The South African Muslims Making (Air)Waves during the Period of Transformation[1]

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The purpose of this article is manifold. It firstly locates the establishment of community radio stations – particularly Muslim-owned and controlled stations – in the relevant socio-cultural and political context. It then describes how these stations were set up and discusses certain policies which brought about specific challenges. Alongside these, it demonstrates how the stations brought about changes within Muslim society and details some of the issues they had to deal with. The article does not discuss every Muslim radio station in great detail, but attempts to give fair insight into their programmes and resources. More importantly, it tries to measure the extent to which (some of) these stations contribute to the transformation process in South Africa. The article also explains, albeit briefly, concepts such as 'community station' and 'participatory communication', in addition to outlining the theoretical tools employed in the course of the study.

Introduction

The invention of information technologies is amongst the most important phenomena of the twentieth century, resulting in the expansion of mass communication (Davies 1989: 167). With the introduction of various media, particularly electronic media, the information explosion reached enormous proportions and affected all sectors of social life across the globe. The effects of these technologies could be felt in villages, towns, cities, counties and states, giving rise to "a global village" (McLuhan & Powers 1989). The distances between villages and capital cities in most of the world's countries have been narrowed because of the technology made available by governments and through the availability of financial resources. Amongst the technologies that have caused distances to be

narrowed – and in some instances to disappear – is radio; a means of communication that has played a crucial role in the socio-political changes in first and third world states (Noor 1997: 47; Hafez 2000: 3-4). According to Dagron, radio is "the ideal medium for change"[2] (2001: 14).

This medium formed part and parcel of the South African landscape for almost the whole of the twentieth century. South Africa, which has been characterised as both a first and third world state, has been amongst the more fortunate states on the African continent. Over a number of decades and through the exploitation of cheap labour by the apartheid government, it created an excellent infrastructure to accomodate the various types of media. In the 1920s it established its state run radio station, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, which dominated the airwaves until the 1990s when it was forced to reposition itself in the light of new regulations and socio-economic developments (Tomaselli & Tomaselli 1989: 84-153, Hendy 2000: 219-222). Soon after Mandela's release in February 1991, dramatic changes began to unfold. The formation of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) paved the way for the creation of democratic structures, and amongst its many tasks was securing 'freedom of the press' and 'freeing the airwaves.'

The purpose of this article is manifold. It first seeks to place the establishment of community radio stations, particularly the Muslim owned and controlled stations, in a socio-cultural and political context. It then describes how each of the stations was set up and discusses how some of these adopted certain policies which forced them to face certain challenges. Alongside these, it demonstrates how these stations brought about changes within the Muslim society and some of the issues they had to deal with. The article will also attempt to give a fair insight into these stations programmes and resources. It will show the extent to which (some of) these stations contributed to the transformation process in South Africa. However, before introducing, describing and discussing these Muslim community stations, it is necessary to begin with an explanation of concepts and phrases such as 'community stations' or 'participatory communication.' It is also important to briefly discuss the theoretical tools employed.

Tools For Understanding the Airwaves

Community Radio

Community radio station has been described as a medium of communication, which expresses the views and opinions of the local community who owns and controls it. Meyers defined it "to mean small-scale decentralized broadcasting initiatives which are easily accessed by local people, actively encourage their participation in programming, and which include some element of community ownership or membership" (2000: 90). It has also been seen as a voice between the state radio and the private commercial radio.[3]

Tomaselli & De Villiers (1998: 163-167) made reference to White (1982) who outlined a few features of community radio stations. These characteristics (in no preferential order) are that they are: (a) autonomous, (b) encourage community participation, (c) supported by a cadre of community volunteers, and (d) avoid becoming commercialised. Hendy supplemented this list with a few more (2000: 16-17). He stated that they are (a) for the community's benefit, (b) smaller than state or commercial stations, (c) they are more participatory than mainstream media because they are 'closer' to the listening community. He however argued that their emergence is attributed to "... the inability of mainstream operators to meet audience need." Whilst this argument rings true and is quite acceptable, case studies in Latin America and Africa proved that community stations emerged within particular socio-economic and political circumstances. This is well illustrated by Dagron's excellent fieldwork survey on each of the continents (2001). Some however emerged initially as 'pirate' stations or in the disguise as 'micro'-radio stations. These stations moreover countered the state stations, which have been viewed as 'agents of propaganda,' and acted as 'alternative' voices, which eventually contributed to the formation of a democratic culture in their respective regions and countries. Furthermore, in countries such as Britain where democracy was already part of the culture, community stations flourished and served the needs of specific interest groups such as the medical fraternity in hospitals, academic circles in universities, and religious groups near and around churches.

Participatory Communication

Hendy raised a few critical and pertinent questions with regards to these interest groups, in particular the religio-ethnic fraternities and cultural circles that espoused certain ideals and followed particular rules and regulations to fulfil their objectives (2000: 194-195). He posed the question, whether the establishment of their specific community radio stations would not be reinforcing certain cultural differences and practices rather than eroding them. Although he did not venture to answer these directly, he emphasised their relevance in the light of wishing to establish a democratic culture. If the community stations responded negatively to the first part, then they are guilty of constructively contributing towards the destruction of the democratic culture which the society as a whole advocates, and this practice will imply the end of the positive cultural encounters in this 'global village.' The Latin American community stations, which were set up by Catholic priests, were at the vanguard of promoting positive cultural encounters since their two-fold objectives were to (a) connect disparate mountainous and rural communities, and, more importantly, (b) bring about social changes. Their inputs eventually led to the establishment of a string of other stations in different parts of that continent. It is indeed this development at the community level, which Dagron eloquently described and discussed as 'partici-

patory communication;' a term that may not be easily defined, as he argued (2001: 8).

Indeed 'participatory communication' is an essential ingredient for social change. For Dagron this simply meant that the community take ownership and control of the media (cf. Emdon 1998a). And once they are in charge of their own medium, they are then able to initiate transformation and make the changes. The community radio station is thus a valuable tool to be effectively used in the process of transformation. And its role is to promote democracy and create a positive attitude towards identity, culture, ethnicity and religion. In fact, Dagron's explanation of 'partcipatory communication' also took cognisance of the respective notions of 'identity' and 'power' (2001: 34). The latter, he stated, instilled within the marginalised and oppressed community cultural pride and self-esteem, and this inadvertantly protected their cultural values and traditions. And the former, he clarified, placed in their hands the opportunity to make their own decisions, and this favoured the strengthening of an internal democratic process.

Access, Participation and Empowerment

Dagron's idea of 'participatory communication' should be closely linked to the thoughts advocated by Berrigan (1977: 15) and Mayo & Craig (1995: 2). The former considered 'access' an extremely important concept, whilst the latter two scholars emphasized the dire need for 'community participation and empowerment.' Berrigan defined and discussed this concept in detail and pointed out that mediums of communication need to be accessible to communities to bring about changes and make an impact; an idea partially couched in Meyer's definition quoted earlier. Mayo & Craig derived their support from the 1993 *Human Development Report* which commented that "the best route is to unleash the people's entrepreneural spirit ... (was) people's participation, (which) is becoming the central issue of our time." 'Participation' and 'empowerment' are key developmental concepts, which assist communities to advance the process of social transformation. During this era of democracy and globalisation, governmental departments and NGOs fully support the communities' participation. Mayo & Craig argued that whilst the purpose for the community participation is seen as a form of empowerment, this development should also be seen as a cost saving measure, as a means of attracting voluntary skilled personnel, and as a way of empowering communities via decision making and implementary processes. This shift of empowerment from the public sector to the communities also implied that when they participate in any undertaking then they shoulder much of the responsibility in delivering the goods, and that they then also become agents of their own transformation and development (Mayo & Craig 1995: 4-5). And this ultimately leads them to bringing about positive social changes in which the radio plays a crucial and critical role.

However, in order for positive social changes to take place, Dagron recorded

a few strategies which have to be adopted (2001: 34-35). He explained that communities should: (a) be viewed as dynamic actors and be involved in the process, (b) undertake constant dialogue since they hold the future in their hands, and (c) particpate in a collective spirit. In addition to these, he mentioned that (a) communities should participate in the research, design and dissemination of information, (b) communities identify the real needs, (c) the communication process be adapted to suit the requirements of the community, (d) the community take ownership and (e) raise consciousness and awareness of the social problems.

The establishment of the stations, and the arrival and availability of the cheap portable transistor radios thus provided a solution of pressing developmental and social and political problems. Although radios might not have solved the social and political problems Mytton had in mind, they – at least – contributed towards the solutions (1983: 5). He also stated that "the ability of radio to span the twin barriers of distance and illiteracy makes it a medium worthy of particular interest." Radios have thus also provided easy access to a large illiterate audience in both the urban and rural settings. Dagron's important study concretely proved this through his numerous case studies including a few from South Africa (2001).

South African Media & the Socio-Political Context

South Africa's oppressed society was indeed acutely aware of the social problems which stemmed from the socio-political and economic policies adopted, legislated and implemented by the apartheid regime. After all, they were the ones who experienced them on a daily basis. As a consequence of inhumane policies, they were familiar with the variety of social problems and with the deep psychological and physical impact they have had. South African society embarked upon an extra-ordinary journey to transform its socio-political and economic circumstances, which – with the passage of time – affected all aspects of life. It was indeed Nelson Mandela's release, and the unbanning of the liberation movements, which set the wheels of democracy in motion.

CODESA, NGOs & IBA

Democracy was in full swing during the serious CODESA deliberations between the Nationalist controlled apartheid government and the liberation movement representatives. They firmly agreed, amidst the numerous compromises, on a number of vital issues which would take the country forward. Amongst these was the freeing of the airwaves. The objective being to give access to communications to all those residing in the heavily populated urban suburbs and sparsely populated remote rural areas. CODESA realised that it was essential that the printing press and broadcasting sectors be granted the freedom, which was a

radical departure from the apartheid era, so that they could assist in building democratic structures where transparency and the free flow of information were to become the order of the day and where censorship was to be marginalised. CODESA was conscious of the fact that the media had a central role in transforming South African society's racist lifestyle to a deracialised one where democracy was the hallmark. This is underscored by Hendy's statement that "media plays a central role in defining democratic life" (2000:195).

These negotiations created space for members of South Africa's civil society with the eager support of international foundations to put in their efforts into bringing about concrete changes. During August 1991 the *'Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves'* conference organized by the Africa-Europe Institute was held in the Netherlands. This conference laid the ground work for the NGOs to further pursue the conference's objectives and recommendations. This, in a way, culminated in the *'Media in Transition'* conference which took place in January 1992 on South African soil (Duncan & Seleoane 1998; Thorne 1998: 216). However, it was the Campaign for Open Media (COM) which worked tirelessly at grassroots level to attain the goal of independent broadcasting in South Africa (Minnie 2000: 174-176). The main objectives, advocated by CODESA at the governmental level and supported by – amongst other NGOs – COM at the grassroots level, were concerned with empowerment of the South African people and allowing them full participation in the realisation of a democratic life style. It was aware that the process of empowerment and participation could successfully be achieved through the 'freeing of the airwaves' in general and the establishment of community radio stations in particular.

However, to help the (then future) Government of National Unity in developing a democratic culture other institutions such as the Independent Broadcasting Authority[4] (IBA) had to be governmentally decreed to assist in building a vibrant, democratic South Africa. By 1993 Act 153 was legislated to pave the way for the recognition of the IBA, which would oversee the formulation of rules and regulations for the print and electronic media as well as the drafting of policies to ensure that the democratic principles were upheld, and where no-one was prejudiced when applying for a licence. The Act was subsequently amended to take into account a few new developments (Mtimde 2000: 173-179; Minnie 2000: 174-179).

The Media: Restructured and Repositioned

Between 1993 and 1995 much activity such as licensing, complaints and other similar activities were safeguarded. These safeguards gave rise to the formation of specific bodies to help monitor the media. At present there are four bodies which are independent of one another but whose work are interrelated. They are (a) the Press Ombudsman and an appeal panel in 1997 (This body was set up by journalists and the publishers' association); (b) the Broadcasting Monitoring and

Complaints Committee, which consists of four members from the legal and media professions with a working or retired judge to oversee the complaints etc; (c) the South African Advertising Auhtority, which listens to complaints pertaining to the advertisements and related matters; and (d) Broadcasting Complaints Commission, which was mooted by the National Broadcasting Association to also sort out the complaints. Subsequent to the setting up of these structures, permission was granted to issue temporary licences to private and community applicants, and the SABC had to be restructured and sell off some of its 22 stations.

Various community organizations and business companies made their applications, realising that the "radio is the most often utilised and successful medium for social change" in the third world (Gray-Felder 2001: 2). This was thus the start of 'participatory communication' in South Africa.[5] When opportunities opened up for the communities to establish their own radio stations, many prepared and handed in detailed proposals to the government's IBA. This initiative, on the part of the respective communities, demonstrated their willingness to be active participants in communicating and disseminating information via the media. During the apartheid era the community already had enduring experiences with the printing press (Tomaselli & Louw 1991). This time round they looked forward to having a richer relationship and more meaningful experience with the radio, which is acknowledged to be a more powerful instrument than the press and even the television.

Since many in the disadvantaged sectors of South African society realised the exciting experience and powerful potential of this medium, the IBA was flooded with almost 200 applications, nation-wide. By June 1995 it granted 80 licences[6] (Fardon & Furniss 2000: 7; Mabanga & Matlou 2001). The mere act of granting the licences was "finally freeing the airwaves from state control" (Morton 1995: 26). Even though a fair number of religious groups applied to obtain temporary licenses, some did not fulfill the requirements laid down by the IBA and were thus unsuccessful.

In bringing this section to a close, two more issues have to be dealt with. The first makes reference to Paulo Freire's ideas quoted by both Taylor (1995) and Dagron (2001: 34). Paulo Freire's writings, such as *Education: The Practice of Freedom* (1973) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974), proposed that programmes and processes need to focus on capacity-building that leads to empowerment of individuals and communities. This was indeed what had – to some degree -- taken place in various sectors of the South African society. The Muslim community, for example, were amongst those fortunate religio-cultural communities who gave attention to capacity-building by granting their youth as well as others who were adherents of other religio-cultural groups the opportunity to train in radio journalism, sound engineering and other related fields (cf Davies 1989: 191-192). But even though certain religio-cultural communities benefitted from the transformation and were able to focus on capacity-building,

the process of empowerment – as Taylor correctly pointed out – has been affected by nation-wide poverty, unemployment, crime and violence amongst South Africa's disadvantaged communities (1995: 173-175).

The second issue is that one should take full cognisance of the fact that South African society like all other societies in this 'global village' is a heterogeneous one, and because of this the members of the society are adherents of diverse cultures, vibrant ethnic groups and rich religious traditions. When they take charge of the media, they employ the media to first and foremost reflect their religio-cultural and ethnic identity before granting space to the opinions and views of those belonging to other social groups. In this regard the edited work of Hoover & Lundby (1997) is relevant. These editors and their contributors cogently argued that the relationship between 'religion, media and culture' intersect and impact upon one another. These and other scholars have, only of late, been studying this phenomenon in order to see how they interact and to what extent the media became influential religio-cultural tools. In the light of these issues, attention will now be turned to Muslim involvement in the media in general, and to those who became initimately involved with the Muslim community radio stations.

Muslim Media Workers in the State Broadcasting Sector
Human Resources – Specialisation & Training
The majority of South Africa's active Muslim community belonged to the disadvantaged communities. However, it is only during the latter part of the twentieth century that they became economically mobile. Growing numbers graduated from South African tertiary institutions. Some specialised in the humanities and education to move into the teaching profession, and others steered in the direction of management and natural and health sciences respectively, eventually succeeding as accountants, economists, doctors, nurses and health workers. There is no evidence of many Muslim individuals having considered moving into media and communication studies between the 1950s and 1970s. This development was only witnessed towards the beginning of the 1980s and during the 1990s. The main reasons could be that (a) the media studies programmes at the tertiary levels were not well established during those years, and (b) few from the disadvantaged communities were given opportunities to consider print and electronic journalism as viable options.[7] Human resources in these areas were thus scarce. An upsurge in these fields has only been seen in the last two decades of the 20th century. In the print media the names of, amongst others, Khadija Magardie and the late Amin Akhalwaya from Johannesburg, Zubayda Jaffer and Benny Gool from Cape Town, and Rafiq Rohan and Farouk Khan from Durban come to mind. Very little information is available regarding those who went into the broadcasting sector. However, mention may be made of Shamila Essack, an SABC TV documentary producer, Anisa Yussuf, an SABC 1 news reader, and Zurayda

Jardien a Radio Good Hope disc jockey. It is an undeniable fact that with the establishment of community stations, many more joined the media and communications sector and these developments stimulated others to consider media and communication studies as areas of specialisation.

State Stations[8]

Those Muslims who found opportunities at the state radio stations and in other sectors of the media world made in-roads for themselves, and this paid off in many different ways. Muslims – as a religious minority – featured in documentaries showed on television and aired on radio. Those individuals, who had acquired certain skills such as sound engineering, were able to work in that capacity without being noticed; but then there were a few who excelled in their positions and drew the attention of the executive staff of the respective media companies for which they laboured, and were thus pushed into positions where they could apply their skills as producers and presenters.

The South African Broadcasting Corporation's *Radio Sonder Grense* and *SAfm's* religious programmes have been amongst those stations which gave the Muslims a small percentage of airtime. Even though the percentage was pretty small, it provided the Muslim community a useful platform to share their views. For instance, during the early 1990s every Thursday night on *Radio Sonder Grense* the presenter, Mr. Shaik, and a community religious leader, Shaykh Abduraghiem Salie, had an open discussion on Islam in Afrikaans. At the turn of the decade Ms. Shaheeda Carlie and Shaykh Thafir Najaar took over this slot. Later when the restrictions were lifted and policies became more liberal, Muslims such as Dr. Farid Esack were invited to sit on its advisory board and were also participants in *SAfm's* panel discussions on 'Islam and Muslims.'

SABC TV also provided some space for Muslims on Sundays and Fridays during the 1990s. On Fridays selected individuals presented a two minutes message on *Reflections of Faith* which was supervised by Sh. Ameen Amod, a former post-graduate student at the University of Cape Town, and University of Durban-Westville's Professor Suleiman E. Dangor. Every alternate Sunday Nceba Salamtu – a graduate from one of the Pakistani Islamic institutions – hosted *Wal-'Asr*, which featured a variety of socio-cultural and educational activities in the Muslim community. Whilst the *We believe, You believe* Sunday programme explored various aspects of beliefs and practices in the different religious communities, Cedric Mayson's[9] *Credo* provided a forum for them to make their intellectual input on religion. In fact, although *Credo* is no longer on air, Mr. Mayson continued to pursue relevant religious issues in his newspaper column. Two other weekly programmes[10], which focus on 'religion' and usually include aspects on Islam, namely *Issues of Faith* broadcast on SABC2 at 18h30, and *Shadows of Divinity: Religious Magazine* broadcast at 9h00 on SABC1. These programmes are co-presented by Shamila Essack and Trevor Tshababala and produced by Mr. Sheikh.

The Durban based 'Indian' *Radio Lotus*, over the years, broadcast 'Islamic' programmes throughout the week and devote more airtime when Muslims celebrate the major festivities such as 'Id ul-Adha' and 'Id ul-Fitr.'

The Muslim Stations: Motivations & Applications

Motivations for a temporary licence

The Muslim organizations celebrated when they succeeded in securing licences for their respective regions. They celebrated because they strongly motivated and convincingly argued for temporary licences in their detailed proposals the reasons for wanting to set up stations; some of their motivations were that (a) the state stations were not providing adequate airtime for Muslims, and (b) that these stations, who usually depend upon news and information from Reuters and other news agencies, continue to broadcast biased and negative news reports about Islam and Muslims (Noor 1995; Jassat 1999; Kai 2000). Whilst these motivations were acceptable, the most important rationale for the applications were (a) job creation, (b) empowerment, and (c) social upliftment. The applicants generally reflected that they would cultivate religious tolerance, and respect the rights of other religio-cultural communities.

The Applicants

The IBA received 200 applications for community radio station licences, and 19 out of the 200 were from religious groups or organizations. And from the 19 only 7 represented urban-based Muslim organizations. IBA granted temporary licences to only 5 Muslim applicants. In Johannesburg the successful groups were Az-Zaheer[11] who had to share a frequency with the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa's (est.1970) *As-Saut* station which was managed by former *Al-Qalam* editor and present MYMSA president, Naeem Jeenah; and the Jami'at ul-Ulama's Lenasia branch laid the foundations for *Radio Islam* which was managed by Maulana Dhorat. The Pretoria based *Radio 786* – no relations with the Cape *Radio 786*, which was amongst the succesful ones, only went on air in February 1996.

Shifting to Durban and its surrounding areas, Mr. Ebrahim Jadwat – a founding member of MYMSA and entrepeneur – planned the formation of *Radio Azaania* under the auspices of Azanian Broadcasting Corporation in Durban; he and his support group did not manage to get the station off the ground in October 1995 as planned. However, in Durban Al-Ansaar Educational Foundation formed *Al-Ansaar* Radio station, which has been operating only during Ramadan since it was granted a restricted temporary licence. The nationally based Islamic Unity Convention (est.1994), which has its headquarters in Cape Town, applied for a licence for its station, namely *Radio 786*, and the Muslim Judicial Council (est.1945), in conjunction with nine other community organizations, formed the Muslim Broadcasting Corporation to obtain a licence for their joint venture, the

Voice of the Cape. In certain small Muslim-populated cities such as Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, Muslim radio stations were established but were not granted temporary licences to broadcast throughout the year; these were only given restricted licences to operate during Ramadan. In Port Elizabeth and the surrounding areas the *Voice of Guidance* functioned in 1997 and 1998 respectively, and in 1999 *Radio ya Salaam* went on air. This was established by the 'Lad Boys and Girls Brigade.' And in 2000 and 2001 'The Eastern Cape Malayo Cultural Society' was able to go on air under the auspices of *Radio Nur*.[12]

Although it was very heartening to see the number of applicants, this posed a problem for the IBA since it did not anticipate that there would be so many applicants. The IBA was however in a dilemma because the number of applicants outstripped the number of available frequencies; in the end it was forced to grant a frequency, which had to be shared; this was particularly the case in the Cape and Gauteng where two respective Muslim groups vied for licences and were told to share the frequency. The two Cape stations, namely *Radio 786* and *Voice of the Cape*, were affected by this decision when they were granted a temporary licence in 1995. They began to broadcast more-or-less the same time using the same frequency which gave rise to a certain degree of confusion initially (Morton 1995: 27). These stations were granted the opportunity of broadcasting on the FM wave bands whilst their co-religionists had to be satisfied with the medium wave bands. The other mentioned stations, however, started their programmes in 1996. Initially the idea of sharing frequencies was frowned upon by the inexperienced applicants, but later they were satisfied with the outcome.

The Stations
There are indeed quite a few Muslim radio stations located in at least four main cities, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pretoria and Durban. Since it will not be possible to tackle each and every one, this section will only deal with the more prominent stations on the basis of the controversies and their popularity. The evaluation towards the end will comment and try to link their activities, where possible, together. This section begins by introducing the satellite station (*Channel Islam International*), which is separate and somewhat different from the other stations, namely the conservative voices (*Radio Islam* & *Voice of the Cape*) and the liberal voices (*Radio 786* & *The Voice*).

Channel Islam – The Voice for Africa
Towards the end of the year 2000 Mr. Ashraf, a former electronics expert and Managing Director of the Lenasia based 'Islamic Sound & Vision' company, had investments in a variety of companies. These he apparently sold and invested much of his money into setting up *Channel Islam International* in Lenasia, a predominantly Indian suburb of Johannesburg where a sizeable Muslim population reside. Mr. Ashraf and his management team succeeded in setting up the satellite

station; he, as the sole investor, had to invest about R10 million in the project to get it off the ground and to broadcast it to the different African and Middle Eastern states.

Even though the channel, which uses the satellite medium, might not be competing with smaller radio stations, the drawback for the listener to tune in to this channel is that the person has to invest in a special World Space satellite radio which costs approximately $200.00. However, being a community based radio station, which has helped to take 'Islam' to the homes of families in Gaborone, Lusaka, Harare, Maputo and a host of other cities where the World Space satellite radio station is available and able to reach, it has attracted a great deal of interest from communities in these cities. In Gaborone, for example, the station – as part of its outreach programme – came out to the community towards the end of 2001 before the month of Ramadan, and was broadcasting the whole of the weekend from the Botswana Muslim Council mosque premises to other parts of the continent. This community drive was successful in that the community were able to get to know some of the main presenters and the persons behind the funding of the station. However, representaives of the managing team also came to know the extent of the community support in cities such as Gaborone.

According to *Channel Islam International*, it has over a quarter million listeners in the region in more than 50 states. This is indeed phenomenal and one expects the listenership to grow rapidly because of the nature of the broadcast. The channel broadcasts a wide range of programmes, from talk shows to qasidah slots. The channel therefore sees itself attracting an audience ranging from the young adolescent to the mature adult. If the channel maintains its momentum, then it will successfully attract more listeners as they improve the quality of the programming and programmes. It will in the end be financially fruitful for the owners and for the listeners religiously rewarding.

It was observed that whilst the channel adopts an open policy in discussing a variety of issues such as, for example, every Wednesday's 'Finance' between 19h00 to 20h00, immediately thereafter 'The News' from 20h00 to about 20h10, and between 20h15 till about 21h00 'Health' issues, it reflects a slightly conservative approach during its advertisement breaks. Firstly, no music is used in the advert(s), and secondly, no jingles are played between the advert and the programme that follows. The switch between the advert and the news, for instance, is done in a very unprofessional manner; the moment the advert ends the news is read without a distinct interruption and indication that a new programme is about to start. During the very short intervals between the various programmes, the programmers make use of the popular Middle Eastern and South Asian acappella or they make use of their frequently repeated radio motto: 'A guide to a better Islamic lifestyle'.

The Conservative Voices

Radio Islam and *Voice of the Cape* have both been described as 'conservative'

because their founding organizations, namely Jamiat ul-Ulama of Gauteng and the Muslim Judicial Council, generally opt for the traditional life style and value system; they are not in favour of great or sudden social changes. However, even though these two stations are lumped in one category, it does not mean that they do not differ on a number of issues – they do. For example, the *Voice of the Cape's* policy on women participation on the station as presenters and in other roles is not the same as that of *Radio Islam*. The term 'conservative' should be seen as an all-encompassing one, which accommodates the views of these two organizations and their appendages. And since there is a close connection between the nature of conservatism and the terms 'ultra-orthodox' and ' orthodox' respectively, the term 'conservative' was considered the most appropriate one.

Radio Islam – The Ultra-Orthodox Voice[13]

The Jamiat ul-Ulama of Gauteng (JUG), formerly known as the Jamiat ul-Ulama of the Transvaal (est. 1923), established *Radio Islam* in 1997. The station was set up in the heart of Lenasia, not very far from where *Channel Islam International* is broadcasting, and has a large following in the area. It is however able to broadcast beyond the confines of Lenasia, and is able to reach a radius of 35 km. Being a very conservative theological organization and male dominated, the management of the station adopted certain policies which reflected their conservative and anti-progressive position. They, like the management team of *Channel Islam International*, adopted and implemented a policy of not accepting any form of music on the station except those adopting the acappella genre. And although it has been avoiding the broadcasting of advertisements, the management team realised that to depend upon the limited funds from the JUG investments and other forms of (charitable) revenue will not be enough, and that the advertisements should be welcomed as a source of financial income to manage the affairs of the station effectively; and it is for this reason that JUG made special appeals to the business community (on its website) to advertise (without music of course!). However, their attitude towards the latter mentioned issue is inextricably tied to their interpretation of Muslim theology, which is an age-old debate between conservatives and liberals within the house of Islam.

In addition to JUG's policy towards music, it adopted an ultra-orthodox policy towards the women. JUG implemented a policy of not allowing women to feature on radio as sound engineers, presenters, producers or in any other capacity; this policy stems from their reading, understanding and interpretation of Muslim theology. JUG, being Hanafite trained theologians, logically argued that because of Islamic law's stringent rules – as interpreted by them and their fore-bears, that there should be no free mixing with (strange) women, and that the voice of the woman is part of her *'awra* (private part). From this, they deduced that woman therefore cannot in any way be part of the station's team of presenters or workers, and nor is she allowed to speak on the radio because of the

effect (sic) it might have on its male listeners! (Haffajee 1998: 9; Cassiem 1999: 2-9; Wessels 1998: 29-35).

This issue was immediately taken up by Youth for Islam, Enlightenment, Leadership & Development, a youth movement in the Gauteng province, and other interested parties.[14] The youth group pointed out that the station violated section 14 and contravened section 36 of the 'Code of Conduct for Broadcasters.' The station's management committee had to attend the IBA hearings to defend their decisions; however, because of their hard-line attitude, they chose to take out an interdict against the IBA's ruling. Only after the Witwatersrand High Court ruled in favour of the IBA on 11th of November 1997 did the official hearing take place (Linington 1998). They of course lost because of the pressure put on them from various sectors of the Muslim and non-Muslim society. Since that incident, which was a hot topic and was given national coverage by all the media, the management was forced to accommodate the women and was expected to abide by the rules and regulations set down by the IBA; for example, the station had to provide 3 hours of air-time to women presenters between 7h30 and 22h00 everyday, and it had to increase the number of women by a third of the total membership of every committee before the 1st of June 1998.

Despite the ultra-orthodox nature of the station, it has its crop of faithful listeners who fully support JUG's stand and views. JUG and other theologians in other provinces consider themselves to be the gatekeepers of Islamic knowledge, and the ones who have the authority to interpret the primary texts of Islam and, by implication, speak on behalf of (all) Muslims. It is exactly for this reason that they see themselves as important disseminators of 'authentic' Islam as opposed to the liberal voices such as *The Voice*, which broadcasts to the same audience from a different location and on a different frequency. It can only be concluded that their notion of participation and empowerment is selective and indeed discriminatory.

Voice of the Cape – The Orthodox Voice

The Muslim Judicial Council[15] (MJC, est. 1945) is a member of South Africa's Council of Theologians and advocates similar views as its counterparts in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal respectively. However, when one compares the two, one cannot but note that they do differ radically on a few issues such as the playing of music, and the position of women; they are guardedly less conservative regarding these two sensitive issues than their counterparts. The MJC realised when making an application for a temporary licence that they needed a bigger group to see the application through. With this in mind, they were joined by a few broad-based and influential community organizations under an umbrella organization called the Muslim Broadcasting Corporation (MBC).[16] The station was located in the Woodstock-Salt River area, and later it moved to new premises in the Bo-Kaap – also referred to as 'the Malay Quarters', an area which is a densely

Muslim populated place; most of the Muslims in that part proudly consider themselves to be 'Cape Malays'.

Voice of the Cape, the name given to the MBC station, was well received with its classic Cape 'sea waves' jingle in the background; it uses this jingle whenever the station promotes itself at regular intervals. It was however forced to share the same frequency (FM 100.4) on every alternate day during the month with Radio 786. The station is run by a management team and since its inception towards the end of 1995, signs of management and staff problems and changes were already appearing. During the course of 1996 and early 1997 the Voice of the Cape underwent a few changes amongst its staff, some of whom protested against unfair practices by the management and complained that the MJC was enforcing its decisions on the staff. The IBA was thus approached to intervene; the staff were successful in their mediation battle and some of them were re-instated whilst others went off to take up other posts (Manjra & Sangley 1997: 23). In addition to its internal problems, there were also complaints from the listeners who were not happy with the programmes. However, one of the most serious allegations was a letter written to the IBA by the MBC; it attempted to undermine and smear the reputation of Radio 786 by accusing the station of misconduct. On 26 October 2000 Islamic Unity Convention came across this letter and chose to seek legal advise to take up the matter (Anon 2000: 19). The IUC's mouthpiece, Al-Miftah (2000/2001: 19), published the letter in full; as yet there has been no outcome regarding this matter. During the course of 2001, the station's new management team under the direction of Mr. Ebrahim Arnold – a chartered accountant from the Bo-Kaap area, solicited opinions from the community regarding programmes and numerous other issues.

The station offered a mixed bag of programmes such as women's affairs, Islamic Law, and social problems. The programmes have been hosted by individuals from various backgrounds and with a variety of tastes and interests. From amongst the many programmes, there is 'Happy Families, Happy Homes' which is presented, during the late mornings, by Imam Moutie Saban, a former car dealer who turned Imam. Although there have been critcisms from certain quarters regarding the contents and question-and-answer sessions of this programme, it has been considered amongst the popular ones. Then there is a regular slot on 'Sharia' which is hosted by Mr. Arnold who poses certain questions to the Shaykh for that partcular programme.

The station's professional and technical team took a while to gather a good crop of individuals who wanted exposure and training in radio journalism. One of their problems, as mentioned earlier, was the stability of the managerial team which included a capable station manager. When prominent community worker, the late Achmat Davids, was in charge there was a period of stability. However, before and during that time the station managed to attract an interesting group of potential journalists who wanted to be programmers, presenters, producers et al; amongst

them were females such as Munadia Keraan who excelled in her position as presenter, news editor and reader (Daniels 1999: 43-45). Moreover, some of the presenters were persons who came from other religious traditions; here the name of Vernon Adams comes to mind. He got his basic training at this station and not too long thereafter was lured away to other newly established stations such as *Cape Talk*, a popular professionally run radio station in Cape Town.

Furthermore, the ambitious nature of MBC caused the organization to apply for two separate temporary licences for two outlying stations, namely *Voice of Paarl* and *Voice of Worcester*; after being successful the stations were launched during the latter part of 1998. The location of these stations outside Greater Cape Town and in the Boland region meant that they were forced to broadcast on alternate days on the same frequency (FM 98.5), and in place of *Radio 786*, which was unsuccesful in its bid for a temporary licence to broadcast on this frequency to the mentioned outlying towns. The inception of these stations meant that some of its human resources had to be transferred and shared with these two stations, and this resulted in the training of new persons to serve the parent station. From the list of items mentioned, it is quite clear that it was deeply involved in the empowerment and very much concerned with capacity building.

Despite the untold rivalry, which emerged over the course of the 5 years between these two Cape stations, they have been able to maintain their independence and also build up a sizeable following. Supporters for the *Voice of the Cape* were growing at a steady pace; it boasts of more than a 100,000 supporters, listeners, and sympathisers. VOC popularised itself via establishing outside broadcasting and outreach programmes. This became a natural part of its weekly activities, particularly over weekends. It tried to fully identify with and participate in the communities which it served. It, for example, would broadcast one weekend from one of the main supermarkets where individuals of different religious persuasions shop; and on another it would broadcast from the school grounds where there were different sporting events and other entertainment.

In addition to going out to broadcast from specific venues, it also established its annual festivals to raise funds to sustain the running costs of the station, and to also plough monies back into community projects. During 2001 it held one of its annual festivals at the Green Point Stadium not very far from the station's headquarters and very near to the popular Cape Town Waterfront between the 5th and 7th of October. The festival drew a crowd of about 60,000 people, and it offered a variety of entertainment for the community who patronised the festival. Amongst the activities, which took place, were a fun run, a big walk, a golf competition, and a soccer match. Prior to this festival, it went on a pledge drive, which brought to the MBC coffers more than R150,000.00 in order to upgrade its equipment and move to their own premises (Anon 2001: 3). The annual VOC festival and outside broadcasting have given the station a high community profile, and because of this it will remain *Radio 786*'s competitor.

The Liberal Voices

In direct opposition to the conservative voices are the liberal ones, the ones who do not oppose social changes and are in favour of the transformation of leadership, programmes, activities and outlook. The two stations discussed hereunder, namely *Radio 786* and *The Voice*, are different in their outlook but are strong upholders of transformation. However, whilst *Radio 786* is categorised as a liberal voice, its not as liberal as *The Voice*. It is moreover more radical with regards to socio-political issues and adopts a provocative stance towards leadership. *The Voice* may be described and defined as progressive; in fact, its founding body – the MYMSA classified itself as being part of the progressive movement.

Radio 786 - The Radical Voice[17]

This station, which describes itself as the station which "keeps you listening, thinking and talking," was established by a broad-based Muslim NGO, namely the Islamic Unity Convention; an organization which was given birth to by prominent Muslim business persons such as the late Mr. Salie Mohamed who worked under the Muslim Unity Society banner. At the time of its launch in March 1994, the IUC represented approximately 254 regionally and nationally based organizations, and was thus in the position to boast of having a wide range of talent and human resources. It established the station to reach the disempowered; particularly the Muslims who have generally regarded and accepted the role of the Shaykhs and Imams as paramount and the purveyors of Islamic knowledge. The IUC came to challenge that role through its irregular printed tabloid, *Al-Miftah*, the establishment of its own theological committee, and this radio station.

Radio 786's motto is to "inform, educate and uplift" and is located on the periphery of a densely Indian populated area known as Rylands. However, its location is easily accessible to the disadvantaged communities residing in the Cape Flats. It is also surrounded by a number of other influential Muslim organizations such as the South African National Zakaat Fund, Muslims against Global Oppression, the Muslim Views newspaper, Africa Muslim Agency, Islamic Dawah Movement of South Africa and the regional headquarters of the Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa, which established *The Voice* in Gauteng.

The business-like approach of the station's management who were drawn from the IUC ranks placed the station in a fairly sound poistion to manage its affairs such as capacity building and adminstering the programmes. During its first year it had a fairly smooth year of running as far as its staff was concerned, and since its inception trained a number of individuals in the field of broadcasting. It adopted a multi-tasking approach, according to Amien Ahmad, the former station manager, in order to stream-line and manage the 'on-the-job' training of individuals; this, for him, was the station's rule. This approach allowed them to be involved in the various teams created by the management; for example, a staff member who was involved in the team of 'sport' presenters also found him/

herself involved in the 'News & Current Affairs' team. In this manner it succeeded to create and develop multi-skilled personnel. Two names will be sufficient to mention; Mansoor Modack – a former Kengsington High School teacher – who sometimes read the news, anchored the 'Straight Talk' and 'Prime Talk' slots respectively, and Nurah Tape who has proved to be one of *Radio 786's* best and most capable producers and news editors (Daniels 1999c: 41-45). Many spoke highly of her potential and skills. The station seems to have taken the ideas of capacity building and empowerment very seriously. As far as the management was concerned they trained individuals (males and females) for others. Indeed, this has been the case with a few individuals who were snapped up by other radio stations and e-TV, the privately owned and run TV station which broadcasts nationally.

According to the polls, this station has the most listeners for a community radio station in the Greater Cape Town region; it appears to have outstripped its sister station in terms of listenership. The June 2000 RAMS survey indicated that it had over 135,000 listeners. One of the main reasons for this sizeable number of listeners is because it has offered, over the past few years, a broad spectrum of programmes ranging from health, education, religion, current affairs to sport; these fall within the ambit of the programming team who have to see to 19 to 24 hours of broadcasting hours on the days it broadcasts. It makes use of various jingles and catch phrases to attract its listenership; for example, its website foot line reads "tune in to 100.4 FM stereo ... for your empowerment and listening pleasure" and at the top of its advertising masthead it reads "Discerning, Dissenting, Never Disappointing." It has numerous popular programmes – more than 30 of them – such as 'Prime Talk,' 'Straight Talk,' 'News Reviews & Analysis' and it also presented a series on very important and relevant topics such as 'Detention and Torture in South Africa' which was presented by Mansoor Modack and his guest, UCT's Professor Don Foster. The station popularised the problems faced in the Muslim world by concentrating on the affairs of various Muslim countries such as Algeria, Afghanistan, and Palestine; international panelists participated in providing new insights into international affairs. For example, Shaykh Omar Abdul-Rahman, who – along with others – was accused of the World Trade Centre bombing in New York in 1993, was interviewed on the 15th January 1996 by *Radio 786*; this was a big scoop for the station and South African Muslims. Another interview scoop was with Shaykh Yasien of Hamas in Palestine; the latter was supposed to have come to South Africa but was not granted an entry visa due to pressure from the Palestine National Authority which is led by Yasser Arafat.

On its 'Global Perspectives' programme – a forthnightly one – it interviewed prominent international journalists such as John Pilger and Robert Fisk. Its 'Prime Talk' show looked at the HIV-Aids debate, Genetic Engineering and a host of other themes. This and many other types of scoops drew a fair amount of listenership

from a cross-section of the community; the category of people who enjoy serious newsworthy and debatable programmes. Since it established its limited interactive website, listeners have had the opportunity of tuning in to past popular programmes by retrieving them from the site; some of the programmes on the web are Envirowise, Labour Law For All, Healthwise, and Women's Forum.

Radio 786 initiated the outside broadcasting programmes and also its community outreach activities. It managed to excel in the latter activities and took up the challenge of responding to the needs in the community. For example, during winter time the Cape experiences severe storms and floods, and because of this many parts of the Cape Flats are affected, and in response the station rallies around the Operation Winter Warmth project. It also got tied up with projects such as the inter-madaris (muslim schools) qasida competition, Parent–Child empowerment workshops, 'Telethon' in aid of Tygerberg Hospital's Department of Social Work, and 'The Gift of Sound' for 4-year-old Fahim Nordien who needed a cochlear implant. These types of projects endeared the station to the scores of listeners who came to its assistance when it was fighting certain legal battles, and when it holds its annual fairs. The station has generally been highly rated in certain circles for its popular community announcement and information programmes such as Telejobline, community calendar, in touch, and organization profiles, and its serious talk shows; others were however highly critical of it, considering it to be pro-Shi'ite and the handmaiden of Qibla, the 'radical' organization of Achmad Cassiem who is the current chairperson of the IUC, since Shaykh Abdul-Kariem Toffar stepped down more than 3 years ago.

The station also had its fair share of problems compared to VOC. However, the nature of the problems was different. One of the first problems was the act of sabotage during the month of fasting in 1997. This was indeed a cowardly act by unknown sabotuers who cut the station's newly installed cables. Later during that year, because of the complaints of Dr. Ebrahim Moosa and Shaykh Satardien respectively against the station for its biased reporting and incitement against them, the management team led by (the then) station manager, Amien Ahmad, were forced to face the IBA's disciplinary committee. Dr. Moosa was vindicated and the station was warned to avoid any biased reporting and incitement.[18] Sh. Satardien however withdrew his complaint. Subsequent to this complaint the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBOD) also complained about anti-Semitic sentiments and inflammatory remarks made by the guest of the IUC, namely Dr. Yaqub Zaki, a British scholar. In response, the station's management team decided to sue the IBA, BMCC, SAJBOD and the Minister of Communications; this case was heard on the 28th and 29th of November 2000 (cf. *Muslim Views* 2000(11): 14). Their main arguments were that the SAJBOD's letter did not amount to a complaint, and nor did they lodge their complaint within the stipulated period of 30 days and the IBA strangely ruled that it was lodged within the said period. Although the outcome of this issue remains unresolved,

the station decided to take up the matter with the Constitutional Court to cancel section 2(a) of the 'Code of Conduct for Broadcasters' from the IBA constitution because it was vague and restricts broadcasters from debating critically. The Johannesburg based Freedom of Expression Institute (est. 1994), which was concerned with, inter alia, the rights of a person to express him/herself and to have access to the court to defend his/her case, has come in support of the station's demand.[19] Earlier mention was made of the MBC's confidential letter to the IBA, in which it accused *Radio 786* of certain misconduct; the IUC has sought legal opinion to take up the matter with the IBA and other relevant authorities.

The Voice[20] – The Progressive Voice

The Muslim Youth Movement of South Africa (est. 1970) is amongst the most broadly based community organizations which gave rise to numerous other organizations such as its mouthpeice, namely *Al-Qalam*, the South African National Zakaat Fund and the Islamic Dawah Movement of South Africa which have since become autonomous (Tayob 1995). As a parent organization it continued to give birth, and this time round to *The Voice (As-Saut)*. However, it realised that it was in the interest of the station to operate separately, and because of this it formed the Muslim Community Broadcasting Trust in 1994. Since its inception it was run by a management committee of 13 people of diverse backgrounds; most of whom were professionals such as activists, religious leaders and business persons who had a keen interest in setting up a broadcasting unit. It had in mind not only to establish a radio station, but also a TV community station; the latter is still in its foetal stages. MCBT was supported by a range of Muslim organizations such as the Call of Islam, Islamic Medical Association, Laudium Muslim Women's Association, and Nurul Islam Primary School, which were stationed in Johannesburg and its surrounding areas. The station went on air on the 29 August 1997 and has been on for 24 hours a day ever since. It is situated in an Indian area on the outskirts of central Johannesburg, namely Mayfair and broadcasts to beyond the Greater Johannesburg area – a radius of more than 35km; it also includes towns such as Soweto, Benoni, Bosmont, Krugersdorp and Laudium. *The Voice's* wide coverage ensures that it receives a sizeable number of listeners in the region of about 120,000. In fact, the RAMS results indicated that it has more than the sister station in the area *Radio Islam*!

The Voice's current station manager is Mr. Abdul Basit Bulbulia, a business person who has the necessary managerial skills. He was preceded by Mr. Na'eem Jeenah, the MYMSA Secretary General. *The Voice* drew an active group of skilled personnel who received 'on the job training' as producers and presenters. Amongst them are: Aliyah Haeri who presents the pre-Khutbah jumuah programme, Salim Mohamed and Yusuf Dadabhai who offer their Edu-care educational programme, Yusuf Seedat who introduces 'Police Beat,' Najma Ansari who hosts 'First things First'; and with

Hajira Ganget who discusses 'Lifting the Veil,' Julie Patel shares her 'Household Hints,' and her namesake Julie Ally presents 'Straight Talk.' All of these individuals provide coverage of a variety of exciting and interesting programmes. The diverse programmes have been challenging and attracted a wide listenership.

Recording the number of persons involved and the different programmes listed proved that community stations have been successful in harnessing the skills of young and old persons, males and females. And as a consequence, all of them were able to demonstrate their abilities to produce a specific programme with a certain amount of professionalism. The different and diverse programmes such as Global Dialogue, Editorial License, Voice of Health, Medically Speaking, World View, and Under the Shade of the Sirah, which are on air between 16h00 and 20h30, are ample evidence of the range of material which can be offered to maintain people's interest in the station. During the evening it offers Family Matters, Pearls from the Past, In the Shade of the Quran. An interesting addition to the mentioned programmes are those presented for specific linguistic (refugee and indigenous) communities. For example, 'Amharie' is an Ethiopian programme which broadcasts on Saturday mornings, the 'Boabab' for the Ivorians, the 'Somali Voice' on Sundays, 'Ukholo' for Sesotho speakers, and 'Qawali ki Mehfil' for Urdu listeners. The Voice broadcasts 'Drive Time Live,' which is a news review programme, and it broadcasts 'Our Treasure Chest' aimed at the children, 'Saut as Shabab' which targets the youth, the bi-weekly 'Sports Special,' and the daily morning 'Saut un-Nisa' (Women's Voices[sic]). A brief insight into the spin-offs of the latter programme will cleary demonstrate to what extent the station drew closer to the community and more importantly to what degree it followed a very progressive policy with regards to women; a policy which is diametrically opposed to that of JUG and those who accept JUG's views.

'Saut un-Nisa' is a term with reference to all the women's programmes such as 'Lifting the Veil,' 'Women Today,' and 'Maids & Madams' on The Voice. The team of representatives from each of the programmes and their co-workers on the station organized to celebrate National Women's Day on the 8th and 9th of August 1998. They pamphleteered and published a booklet to explain and clarify the role of women in contemporary South African society; the idea was 'to explode the myths surrounding the Muslim woman' and for the ordinary women to 'tell their stories' of abuse and difficulties (Moosajee 1998: 10). The two days' activities included: workshops focusing on abuse, self development, and empowering women; special focus on Muslim Personal Law, which directly impacts and affects the position of women in contemporary society, was also part of the two days' proceedings. The organizers invited speakers from the local government and the Commission for Gender Equality to address relevant issues in relation to women. In addition to the serious discussions, they displayed the handicrafts and artifacts created by the women of Mayfair and other areas. Other activities for the two days were also organized to entertain the children. The event was

considered a huge success and an eye-opener for those who had an 'orthodox' perception of women. The discussions were 'alive' and 'open.'

The Voice's motto is 'Open & Alive' and it broadcasts on FM 95. 4. It sees itself as an alternative voice, which grants the listeners an opportunity to voice their comments, opinions, and criticisms. In this way, the station management argues, they are able to influence and shape the programmes. All these pro-grammes, once again, re-inforce the view that when organizations are serious in capacity building, empowerment and participation in order to uplift and im-prove the quality of life, then the social changes which take place will also be of a qualitative standard.

Evaluation

Although it might be debated whether qualitative changes have taken place in all sectors of South Africa society, it cannot be ignored that changes have taken place; in some places radically and others superficially. The media were amongst the many tools used to bring about transformation in South Africa. However, the landscape of the South African media underwent a rapid transformation since the early 1990s; this was because of the socio-political developments in and outside the country. The SABC, the state company, and Channel Africa – its sister channel – have been amongst those media which were forced to change, and since then have made tremendous strides in broadcasting in South Africa and to the rest of the continent. On the whole, the South Africans have gener-ally enjoyed and benefitted from the available communication systems which many other countries on the continent lacked or still desire to have (Fardon & Furniss 2000). And as a result of the crucial and effective role of the South African media, the South African society was transformed. One striking example is the role the media played during the time of local and general elections; here reference is made not only to the state controlled media but also to the numer-ous community radio stations which popped up in different parts of the country. The media were able to reach many parts of the country and to educate the society about the importance of participating in the elections.[21]

The Muslim owned and controlled stations formed part of the cadre of com-munity stations which made their stations accessible to the communities in order that they obtain the necessary education as to the manner in which people had to vote. The stations went a step further by inviting politicians to punt their parties' policies and argue their cases 'in the open.' And since many Muslims joined the various parties, their representatives were able to present their views on the talk shows and debate with the listeners during phone-in times. From the available data, it cannot be denied that the community stations have played and continue to play a pivotal role in the transformation of the society. These sta-tions have brought a new dimension to broadcasting and have brought the peo-

ple closer to Parliament, something which would have taken the state controlled stations a few years to accomplish. These stations have also initiated a string of activities which ultimately led to unstoppable changes and internal transformations. Numerous factors may be listed but attention will only be given to some; they are (a) human resources, (b) programming, (c) audience.

Human Resources

The Muslim community media, despite their shortcomings, have played a tremendous role in creating opportunities for the development and training of human resources. During the past few years they have harnessed the talents of a number of young individuals, and they were in the position to re-train persons who came from other professions. In their efforts they have helped to bring new skills to their respective communities. The community stations concretely demonstrated through their respective 'development and training programmes' that they have generally complied with the IBA regulations in terms of job creation and empowerment; issues which they cogently motivated for in their applications.

Certain stations saw to it that their staff received the necessary training from media institutions in the respective areas. They thus fully supported them by obtaining the necessary funds to go for further training. In addition to this, they also assisted their staff to be exposed to international media workshops. *Radio 786*, for example, has been pro-active in having its staff trained in this manner. In 1999 Fatima Allie, a regular presenter, was amongst the fortunate 20 radio journalists – out of about 120 world-wide – who were invited to participate in the 'FOJO journalism and Democracy Seminar' in Sweden. In May 2001 Nurah Tape, the prominent *Radio 786* producer and news editor, participated in the 'FOJO Women in Journalism' seminar, and during September 2001 the station's Enviro-wise producer and presenter participated in the FOJO International Seminar on Environmental Journalism. As a consequence of the opportunities granted by these stations, individuals – who trained as sound engineers, presenters, producers and specialise in other fields in radio journalism – were able to find better jobs with major commercial radios stations; for example Vernon Adams who was a popular presenter on the *Voice of the Cape* moved to *Cape Talk* and thereafter shifted to *Radio Good Hope* in Cape Town. Then there are other individuals such as Altaf Kazee, a former *Radio 786* trainee, who ventured into sports journalism and joined e-TV as their sports reporter. There are numerous other examples of individuals who had their basic training at these stations and who moved to more lucrative and challenging positions. Other radio journalists who received their initial training at these community stations preferred to remain where they were, even though they had offers to join the commercial radio stations.

As a result of the role they were playing as radio journalists, a very consistent locally based and quarterly produced magazine, namely *Boorhanul Islam Magazine*, included a 'Radio Personality Profile' column for its readers; this column

attracted lots of interest because people were able to associate 'the faces behind the voices' and were naturally curious to know more about the presenters and personalities involved in the radio stations at the Cape. In its second issue during 2000, which coincided with the month of Muharram – the first month of the Muslim calendar, the magazine included an insert entitled 'The Faces Behind The Voices'; this handy insert covered most, if not all, those who were involved in the Cape Muslim community stations. And when programmes go on air members of the community who are avid community radio station listeners are able to immediately identify the presenter or newsreader.

Diverse Programmes

These individuals who were exposed to various radio journalism courses were thus able to produce and present programmes with a great deal of confidence. And because of the diverse interests amongst the trained individuals, they were able to demonstrate their creative nature by developing innovative programmes. These individuals thus covered the full range of programme genres from information and education to entertainment (Tomaselli & De Villiers 1998: 161). However, there were some stations such as *Radio Islam* which view the medium as only a form of 'islamic education and mission' according to the way they understand it. The idea of entertaining programmes such as music are absent from the mentioned station's list of programmes. The programme genres did not only target the adults, they also included youth programmes,and other special audiences. *Voice of the Cape* for example has a special phone in for the elderly, and they have a phone-in programme for those who are in prison. Mention was made of the fact that certain community stations such as *Al-Ansaar* in Durban and *An-Nur* in Port Elizabeth are given restricted licences annually to only go on air during the month of Ramadan during which they only present programmes dealing with fasting and spirituality. The quality of the programmes varied from the mediocre type to the unusually well-produced ones. In the mediocre category one may think of the 'Happy Families Happy Homes' presented by Imam Saban and in the well-produced catergory, Nurah Tape's programmes, which deal with contemporary socio-political issues related to the Muslim world.

During 1997 and 1998 there were community developments which sometimes dominated the airwaves to such a degree that the issue was not only heard on the community radio stations but also on SABC and private stations. One example will suffice and this is just to illustrate the extent of the coverage and the extent to which the community was involved. In the Cape a community organization emerged known as People Against Gansterism and Drugs (Galant et al 1996). This organization took up the struggle of fighting against the gangsters and drug dealers. The phenomenon was at its height during the mentioned period. During this time the struggle which they undertook led to the destruction of property, murder of gangsters and innocent individuals, and the petrol bomb-

ing of public places. Many of these acts were said to have been the work of PAGAD and as a consequence it was seen no more as 'an anti-crime group' but as 'a vigilante group.' In fact, the CIA described it as a terrorist organization alongside Qibla. The security services had a difficult time in identifying the instigators and those who committed the actual acts. The result was that the people were venting their feelings and expressing their anger about these events on the various community radio stations; some of them were arguing for and others against this NGO. *Radio 786* was seen by many as a prominent supporter of this NGO because its leaders were interviewed on numerous occasions; and when the NGO staged rallies this radio station would be there to cover the proceedings, and in the end the station was also accused of stirring fundametalism and vigilantism. There was no doubt that PAGAD was given full coverage by the community radio stations, particularly *Radio 786*, and only when the situation became unbearable in the Western Cape did the other commercial radio stations come in to add their voices to the developments. The programmes on which PAGAD featured were during the early morning news round-up sessions and in the late afternoon 'prime-talk' slots. However, there were also occasions when it appeared on other talk shows such as the youth and women's programmes to talk about the effect of drugs and the impact this had on family life.

Whilst various issues were entertained on the programmes, the radio stations had to abide by a code of conduct. If individuals were not happy with the contents of a particular programme or with the discussions on that programme, they had the right to complain to the IBA. There was an incidence where a women complained that the licensee contravened section 5(1) of the Conduct code. In essence the complaint was that a guest presenter on a particular programme did not read the full message of someone who was invited to participate on the programme. On another occassion, the Ahmadiyyah group complained against the *Voice of the Cape* and wanted to be given an opportunity of airing their views. Whilst the nature of the complaints differed from one person to the other or one group to another, it proved that within the new South African setting the listener had the freedom and right to complain to the authorities if the person felt he/she had reasonable grounds to complain. And it demonstrated that the community constantly interacted with 'their' station. Community participation was truely visible when these complaints were made and taken up by the IBA, no matter how trivial. In this regard, Davies emphasises this very point by arguing that "public demands must be heeded" and that the station management must "consult" with the audience (1989: 179).

Community Participation
The examples in the previous section re-inforce the point that the community radio stations have kept in touch with the communities they served. And even though the nature of the relationship between listeners and the stations differed

from one area to another, there is a bond which was created where the community became familiar with their programmes and presenters. In other words, according to Douglas' (1999) *Listening In* quoted by Hendy (2000: 119-120), there existed an 'associational' relationship. He, however, also stated that there is an 'emotional' link between the listeners and the station. This would clearly have come to the fore if the PAGAD story had been further explained. Douglas' third point was the 'sociability' dimension of the radio. By this he meant that listening to a station fosters human relationships on the basis that "listening is a 'sociable act.'" This is precisely what has been experienced by communities who cultivated a relationship with 'their' stations. When speaking to individuals in the street, they would describe the community station as 'our' station as opposed to 'their' station; that is the station owned by the state or private company. In line with this, Murdoch correctly remarked that the media must see themselves as part of the community and not create an 'us' and 'them' divide (1997: 89). And if this close bond is nurtured then the listener will be satified because the radio is afterall his/her diversion or companion in times of loneliness, and it also reinforces the person's self-awareness, and provides him/her with information about events (Hendy 2000: 133).

Design of programmes and audience response

However, bonding between the station and the community stations has taken shape in more than one way. This depended upon the skills of the producers and the presenters. Hendy described radio producers as "all encompassing programme makers of radio" (2000: 71). They are the ones, he further stated, who create the vibrant relations between the media and the audience.

During the morning slots the the team of producers and presenters have to become familiar with the target audience who might be housewives or children or those who work night shift etc. Thus the producers who design programmes for the toddlers, teachers and parents had to be mindful of how they intended to present them in order to make their programmes interesting, attractive, accessible and successful. The pre-school programmes, which have been flighted in the morning, have generally drawn praise because of the topics or themes which were tackled. It has been recorded that some schools occasionally tune in to listen to the subject under discussion and during their staff meetings elaborate upon the theme dealt with in the programme. This is therefore a very concrete example of community participation.

Phone-ins and audience participation

One of the most successful methods of involving the station's listeners was the popular phone-in programmes where individuals expressed their opinions, or where they dedicated certain songs to their beloved ones or friends, or raised questions to know certain answers. 'Question and Answers' about Islamic law has

proven to be one of the most popular phone-in programmes because individuals desire to know this or that about Islamic law; aspects of which they had no knowledge of and which needled them for many months or years. Questions of *halaal and haram*, i.e. the lawfulness or prohibition of certain products, have been commonly raised. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the way the questions were posed or the manner in which they were answered, one cannot but agree that the programme succeeded in drawing the listener's attention and that the presenter or guest was prepared to respond. The mere interaction and connection already guaranteed the programme's success.

The programmes, which have drawn a specific section of the Muslim (and non-Mulsim) audience, have been the phone-in programmes such as 'Straight Talk' or 'Prime Talk'; these have drawn a diverse group of people from various religious and secular backgrounds. According to Emdon, phone-ins allows for greater intimacy and a large degree of interaction and participation; this, he further argued, gave rise to democratic participation (1998b: 202). These are generally talked about programmes because the anchor person or the presenter usually cover controversial and debatable topics. One of the interesting aspects of these programmes is that they were not only confined to issues in and around their specific geographical territory but were hooked up telephonically to persons from other provinces and states to discuss and engage the community in a particular subject. Perhaps one may refer to the Palestinian question, which has remained a 'hot' topic.[22] All the Muslim community stations have given attention to the Palestinians on their programmes and during their review of events in the Muslim world. Many of them interviewed, inter alia, Edward Said, the prominent American-based, Palestinian scholar, and critical journalists like John Pilger and Robert Fisk, who covered various aspects of the Muslim world in a very objective manner. In the past Palestine was read about in the press media, but now the community stations have brought the Palestinians into the homes of the South African communities. And the communities have the chance to phone-in and air their views and identify with what was happening in Palestine and compare it with what they experienced during apartheid South Africa. These localised 'international' programmes have contributed to the community stations' unbelievable success. The stations were also pro-active in directing the listeners to further their understanding by surfing the internet; and for this very reason some of the community stations decided to set up their own websites linked to international websites of interest.

New Website Audiences

During the past three years the community stations made a conscious effort to branch out into the cyberworld. They followed a trend widely practised in the first world. In fact, Dagron gave special emphasis to the marriage between the radio stations and the internet. He opined that this is "... one of the most interest-

ing symbioses that the new techniques can offer" (2001: 30). Amongst the first Cape-based community radio stations to create a website was *Radio 786*; this was during the month of March 2001;[23] the station was however preceded by the Muslim print media, namely *Muslim Views*, which went online towards the end of January 2001.[24] These developments have already attracted a new set of listeners and viewers who are website surfers or browsers. The Cape station and newspaper were later joined by *Al-Qalam* and *The Voice (As-Saut)*.[25]

The future of this symbiotic relationship seems pretty promising but it depends on the website manager and the team of producers to always update the site and to make it more and more interactive. *Radio 786's* site is interactive but needs extra work and material to make it more attractive. *The Voice's* site has not reached the interactive stage and has to load more material other than listing and describing its programmes. This is indeed a very challenging field but it has to draw more creative minds and funds to make it successful; however, the stations must also be wary and fully aware of the dangers in setting up sites and maintaining them.[26] It also depends on how it is being used and how the audience, that is the listeners, readers, and viewers, respond to them.

Conclusion

The article demonstrated that community radio stations which proudly claimed ownership and control have generally reflected preparedness to participate in the democratic structures, even though there existed disagreements regarding various controversial bills which were implemented by the democratic state. The community radio stations have contributed, during this short period of their existence, to the transformation of the community in debating issues in the open, raising sensitive and pertinent questions such as 'sex education,' 'HIV-Aids,' and 'life insurance.' The establishment of these stations has directly challenged the role of the theologians who regarded themselves as the 'gatekeepers of Islamic knowledge.' The stations came to reverse those roles and question the type and quality of education they impart to the Muslim communities. However, as theologians they responded by creating their own stations to counteract the views of those Muslims they vehemently disagree with and reject. Their legal opinions are these days relayed from the mosque to the stations and into the homes. The station has thus been seen as a natural extension of their conservative identity and their sacred space, and the private spaces have now been invaded by the unseen conservative theologians and their interpretations and understandings of Islam.

The stations have not only made the communities conscious of Muslim theology through the use of the radio, but they also made them aware of local and international politics and the heterogenous nature of society as opposed to the homogenous nature generally espoused by the theologians. These stations have clearly taught the communities that there are various approaches to Islam.

They have highlighted that there are more than one theological school, more than one jurisprudential school, and many sufi groups who express a particular brand of Islam. The stations have demonstrated the richness of Islam and have thus tried to inform and educate Muslims about their rights and responsibilities within their religious tradition. For example, the theologians kept silent about the rights of women and the radio stations came to set the records straight regarding that issue. They also emphasised the civil rights of the individual within the South African democratic state. These ideas were, for example, disseminated via (national and local) elections, which took place in 1999, and also during the time PAGAD acted as a catalyst and was the cause of so many different debates and activities between 1997 and 2000. Because of the nature of the issues covered, the stations could not confine themselves to discussing Muslim affairs only, they had to shift their sights to many other developments in society. As a consequence of this, the stations succeeded in drawing non-Muslim listeners. This in itself was a positive development because it gave them the chance to inform and rectify misconceptions about the Islamic tradition. Whilst this might be construed as a subtle way of undertaking mission, it might also be a way of mending inter-faith relations, and of creating a better understanding of what Islam stands for and who Muslims really are.

Civil society has thus benefitted from the inputs of the community in more than one way via these community stations. These stations opened up the national and international worlds to the community linking them to communities around the country, and to societies in Palestine, Somalia, Bosnia and Afghanistan. The listeners were exposed to the war ravaged frontiers of Iraq, the genocide in Bosnia, and a host of other events. The Muslim radio stations gave their full support to Muslim NGOs such as Waqf al-Waqifin, which have been doing tremendous work for the flood ravaged communities in Mozambique and the poverty stricken Somalians at the international level. The stations' support and call to assist demonstrated that the media were used not to merely project a Muslim identity but to put this identity into action by responding to those communities who were or are in distress.

In conclusion, the establishment of these stations clearly showed that whilst they might act competitively with the state stations and other community stations, they have been able to make a direct contribution towards nation building and successfully breaking down barriers of cómmunications which the state stations could not easily accomplish. The stations have generally informed, educated and entertained their respective communities. And in the process, these communities became equipped intellectually, more conscious of the importance of education, aware of their rights, alert to what was going on in their own and other communities, and what was taking place in distant places such as Palestine.

Notes

1   This paper was initially presented as part of a larger paper on the 'Muslim media in Southern Africa' at the University of New York (Binghampton) during April 2001, and subsequently radically revised for the "Religion and Social Transformation in South Africa" symposium between the 18th – 20th September (2001) organized between the University of Hamburg and the University of Cape Town.

2   This means of communication has however been further bolstered by the introduction of radio controls, cellular phones and satellite stations in order to keep in constant contact with almost every one in society; this was and is particularly evident in first world societies.

3   Hendy's (2000: 14) divided the radio industry into five different but related categories; they are the state radio, underground radio, community radio, public service radio, and commercial radio. For some reason, he overlooked the crucial role 'rural radio' played in the lives of millions of illiterate communities (Ilboudo 2000: 42-71).

4   This has now been renamed the 'Independent Communications Authority of South Africa' (ICASA) after IBA and South African Telecom Regulations Authority amalgamated; ICASA however still uses the old IBA website at www.iba.org.za/. Visit the site http://fxi.org.za/pubroadc.htm, which gives a brief overview of the reasons for the amalgamation, and outlines their objectives and policies.

5   In Dagron's (2001) work the following South African projects were studied: Soul City (pp.175-180), Radio Zibonele (pp.199-204), Bush Radio (pp. 211-216), Moutse Community Radio (pp. 247-252), and Gasaleka & Mamelodi Telecentres (pp.265-270).

6   Almost five years later Thebe Mabanga & Jubie Matlou (2001) reported that life has not been rosy for the numerous community radio stations around the country; it however reported on some of the successes.

7   It must be stated that few from the disadvantaged communities entered journalism and had 'on the job' training. The *Drum magazine* in the 1950s was one such success story; this was however in the print media sector (Tomaselli & Louw 1991; Switzer 1997).

8   The Muslim Media Review Network, a Pretoria based monitoring group, records and highlights biased, distorted or anti-Islamic news items which appear in the state and other media sectors. This organization has done a tremendous amount of goodwill over the past three years and has been viewed as an important lobbying body for the South African Muslims. Visit www.mediareviewnet.com to read about their activities.

9   Mason is a staunch supporter of the ANC and regular columnist in the weekly *Mail and Guardian.*

10   These have been replaced by *Free Spirit* and *Let There be Light* at different time-slots; the latter at 08h30 on TV 2 and the former at 09h00 on TV 1.

11   This station was apparently sold to another group without the written permission of the IBA. Since they contravened the IBA Act the licence of *Al-Mughni,* who took over the station and operated under the mentioned name, was withdrawn. Its case was reported on the 30 July 1996 and it was heard on the 3rd of August 1996.

12   Thanks are expressed to Mr. Yusuf Agherdien, P.E. municipal worker and active community researcher, for supplying this information.

13   The station has its own website www.radioislam.org.za on which the daily and weekly schedules appear. The site speaks about the reasons for establishing the station, but

there are no names of those involved in the management team nor is there any clue who the anchors or presenters are for the respective programmes. The names of women are conspicuously absent and so are photographs of radio station personalities.

14   Consult the IBA Records dated 11 December 1997, IBA Records dated October 1997, and IBA Records dated 13 November 1997. Despite their stand on this sensitive issue the station applied on the 28th of January 1998 for a temporary license (Gazetted 23 January no.18642).

15   The MJC has its own website which is at www.mjc.org.za and its mouthpiece, namely *Ad-Dawah*, which occasionally publicizes the station's programmes and community outreach activities.

16   The formation of this organization has an interesting history which still has to be recorded. It will reflect the extent of the disagreements and compromises before they finally were able to move on; however, these disagreements spilt over as they were jointly managing the radio station.

17   Thanks should be expressed to the former station manager, Mr. Amien Ahmad, an MA graduate in psychology, who supplied information on the station. Glance through the articles in *Africa Perspectives* (May 2001) – p.9, *Al-Miftah* (June 2001) – p.8, and the *Cape Argus* (1 May 2001) which seemed to have favourably viewed the station's website, which is www.radio786.co.za. Mr. Ahmad was succeeded by Mr. Farid Sayyid, the former editor of the *Muslim Views*, as station manager in January 2002.

18   See *Al-Qalam* correspondent's article entitled "Dr. Moosa vindicated by the IBA" at http://mandla.co.za/al-qalam/apr97/drmoosa.htm. Also refer to pamphlet entitled 'Zionists and Ebrahim Moosa on attack – Radio 786 to be shut.' This was issued by the Save Radio 786 Campaign at the beginning of March 1997 and it requested the Radio 786 listeners to be at the hearing on the 3rd of March 1997.

19   Browse through FXI's website at http://fxi.org.za wherein it expresses its support. The site also contains the Community Media Policy Research Unit's findings regarding the problem faced by community radio stations requesting for licences. Radio 786 has been part of this group who has struggled to obtain a licence for a longer period.

20   Gratitude is expressed to the station manager for having e-mailed some of the relevant data reflected in this section, and thanks should also be expressed to one of female staff members who supplied copies of articles from local newspapers, which reported on the station's activities. Visit the station's website at www.islam.co.za/voice.

21   See the Politikon: *South African Journal for Political Studies* 26(2) 1999 which devoted itself to the 1999 elections.

22   A special site has been created to strengthen the relationship between the South Africans and Palestinians. Visit www.rain.co.za

23   The website address is www.radio786.co.za; it was initially logged onto a server in the United Kingdom and the management realised the need to have its own server located in Cape Town.

24   The website address is www.muslimviews.org.za

25   The website address, which is not a user-friendly one, is http://islam.org.za/voice/. In fact, thus far the site recorded only one visitor to date!!!

26   One is however concerned with the interference of security bodies who suspect every Muslim station or website of supporting 'radical islamist activities;' for example, the American FBI closed down a number of Muslim controlled sites at the instigation of Zionist lobby groups and journalists such as Steve Emerson, who produced

'Jihad in America' (cf. Tayob 1996). The Texas based Infocom company, which hosts more than 500 clients, was raided and amongst the clients who were closed down was the Qatar based Al-Jazeera Satellite TV network station. See www.iviews.com September 2001.

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