Chapter VI

The activity of interactive radio journalism

Having explored the genre of the interactive talk show and its actors, in this chapter I will analyse the ‘activity’ of interactivity, or the impact of the genre and its actors on society. I distinguish three roughly divided fields of Indonesian public life on which interactive radio has had its impact: public discourse, social action and identity-formation. In the field of discourse, it has created specific types of journalism and media literacy. In terms of social action, it has stimulated people to organize themselves and develop communal activities. With regard to identity, it has contributed to people’s regional awareness and sense of citizenship.

An example of a discursive effect of Indonesian interactive radio is the genre of ‘multi-sided journalism’, used by radio stations to provide different perspectives on the ‘same’ event. Stations do not necessarily need interactive programmes to create multi-sidedness, as monologic reportage or documentary-type programmes can also provide multiple perspectives. However, the type of interactivity that will be discussed not only serves multi-sidedness as such, but is also meant to make the audience aware of and learn from the dynamics of debate. I will analyse a talk show produced by Trijaya, which, rather than representing different perspectives in a monologic narrative, allows different parties with different opinions to speak for themselves. By providing each party with equal opportunity to speak, Trijaya attempts to set a model for democratic debate in Indonesian society.

The case-studies of Suara Surabaya and Jakarta News FM will illustrate that Indonesian radio talk shows also initiate concrete social action. In Suara Surabaya shows, listeners talk about and provide practical solutions to social problems such as traffic jams and burglary. Jakarta News FM broadcasts are used for organizing humanitarian off-air activities such as the building of schools for poor village communities.

In terms of identity creation, I argue that the discussion of local issues and the use of regional languages in Indonesian interactive radio have the potential to provide listeners with a sense of citizenship and strengthen their regional awareness. However, interactive radio can sometimes also lead to
regional chauvinism or narrow patriotism, as demonstrated by media representations of *aje̞g Bali* (‘firm Bali’), and does not necessarily imply publicness or confirm citizenship, as demonstrated by radio station Mora. While Mora presents itself as a public medium that provides legal advice to its listeners, it also represents the business interests of its owner’s legal office. This conflict of interest can be seen as a symptom of the Indonesian public sphere being refeudalized in a Habermasian sense.

Indonesian media institutions have recognized and attempted to reduce the risk of this type of refeudalization by developing interactive talk shows aimed at enhancing the media literacy of their audiences. This type of talk show, which is dialogic in a Bakhtinian sense, is another example of how Indonesian talk-back radio affects public discourse and possibly also social action and identity formation. In this chapter, I will analyse a programme produced by Suara Surabaya in co-operation with Lembaga Konsumen Media, in which hosts, experts and listeners discuss the impact of the media on Indonesian society. In the following chapter, I will focus on Global FM’s efforts to promote media literacy among its crew and listeners.

**Multi-sided journalism**

A journalistic genre that has come into being as a discursive effect or sub-genre of Indonesian interactive radio is multi-sided journalism. The commercial radio station Trijaya in Jakarta, which has a long and respected reputation as the organizer of debates on the Indonesian airwaves, has been one of the pioneers of this genre. Already during the New Order, Trijaya had interactive talk shows on topical affairs, including sensitive political issues. Ironically, the station had more opportunities to address such issues than many other Indonesian media because of its protected status as part of the Bimantara business group, owned by President Suharto’s second son Bambang Trihatmojo.1

As mentioned before, Trijaya Jakarta profiles itself as a news station, using the slogan ‘More than just music’. In 2001, Trijaya Jakarta’s news programmes included ‘Lintas informasi’ (a news bulletin, broadcast once an hour daily), ‘Trijaya market report’ (information from the Jakarta Stock Market, broadcast from Monday until Friday at 10 a.m., and 1:45 and 4:45 p.m.), ‘Trijaya economic business’ (national and international business reports, broadcast from Monday until Friday at noon), ‘Seputar Indonesia di Trijaya FM’ (relays of RCTI’s news bulletin ‘Seputar Indonesia’ or ‘Around Indonesia’, broad-

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1 Samuel 2002:310; Sen 2003:580-2. See Chapter III for a description of Bimantara’s network of radio stations in Jakarta and other places in Indonesia. The business group also owns the commercial television station RCTI, which is located at the same media complex as Trijaya Jakarta.
The activity of interactive radio journalism

The activity of interactive radio journalism is an important aspect of the evolution of radio broadcasting. Interactive radio journalism allows the audience to participate in the news and discussion process, which enhances the engagement and comprehension of the listeners. This type of journalism is characterized by its interactive nature, where the audience can contribute to the discussion and provide feedback.

In 2001, Trijaya Jakarta’s talk shows on current affairs included ‘Indonesia first channel’, ‘Jakarta first channel’ and ‘Thank God it’s Friday’. ‘Indonesia first channel’ contained discussions about topical issues and was broadcast on Monday from 7:30 until 9:30 a.m. ‘Thank God it’s Friday’ dealt with social problems and public services and was broadcast on Friday from 7 until 9 a.m. ‘Jakarta first channel’ invited journalists and experts to analyse the main news items in the morning newspapers and was broadcast on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 6 until 9 a.m.

According to Trijaya Jakarta’s former news programme director, Ido Seno, Trijaya has tried to implement the idea of multi-sided journalism in its talk shows by giving different parties equal opportunity to express their own viewpoints. This multi-sided journalism has functioned as a provocative and productive answer to New Order’s one-sided or monologic, non-negotiable representation of social and political reality. The radio station does not present itself as the provider of ‘independent’ news, as this would hide the fact that news is always biased to a certain extent. Multi-sided journalism, on the other hand, makes listeners media-literate by providing them with different insights into an event and thus training them to put the ‘factuality’ of news and information into perspective.

I will analyse how multi-sided journalism works in Trijaya’s ‘Jakarta first channel’, a morning show on current affairs presented by a host and one or more interviewers. The first part of ‘Jakarta first channel’ consists of the host reading the headlines and leading articles of the major national newspapers, such as Kompas, Koran Tempo and Media Indonesia. It also includes Trijaya’s own news bulletin ‘Trijaya news round-up’, music and commercials. The second part of the programme consists of a talk show in which the interviewers talk with invited informants or experts (nara sumber) on a topical issue.

In accordance with the principle of multi-sided journalism, the invited guests in the talk show are usually representatives of different professions or interest groups, providing the listeners with different interpretations of the ‘same’ topic. The listeners do not always have the opportunity to phone in and give their opinion, as Trijaya prefers to have an organized debate in which spokespersons or representatives of different sections of society are given an equal opportunity to speak. In this sense, ‘Jakarta first channel’ follows the rules of the classical debate in which rational discussion takes place in an orderly manner under the guidance of a chair. This type of debate belongs to

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the Habermasian bourgeois public sphere rather than the oppositional public sphere. The literal dialogism of ‘Jakarta first channel’ is restricted, similar to the Indonesia Media Law and Policy Centre (IMLPC) programmes discussed earlier. However, unlike the IMLPC programmes, Trijaya’s talk show is not pre-recorded and does represent a certain dynamic atmosphere, with the unpredictable directions and outcomes of live interaction.

An example of a ‘Jakarta first channel’ edition with a meta-journalistic character, discussing the role of the media in Indonesian society, was broadcast on 16 October 2001. This edition was about the same 15 October 2001 demonstration against the US invasion in Afghanistan discussed in relation to the talk show ‘Sabtu bersama Ratna’. The demonstration was organized by the Indonesian fundamentalist Islamic organization Front Pembela Islam (FPI) in front of the Indonesian parliament building in Jakarta. The police had attempted to disperse the demonstrators, as demonstrations on public holidays were prohibited according to article 9 of the 1998 Undang-Undang Menyampaikan Pendapat di Muka Umum or ‘Law on the Expression of Opinion in Public’, which was meant to accommodate Reformasi ideals such as the right to organize demonstrations.

When the FPI members refused to stop the demonstration and leave the location, a short violent confrontation between the police and the demonstrators broke out. Several people got wounded, including reporters from commercial television stations (Metro TV, Indosiar) and the written press. The police also confiscated the reporters’ films and video-cassettes that contained images of the confrontation. Media institutions were outraged that some of their reporters were wounded and journalistic material was confiscated, and this provided the incident with only more press coverage, including reports and discussions in radio programmes such as Trijaya’s ‘Jakarta first channel’. In the 16 October broadcast of ‘Jakarta first channel’, two male interviewers talked with a representative from each of the major parties involved in the conflict: FPI, the police, and the press. The interviews were conducted by phone and took about fifteen minutes each.

The first interview was with Habib Risieq Shihab, chairman of FPI. Shihab declared that FPI would take three steps in the aftermath of the incidents: 1. They would not let themselves be ‘provoked’ (diprovokasi) and would ‘restrain themselves’ (menahan diri) from taking violent revenge on the police or other groups in society, 2. They would continue searching for FPI members who were still missing, and 3. They would hire lawyers and take legal action against the police, so that ‘the supremacy of the law would be upheld’ (supremasi hukum ditegakkan). According to Shihab, FPI had sent a letter to the police to announce their plan to hold a demonstration on 15 October, but never received any answer in return forbidding them to organize demonstrations on public holidays. Shihab suspected that the police attempted to put FPI in
a bad light, in order to distract attention from the US invasion in Afghanistan and prevent other groups from organizing demonstrations. FPI itself pleaded for the discontinuation of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and the United States.

The second interview was with superintendent Anton Bachrul Alam from the Jakarta regional Metro Jaya police. Alam explained that the video cassettes and films from the television and newspaper reporters were found and would be returned. He apologized for the police conduct, emphasized the importance of the work of journalists, and would undertake an investigation into the police officers who should be held responsible for the incident. The police would also help with searching for the missing FPI members. According to Alam, the police had replied FPI’s letter, asking for more details on the planned demonstration, but never received any further information in return. The police expected violence to occur from the demonstration, as they had confiscated weapons from FPI supporters from Surakarta, who had arrived in Jakarta by train the previous day. In order to solve any remaining issues, the police would meet with FPI representatives at the Department of Religion. Alam denied Shihab’s allegations that the action of the police was to scapegoat FPI and prevent people from organizing any other anti-US demonstrations.

The third and final interview was with Andi F. Noya from Metro TV. Noya explained that a Metro TV cameraman had filmed the police attempting to disperse the demonstrators and destroying one of their cars. When the camera man refused to hand over his video-cassette and tried to flee, he was chased and hit by the police, and eventually forced to surrender the cassette. According to Noya, Metro TV would only broadcast the content of the confiscated cassette if they considered the information still to be relevant. Noya assured the decision would not be influenced by any pressure from or negotiation with the police. He could understand journalists sometimes had injuries from working in risky circumstances, but did not accept the police taking or destroying their materials and breaching the freedom of the press.

The specific ways in which the different parties answered questions and responded to the situation represented several sometimes confusing references or contributions to discourse and behaviour in alleged Reformasi style. The FPI, with its fundamentalist ideology and militant attitude, can be considered as an example of ‘bad’ civil society, which with the lessening of central state control seized the opportunity to manifest itself in public. Ironically, during the interview Shihab used ‘good’ civil society discourse – similar to the discourse used by IMLPC, for instance – attempting to convince the audience that FPI would not seek recourse to violent revenge, but rather contribute to ‘upholding the supremacy of the law’. He also positioned FPI in the same victim’s role as the press, thereby trying the audience to project some of
the democratic values and functions of the press on to his own organization.

The fact that a high-ranking police representative publicly acknowledged and apologized for bad police behaviour in the media would have been unthinkable during the New Order. Alam used exactly the same phrase as Shihab about ‘upholding the law’, but also said that the police conduct was aimed at safeguarding the values of *masyarakat madani* (‘civil society’, with Islamic connotations, see Chapter III). Probably he used this late 1990s activist-scholarly term to imply that FPI did not act in accordance with what was envisioned as Reformasi-style social behaviour. Several times during the interview, he also underlined the importance of press freedom and the important role of journalists in society. Not surprisingly, this last point was confirmed by the representative from the media, Metro TV’s Noya.

The interviewers confronted their guests with questions of equally critical intensity (‘Why did FPI decide to demonstrate on a public holiday?’, ‘Why did the police confiscate media materials?’, ‘Why was Metro TV not prepared to bring the police to trial?’), although they approached each interviewee with a slightly different attitude. While not impatient with Shihab, the interviewers certainly attempted to prevent him from using his quite impressive oratory skills to manipulate the programme completely for FPI’s own ideological ends. The interviewers applauded the superintendent’s self-criticism, but in between, they also made some ironic comments on police conduct. With regard to their fellow journalist, Noya, there was an interesting combination of solidarity and professional rivalry.

During the talk show, the people interviewed did not have the opportunity to talk with each other, nor were there any phone-in opportunities for the listeners. In line with the idea of multi-sided journalism, the Trijaya hosts tried to give the interviewees equal time to present their own version of the story – without having to face the risk of endless interruptions – and provide the audience with the clearest possible overview of the different aspects of the case. Although this restricted dialogism in a narrow, literal sense, the talk show was certainly dialogic in a broader, Bakhtinian sense of ideological becoming, as it contributed to the audience’s knowledge about the work of journalists, the mechanisms of media representation, and the function of a free press.

‘News-interaktif-solutif’; From practical solutions to sustainable development

Interactivity on Indonesian radio has not only effects on a discursive level, enabling specific forms of journalism such as multi-sidedness, but also practical social implications. For instance, the Suara Surabaya interactive programmes showed that audience participation can lead to solutions to
such diverse problems as tracing missing persons and reducing traffic jams. According to Suara Surabaya’s brochure, the radio station in cooperation with its listeners has also been very successful in solving cases of car-theft. While Suara Surabaya listeners often debate relatively complex issues in the fields of politics, economy and culture, they are best known for providing information on and solutions to such down-to-earth matters of traffic, city infrastructure and criminality. In this way they give shape to Suara Surabaya’s own concept of interactivity, which is summarized in the station’s slogan ‘News-interaktif-solutif’ (‘News, interactive, problem-solving’). The slogan indicates that the station expects its listeners not to provide mere opinion, but to contribute to the solution of the problems discussed in interactive talk shows.

Suara Surabaya, founded by Soetojo Soekomihardjo on 11 June 1983, was the first Indonesian commercial radio station with a news format. In order to circumvent New Order legislation that forbade news production by commercial stations, Suara Surabaya proclaimed that it did not produce news but information. This ‘information’ was inserted in talk shows in which listeners functioned as journalists and discussed all kinds of topical problems (Samuel 2002:308-10). Another strategy to overcome opposition from the authorities was to invite them for forum discussions on Suara Surabaya’s management and broadcasting policies. These forums helped the station to receive the support of the governor of East Java and the regional parliament, and to establish good relationships with other official or professional institutions such as hospitals, the traffic police, the regional police and electricity and telecommunications companies (Titis Nurdiana and Andreas Berthoni 2002). These institutions together with the listeners remained Suara Surabaya’s first-hand information sources after the fall of the New Order. Some of the station’s other sources are the Internet and the national and international news agencies Antara (Indonesia), AFP (France) and Deutsche Welle (Germany) (Suara Surabaya 2002).

Every year, Suara Surabaya awards listeners as well as institutions for fruitful contributions to their programmes and society at large. Suara Surabaya’s staff believes that the awards can help institutions redefine their role in society and create or regain a real public function, after so many of them

4 People whose car has been stolen can phone the radio station in order to have the theft and a description of the car announced on air. Listeners who spot the car on the road or in their neighborhood are expected to report this to Suara Surabaya or the police, although some listeners prefer to try and catch the thieves themselves. It is said that the victims of this type of criminality prefer calling Suara Surabaya to calling the police, as the radio station would be faster and more efficient. Sometimes the police themselves use Suara Surabaya as an information source, see Suara Surabaya 2002.

5 Suara Surabaya inspired another commercial radio station, Global FM, to organize its own competitions for listeners.
were discredited for cases of corruption, collusion and nepotism during and after the Suharto regime. According to the staff, it is too easy a definition of Reformasi simply to criticize or disavow these institutions without allowing for constructive attempts at reform from within. What needed to be criticized were not the institutions as such, but the practices of some of their so-called representatives.

Similar to Suara Surabaya, the Jakarta-based radio station Jakarta News FM, founded in 1998, also attempts to involve its listeners in news production as well as social activities. The station relies almost completely on funding by its listeners, as it is unable or unwilling to receive commercial funding. According to Nor Pud Binarto, Jakarta News FM’s head, the station deliberately chose to be financially and ideologically independent of any sponsors.

Jakarta News FM’s crew consists predominantly of students and human rights activists. In news production and social off-air activities they pay special attention to street children, victims or witnesses of political violence, and peace movements. They interview people who do not have the means to phone in or come to the studio, and attempt to teach them how to speak in public and defend their rights. Binarto believes radio is a suitable medium for achieving these goals, as it responds to dominant oral traditions in society, can reach illiterate people, leaves room for people’s imagination, and is in that sense less manipulative or ‘refeudalizing’ than television.

In 2001, Jakarta News FM’s news programmes included ‘Headline news’ (headlines of newspapers and news sites on the Internet), ‘Paradigma publik’ (‘Public paradigm’, with information on public services), ‘Polling’ (public opinion surveys), ‘Reportase bursa’ (‘Stock exchange reportage’), ‘Prognosis’ (a news bulletin with audience participation), CNN news (relays from the American news channel) and ‘Jakarta street views’ (on-the-spot interviews with the Jakartan people). Jakarta News FM’s talk shows on current affairs included ‘Portopolio’ (‘Portfolio’, with analyses of politics and the economy), ‘Analisis topik’ (interviews with experts on a topical issue), and the earlier discussed ‘Sabtu bersama Ratna’ and ‘Ngobrol sama Dino’. The radio station’s features and documentary programmes included ‘Harmoni alam’ (‘The harmony of nature’, a programme about environmental issues), ‘Features anak jalanan’ (‘Features on street children’, documenting the life of street children in

6 The regional government and other official organizations, joining in this culture of contests, sometimes also award Suara Surabaya listeners for social merits directly or indirectly facilitated by the medium of radio. According to Jonathans (personal communication, 24-7-2002), Suara Surabaya itself was once nominated for an award, but it refused to accept it in order not to lose its independence and credibility.

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

8 Nor Pud Binarto, personal communication, Jakarta, 11-8-2001.

9 Nor Pud Binarto, personal communication, Jakarta, 11-8-2001.

Jakarta News FM also has its own social welfare organization, Rumah Bersama (‘A House for All’). The people involved in Rumah Bersama describe themselves as ‘a humanitarian working group for refugees and the urban poor’. The organization, which is funded with donations from Jakarta News FM listeners, has been involved in projects such as the rebuilding and restoration of schools. Several off-air projects initiated and sponsored by Rumah Bersama constituted the main themes for episodes of the ‘Features sang guru’ series. This series illustrates how certain on-air interaction between hosts and listeners on Indonesian radio aims at and leads to the realization of concrete social development projects.

The 15 September 2001 episode, for instance, documented how the volunteers of Rumah Bersama together with a team of doctors went to the field in order to inspect the health of pupils at an elementary school in the Depok suburb of Jakarta, which was located near a garbage disposal. The feature was very ‘lively’ in Masduki’s sense and tried to attract the attention and stimulate the involvement of the audience through the inclusion of voices and noises from the school children, interviews with a doctor and local people, and pop songs selected as background music or intermezzo.

After a short introduction in which the female presenter explained the purpose of the visit to the elementary school, the reportage started with a pupil rattling off a lesson about hygiene. Then the presenter explained: ‘Behind the windows of the third grade [classroom] at the State Elementary School Cipayung 3, the pupils learn to improve their reading. But the other side of the teaching process is that outside the school there is a heavy traffic of garbage trucks.’ She also argued that the local Depok government only made vague promises and considered the health problems of the residents nothing to be worried about, in spite of the fact that the number of ill people had increased drastically. An interview between a Jakarta News FM reporter and a local resident inserted in the presenter’s narrative illustrated and confirmed her argument.

The presenter then summarized the words of a medical doctor who was concerned that diseases would spread easily if the living conditions did not improve quickly. This explanation was followed by an insert with an inter-

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12 Di balik jendela kelas tiga SD Negeri Cipayung 3 murid-murid belajar mempelajari membaca. Namun di balik proses mengajar, di luar sekolah mobil truk pengangkut sampah berseliweran.
view between the Jakarta News FM reporter and the doctor. In all the interviews, background sounds of playing and studying school children could be heard, while the presenter’s narrative was accompanied by soft melodic pop music. The programme also contained an intermezzo with the same type of music, which provided the programme with a sense of heroism and optimism about the attempts made to improve the situation.

The second part of the programme, after the intermezzo, also consisted of the presenter’s narrative and interviews between reporters and local residents about the health programmes that had been attempted. According to government plans, the school could only be rebuilt at another location in three years time, so the local residents tried to find temporary solutions such as building fences around the garbage belt and campaigning for the waste to be dumped at other locations. Not coincidentally, the programme was directly followed by a socio-critical song of the famous Indonesian protest singer Iwan Fals.

By including songs, narratives, interviews and background sounds related to the themes of poverty, education and health, the ‘Features sang guru’ episode informed the listeners and stimulated them to formulate their own opinions. At the same time, the programme was meant to encourage the audience to provide physical or financial assistance to Rumah Bersama’s social welfare projects and contribute to Jakarta public life in general as fully-fledged, active citizens.

‘Wandering around the city’; Virtual travel and regional awareness

Earlier I argued that the type of citizenship created by Reformasi-style broadcasting has transnational characteristics, as it has been partly shaped by imported foreign ideas and practices. News stations often show pride in being part of larger communication networks and having the means or privilege to relay news from or disseminate information to distant places. The following Jakarta News FM jingle, for instance, creates an image of modernity and cosmopolitanism for the radio station and its listeners by mentioning the use of the prestigious technology of the Internet for reaching Indonesian people abroad.

Imagine a ‘Jakarta listener’ who is in London, then flies to Tibet. Today the world has become small indeed. Jakarta News FM can be listened to for 24 hours [a day] in every corner of the world. Just click: <www.indonesiamu.com>. Jakarta News FM is within your grasp indeed. Jakarta News FM online: ‘World in your hand’ [sic].

13 Bilamana Jakarta listener berada di London, kemudian terbang ke Tibet. Maka sekarang dunia menjadi sempit adanya. Jakarta News FM dapat didengar selama 24 jam di seluruh pen-
Similarly, Global FM in Tabanan tries to earn prestige from its cooperation with the BBC as well as the satellite technology that makes this cooperation possible: ‘You have just followed a direct satellite connection with BBC London. This direct broadcast was collaboratively organized by the Global FM network and BBC London.’

Although Indonesian radio discourse has been partly shaped by and earns prestige from national and international ideas and practices, and partly turns its listeners into national or cosmopolitan citizens, the case of ‘Features sang guru’ confirms that it has had its greatest political and social resonance or impact at a regional level. Official New Order policy as reflected in the SARA doctrine admonished stations to keep the listeners at a distance and not cultivate regional sentiments, as any confirmation of the audience’s regional and civilian identity was considered a potential threat to national political and social stability. However, since Reformasi broadened the space for regional culture and even regional autonomy, radio stations and other media institutions have wholeheartedly taken advantage of the possibility to renew the contact with their listeners and re-strengthen their regional cultural pride by focusing on the niche of regional culture and politics.

For instance, although Suara Surabaya is Indonesia’s radio station with the largest number of listeners – several million people – and the highest advertising rates, it explicitly positions itself as a local news provider for Surabaya and surroundings, or ‘the voice of Surabaya’ (suara Surabaya). In a highly self-conscious manner, it refuses to make use of the services of international radio services such as Radio Nederland. Although Jonathans acknowledges the merits these news providers had in providing alternative sounds to the New Order propaganda, he believes their broadcasts have lost some of their relevance since the beginning of Reformasi. According to Jonathans, local stations are better equipped to produce programmes about local circumstances as they are amidst the events, while the international services operate from a distance and lack direct engagement as well as the relevant cultural and topical knowledge.

Suara Surabaya endeavours to present itself as the voice of the Surabaya region by means of the all day flow of broadcasts called ‘Kelana kota’ (‘Wandering around the city’), which groups together news bulletins, talk shows and other programmes. ‘Kelana kota’ invites hosts, experts, journal-
Suara Surabaya’s programme manager Errol Jonathans, 2002
ists and listeners to wander around Surabaya and surroundings physically or virtually, and in this way stimulates them to become more attentive to the peculiarities of their own region and community. Suara Surabaya listeners may sharpen their regional awareness and perform their regional citizenship through such down-to-earth activities as reporting about traffic jams or criminal acts in their neighbourhood. Other programmes produced by other stations have similar effects, such as Unisi’s ‘Jendela’ (‘Window’), which simultaneously attempts to promote the tourism business in Yogyakarta and develop the audience’s regional pride and knowledge about their cultural heritage by providing a ‘window’ on important historical events and cultural sites in the area.¹⁶

Elsewhere, in Bali, a Global FM jingle makes it clear that ‘Talking on Radio Global will show your quality and contribution to the Balinese cause’.¹⁷ In other words, participation in on-air discourse will enhance the prestige of the listener-participants, contribute to their personal development, and also benefit local society as a whole. The Global FM listeners show their concern about various aspects of Balinese life in programmes such as ‘Citra Bali’ (‘The image of Bali’) and ‘Bali terkini’ (‘Bali update’). Together with the producers and consumers of the other media of the Bali Post Group, including newspapers, magazines and television, they have obtained and contributed to a renewed but not always uncontroversial Balinese self-consciousness.

One controversial concept in the Bali Post Group context is ajeg Bali (‘firm Bali’), which is illustrative of the attempts of post-Suharto Indonesian media to mediate new forms of identity in response to international problems such as terrorism and local developments such as regional autonomy. According to Helen Creese

literally, ajeg mean ‘strong’ but it also implies tenacity and firmness; it encompasses all aspects of Balinese tradition, religion and culture (adat, agama, budaya), and represents a drive for stability and cultural certainty in a chaotic world (Creese 2004:2).

The concept of ajeg Bali or mengajegkan Bali (‘making Bali firm’) became popular after the first Bali bombings of October 2002 and only increased in popularity after the second bombings of October 2005 (I Nugrah Suryawan 2005:2). According to the Balinese scholar I Ngurah Suryawan (2005:9-10), the Bali Post Group management were the inventors of ajeg Bali shortly after the 2002 bombings. The idea was further promoted in political road shows

¹⁶ Unisi is a commercial radio station with a mixed format of news, education and religion, see Mardianto and Darmanto 2001:51-4.
¹⁷ Berbicara di Radio Global akan menunjukkan kwalitas diri Anda dan peran serta bagi kepentingan Bali (Jurriëns, transcription of an 11-7-2002 broadcast).
in the Balinese regencies (kabupaten) that were supported by the governor of Bali, the head of the regional parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Daerah, DPRD), the mayor of Denpasar, local regents (bupati) and other influential figures.

Both Creese and Suryawan have rightly criticized the ajeg Bali discourse for instilling a narrow Balinese Hindu nationalism that simplifies history and excludes groups in society. Suryawan (2005:5) points out the lurking dangers of cultural-religious essentialism and fundamentalism.

A greater downfall is an analysis that conveys that ‘Firm Bali’ also has to be ‘Firm Hindu’. This creates a fortress and a discourse that can lead to the extremes of essentialism and, certainly, religious fundamentalism. Something that cannot be avoided, in spite of the fact that it has been endlessly disputed by the intellectuals of the Firm Bali ‘think tank’ [in English] themselves. This discourse thus creates a new politics of caution. Who is not ‘Firmly Balinese’? Who is not guarding Balinese culture? A truth regime and the creation of a new person have begun to appear in Bali recently. A truth regime called ‘Firm Bali’ and a new Balinese people who are ‘Firmly Balinese’. (I Nugrah Suryawan 2005:5.)

This new ‘truth regime’ or ‘politics of caution’ has been translated in local groups organizing raids in neighbourhoods in order to detect non-Balinese residents without valid identity cards, and ethnic Balinese business men uniting themselves in Koperasi Krama Bali (KKB, Balinese Citizen’s Cooperatives) in order to protect their interests against non-Balinese competitors (I Nugrah Suryawan 2005:1-2, 17).

Creese (2004:1) argues that ajeg Bali and other forms of renewed cultural-religious puritanism have also strengthened patriarchal values that curb or exclude women in Balinese society. She observes that articles in the Bali Post newspaper include and acknowledge the issue of women’s emancipation, but usually present it as part of the national agenda rather than a constructive element of ‘Balineseness’. Topics such as women’s employment, domestic violence and demonstrations led by women, if discussed at all, are rarely integrated in the paradigm of Balinese (female) cultural identity (Creese 2004:10). According to Creese

in the context of ajeg Bali and in the face of what appears to be widely held perceptions of the increasing burdens placed on Balinese women by the conflict between modernity and Balinese cultural values, the majority of recent media articles on women instead seek to describe and justify the special place which traditional Balinese culture provides for women, a position that even the benefits of modernity cannot displace (Creese 2004:11).

At the same time, however, Suryawan (2005:14) shows that artists and ordinary people also put the ajeg Bali discourse in perspective by ‘parodying,
ridiculizing or even ignoring it’ (memparodikannya, mengejeknya, bahkan mengacuhkannya). Although the Bali Post Media Group has been influential in disseminating the idea of ajeg Bali, it also provides ample space for forums where audiences have the opportunity to criticize ajeg Bali and other developments in Balinese society, such as the letters to the editor in the Bali Post newspaper and interactive discussions at Global FM. There are also broadcast segments on Global FM specifically aimed at enhancing the audience’s media literacy and making the audience aware of and thus less vulnerable to ideological manipulation by the media. Although the outcome of the interactions between the Bali Post media and their audiences may not always be satisfactory in terms of Indonesia’s quest for democratization, it would be wrong to suggest that the process in which public debate takes place in Bali is entirely monopolized and controlled by the elite of politicians and media magnates. In the case of Global FM’s interactive programmes, the openness of the way in which debate is conducted is remarkably progressive.

Suryadi (2005) has analysed media activities in the North Sumatran region of Riau that also aim at the rediscovery and redefinition of ethnic identity, in this case ‘Malayness’. The most prominent among these is Riau TV (RTV), one of the several local television stations established since 2001, which broadcasts programmes that aim at the revitalization of Malayness, discuss the issue of regional autonomy, and even express the ambition of regional independence (Suryadi 2005:136). Many of the commercial radio stations in Riau began to focus on local ethnic identity during the Suharto regime. One of these, Radio Soreram Indah (RSI), has programmes such as ‘Pantun Melayu’ (‘Malay pantun’), ‘Syair Melayu’ (‘Malay poetry’), ‘Dongeng Melayu’ (‘Malay legends’) and interactive programmes on regional music and culture. In these programmes, not only standard Indonesian and Riau Malay are used, but also Minang, Kamper (a Minang dialect), Batak and Mandarin, in order to reflect and cater for the audience’s diversity in Malayness (Suryadi 2005:144-8).

Some news radio stations also use regional languages in addition to standard Indonesian, especially in conversations on local issues between the host and listener-participants. Usually code-switching takes place, as in the cases of Global FM, Jakarta News FM, Unisi and Suara Padang, with host and listeners constantly shifting between standard Indonesian and Balinese, Jakarta dialect, Javanese and Minang respectively, and sometimes also peppering their conversations with English expressions. In programmes of other radio stations, code-switching is alternated with the sole use of the regional language.

The talk shows of Mora in Bandung are sometimes in Indonesian or a mix of Indonesian and Sundanese – the mother tongue of the majority of the listener-participants – but often also almost exclusively in Sundanese. The
content of the majority of these talk shows is about legal issues in accordance with the radio station’s affiliation to a lawyer’s office. According to Mora’s broadcasting policy, the use of Sundanese can create a bond of trust and intimacy between the host and the listeners, and make it easier for people to explain highly complicated matters with not just legal but also personal and emotional aspects.18

During phone-ins, Mora listeners often express their concern about local issues such as the worsening infrastructure of Bandung. Depending on the approach for discussing such topics, Indonesian, Sundanese, or a mixture of Indonesian, Sundanese and sometimes English is used. For instance, the following dialogue from a 4 October 2001 broadcast of ‘Somasi’ (‘Injunction’) was entirely in standard Indonesian.

Listener (L): I want to comment on the fact that the city of Bandung seems to have become increasingly chaotic.
Host (H): The traffic, or what do you mean, Brother Edo?
L: Yes, also the traffic. The development over the last ten years also does not seem to have gone right. There are only one or two things that seem [right]. […] I compare it with… if you look at Central Java, East Java, the development seems to… seems to have gone right. The streets all seem to be good, wide, safe. But if you look at Bandung, particularly Bandung, West Java in general, the development of streets seems to have been wasted. I don’t know whether my opinion is wrong.
H: What you have just said is true, Brother Edo. Because I stayed for twenty years in East Java. In East Java even the streets that lead to small villages have been asphalted, Brother Edo. There aren’t any streets with holes in them.
L: At the same time the number of cars is increasing. While the streets are still the old ones, many of which with holes in them, Brother Aditya.19

A similar dialogue from a 29 September 2001 episode of ‘Saksi’ (‘Witness’) was almost entirely in Sundanese, only occasionally mixed with Indonesian expressions (Indonesian translations in italics).

19 Listener (L): Mau mengomentari kota Bandung makin semrawut kelihatannya.
Host (H): Di lalu lintasnya atau apanya Kang Edo?
L: Sedangkan kendararaan kan makin lama makin banyak gitu ya. Sedangkan jalan yang lama aja, banyak yang berlobang itu, Bang Aditya (Jurriëns, transcription of a 4-10-2001 broadcast).
Host (H): Because times are changing so quickly, certainly there are also risk-increasing things.

Listener (L): It is very different from when I was a child, Brother Ayo, and lived there. I was born here, I am originally from here, my grandparents were from here. I even danced at the audience hall here, I learned dancing... So I am confused to see that it has even become difficult if you want to walk on the pavement. Now, at my age, I cannot enjoy it, Brother Ayo. It will never be again like it was during my youth. It seems to have gone very far away.

H: Maybe our children and grandchildren will not be able to enjoy the same atmosphere as in the past again.

L: It will be difficult for our children and grandchildren, Brother Ayo, if they want to walk there. When I was still at elementary school until I went to secondary school...

H: In the past you could also play on the street.

L: Now it has become difficult...

It is no coincidence that the difference in language in the two dialogues reflects a difference in topics and attitudes. In the first dialogue, in which standard Indonesian was used, the conversation partners decided to approach the problem of Bandung's infrastructure by talking about rather abstract issues such as city development policies. The second dialogue, which was predominantly in Sundanese, contained a much more informal feel with the listener-participant reflecting on her personal experiences and expectations with regard to the development of Bandung.

Similar to the listener-participants in the two dialogues above, many other audience members have also regretted Bandung's bad city-planning, causing problems such as traffic jams, floods, pollution, safety-risks and unattractive city design. The listeners' observations usually lead to general discussion about local politics and cultural affairs, and confirm that radio broadcasts can express and enhance people's awareness about the region where they live and stimulate them to exercise their rights and duties as fully-fledged citizens. In
other respects, however, Mora is highly controversial in terms of the public values it claims to represent.

Talk-back radio and the refeudalization of the public sphere?

Mora has created a unique segment of the Indonesian radio market by combining current affairs with information and advice on legal issues. This has been a successful formula, as both items are in high demand in the context of the social and political reform in contemporary Indonesia. At the same time, controversy has arisen about whether the station serves the public cause indeed, or, in line with Habermas’ pessimistic view of the mass media refeudalizing society, whether it merely stages displays of publicness to the benefit of its own commercial interests.

Mora received an official broadcasting license in 1999, after the abolition of the Ministry of Information. The radio station had trial broadcasts from 1985 until 1987, but failed to receive official recognition by the New Order broadcasting authorities because of its information-oriented format. By choosing the name Mora and focusing on the format of news and information, the Mora crew aroused the anger of the crew of Mara, another commercial news station in Bandung, which had its name and format from the late 1960s, long before Mora did. According to Layla S. Mirza, head of Mara, Mora in a cheap manner attempted to benefit from Mara’s long history and good reputation in radio journalism. The people from Mora claim, however, that Mora was just an abbreviation of the name of its owner, Monang Saragih, and that they have a different approach in presenting news than Mara, which does not have in-house expertise in legal issues.

The majority of Mora’s programme hosts are indeed lawyers. Monang Saragih is also a lawyer, who besides the radio station owns his own lawyers office. It is the close cooperation between Saragih’s two businesses – which are even at the same physical location – that raises questions about the sincerity of the information and advice provided by Mora. Do the Mora hosts serve the private and public interests of the listeners, or rather attempt to instil motivation in the audience to make use of the commercial services of Saragih’s legal office? My analysis of the interaction between host and listener in one of Mora’s interactive programmes will show there is no univocal answer to this question.

From Monday until Saturday, each day at the same times, Mora broadcasts the same seven programmes. Three of these programmes contain light

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The activity of interactive radio journalism

infotainment about regional culture and religion, three other programmes are about legal issues, and one programme, broadcast twice an hour, is dedicated to current affairs. The Sunday broadcasting schedule is dominated by popular music. The radio station also organizes off-air activities, such as law seminars and broadcasting workshops.

Mora’s current affairs programme is ‘Somasi’ (‘Injunction’; also an abbreviation for sorotan masalah dan situasi, ‘clarifications of problems and situations’), which contains information about economic, political, cultural and social affairs in Bandung and surroundings. Mora receives the information from its own reporters, and only broadcasts national or international news when it is considered of direct importance to the local situation, such as news about the fall of an Indonesian president or international terrorist attacks. The Mora crew considers radio a local medium and believes it is unrealistic to try and compete with national and international news media. In interactive programmes, hosts and listeners often show a regional patriotic pride and concern about Bandung and West Java, as illustrated by the two earlier dialogues on Bandung’s city infrastructure.

The three programmes about legal issues are ‘Saksi’, ‘Kasasi’ and ‘Mora interaktif’, all with a talk show format. ‘Saksi’ (‘Witness’; also an abbreviation for saran komentar dan informasi, ‘suggestions for comments and information’) is a talk show in which listeners can request legal advice. In ‘Kasasi’ (‘Cassation’; also an abbreviation for kasus dari sana-sini, ‘cases from everywhere’) cases from Saragih’s legal office are discussed. In ‘Mora interaktif’ (‘Interactive Mora’) listeners have interactive discussions with experts in the studio about legal issues as well as topics of a more general social, political or religious nature.

A major challenge for the Mora programme hosts is how to translate legal problems into a language that suits the medium of radio. Messages have to be short and attractive, but still cover the essence of a topic. The few Mora hosts who are not lawyers by profession obtain training from lecturers in law at Padjadjaran University, Bandung, and other legal specialists and practitioners. As demonstrated earlier, the hosts also need to know Sundanese for smoothing their interactions with the listener-participants.

The Mora hosts show their expertise by providing the listeners with legal advice, explanations about new government legislation and information about legal aspects of other public issues, such as the violation of human rights. Often listeners request information about legal matters they are confronted with in their daily lives, such as the lodging of an application for an identity card or birth certificate. Listeners are not charged for the on-

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air advice by Mora’s hosts, but they do have to pay for legal assistance by Saragih’s legal office (Mora 2001).

As the Mora hosts receive money for every case they are able to hand over to the legal office, they never enter the debates about the law and legal issues completely unbiased or without self-interest. In talk shows, hosts also discuss cases that have already been handled by the lawyer’s office. Although the radio station explicitly presents itself as a ‘public’ station, it is clear that under the veneer of its publicness it predominantly serves as a popular communication channel for attracting new clients and advertisers, and promoting and expanding Saragih’s legal business.

An example is the 29 September 2001 episode of ‘Kasasi’, in which a listener phoned in on behalf of ‘a friend’ or herself – this was not entirely clear – about problems that had arisen because of plans to marry a man with a different religious background. The parents of the woman disagreed with the proposed marriage, had the man captured by the police, and threatened to have him dismissed from his job. The listener asked the talk show host whether there was any legal ground for the parents to have the man put in jail, have him fired, or otherwise obstruct the relationship. The host explained that there was no Indonesian law that could prevent people from loving each other, even if they were from different religious backgrounds. Legal action could only be undertaken if one of the partners was under the age of eighteen, which was not the case. If the man was put into jail, the couple had the right to sue the police for unlawful imprisonment. According to the host, the easiest way to solve problems was if one of the partners changed religion and the couple got married legally. If the girl’s relatives would not agree with her changing religion, she had the right to use a third party as a witness to the marriage. The listener specifically wanted to know whether legal action could be taken against the police for capturing her partner. The host directly provided some general information on the air, but apparently also saw an opportunity for Saragih’s legal office to handle the case. When the listener was about to hang up the phone, he quickly invited her to come to the radio studio or legal office for more detailed information.

Listener (L): But, for instance, if the police was determined. For instance, if they already knew that there was no connection, there was no criminal aspect to the case, for instance. They [the couple] could in return, er, in return sue the police, couldn’t they?

Host (H): Yes, they could. If the police have done something to him [the boyfriend], that is, if they have arrested or captured him. In that case they can sue the police in return. But not if the police just searched for the man or interrogated him. That’s nothing; that does not count. Then they cannot sue them in return, Madam. Only if it is based on the police capturing him, the police arresting him, putting him in prison, then they can sue them in return, Madam. The police will then be put on trial for capturing someone without any clear grounds for a criminal case.
L: Alright, thanks, Mr Heru [indicating she wants to hang up the phone].
H: The main thing is, just send her here Madam, er, your friend, just send her here with her boyfriend. But really, Madam, what I have just proposed will not solve the problem. That is...
L: At what time, Mr Heru? I mean, when is it possible?
H: Monday will be fine. Monday, Madam.
L: What time on Monday, Sir?
H: Monday, Monday until... Monday until Friday from eight until...
L: Monday until Friday...
H: Yes, from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. I am at the office all the time.
L: To Radio Mora?
H: Yes, Madam, at Jalan Peta number 38.
L: Directly with you, or how?
H: Yes, you can meet me, Mr Heru, or my friends, Madam. Mr Dede Mulyana will be there, Mr Anwar, Mr Ferdinand Siregar. You can look for those people. If not, you may also meet directly with Mr Monang.25

The Bandung public is not unaware of the ambiguous nature of the radio station. For instance, in August 2003, hundreds of employees of the ailing Indonesian aircraft maker Dirgantara were on the city streets heading towards the Mora studio. The employees of Dirgantara, who were in a legal conflict with the company’s management, accused Mora of biased news...

25 Listener (L): tapi misalnya, kalau pulisi udah nekat gitu ya. Udah tahu misal kan, nggak ada hubungannya, nggak ada unsur pidana gitu, misalnya, mereka gitu balik, balik, me... apa itu, menuntut pulisi itu, bisa, berarti ya?
L: O ya deh, makasih ya, Pak Heru.
H: Pokoknya suruh ke sini aja Bu, er, itu, teman ibu itu, suruh ke sini ama cowoknya gitu ya. Tapi memang begini, Ibu ya, artinya, ya, apa yang saya sarankan tadi itu nggak menyelesaikan masalah gitu, artinya ya...
L: Jam berapa ya, Pak Heru, ya? Kapan gitu maksudnya bisa?
H: Seninlah. Senin Bu.
L: Senin jam berapa ya, Pak?
H: Senin, Senin sampai... Senin sampai Jumat dari jam 8 sampai...
L: Senin sampai Jumat...
H: Ya, jam 8 sampai 5 sore. Saya ada di kantor terus.
L: Ke Radio Mora?
H: Ya Bu, di Jalan Peta 38 itu.
L: Dengan Pak Heru langsung atau gimana?
reporting. They claimed Mora favoured the management’s case, especially since Monang Saragih was appointed the management’s defence lawyer.\textsuperscript{26} They felt betrayed, as Saragih and his radio station were initially thought to favour their case. During the demonstration, the angry crowd broke some of the radio station’s windows, while shouting that ‘Radio Mora was no longer defending the small people’ (Radio Mora tidak membela wong cilik lagi).\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Media literacy}

Aware of the danger of the refeudalization of the public sphere in cases such as Mora’s, radio institutions in late- and post-Suharto Indonesia have developed programmes aimed at making audiences media-literate or media-savvy. An example discussed earlier was the IMILPC programmes on media legislation and other media-related issues. These programmes were not interactive and did not offer opportunities for dynamic discussions with direct audience input. A different programme, in which media-related issues are always discussed in lively interaction with the listeners, is ‘Lembaga konsumen media’, produced by Suara Surabaya in co-operation with Lembaga Konsumen Media (LKM, Institute of Media Consumers).

LKM, initially called Lembaga Konsumen Pers (LKP, Institute of Press Consumers), was one of the first Indonesian media watch organizations, founded by the journalist and university lecturer Sirikit Syah in Surabaya, 1999 (Sirikit Syah 2000). In the weekly radio programme, LKM representatives together with the Suara Surabaya host and listeners discuss the content and impact of different types of media, including magazines, billboards, television soaps and radio bulletins, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the listeners as information consumers.\textsuperscript{28} In addition to co-producing the radio programme, LKM also keeps records of offences by the press, publishes newsletters with feedback for press organizations considered to have harmed the public interest, and organizes workshops and seminars on the role of media in the public sphere (Sirikit Syah 2000).

In ‘Lembaga konsumen media’, listeners explore and negotiate the rules of discursive interchange by expressing their own experiences in dealing with the media. In order to demonstrate how the programme attempts to guide listeners through this literally dialogical process of ideological becom-

\textsuperscript{28} Based on Meinara Iman D., news director at Suara Surabaya, personal communication, 24-7-2002, and recordings of 2002 broadcasts.
ing, I will focus on a 23 July 2002 broadcast that was about advertisements promoting the use of condoms in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The Suara Surabaya host, Meinara Iman, talked about these advertisements with the LKM advisor Tjuk Suwarsono, the sexologist Doctor Andi Wijaya, and the listeners. The advertisements were controversial as they touched on a taboo subject in Indonesian society, the issue of pre-marital sex.

The one-hour episode started with Wijaya arguing that the risk of the advertisements was that people, especially youth, could derive a false sense of safety from using condoms. Wijaya referred to data from the United States, which showed that in thirteen per cent of cases condoms failed to offer sufficient protection. According to Wijaya, abstinence was a far more reliable method. He also thought the condom campaign should have been targeted specifically at groups with a high-risk lifestyle, and not the general public. After this introduction, the listeners, addressed as *konsumen media* (‘media consumers’), were invited to give their own opinion on the issue.

Some of the listener-participants agreed with Wijaya. They were not necessarily against condom use, but thought the campaign should have been targeted at adults only.

Actually it should not be the case that because we, adult people, cannot control ourselves, the government has to recommend us to use condoms, which causes these children to misuse them, and so on. I also want to suggest that maybe the mass media, when socializing and helping the government with social health services, should not publish [information] directly in the newspaper. Maybe they can print a special brochure or something, and distribute it to adults only.29

Others argued, however, that the main issue was not the publicness and accessibility of the advertisements, but the personal attitude of the media consumers.

According to me, it is ‘up to the person itself’ [*sic*], Sir. Whether someone wants them [condoms] or not is their own responsibility. So in my view, just let the publication of condom advertisements go. So, it is up to the person who reads them. That’s all, Sir.30

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29 Sebetulnya kan ulah kita-kita orang dewasa yang tidak bisa mengontrol diri, sehingga pemerintah perlu memberikan anjuran untuk memakai kondom tersebut ya sehingga yang mana mengakibatkan anak-anak ini menyalahgunakan dan lain sebagainya ya. Saya juga ingin mengusulkan, mungkin media massa dalam rangka menyosialisasikan dan membantu pemerintah dalam layanan kesehatan masyarakat tersebut mungkin jangan langsung dicetak di koran. Mungkin bisa dicetak brosur tersendiri atau bagaimana, disebarkan hanya kepada orang dewasa saja (Jurriëns, transcription of a 23-7-2002 broadcast).

In the final part of the programme, Wijaya summarized some of the points made by the listeners and provided advice for media producers and consumers. Similar to Hinca Pandjaitan’s argument about *hak menjawab* (‘the right of reply’) in the IMLPC programmes, Wijaya emphasized the right of media consumers to protest if they did not agree with certain messages in the media. He also urged parents to spend as much time as possible with their children in order to protect and guide them, and teach them proper values. The host ended the programme by expressing the hope that the information provided by Wijaya and the listeners would contribute to the improvement of future media campaigns about HIV/AIDS.

In ‘Lembaga konsumen media’, Suara Surabaya uses this type of debate to address the rights and responsibilities of media producers and audiences. In general, the different discussion partners do not argue for a return to a New Order-type control of the media, but try to explore and negotiate the boundaries of the press’ Fourth Branch function in the context of Reformasi. In ‘Lembaga konsumen media’ and other talk shows, Suara Surabaya promotes media literacy not only by addressing the media content audiences are confronted with in their daily lives, but also by giving listeners the opportunity to talk about their own or the hosts’ performances as participants in radio talk shows. The following chapter will show that this Suara Surabaya model of meta-journalism has also become a source of inspiration for other Indonesian radio stations in their attempts to raise media literacy.