

ABSTRACT

This thesis illuminates the talk radio phenomenon in Kenya and its increased usage as a tool for participation towards democratization. It illustrates the sometimes tenuous relationship between radio and democracy more broadly, and deepens our understanding of how talk radio shows in Kenya open up spaces for Kenyan citizens to air their views and opinions about matters that concern them as a people; through public opinion expressions on democratic participation and political discussion. Adopting Jürgen Habermas' (1974) concept of the public sphere as a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed and is guaranteed to all citizens; this research seeks to understand the democratic role of the media, by exploring how Radio Citizen, specifically through its talk show program *Jambo Kenya*, mediates public discussion, through components such as the talk radio genre and hosts, interviews, commentary and audience call-in.

The interrogation of whether *Jambo Kenya* provides content or procedures on important associated democratic principles such as: informed participants, freedom of expression, and right of access to public information, rule of law, checks and balances on power, human rights, and respect for minorities in the society seeks to find out how talk radio content contributes to the democratic life of society and how it acts as a tool for achieving democratic aims.

The study takes a thematic content analysis of the occurring comments and suggestions made by the listeners regarding Kenya's governance through *Jambo Kenya*; interrogating how the program constructs and reflects power struggles and the way these aspects are likely to enhance mediated deliberative democratic practices. Findings from the study reveal that talk show *Jambo Kenya* promotes citizen participation and public discourse where call-in listeners compare agendas. The interpretations of the findings foreground an understanding that the talk radio genre as taking a lead role in fostering a nexus between citizens and politics, and its audiences participate significantly in shaping public opinion.