CHAPTER V

The actors of interactive radio journalism

Indonesian radio has witnessed the development of 'interactivity' since the late 1980s.¹ Interactivity here refers to 'talk-back' or 'phone-in' radio, or interactivity in a narrow sense, in which the audience has direct on-air contact with the host and other participants and actively contributes to the production of radio discourse by using the medium of the telephone. Indonesian radio stations have been interactive in a broader sense by targeting specific audiences or market segments. These audiences or market segments are partly created by the radio stations themselves, as they develop in response to the radio stations' own perceptions of groups and needs in society.

Jennifer Lindsay (1997) has demonstrated how private radio throughout Indonesian radio history has appealed to local audiences by focusing on local broadcast content, including regional music and performing arts. Krishna Sen (2003:575) has called this broader type of interactivity 'socially produced interactivity' contrasting it with the 'technologically given one of the Internet'. However, this observation does not address the problem of where technology ends and social production begins, nor does it take into account that 'local audiences' and 'regional culture' have been the products of marketing strategies of private radio as far back as the 1930s.²

This is not to underestimate the capability of Indonesian radio to simultaneously create and represent trends and traditions that are alive on a regional or local level, due to techno-cultural features such as the orality and aurality of radio communications, the instantaneousness of broadcast transmission, the relatively cheap production costs of programmes, and the cheapness and portable size of radio receivers. During the New Order, radio stations also developed a close relationship with local audiences, not always devoid of political content, as an effect of government policies that restricted the reach of private radio broadcasts. Ironically, these policies were developed out of

¹ Samuel 2002:309; Sen 2003:584; Lindsay 1997:116; Jurriëns 2007.

² This was the period of the so-called 'Eastern' radio stations or *radio ketimuran*, private stations monitored by Dutch colonial rule that catered for an autochthonous market, see Lindsay 1997:109; Sen and Hill 2000:81.

fear of the potentially political impact of private radio.³

Although only Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI), the state radio station, was allowed to have a national scope and broadcast news, private radio stations found creative ways to circumvent regulations and produce their own news and information, especially by exploring their 'social interactivity'. They inserted commentary on regional current affairs in radio drama, 'soft' information bulletins and interviews with studio guests and listeners. As mentioned before, the Bandung radio station Shinta produced 'Dongeng plesetan', a Sundanese parody-drama on West Javanese politics and society (Jurriëns 2004:147-66), while a restricted number of other stations, including Trijaya (Jakarta), Mara (Bandung), Unisi (Yogyakarta) and Suara Surabaya (Surabaya) had the courage to pioneer talk-back programmes on topical issues (Samuel 2002:308; Sen 2003:580-2).

Today, the number of current affairs programmes on Indonesian radio is still relatively small, as most commercial stations lack the financial means or journalistic skills required for news production. The majority of talk-back programmes are concrete examples of an Habermasian 'externalization of inner life', in which listeners exhibit aspects of their private life, while participating in activities such as requesting songs and sending greetings to members of an audience of overhearers. Due to their lack of political content, the programmes can be considered as instances of 'phatic performance', a discursive category Ben Arps (2003) has linked to the sending of personal messages on air in Banyuwangi, East Java. Arps, contradicting Habermas, demonstrates that such activity is less trivial than it may seem and serves important social goals, as it enables interaction between radio listeners, provides the participants with the pleasure of being heard or overheard, and creates or confirms social networks.

At the same time there has been a progressive growth in talk-back radio that is of a shared public interest not only because of the social functions it serves, but also because of the social issues it represents. The broadcast content of this latter type of talk-back radio includes topics such as current affairs, art and culture, health and sexuality, the environment, religion, law and regional autonomy. With slogans such as 'Informasi dari anda, untuk anda' ('Information from you and for you'),⁴ commercial radio stations have attempted to involve the audience in news and information production, reduce programme production costs, compensate for the lack of professional radio journalists and make the news and information relevant to local or regional circumstances.

³ Lindsay 1997:115; Sen 2003:582-5; Samuel 2002:296-7.

⁴ This slogan has been used by El Shinta and Jakarta News FM, both located in Jakarta.

In this chapter, I will not explore further the potentially subversive aspects of 'phatic performance', but focus on current affairs talk shows. After a general introduction about the 'audience participation programme' genre, I will discuss the role and function of the different actors involved in Indonesian talk-back radio since the late New Order, including hosts, invited experts, listeners, reporters, editors and gatekeepers. In Chapter VI, I will analyse the effects of the on-air behaviour of these participants and describe what Indonesian interactive radio discourse does in terms of the journalistic and social practices it has brought into being. Chapter VII will specifically focus on the group of the listeners and its experiences in interactive radio journalism.

The genre of the audience participation programme

I will use Sonia Livingstone and Peter Lunt's excellent work on television talk shows as a framework for the analysis of Indonesian interactive news radio. According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994:37, 175), the audience participation programme is a genre that challenges traditional distinctions in discourse theory, for instance between text and audience, production and reception, sender and receiver, interpersonal communication and mass communication, current affairs and entertainment, ideas and emotions, and argument and narrative. It combines elements from various media genres, including current affairs, documentary and soap opera, but is at the same time distinctively different from each of them.

The audience discussion or participation programme is not quite current affairs or consumer affairs though it deals with current issues as they affect ordinary lives. It uses experts but is not documentary. It shows the impact of current issues on ordinary people's everyday lives through story-telling but is not soap opera. Like the soap opera, it constructs the viewer as community member and repository of common sense, but it takes issues beyond the private domain of the domestic and local, for the viewer is also constructed as citizen, with a duty to be informed about and act upon the wider world. (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:38-9.)

The discussions between participants in audience participation programmes also comprise different narratives or debate styles, such as 'the classical debate', 'the romantic narrative', 'the therapy session', or combinations of one or more of these (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:56). In the classical debate, audience members and experts discuss social problems with each other under the guidance of a host. Each party receives equal opportunity to present their opinion in a rational and orderly manner. The discussion partners aim at reaching a conclusion by the end of the programme (Livingstone

and Lunt 1994:57-8). This style of debate can be found in the Trijaya talk shows. The romantic narrative does not necessarily aim at a conclusion, but rather encourages ordinary people to talk about their personal experiences. Audience participation programmes evolve into therapeutic sessions when the host helps audience members to express their emotions and overcome their problems (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:61-8). In the talk shows of Jakarta News FM and Mora, such self-disclosure does not only serve to cure purely personal problems, but also social diseases of Reformasi.

The audience participation programme with the classical debate style shares several characteristics with Habermas' bourgeois public sphere, as it constitutes an institutionalized, publicly accessible forum where rational debate takes place and consensus may be reached. Livingstone and Lunt (1994:58) rightly put the publicness of these debates into perspective by addressing the controlling power of the host, the prominence of experts over lay participants and the restricted opportunity for listeners to express themselves. These observations partly hold true for Trijaya's concept of 'multi-sided journalism' (see Chapter VI).

Livingstone and Lunt (1994:160-1) argue that many audience participation programmes are in fact manifestations of a different kind of public sphere, the so-called 'oppositional public sphere'. In the oppositional public sphere, people express opinions that are rich in diversity, validate accounts of lived experience in the life-world, and search for compromise rather than consensus. According to Habermas (1989b:236; Livingstone and Lunt 1994:174), this alternative type of public sphere is subject to corruption and refeudalization because it allows the representatives of official power or commercial interest to engage in direct dialogue with normal citizens, thereby transforming publicness into public relations. My example of radio station Mora (Chapter VI) will illustrate that such refeudalization is indeed one of the symptoms of the Reformasi radio landscape.

On the other hand, the dialogue as manifested in audience participation programmes 'may also afford opportunities for accountability, the identification of contradictions between policy/expertise and everyday life, space for ordinary people to generate and validate common experiences, and so forth' (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:174). According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994:32), the programmes usually do not represent a public unified by the successful outcome of communication between different parties, as would be the case in the bourgeois public sphere, but rather diverse publics exploring the possibilities and restrictions of communication. This exploration of the rules and boundaries of discursive interchange can be found in Indonesian radio talk shows and contests for listeners that aim at enhancing the media literacy of audiences.

Hosts addressing their audiences

The participants in radio discourse play different roles and fulfil different functions in accordance with the profile of a radio station and the narrative(s) or debate style(s) of a specific programme. Two of the main functions of a programme host are to sell the image of a radio station by addressing and attracting listeners, and to regulate the flow of radio discourse by guiding interactive discussions and choosing the right moments to insert music and commercials. A direct and effective manner for hosts to establish close emotional or ideological ties with the listeners, and identify them as or turn them into their listeners, is the use of clearly identifiable modes of address. In general, Indonesian radio hosts use two different modes of address: either referring to the listeners' status or main activities, or expressing a friendship or family-like relationship between the radio station and the audience.

Examples of the first mode of address are used by the hosts of the commercial stations El Shinta (Jakarta), Trijaya (Jakarta) and Unisi (Yogyakarta), who address their listeners as *eksekutif muda* ('young executives'), *profesional muda* ('young professionals') and *intelektual muda* ('young intellectuals'), respectively.⁵ Although they address the listeners as 'young', youth is not necessarily their main target audience. Young rather refers to 'dynamic', to people who live in a cosmopolitan environment such as Jakarta or a cultural and educational centre such as Yogyakarta, are willing to develop, and capable of adapting themselves to changing circumstances. 'Executives' and 'professionals' represent businessmen and office people, and 'intellectuals' students or people with a higher educational background. These modes of address may boost the self-confidence of the listeners and make them feel part of a larger community of people with similar backgrounds. At the same time, the modes of address are meant to provide the radio stations with a reputation of high quality, as they suggest that the listeners have to have certain skills to be able to follow the programmes, or that the programmes may further enhance the listeners' professional and intellectual abilities.

The hosts of other radio stations use more informal modes of address, referring to their listeners as friends or relatives. For instance, at Global FM (Tabanan) *saudara* ('brothers and sisters') is used, at Mora (Bandung) *sobat* ('friends'), at Suara Surabaya (Surabaya) *kawan* ('friends' or 'comrades') and at Suara Padang (Padang) *bapak ibu sahabat setia* ('ladies and gentlemen, loyal friends').⁶ With these modes of address, the hosts make it clear that they are trustworthy conversation partners, who understand and respect the opinions

⁵ Based on recordings of 2001 and 2002 broadcasts.

⁶ Based on recordings of 2001 and 2002 broadcasts.

and way of life of their listeners. The listeners are turned into members of a radio community, who do not merely share the same professional or intellectual interests, but also the same feelings and emotions. Hosts also use such modes of address to confirm the position of their radio stations as 'the voice' of a region – reflected in names such as Suara Surabaya ('The Voice of Surabaya') and Suara Padang ('The Voice of Padang') – and strengthen the regional attachment of the listeners, exploiting the fact that the region in Indonesia is a geographical or administrative concept that bears the connotations of a family unity or friendship bond.

In Indonesian radio talk shows, not only standardized modes of address are used, but also more personal references for introducing oneself or welcoming someone else. Hosts, listeners, experts and other participants usually take time in informing each other about their names, the places where they live and other noteworthy personal details. These introductions can be seen as media equivalents of the Indonesian social tradition of *mengikat silaturahmi* (establishing friendship bonds), in which new connections are established or old friendship bonds reconfirmed. However, after the slow and relaxed introduction ceremony, newly introduced persons often quickly change the mood of the conversation by accelerating their speech and expressing their opinion in sharp, clear and serious wording.⁷

Modes of address in a literal, narrow sense are just one set of rhetorical devices used by radio hosts in order to contribute to the construction of the image of a radio station and the creation of a community of listeners. They use other devices that meet the requirements of specific speech situations or programme genres, and confirm the talk show host in a specific role. A host can play such diverse roles as 'the chair of a debate, the adored hero of a talk show, a referee, a conciliator, a judge, the compère of a game show, a therapist, the host of a dinner-party conversation, a manager or a spokesperson' (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:56). I will provide concrete examples of Indonesian hosts in three of their major roles: 'consoler-therapist' (in programmes of Jakarta News FM and Mora), 'star-hero' (Jakarta News FM's host Ratna Sarumpaet) and 'chair of debate' (in Trijaya's programme 'Jakarta first channel', see Chapter VI). I will also describe the roles of invited experts, editors and gatekeepers in Indonesian radio programmes.

An example of the host as consoler-therapist can be found in Jakarta News FM's two-hour Saturday morning talk show 'Ngobrol sama Dono' ('Chatting with Dono'), which is hosted by the radio station's head Nor Pud Binarto together with a comedian known as Dono Warkop. In the show, the two hosts

⁷ I noticed this in talk shows of Trijaya, El Shinta, Jakarta News FM (all three in Jakarta), Mora, Mara (both in Bandung), Unisi (Yogyakarta), Suara Surabaya, SCFM (both in Surabaya) and Global FM (Tabanan).

discuss a news item of the week in a very relaxed and humorous manner, with possibilities for listeners to phone in and express their own opinions in a preferably similar mood. By discussion and releasing the tension from controversial issues, the hosts attempt to free people from their frustrations and console them. The hosts also have the flexibility to insert commercial breaks or musical interludes whenever they feel that the participants in the discussion become too emotional or tired, or otherwise lose direction. Usually they announce the necessity of such mood-changing breaks or interludes with the subtle, tranquilizing phrase 'let's have a break now' (*break dulu*).⁸

The hosts of 'Ngobrol sama Dono' follow in the footsteps of a long tradition of Indonesian radio hosts who, almost similar to the way in which traditional Malay consoler-storytellers (*penglipur lara*) tell tales to relieve or amuse their audiences (Maier 2004:92), attempt to console listeners or distract them from their daily sorrows. Whereas consolation before Reformasi was mainly offered in broadcasts with entertainment such as music, radio drama and quizzes, now it is also provided in programmes with a journalistic edge. The consolation offered in 'Ngobrol sama Dono' can be seen as a specific manifestation of peace journalism, in which social problems are not avoided, but addressed and put in a peaceful therapeutic or humorous perspective.

A similar kind of peace journalism can be found in the talk show 'Mora interaktif' ('Interactive Mora') produced by the commercial station Mora in Bandung. For instance, in a 27 September 2001 broadcast on the US invasion in Afghanistan, the host urged the listeners not to get involved in 'sweeping', the activity of harassing foreigners in Indonesia. The host used several consoling devices to make the listener-participants in the interactive dialogue feel at ease as well as to lessen tensions in society at large. He created a relaxed and intimate atmosphere by speaking slowly, using a soft voice, mixing codes between Indonesian and Sundanese, using Sundanese expressions such as the hospitality device *someah ke semah* ('be friendly to guests'), making jokes and spreading peaceful messages.⁹ One of the listener-participants joined in code-switching and joking by making a wordplay or *plesetan* of the expression 'sweeping', thus pointing to the very meaninglessness of violence against foreigners.

⁸ Based on recordings of 2001 broadcasts and Nor Pud Binarto, personal communication, Jakarta, 11-8-2001.

⁹ While the Mora hosts try to be therapeutic by calming down the audience, other hosts rather attempt to make their listeners cope with the problems of daily life by 'energizing' them. The hosts of commercial youth stations such as Swaragama in Yogyakarta represent joy and energy by playing loud pop music and using fast speech, trendy language (*bahasa gaul*) and much laughter.

Host (H): [In Indonesian] Bandung citizens, all of us er, [in Sundanese] please don't participate in 'sweeping'. There is no reason at all to 'sweep' American tourists here. [...] What is 'sweeping' actually? Don't do it, friends of Mora, [in Indonesian] we don't need to hate other people. No, towards other people, we, the West Javanese people, will surely remain er, [in Sundanese] what's the expression, 'friendly to guests'. There is that expression 'be friendly to guests'. What does it mean? Hello?

Listener (L): Hello?

H: Yes, good afternoon.

L: Good afternoon.

H: Who am I speaking to, Sir?

L: Budi.

H: Hi Mr Budi, how are you?

L: Not too bad. I am still on the road.

H: Alright. Mr Budi, are you friendly to guests?

L: You must be joking!

H: Hehehe. But not after guests have been at our place for seven days in a row, right, hehehe.

L: What about that 'sweeping', 'sweeping' [is something you should do] in a pool.

H: Hehehe, that's 'swimming', Sir, hehehe. You're just twisting it.

[...].¹⁰

While this type of dialogue may not meet the criteria of Habermas' critical-rational debate nor explicitly address the deeper causes of the war in Afghanistan, both host and listeners showed that they tried to come to terms with the effects of the war by using Bakhtinian parody, which undermines traditional conventions in language and society and illustrates or contributes

¹⁰ H: Warga Bandung kita semua, ah ulah ikut-ikutan sweeping atuh. Teu puguh-puguh ada turis Amerika di ieu disweeping. [...] Naon atuh 'sweeping' teh? Urang mah ulah, ya, sobat Mora, kita mah tidak perlu ya, untuk benci terhadap orang. Kemudian apa sama orang, tidak, kita tuh tetap ya, sebagai orang Jawa Barat anu, naon kitu istilahna teh, 'someah ka semah'. Ieuh, aya istilah eta teh someah ka semah, maksudna teh naon? Halo?

L: Halo?

H: Ya, wilujeng wengi.

L: Wilujeng wengi.

H: Sareng saha ieu, Pa?

L: Budi.

H: Ha Pa Budi, damang?

L: Alhamdulillah, di jalan keneh.

H: Oh kitu. Pa Budi, someah ka semah?

L: He, atuh!

H: Hehehe. Kecuali semahna tos tujuh dinten di urang terus nya, hehehe.

L: 'Sweeping', teh kumaha, 'sweeping', di kolam renang.

H: Hehehe, 'swimming' atuh Pa, hehehe. He, sok dibolak-balik wae.

[...] (Jurriëns, transcription of a 27-9-2001 broadcast).

to people's ideological awareness. The Mora dialogue also demonstrated that *plesetan* has not declined in popularity since the New Order, but found a new place among other, more 'transparent' journalistic devices to talk about politics and society.

Unlike the consoler-therapist host, other hosts of Indonesian radio talk shows do not necessarily aim at making their conversation partners feel at ease or giving them enough opportunity to talk. They belong to the category of 'star' or 'hero' hosts, who often present themselves as experts in a particular field and behave in an authoritarian way. While their attitude is partly meant to create an image and sell their own name and the name of the radio station, it sometimes also serves to set an example of critical thinking and to train the listener-participants to formulate their own opinions coherently and concisely.

An example of a star-hero trying to achieve both goals is Ratna Sarumpaet, a well-known Indonesian actress, playwright, stage-director and human rights activist, who is also presenter of the Jakarta News FM talk show 'Sabtu bersama Ratna' ('Saturday with Ratna'). The title of the show immediately confirms the star-status of the host, as the sheer mentioning of her name is thought to attract listeners and provide the programme with authority in the same way as the names of popular international television talk show hosts such as Oprah Winfrey do. Sarumpaet's star-status is confirmed by the presentational style and rhetorical devices she uses in her discussions with listeners and other conversation partners.

At the start of the 20 October 2001 broadcast of the talk show, for instance, Sarumpaet presented herself as a star by making no secret of the fact she had overslept and arrived too late in the studio. With no signs of any shame either, she asked her male co-host what the topic was they were going to talk about with the listeners. The topic of the day happened to be the attitude of the police towards demonstrators and journalists during the Front Pembela Islam (FPI, Cadre of Defenders of Islam) demonstration against the US invasion in Afghanistan on Israk Mikraj, 15 October 2001.¹¹ In spite of her real or pretended lack of preparation, Sarumpaet was able to give an impressive monologue of about ten minutes on the war in Afghanistan, the standpoint of the Indonesian government, and the attitude of the police during the FPI demonstration. After this monologue, listeners had the opportunity to phone

¹¹ Israk Mikraj, which is always on the 27th of Rajab (the seventh month of the Islamic calendar), commemorates the Prophet Mohammad's flight on a winged horse known as a Buraq from Mecca to Jerusalem. During the flight, Mohammad went through the seven levels of heaven, where he met several earlier prophets of Islam. The Prophet's trip instigated the Islamic rule of the five daily prayers.

in and give their opinions, although both they and the timid co-host of the programme were regularly overpowered by Sarumpaet's rhetorical skills and confidence.

According to Sarumpaet, President Megawati had to have courage to present an independent Indonesian viewpoint about the war in Afghanistan during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting she was going to attend in Shanghai. Although Sarumpaet condemned the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001, she thought Osama Bin Laden and his companions could only be accused after independent investigation had produced legal evidence for their involvement. This investigation had to be conducted by the United Nations, where Sarumpaet, in one of her self-confirming statements, confessed to have 'some good friends' herself. She could also not accept that a country was bombed and civilians killed because of the search for one man. She predicted that the war would create new antipathy to the United States, also outside the Muslim world, and hoped that Megawati would represent her views and feelings during the APEC meeting.

Sarumpaet condemned the behaviour of the police during the FPI demonstration as 'overacting' (she used the English expression). She did not accept the excuse that the policemen who were on duty were tired and had not had a proper meal, as she thought it was the police force's own responsibility to have their men well-prepared for a particular task. According to Sarumpaet, the police were wrong in hitting the demonstrators, and should have used water-cannons instead.

At one point during the interactive discussions Sarumpaet was confronted with an equally stubborn listener-participant with a different opinion. The listener believed that the police had the right to act harshly against FPI, as they behaved against the law by organizing a demonstration on a public holiday, abused the name of Islam and were violent. He also argued there was sufficient reason for an attack on Afghanistan, as the Taliban regime was not only reluctant to co-operate in capturing Osama Bin Laden, but also involved in the repression of their fellow-countrymen.

Unlike other talk shows in which hosts tend to easily agree with their conversation partners, Sarumpaet used her star-status and authority as a host to fully attack the listener's arguments, to repeatedly interrupt him, and eventually even to close off the discussion, as she thought their differences of opinion were unbridgeable. Paradoxically, Sarumpaet was convinced that her rather authoritarian behaviour would teach the listeners the laws of democracy.

Sarumpaet (S): Do you have the evidence or not [that Osama Bin Laden was the mastermind behind 9/11], that is what I ask.

Listener (L): Yes, there is evidence.

S: What!? It has not been announced. Are you a policeman or something?

L: It is the evidence that has been issued by the American government.

S [ironically]: Sir, you have an obligation [to spread the information], so that the demonstrations will subside. Please prove it. Where did you get it from?

L: It is on the BBC.com website, Madam.

S: What, Sir. I have also read it, that's not evidence. [cynical laughter] Come on. That's supposition, supposition is different from evidence, Sir.

Co-host [without irony]: Based on intelligence data. This man really knows what intelligence is.

S: Intelligence, that is the intelligence of America, whose objectivity as a victim is very much in doubt. So what, Sir?

L: For us it is always like that. In the case of Suharto, we demanded that Suharto would be brought to justice. Then the court said there was no evidence, but we said that the facts were there. Well, in fact, if we want to talk about evidence of which the validity really has to be proven, it has to be in court. Osama has to appear. I only want to see that...

S: Sir, Sir, also, er... you really have a 'bias' [in English]. We were just discussing Afghanistan. I want to return to Afghanistan. I want to pretend that I agree with you. You said there was evidence. Alright, let there be evidence. Now in that process of going to war in Afghanistan, the matter was to capture Osama.

L: That is correct.

S: According to your sound reason, does one have to kill people and destroy a country in order to capture Osama? That is what I want to ask. That is what I want to ask, you have not answered me yet. You haven't answered me yet. Is it logical or not that Osama can be captured with staging a devastating war in Afghanistan, in which buildings are destroyed and everything becomes as flat as the soil. Will one get Osama or not?

L: It's possible. The answer is that it can be done.

S: Are you prepared to sacrifice so many people!? Apparently you are higher than God.

L: No. It is because the Taliban regime does not want to cooperate in releasing Osama, who is sacrificing his own people.

S: Oh my, at moments like this democracy becomes painful. I have to debate with aversion, with a person who apparently also does not want to open his mind to accept other people's thoughts. So I want to apologize, Sir. I am really not an authoritarian ruler, but as I see that our discussion has no purpose any longer, I apologize, I will end the discussion with you.

Co-host: Okay, that is maybe one of the dynamics of democracy, that a debate like this takes place.

S: Yes, but in democracy, we learn, listeners, and we learn to understand. I persisted all the time and did not use any... How many of my question remained unanswered? Yes, that is democracy. If you ask questions there have to be answers, alright. Come on.¹²

¹² Sarumpaet (S): Bapak punya nggak bukti ya, saya tanya.

Listener (L): Ya, udah ada.

S: Masak!? Tidak diumumkan. Apakah Bapak ini pulisi atau apa ini?

Although both programmes were on the same topic, the heated ambience in this edition of 'Sabtu bersama Ratna' presents a sharp contrast with the relaxed and humorous atmosphere in the 'Mora interaktif' talk show discussed earlier. Unlike the 'Mora interaktif' show, Sarumpaet's programme does provide an institutionalized forum for critical-rational debate about national and international political affairs. The accessibility of this public forum is questionable, though, due to the controlling power and authoritarian behaviour of the host. While Sarumpaet's show may enhance the ideological awareness of the public by providing a model for critical thinking, its dialogical quality in a narrow sense is restricted, as the host performs a role as the self-nominated representative rather than the 'presenter' of the public.

L: Bukti yang udah dikeluarkan oleh pemerintah Amerika.

S: Pak, Bapak punya kewajiban lho supaya reda ini demonstrasi. Coba buktikan. Bapak diterima dari mana itu atuh?

L: Di website BBC.com itu sudah ada, Bu.

S: Apa, Pak. Itu juga sudah saya baca, itu bukan bukti. Hehehe. Bagaimana. Itu sangkaan, sangkaan berbeda dengan bukti, Pak.

Co-host: Berdasarkan data intelijen, Bapak tahu persis kalau yang namanya intelijen.

S: Intelijen, itu intelijen Amerika yang obyektivitasnya sebagai korban sangat diragukan. Bapak bagaimana sih, jadi?

L: Kita selalu kaya gitu. Kalau dalam kasus Suharto kita menuntut Suharto itu diadili, terus pengadilan bilang nggak ada bukti, tapi kita bilang, ini lho fakta-faktanya. Nah, sebetulnya kalau mau kita bicarakan bukti harus benar-benar dibuktikan, itu harus di pengadilan. Osama harus muncul. Cuma saya mau lihat...

S: Pak, bapak, juga apa ya... Bapak ini 'bias' gitu lho. Tadi kita bicarakan Afghanistan. Saya mau kembalikan ke Afghanistan. Saya mau seolah-olah menyetujui Bapak. Bapak mengatakan sudah ada bukti. Ok, sudah ada bukti. Sekarang dalam proses peperangan ke Afghanistan itu, urusannya berarti mau menangkap Osama.

L: Betul.

S: Menurut akal sehat Bapak, apakah menangkap Osama harus membunuh orang dan menghancurkan satu negeri? Saya mau tanya. Saya mau tanya, Bapak belum jawab saya. Bapak belum jawab saya. Secara logika, bisa nggak tertangkap Osama dengan memerangi Afghanistan habis-habisan, gedung hancur, rata sampai tanah semuanya. Dapat nggak Osama?

L: Bisa. Jawabannya, bisa itu dilakukan.

S: Bapak rela mengorbankan begitu banyak manusia!? Bapak lebih dari Tuhan kayaknya.

L: Bukan. Karena rezim Taliban tidak mau bekerja sama untuk melepaskan Osama itu yang mengorbankan rakyatnya sendiri.

S: Aduh, ini, di sinilah saat-saatnya demokrasi jadi menyakitkan. Saya harus berdebat dengan ogah, orang yang juga ternyata tidak mau membuka akalnya untuk menerima pikiran orang lain. Jadi saya minta maaf Bapak ya, saya memang bukan penguasa yang otoriter, tetapi karena saya lihat diskusi kita sudah tidak berguna, saya minta maaf, saya hentikan pembicaraan dengan Bapak.

Co-host: Ok, salah satu dinamika dari demokrasi mungkin ya, munculnya perdebatan seperti ini.

S: Ya, tetapi, demokrasi, kita belajar, pendengar, dan belajar memahami. Saya terus-menerus ngotot aja dan tidak menggunakan... Berapa pertanyaan saya nggak terjawab? Ya, itulah demokrasi. Bertanya harus ada jawabannya dong, bagaimana ini (Jurriëns, transcription of a 20-10-2001 broadcast).

The authority of experts

In talk shows, hosts usually talk not only with lay listeners, but also with specialists who are invited to the studio or interviewed by phone in order to give their expert comments on a particular topic. They are called *narasumber* ('informants'), *pengamat* ('observers') or *pakar* ('experts'). The experts are supposed to give in-depth information or alternative views on topical issues, and to give authority to and underline the seriousness of the programme in which they participate. This is illustrated by SCFM's jingle for the programme 'Dunia bisnis Indonesia' ('Indonesian business world'), in which the Surabaya-based commercial station attempts to convince the audience of the usefulness of its programme by announcing the presence of 'competent experts, including observers and even practitioners from the business world'.¹³

In their analysis of American and British television talk shows such as Oprah, Donahue and Kilroy, Livingstone and Lunt (1994:62) observe that the expert is 'cast at times in the role of villain'. The position of experts becomes undermined when they have no opportunity to present a coherent story based on scientific evidence, but are forced to simplify their argument and merely rely on their status as a reliable information source. Lay participants often become the 'real' experts in talk shows, as the host and the other audience members validate their accounts as authentic, based on real-life experience (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:98-9).

The Indonesian radio talk shows I recorded in 2001 and 2002 provided a different picture. While listener-participants often undermined each other's authority and sometimes the authority of the host, independent experts were usually held in high esteem. The special position of the expert partly reflects an admiration for educational or professional achievement and partly a strong sense of hierarchy in Indonesian society. An example is the 19 October 2001 broadcast of Trijaya's one-hour interactive talk show 'Thank God it's Friday', in which a host respected and emphasized the status of an invited expert by referring constantly to his academic titles. In the broadcast two male hosts discussed with several expert informants (called *nara sumber*) and the audience the health effects of anthrax, the poisonous white powder spread by mail in the aftermath of the US invasion in Afghanistan.

In their first interview, one of the hosts talked with Professor Doctor Umar Fahmi, a specialist in the field of contagious diseases from the Indonesian Department of Health. Fahmi discussed the origins, characteristics and effects of anthrax from a medical viewpoint. He explained that anthrax was a bacterial disease, not a virus, and that its natural, non-chemical variant could

¹³ Jurriëns, transcription of a 25 July 2002 broadcast.

be found in several rural areas in Indonesia. Fahmi's authority as a specialist was confirmed by the host, who frequently addressed him as 'Prof' or 'Doc'.

Host (H): Prof Umar Fahmi, er... isn't it true there is actually also anthrax in Indonesia, as the lands also er... contain many of those spores.

Fahmi (F): Yes, but not every region.

H: Not every region. Okay...

F: There are certain regions, which have actually already been mapped. And there we have prohibitions against... we recommend that people do not keep livestock.

H: Where is that, Prof er, Prof?

F: For example, there are eleven provinces. For instance, in the regions of West Java, Central Java and West Sumatra. But not in the whole of Sumatra, not in the whole of West Sumatra. For instance, there are several places. Further, in the Eastern Lesser Sunda Islands and so on. There are several places, there are eleven provinces.

H: What are the initial symptoms, so that it can be anticipated, Doc?

[...]

H: In Indonesia, how many cases... But there have not appeared any, have there, Prof, for how long... ?

F: Last year there was one, exactly during the Pilgrimage season. When the Pilgrimage started, there were several people who died indeed. But there were dozens of people who got infected.

H: How many cases per year, Prof?

F: Oh, I have forgotten. I have already... forgotten how many, but...

H: It was not significant, was it?

F: There were dozens, dozens even.

H: That was because of the anthrax bacteria, wasn't it, Prof?

[...].¹⁴

¹⁴ Host (H): Prof Umar Fahmi, ini er... di Indonesia sebenarnya juga ada anthrax ya, karena juga tanah-tanah juga er... banyak mengandung spora itu ya.

Fahmi (F): Ya, tapi tidak semua wilayah.

H: Tidak semua wilayah. Ok...

F: Ada beberapa wilayah-wilayah tertentu yang petanya sudah ada sebetulnya. Dan di situ itu kita melarang supaya... menganjurkan supaya tidak beternak begitu.

H: Di mana itu, Prof er... Prof?

F: Sebagai contoh, itu ada sebelas propinsi ya. Misalnya di daerah Jawa Barat, Jawa Tengah, Sumatra Barat. Tapi tidak seluruh Sumatra itu, nggak seluruh Sumatra Barat, misalnya ada beberapa tempat gitu. Lalu di Nusatenggara Timur dan sebagainya gitu. Ada beberapa tempat, ada sebelas propinsi.

H: Gejala awalnya supaya bisa diantisipasi gitu bagaimana, Doc?

[...]

H: Kalau di Indonesia, kasusnya itu seberapa... Tapi tidak ada yang menonjol ya, Prof, selama...?

F: Tahun lalu kan, pas musim Haji itu. Mau Haji kan, ada beberapa yang meninggal memang. Tapi ada puluhan yang kena.

H: Berapa kasus, Prof, per tahun?

F: Aduh, lupa. Saya sudah... Lupa saya berapa ya, tapi...

The next interview was with Juanda, a military analyst and former marine colonel. Juanda explained that terrorists in the Arab world or the United States had probably stolen the technology for producing anthrax from official US institutions. After Juanda, the Trijaya gatekeepers broadcast a response from one of the listeners, who provided follow-up information on Fahmi's talk and presented himself as an expert without specifying his professional background.

Some experts have been invited to give their opinion in radio or television talk shows so often that they have become real media personalities or stars, and sometimes even become involved in media activities that are only loosely or not at all related to their field of expertise. Famous names among them are Andi Mallarangeng, Denny J.A., Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Didik J. Rachbini, Emil Salim, Faizal Basri, Harkristuti Harkrisnowo, Imam B. Prasodjo, J. Kristiadi, Kastorius Sinaga, Kusnanto Anggoro, Rizal Mallarangeng, Sjahrir and Sri Mulyani. The majority of these people hold highly esteemed university degrees from the United States, Europe or Australia, and work as lecturers or researchers at Indonesian universities or national or international research institutes.¹⁵ In general, they regard their participation in talk shows as a social obligation, as a means to share academic or professional knowledge with society at large.

For some experts talk shows have also become an important income source, as the money for one media appearance sometimes exceeds their normal monthly salary. Others refuse any financial gifts or are unwilling to participate in debates that go beyond their field of expertise. Some fear that public appearances in media debates may corrupt their academic or professional integrity. In Habermasian terms, these experts do not so much fear a refeudalization of society as the refeudalization by society of their own discipline. Andi Mallarangeng, a sociologist with a doctor's degree from Northern Illinois University, admitted that it was sometimes difficult for experts to find a balance between their academic or professional activities and their public appearances.¹⁶ Mallarangeng himself used to be the host of the talk show 'Interupsi' ('Interruption') on the commercial television channel Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI). He also regularly appeared as invited expert in many other television and radio talk shows before he became President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's official spokesperson.

The producers of radio or television talk shows have their own criteria

H: Tidak signifikan ya.

F: Ada sepuluh, sepuluh malah.

H: Itu karena bakteri anthrax ya, Prof?

[...] (Jurriëns, transcription of a 19-10-2001 broadcast).

¹⁵ 'Cendekiawan, televisi, salon kecantikan', *Kompas* (14-10-2001):13.

¹⁶ 'Cendekiawan, televisi, salon kecantikan', *Kompas* (14-10-2001):13.

for selecting experts. According to Billy Soemawisastra, special programme manager of the commercial television station SCTV, the invited specialists should not reduce the attractiveness of a talk show.

Imagine that the person who appears on television is an informant who is maybe really clever, but stammers when he speaks. Or someone who cannot speak 'to the point' [in English]. The talk show will certainly not be interesting if the informant is not active. For example, if he does not speak if he is not asked a question, or if he only utters brief answers to questions.¹⁷

If media appearance rather than expertise becomes the main criterion for inviting specialists, the danger of the aestheticization of politics (Benjamin 1977:42) lurks, as rational debate in the public interest is compromised by commercial or ideological interests. Other producers agree that some experts are mere tokens of authority in talk shows, as they 'rarely read' (*jarang membaca*), have a 'weak theoretical framework' (*kerangka teorinya lemah*) and 'just talk for the sake of talking' (*asal bicara*).¹⁸ Some producers refuse to hire a well-known expert as a programme host, as they fear that the expert's background or reputation as a highly opinionated person may clash with the host's preferred role as an objective debate moderator, and deter other potential participants from interacting in dialogue.¹⁹

Editors and gatekeepers

As they rely on a rich variety of information sources including their own listeners and national and international news agencies, Indonesian radio stations with a long experience in news production such as Trijaya, Suara Surabaya and Mara try to maintain a high quality team of editors and gatekeepers, who verify incoming information before it is transmitted to listeners. The gatekeepers also regulate phone calls from listeners and decide whether they will be provided with or denied access to a talk show or news bulletin. This means they bear responsibility for the extent to which the listener-participants allowed entry are representative of larger groups in society. The editors decide on the structure of the programme as a whole by selecting news items and interviews, and adding commercials, music, jingles and sound effects.

Suara Surabaya keeps its own database with the names, addresses and discussion topics of all the listeners that have ever contributed to their interactive programmes. In 2002, the database contained information about at

¹⁷ 'Jarang membaca, teori lemah, asal bicara', *Kompas* (14-10-2001):14.

¹⁸ 'Jarang membaca, teori lemah, asal bicara', *Kompas* (14-10-2001):14.

¹⁹ 'Jarang membaca, teori lemah, asal bicara', *Kompas* (14-10-2001):14.

least 40,000 people. It provides the radio station's crew with an archive of discussion topics, a means to deny access to callers who misbehaved during talk shows and a source for general reflection on the discursive behaviour of hosts and listeners. Suara Surabaya's gatekeeper team allows listeners to participate in programmes only after their personal data and aims for participation have been identified and compared with or added to the information in their computer archive (Suara Surabaya 2002). While this restricts Suara Surabaya's accessibility, or its publicness in a narrow sense, it may enhance the chances of rational debate taking place and consensus being reached as in the bourgeois public sphere.

Usually the gatekeepers will report the information from listeners 'live' in a special information section of their current affairs programme package 'Kelana kota' ('Wandering around the city'), but sometimes the listener-participants themselves are allowed to have short on-air dialogues with the programme hosts. The following two transcripts from a 23 July 2002 'Kelana kota' 5-6 p.m. section on police information and traffic jams illustrate the two possibilities. The first possibility of reported speech or indirect dialogue is represented by a gatekeeper (Ema) reporting the successful conclusion of a case in which the Surabaya police (represented by Armin Ismail) had requested Suara Surabaya to broadcast information on a missing person (the daughter of Ms Pipud) in order to help finding her.

Gatekeeper Ema: Ms Pipud earlier reported to the local police headquarters in Surabaya. Then Mr Armin Ismail informed Suara Surabaya that Ms Pipud had lost her daughter. Her daughter is indeed 17 years old, but there was much concern because of her mental disability. It turned out that she was found in the North Surabaya area at 5 p.m., now she has been brought to her grandmother in the Sidotopo area. 'Thanks to Suara Surabaya' [Ema representing the words of Ms Pipud].

Female host: Fine. Congratulations, madam. You have already found your daughter. Thank God. Our only help was the mere provision of information.²⁰

The second possibility of direct dialogue is represented by a section in which a listener (Stanley) provided the host (Restu) with information on a traffic accident he witnessed from his car.

²⁰ Gatekeeper Ema: Ibu Pipud tadi kan lapor ke Polwil Mabes Surabaya, kemudian Pak Armin Ismail yang menyampaikan ke Suara Surabaya kalau Ibu Pipud kehilangan putrinya ya. Kalau usianya memang sudah 17 tahun, tapi karena ada cacat mental, jadi sempat sangat khawatir. Tadi pukul 5 ternyata ditemukan di kawasan Surabaya Utara ya, sekarang dibawa ke neneknya di kawasan Sidotopo. 'Terima kasih untuk Suara Surabaya.' Female host: Baik. Selamat juga, Bu. Sudah ketemu putrinya. Alhamdulillah juga. Kita bantunya cuma hanya sekedar informasi (Jurriëns, transcription of a 23-6-2002 broadcast).

[...]

Host Restu (H): A Panther [the make of a car] went into a ravine and a truck is blocking [the road]?

Listener Stanley (L): It is almost blocking [the road]. (H: Almost blocking...).

H: But do you think it is possible to pass it or not, Sir, for [cars]...

L: Yes, for one car only.

H: For one car only, that should be enough.

L: On one traffic lane it is definitely possible, I have just passed it. (H: Oh, that's good...). There is still a traffic jam in the middle of the road. The traffic is proceeding slowly. (H: Alright...). Please be patient, friends, be careful.

H: Obviously, there is already an official, Sir?

L: Yes, there is. I... I can just see there is a police officer... Two police officers. One of them is on a motorcycle. He has begun 'calling' [in English], perhaps another police officer.

H: Fine. Thank you.

S: Who did I speak with?

H: I'm Restu, Mr Stanley.

S: Oh Ms Restu, thank you.

H: You're welcome, Sir. Have a safe drive.²¹

Apart from storing information on their listener-participants, Suara Surabaya also attempts to build a publicly accessible audio-archive with programme recordings on its Internet website. According to Suara Surabaya's programme manager Errol Jonathans (2000:56-7), the archive was an expression of Suara Surabaya's awareness that past and current developments steer the future and can regain topical value at any moment. He regretted, however, that archiving was still one of the weakest points in Indonesian radio journalism due to a lack of journalistic training or interest as well as a lack of economic means.

One section of Suara Surabaya's audio-archive contains statements of

²¹ [...]

Host Restu (H): Panthernya masuk jurang, truk melintang ya?

Listener Pak Stanley (L): Hampir melintang. (H: Hampir Melintang...).

H: Tapi kira-kira bisa nggak, Pak, lewat untuk...

L: Ya, satu mobil aja.

H: Satu mobil aja, cukup ya.

L: Satu jalur pasti, saya barusan lewat. (H: Oh, baik...). Di garis tengah itu masih ada mojonnya. Maju sedikit. Teman-teman bersabar aja, hati-hati.

H: Yang jelas sudah ada petugas ya, Pak?

L: Udah ada. Saya... ada Bapak polisi saya lihat pas... Dua polisi. Satu pakai sepeda motor. Dia udah mulai 'calling' mungkin yang lain.

H: Baik ya. Terima kasih.

S: Dengan siapa ini?

H: Saya Restu, Pak Stanley.

S: Oh Mbak Restu, terima kasih.

H: Sama-sama Bapak. Selamat meluncur (Jurriëns, transcription of a 23-6-2002 broadcast).

government representatives and other high officials.²² This section serves journalism's Fourth Branch function of monitoring government, parliament and the judiciary system, as it is specifically meant to assist Suara Surabaya listeners in holding high officials publicly accountable for the promises they make. According to Jonathans, while officials can easily distance themselves from written reports of their statements by denouncing them as misquotations or misinterpretations, audio-recordings make it much more difficult for them to deny responsibility, even if sound-bites can also be edited.²³ Jonathans responds here to a journalistic and social convention in Indonesia and the West that the spoken word bears a higher degree of authenticity and evidence than the printed word.

While Indonesian editors and gatekeepers usually provide their radio station with an image of neutrality and objectivity, and attempt not to alienate the audience or cause any conflicts in society, some radio stations are not afraid to join public debates with subjective or provocative statements. Radio 68H, which is affiliated to KBR 68H, is an example of a radio station that gives its editors the space to express their opinions in special on-air editorials, called 'Sikap redaksi Radio Berita 68H' ('The attitude of Radio Berita 68H's editorial board'). For instance, in the 14 August 2002 edition of the editorial, the editors did not shy away from criticizing the Accountability Report (Laporan Pertanggungjawaban) of the controversial governor of Jakarta, Sutiyoso. The report had been accepted by the regional government of Jakarta on 13 August 2002, which meant that Sutiyoso could announce his candidacy for a second term as governor of Jakarta.

The Radio 68H editors regretted that the demands of thousands of people demonstrating against the report had been neglected by the main political parties. The protesters claimed that Sutiyoso had failed during his first term as governor, and that he had bribed politicians in order to have his Accountability Report approved. In order to have their bribery allegations proven, they urged the Komisi Penyelidik Kekayaan Pejabat Negara (KPKPN, Commission of Investigators of State Officials' Wealth) to reinvestigate the wealth of Sutiyoso as well as the members of the regional parliament. They thought there were strong grounds for such an investigation, as many political factions that were initially sceptical about the Accountability Report eventually had no problems with approving it. After representing the views of the protesters against the report, the Radio 68H editors concluded the editorial with their own negative commentary on Sutiyoso's performance.

²² <http://www.suarasurabaya.net> (accessed 24-7-2002).

²³ Errol Jonathans, personal communication, Surabaya, 24-7-2002.

Isn't it strange that Sutiyoso's completely unsatisfying performance can be accepted by the majority of the council members? This is a dishonesty that has to be questioned by all the citizens of Jakarta. The bribing rumours would not have appeared if Sutiyoso had indeed shown an admirable performance during the five years that he led Jakarta. But everyone knows that, unlike the mayor of New York who immediately took action after the WTC buildings were destroyed, Sutiyoso even seemed to panic when Jakarta was hit by floods. During the five years that he led the capital, the citizens of Jakarta never enjoyed safe public transport, the traffic was chaotic, the city infrastructure disorganized, crime flared up everywhere. In spite of this series of dark results, the majority of the members of the Regional Parliament of the Special Capital District of Jakarta accepted Sutiyoso's Accountability Report. While he also has a number of human rights abuse records, there is a possibility that the citizens of Jakarta will still have to be led by the same person.²⁴

Editorials such as Radio 68H's do not involve direct audience participation, but aim at initiating a broader dialogue and making the public think about public affairs by setting an example of rational-critical argument. The editorials confirm that Indonesian radio journalists in post-Suharto Indonesia do not necessarily seek refuge in a stripped-off type of peace journalism and avoid talking or writing about sensitive social issues, but also attempt to adhere to the Fourth Estate journalistic principle, which in accordance with the alleged spirit of Reformasi, secures the watchdog function of the media and its independence.

²⁴ Betapa tidak aneh kalau kinerja Sutiyoso yang sama sekali tidak memuaskan bisa diterima mayoritas anggota Dewan? Inilah ketidakwajaran yang harus dipertanyakan seluruh warga Jakarta. Isu suap tidak akan muncul kalau memang Sutiyoso menunjukkan performa yang mengagumkan selama lima tahun memimpin Jakarta. Tetapi semua tahu, tak seperti walikota New York yang langsung turun begitu gedung WTC dihancurkan, Sutiyoso bahkan nampak panik ketika Jakarta diterjang banjir. Selama lima tahun memimpin Ibu Kota, warga Jakarta belum pernah menikmati nyamannya angkutan publik, lalu lintas semrawut, tata kota ambruk, kejahatan marak di mana-mana. Dengan sederet prestasi buram itu, mayoritas anggota DPRD-DKI Jakarta menerima Laporan Pertanggungjawaban Sutiyoso. Dengan sejumlah cacatan pelanggaran HAM yang ia miliki, warga Jakarta kemungkinan masih harus dipimpin orang yang sama (Jurriëns, transcription of a 14-8-2002 broadcast).