total 5 centres were visited in Andhra Pradesh, 3 in Visakhapatnam and 2 in Vizianagaram. Given the difference in services, these two districts exhibited quite different stories as far as the CSC implementation was concerned. Nonetheless, some generalisation can still be drawn on the basis of the conversations with SDA and SCA representatives in Hyderabad, district coordinators of SCA, VLEs and also some interactions with the villagers.

- There was discrepancy in the way CSC had been implemented in different districts. For example, Visakhapatnam was much ahead of other districts in terms of providing revenue services and therefore was touted as a success story. This again emphasized the significance of G2C services in the effective implementation of the CSC scheme.
- VLEs where G2C services were consistently available were making profits.
- There was a prominent presence of women VLEs among the centres visited.

- Villagers admitted to the convenience of availing services from the CSCs over government administrative offices.
- There was evidently lack of coordination between different governmental departments which evidently slowing down the implementation process.
- Most of the governmental departments in the Andhra Pradesh are much advanced in terms of e-readiness and also have their services already available online. But there is heavy reluctance on their part to bring these services under the purview of the CSCs.
- Due to some malpractices by previous SCAs, there was a general air of mistrust among government departments about SCAs, which became problematic for the current SCAs in particular and for PPP model in general.
- AP Online, which is a joint venture of the AP government and TCS, was proving to be a rival for the SCAs as they had to share the commission of most of the government services available online.
- The AP government had similar initiatives before such as RSDPs and RIVs. This overlap between state government schemes and the schemes like the CSCs initiated by the centre created much confusion and in some places even conflict zones. Due to strong resistance from RSDPs, some CSCs could not be opened while some are even caught in impending court cases. In some isolated cases, there was also active yet indirect resistance from intermediary brokers operating in public administrative offices.
- Delay in the availability of G2C services were causing frustration and agitation among VLEs. During the field visit, a group of VLEs from Nizamabad district were in fact voicing their frustration and protesting in the SCA headquarter in Hyderabad. .

5.6 A Comparative Account of the CSCs Scheme in the Four States:

On the basis of the field observations and critical scrutiny of project documents a comparative account describing the differential status of the four states in the implementation of the CSCs Scheme is drawn here

.Status of CSC Implementation	Name of the States Visited			
Categories of Evaluation	Rajasthan	Gujarat	West Bengal	Andhra Pradesh
G2C services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric ity Bills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Certificate. • Death Certificate, Document for Caste Certificate. • Income Certificate, Tax Collection Receipts. • Land Right Records Services (RoR- 7/12 & 8A). • Application Forms of various development Schemes through Gujarat Portal. • ITI Application Form, Data Entry work for Govt Departments like 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity bills Deposits • BSNL bill deposits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric ity bills Deposits

		<p>Health etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electricity Bill Collection. 		
B2C Services	<p>There were no standardised B2C services across centres. The most common were railway reservations., mobile top ups, print outs, photocopies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • e-Ticketing of Railways, Airlines Utility Bill payments (Telephone, Mobile, DTH etc), • Market linkages for Agriculture Commodities • DTP work. 	<p>Utility Bill Payments (Mobile , DTH etc.), e-learning courses, railway reservations, private insurances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railway reservations, Utility bill payments (Post paid mobile, DTH etc.), • Mobile top ups, • Private insurances, Western Union money transfer services
Connectivity	<p>BSNL Broadband (there were many complains of low connectivity)</p>	<p>VSAT Broadband (No problem of connectivity, however, controls on availability of websites)</p>	<p>Not standardised, some were connected through VSAT, some through Broadband. Ones with broadband did not have much problem of connectivity</p>	<p>BSNL Broadband (connectivity was not a problem)</p>

Infrastructure	The space was usually arranged by the VLE, everyone had at least one PC and a Printer. One of the main problem was electricity as everyone could not afford an inverter or generator	Gujarat had most standardised infrastructure in terms of location in panchayat office, technical equipments, connectivity and other facilities	Space was organised according to the contacts of the VLE, some were in BDO or panchayat office and some were privately acquired, every centre had one PC and a printer, other systems and equipments were arranged by the VLE	Most of the centres were acquired by VLEs privately, each centre had one PC and printer given by the state government and the rest were arranged by themselves
Status of VLEs	VLEs without any other private business of their own was finding it difficult to be sustainable	With G2C services, most of the VLEs were in a comfortable position, some even earning quite well	It seemed to be a mixed experience, without much G2C, some VLEs were fighting for survival. While some others were doing well relying only on B2C services	Except Visakhapatnam, VLEs were fighting for survivals which led to deep frustrations, sometimes invoking strong agitation. Another problem was conflict with other projects run by the

				state.
Role of the State Government (SDA)	State government played an active role through the SDA in motivating the VLEs as well coordinating among different departments	The state government played the most active role in all levels of implementation and operation of the project	The role of the state government seemed to be much in the background	There seemed to be some kind of reluctance within the state government in implementing CSC
Role of the Private Sector (SCA)	Despite some problems, SCAs worked closely with the state agencies in implementations of CSCs	Role of the SCAs were more of a facilitator to the SDA	SCA played a very active role in the project implementation	SCAs were trying to play an active role albeit in not so pronounced way
Status of the PPP Model	Both SDA(public) and SCAs(private) seemed to have equal stake, hence more of a cooperation	State had much stronger role despite the adoption of the PPP model	SCA, the private partner had a more visible presence than the public agency in the PPP model	There was a lack of cooperation between the governmental departments (except the SDA) and the

	between public and private partners			SCAs, which was a hindrance to the PPP model within the CSC project framework
Citizen Awareness and Participation	General Awareness was low. Demand was high for G2C services which attracted most of the traffic to the centres. However, the availability of G2C services were limited	General Awareness and participation were both quite high.	General awareness level was substantial yet the participation did not match the level of awareness.	Both awareness and participation was high in centres where revenue services were available.

Table: 5.3: Comparative Status of the CSCs in the Four Sample States

Source: Author

This table summarises different status of the CSCs implementation in the four sample states. The categories of evaluation in this table are selected carefully according to their relevance to the overall level of governance. An attempt has been made to combine purely technical criteria such as infrastructure, connectivity with that of more qualitative aspects of governance such as participation and awareness level. However, it is important to acknowledge that this comparative table does not present an exhaustive account of different issues involved in the CSCs implementation in these four states. Nonetheless, this comparative account provides some crucial insights into how differential implementation status and strategies can possibly

reflect on the level of governance in these particular states. The detailed analysis of these findings from the field unfolds in the following chapter.

5.7 Conclusion: Limitations of the Case Study

CSC is a pan Indian project with a much wider scope and a great many stakeholders. The scale and depth of such a project render it to be complex in terms of the structure, organization and process. Doing a case study of such a project is, therefore, trifled with many complexities as it requires both extensive and intensive methods of analysis. As this case study was conducted by a single individual, only 4 states within the project could be covered over a 9 months period. However, this lack of a larger frame was somewhat balanced by an attempt to gain in-depth overview of the project. A serious attempt of intensive scrutiny of the CSC was taken up through qualitative interviews with representatives of all the stakeholders that include private sector (SCA), public sector (SDA), consumers/citizens, and intermediaries (VLEs).

Despite sincere efforts, this study nonetheless is impaired with a few limitations.

- The scope of the study is limited to only four states where CSC is being implemented
- Even within these four state only two districts per state was covered under this study
- A limited number of CSCs were visited per state as a representative sample of all the centres
- The time line of the study is rather wide which might lead to discrepancies in findings as different states were at different levels of implementation
- The focus was more on the qualitative aspects of the project, such as awareness among villagers about the services, rather than on the quantitative aspect, such as the number of transactions
- Number of representatives of stakeholders differed from one state to another which might have led to disparities in the findings

All these limitations were already accounted for while planning this case study and therefore also been addressed carefully while analysing the findings. For example, while choosing the four states, it has been tried to make them as representative as possible in terms of their geographical span (North-South and East-West span of the country), and also in terms of the

roll out status of CSC. All the states represented in the study covered almost all broad geographical areas of the nation and each of them had a different roll out status ranging from very high to very low.

The limited number of CSCs per state was balanced by the insights gathered from SDA and SCA representatives about the general status of CSC implementation in the state. Therefore, the specific narrative of each CSC visited was further supplemented by a general overview of the state-level realities. On the basis of these complementary set of views, a comparative understanding of the states could be established.

The qualitative nature of the interview helped understanding the complexities of the situation in different states. For example, every state adopted a PPP model. However, the exact nature of such a partnership model is difficult to be evaluated through mere quantitative analysis.

This case study has been put forward by an individual effort and hence is purely based on the researcher's observation and interpretation albeit backed by much secondary research on the subject. Given the awareness of its limitations, this study has been careful to present its findings and formulate its analysis. There might still be some significant aspects of CSC project, which have been overlooked at the expense of others. Therefore, by no means this case study claims to be an exhaustive study of the CSC Scheme. The sole aim of this case study is to assess the overall impact of the scheme on service delivery mechanism and thereby on the level of governance.

6 A Comprehensive Analysis of Policies & Practices: Assessing the Impact of E-Governance Reform on Governance in India

6.1 E-Governance to Governance: A Relational Matrix

In order to assess the impact of e-governance reform on the level of governance, it is important to establish the clear relationship between the two. The four basic theoretically informed conjectures serve to build this link between e-governance reform which is the independent variable and the level of governance which is the dependent variable. Each of the four conjectures is formulated to indicate certain improvement in the level of governance. The list of indicators facilitates the process of evaluating the quality of governance. The table below presents the relational matrix which connects the four conjectures to the respective indicators and ultimately to the level of governance.

Conjectures	Indicators	Relation to the level of governance
C 1: E-governance reforms that make public service more easily and regularly accessible for citizens will improve the level of governance.	participation of citizens, predictability and transparency	increasing participation → effectiveness of policy reform → higher level of governance
C2: Improved coordination among all the stakeholders of e-governance reform will improve the level of governance.	transparency, accountability	transparency of rules and procedures and clear → accountability structures smooth coordination among stakeholders → higher governance
C3: E-governance initiatives that take social and cultural factors embedded in the specific context into consideration improve the level of governance.	adaptability and participation	higher participation → effectiveness of policy reform → higher level of governance

C 4: E-governance reforms that improve the delivery mechanism of public service will improve the level of governance.	predictability and accountability	higher predictability and accountability → increasing efficiency (legitimacy) of the public institutions → higher governance
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Table 6.1: Frame of evaluating governance in terms of e-governance reform

Source: Author

6.2. Analysing E-governance Reform in India: Evaluating the impact on governance

Along with the above table (6.1), the analytical framework mentioned in the Introduction (Table: 1.2) are important reference points to understand the way the evaluation process is conceived in this study. The data on e-governance policies and practices are analysed according to these analytical structures. As the data collected is of qualitative nature, inferences drawn from them do not claim any statistical precision about the impact of e-governance reform on the level of governance. However, some quantitative patterns are drawn from the qualitative data. In order to follow a systematic pattern of analysis, each conjecture is evaluated in their respective order in accordance to their indicators whereas each indicator is defined in terms of a set of attributes (Table: 1.2).

6.2.1 C1: E-governance Reforms that make public service more easily and regularly accessible for citizens will improve the level of governance

In order to evaluate this conjecture three indicators of governance are deployed, which are: increased participation by citizen in the e-governance reform initiatives, predictability of the services offered through the e-governance initiatives and transparency in the system of public service delivery initiated through e-governance reform. A few patterns can be projected from the case study of the CSCs Scheme.

Participation:

- Across all the CSCs visited in all four states, a direct correlation was found between the provision of public services offered and the overall footfall in the kiosk.

- Gujarat and the Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, where the number of public services (G2C) offered were higher in comparison to other locations, experienced a higher traffic into the CSCs. For example, in Visakhapatnam where a number revenue services were offered through CSCs, all 3 Centres visited experienced on an average 100 footfall per day.
- Across all the states, public services (G2C) were in higher demand than other private (B2C) services among the citizens who visited the centres. In Gujarat most of the VLEs earned 80% of their income from G2C services. One of the VLEs in Gujarat even said that he does need any more services as long as he can provide already available services more efficiently. Similarly in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh, the traffic to CSC increased substantially after the introduction of revenue services. One of the VLEs in Visakhapatnam district, in Andhra Pradesh commented,

I started the centre as a RIV (An AP Government Initiative) in 2004. In those days the electricity department were collecting the payment on their own despite the availability of the kiosks. I personally visited the relevant offices and fought for its withdrawal. I had to struggle a lot in the initial days...Now since the revenue services have been introduced; there has been a steep increase in the number of customers. Most importantly, people do not have to go to Mandala (local administrative unit) revenue offices and deal with the brokers anymore.

- Almost all the citizen respondents (91.3% of 58 respondents) who had visited the CSCs for availing public services said they preferred coming to the CSCs over other local administrative offices. Some cited long queues and over crowdedness as the reason for their preference whereas some other cited petty corruption and ambiguities of government offices as the probable reason for the same. For example a respondent in Jaipur district of Rajasthan reasoned:

I submit my electricity bill through the kiosk. It is much easier as I do not have to travel much to do this and waste half of my day. Though there are sometimes long queues in front of the kiosk during bill deposit period, it is still quicker. I wish the RORs for Land Records and Caste Certificates were also available here. Now, we have to travel all the way to Chomu which is about 20 km. away for all these services. You can see the state of local transport here. It is not so easy to travel such distances. On top of that, our work is never done in one trip. We have to make several round of trips to the administrative offices, bribe

inconsequential people such as gateman, peon etc. and face unnecessary harassment for getting simple things done.

- In the CSCs where hardly any public services were available, VLEs faced a serious problem of sustainability despite providing quite a few other services (B2C). Though B2C services were availed by the citizens, they could attract as many villagers. There were mainly two reasons for this; firstly, the demand for a wide range of B2C services was limited in village areas and secondly, many of the B2C services offered through the CSCs were already easily available in other places. For example, mobile recharge facilities were already easily available even before the arrival of CSCs.

As has already been found in earlier assessment studies on the CSCs (IMRB, 2010), there was a lack of innovativeness in promotional activities of the CSCs and the majority of promotion relied on word of mouth. Despite these shortcomings, there were two factors which worked in the popularity of the CSCs; firstly the location (within village panchayat office or in a busy market area) and secondly the availability of public services. One of the field executives from the SCAs in West Bengal had an opinion that

There should be as many G2C services as possible in the CSCs. Government services might not be very profitable (for the VLEs or the SCAs) but they help increasing the popularity and credibility of the CSCs. Public response (for G2C services) is very high”.

Predictability:

- The electric bill deposit, which was a public service available in the CSCs across all the sample states, demonstrated that citizens needed less time in the CSCs than in regular electricity offices. As it further decentralised the process, the pressure on public offices was also reduced. For example, according to Gujarat Government sources, the number of electricity bill collection centres have taken a quantum leap from 7 in 2005 to 430 in 2008 (e-Gram Pamphlet, 2010).
- In Gujarat and in parts of Andhra Pradesh where more public services were available through the CSCs, the G2C services were provided in a time-bound fashion. For example, in Visakhapatnam district the citizens while applying for a revenue service get an acknowledgement receipt with date and time of application and also a specified delivery date. The VLE goes to the *Tehsil* office and collect the documents after the all the back-end verification process is over. One of the VLEs in Gujarat explained that it

takes now 2-3 days after application to get a copy of ROR (Land Record Certificates) and after the entire the process is digitised (which was in progress), then one can get the copy immediately.

- The online availability of public services also standardised the service delivery. For example, the CSCs followed almost the same delivery design across all the states with minor variations. An Online Monitoring Tool has been installed across most of the CSCs (including the ones visited) in order to monitor its operation hours and transactions records. In addition to this standardised tool, different States have taken additional measures for monitoring the project. For example, in Gujarat “Village level gram sabha meetings can now be monitored online from the control room in Gandhinagar. An online standardised reporting mechanism has been developed which provides information on aspects such as the number of villagers and official present, and the issue raised and resolved at these meetings” (eGram Brochure, Government of Gujarat, 2010). These claims of the brochure were confirmed by the villagers and the VLEs and also the control room in Gandhinagar mentioned in the Brochure was visited. There are also other guidelines which are followed in standardising service delivery. For example, a prototype of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between the RajCOMP (SDA in Rajasthan), the District e-Governance Society (Society formed under the chairmanship of district collectors in Rajasthan for implementing e-governance projects) and a SCA demonstrate the standards formulated for service delivery. Along with other provisions, this MOU also fixes the standard service rates and revenue shares between the private and public partners. As the MOU clarifies, Rs. 5 per transaction (inclusive of taxes) to be recovered from citizens for Information services whereas 10% of the transaction charges to be paid to SCA/VLE will be retained by the respective e-Governance Society. Similarly for utility bill and other government dues Rs. 3.95 per transaction (inclusive of taxes) is to be reimbursed by the concerned department and 10% of the transaction charges to be paid to SCA/VLE will be retained by the respective e-Governance Society.
- As already mentioned, the availability of public services through CSCs cut down on the uncertainties of the citizens. For example, the unending trips to administrative offices, unpleasant encounters with officials, intimidation by illicit brokers could be avoided by switching to the CSCs. By offering public services through a single window solution, CSCs could eliminate too many intermediaries operating in different public offices. 100% villager respondents (58) spoke about these intermediaries and

the resulting hardship in attaining public services. Also the cases of nepotism while providing particular services could be checked by availing services through the CSCs. 70% of all respondents (107) thought that the CSCs play catalytic role in curbing nepotism in public service delivery.

- All the VLEs interviewed suggested that the speed and quality of service delivery has improved and has become more consistent over the time. However, the two major hitches have been the erratic power supply and internet connectivity. Most of the VLEs interviewed had arranged for a power back up within the CSC. All the states visited showed considerable improvement in connectivity through different phases of implementation. For example in Gujarat, the SDA actually monitored the availability of sites in order to resolve the issues of internet speed.

Transparency

- All the CSCs visited had a board outside the centre describing all the services available at the centre in the local languages (Figure 2 & 3).



Figure: 6.1: A Typical CSC Banner in Rajasthan

Source: Author



Figure: 6:2: A Typical CSC Banner in West Bengal

Source: Author

- 53(91.3% of all citizen respondents) citizen respondents, all of whom had availed services from the CSCs said they did not have problem availing information on services in the CSCs. However, almost none of them understood how exactly the online system worked. They relied on the VLEs to get information and services and almost all of them have been satisfied with the information they accessed. In fact, all the VLEs interviewed found to be too eager to disburse as much information as possible for their own interest. For example, one of the VLEs in Gujarat stated that in the beginning he tried to make an announcement with a loudspeaker throughout the village. Later he has been taking help of the panchayat office, the Anganwadi staffs and local school to spread the information about his Centre.
- Channelling information about public services through the CSCs provides an additional source of information for citizens and they did not need to go all the way to

government offices and depend on the discretion of the government staffs anymore. Moreover, the provision for downloading different types of application forms through the CSCs renders it easy for the villagers to access public services.

- Availing public services through the CSCs simplified the process of service delivery for most of the citizen respondents. The public services that have been made available through the CSCs require them to submit an online application with the assistance from the VLE against which they receive an acknowledgment and in some cases with a specific delivery date. In the current phase, the VLE had to go to the local administrative office to collect the documents. But with further upgradation of the system an end-to-end solution was sought. This implies acquiring certificates and copies of required documents online sometimes even instantly. In Gujarat, such a solution was already under progress in case of Land Record Certificates.
- Another aspect of availability of information was evident in the manner in which a wide-ranging pull of documents related to the projects was made easily accessible. These not only included project reports but also service level contracts, the administrative records, bidding documents and so on. This was possible across all the sample states as well as at the central level project office in Delhi, though the quality of services varied from one state to another.
- **Key Finding 1: There is a direct association between the availability of public services and the increasing citizen participation with the CSCs Scheme.**
- **Key Finding 2: E-governance reform initiative as manifested through the implementation process of the CSCs Scheme demonstrates increased predictability of public service delivery to the citizens.**
- **Key Finding 3: E-governance reform initiated through the CSCs renders information about services more easily accessible to citizen, provide alternative channels of getting information about services and provide regular services in more simplified manner.**

6.2.2 *C 2: Improved coordination among all the stakeholders of e-governance reform will improve the level of governance*

Transparency and accountability are the major dynamics on the basis of which better coordination can be achieved amongst public sectors, private partners and citizens.

Transparency

- Use of ICTs renders the financial management of public offices more transparent. For example, in Gujarat a computerised rural accounting management system has been installed for PRIs at all levels since 2007. As the project documents indicates, “This system tracks movement of funds for every transaction and monitors how savings are utilised and when withdrawals are made, thus leading to greater transparency” (e-Gram, 2010). Similar systems were also available in other states. In West Bengal, softwares were installed to publish monthly financial reports of the PRIs in the financial year of 2008-09 which could be easily accessed for monitoring purposes. The system was being upgraded to make these reports available in the public domain and a Gram Panchayat Management System (GPMS) software was being developed simultaneously (Annual Report,P&RDD, Govt. Of WB, 2008-09). In Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh similar initiatives has been undertaken. These IT-enables management tools were also part of the CSCs scheme where all the transactions were automatically recorded online and were readily available for monitoring.
- During the field visits all the project information and documentation such as MOUs, service contracts, status updates, Government Orders and so on were easily available from the websites. The financial transactions were easily traceable and were shared without hesitation. Most of the VLEs could demonstrate the way a transaction was documented while delivering services.
- The terms and conditions of contracts (including clear structures of revenue share) between different stakeholders were also made readily available. (Annexure: Exhibit of Service Contracts)
- Citizens-interfaces were simplified due to use of ICT tools (examples cited under C1)
- 68 out of 107 of respondents (63%) thought that overall transparency would increase due to introduction of ICTs.

Accountability

- The PPP model adopted under the CSCs Scheme was based on clear division of labour. The roles and responsibilities and also the jurisdiction of their influence were clearly set out at the onset. The Service Level Agreements further elaborated the details of the partnership between the SDAs and the SCAs.
- In order to bridge the gap in accountability (that usually emerges with the involvement of private service providers in public service delivery mechanism) the SDAs takes special measures to put pressure on SCAs to perform in accordance with terms and conditions mentioned in the MOUs. Correspondingly, some of the SCA contracts had been terminated in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal in the face of serious complains against them.
- Though VLEs are appointed by the SCAs, the SDAs indirectly oversee VLE activities as well by ensuring legal contracts between the SCAs and the VLEs and by monitoring transactions made by them. Similarly, despite the fact that imparting training to the VLEs falls under the SCAs' responsibility, the SDAs organises workshops and campaigns to sensitise VLEs. In both Rajasthan and Gujarat, the SDAs take keen interest in integrating and handholding of VLEs.
- One of the major problems that the CSCs team encounters is the non-cooperation from lower rungs of the bureaucracy. In Rajasthan, this problem was dealt with much seriousness and several measures were being taken to sensitise lower level staffs of public offices. For example, some of the local bureaucratic representatives who joined the Jaipur workshop organised by the SDA were publicly questioned for their actions and even rebuked for their reluctant attitudes. In Gujarat, the coordination between all levels of bureaucracy was much higher and the flow of information between different stakeholders appeared to be seamless. In West Bengal the relationship between the VLEs and SCAs were strained as they could not channel as many services through CSCs as they promised. The SCAs in turn were helpless as getting public services in the CSCs depended more on the State Government. However, the SDA representative interviewed during the field visit recognised this problem and opined that it is a long-term procedure of business process re-engineering and change management. In Andhra Pradesh where the general state of PPP model was very advanced, the CSCs faced a few issues of coordination. As there were already some big private players in the public service domain, new private players faced steep competition. Moreover,

some of the government departments were reluctant to channel their services through CSCs as they were all independently providing these services online. These created frustration among VLEs and they regularly pleaded and protested to the SDA. The SDA was trying to lobby with departmental heads and resolve the bottlenecks.

- The CSCs Scheme to a great extent has succeeded in eliminating intermediaries in public service delivery mechanism. 91.3% (out of 58) citizen respondent thought that the CSCs will help them to avoid unnecessary intermediaries. 70% (out of 107) responded thought CSCs will eliminate intermediaries and will curb nepotism in public services.
- The CSCs placed VLEs as a substitute of multiple intermediaries in different public offices. As the VLE is selected from the local youth, the credibility of the kiosk is ensured. Having his personal interests linked to the CSCs, the VLE takes additional efforts to attract citizens and serve them better.
- **Key Findings 4: E-governance reforms make interactions between different stakeholders more transparent.**
- **Key Findings 5: More than just technology, business process re-engineering and change management under e-governance reforms make stakeholders accountable to each other.**

6.2.3 C3: E-governance initiatives that take social and cultural factors embedded in the specific context into consideration improve the level of governance

This conjecture can be evaluated through two indicators such as adaptability of the e-governance initiatives to take local needs into consideration and increased participation of the citizens into e-governance initiatives. The shows following trends:

Adaptability

- Using local language has been one of the policy guideline for e-governance in India. For example the Tenth Five Year Plan clearly describes,

“Creation of softwares for establishing an inter-face with the diverse Indian languages used in India poses a real challenge. In the Tenth Plan the endeavour will be to develop suitable software and technologies to enable people to interact and use computers in local languages. Internet accessibility and content creation in local languages will be promoted” (Tenth Five Year Plan, GOI 2002-2007; 188).

- The use of local languages is evident in the interfaces with citizens under the CSCs Scheme. The images projected above in Figure 2 and 3 are testimony to this fact.
- Use of software in local languages was also encountered within the CSCs visited. Availability of information in local languages are prevalent also in other MMPs under the National e-Governance Plan, for example in National Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG).
- Special policy initiatives have been adopted by the State governments to integrate special social groups into the project implementation. For example, the Rajasthan Government's policy focus to give out VLE contracts under the CSCs Scheme to only women showcased an attempt to incorporate gender development goals into the e-governance initiatives. In a state like Rajasthan where women as a group has been considerably marginalised such a policy could act as a social catalyst by providing entrepreneurial opportunities to women. Even though, in reality the women were not much visible within the CSC project in Rajasthan, it nonetheless provided impetus for women to own the franchise and gain a platform for income. In fact, 4 out of 6 VLEs interviewed in Rajasthan were women. Two out of those four VLEs ran the centre by themselves whereas one shared the business with her brother and the other stayed mostly outside the centre and only occasionally assisted her husband.
- The designing of the CSC Scheme as rural telecentres/IT kiosks exhibits innovation on part of the policy makers to suit the Indian context of mass illiteracy and to deal with concomitant digital divide. The VLEs under the CSCs Scheme act as a link between illiterate masses and the public authorities. These VLEs were found to be competent in dealing with this responsibility. The educational qualifications of VLEs were found to be quite satisfactory as described by the Impact Assessment Survey (IMRB, 2010). The same trend was reinforced during the case study as all the VLEs interviewed had completed school and 15 out 22 (68%) had a university degree. There was also special training imparted to them for running the kiosks from the SCAs. However, the quality of these trainings could not be fully assessed during the case study. During the workshop in Jaipur, many VLEs expressed their discomfort and incapability in understanding the system operation. Some VLEs in West Bengal complained about technological problems for which they had to continuously seek assistance from the SCAs. These ratifications by VLEs indicate further need for training of the VLEs to enhance their digital skills.

- To address this need the Department of Information and Technology (DIT), Government of India has approved (with funding) an initiative to certify VLEs of the CSCs Scheme under the DOEACC Society's Course on Computer Concept (CCC). VLEs receive the course certificate by successfully passing the exam and an authorisation from DOEACC Society to impart the same training to citizens. This initiative envisages to facilitate VLEs to further train citizens in their locality and to enhance their own service capabilities and income. It also helps standardising the digital literacy level of VLEs across India which is recognised by government departments.
- Under the same initiative DIT has also approved a pilot on Women's Literacy Scheme by giving special incentives to trained VLEs for imparting skills under the CCC to women in their locality. The initiative started in 2010-2011 in the selected states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. None of the CSCs visited in Rajasthan and West Bengal were found to be involved in the initiative. This initiative though embedded in the larger framework of the CSC Scheme just started rolling out in 2011 and hence would have been too early to reflect any actual patterns of transformation.
- Another instant where other social and developmental schemes has been integrated into the e-governance initiatives was turning CSCs into data entry units for MNREGA and also related tasks of wage disbursement, job card application and MIS updating. In 36.8% of total CSCs (19) visited such embeddedness was evident particularly in Rajasthan, Gujarat and West Bengal.
- In implementing CSCs, different SDAs adopted different strategies. For example, in Gujarat the e-Gram Mission which was running from 2003 with similar objectives was converted as CSCs and hence all the CSCs in Gujarat are located in *gram panchayat* office which helped establishing the credibility of the VLEs among citizens and thereby popularising the CSCs in the State. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, the Rajiv Internet Village Scheme was running since 2004 and these RIVs were being converted later into CSCs. This prevented duplication of service channels and also provided some resort to address resistance from VLEs of earlier projects. In another instance in Gujarat computers were installed in village schools to increase digital literacy among village children and these were also used for spreading awareness about CSCs among village households.

- Beside several attempts made at the state and central policy levels to integrate social needs into e-governance initiatives, there were innovations on the part of the VLEs and SCAs to integrate business goals with local social needs. For example, in Gujarat matrimonial services were offered as a B2C service in one of the CSCs whereas in West Bengal almost 50% of total CSCs visited offered e-Learning courses as a B2C service which was not only in high demand among the local youth but was also one of the major sources of earning for the VLEs. Another major determinant of services was the rural-urban dynamics. CSCs which were closer to towns had different need than remote rural areas. For example, in a CSC in Andhra Pradesh which was surrounded by many residential engineering colleges, the VLE developed a parallel set up of cyber cafes which attracted quite a number of citizens, particularly the local youth. Some VLEs provided assistance in making resumes, in writing applications for public offices, in filling out forms and so on. In this regard, an ex bureaucrat commented, *“What old post-offices meant for rural India, tomorrow the CSCs will take that place in villagers across the country”*.

Participation

- Use of local language in spreading information of services help in reaching out to a wider mass and this reflects mostly in case of e-governance initiatives focussed in rural areas. More citizens in the rural areas became aware of the services available through the CSC.
- Using local youth as VLEs created trust among villagers. Therefore the VLEs’ role as an intermediary between the rural mass and the government becomes more pertinent. With their educational qualifications and additional digital skills VLEs could mend the lack of literacy and digital divide in rural areas and helped villagers in accessing services and in their everyday interaction with the state authorities with a customised approach. Most importantly all these facilities could be provided to the citizens within the close proximity of their villages.
- Introducing gender-specific policy initiatives as manifested through the pilot project of Women’s Literacy Scheme of the DIT at the Union Government level and Rajasthan Government’s programme to promote women VLEs, garner wider participation by women into such schemes particularly in areas where women have substantially lagged behind in developmental trajectories. A successful example of women’s incorporation into the CSC scheme became apparent in

Andhra Pradesh where 3 out of 6 VLEs were women. All the women VLEs interviewed in Andhra Pradesh were running the CSCs quite successfully; they all exhibited remarkable entrepreneurial skills and conducted themselves with much confidence. One such confident VLE was K.Sujatha in Visakhapatnam district who appeared to be a extremely energetic and proactive young lady. In her own words,

After attaining a B.Com degree I enrolled from an M.Com. But I had to quit after one year due to some family problems. Then I saw the announcement in the newspaper and applied to DRDA for the RIV centre. Initially someone else was selected. However, I eventually got the contract as she withdrew. I started the centre as a RIV (An AP Government Initiative) in 2004. In those days the electricity department were collecting the payment on their own despite the availability of the kiosks. I personally visited the relevant offices and fought for its withdrawal. I had to struggle a lot in the initial day...Now since the revenue services have been introduced; there has been a steep increase in the number of customer. On an average there are 300-400 people visiting my centre per day and I can make a net income of about 10-12 thousands rupees a month.

By encouraging women's engagement into e-governance initiatives, the government promotes rural entrepreneurship among women and hence facilitate integrating social sector goals within the private sector interests.

- Incorporating developmental schemes such as MNREGS activities within the CSCs operations helped increasing its credibility amongst villagers and hence their engagement with CSCs.
- Providing additional services, keeping the local demand in mind increased traffic to CSCs as in the case of e-Learning courses in West Bengal CSCs.
- **Key Finding 6: E-governance policy rhetoric and practices of the CSCs Scheme demonstrate sufficient adaptability within the local social contexts.**
- **Key Finding 7: The CSCs Scheme provides different modes for engaging with the citizens.**

6.2.4 C4: E-governance reform that improves the delivery mechanism of public service will improve the level of governance.

Increased predictability at the supply side of the service delivery, that is, within government departments and the increased accountability on the part of the service providers are the two major indicators of an improved public service delivery mechanism.

Predictability

- As different narratives from the case study suggest, the public services which are available through the CSCs showed higher predictability in terms of speed of delivery, compliance with time-bound delivery and standardisation of delivery mechanism. Even though a very few public services were available across all the states, they were delivered in a more or less predictable manner. Right before the launch of a new service, one of the representatives from DOIT&C of the Government of Rajasthan responded,

Using ICT tools needs business process engineering and change management. It is a long term process but we are slowly getting there...We are going to launch IT-enabled end-to-end solutions for bonafied certificates very soon. It will be 100% online, with digital signature, barcode and all other security features. Citizens can apply online and forward all the enclosing documents to the concerned authority. This authorised department can then process the application online and deliver the certificate online...ICT tools also provides us with better monitoring mechanism with which we can regularly monitor SCAs and VLEs and this monitoring is entirely online and hence extremely transparent...while taking the ICT tools to the rural areas, we face resistance from village accountants and gram pradhans and other local representatives. This stems from their ignorance about the technology. But as soon as they realise these technologies can ease their workload, they will be co-opted in the implementation process. For this we need continuous sensitisation campaigns at the local level. And most importantly, we need strong political will at the highest level which I think we have.

- The point raised by the Rajasthan official was also reflected in the experiences of CSCs in Gujarat. For example, in Gujarat *panchyats* was completely co-opted in the process of implementation. Not only had they provided space for the CSCs, but also they worked in close cooperation with the VLEs. This not only worked for the sustainability of the CSCs but also helped *panchayat* offices to update their data and their communication with upper level of administration. For example, in 3 out of 4 sample states, MNREGS data entry was done through the CSCs. In addition, to

mainstream IT in government departments, the State took some measures. As one of the SDA representatives in Gandhinagar informed,

Now every state department has an IT budget for hardware, software and staff training. The Gujarat Informatics Limited (GIL) [which is part of the Department of Science & Technology, Government of Gujarat] works for the capacity building within the State Government and also manages regular training programmes for the staffs. For Class 3 staffs 16hours of training and for Class 1&2 staffs 100 hours of trainings are being provided since last seven years and the process is still on.

- As public services provided under the CSCs increased in number, the public authorities were impelled to become more and more standardised in the delivery mechanism. Resultantly, the speed of delivery also improved. As was evident from citizen's testimony, public services which were offered through the CSCs had a time-bound delivery. It was expected by the VLEs, SCAs and SDAs with technological upgradation and complete automation of the back-end process, end-to-end solutions will be available and that will ensure fast and absolutely time bound delivery. The examples were already available in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat where partial automation of the processes for many public services were.
- This brings us to the question of e-readiness of different state departments. This basically reflected the capacity of the state departments to roll out services to the citizens.¹⁷E-governance initiatives under the NeGP put pressures on state governments to enhance the level of e-readiness.

¹⁷The DIT of the Government of India regular publishes e-readiness assessment report covering all the States/UTs. According to the e-Readiness Assessment Report 2008, Andhra Pradesh was placed among the leaders, Gujarat and West Bengal were labelled as aspiring leaders and Rajasthan managed to reach only the level of average achievers. However, in terms of the e-governance ranking of the same report, West Bengal had a lower ranking in comparison to its e-readiness ranking. On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan had better ranking in e-governance in comparison to their respective ranking in e-readiness. This implies that e-readiness of the departments did not automatically lead to better e-governance implementation.

Accountability

- With the help of ICT tools in application, tracking, monitoring, appeal, grievance redressal become more standardised and fast and create direct interface with the citizens. Most of the MMPs rolled out under the NeGP, including the CSCs has a public grievance redressal mechanism. For example in Lokvani initiative discussed earlier in this chapter pointed out the relevance of such provisions for citizens. The provision of RTIs on the websites of major NeGP initiatives also creates channels of holding the government accountable.
- Integrating private partners in public service delivery can create problems of accountability in the system. However, the public-private partnership model as adopted in the CSCs Scheme addresses this issue. For example, the SDA signs a MOU and a Service Level Agreement with the SCAs and VLEs are further appointed by the SCAs. Therefore, the Government has no direct influence in the selection of VLEs. However, they indirectly try to minimise the possibilities of dispute by dictating the terms and conditions of the agreement with the SCAs. For example, the SDA ensures the enforcement of legal contract between the SCAs and the VLEs; the SDA fixes the service charges including tax and the revenue share structure and integrate them in the service level agreements with the SCAs. Moreover, SDAs overlook the entire project through Online Monitoring Tools and Online Financial Management Systems. Monitoring is also done at the central level with the help of such IT-enabled monitoring tools. The SCAs were compelled to perform not only in terms of business interest but also in terms of precision of their conducts. In West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh some previous SCA contracts were terminated due to complains of illicit conduct and poor management.
- Under the case study of CSCs it was observed that attitudes of the public servants were either changing or they were forced to change due to pressure created by the introduction of ICT tools and change management. For example, there were many representatives from local administrative bodies present during the workshop organised in Jaipur. Besides dealing the problems of VLEs, this workshop also intended to sensitise these public servants. During the course of the workshop, they were asked to provide reasons for their certain actions and in some cases were directly held responsible for delays in project implementation. In another case, in Gujarat there were regular meetings held between different government departments in order to

establish link between state, district and village level administration and to carry out strict monitoring of the project. In some cases the favourable attitudes of local administrative officers acted for the benefit of project.

- As already described in the narratives of VLEs and villagers alike, there were too many inconsequential intermediaries who operated in local administrative offices and who took advantage of the ignorance and the exigencies of the citizens. In all states, elimination of intermediaries in availing public services was cited as a major benefit emerging out of the CSCs Scheme. Respondents associated with the project and experts as well shared the same opinion. VLEs acted as the authorised legal intermediary between the state and the citizens whose conducts were regularly and automatically monitored through different mechanism.
- The appointment of VLEs from among the local youth under the CSCs served two major purposes. Firstly, as most of the VLEs were born and brought up in the villages where they run the kiosks, it created trust among citizens because of their familiarity with the person. Secondly, despite being a private franchise the VLE could easily be traced by the villagers they stayed either in the same village or in the nearby villages. These factors pushed the VLEs to engage in more responsibly in managing the kiosks.
- **Key Findings 8: E-governance reforms ensure higher predictability within government departments for the delivery of public services.**
- **Key Findings 9: E-governance reform creates clearer and stricter structures of accountability across all service providers.**

In an attempt to evaluate the basic conjectures about e-governance reform and the general level of governance, the policies and practices of e-governance have been analysed so far. A case study of the CSCs Scheme added to the matrix of this analysis. The analytical models adopted in dealing with this wide array of data were rooted in the neo-institutional model of governance and social constructivist paradigm. While the former explains why and how certain policies and practices were initiated at a specific time and space, the latter shows how these policies and practices were actually realised in the specific contexts of the sample states. Besides the key findings that emerged out of such analyses, there is an important dimension of e-governance in India that needs further attention. It is the regional variations of the Indian case that adds to the complexity of governance analysis. As Jenkins argues, "...[L]iberalization is increasingly implemented in the form successive micro-reforms in different states, at different times, and under different political circumstances" (Jenkins, 1995;

42) Hence a comparison of the four federal states studied during the course of this research is imminent to further establish how contextual realities play a crucial role in the realisation of the same e-governance initiative.

6.3 A Comparative Regional Narrative: (e) Governance in Context

While in the previous chapter a comprehensive account of the CSC implementation across four sample state was charted out (Table 5.2), this section examines how the contextual realities of each state affect the process of e-governance reform in general. The contextual realities are manifested through myriad political, cultural and social factors. However, in comparing the e-governance reform in these four states a set of four criteria are deployed here. They are namely, policy drive, the status of bureaucracy, political will, and the local socio-political dynamics. They demonstrate how each of these factors played a crucial role while implementing a national project thereby leading to different outcomes in different states. These criteria of analysing context-specific (e) governance are in no way extensive, but they nonetheless quite straightforwardly explicate the importance of the context in harnessing the governance through e-governance.

- **Policy Drive:** Given the federal structure of India, the state governments enjoy relative autonomy in policy-making in number of areas. This led to different kind of policy-orientations in different states. In case of CSCs, the diverse nature IT policy and particularly e-governance orientations of the state governments in all four states influenced the implementation process in a significant manner. For example, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh has made much progress in developing the physical infrastructure and wider IT environment due to consistent track record of favourable IT policy environment in the states, whereas Rajasthan the policy focus on IT infrastructure and e-governance is fairly new. These differences reflect in the way CSCs are rolled out in these states as Rajasthan's infrastructural issues act as deterrent in the level of IT penetration among masses. Conversely, in Andhra Pradesh, despite initial thrust on IT sector during Chandra Babu Naidu's tenure (1995-2004), the IT took a back seat in state policy framework after his electoral debacle. This attitudinal shift was quite evident in the interviews with all the state officials in Andhra Pradesh and the slow pace of implementation of the CSCs in the state was partly attributed to this policy shift.

In another instance where a state policy found to be conducive for the effective outreach of CSCs, Gujarat government's strategy can be cited. The state's initiative to

establish e-gram centres in each panchayat office building proved to be an successful strategy as it ensured more visibility of the project, more accessibility for village populations as well as increased the credibility of the VLEs despite their private franchise status. In addition, the co-existence with panchayat office led to better cooperation between the public and private partners on one hand, and to higher state-monitoring of the project on the other. Even though, Gujarat shows an intense state control over the public-private partnership model, nonetheless such a strategic policy position of the state government was effective in increasing the outreach of the initiative.

- **The Status of Bureaucracy:** A direct impact of the state government's policy orientation reflects on the functioning of the bureaucracy. The status of the bureaucracy is represented by both its capacity to absorb change and its attitude towards change. E-governance reform hinges heavily on both these aspects. Barring Gujarat, in all the other sample states either of this aspect was missing which further impacted the implementation process of the CSCs. For example, in West Bengal, the capacity of the bureaucracy was a major hindrance towards channelling government services through CSCs even with much infrastructural advancements. There was severe lack of coordination between different governmental departments as well as between public and private partners. In Andhra Pradesh, where the e-readiness and capacity of the bureaucracy was a non issue, coordination and cooperation between departments posed considerable challenge. The departmental initiatives were mostly run by a champion-driven vision and innovations which did not trickle down to lower levels of the bureaucracy. The similar trend was evident in Rajasthan as well where the non-cooperation of the lower bureaucracy across departments was one of the main bottlenecks experienced by the CSCs team in the state. One of the reasons behind such non-cooperation was aversion to change. The local bureaucracy in village areas enjoyed considerable authority without much need of an accountability. Introduction of public services through CSCs challenged this sphere of authority not only through digitisation of services but also by demanding greater transparency and accountability in public service delivery mechanism. In Andhra Pradesh as well, the VLEs where CSCs were running successfully complained about such non-cooperation from local bureaucracies in the initial stages. In Gujarat, bureaucracy appeared to be more adept to e-governance reform. For example, the organised and efficient functioning of the bureaucracy was already witnesses even before making the field trip to Gujarat. This

was evident in the way the field-visits (of just an ordinary academic researcher) were planned and coordinated as well as communicated in an efficient and systematic manner. In case of CSCs, where the centres were well integrated into Panchayat operations, the local bureaucracy as well as village panchayats facilitated the process of implementation. Another factor which was made much difference in case of Gujarat was the pressure from higher political authority. This factor brings us to the next criterion of political will.

- **Political Will:** The idea of a political will is closely related to the role of state political elites and interest groups which are again a by-product of the federal structure of the Indian state. This criterion is also closely related to the policy domain as the political elites and interest groups within the state exert enormous influence on the policy orientation of the state governments. In case of e-governance reform also this political will plays a crucial role and it was time and again reiterated during the interviews with the experts as well as state officials. For example, in case of West Bengal, the political leadership of erstwhile Left-front government found itself in the midst of controversies and political opposition (within and outside the party rank and file) in the face of their pro-growth developmental stance. This led to a general environment of suspicion and ambiguity around reform policies and practices of which e-governance was also a victim. Especially, during the field visits in West Bengal in March 2011 with state assembly elections approaching in two months (May 2011), either CSCs, or e-governance in general did not seem to appear on the priority list of the political leadership in the state. A similar narrative was encountered in Andhra Pradesh, where IT is considered a jinxed topic for much of the political leadership particularly after the decline of Chandra Babu Naidu. During his tenure as a Chief Minister massive policy reform was introduced in the state with much hype and publicity. Andhra Pradesh made significant progress in the field of Information Technology and e-governance and the capital Hyderabad was often touted as the Silicon Valley of India. However, Naidu's defeat in 2004 assembly election was attributed to the backlash of his reform strategies that focused more on technology-driven Hyderabad-centred development at the expense of the rural mass. Hence, the political leadership since then maintained the rhetoric of pro-poor social policies. Though e-governance continued to receive state-funding, it did not remain in the priority list of the politicians. Quite on the contrary, e-governance received much attention of the highest leadership in Gujarat and Rajasthan, even though both these

state were not quite at the same level of e-governance development. In Gujarat, political leadership put e-governance reform in their top checklist of the overall development agenda of the state. Consequently, they took several policy measures to incapacitate the bureaucracy and embed e-governance reform to the lowest unit of state administration. The clear mandate from the political leadership and the pro-active demeanour of the Chief Minister Narendra Modi provided the much-needed impetus for the reform and hence accelerated the pace of reform albeit some significant criticism. Hence, Gujarat government's initiative of e-gram was already advancing at a fast pace when the CSCs scheme was conceived at the national level and acknowledging the success of the state initiatives CSCs were incorporated in to the e-gram centres. In Rajasthan the political leadership has now rose up to the significance of e-governance reform in improving public service delivery model. This reflects in the earnest effort of the policy makers of the state and the subsequent push to the bureaucracy in implementing CSCs in the state as well as other measures to improve public service delivery mechanism.

- Local socio-political dynamics: Local social as well as political factors also play a role in the implementation processes as they has the potential to leverage the role of the political elites, the policy framework as well as the bureaucracy. The local networks of power involving administrative personnel, village leaders are key players in any effective reform process. For example, secondary literature on many e-governance projects in India has displayed how these power networks worked against the sustainability of the initiative (Sreekumar, 2008, Panda, 2007). In case of CSCs, local social as well political circumstances act as both an impediment and an incentive in different states. Some of the political factors particular to the states and their role in CSCs implementation process are already mentioned in the discussion on other three criteria. Furthermore, in states like Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, the volatile political situations acted against the roll out of e-governance reform. In Andhra Pradesh, the separatist movement of Telengana affected the general reform agenda in a significant way as it preoccupied a considerable amount of political and administrative attention, thwarting the pace of institutional reform. This coincided with other form of protests within the CSCs project itself. During the time of the visit, the VLEs of Nizamabad district demonstrated in the capital against the slow roll out of public services through CSCs and the reluctant attitude of the state government. Reportedly, similar protests had taken place in earlier occasions as well. Another point of

contestation in Andhra Pradesh CSCs was the existence of similar internet kiosks from previous initiatives of the state government. These kiosk operators not only took legal measures to prevent rolling out of CSCs in their locality, some also took recourse to violent measures. As a result, many CSCs in Andhra Pradesh remained non-operational in spite of being officially opened. In West Bengal, political violence in some of the district was on upswing (as observed during the field trip) accounting to Maoist insurgency, political rivalry between the incumbent allies and the opposition parties. The state assembly elections were impending and the exit of the long-standing Left government was almost imminent and there was a general air of massive political and institutional change riding on the success of the regional party the Trinamool Congress. However, the process of change was fraught with much aggression and violence on both sides. This wider regional political situation led to a sense of instability within the political institutions which was only likely to increase given the future change of the state cabinet. The volatile regional political contexts rendered not only the process of CSCs implementation difficult at bureaucratic level but also in the everyday practices of the centres. In many places Centres could not operate due to such incidence of political violence. Another example of political influence was witnessed in West Bengal, where some VLEs got their contracts through their political connections at the local level. During an interview, one of the field executives mentioned that some of the Panchayat heads and BDOs were known for such favouritism, in some cases there was action against them but most of the time it continued as business as usual. In Rajasthan, regardless of the highest political will, the local contexts at times played out quite differently. For example, despite the state policy women VLEs were hardly visible on the scene and this went quite openly without stirring much irks among the officials and politicians. The gender inequality within the state of Rajasthan was acknowledged in the rhetoric of state policy, however without insistence on enforcement of the same policy. In another instance, the tension between the local representative of private sector players and their public sector counterparts added to the complexities of the implementation process. For example, in Jaipur the field executive of the SCA and the official of the District e-governance office shared a mutual understanding of the local situation and admitted to the shortcomings of both the public and private partners, whereas in Udaipur the situation was quite reverse as the partners were busy blaming each other. The local contexts display even more diversity in the ways local panchayats or block

administrative units extended their hands to the CSCs. In Gujarat, they were mostly supportive, whereas in other states the situation differed on case to case basis even within one district. The entrepreneurial qualities of the individual VLE and their personal relationships to the local elites also added to the diverse CSCs narratives across regions.

These comparative regional narratives do not intend to merely evaluate the performance of the state in implementing e-governance reform. Instead, they demonstrate how each region differed in their experiences of the same reform initiatives. This section attempted to present a few main factors behind such diverse trajectories of e-governance reform with an ultimate aim of bringing in the significance local contexts in the national frame of public policy. These contexts-specific narratives also hint at a broader analytical question: how the agency of the actors affects policy processes and institutional structures? Hence, the policy prescriptions, project implementations processes, and new institutional set ups emerging in the form of internet kiosks - all together pose a larger analytical challenge to explain how structure and agency confront each other and ultimately e-governance reforms bridge the state and society. At this point hybridity both as a political strategy and as an analytical tool can provide a few insights.

6.4 *Hybridising (e) Governance in India: Bridging State and Society*

E-governance involves the use of sophisticated information communication technology in building up a well networked institutional system. Like other developing countries, in India such technologies came as a baggage of modernization with a visible time lag in comparison with its developed counterparts. Even though the attempts to introduce ICT tools in the public sector date back a few decades, the upsurge of e-governance as a major reform area gained prominence since late 1990s. Given the backdrop of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s, there was a strong impetus from the international donor agencies such as World Bank, the UN, DFID and so on to focus on e-governance for a larger agenda of governance reform and developmental goals. In fact, the role of international organisation was also not new in this field as the National Informatics Centre (NIC) was established with funding from the UNDP already in the 1970s. There are two basic features of the larger governance reform agenda which are also extended to the domain of e-governance reform. Firstly, e-governance is geared towards public sector reform through ICT tools; secondly, it strives to combine developmental goals with market mechanisms in promoting ICTs among citizens. So far it has

become quite apparent from the above analyses of the data that e-governance initiatives in India (both in policy orientation and in applications) are following these two parameters.

Now the questions arise, are these reforms initiatives are mere replications of the international best practices? Are these initiatives received as such without any resistance? Do these initiatives change meaning on their way from policy documents to everyday practice? One of the probable answers that this research offers is that despite apparent attempts to live up to the global standards of 'good governance', e-governance reforms in India shows considerable shifts from those very standards. Some of such digressions are products of deliberate strategising by elites; some are results of resistance and still some are unintentional effects of a process of adaptation. In short, they are by-products of a continuous yet non-linear interplay between structure and agency and hybridity as a heuristic device adds much value to the explanatory framework. For this purpose a few examples from the case study conducted under this research endeavour are pulled together to present a holistic picture.

- The very design of the CSCs scheme hints at a hybrid political strategy on the part of the policy makers to combine social and market objectives. The concept of a village youth serving his fellow and neighbouring villagers through an internet kiosk is conceived to deal with illiteracy and digital divide prevalent in the rural India. Moreover, while outsourcing the delivery mechanism to private companies and individuals, the State tries to create employment opportunities for rural youth and develop better infrastructure in the villages. Despite drawing inspiration from international experiences, the overall framework of the scheme was customised to suit the ground realities of India. Interestingly, in the policy rhetoric the scheme was promoted more than just an ICT roll out or e-governance project. It was viewed more as an agent of social change based on community needs. It can well be argued that a policy document does not reflect the reality. Nonetheless, on the other hand such terminology indicates the level of awareness among policymakers about the ground realities and hence their efforts to innovate. These strategies adopted by policy makers help adapt alien institutional models into the local soil. Hence CSCs can be labelled as a hybrid institutional set up created through strategic policy-making. The hybrid policy-making is further extended to practices of CSCs where certain hybrid methods were adopted to set up and run the kiosks. For example, in Andhra Pradesh many beneficiaries of an earlier self-help group initiative by the State Government were incorporated into the CSCs implementation. As a result, a group of enterprising

women made their entry into this e-governance initiative. There are a few more examples of such strategic policy making embedded within the CSCs Scheme.

- In an attempt to address the problem of digital divide among the mass and to raise the digital competence of the VLEs at the same time, the Department of Information and Technology (DIT), Government of India has started an initiative with substantial funding to certify VLEs of the CSCs Scheme under the DOEACC Society's Course on Computer Concept (CCC). VLEs receive the course certificate by successfully passing the exam and an authorisation from DOEACC Society to impart the same training to citizens. This initiative envisages to create a chain of beneficiaries through a single initiative where VLEs can take advantage of their skills to further train citizens in their locality and to enhance their own service capabilities and income. It also helps standardising the digital literacy level of VLEs across India and mainstreaming them with government-recognised computer skills. As an extension of the same initiative DIT has also approved a pilot on Women's Literacy Scheme. Under this scheme the DIT gives special financial incentives to the trained VLEs for imparting the special digital skills (learnt under the CCC programme) to women in their locality. The initiative started as a pilot in 2010-2011 in the selected states of Assam, Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. This initiative though embedded in the larger framework of the CSC Scheme was a later policy innovation which started rolling out only in 2011. In one such initiative education, gender and livelihood issues become enmeshed. This example again draws our attention to hybridity as a political strategy at the hands of the policy makers to combine developmental goals with business incentives and integrate both of them within a so-called ICT project.
- Another such gender oriented strategic intervention was induced by the Rajasthan Government. While implementing the CSCs Scheme in the state the Rajasthan Government made it compulsory for SCAs to give out franchise only to women and termed them as Village Level Women Entrepreneurs (VLWE). Rajasthan is well known for its conservative social structures and backward status of women. This policy is yet another example of combining strategic reform initiatives in social sector with that of e-governance reform. Such hybridising tendencies at the policy level lead to further hybrid practices that reflect both resistance and adaptation to the same policy. In Rajasthan, all registered VLEs are women, yet a VLE workshop in Jaipur is a male dominated fair. They are all male relatives of those registered VLWEs and run

the kiosks on behalf of their sister, daughter, wife, mother and so on. This indicates a strong resistance from the society to adopt a policy dictum of the State. However, at the same time there were a few women who actually took control of the CSCs and ran it quite successfully. Some of them even travelled by themselves to Jaipur from remote areas. One such VLWE was found to be felicitated by the State during a VLE workshop in the state capital. In some other cases the women shared their responsibilities with their male relatives which gave them some exposure at the least. This example clearly shows how certain policies acquires different connotations while being implemented and lead to hybrid practices which neither completely embrace nor completely reject them. This also underlines the political agency of affected actors and the importance of local contexts and culture in shaping structural forces. None of the state representatives interviewed during the case study seemed to be taken aback by the outcomes of this policy. These divergences were somewhat predictable for them. In fact, they believed such policy impetus is absolutely necessary to initiate the process of transformation in a piecemeal way without threatening the underlying social structure.

- Moving from social policy dimension to private sector goals, the PPP model as espoused under the NeGP as well as in the CSCs Scheme sheds more light on the hybridisation of practices and institutions. As the Government of India already acknowledged that given the complex state of development, it is not possible for the Indian State to take a minimalistic role in the matters of governance. Therefore, even though adopting the PPP model at large the State still spearheads the reform initiatives in e-governance. As experienced under the CSCs Scheme, the SDAs informally assert a lot more influence on the project than is visible from project outlines. It can also be argued that in States where the state has more control over the project implementation, the outreach of the project has also been wider. For example, in Gujarat the State plays an extremely instrumental and influential role in the overall management of CSCs and as a result the CSCs are much more embedded into the Panchyati Raj Institutions (PRIs) within the State. The private partners such as BhartiAirtel, in fact operate out of the SDA office in Gandhinagar. The VLEs in Gujarat are also more dependent on G2C services than B2C services. Though the CSCs were operating out of village panchayat offices, there was a strong centralising tendency in Gujarat as far as the implementation of the CSCs Scheme was concerned. Similarly, in Rajasthan in some divisions the District e-Governance Society which is founded under the chairmanship

of the District Collector for implementing e-governance projects act as the SCAs. This again indicates a pervasive role for the state agencies. VLEs in Rajasthan were also more interested to be labelled as government agents as it helped them gaining credibility within the village community. Moreover, the strong presence of the state also ensured the sustained participation of the SCAs and VLEs amidst various difficulties. One SCA representative in West Bengal opined that if government was not involved we could have just chosen 10 successful CSCs and run them in order to make profit. But the goal of this project is not just to make profit but also reaching out to the masses. These everyday practices of the scheme points the supremacy of public institutions in rural areas irrespective of the arrival of private players. Hence the PPP model adopted under the scheme has given birth to hybrid practices as described above to adapt a grand model into the local matrix of bureaucracy and rural administration.

- The agency of the stakeholders is again witnessed in the selection procedures of the VLEs. A large number of the VLEs interviewed during the case study revealed that they already knew either the local SCA field executives or other VLEs in the nearby villages and it is through them they got the VLE contract. When cross-verified with those SCA representatives, these stories were reiterated. According to these field executives, they used their personal network to find VLEs as they were put under tremendous pressure to achieve their VLE quota within a stipulated time period. Hence, they deemed it absolutely appropriate to tap into their contact base as all the VLEs they selected fulfilled the minimum eligibility criteria. Neither the VLEs, nor the SCA field staff view these practices as act of nepotism. Evaluating from a transcultural perspective, these developments can be explained as hybridisation process of project practices as enabled by the agency of the involved actors ensconced in their particular contexts. Rather than viewing them as anomaly, these practices need to be understood in their contribution to sustain the project. For example, in rural India it could be a difficult task to find educated young people who are willing to risk their capital in a field as innovative as e-governance. Therefore, through a process of hybridisation, the SCA field executives have created a well-knit network of VLEs in their locality who can share their experiences and voice their concerns as a group to different authorities.
- A close look at the everyday practices of the kiosk yields some interesting observations. In order to gain their foothold in the community the VLEs were found to

be improvising the services they could offer from the kiosks. In case of B2C services, some VLEs provided online matrimonial services, some provided e-learning courses, some assisted in developing resumes and writing applications, some provided insurance and banking services. In West Bengal, one of the VLEs ran a photocopy unit. The centre was located inside the block administration office premise which experienced constant traffic of people in need of instant photocopies of documents. Moreover he got photocopy piles from the block office as well. As the G2C services available in the State at that time were very few in numbers, this service made his centre sustainable. In another instance, one VLE in Andhra Pradesh ran a parallel unit of cyber cafe as this service attracted customers from the nearby engineering colleges. Instead of perceiving these myriad services as aberration from reform focus of e-governance, hybridity explains them in terms of the agency of the VLEs and the citizens. VLEs business interests intermingled with citizens' need shape the service patterns of the CSCs and render them hybrid practices. Therefore, an ex-bureaucrat aptly described the CSCs as equivalent to the old post-offices in rural India which was much more than just a post-office.

These examples drawn from the case study aid in understanding how the e-governance policy outlines are materialised in everyday practices of e-governance projects where actors from the state and society interact with each other. On the one hand, hybridity as a political strategy is deployed by the state to formulate reform-oriented policies. On the other hand, hybridity manifests the political agency of the actors in a particular society. As an analytical category hybridity explains the processes of adaptation as a continuous yet non-linear dynamics of structure and agency. Thus, hybridisation as a discursive process negotiates the gap between policy and practices and thereby acts as a bridge between the state and the society.

6.5 Revisiting the Analytical Strategy

The analytical strategy adopted in this chapter is based on the framework of analysis (Figure 1.3) laid out in the introduction. The findings are extracted from the detailed introspection of the policies, practices and the case study of the CSCs Scheme. As the sources involve the Union government, regional governments, International organisations, bureaucracy, private players, citizens and experts, the findings are expected to present an all-encompassing view of e-governance in India. However, it is important to mention here that this study was based on inter-subjective interpretations of a rather small sample. Furthermore, the CSCs Scheme which was chosen for the case study is an ongoing project and was at different stages of

implementation in different states. Hence the overall patterns abstracted from this analysis are only indicative and not conclusive of the relationship between e-governance reform and the level of governance as such.

As the analyses demonstrate, the evaluation of each conjecture elicits important insights into the relationship between e-governance reform and the level governance. These insights need to be placed into the broader research questions that this study undertakes to address, that is, if strategic reform help to enhance the level of governance; why some strategic reform succeed while others fail and lastly does the gap between intent and implementation of e-governance denote a legitimacy deficit. These broader research questions are addressed in the following chapter (Conclusion) on the bases of the general observations connecting e-governance to the ultimate goal of analysing governance. This conclusive chapter not only establishes how governance research can facilitate from research on e-governance but also explicate how a context-specific analysis of India' governance contribute to the general theory of governance.

7 Conclusion: (e)-Governance at the Intersection of Politics, Technology and Contexts

7.1 Impact of e-governance on the level of governance in India: Summary of

Observations

The endeavour to study e-governance in India started with a simple aim to measure its impact on the quality of India's governance. Consequently, this research is based on four basic points of departures which serve as the link between e-governance reform and the overall level of governance. These basic assumptions are clearly laid out in the form of four basic conjectures and complex set of categories to evaluate these conjectures at the onset of the study. The previous chapter evaluated each of these theoretically informed conjectures on the basis of concrete data collected through extensive fieldwork and other secondary sources. Now, having analysed the primary and secondary sources on e-governance policies and practices in India, it is imperative to infer a few general patterns of e-governance and its concomitant impact on the level of governance in India. For this purpose, in this section the four basic postulations are revisited on the basis of the general observations drawn from the analysis of policies and practices of e-governance.

One of the key assumptions behind studying e-governance reform is that as a strategic reform it improves the life-conditions of the citizens and thereby improves the level of governance. The findings clearly indicate there has been major shift in the policy paradigm of e-governance. In the drive to take IT to masses the legal framework has been reformed, a national strategy has been adopted with a vision to take services to the doorsteps of the citizens. As it becomes evident through the case study of the CSCs Scheme, there is a high demand among citizens to avail public services without hassle, to acquire information about services without interruption and to voice their concerns and grievances without intimidation. E-governance initiatives such as the CSCs and other MMPs under the National e-Governance Plan strives to provide for these needs of the citizens. Field narratives from the CSCs show how citizens can actually benefit and how their experiences in availing public services can improve through the scheme. It minimises the time to avail services, reduces the trips to government offices, curtails the frequency of bribes and cases of nepotism. Thus, it can be argued that e-governance initiatives create avenues for citizen-centric governance and hence have a positive impact on the level governance.

The second major assumption about e-governance is that as a strategic reform it caters to the overlapping benefits of all political and non-political actors and as a result improves the level of governance. According to the policy network of e-governance (Figure: 3.3) there are five

major stakeholders, namely International Organisations, state or the public sector, market or the private sector, citizens and civil society. The role of the state has been to co-opt all the major players into the broader framework of e-governance reform. The secondary literature on IT policies in India and primary sources on the same uniformly suggest the strong presence of International Organisations such as the World Bank, the UNDP, DFID and so on under the broader agenda of good governance and e-governance for development. All the major policy documents in India are fraught with the idea of e-governance reform to achieve good governance and also with examples of best practices as espoused by the major International Organisations. These organisations actively engage in the policies and processes of e-governance in India. The World Bank representative interviewed as part of the expert group confirmed the support that his organisation provides to the Union as well as the State governments in terms of technological solutions and policy advice. The private sector goals are also integrated into most of the e-governance initiatives taken up by the State. The overarching model on which the NeGP is constructed is the public-private partnership (PPP). Similarly one of the guiding principles of the CSCs Scheme is to integrate developmental role of the State with the market orientation of the private sector players. As a result all the CSCs are run by private companies (SCAs) to provide both G2C and B2C services through individual rural entrepreneurs (VLEs). Hence, through a sole initiative it creates opportunities for livelihood in villages, plug into private resources to build infrastructure in rural areas and brings a single-window front-end service delivery channel to rural mass. In terms of civil society organisations, no particular instance was found during the case study. However, a few such organisations were visited in Delhi. They mostly worked in the field of digital empowerment and e-governance promotion. They provided consultative support to the State on different policy and implementation issues. Furthermore there is a continuous emphasis within the public sector for capacity building and better coordination among different departments and wings of the government. These varied examples from the case study reveal the manner in which the state relentlessly tries to accommodate all the interest groups and devise policy solutions. In particular instance, the CSCs implementation clearly demonstrates how successful policy outcomes and hence better levels of governance could be accomplished by proficiently assimilating conflicting interests.

The ability of macro-policies to accommodate embedded values and norms with a local context is directly proportionate to the level of governance. This broader assumption fits perfectly well into the e-governance policy responses in India. The ability to adapt into

everyday life of citizens is one of the guiding principles of the CSCs Scheme. The very design of the scheme is developed keeping the illiteracy and digital divide in mind. In a country with low literacy rate, CSCs act as mediator between the State and its citizens. VLEs' familiarity with the local context works as an added advantage. The intention of the broader policy framework is reflected in the numerous efforts to deal with illiteracy, digital divide, education, health, financial inclusion and so on. As part of the broader goal of community development, CSCs create livelihood opportunities for village youth; encourage women's participation through various associated initiatives, build concrete village infrastructure. Beside central initiatives, state governments under the federal structure of India adopt several measures to cater to the specific need of its populations. One of the prominent examples of such measures was Rajasthan government's policy to introduce the scheme of village level women entrepreneurs (VLWEs) under the CSCs Scheme. This measure helps to promote women's involvement in the project in an otherwise strictly patriarchal state. There are many such examples which enhance the adaptability of the scheme across diverse contextual realities of India and hence the resilience of the system of governance.

The final major postulation is that capacity of the state machinery to absorb institutional change resulting from strategic reform and to deliver policy results manifests in the improved level of governance. This impels us to look at the supply side of the public service delivery. The policy papers, government practices experienced during the case study and expert interviews suggest that public sector reform is one of the major focus areas of the e-governance initiatives. There are special projects undertaken for this specific purpose under the NeGP. The CSCs Scheme strives to integrate ITC-enablement with business process re-engineering and change management that will change the face of public administration. No doubt, there is strong resistance from the lower rungs of bureaucracy as it threatens to diminish their sphere of influence. There are regular trainings, capacity development and sensitisation programmes to make the public servants more aware of the benefits of the ICT tools for their own work. However, examples from the CSCs scheme shows where there has been simultaneous change in the bureaucratic capacities, the project goals have been more effectively fulfilled. For example, in Gujarat there was seamless coordination between different departments, clear line of authority and responsibility shared within all levels of bureaucracy, and a strong political will at the highest level. All these factors make Gujarat one of the successful implementers of the CSCs scheme. Evidently, this establishes a strong relation between the higher state capacity and improved level of governance.

7.2 Politics of Governance Reform and the Role of E-governance: The Indian Scenario

As e-governance reform in India demonstrate substantial impact on the level of governance, it would be appropriate to locate e-governance in the broader context of strategic reform which in turn falls under the rubric of a transnational agenda of governance reform. It has been reiterated since the beginning of this research that a major shift has taken place in governance discourse since the end of the Cold war which has reconfigured the relationships between state and society in most post-colonial and post-communist states. India has been no exception in this global trend. Although the initial push came from a transnational agenda of good governance, the domestic politics in India was also conducive for such ideas to flourish. Stagnant economic growth, problems of poverty, inept state bureaucracy, growth of regional parties, and development of a strong civil society – all contributed to the burgeoning interest in wider reform in the system of governance. Thus ensuing currents of good governance or governance reform agenda followed after the economic liberalisation in early 1990s and manifested in major policy reforms across different sectors. All these reforms have not only significantly changed the way the state functions but also impacted the nodes of state-society interaction leading to considerable rise of market and civil society in the matters of governance.

E-governance as a major sector to facilitate the wider goals of development and good governance thrived within such shifting contours of reform discourse. E-governance reform encapsulated not only the technological promises to improve the interaction between state and society (including market, civil society and citizens) but also the political potential to address the parameters of good governance, such as transparency, efficiency, predictability and so on across all sectors. Therefore, e-governance slowly and steadily moved into the national agenda of policies and planning which manifested in new legal frameworks, growing emphasis in policy dialogues, and ultimately in a national planning strategy. The burgeoning interest in e-governance reform reflected many trends of the wider agenda of governance reform. Firstly, it emphasised a market concept of equality among citizens by empowering them with increasing access to public services and information. Secondly, e-governance reforms propagated such concepts of equality by projecting state as a service providers and citizens as consumers and clients. Thirdly, e-governance reform in India is widely based on a public-private partnership (PPP) model where private sectors take on many roles previously performed by the State. Fourthly, such reforms revolve around the concept of citizen-centric participatory governance with seamless and increasing interaction between state and extra-state spheres. Fifthly, with its ability to reach out to the remotest corner of the country, e-

governance contributes to the process of decentralising administration. Finally, e-governance reforms cater to both technical as well as developmental capacity of the state. All these characteristics of e-governance render it a coveted sector for strategic reform. Hence, post-Cold War trends of governance reform made a strong presence in the policy framework of post-economic liberalisation India and e-governance lied at the forefront of such reform discourse. However, it is important to remember that by no means e-governance is the only sector to witness this impetus for strategic reforms. On the contrary, e-governance reforms in India are only symptomatic of emerging currents of governance reform within the broader context of post-liberalised Indian political economy.

7.3 *Connecting Governance and Technology: Is e-governance a means to an end or an end in itself?*

E-governance is promoted as a strategic reform because of its probable positive impact on the overall quality of governance. The above observations clearly show how e-governance can lead to better levels of governance. However, this research also emphasises that this connection between the technology (ICT in this case) and governance is not automatic, but is in fact mediated through other factors such as politics, society, culture and contexts. As Sreekumar reiterates,

The idea that ICT is inherently a liberating technology, and hence e-governance, is a new way of transcending inept and inefficient bureaucratic systems, which empowers 'end users', appears to be completely inaccurate in the rural societal setting.... [Therefore] E-governance delivered simply as an improvement in the pragmatics of governance exemplified in the efforts to make service delivery quicker or more accessible, would probably end up in reproducing technological practices, which hinges for its existence on the crucial technology component rather than its social dimensions and would help the consolidation of and centralization of power in the hands of those who directly or by proxy own, control or manipulate the technology (Sreekumar, 2008; 185)

Therefore a holistic understanding of e-governance needs to closely examine the relationship between technology and governance by putting governance at the intersection of politics, technology and culture. This brings us to a rhetorical question that often forms the underlying assumption of most of the e-governance initiatives: Is e-governance a means to an end or it is an end in itself? Although, most of the literature stress the fact that e-governance is not a panacea for better governance and only one of the tools for improving governance, often in

practice technological determinism overshadows the political dimension ensconced in the concept. The other aspect of this problem is that a certain standard of governance seems to be a prerequisite for technological innovations to sync into the system. Though there is no fix formula to set these prerequisite, they are usually a mix of political, social and cultural fabrics embedded in a context. The other issue is that e-governance reform often violates standards that it should ensure by default. All the issues posit an intertwined problematic indicative of a caveat in the conceptualisation of the link between technology and governance and thereby need some close introspection.

The first issue engages in asking to what extent information communication technologies are treated to be a means to attain broader goals of governance. As mentioned in the outset (Introduction) e-governance is usually promoted as a means to achieve 'good governance'. As a matter of fact, both 'good governance' and e-governance parameters in India draw heavily on Western standards of technology and governance. Hence in a modernising quest to catch up with higher technological advancement, the local political, social and cultural dimensions more often than not take a backseat. As already discussed (in Introduction) in correspondence to the 'good governance' paradigm, this developmentalist approach towards technology also suffer from a hegemonic universalism. The inability to account for the gap between such universal ideals and realities of developing countries are considered to be the most important reason behind massive failures of e-governance projects in transitioning societies (Heeks, 2003). In this approach the incorporation of latest technology in service delivery and building of technological infrastructure in rural areas becomes an end in itself, an empty yet symbolic signpost of development. This study takes a critical stand against such modernising notion of governance albeit its initial research goal of connecting the developmental jargon of governance with the social science perspectives of the notion. This study argues that, strategic reform of e-governance improves the quality of governance when it purports to trickle down into everyday practices of social and political life. That is to say, it is not enough to introduce new technologies, but there is further need for innovation in institutions and practices to use these technologies in particular contexts.

The catalytic nature of the context points towards the other related issue which questions what are the pre-requisites of a context-specific and effective e-governance initiative. There are no simple answers or no readymade recipe for success. However, besides understanding the complex dimension of e-governance, some structural factors are also required for realising the potential of e-governance. A few examples of such factors would be an efficient and

supportive bureaucracy, a strong leadership, legitimacy of rule and ruler, deeper understanding of citizens' need and the local context. Although this list does not include all such factors, nonetheless absence of any of these can pose serious challenge to e-governance reform. The analysis of e-governance reform (Chapter 6) in India has already illustrated in details how these factors vary from one region to another thereby reflecting on the varied pace of reform in these regions. For example, Andhra Pradesh started on a high note on e-governance reform in the state in late 1990s; however the pace of reform was baffled by the electoral demise of the government that spearheaded such reform. It also stated a clear public mandate against the leadership and their reform policies. This is a clear example where despite an efficient bureaucracy and a visionary leadership was not enough to gain legitimacy among the citizens as their needs were not catered to through such reform agenda. In another case, Gujarat has made substantial advance in taking IT to the masses in rural areas amidst intense criticism against the government for massive human rights violations and for subjugation of minority communities in the state. Though this research do not investigate the reasons of Modi governments' electoral success vis-a-vis Naidu governments' electoral debacle, the trajectories of e-governance in these states nonetheless raise important questions in this direction. Similarly, in case of West Bengal the overall reform agenda professed by the Left Front experienced a major setback by ousting of the longest-standing government in the state. Whether the reform was one of the reasons behind this demise or there were other underlying factors need a separate and deeper analysis. Nevertheless, these examples show e-governance or any strategic reform, for that matter cannot inevitably mend the legitimacy deficits unless they take all the relevant political, social and cultural factors into consideration.

Another point of contestation in e-governance reform is the way such reforms are introduced and consolidated. This is a problem in general with the entire governance reform agenda as they often reinforce the characteristics of governance that they espouse to eliminate themselves. For example, even though increasing transparency of the public service is one of the aims of e-governance reform, the way e-governance policies are incorporated are far from being transparent. While discussing the conceptual tension within the 'good governance' agenda, Jenkins (1995) has focussed on the ability of the state and political elites in India to adopt non-transparent strategies for consolidating policy reform. According to him, "These include strategies to soften the edge of political conflict by promoting change amidst the appearance of continuity, and to arrange accommodation among groups who perceive reform as a threat. In other words, governance capacity of democracies need not rest solely on the

transparency of decision-making or relationships.” (Jenkins, 1995; 38). Mahadevia (2005) in his analysis of Gujarat economic reform raised similar concerns and label it as ‘reform by stealth’, where public debate over policy priorities were consciously avoided. He further linked these trends of policy reform with the rise of communal politics in the state. As already mentioned in the Introduction, therefore, a vast literature on the political economy of India post economic liberalisations focus on the issues of Hindu nationalism, identity politics as simultaneous developments besides policy reform (Jayal, 2001; Harris and Corbridge, 2000; Mooij, 2005; Ruparelia et al, 2011). While applying these concerns in the field of e-governance, the basic argument remains that with an overwhelming fascination with efficiency of service delivery, other criteria of e-governance such as accountability, transparency are often overlooked. The pursuance of efficiency often relegates citizens to mere customers and turns the state into just one of the service provider without much heed to the notions of justice and social inclusiveness. As a result, governance just becomes a techno-managerial fix of increasing efficiency. These biases are ingrained in neo-liberal ideals of ‘good governance’ and hence unavoidable as long as e-governance reforms are merely viewed as a tool to achieve those ideals. This not only calls for changing the ways policies are framed but also the way policy processes and policy impacts are analysed. This implies stepping out of the ‘good governance’ paradigm and scrutinise the politics of reform taking place in the real political context.

The real political context unfolds in the relationship between the governed and those who govern, this includes not just a few policy makers and the citizens but an entire policy network (Figure 3.3). All the actors in this network, in their particular context and capacity assert their agency in accordance to their particular preference and interests. Therefore, without denying the differential power distribution, this research examines how these myriad agencies together transform the system of governance.

7.4 *Hybridising (e)governance Reform in India: Contradiction or Consolidation?*

The basic analytical framework of this research conceives e-governance as an independent variable with a probable impact on the level of governance. The above observations exhibit how e-governance reforms are slowly taking root in the Indian political contexts. On the one hand, the neo-institutional model of governance explains how institutional designs and elite strategies together facilitate the process of consolidation of these reform measures. The elite strategies which Jenkins calls “political skills”, Mitra (2006) refers to as “room to manoeuvre” are embedded within a political structures of Indian democracy. The capacity to contain

political conflict manifests in the constitutional design, in the federal structures and also in elite competition. On the other hand, the social constructivist approach elucidate how local contexts as characterised by a mix of political, social and cultural factors have the potential to subvert the technological impact on governance by generating reactionary forces within the system.

However, e-governance is an emerging field of reform initiated in India in the recent past. Its absolute impact is far from being properly understood let alone being fully realised. There is clear paradigm shift in the policy discourse turning it towards favourable conditions for e-governance reform initiatives. Yet, state-led e-governance reforms in India are going through a process of transition which is confronted with strong resistance from the society. This constant tussle between structure and agency mark the process of change with conflict and rupture which cannot be fully captured within the neo-institutional or social constructivist approaches of understanding e-governance reform. Hence, the concept of hybridity adds to the basic propositions of this analytical model discussed above. In its transitory phase e-governance initiatives go through a process hybridisation and generate hybrid institutions and practices which are far from policy prescription yet grounded in local cultural contexts. On one hand, the CSCs Scheme stands out as one such example of hybrid e-governance institutions that emanates from the hybridising tendencies of the State to leverage the relationship between state and society. On the other hand, everyday practices of the same scheme show further processes of hybridisation by state and society to better accommodate local interests, norms and needs.

The CSCs scheme is a state-driven top-down initiative to combine private sector interests with developmental goals. The designing of CSCs are done in a manner to address the issues of illiteracy, digital divide, rural employment, rural infrastructure and service delivery to rural masses. In its own right it is a hybridising political strategy on part of the policy-makers to accommodate conflicting interests of market, of donor agencies, of local political elites and of citizens. It not only shows how elites adapt the imported categories of governance reform into the innate political contexts, it also exhibits how the hybridity of already existing institutions in turn facilitate the elite strategising tendencies. As for example, the federal structure of India helped the national elites to minimise the possibilities of opposition by deflecting reform through regional political structures. The policy drive of the regional governments differs from each other. As on one hand Gujarat shows a dominant role of the state government within the general rhetoric of PPP model, on the other hand Andhra Pradesh government took a rather

reluctant stance in influencing the reform. However, at same time the overall implementation in all the states indicates that despite stressing the PPP model, state elites and state institutions work as the driving force behind this mammoth initiative. Furthermore, CSCs can easily pass on to the pool of hybrid institutions that already exist in the Indian context. Like its predecessors, the internet kiosks help harnessing the gap between alien standards of e-governance and the Indian reality. Thus, the process of e-governance policy formulation and implementation in India are produced through continuous yet non-linear process of hybridisation and further produce hybrid institutions. In this way, the neo-institutional model of elite strategy attains a new analytical edge through the conceptual prism of hybridity.

The regional narratives (Chapter 6) demonstrated the different course that the same scheme took in the particular contexts. The relative autonomy of the states within the federal structure of Indian polity not only ensured smoother consolidation of reform policies but also led to different strategies by stakeholders in the face of such reforms. These differential experiences also attest the context as the catalyst. The policy focus, the political will of the highest leadership, the mindscapes of the local bureaucracy, and finally the minute details of political, social and cultural fabrics of these states affect to what extent and how e-governance reforms are absorbed into these regional contexts. There are instances where the state takes innovative hybrid policy measures to integrate e-governance reform with other social dimensions as in the case of Rajasthan government's policy to promote women VLEs or VLWEs. This particular policy again goes through a process of hybridisation when the male relatives of these women beneficiaries take over their responsibilities. Here, the cultural values of patriarchy embedded deeply in the social structures subvert the top-down policy solutions. Nonetheless, this policy also led to a hybrid institutional space within CSCs in Rajasthan, where some women VLEs co-existed alongside their dominant male counterparts. Similarly visibility of women VLEs in Andhra Pradesh can also be attributed to the hybridising tendency of state government's policy to integrate self-help groups into CSCs scheme. The scheme also gives ample opportunity for VLEs to improvise the institutional space by asserting their entrepreneurial skills. Therefore, even though the public services were more or less standardised across CSCs in a particular state, the private services varied substantially from one centre to the other. The educational qualifications of VLEs, the local politics of selecting VLEs, the personal relationships of VLEs with local bureaucracy and village panchayat leaders- all were differently played out in different contexts leading to continuous process of hybridisation and hybrid institutional structures and spaces. The broader political

contexts and the organisation of bureaucracy from upper ranks to the lowest levels also differed not only from one state to another, but sometimes from one district to the other. These varied trajectories are sometime produced through deliberate assertion of stakeholders' agency as they engage in actively negotiating the processes of e-governance reform. At other times they are merely unintended by-products of such processes of assimilation and consolidation. Subsequently, the practices of e-governance reforms differed considerably from the policy dictum. However, such gaps between policy and practices did not necessarily denote a contradiction in the reform process but rather the consolidation of the policies by negotiating through contextual realities. Here, hybridity strengthens the social constructivist approach by adding a productive political agency to all the stakeholders who in continuous interactions with each other not only overcome the legitimacy deficit but also gradually shift the structural parameters of governance.

Thus, through hybridising, e-governance reform conjures up the neo-institutional model of governance with that social constructivist analysis of technology. In doing so, e-governance brings governance and technology as two intertwined theme under the same analytical frame. As the focus of this research is on governance, nonetheless it is worthwhile to comprehend how governance research can gain from this broader analytical framework.

7.5 Researching Governance through the prism of e-governance

The relationship between technology and governance is a pertinent yet relatively under researched field of study. In last two decades there has been an unprecedented upsurge in the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) geared towards good governance goals both across developed and developing countries. For developing countries it has also been popularised by International Organisations under the banner of "E-governance for Development" and eventually has taken an important position in governance reform agenda of the national governments. This study, based on an extensive fieldwork in rural India critically examines the impact of e-governance as a strategic governance reform agenda and its resultant impact on the overall system of governance. Drawing closely on the policies and practices of e-governance in India, this study views (e)governance as a hybridising experience grappling with the intermingling issues of politics, technology and culture, as embedded in the wider context of the society which further produces hybrid institutions and practices of governance.

The novelty of this research lies not only in its subject matter but also in its methodological approach. As far as the subject matter is concerned, while analysing the impact of strategic reform on the level of governance, the study takes up e-governance reform which is an under-researched field of enquiry within social sciences. Even within the studies of technology and governance, e-governance has attracted only limited serious academic attention. Most of the studies on e-governance reflect either techno-managerial perspectives, or institutional management approach, or policy outcome studies or developmental perspectives. In dealing with e-governance as part of a research on governance theory, this study demanded some methodological innovations. In analysing the entire spectrum of e-governance reform - starting from the policy formulation to implementation, from reception of reform initiatives to consolidation of reform - the study deploys a novel combination of neo-institutional model of governance from Political Science, a social constructivist approach from Sociology and an analytical category of Hybridity from Postcolonial and Transcultural perspectives on politics. This interdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approach enriches the context-specific understanding of governance as viewed through the lens of e-governance where technology, governance and cultures are relentlessly enmeshed within everyday practices of reform.

As already been mentioned throughout the discussions in the Introduction, literature reviews (Chapter 2) and theories of governance (Chapter 3), governance as a concept not only transcends scholastic boundaries of social sciences but also capture the fancy of development practitioners to civil society activists, from policy makers to political leaders. Given such widespread interest in and engagement with governance, the term at times tends to lose the conceptual clarity. This ambiguity around the notion of governance often stem from the fact that experts working on governance in their respective field talk pass each other rather than talking to each other. The development consultants working in the ambits international aid and development community formulate their own idea of 'good governance' and espouse prescriptive governance reform agenda for universal application across all developing countries. Policy makers and political leaders in the developing countries, either under the pressure from donor agencies or in an attempt to incorporate into the global neo-liberal economic network, promote these governance reform agenda in their respective political context at least rhetorically. Since policies are being viewed more and more as the key to institutional/governance reform in developing countries, the donor agencies in recent times have shifted their attention from direct intervention to policy facilitation. As a result, the International Organisations like World Bank or the UN frequently serve at the advisory

committees of policy-making and planning in developing countries. The policy prescriptions and solutions that emerge from this spectrum are usually coded in an ideal type construction of governance and a quick techno-managerial fix to achieve this ideal. However, undoubtedly these ideals of governance are fetched from the realities of the receiving countries and are thereby doomed to fail almost without exception. What is worse is that such governance paradigm being a far cry from reality often leads to counter-productive forces by reiterating the evils it wants to eliminate to begin with. The lack of transparency in governance reform policy processes in India already explicated this point. The civil society, though fiercely promoted by this popular governance reform agenda, often finds itself at loggerheads with both the state and the market over the implications of 'good governance' paradigm for the ordinary citizens. Hence the position and role of civil societies in the system of governance becomes further complicated given their complementary yet contesting relationship with the state. Amidst all these cacophony of ideas and agendas the academic engagement with governance becomes even more pertinent as the need to re-establish governance as a political and social problematic instead of a mere development jargon is ever more pressing. Still, this does not imply ignoring the debate that emanates from these other perspectives on governance. Instead the aim of this research is to address this very debate in regaining the centrality of governance as a political and social concept.

The burgeoning pre-occupation of the international development community with governance is symptomatic of a wider trend of shifting from government to governance as experienced in different political contexts of the developed and developing nations. This shift in the developed nations was brought through the popularity of New Public Management theories of public policy and public administration. The result was the emergence of policy networks of different actors reducing the influence of the public sector. In the developing counterparts, the shift was an immediate outcome of the changing domestic and foreign political environment of the post Cold War times. The manifest impact was the popularity of 'good governance' or governance reform agenda focussing on the expansion of market and civil society and the reduction of the sphere of state. As these governance reform agenda has become rampant throughout most post-colonial and post-communist societies, it becomes extremely important to unravel the impact of these reform agendas on the state institutions and on the society at large. However, the realities of the developing countries do not necessarily reflect this trend even while adapting state institutions to this broader governance reform agenda.

In order to understand why such a gap still exists despite consistent deliberations by international donor agencies and national policy, we need to turn to the concept of governance as social and political problem. At this point, it is worthwhile to briefly point out the major connotations of the term in the social science research. Governance is predominantly a field of study in the discipline of Political Science albeit conceived differently by the sub-field of public policy, international relations and comparative politics. However, one common theme that runs through all these different fields of study is that they all view governance as a broader concept than government and engage with institutions as the site of interactions between different actors. In this way, most of the governance research is governed by overarching panoply of Institutionalism and focuses on how institutions affect actors and their behaviour and how institutional change occurs. Hence, governance as a concept dwells on the interaction of the institutional structures with the agency of the actors. In other words, it can be described as the interface between state and society (Figure 1.1). This conceptualisation of governance conjures up all the actors in its fold at the same time: the state, the market, the civil society and the citizens. It is within the institutional spaces created by the state that market, civil society and citizens interact with each other and as well with the state. While the state institutions determine these interactions, the institutional set up also get transformed through these interactions. Taking this view of governance facilitate understanding the conceptual tension within the 'good governance' definition of governance and its techno-managerial solution of governance reform. At the same time it is important to keep in mind that academic and developmental perspectives on governance are not formulated in complete separation and isolation. In fact there are enough instances of overlap. For this purpose, the related concepts of efficiency, accountability and legitimacy (already discussed in the Introduction) become crucial as they lie at the overlapping zones of these different conceptualisations of governance. In the Political Science literature on governance, legitimacy of rule sets the basic premise of governance in a democracy, whereas efficiency and accountability (though not always mutually inclusive) serve significantly to manipulate the legitimacy of rule and thereby the nodes of democratic governance. Similarly, all these concepts are integral parts of the governance reform agenda which takes democracy as a necessary but not a sufficient condition for 'good governance'. These intersecting concepts associated with governance discourses further reveal the complex and interconnected nature of governance as a concept which can easily traverse scholastic boundaries. The flaccidity of these concepts also hints at the difficulty in analytically separating the techno-managerial perception of governance from its academic roots.

This brings us back to the basic aim of the research that was explicitly laid out in the beginning, that is, how strategic reform of a techno-managerial variety influence the notion of governance that hinges upon the relationship between state and society. In finding answers to this basic research question a neo-institutional model of governance (Figure 3.2) has been adopted as it explains why and how strategic reforms affect the level of governance.¹⁸ To deepen the understanding of strategic reform, the focus has been narrowed down to a specific sector of reform that is e-governance in this case. E-governance can be described as the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in leveraging the relationships between state and society and is comprised of two distinct yet interrelated dimensions such as technological and political. It is the interaction between the two that determines how e-governance is going to influence the quality of governance. Therefore, in addition to the neo-institutional model of governance, governance research will attain further analytical depth by turning to the relationship between technology and governance. The relationship between technology and governance has been studied here from a social constructivist interpretation of technology. The social constructivism of technology defies technological determinism and argues that the impact of technology is not automatic and neutral. Rather the impact of technology is mediated through social processes and practices. Now the use of a social constructivist understanding of technology in a neo-institutional model of governance can raise some scholarly doubts. However, our analysis of the e-governance reform in India can provide a simple answer to such apprehensions. While e-governance policies and projects are planned by policy-makers and political elites, the appropriation of these new technologies are shaped by the different stakeholders depending on their respective subject positions within the system of governance. A social constructivist approach is therefore necessary to understand how ICTs initiated by the state received by the society. Here the society includes all the stakeholders affected by the e-governance reform. Such an approach not only explicates the relationship between technology and governance but also affirms how this relationship is mediated through an array of political, social and cultural factors. In other words, social constructivist analysis of the e-governance reasserts the context-specific analysis of governance.

¹⁸Given the qualitative nature of this study, the findings only indicate a difference in quality of governance rather than showing a quantitative scale of the level of governance.

The underlying assumption of governance presupposes a differential distribution of power between those who control the state and those who inhabit the society. Technologies of power and governmentality (Foucault, 1980) ensure the legitimacy of the rule despite the hiatus between the governed and those who govern. Based on this view of power and governance, sanctions and welfare become a two-track strategy of the elites to ensure the legitimacy of the rule (Mitra, 2006). In this way, e-governance becomes a strategic reform aimed at attaining better governance through welfare. However, such a power dynamics does not imply seamless reception of dominance by the powerless. For that reason, the neo-institutional model of analysing e-governance as a strategic reform and the political, social and cultural factors as discussed within the social constructivist approach towards e-governance- all together hint at the notion of agency inbuilt into the understanding of governance. This notion of agency is assigned to all the actors or in other words stakeholders who implement and are implicated through e-governance reform. It is through the analytical category of hybridity that this research illustrates how each stakeholder exerts their agency to negotiate the state-initiated e-governance reform and in turn affect the institutional arrangements of e-governance.

Researching governance through the prism of e-governance often runs into the risk of shifting focus of analysis. In other words, while originally e-governance reforms were intended to serve as analytical tool to ameliorate research on governance, it could might as well taken as the end in the process of enquiry. Although this study on e-governance reform in India might have a few policy implications, these are not simply the ultimate aim of this research. Instead of just focusing on the policy outcome of e-governance policies, this research takes on a broader aim of unravelling governance through strategic reform. Hence the implications of this study spills not only beyond the study of e-governance but also beyond its specific geographical contexts of India.

7.6 *Transcending the Context: From Area Studies to Theory of Governance*

In studying the impact of strategic reform on the level of governance, it has been asserted time and again that the context of reform is of prime significance in fully capturing its implications. For this purpose the analyses of e-governance reform- starting from policy formulation to policy implementation, from project design to reception of project, from introduction of reform to consolidation of reform- in this research has been firmly grounded in the context of India's governance. One of the broader assumptions behind understanding India's governance through e-governance is that governance is a key to the resilience of the democratic system in India (Mitra, 2006). The theoretical and methodological dispositions

have been arranged accordingly to demonstrate how India's governance has been enhanced through e-governance reform and further contributed to the resilience of the system. However, does it imply that the findings and observations derived from the Indian context will be confined only to the understanding of India's governance? Does the understanding of India's governance say anything of governance that can spill beyond its context? Does this research have any implications for theories of governance in general? These are the questions that compel us to transcend the context to find out the general theoretical implications of this research, in other words, to move beyond Area Studies to theory-building.

There are two distinct yet related aspect of this research which can be linked to the broader issues of governance research; first the theme or subject matter of the study and second, the methodological approach adopted to analyse the theme. The first aspect that deals with the theme of this research relates to the issue of e-governance and its ramification for governance research. The concept of e-governance hinges upon the relationship between technology and governance as it deploys Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in harnessing the interplay between state and society by refurbishing the public service delivery mechanism. As the term suggests e-governance is comprised of a technical as well as a political dimension, which together aim to transform governance. Therefore, e-governance can be studied both as the politics of technology as well as a technology of politics. On one hand, the politics of technology shows how the broader political context of neo-liberalisation and the concomitant agenda of governance reform push the recent upsurge of e-governance in most developing countries in last two decades. This reflects in the way policies of e-governance are formulated and initiated through policy networks (Figure 3.3). The national, regional and local politics further influence the way such technologies are percolating through the system. On the other hand, e-governance as a strategic reform serves as political tool in the hands of the elites to control the system of governance. Therefore technology policies have been an important area of enquiry for political scientist and sociologists. Social Construction of Technology, Sociology of Science and Science, Technology and Society (STS) studies have studied the myriad ramifications of technology from a sociological and philosophical perspective. However, this research views the relationship between technology and governance from disciplinary approach of political sociology. Though social, culture and contexts have been added to the analytical frame; the focus still remains on politics. In this way this research on e-governance not only shows how strategic reform aid to the system of governance but also elicits important observations on the relationship between technology and governance.

Undoubtedly, such insights go much beyond the Indian context and contribute to the larger research on governance.

The second aspect of the research that displays wider connotations lies in the theoretical and methodological approach of the study. In evaluating the impact of strategic reform on governance, a dynamic neo-institutional model based on elite strategy (Figure 3.2) has been deployed. This model forms the analytical grid of this research. However, as the specific strategic reform selected in this case is e-governance, this model needed to be strengthened with further dynamism which could facilitate understanding the interplay of technology and governance. Here, the social constructivist approach to understand the relationship between the two has served this purpose. However, both the neo-institutional and social constructivist approaches leave a few gaps in their analysis despite the prevalence of agency and context in their methodology. The neo-institutionalism as being an essentially a Euro-centric theoretical model presupposes a methodological individualism which might fall short of fully analysing the post-colonial and other developing societies. Similarly, social constructivism of technology, though focusing on political, cultural and social dimensions, explicates the transformative processes more in terms of policy deficits. While these analyses successfully point out the problems of universalism in particular contexts, they also contain the risk of indefinite relativism. Such approaches could turn the governance of a post-colonial society either into an exotic aberration or a unique case in itself without much scope for generalisation. To counter this epistemic gap, a transcultural perspective of politics has been introduced in studying e-governance. A transcultural methodology of politics serves two purposes in this study; first it demonstrate how even a seemingly most local phenomenon is entangled within the broader political, social and historical trajectories; second it provides a analytical tool box to understand the process of such entanglement and its implications. From this methodological stance, e-governance is understood as a part of wider political context of neo-liberal agenda of governance reform which has been proliferating across developing countries in last two decades even though its local consequence differs considerably from one context to the other. Unlike the modernising developmental theories, these local variations are not analysed in terms of deviation or exoticism. Instead, a transcultural methodology helps understand the local manifestations of e-governance in their own rights. Based on this methodological perspective, this research makes use of the analytical category of hybridity¹⁹.

¹⁹ Hybridity is usually deployed in Political Science literature to denote special categories of state which lack the pure characteristics of either democracy or autocracy and hence fall in between in the measurement scales of democracy. In this research a hybridity is used to understand the transcultural perspective on politics. Even

Hybridity aids in our analysis of (e)governance in many ways, such as, by explicating the application of e-governance as a hybrid political strategy of reform by the elites; by unravelling the political agency of the different stakeholders through hybridisation of e-governance institutions and practices at the local contexts.; by demonstrating how e-governance as a strategic reform leads to hybrid institutions which can further enhance the level of governance; and by adding explanatory value to the structure-agency dynamics with the matrix of governance. Thus, hybridity serves to analyse how broader theoretical models takes root in the local contexts through multi-layered processes of entanglement. In a post-colonial context, hybridity can explain how governance is generates by bridging the hiatus between imported institutions and inherited social norms.

So, evaluated both on the bases of its subject matter and methodological outlook this research transcends much beyond its specific context of India. Without disregarding the significance of the context-specific analysis of governance, this research illustrate general theoretical implications; firstly in terms its analysis of the relationship between technology and governance and secondly, in terms of its unique yet holistic methodological approach addressing the entanglement of politics, technology and culture in the complex whole of governance. Furthermore its focus on the Indian context leads to general understanding of governance reform agenda and its subsequent impact on the post-colonial and post-communist societies of the developing world.

7.7 Further Research:

E-governance is a burgeoning field of strategic reform to achieve higher standards of governance. Undoubtedly, its popularity has increased in developing countries in last two decades as a direct outcome of the governance reform or 'good governance' paradigm. Given its recent upsurge and emerging nature, the academic study of e-governance is at a very nascent stage. Furthermore, most of the studies done on the topic are either rooted in the development literature or in the techno-managerial field of information management or purely technological study of IT system development and upgradation. These studies focus mostly on the technical and administrative side of e-governance. The sociological and political implications of e-governance are relatively under-researched topics so far. Some literature with critical analysis of e-governance projects do exist and has been extensively consulted for this research such as, Sreekumar (2008), Madon (2009), Panda (2007) and a few more.

though essentially the term denotes an impurity of concepts in both the cases, unlike democracy theorists, transcultural understanding of hybridity renders all conceptual categories as essentially impure.

However, there is clearly a deeper need to understand the policies and practices of e-governance for its myriad implication in political, social and cultural fabrics of the society and its impact on the institutions and practices of the state. Furthermore, as being closely connected to the field of technology, the evolution of e-governance is fast and ever-changing. For example, in Indian context the next step of e-governance is towards mobile governance which intends to take advantage of the extensive usage of mobile phones amongst Indian population. Recognising its growing importance, the Department of Information Technology, Government of India has published *The Framework for Mobile Governance* in January 2012. Therefore, there are constantly emerging new fields of enquiry in which e-governance can be studied. The e-governance, or in other words the use of ICTs is transforming the local governance which also needs more academic attention. Gender and ICTs and its impact on local governance, the problem of digital divide, e-governance and rural development are some of the related and relevant research field that this research briefly touches upon without going much deeper into their analysis.

In a final note, it can be said that this research explores e-governance as a strategic reform for its impact on the overall level of governance. While doing so it draws on an array of political, social and cultural issues which lie much beyond the scope of this study. However, grappling with these interconnected themes, this dissertation indicates many ways that e-governance research can lead to. Furthermore, by drawing balance between universal versus context-specific understanding of governance, it stretches applicability of this research to other societies beyond India.

Methodological Appendix

Case Study:

Case study of the Common Services Centres (CSCs) scheme as being implemented under the National E-governance Plan of the Government of India across 29 states of India is being conducted, on the basis of a selected sample of some already operational kiosks.

Objective of the Case Study:

How far the better level of governance could be achieved in a particular social context through a planned intervention of e-governance initiatives?

Strategic Sample:

1. Rajasthan,
2. Gujarat,
3. West Bengal,
4. Andhra Pradesh

Timeline of Field Trips: (September 2010 –August 2011)

- October 2010 –August 2011: Expert Interviews in different places
- November 2010- Rajasthan
- December 2010- Gujarat
- March 2011- West Bengal
- July 2011- Andhra Pradesh

Qualitative Interviews and Focussed Group Discussion:

Most of the interviews were purely qualitative and therefore the course of one interview varied considerably from the other. However, the overall attempt was to focus on certain issues depending on the group which would in turn help evaluate the indicators. Some interviews were taped; some were documented through field notes. The interviews usually lasted from 20 minutes to 1 hour, sometimes even more. In case of villagers, mostly focussed group discussions were deployed. The number of focussed group members varied from 5-12 from one state to another. Other than FDGs, villagers were interviewed while they were availing services in the kiosks, or in marketplaces and panchayat offices around the CSCs. Questions varied depending on the group of stakeholders. Some sample questions are

elaborated below. However, it is important to remember, as part of the qualitative interviews the course, sequence, presentation and framing of these questions varied from one person to the other.

For Villagers (including panchayat members, school teachers):

1. Do you know about CSCs (different names in different states were used)?
2. How did you come to know about them?
3. What do you think they do?
4. How often do you visit a CSC and why?
5. Do you know what all services available here?
6. Are you satisfied with the services you get here? You want any more services?
7. How do you perceive CSC? Is it a public or private enterprise?
8. Why do you choose to go to a CSC, if at all?
9. How can you be sure of availing public services from this individual who is not a public servant?
10. Do you think that you need the help of middlemen any less in acquiring government services?
11. Will it be fine with you if these CSCs are removed from your village?
12. What do you think are the most pressing need of your village?

For VLEs:

1. How did you come to know about the CSC franchise?
2. Why were you interested in being a VLE?
3. What are the procedures you had to follow to become a VLE?
4. How long have you been running this kiosk?
5. What did you do before this for leaving?
6. How did you promote your centre?
7. Do you have an online monitoring tool installed in your system?
8. What are the services that you are currently providing and what are most demanded services? Can you classify these services under G2C and B2C categories?
9. Are you planning to start any services on your own other than waiting for further G2C services?

10. What is your educational qualification? Did you get any training before starting off the centre? Do you think that training was enough or you would like to get some further training?
11. How are your relationships with SCA coordinators? Do you see them often?
12. Do you know any other VLEs in your surrounding area, district or state?
13. Are you satisfied the way the centre is functioning? Do you earn enough to survive?
14. What do you think about the future of your business here? And what do you think about the future of such centres anyway?
15. What are the main problems you are facing in running the kiosk?

For SCA:

1. How did you get the contract for CSC in the state?
2. How do you select and train VLEs?
3. How is your experience with government collaboration?
4. There seemed to be a lot of misunderstanding as far as the financial system is concerned? Are you aware of it? If yes, how is it been tackled?
5. How do you visualize the future of CSC?

Along with these interviews, there have been prolonged conversations with SCA field coordinators who accompanied almost all of the field visits. These conversations were not taped and were carried out in a casual manner in between other interviews. However, all these conversations were extremely insightful as some of these coordinators were more than willing to share their problems, frustrations, and hopes without any inhibitions.

For SDA:

1. What do you think are the main strengths of CSC?
2. How is CSC different from other e-governance projects?
3. What do you think are the main hindrances in its implementation?
4. How do you describe the role of state government in CSC?
5. How the partnerships with the private partners in e-governance have been so far?
6. What is the general state of e-governance in the state and why do you think it is relevant?

7. Do you think there has been any significant change in the e-governance scenario in the state post NeGP?

For experts:

1. How long have you been associated with the field of e-governance? How did you become interested in this field and how did you acquire expertise in this area?
2. What is e-governance according to you? How is it different from common understanding of governance?
3. Why do you think there is such a buzz around e-governance these days?
4. What is the status of e-governance in India, in your view?
5. To what extent it is a technological and to what extent it is a political issue? What should be the state of balance between the two?
6. How do you describe the role of public, private and civil society sectors in e-governance in India?
7. Do you think in India e-governance is driven by a more state-centric top-down approach?
8. Do you think there has been any significant change in the e-governance scenario in India post NeGP?
9. What is your take on CSC? Do you think it is different from other government projects of e-governance? If yes/no, why? Do you think it would be sustainable in the Indian context?
10. Do you think PPP is a suitable model of implementation in the Indian context? What do you think about the accountability of private partners?
11. Do you think a e-governance project (e.g. CSC) has the potential to tackle the issues of corruption, transparency, accountability, participation and efficiency?
12. In your opinion, what are the main issues of hindrances in India to successfully implement e-governance reform?
13. To what extent do you think ICTs can really improve the level of governance in India?
14. How would you compare the Indian experience of e-governance with other developed and developing countries?
15. What is your take on the issues of digital divide and e-governance reforms in India?

GLOSSARY

Challan	Challan means the requisite form filled to pay cash, cheque, Demand draft in a bank, tax department, government office etc. This also means in simple terms official receipt of payment.
Dalits	A political label under which former Untouchable caste in India are described
Gram Sabha	Village Council Meeting
Janasevana	People Service Centres
Kendrams	
Kisan	Farmers
Panchayat	Local self-governments in India.
Panchayati Raj	Institution of local self governments in India
Sarpanch	Head of the Panchayat
Sarvashiksha	Mass Education Campaign
Abhiyan,	
Soochaks	Informer
Soochanalayas	Information Centres
Talati	Village Accountant
Taluk	A Revenue Unit at the Village/District Level
Tehsil	Administrative Unit at the District Level

ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Administrative Reform Commission
B2C	Business to Citizen
BCP	Business Continuity Planning
BDO	Block Development Officer
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BPR	Business Process Re-engineering
BSNL	Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CAP	Central Agri Portal
CBOs	Community based Organisations
CCC	Course on Computer Concept
CCEA	Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs
CIN	Corporate Identity Number
CMC	Computer Maintenance Company
CNE	Committee on Non Plan Expenditure
CSA	Chief Software Architect
CSC	Administrative Unit at the District Level
CSS	Centrally Sponsored Schemes
DAC	Department of Agriculture and Cooperation
DAR & PG	Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances
DFID	Department for International Development
DISNIC	District Information System of the National Informatics Centre
DOE	Department of Electronics
DOEACC	Department of Electronics and Accreditation of Computer Courses
DOIT&C	Department of Information Technology and Communications
DOT	Department of Telecommunications
DR	Disaster Recovery
DRDA	District Rural Development Authority
ECIL	Electronic Computers of India Limited
EFC	Expenditure Finance Committee
FGDs	Focussed Group Discussions
G2C	Government to Citizen
GIDC	Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation
GOI	Government of India
GPMS	Gram Panchayat Management System
GPRS	General Packet Radio Service
GVMC	Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation
ICTD	Information Communications Technology for Development
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
IGPVSJ	Indira Gandhi Vivah Shagun Yojna
IIMA	Indian Institute for Management Ahmadabad
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMSC	Inter-Ministerial-Standing Committee
INR	Indian National Rupee
IPSS	International-Package-Switching-Services
IT	Local self-governments in India.
LIC	Life Insurance Corporation of India
MEGS	Market Enhancing Governance Structure

MIS	Management Information Systems
MMPs	Mission Mode Projects
MNREGA/S	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRPT	Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices
NASSCOM	National Association of Software and Service Companies
NDC	National Development Council
NeGP	National e-Governance Plan
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NIC	National Informatics Centre
NPM	New Public Management
NREGA/S	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Scheme
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission
NSDG	National Service Delivery Gateway
PAN	Personal Account Number
PCO	Public Call Office
PDC	Primary Data Centre
PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana/ Prime Minister Rural Road Scheme
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RAR	Revenue Agent's Report
RIV	Rajiv Internet Village
ROR	Land Record Certificates
RSDPs	Rural Service Delivery Points
RTI	Right to Information
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SCA	Service Centre Agency
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SDA	State Designated Agency
SDCS	State Data Centres
SKD	Simple Knock Down
STD	Subscribers trunk dialing
STP	Software Technology Parks
STs	Scheduled Tribes
STS	Science and Technology Studies
SWANS	State-Wide Area Networks
TAN	Tax Account Number
TNCCs	Transnational Computer Companies
TSTSP	Technical Support and Training Service Provider
UID	Unique ID
UIDAI	Unique Identification Authority of India
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USOF	Universal Service Obligation Fund
UT	Union Territories
VCE	Village Computer Entrepreneur
VLEs	Village Level Entrepreneurs
VLWE	Village Level Women Entrepreneurs
VOs	Voluntary Organizations

VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WGI	Worldwide Governance Indicators
WTO	World Trade Organisation
ZBB	Zero Based Budgeting

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