

## CHAPTER 4

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Organisations do not exist in a vacuum but within a broader environment from which they cannot be separated. As such, they are continuously shaped by it. As well as being shaped and conditioned by the environment, organisations are thought to express and influence its nature, through constant interaction (Pettinger, R. 1996:36; Giddens, A. 2005:573; Wraith, R: 1972: 27). From this contention, it is clear that there are a variety of factors, ranging from cultural factors to economic factors emanating from the environment which impact on organisations including public ones e.g. municipal authorities.

The research accepts, as a general premise, the argument that the activities of local government in a country involve conducting and maintaining formal relations within the broader social system; and more importantly, that local government institutions quite often shape their environment and *vice versa*. In this section, therefore, the research is concerned mainly with how the local government system in Swaziland is shaped by factors associated with its environment and surroundings. Accordingly, the discussion identifies and considers the most crucial of these factors. The discussion leads to conclusions about the nature of local government in Swaziland and the extent to which it is shaped by the various factors examined.

Various models are utilised by social scientists to analyse the interaction between organisations and their surroundings. In this regard two concepts are worthy of special mention: *ecology and systems theory*. Ecology is a scientific construct or metaphor for studying and analysing relations between organisations and their surroundings and has been widely utilised by different writers such as those associated with the Chicago school (Giddens, A. 2001: 573). Systems theory, is a concept developed by David Easton (1965:212) to assist in explaining how political institutions influence and/are influenced by factors that are external to them (Anderson, J. 2003:14-15). Below, both concepts are explained and an indication given of how they assist the understanding and appreciation of urban local government in Swaziland.

#### **4.1.1 Ecological approach**

The term *ecology* is borrowed from a physical science. The Oxford dictionary defines ecology as: *the scientific study of the relation of plants and living creatures to each other and to their environment, alternatively, the branch of biology dealing with living organisms' habits, modes of life and relations to their surroundings*.

Ronald Wraith argues, persuasively, that it is useful to think of local government, especially at its embryonic stage, in these terms; firstly that local government is an *organism*, something that is dynamic and which cannot be contained for ever - or even for very long - in a particular set of statutes, rules, and regulations, but

which is constantly changing and adapting itself to new circumstances; and secondly, that local government is related to habits, modes of life and surroundings (the environment). It will differ from one country to another, or even within one country. Ronald Wraith argues that the factors which bring about these differences and help to determine different patterns and purposes for local government are very complex and include the *historical*, the *geographical*, the *political*, the *economic* and the *sociological* (Wraith, R. 1972:27).

From Ronald Wraith's assertion, two inferences can be drawn. Firstly, local government institutions in Swaziland - city councils, town councils and town boards - have important links with their environment. Secondly, the influences emanating from the environment are critical in shaping the purpose and function of the local government system in Swaziland. Therefore, the interaction between local government and the external environment merit some attention in this discussion.

#### **4.1.2 Systems theory**

As no organisation exists in isolation from its environment, the nature and extent of the relationship and interactions between the two may be understood in terms of systems theory. Systems theory analyses the political system's response to demands arising from the environment. The political system, as Easton defines it, comprises those identifiable and interrelated institutions and activities (government institutions and political processes) in a society that make

authoritative allocation of values (decisions) that are binding in society (Anderson, J. 2003:14).

The environment consists of all phenomena – the social system, the economic system and so on – that are external to the boundaries of the political system. Inputs into the political system from the environment consist of demands. Demands are the claims for action that individuals and groups make to satisfy their interests. In the case of local government, the demands would emanate from the inhabitants of the locality. Support is rendered when groups and individuals abide by election results, pay taxes (such as the rates in local government), obey laws, and otherwise accept the decisions and actions undertaken by the political system in response to demands. The amount of support for a political system indicates the extent to which it is regarded as legitimate, or as authoritative and binding to its citizens (Anderson, J. 2003:14).

Within the black box called the political system the demands are converted into outputs. Outputs of the political system include laws, rules, decisions, by laws and resolutions. Regarded as the authoritative allocation of values, they constitute public policy. The concept of feedback indicates that public policies (outputs) made at a given time may subsequently alter the environment and the demands arising there from, as well as the character of the political system itself. Policy outputs may produce new demands, which lead to further outputs and so on in a never-ending flow of public policy (Anderson, J. 2003: 15).

There is general consensus amongst writers on systems theory that organisations, such as local government institutions, are open systems rather than closed systems (Pettinger 1996:30). Open systems are those that require or are exposed to constant interaction with their environment to make them work, whilst closed systems are those that are self-contained and self-sufficient, and do not require other interactions to make them work. There are very few systems that are genuinely closed.

#### Box 4.1 An open system

INPUT (external)	PROCESS (the system)	OUTPUT (outputs)
Supplies Demands → Resources (financial and material)	Technology, Energy → Expertise	Products Services → Waste

Source: Pettinger, R.1996

It is argued that organisations are subject to a variety of *economic* and *legal* pressures which they must be capable of accommodating if they are to operate effectively. In some cases there are strong *religious* and *cultural* effects, and also local traditions which must be capable of effective harmonisation. Furthermore, organisations need access to workforces, customers, and clients; and to technology, equipment, and financial resources (Pettinger, R.1996:30).

The above point is best illustrated by the economic, legal and financial constraints that characterise the local government system in Swaziland.

Evidence suggests that from the 1980s economic performance in Swaziland has been on the decline. The economic crisis that has saddled Swaziland, evidenced by a growing budget deficit and low levels of economic growth, inevitably reduces the amounts of money available in the budget to meet the various national government financial commitments. This includes financial assistance to pay for local government services i.e. grant aid, an item that is now almost a permanent feature of the national budget. When faced with an economic crisis the amounts that the national government can provide in terms of grant aid to local government is bound to be severely limited. As argued in the relevant sections of this chapter, local authorities in Swaziland, particularly some of them, experience acute shortages in terms of financial resources to the extent that some of them were even unable to meet their basic financial commitments e.g. paying salaries.

There are legal pressures that somewhat ought to be accommodated too. In this regard it is worth noting that the legal framework can impose some constraints on the performance of local authorities. For instance, the existing statute in Swaziland, the Urban Government Act, No. 8 of 1969 is not considered to be enabling. It has already been observed that this statute is outdated having been promulgated more than three decades ago when emphasis was still on control rather than on good governance. At the time of writing this thesis it had been mooted that the Act will be amended to bring it up-to-date and in line with prevailing political and social values articulated in the Constitution.

Thus, the relationships between organisations and their environment may be simply summarised as: *environment domination* – where there are overwhelming legal, social, and political pressures on the organisation and those that relate to strong local histories and traditions; and/or *organisation domination* – where the environment is dependent on the organisation for the provision of work, goods and services (Pettinger, R. 1996:36):

Lastly, in the above framework, it is strongly suggested that the best organisation-environment relationships are generated if the right balance is struck. For instance, if the right matrix is not generated and the environmental pressures are too great, the organisation will become dysfunctional in that particular environment. Thus, organisations such as municipal authorities are likely to succeed when those in their leadership are aware that success is built on awareness of the environment as opposed to a casual view of the environment (Pettinger, R.1996:36).

It is obvious that there is a lot in common between the contributions by Wraith and Pettinger. For this study, the work by Ronald Wraith may be credited with identifying the five factors – *historical, political, economical, geographical, and social* factors – that impact on organisations and which can be used as a framework in a study of local government utilising the ecological approach. The work by Pettinger may be credited with mentioning three key aspects that are important for a study that utilises the systems approach, namely, the *legal*

*framework, finance and culture.* Based on the foregoing observation, it can be postulated that the legal framework, finance and culture are important aspects that merit special consideration for the current study on local government in Swaziland.

The first aspect, the legal framework (constitution and local government statute), is important because it determines the power and authority of local government in a particular country, including the functions it must perform. In the ecological model, alluded to earlier, the legal framework may be discussed, quite appropriately, under the political factors. The examples of these are the Urban Government Act, 1969 and the Constitution of Swaziland, 2006.

The second aspect, finance, is equally important to the operations of local government and indeed of any organisation. It has been said that ‘money talks’ (Penguin Dictionary of Clichés). In the context of the present discussion, this cliché emphasises that the availability of financial resources can determine the success and viability of an institution, particularly local government. Thus a local government institution that is adequately funded – through locally generated taxes grant aid and so on, has the wherewithal to successfully carry out most of its activities. Conversely, a local government institution that is under-resourced is bound to struggle to meet its service delivery obligations. In the ecological model, described above, the financial aspect of the local government system may be considered as part of the economic factors.

The third aspect, culture (the customs and social institutions of a particular group of people) is an important aspect that requires serious examination, especially in Swaziland where culture, as explained in Chapter 1 has remained strong and has arguably been on the ascendancy. In the ecological model described above, this variable can be subsumed under the social factors.

#### 4.2 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SWAZILAND

At this stage, the discussion turns to a consideration of the environmental factors of local government in Swaziland. The section uses the ecological model, casting local government in Swaziland against the backdrop of its wider environment. The various factors that are thought to shape public organisations, including local government institutions, are examined. In this case particular attention is paid to those that are identified by Ronald Wraith – the *historical, geographical, social, political* and *economic* factors – all which clearly constitute the environment or the surroundings of local government in Swaziland.

**Table: 4.2 Environmental factors for urban government in Swaziland**

<i>Historical</i>	<i>Political</i>	<i>Geographical</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Economic</i>
Colonial Heritage	Constitution Legal framework Political system	Human environment Physical Environment	Culture  Social institutions	Economic growth  Finance

### 4.3 HISTORICAL FACTORS

History is considered an important factor that can significantly influence the political system to such an extent that local government can only be fully understood in terms of its history. It has been argued that as nations evolve, they often carry something from the past which has significance in many matters which are considered important today. For instance, in England, local government preceded central government and this historical fact largely accounts for the unusually prominent part which local government plays, relative to the national government, in public administration. The immediate inference to be drawn from this is that a particular set of historical circumstances peculiar to this one country helped to cast local government in a particular mould (Wraith, R. 1978:28-30).

For Swaziland, historical influences must of necessity include the colonial background. However, only a brief reference to history is necessary since the thesis has already alluded to this aspect in chapter two. It suffices to state that the colonial era is of course an important part of the Swazi history and its influence will always be important. For instance, the foundation for the current system of local government in Swaziland was laid during the colonial period. The system of local government in Swaziland exhibits the British heritage. The model followed by Swaziland in respect of urban local authorities indicates this point clearly.

In addition, the country's governmental system at both the national and local levels, characterised by dualism, was conditioned by the colonial system. During the colonial period, the colonial officers operated a *laissez faire* system, permitting a parallel system of government, consisting of the traditional authority system on the one hand and the Western system on the other. It is considered that colonial policy in Swaziland was favourable to the traditional leaders in the sense that unlike in other territories, the colonial government maintained the traditional authority system such that the traditional leaders emerged from colonialism very strong. This allowed the traditional authorities in Swaziland to continue playing a significant role in the political affairs of the country even after independence.

The dual system of government described above was not abolished at independence. In fact this system was preserved and even further developed in the post-independence period. Through the Urban Government Act, 1969, the government created local government (town councils and town boards) only in urban areas. Through the Establishment of Parliament Order and the Regional Council Order, 1978, the government also created the *Tinkhundla*, as local government in rural areas. By so doing the Swaziland government institutionalised a dual system of local government - one for the urban areas (based on Western systems) and another for the rural areas (based on the

traditional authority system). The dualism that is manifest at the local level of government in Swaziland is no doubt an enduring legacy of the colonial system.

Thus, notwithstanding the fact that colonialism was an era of little less than a century, it left an impact on the country's political landscape. As a result of the colonial experience, significant differences between local government in urban areas and local government in rural areas in Swaziland can be observed. Concerning the differences between local government in urban environments and local government in rural areas in Africa, which are due to the impact of history, Wraith observes:

*In the countries of the third world in particular the differences between local government in rural areas and the large cities (towns) are so great that it is difficult to write about them both in general terms. Urban and rural authorities differ not only in their constitution, membership and staff but in their principal purpose (Wraith, R: 1972: 33).*

Thus, whilst urban government in Swaziland does expressly include notions of development and efficient and effective service delivery, this cannot be said of the *Tinkhundla*. The latter are structures that to a large measure still lack the basic characteristics of local government, including the wherewithal to perform service delivery in an efficient and effective manner. The national government has tended to emphasise the political objective of the *Tinkhundla* e.g. using these

structures to conduct national elections whilst paying lip service to the other important functions – i.e. the *Tinkhundla*'s developmental functions.

#### **4.4 GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS**

Geography (both the physical environment and human environment) can be a great influence on the shaping of local government. The physical environment i.e. the natural world – climate, mountains, rivers and deserts - obviously impose their stamp on the way people are governed and administered. The rivers can directly or indirectly determine the development of both provincial and local government. Similarly, the human environment – the pattern of population – also has direct influence on local government. Local government is influenced by the growth of the population as well as its shifts – e.g. the movement of large numbers of people from rural areas to the towns (Wraith, R.1972).

It is possible to identify a number of factors associated with the physical environment that shape local government in Swaziland. The most outstanding of these factors are the mountains, the climate, the rivers, the topography, natural resources and the landlocked nature of the country.

The aforementioned features of the physical environment influence local government in Swaziland in the sense that they determine: where towns are built and how they expand; where the central business districts (CBD) are situated;

and where residential areas, industrial areas, recreational facilities are located *vis-à-vis the CBD*. In addition, the physical environment determines whether a particular urban area (town or city) will possess the capacity to attract investment that will enable it to sustain its growth and economic prosperity. Thus, because of its location in a region with the least developed infrastructure and limited natural resources, the town of Nhlangano has fared badly in terms of attracting investment and moving forward in terms of development. Similarly, because of its location in a mountainous area with very limited natural resources, the town of Mankayiyane has performed very poorly in terms of development.

The human environment, it is argued, takes on an even higher level of significance in terms of influencing local government in the urban areas of Swaziland. It is reported that the cities of the world have, in recent decades, have been growing at an unprecedented rate. At the turn of the current century, almost 3 billion people lived in urban areas, nearly half the world's population. The phenomenal growth of cities and the high concentration of people they represent have created some acute environmental problems both outside and inside city limits.

Te foregoing is best illustrated by the prevailing situation in Swaziland where the urban environment has experienced a rapid growth in recent years such that by 1995 Manzini and Mbabane (the country's principal economic, administrative and political centres) together accounted for 56% of the country's urban population,

making the Manzini-Mbabane corridor areas of high population density relative to the other communities in Swaziland. The Manzini and Mbabane corridor of economic activity attracts a significant number of migrants from outlying areas and other smaller towns and villages. The urbanisation process is projected to increase in the years to come as shown in the following diagram.

**Table 5.3: Urbanization trends in Swaziland, 2000-2030.**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Level of Urbanization (%)</i>	<i>Urban Population</i>
2000	26,4	266 000
2015	32,7	481 000
2030	42,3	813 000

**Source: UNCHS (2001)**

Manzini is the largest and fastest growing city in the country. It is reported that during the period 1986-1997 the urban area of Manzini grew at an average rate of 5 percent (CSO, 1997). Significantly Manzini is located close to Matsapha, the largest industrial site in the country that in large part is the main driving force behind urbanization in Swaziland (World Bank, 2001). The expansion in employment opportunities in Matsapha make the city of Manzini a magnet for migrants coming to urban areas. Based on present trends the projection is that the Manzini area will have a population of 129,000 before 2010 (Government of Swaziland and UNDP 2003:29). It has been observed that the increased levels of rural-urban migration have placed enormous stress on existing land and available infrastructure in the city of Manzini (Zamberia, A.M, 2006:21).

Cities represent an artificial environment; they absorb vast quantities of resources from surrounding areas and create high concentrations of wastes to be disposed of. There are acute environmental problems that occur within many cities, particularly in the developing world (Middleton, N. 1999:159). The environmental threat posed by this level of urbanisation is typified by the rapid growth of informal settlements in the vicinity of the towns/city, e.g. in Manzini and Nhlangano. The urban population living in informal settlements reside in large, unplanned settlements with high densities that lack water supply, sanitation and other services. According to some reports, more than 60 percent of the population residing in the Mbabane - Manzini corridor lives in informal, unplanned communities in sub-standard structures on un-surveyed land without legal title (Report: Government of Swaziland, 1995).

The growth of informal settlements has in many countries often outpaced the ability of urban authorities to provide adequate services. These informal settlements are the temporary homes of the poorer sections of the population in Swaziland. These are individuals who are either unemployed or are in the low income bracket. Related to this, reports indicate that urbanisation in Swaziland has resulted in serious social problems including violent crime in Urban areas. The crime rate increased significantly in the 1990s partly due to the problem of high unemployment, coupled with a high number of layoffs in the textile and apparel industries in the industrial centre of Matsapha.

The low levels of service provision in the towns and cities of Swaziland are exemplified by the highly inadequate conditions in the boundaries of the urban areas of Manzini and Nhlangano and to, a lesser extent Mankayiyane. These conditions can be attributed to the government's inability to provide adequate services such as the collection of household garbage or the provision of housing of the acceptable quality or the provision of infrastructure such as water and sewerage in these settlements (Davis et al. 1985: 9; Zamberia, A.M, 2006:23).

Middleton notes quite correctly that although the environmental problems associated with garbage do not disappear with its collection, uncollected garbage exacerbates many of the environmental hazards. In developing countries where escalating urban growth rates and lack of finance make such provisions inadequate, it is usually the poor sectors of urban society that are at risk from environmental hazards. Such hazards include the pervasive dangers of high pollution levels (Middleton, N. 1999: 171-173). Urbanisation can result in numerous impacts on water quality. Many rivers that flow through urban areas are biologically dead, due to heavy pollution. The state of urban rivers in developing countries is bad. Most rivers in third world cities are literally large open sewers. The quantity of water is another critical environmental issue. Many cities experience severe shortages. Adequate provision of water supply and sanitation are designed to offset the risk of disease. In Swaziland less than 50 percent of the urban and peri-urban population has access to safe water and fewer than 20 percent are connected to a waterborne sewage network (World Bank, 2001).

The general quality of the environment in cities is also a function of the infrastructure and services, which tend to be inadequate in poorer areas. Studies of the distribution of infant mortality, a good indicator of the quality of the environment, show clear correlations with income levels and basic service provision. Overall infant mortality rates in poor suburbs of the city are higher than those in the more prosperous areas, and infant mortality rates by avoidable causes (including tetanus, respiratory infections) have been found to be higher in the poorest zones. The most critical environmental problems faced in urban areas of the developing world, however, stem from the disease hazards caused by a lack of adequate drinking water and sanitation. Water borne diseases (diarrhea, dysentery, cholera, and guinea worm) water hygiene diseases (typhoid and trachoma) and water habitat diseases (malaria) both kill directly and debilitate sufferers to the extent that they die from other causes. Again it is poorer sectors of urban society that are most at risk (Arrossi, 1996).

Miles (2001:113) reports that in Swaziland the rapid annual rates of growth in the cities of Swaziland have posed a challenge to urban government. The rapid urbanisation has had a marked effect on government's ability to provide adequate housing, jobs, health and education for the population. For instance, more than 60% of the population in the two cities of Swaziland lives in inadequate housing (World Bank, 2001; Zamberia, 2006:22).

In Swaziland the challenge of informal settlements and the environmental threat this poses are further complicated by the fact that urban government does not see informal settlements as their problem in spite of the fact that the statute specifies that municipal authorities will be responsible for housing development in the towns and cities. Yet many of the informal settlements are not only within the boundaries of the municipality but are in close proximity to the city centres. The reason why municipalities have not prioritised the upgrading of informal settlements is that there exists another body, the Human Settlements Authority, created by the national government, which is tasked with addressing the problem of informal settlements.

In addition, the government has, with World Bank financial assistance, embarked on urban development projects, coordinated by the ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The urban development project is aimed at improving the housing infrastructure in urban communities. Housing development and the problem of informal settlements are not seen as the sole responsibility of the municipal authorities, but an issue that requires a multi-sectoral approach involving various government agencies. Consequently, the improvement of the housing infrastructure has been slow due to the government bureaucracy which derive from the cumbersome processes of procurement and tendering, delays in the allocation of land, and construction of houses as well as inadequate budgetary provision.

## 4.5 SOCIAL FACTORS

Social factors refer to the phenomena that determine the way people live – their laws and customs, their family groupings and habits, their patterns of authority and power (Wraith, R. 1978). This aspect is discussed in relation to Swaziland and its influence on the local government system considered. Special premium is placed on the traditional authority system, given that Swaziland is a monarchy where traditional institutions and values have remained vibrant in the post-independence era in spite of their diminishing importance in the continent. Consideration is also given to the interaction of traditional authority and municipal authority in Swaziland's urban areas.

In many countries the question of culture means less in the cities than in the rural areas because there is a universal Western and urban influence at work affecting the way in which the municipal authorities operate. However, In Swaziland the influence of traditional authority has not greatly diminished inside the boundaries of the town and cities. Traditional authority has remained vibrant and has even gained recognition in the new Constitution. This is partly because the status of traditional leaders (chiefs) was never completely eroded during the colonial period. In the post independence period, traditional authority in Swaziland has been resurgent. It can be argued that traditional authorities have more power today than they had during the colonial era. The chiefs are considered as major

role players in rural areas, which are administered under the traditional system of local government i.e. *Tinkhundla*.

Significantly, the influence of the traditional authority is also felt in the urban areas. In more recent years the boundaries of municipalities have been expanding to incorporate land previously under the control and authority of chiefs. In consequence, as town boundaries have expanded residents have had to choose whether they want to be inside the boundaries of a particular municipality i.e. title deed land (TDL) or to be outside the municipality under land that is controlled by chiefs i.e. Swazi Nation Land (SNL). Those who choose to be incorporated into the municipality have to comply with the rules and regulations governing urban areas. For instance, the buildings they construct must conform to specifications and as urban residents they must pay taxes corresponding to the value of the property.

The experience of Manzini is that the city council has not always succeeded in asserting its authority in the areas that are in the outskirts of the municipality and which previously were part of Swazi Nation Land. Consequently, whilst the residents of such areas are technically within the council's jurisdiction, they have tended to disregard the rules and regulations of the city council, preferring to live their lives the way they have always done. For example, the research found that some of the residents do not pay rates and are not considering paying the rates until they start receiving what they consider to be adequate municipal services in

their area. From, this it can be deduced that the expansion of boundaries to traditional areas does not immediately transform the attitudes and mindsets of individuals who have lived in those areas for a long time.

In Mankayiyane the situation was even more challenging because the local government (town board) has not yet succeeded in asserting its authority fully in the areas within their jurisdiction - areas which previously were part of Swazi Nation Land and under the control of chiefs. It was found that there were residents who have continued living their lives in the traditional way. For instance they don't pay rates; live in substandard accommodation similar to rural homesteads, and have no respect for council rules and regulations. It is an example of interaction of traditional culture and Western culture or co-existence of traditional and Western norms in an urban area.

#### **4.6 POLITICAL FACTORS**

The nature of politics in a particular country must also have great influence on how local government develops. In parliamentary democracies the division of work between the centre and local government tends to be based on work which it is thought can be done locally rather than centrally, and not on a political theory or philosophy. In the West parties oppose each other on matters which have a genuine political content. The councils are organised along party lines and are local versions of the parliamentary model, with a majority controlling group in

charge of the determination of policy and a minority group or groups whose principal task is to scrutinise, criticise, and oppose policies put up by the majority. Local government in parliamentary democracies has also a greater or lesser degree of freedom from central government control subject to the requirement to facilitate uniform standards countrywide through equalisation grants. However, in transitional systems such as one-party states or no party states different considerations apply because foreign inherited forms of democracy have failed to take root. Because of the low levels of legitimacy and the aim of government to promote unity, there are many instances in Africa where local government has been suspect because it is thought that it could be divisive. In those situations the conditions of parliamentary democracy are likely to be absent and questions of autonomy and pragmatism hardly arise (Wraith, 1972; Alexander, A.1982: 74).

It is important to briefly consider the extent to which the democratic tradition that exists in parliamentary democracies is present at the local level in Swaziland, in terms of the vibrancy of political debate and autonomy in local government. The political factors that are of relevance to this discussion have to be considered in terms of the constitutional framework. From 1978 until 2005 the country was governed through a constitutional framework – the Establishment of Parliament Order 1978 – which assumed that Swaziland is a non-party state governed through the *Tinkhundla*. At national level, the elections have since 1978 been based on individual merit i.e. candidates campaign for elections as individuals with no political party affiliation. Consequently, elections at the local level

government are informed by what happens at the national level. The provisions governing municipal elections assume that candidates will be elected based on individual merit.

During the period of this research Swaziland was a country in transition. In Swaziland, the process of democratising the country's political and administrative institutions is still underway. The new Constitution that comes into force in February 2006 does not explicitly provide for pluralism. This means that at least for the foreseeable future, pending new developments in the constitutional dispensation, elections at both levels of government will continue to be based on individual merit as was the case before.

The elected councils established for each of the twelve urban local authorities exercise the powers of council - policy formulation, enactment of bylaws, preparation of the budget, overseeing the performance of the council and its staff - as provided for in the statute. However, in the absence of a common political platform on which to administer council affairs, there is little evidence that councillors are pursuing coherent policies or for that matter practicing responsive and accountable forms of administration. Councillors have tended to get embroiled in rancorous petty politicking (for example over appointments of the management personnel and perceived corruption) a practice that has tended to derail councils from their main functions – i.e. making service delivery their main priority.

It is argued that the legal framework is a vital political factor that determines the autonomy, powers, functions, purpose and vitality of local government in any country. The Local Government Act was enacted in 1969 when the emphasis was still very much on control and close supervision of local government by national government. Since the Act has not been amended or replaced by a new one, local institutions do not enjoy sufficient power and autonomy. The councils do not perform significant functions such as education, health, and security. Some of the functions that possibly could have been performed by local government were assigned to public enterprises. The city councils have a higher level of autonomy, whilst town councils have less autonomy than city councils. It is not possible to entertain any notion of autonomy, political or financial, in the administration of a typical town board in Swaziland.

#### **4.7 ECONOMIC FACTORS**

Economic factors are bound to shape the local government system in a country. This relates to the purpose of local government to advance and promote development in local communities through the services they provide. To achieve credibility local government has to assist in local economic development through public service delivery. In Western countries the business of local government is considered to be that of collecting revenue from a local tax i.e. a rate (on property) and with the assistance from central government to provide schools, health services, public works transport, markets and a wide range of amenities.

In many African countries the same could be said of local government in the large towns except for the fact that their resources - money and staff - are inadequate for such purposes. In rural areas the picture is quite different because rural local government lacks adequate sources of income and capacity to meet the responsibility of service provision. As Wraith, R. (1978:38) argues, rural local government will find it difficult to be relevant unless it can generate income and advance local social and economic development.

In Swaziland, it has been observed that the Tinkhundla do not have their own sources of income and as such these structures rely entirely on central government for revenue; hence it is difficult to see what services rural local government can provide outside those that are provided by other government community development structures in the rural areas. Urban government officials in most countries spend vast amounts of time thinking and worrying about how revenues will be generated to pay for the growing number of municipal services.

On this the comment by Cloete and Thornhill is instructive:

*“local government needs money to perform its functions in the same way that a private enterprise needs money to stay in business The municipality needs money to obtain the services of personnel and equipment with which to provide services, and to pay for the services rendered to it by other institutions and individuals. No expenditure is possible without income. The collection, safekeeping and spending of money are significant activities of municipalities (Cloete and Thornhill: 2005:131).*

Revenue can be classified in terms of whether it is tax, a user charge, and administrative fee, a license, a debt service, or a grant-in-aid (Frank S. So. 1979). In Swaziland, the municipal authorities have adopted a simple classification i.e. their income is classified into three broad categories—government grant aid, local taxes, and miscellaneous sources. In the following table is described the sources of income and the proportions that are generated from each source.

**Table 5.4 sources of income for municipal authorities: Year 2006/07**

<b>Name of Municipality</b>	<b>Grant Aid</b>	<b>Rates</b>	<b>Miscellaneous Sources</b>	<b>Total</b>
City Council - Manzini	E 4, 8 999 676	E 23 718 213	6 2172 000	<b>E 34 790 011</b>
Town Council - Nhlngano	E 550 000	494 400	550 000	<b>E 1 545 000</b>
Town Board - Mankayiyane	E 565 000	E 73 000	E 103 461	<b>E 707 461</b>

**Table 5.5 sources of income as a percentage of total income**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Grant Aid</b>	<b>Rates</b>	<b>Miscellaneous</b>
City Council – Manzini	14%	74%	8%
Town Council – Nhlngano	56%	32%	14%
Town Board – Mankayiyane	76%	10%	14%

Although local authorities may receive some percentage of their revenue from government grant aid, and although there are good reasons why this should be so, it is obvious that if local government is going to have any real meaning the authorities must be able to raise a comparable amount from their own sources. Most local government institutions make attempts to achieve this objective. There is a legal foundation to the raising of revenue. In Swaziland, the urban Government Act contains provisions enabling all municipal authorities to raise revenues from own sources. Statutes govern the types of taxes that may be levied by local government, thus in Swaziland, the statute governs what a municipal government may borrow in terms of both purpose and amount, and a large number of other requirements. In Swaziland the councils raise money through charging rates and also receive grant aid. The most important item of the locally generated income is rates on property, based on the value of the property and improvements made. This applies to all immovable property – residential and commercial buildings.

Manzini City Council budget indicates that more than 70% of its income is raised from rates and 14% from grant aid. The picture is different for a typical council (such as Nhlanguano town council) because whilst it is able to raise only a certain proportion of the income from rates, this amount is inadequate and they must depend on central government financial support to survive. A typical town board, such as Mankayiyane is virtually depended on central government for income. It

is noteworthy that the Mankayiyane Town Board started charging rates only from the 2005 financial year. For years previous to that, the Board relied entirely on grant aid and miscellaneous sources. For city councils, the amounts raised from local sources exceed the income which comes from the national government as grant aid.

In Swaziland grant aid is a permanent feature of the budget. Grant aid is designed in such a way that the bigger municipal institutions get a higher amount in absolute amounts compared to town councils and town boards. It has been argued that the relationship between national government and local government can to some extent be deduced from the amount of grant aid which a government gives to local authorities. In Western counties e.g. USA and Canada, the average amount raised locally is about 70% and consequently local government in the aforementioned countries is independent (Wraith, R, 1972:119). In the Swaziland situation described in the above table, it is clear that a typical town board relies on grant aid. The amount generated from local sources is the smallest proportion of the total revenue. In Swaziland the city councils have relatively more autonomy than town boards because city councils raise a substantial proportion of their income from local sources yet town boards are almost entirely dependent on central government financial support. Consequently, the national government has tended to intervene more on board affair is that they do on the affairs of city councils.

In Swaziland the types of miscellaneous sources and the amounts raised from them vary from one municipal authority to another. Miscellaneous sources include:

- Borrowing (applicable only to city councils)
- commercial undertakings and joint ventures (applicable to city councils)
- Charges for recreation facilities, toilets, markets, bus stations (applicable to all municipal authorities)

#### **4.8 CONCLUSION**

It has been argued in this chapter that municipal authorities, like most organisations in society, are shaped by their environment. The environmental factors of local government in Swaziland were assessed because of the compelling argument that the environment does shape organisations; and that high-performing organisations are those that have leaders who have an awareness of the environment. The environmental factors of local government are political, social, geographical, economic and cultural. The research contends that all the above factors are instrumental in shaping the nature, direction and purpose of urban government in Swaziland.

It is found that historical factors played a major part in engendering the current governmental system by creating the political and administrative structures that were inherited at independence and which to a large extent were perpetuated by

post-independence rulers. This includes political and administrative structures at local government level.

Geography too is considered to be of great influence on the shaping of organizational systems, such as urban government. The most significant of the geographical factors in urban government in Swaziland is the fast rate of urbanisation and the environmental challenges that this phenomenon poses. Municipal councils have very limited capacity to deal with the formidable challenges – informal settlements, disease, crime, pressure on land and the infrastructure – accompanying rapid urbanisation. It is argued that the population shifts of more recent years and the problems they present are likely to test the capacity of the country's burgeoning municipal authorities to respond to them.

Social factors are found to have had an influence on urban government in Swaziland. The traditional authority system is found to be the most decisive of the social factors. In the post independence period, culture and traditional authority systems in Swaziland have been resurgent to the extent that they have gained recognition in the new Constitution. Swaziland is an example of a country where culture is an issue that has real serious implications for development, given that some of its manifestations are positive whilst others are negative. Often, it is necessary to enlist the support of traditional authority in the major decisions. Hence, in a traditional setting such as Swaziland it is not possible to pursue development policies, such as decentralisation, without taking into account the cultural dimension.

Political factors are also bound to impact on urban government. It is found that the legal framework is a vital political factor that determines the autonomy, powers, functions, purpose and vitality of local government in any country. The Local Government Act was enacted in 1969 when the emphasis was still very much on control and close supervision of local government by national government. Since the Act has not been amended or replaced by a new one, local institutions do not enjoy sufficient power and autonomy. Neither do councils perform significant functions such as education, health, and security. Some of the functions that possibly could have been performed by local government were assigned to public enterprises. The city councils have a higher level of autonomy, whilst town councils have less autonomy than city councils. It is not possible to entertain any notion of autonomy, political or financial, in the administration of a typical town board in Swaziland.

Finance is found to be the single most important economic factor impacting on urban government because its availability and scarcity determine the ability of the local government system to finance projects and programmes and to make a difference in terms of improving the livelihoods of individuals and communities. Municipal authorities in Swaziland must raise money to finance their operations i.e. carry out functions bestowed upon them by the Urban Government Act, 1969. The research identified three sources of income for urban government: grant aid, rates, and miscellaneous sources. A significant feature of urban government

finance is the varying abilities amongst municipal authorities to raise income from home sources. It is concluded that a city council has a greater ability to raise money from own sources than a town council. A town board has the least ability to do this and the bulk of its income comes from the central government.

