

CHAPTER III

Media and publicness

This book focuses on concrete manifestations of ‘publicness’ in radio programmes, genres and institutional forms. However, publicness also has a history as an idea much discussed in Indonesia, especially since the end of the New Order when the space for society to express itself in public expanded dramatically. This chapter will address a part of that history, relating to discussions in society about ways to give shape and manage the newly conquered public space, and specifically the efforts of Indonesian academics and NGO activists to disseminate the notion of public media.

Many of the debates that produced the context for the new ideas and practices in post-Suharto radio journalism have been directly or indirectly inspired by Jürgen Habermas’ work. In this chapter, I will compare the ‘Indonesian’ debates with Habermas’ thoughts on the public sphere and identify several heuristic tools that will be used for the analysis of case-studies in the following chapters. One recurring issue in the debates has been the call for independent bodies monitoring the public quality of the Indonesian radio scene. I will discuss the main monitoring body for radio and television broadcasting that came into being during Reformasi, the Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia (KPI, Indonesian Broadcasting Commission). I will also focus on Radio Republik Indonesia’s (RRI) attempts to change from a government-controlled institution to a formally public one. At the same time, I will argue that publicness is a value rather than a media category, which – contrary to Habermas’ ideas – is not necessarily negatively affected by contemporary forces such as commercialism and media segmentation.

The Depok School and the migration of concepts

One pioneering group with a specific interest in the relation between radio and the public sphere has been the scholar-activists affiliated to the Communications Department of Universitas Indonesia (UI, University of Indonesia), including Victor Menayang, Effendi Gazali and Dedy Hidayat. These cosmopolitan media experts, who had their education at universities

in the United States and Europe, call themselves the 'Depok School' (Effendi Gazali 2002a:ix, 2002c:55), which refers to the location of their university in the Jakartan suburb of Depok. More interestingly, the name is also a clear allusion to the Frankfurter Schule, the school of thought of which Habermas is considered to be a late representative. Since 2005, members of the group have been involved in innovative television production, including the popular genre of political parody (Jurriëns 2008).

In 2002, Gazali published an edited volume about radio and the public interest with contributions from the school members and several other media scholars and NGO activists. Depok School's central thought presented in the volume was that a media institution can only be considered 'public' if it accepts supervision and evaluation by the audience.

A Public Broadcasting Institution is a broadcasting institution that has a vision to improve the quality of public life, the quality of a nation's life and also the quality of the relations between nations in general. It also has a mission to become a forum for discussing, articulating and serving the needs of the public. This broadcasting institution significantly acknowledges the supervising and evaluating role of the public in its position as audience and active participant. Therefore, a Public Broadcasting Institution is neither a Government Broadcasting Institution nor a broadcasting institution that is only based on the laws of the market. (Effendi Gazali 2002b:44, see also 2002a:ix and 2002c:55.)

According to the Depok School members, the supervising and evaluating role of the audience should be institutionalized in Institutes for the Supervision of Public Media that reflect the diversity of the public (Effendi Gazali 2002a:ix, 2002c:55). They make a distinction between organizations that are publicly owned and organizations that serve the public interest, arguing that serving the public interest is the duty of any media institution regardless of its funding or institutional organization (Effendi Gazali 2002c:53). They rightly point out that public funding can be an important strategy of anchoring a broadcasting organization in society, but only if it contributes to the organization's accessibility and accountability to the public (Effendi Gazali 2002b:41-4). The examples of Televisi Republik Indonesia (TVRI) and RRI during the New Order confirmed that this is not always the case.

The Depok School defines the public sphere (*ranah publik*) as a 'public space' (*ruang publik*) independent from the economic system and the state, where members of the public conduct rational discussions, formulate their opinions and monitor the government (Dedy N. Hidayat 2002:15; see also Effendi Gazali 2002d:85). This notion of the public sphere is based on the ideas of Habermas and his interpreters, particularly Craig Calhoun (1992), which have migrated to Indonesia through the Depok School's research projects and workshops, among others. Since 2001, the Depok School has

been active in ten Indonesian provinces and cooperated with more than two hundred local NGOs, universities, media organizations and regional parliaments (Effendi Gazali 2002a:ix).

Although the Depok School claims the idea of independent institutions for the supervision of broadcasting activities and the representation of the public interest, similar ideas have been put forward by other Indonesian organizations since early Reformasi. In 2000, the Media Law Department of Internews Indonesia published a book on the role of radio in developments related to *otonomi daerah*, or regional autonomy. It included an article by Louie Tabing, the Philippine-born vice-president for Asia of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), who pleaded for *dewan penyiaran* ('broadcasting boards') which, similar to Depok School's supervising institutions, had to monitor community broadcasting activities and check whether the people involved gave a fair representation of the diversity of groups in each community (Tabing 2000:133).

Another organization known as Komunitas Televisi Publik Indonesia (KTVPI, Community for Indonesian Public Television) has focused on developing similar strategies for making media institutions transparent and accountable to the public. KTVPI was established as part of the NGO Yayasan Sains, Estetika dan Teknologi (Science, Aesthetics and Technology Foundation) in 1999. It is run by the acclaimed Indonesian film director Garin Nugroho, the media scholar and head of Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan dan Penerbitan Yogyakarta (LP3Y, Yogyakarta Institute for Research, Education and Publication), Ashadi Siregar and several other media practitioners, scholars and activists. KTVPI's main task is to contribute ideas that help TVRI transform from a government institution into a public television station (Garin Nugroho 2002:viii; Kitley 2003:111-2). According to Siregar (2000:10), TVRI's transparency and accountability as a public medium should be safeguarded by the establishment of independent institutions that monitor TVRI's broadcast content and financial structure.

An early pioneer in introducing more general concepts of civil society and the public sphere in Indonesia is the scholar Muhammad A.S. Hikam, whose work almost reads as a blueprint for Reformasi. In his 1996 monograph *Demokrasi dan civil society* ('Democracy and civil society'), Hikam already addressed themes such as the authoritarianism of the New Order regime, the need for democratization, and the key role of civil society in reforming Indonesia's socio-political system. According to Hikam (1996:3, 84, 217), civil society consists of areas of social life that are independent from the state, have a voluntary and self-supporting character, and adhere to the rules of civil law. Hikam's (1996:3, 85-6, 217) public sphere is a part of this civil society and provides a space for citizens to communicate with each other in freedom.

Similarly, the US-based scholar Adam Seligman (1992:9) has defined the

public sphere as 'a sphere of civil society (or civil life) beyond the state and yet transcending purely individual existence'. Seligman's (1992:122) civil society encompasses social identities and activities that are not directly controlled by the state and go beyond the intimate sphere of family life. This type of civil society has both private and public aspects, as it depends on the participation of individuals in collective life. The very privacy of the participating individuals guarantees that collective identity and activity goes beyond the state and is civil indeed.

The public space of interaction in civil society is a public space only insofar as it is distinguished from these social actors who enter it as private individuals. Where there is no private sphere, there is, concomitantly, no public one: both must exist in dialectic unity for sense to be made of either one. (Seligman 1992:5.)

In democracies, the state guarantees the possibility of public life with a personal face – beyond the state as an impersonal locus of authority (Calhoun 1992:8) – by institutionalizing, respecting and stimulating citizenship or 'the values of membership and participation in collective life' (Seligman 1992:101). This type of citizenship is not merely about individuals exercising their private rights, but about individuals sharing a sense of solidarity with each other (Seligman 1992:118).

According to Hikam (1996), during Indonesia's parliamentary democracy of the 1950s, social and political organizations in civil society could grow because of the support of the people and the lack of intervention by the political elite. During the Guided Democracy of the late 1950s and 1960s, however, civil organizations lost their independence and were used by the ruling power for mass mobilization and self-legitimization (Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:4). Eventually, during the New Order, the state had strengthened its presence in almost every aspect of public life. The Indonesian middle class had also grown, but depended too much on the state to become a tool for counter-balancing state power as in Western societies (Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:5). NGOs, although large in numbers, were equally powerless, as they could not survive without the financial and political support from the government and international sponsors. The press, another potential pillar of civil society, had seen the creation of large business conglomerates, but was curbed by bans, censorship and government-controlled licence procedures (Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:6).

Hikam (1996:32) predicted that any attempt at democratic reform in Indonesia would be accompanied by a period of transition in which different parties, including the old ones, would compete to secure a spot in the new social and political establishment. Almost in prediction of the South-East Asian economic crisis of 1997, he argued that the reform process would be strongly influenced by economic, political and social developments on a global level

(Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:33). Basing himself on the democratization process in Eastern Europe almost a decade earlier (Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:76-95), he also rightly indicated that the main initiators of reform would be intellectuals – particularly students – the middle class, and joint forces of farmers and labourers (Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:58).

Hikam, who would later become the Minister of Research and Technology under President Abdurrahman Wahid (1999-2001), used the English term ‘civil society’ and based himself on Western sources such as De Tocqueville and Habermas. Other scholars and activists have explained the concept of civil society in Indonesian terms and used non-Western sources including Islamic traditions. In recent years, civil society has been referred to as *masyarakat sipil* (*sipil* is the Indonesian spelling of ‘civil’, *masyarakat* means ‘society’), *masyarakat warga/kewargaan* (‘citizens society’) and *masyarakat madani* (‘city’s society’) (Wolters 2002:139-40; Muhammad A.S. Hikam 1996:3). In the last interpretation, developed by liberal Islamic scholars such as Nurcholis Madjid and Dawam Rahardjo, *madani* is derived from *madina* (‘city’), an Arabic equivalent of Latin ‘civil’. However, for Muslims, *madani* also bears connotations with Madina, the city where the Prophet Muhammad established the first Islamic state and constitution (Wolters 2002:140; Hefner 2000:189).

Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere and the mass media

As mentioned earlier, many of the ‘Indonesian’ public sphere, public media and civil society concepts have their roots in Habermasian thought. Habermas’ own work as well as Calhoun’s interpretation used by the Depok School identifies discourse or communicative action as a crucial factor in shaping and coordinating the public sphere. Habermas (1989b:231-2) defines the public sphere as an institutionalized and accessible forum that offers citizens the opportunity to conduct rational debate and reach consensus about topics related to the state and other authorities.

By ‘public sphere’ we mean first of all a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. [...] It is no accident that these concepts of the public sphere and public opinion were not formed until the eighteenth century. [...] It was then that one learned to distinguish between opinion and public opinion, or *opinion publique*. [...] Public opinion, in terms of its very idea, can be formed only if a public that engages in rational discussion exists. Public discussions that are institutionally protected and that take, with critical intent, the exercise of political authority as their theme have not existed since time immemorial – they developed only in a specific phase of bourgeois society, and only by virtue of a specific constellation of interests could they be incorporated into the order of the bourgeois constitutional state. (Habermas 1989b:231-2.)

Habermas has traced the roots of contemporary notions of the public sphere to eighteenth century Europe, which saw the rise of the modern state, capitalist economic activity and bourgeois society. Capitalism, one of the foundations of the bourgeois public sphere, completed the privatization of civil society by allowing people individual control of property and production. Two other foundations were the increasing availability of information and education, which enabled the public to go beyond common opinion and develop considered thoughts. People with the appropriate financial and cultural capital had access to the institutions of the public sphere – including meeting places such as coffee houses (England), salons (France) and table societies (Germany) – and print media and literary works such as journals of opinion, novels and theatre plays (Calhoun 1992:12-5). According to Habermas (1989a:37; cited in Calhoun 1992:13), the potential of the public sphere to represent civil society as a whole was not necessarily diminished by its specific admission criteria, as ‘it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who – insofar as they were propertied and educated – as readers, listeners, and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion’.

Habermas (1989b:236) regrets that in contemporary Western society the foundations of the public sphere have been undermined by a process of ‘refeudalization’. Refeudalization means that state and civil society are no longer distinct, but have become interlocked, with the state penetrating the private realm on the one hand and private organizations assuming public power on the other. As a consequence, the public sphere has come to resemble an arena where legislators stage displays for their constituents, and special interest groups seek to increase the prestige of their own positions (Calhoun 1992:21, 26). The different parties in this arena prefer to negotiate mutually beneficial compromises with each other rather than to organize truly critical discussions to the benefit of society as a whole.

With the interlocking of the public and private domains, not only do political agencies take over certain functions in the sphere of commodity exchange and social labor; societal powers also take over political functions. This leads to a kind of ‘refeudalization’ of the public sphere. Large-scale organizations strive for political compromises with the state and with one another, behind closed doors if possible; but at the same time they have to secure at least plebiscitarian approval from the mass of the population through the deployment of a staged form of publicity. (Habermas 1989b:235-6.)

Another aspect of refeudalization has been the ‘externalization of the inner life’ by citizens reducing the private sphere to family affairs and withdrawing from ‘their socially controlled roles as property owners into the purely “personal” ones of their noncommittal use of leisure time’ (Habermas

1989:159; cited in Calhoun 1992:22). As a consequence, rational debate has been replaced by 'apolitical sociability' and the passive consumption of popular culture. Habermas here follows the same critique of mass culture in which earlier members of the Frankfurter Schule played a prominent role (Calhoun 1992:22-3).

According to Habermas, the refeudalization of society has been reinforced by the modern audio-visual mass media such as radio, film and television, which have a far greater immediacy than the print media and are capable of creating a 'secondary realm of intimacy' with the audience (Calhoun 1992:24). States and corporations have exploited this immediacy by turning politicians into media stars and instilling motivations in the audience that respond to specific political or commercial interests. At the same time, however, the media give the audience an image of itself as a group of private citizens that contributes responsibly to public opinion rather than a group of media consumers that is being persuaded and manipulated (Calhoun 1992:24-6).

A concrete illustration of Habermas' argument about the use and abuse of the immediacy of the electronic media is Timothy Cook's (1998) analysis of broadcast journalism. Cook (1998:12) argues that, particularly in the United States, broadcast journalists and politicians are involved in 'a constant but implicit series of negotiations over who controls the agenda, what can be asked, where and how, and what a suitable answer will be'. This 'negotiation of newsworthiness' contaminates journalism's function as the 'Fourth Estate' or 'Fourth Branch of State' (Schultz 1998), which is meant to secure the autonomy of the public sphere – of which the press is a part itself – and serve the 'exercise of citizenship' (Hjarvard 1998:211). The Fourth Estate depends on journalists remaining independent from and critically examining the other three branches of state: those of executive, legislative and judicial power, respectively. In reality, however, the standards of professional journalism are often weakened by government officials using border-crossing strategies to have direct access to the media, turn journalists into accomplices and use the press in their own interest.

Linking media strategies and governing strategies has become an attractive option for officials, whether to communicate to an ever more complex and dispersed political system, to influence the context in which other officials decide inside and outside their own institutions, or to make policy itself by the use of performative language. Officials have furthered the importance of news making by hiring professional public information officers who bring the journalistic perspective into the governmental process. (Cook 1998:16.)

The fruitfulness of Habermas' theory of the bourgeois public sphere is that it provides a heuristic tool for the disclosure and analysis of these and other problems that are at the heart of twentieth and twenty-first century capital-

ist society. In spite, or perhaps because, of its impact and productivity, the theory has also provoked much controversy and criticism. A point of criticism I share with others (for instance, Calhoun 1992:33) is that the modern media are not necessarily as uniform and anti-democratic as Habermas suggests. Alternative, democratic media strategies certainly exist, as some of the examples from the contemporary Indonesian radio landscape in this book will demonstrate.

Radio Republik Indonesia; Public radio and the Broadcasting Law

Not surprisingly, media scholars, practitioners and activists evaluating the publicness of Indonesian radio have had a special interest in RRI. Some of their research findings and recommendations have been translated into legal documents officially sanctioning RRI's status as public broadcasting institution. The most influential of these legal documents, the 2002 Broadcasting Law states in article 14 that RRI 'has an independent, neutral, non-commercial character and functions to provide services in the people's interest'. The 2005 Government Regulations Numbers 11 and 12 confirm RRI's new status in more detailed and operational terms.

Until 2000, RRI held the status of government broadcasting institution under the Department of Information (Departemen Penerangan), which meant that it was owned, ruled and financed by the government. In the transition period from 2000 to 2005, it was a state-owned corporation (BUMN, *badan usaha milik negara*) under the Department of Finance (Departemen Keuangan), which meant that it had to search for its own funding but not strive to make profits. As a public broadcasting institution, RRI now consists of a supervisory board (*dewan pengawas*) and a board of directors (*dewan direksi*). The supervisory board includes five delegates from the public, the government and RRI and has the duty to elect and monitor the board of directors. The board of directors also consists of five members and is involved in policy-making and broadcast coordination.¹ The Broadcasting Law, specifically article 15, mentions that RRI is allowed and expected to receive its income from a diversity of sources, including listener fees, the national budget, advertisements and voluntary contributions.

In 2006, RRI owned 52 national and regional stations as well as one international service for Indonesian-language listeners overseas, called Voice of Indonesia. RRI's broadcasting priorities are news, education, culture and

¹ 'Tentang kami'. <http://www.rri-online.com/modules.php?name=TentangRRI> (accessed 13-7-2006).

music. The national head station in Jakarta has six different *programma*, or channels (abbreviated to Pro I, II, III, IV, V and VI, respectively) on six different frequencies. Pro I focuses on adult listeners in the Jakarta region, Pro II on Jakartan youth, Pro III on news and information, Pro IV on culture, Pro V on education and Pro VI on classical music and foreign languages. The majority of regional RRI stations have three different channels (abbreviated to Pro I, II and III, respectively), each with its own frequency. Pro I targets rural communities, Pro II urban audiences, while Pro III positions itself as a news and information channel.²

When I interviewed employees of the regional RRI stations in Bandung, Denpasar and Padang in 2001 and 2002, when RRI was still a BUMN or *perusahaan jawatan* (state 'service enterprise'), there was much uncertainty about whether RRI's future direction would be governmental, commercial or public. One of the fundamental changes underwent by RRI was that it could rely less on government funding and had to start searching for alternative sources of income. RRI Padang, for instance, established its own Marketing and Company Development (Pemasaran dan Pengembangan Usaha) department, which attempted to earn money from selling air time to advertisers, attracting sponsors for talk shows and renting out broadcasting equipment to private radio stations and media training institutes.³

At the same time, the Padang staff hoped that their station would not become entirely commercial, as this would automatically lead to the redundancy and forced dismissal of staff. One of the strategies to make RRI Padang more attractive for (potential) advertisers and sponsors, and simultaneously give it a more public image, was to start the production and broadcasting of infotainment and interactive talk shows on current affairs, including 'Padang bicara' ('Padang talks') and 'Dinamika seputar kota' ('The dynamics around the city'). They also tried to introduce a more informal, colloquial broadcast language and break with the monological, stiff and distanced presentation style practiced during the New Order.⁴

The Padang staff was dissatisfied that RRI, in spite of the Reformasi agenda of decentralization and regional autonomy, continued to adhere to a hierarchical, centre-oriented structure of one head office (*cabang utama*, or 'main branch') in Jakarta and numerous branch offices in the regions, which in order of size or importance were called *cabang madya* ('middle branches'), *cabang muda* ('young branches', including RRI Padang) and *cabang pratama* ('sub-branches'). They also complained that the regional stations still had to

² 'Sejarah'. http://www.rri-online.com/modules.php?name=Tentang_RRI&op=sejarah (accessed 13-7-2006).

³ Idham Hamid, personal communication, Padang, 20-8-2002.

⁴ Mustawar Lubis, personal communication, Padang, 20-8-2002.

share their income with the head office.⁵

The key element of RRI's new, post-BUMN status of public organization is the supervisory board, which elects and monitors the board of directors. This is the kind of supervisory body for public radio that the Depok School and other media scholars and activists had pleaded for.⁶ Article 14 of the 2002 Broadcasting Law included a general description of *dewan pengawas*, while Government Regulation No. 12 of 2005 contained specific details about the board's *modus operandi*. According to the Government Regulation, the government seeks feedback from the public in nominating candidates for the supervisory board to the Indonesian parliament (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, DPR). The members of parliament eventually decide on the five board members, who are elected for a period of five years and can only be re-elected once (*Peraturan Pemerintah 2005b*, Articles 8 and 19).

Government Regulation No. 12 as well as two other related 2005 Government Regulations – the No. 11 on public broadcasting in general and the No. 13 specifically on TVRI – have not been without controversy. For instance, KPI has criticized the Government Regulations for giving the Minister of Communications and Informatics (Menteri Komunikasi dan Informatika) the right to issue licenses to public media organizations. According to KPI, this authorizes the government to intervene in public broadcasting and reinstates RRI and TVRI as state rather than public media organizations, whereas the right to issue licences should lie with KPI in its capacity as independent institution.⁷

The conflict about the issuing of broadcasting licences was caused by the unclear, multi-interpretable word *negara* ('state') in article 33 of the Broadcasting Law, which says that 'the state gives licences and organizes broadcasting'. According to KPI, 'state' here refers to KPI and not the Minister of Communications and Informatics. Later in 2005, the same interpretation problems about the same word arose with four other government regulations on broadcasting – the Numbers 49, 50, 51 and 52 on foreign, private, community and subscription channels, respectively.⁸ This prompted KPI to request the Indonesian Supreme Court (Mahkamah Agung) for a judicial review of all seven government regulations.⁹ So far, the first three regulations have been

⁵ Mustawar Lubis, personal communication, Padang, 20-8-2002.

⁶ 'Diingatkan, pentingnya dewan pengawas RRI'.

<http://www.kompas.co/kompas-cetak/0505/16/Politikhukum/1753698.htm> (accessed 16-5-2005).

⁷ 'KPI tolak tiga PP Penyiaran baru'.

<http://www.hukumonline.com/detail.asp?id=12601&cl=berita> (accessed 8-4-2005).

⁸ 'Kronologi kontroversi Peraturan Pemerintah tentang Penyiaran'.

http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=52&p2_articleid=98 (accessed 17-7-2006).

⁹ 'Peraturan Pemerintah'.

<http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=23> (accessed 17-7-2006).

in force in their original formulations, while the application of the last four regulations has been postponed several times.

Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia; Monitoring the publicness of broadcasting

While RRI and TVRI have their own supervisory boards to monitor their publicness, KPI has the task to monitor the publicness of the Indonesian media landscape as a whole. According to a statement on the KPI website, KPI was a product of the 2002 Broadcasting Law, which stated that broadcasting was a public affair that needed to be regulated by an independent body.¹⁰ This was a radical change from Indonesia's first broadcasting law of 1997, which stated that the government was in charge of regulation. KPI believes regulation is necessary, as the accessibility of the broadcasting spectrum is restricted due to physical limitations on the availability of frequencies. The commission's two basic principles that make broadcasting organizations serve the interests of the public are 'diversity of content' and 'diversity of ownership'.

The democratization process in Indonesia positions the public as the main owner and controller of the broadcasting domain. Because frequencies are public property and have a limited character, their use should serve the public interest as much as possible. Serving the public interest as much as possible means that broadcasting media have to function as healthy public information providers. Information can be found in various forms, from news to entertainment, science etc. The basis of healthy information provision is 'Diversity of Content' and 'Diversity of Ownership' as mentioned in Broadcasting Law No. 32 of 2002. These two principles are the foundations of every policy formulated by KPI.¹¹

In order to guarantee diversity of content and diversity of ownership, KPI admonishes broadcasting organizations to abide by Broadcasting Law Article 18, which strictly forbids media monopolies; and article 31, which stipulates that radio and television stations aiming to expand their transmission area need to have a local branch or cooperate with a local media organization in every region within their scope. KPI uses these and related articles from the Broadcasting Law not only as tools to fight the centralization and monopolization of news and information, but also to give concrete meaning to the idea of regional autonomy and stimulate regional economic and socio-cultural development.¹²

Neither KPI nor the 2002 Broadcasting Law have been without their crit-

¹⁰ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

¹¹ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

¹² 'Dasar pembentukan', <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

ics. One of the most prominent among these critics is LP3Y and KTVPI's Ashadi Siregar, who argues that KPI and the Broadcasting Law restrict the freedom of media organizations by controlling and interfering in their broadcast content. Siregar would prefer the Broadcasting Law only to function as a complement to the Undang-Undang Telekomunikasi ('Telecommunications Law'), which is about issues related to frequency use and transmission technology. The Broadcasting Law could specifically deal with the technological complexities and business implications of these issues, while an independent monitoring body such as KPI could function as a weapon against government officials seeking personal political or financial benefit from the telecommunications business.¹³

According to Siregar, citizens who feel offended by certain broadcast content do not need a broadcasting law or KPI to handle their case, as existing, more general legal means could deal with misconduct by the media as not fundamentally different from misconduct by ordinary citizens. He argues that KPI in its current form, similar to Dewan Pers ('Press Council') during the New Order, seems to function as an extension of the government in curbing the media. He also disagrees with the Broadcasting Law stating that KPI and its regional offices are to be controlled by (*diawasi oleh*) the national and regional parliaments, and believes a better, less authoritarian formulation would be that the KPI offices have to be accountable to (*bertanggung jawab kepada*) the parliaments. He also believes that Indonesia is less in need of a broadcasting law or broadcasting commission than an imperative for the government and the media industry to meet society's right on information, for instance in the form of an information act on the freedom and accessibility of information.¹⁴

Siregar's argument that media producers and consumers are being curbed by KPI and the Broadcasting Law, and KPI's own fear of the growing influence of the Department of Communications and Informatics, illustrates that the concept of publicness is highly contested among Indonesian politicians, media practitioners, activists and scholars. By law and in practice, KPI deals with issues related to broadcast content itself. However, although the spectre of New Order's infamous Departemen Penerangan ('Department of Information') is still haunting KPI, the commission – which, interestingly, during its first term (2004-2007) was headed by the Depok School's Victor Menayang – takes every opportunity to show that it dedicates itself painstakingly to the task of representing the public and improving the quality of

¹³ 'UU Penyiaran; Menghidupkan kembali otoritarianisme'.

<http://www.suarapembaruan.com/News/2003/02/17/Editor/edi03.htm> (accessed 17-2-2003).

¹⁴ 'UU Penyiaran; Menghidupkan kembali otoritarianisme'.

<http://www.suarapembaruan.com/News/2003/02/17/Editor/edi03.htm> (accessed 17-2-2003).

Indonesian broadcasting. One of KPI's services is its website which contains forms for the public to lodge complaints about media institutions or media content. On the basis of their comments, KPI issues warnings to television stations for screening materials considered harmful – such as representations of sex, violence or superstitious beliefs – or for not being objective in their news reporting.¹⁵ Documents with these warnings are accessible to the general public on the KPI website.

An example of a KPI warning was a letter sent to thirteen television stations on 22 March 2006. In the letter, KPI reminded the stations that they were using 'broadcast frequencies that were owned by the public and therefore had to be used in the interest of the public and with respect for the social order of values and norms'.¹⁶ The attachment to the letter contained a detailed list of complaints about specific programmes. The complaints were about obscenity and disrespect for religious values in soap operas and films (for instance, Indosiar's screening of the US movie 'American pie'); vulgar lyrics and dance movements in music programmes (for instance, TVRI's 'Channel dangdut' ['The dangdut channel']); superstition and mysticism in reality shows (for instance, SCTV's 'Di sini ada setan' ['Here is a bad spirit']) and violence in fiction (for instance, martial arts in Global TV's 'Film Mandarin' ['Mandarin films']) and news or investigative programmes (for instance, TPI's 'Sidik kasus' ['Case investigation']). KPI emphasized that it was acting on behalf of the people (*masyarakat*) and considered taking legal action against stations that refused to stop broadcasting offensive materials and improve the quality of their programmes as part of its responsibility.

KPI has received many complaints from the people that television stations have recently become increasingly daring in showing vulgar, sexually-oriented materials in comedy programmes, *sinetron* [Indonesian soap opera], music performances, music video-clips, talk shows, variety shows, films and features and documentaries. Similarly, there have also been many complaints about violent content in *sinetron*, news, films and features. The presence of these programmes demonstrates that national private television stations have excessively violated Broadcasting Law No. 32 and the Guidelines for Broadcasting Conduct/Broadcast Programme Standards (P3-SPS), which have been declared valid from August 2004. Therefore KPI, as part of its responsibility to act in accordance with the people's mandate and uphold the law, is left with no other choice than to follow the road of justice and proceed with actions against violations of the Broadcasting Law.¹⁷

In other letters, KPI admonished television stations for broadcasting graphic images of casualties, as in reports on a Mandala aircraft crash, September

¹⁵ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

¹⁶ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

¹⁷ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (accessed 17-7-2006).

2005, and social unrest in Papua, March 2006. The commission also issued warnings against stations breaching the rules of objectivity in current affairs programmes. TVRI, for instance, was warned for its 12 July 2006 edition of the talk show 'Mimbar demokrasi' ('Pulpit of democracy'), which was hosted by Anas Urbaningrum, head of the Politics and Regional Autonomy division of Partai Demokrat (PD, Democratic Party). Especially since PD is also President Yudhoyono's party, KPI argued that 'Mr Anas Urbaningrum's presence as a presenter in this programme created the impression that TVRI was becoming a tool for government interests [again]'.¹⁸ Other warnings concerned the use of hidden cameras in humorous reality shows, violence and nudity in live broadcast, and misleading information about SMS tariffs and prize-winner notifications in phone-in quizzes.¹⁹

KPI's website shows letters from television stations in response to the warnings, in which they usually promise to increase their programme standards. The website's folder on radio programmes and institutions is still empty, perhaps because the absence of visual material makes radio less likely to be offensive, or because the high density and diversity of radio programmes simply makes it a medium too hard to monitor. KPI's ultimate penalty for a media organization continuously harming the public interest is to withdraw its broadcasting licence.

'More than just music'; News radio and segmentation

As acknowledged by institutions such as the Depok School and KPI, the publicness of media organizations is a matter of the values they represent rather than their official status. The fact that media organizations may represent commercial interests or entertain links with the national government or international media organizations and NGOs does not necessarily reduce their publicness, but calls for a Habermasian evaluation of how these institutions confirm or cross the borders between the public and the private, the local and the global and civil society and the state, and to what extent they resist or contribute to the 'refeudalization of society' and the 'externalization of inner life'.

My case-studies will focus on activities developed by Indonesian radio institutions that can be roughly divided into the following three categories:

1. Activities that represent the ideals of the Habermasian public sphere,

¹⁸ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (letter to the head of TVRI, 21 April 2005; accessed 17-7-2006).

¹⁹ 'Dasar pembentukan'. <http://www.kpi.go.id/index.php?categoryid=11> (letter to the head of TVRI, 21-4-2005; accessed 17-7-2006).

2. Activities that include alternative strategies for representing the public interest, and 3. Activities that are controversial with regard to the public values they are supposed to defend. The first category includes the institutional structures and programmes of the radio news agencies Kantor Berita Radio 68H and Internews Indonesia (Chapter IV), the second category community radio (Chapter VIII) and the talk shows and off-air activities of commercial stations (Chapters V, VI and VII), and the third category the programmes and concepts of Radio Mora, a commercial station with a mixed format of news, information about legal issues and entertainment (Chapter VI). This is a rough division made for the sake of the argument, as there is also much overlap between the three categories.

The main factor on the macro level of media management that determines the organizational structures, journalistic concepts, programme contents, broadcast styles, broadcast languages, advertising strategies and off-air activities of the majority of radio stations that will be discussed is the commercial strategy of segmentation. Segmentation means that radio managers give their stations a particular identity by imagining and thus partly creating a target audience or segment of the Indonesian listeners' market. Their decisions on how to create and represent a specific community of listeners are reflected, in a very concise manner, in the genre of the jingle.

Jingles are short sung or narrated commercials, usually accompanied by music, broadcast for self-promotion and containing general information about a station or details about a specific programme or off-air activity. Jingles constitute one of the immediate reference points for listeners to make sense of the discursive flow they are confronted with when tuning in to the radio. The Jakarta news station Trijaya, for instance, identifies itself as 'the real radio' providing 'more than just music' (in English) in jingles that are broadcast several times an hour. These signature tunes are illustrative of commercial stations in the post-Suharto radio landscape trying to get rid of the image of only providing entertainment to the audience. What is 'real' about Trijaya is that its broadcast content includes not 'just music', but also news and current affairs.

Trijaya is part of a national network of radio stations that also consists of SCFM (Surabaya), Prapanca (Medan), Trijaya Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta), Trijaya Semarang (Semarang), Mercurius Top (Makassar) and Voice of Papua (Jayapura). This network is part of the Bimantara business group (see Chapter VI). The programmes of Trijaya Jakarta are also broadcast via World Space, a radio satellite service that can be received anywhere in Indonesia, major parts of Asia and the north of Australia. The network aims at a middle- or high-income audience of urban business people.²⁰ One of the ways in which

²⁰ Ido Seno, Trijaya programme director, personal communication, Jakarta, 12-10-2001.

it addresses and partly creates this type of audience is by means of the broadcast content and jingles for the programme 'Thank God it's Friday'. This programme is produced in Jakarta and broadcast by the majority of the network stations. The following jingle produced by SCFM, the member station in Surabaya, shows that which is supposedly of interest to the listeners of 'Thank God it's Friday' and the network's audience in general. The jingle was directed at potential advertisers.

Do you want young professionals to know and try your company's new products? You also have to communicate your company's professional services so that they reach their target. Everything is discussed interactively in 'Thank God it's Friday'. Every Friday from 7 until 9 a.m. on SCFM. Apart from the analysis of new products, 'Thank God it's Friday' also includes: lifestyle talk, weekend destination and celebrity profile. Make sure 'Thank God it's Friday' accompanies you on your Friday morning exclusively on 104.7 SCFM.²¹

The jingle confirms that the Trijaya audience is believed to consist of a group of business people, including the radio station's potential advertisers, who are in their early professional career (*profesional muda*). The special themes of 'Thank God it's Friday' (lifestyle talk, weekend destination and celebrity profile) also imply that the listeners would feel the urge to create their own 'lifestyle' inspired by Western capitalist notions of luxury, have the time and money to participate in recreational activities during the weekend, and find the lives of celebrities intriguing or even a source of inspiration.

Another example of segmentation is Suara Padang ('The Voice of Padang') in Padang, West Sumatra, which is also a news station, but with a profile very different from Trijaya's. Suara Padang's slogan is 'Berita dan dakwah', indicating that the radio station's two main foci are news (*berita*) and Islamic proselytizing (*dakwah*). Suara Padang relays national and international news from the Indonesian radio news agency Kantor Berita Radio 68H and the Voice of America, while it gathers news about Padang and West Sumatra from its own reporters and local newspapers.²² Two of its Islamic programmes are the interactive talk show 'Masail islamiyah' ('Islamic problems'), in which listeners can ask questions about religious issues to experts in the studio, and 'Mutiarah hikmah' ('Pearls of religious wisdom'), which consists of jingles

²¹ Anda ingin profesional muda tahu dan mencoba produk baru perusahaan Anda? Layanan profesional perusahaan Anda juga harus dikomunikasikan agar tepat sasaran. Semuanya dibahas secara interaktif di 'Thank God it's Friday'. Setiap Jumat pagi jam 7 hingga 9 di SCFM. Selain ulasan produk baru di 'Thank God it's Friday' juga ada: bincang lifestyle, weekend destination dan profil selebritis. Pastikan 'Thank God it's Friday' hadir menemani Jumat pagi Anda hanya di 104.7 SCFM (Jurriëns, transcription of a 27-7-2002 broadcast).

²² Yusirwan Yusuf, head of Suara Padang, personal communication, Padang, 19-8-2002.

with interpretations of Koran verses and is broadcast at least once an hour. At Suara Padang, news and religion remain relatively separate domains, though, as there are no broadcasts in which a specifically Islamic view on topical issues is expressed.

Suara Padang creates and promotes its profile by means of its signature song, which follows the verse structure of *pantun*,²³ a Malay literary genre that is very popular in West Sumatra.

Radio Suara Padang FM
Appears sweet and enchanting
Radio Suara Padang FM
Is here as your friend

Radio Suara Padang FM
Full of information
And proselytizing that alludes
To the blessing of an eternal life

Padang FM is here together with you
To entertain you all
Padang FM is here together with you
To accompany you in happiness and sorrow²⁴

The radio station's management acknowledges that the main reason to combine news and religion is commercial and pragmatic rather than purely religious. It is a strategy to distinguish the station from its competitors and safeguard the crew against verbal or physical attacks from angry mobs that question their religious or patriotic integrity. The crew knows from experience that relaying news from a rich variety of sources, including Western news providers sometimes considered anti-Islamic or anti-Indonesian, involves inevitable risks. Especially when Suara Padang relayed Voice of America broadcasts during the war in Afghanistan in 2001, they received many verbal and physical threats from discontented listeners.²⁵

The segmentation of the Indonesian radio landscape as illustrated by Trijaya and Suara Padang can be seen as a typical manifestation of the mar-

²³ For a concise description of *pantun*, see Teeuw 1994.

²⁴ Radio Suara Padang FM / Tampil manis mempesona / Radio Suara Padang FM / Hadir sebagai teman Anda // Radio Suara Padang FM / Sarat dengan informasi / Serta dakwah meng-iasi / Berkah hidup yang abadi // Padang FM hadir bersama / Untuk hibur Anda semua / Padang FM hadir bersama / Temani Anda suka dan duka.

²⁵ Yusirwan Yusuf, personal communication, Padang, 19-8-2002.

keting and consumer orientation of contemporary mass culture. According to Habermas, such segmentation reflects fragmentation rather than diversification, and contributes to the disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere. It would undermine the formation of a mass-based solidarity by failing to facilitate critical discussion to the benefit of all (Livingstone and Lunt 1994:27; Calhoun 1992:25). It would also be symptomatic of the segmentation of society at large, where 'the sounding board of an educated stratum tutored in the public use of reason has been shattered' and 'the public is split apart into minorities of specialists who put their reason to use non-publicly and the great mass of consumers whose receptiveness is public but uncritical' (Habermas 1989a:175; cited in Calhoun 1992:26).

Seligman (1992:128) explains that this altered relationship between cultural producers and consumers is a negative and paradoxical consequence of the very success of the public sphere, in particular the wide-spread implementation and dissemination of the idea of the use of reason: 'By bringing ever increasing realms of life into the realm of Reason, it also denuded them of any value (especially ethical value) beyond that instrumental calculus of means-end relationship.' Following Max Weber, it is this 'disenchantment of the world' that has left us with 'specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart' (Seligman 1992:128).

However, there are both theoretical and empirical grounds for arguing that the segmentation of society and the media is not necessarily negative and disruptive, but can also bring positive contributions to public life. Some of my case-studies of Indonesian private radio will demonstrate that certain manifestations of mass culture, similar to Habermas' bourgeois public sphere, contain rational-critical debate and address society as a whole.²⁶ Other case-studies will show that Habermas' concept itself is in need of a critical re-examination. In this book such a re-examination, more or less in line with Seligman's critique of the idea of reason, will lead to the argument that says, perhaps paradoxically, that rational-critical debate or the capability to address society as a whole are not necessarily required for media such as Indonesian private radio to facilitate and improve public life.

²⁶ I am aware that the 'externalization of inner life' as manifested in the pleasure of producing, receiving or interacting with media content can, in certain cases, serve important social goals or subvert or redefine existing political and social structures too. However, this is not the direction in which I want to lead this book, see also my discussion of 'phatic performance' in Chapter V.

What is new about the news?

It should be emphasized that Indonesian radio journalism since the late New Order, while being influenced by Habermasian and other imported intellectual thought, is certainly not about journalists, programme producers and audiences neatly applying internationally accepted journalistic concepts to the local context. It is rather about the dynamic struggle of these actors to come to terms with the renewed freedom of expression in their country. Perhaps not surprisingly, audience participation programmes have become dominant as both a symbol of and space for this struggle. With specific regard to such programmes, it does not make much sense to try and give a precise definition of Indonesia's new radio journalism, or judge whether it is good or bad, or 'real' or 'fake', journalism. More useful, as a start, is to try and explain the broader socio-political context that gave this journalism the shape it has.

In her work on the relationship between politics and the written press during the New Order and Reformasi periods, Angela Romano (2003:132) quotes sociologist Gaye Tuchman's definition that 'news imparts to events their public character as it transforms mere happenings into publicly discussable events'. While this is a useful working definition, Romano (2003:40-6, 132, 2005:9) rightly observes that censorship and self-censorship during the New Order prevented many potentially newsworthy issues from entering the public domain by classifying them as politically sensitive, or not in line with the regime's interpretation of a 'free but responsible' press. Since the late 1990s, journalists and media organizations have tried to free themselves from the legacy of these (self-)restrictions by adopting a new paradigm much closer to the ideal of journalism as a watchdog of politics and society (Romano 2003:65-7). According to Romano (2003:66), two tasks have become priorities for the Indonesian press: firstly, to establish mechanisms for protecting and promoting press freedom; secondly, to increase the professional and ethical standards of the press. As a result, there has been a boom in the creation and revision of government legislation, scholarly literature and practical training courses on print and broadcast journalism (Romano 2003:66).

Masduki (2001:xiii) – Indonesian academic, radio journalist and former head of the Yogyakarta branch of Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI, Alliance of Independent Journalists) – appropriately describes the early post-Suharto period as a 'try and error' (*sic*) phase of Indonesian journalism, particularly radio journalism. He explains how radio during the New Order positioned itself predominantly as a medium of entertainment (*hiburan*), not journalism. He regards this tendency as a symptom of the self-censorship of the Indonesian media, who were forced to restrain themselves from any reporting that went against the interests of the government. As a result, the media 'became more and more alienated from the people's real needs', while the



The Indonesian media scholar and radio journalist Masduki, 2001

people 'became isolated, unaware of their critical function and the fundamental rights they should have received from the government in power' (Masduki 2001:1).

According to Masduki (2003:141), the period between 1998 and 2001 saw some of the most important developments in the history of Indonesian broadcast journalism. Five of the main developments were: 1. The broadcasting media giving priority to market interests rather than government interests, 2. The introduction of a different ownership paradigm, with community, public and profit-oriented media replacing private, state and non-profit media, 3. The creation of journalistic content as an alternative to entertainment, 4. The promotion of the interactive dialogue format in response to the tradition of reactive monologue known from the state broadcasters during the New Order period, and 5. The introduction of digital broadcasting via satellite and the Internet as a technological alternative to analogue broadcasting. Masduki (2003:180) argues that the main challenge for Indonesian radio journalism is 'to secure that the public space that has opened up remains public property'.

Masduki's (2001:3) ideal of Indonesian radio – much in line with Habermas' ideal of the bourgeois public sphere – is that it does not merely distribute information, but also facilitates listeners to have debates, reach consensus, influence government policies and create a sense of community. In Indonesian radio's transitional period of trial and error, many other media practitioners, scholars and NGO activists also attempt to have the listeners and their interests back at the centre of attention of the radio producers and their programmes. This explains why audience participation has become such a popular, although not always effective, concept and practice in the early development of non-governmental radio journalism. In his book tellingly titled *Socrates di radio* ('Socrates on the radio') – referring to the strategy of the Greek philosopher to ask people simple but provocative questions, thus stimulating them to talk, reason and discover the truth about things 'themselves' – Suara Surabaya's programme manager, Errol Jonathans, confirms the centrality of the listener, as a representative of the Indonesian public, to the process of Reformasi in general and Indonesian broadcast journalism in particular.

If Reformasi is considered as the spiritual essence of the change of the Indonesian people, radio has to accept wholeheartedly the laws of the 'listener's platform' as a service prerequisite as well as an easy chance to secure its existence in broadcasting, both idealistically and commercially. Thus the information service via interactive opinion or talk shows – in addition to news packages – turns out to constitute a part of Reformasi. (Errol Jonathans 2006:100.)

Suara Surabaya and other radio stations have attempted to reach out to the listener's life world by developing their own versions of interactive radio

journalism (see Chapter VI) and creating news bulletins that include live interviews and so-called *sisipan*, or 'inserts' with sounds representing the ambience of an event (Masduki 2003:145; see also Chapter IV). Romano (2003:117-8, 134) explains that such concern with the recipient of media content was rare in New Order print journalism. She argues that President Suharto and other political figures engaged with the media 'in a fashion that prevented direct accountability through public interrogation of his [the president's] actions or policies', while business leaders were also often reluctant to share information with journalists. Only NGOs, academics, religious leaders and certain retired generals were relatively easy to approach and obtain information from (Romano 2003:138). The 'little people' were almost never accessed as a source of information or opinion (Romano 2003:141).

According to Jonathans (2000:52-3), the positive aspect of having listeners as news sources is that it gives them the opportunity to express their 'loyalty' to radio and develop a sense of 'owning' the medium. This sense of ownership can be strengthened by interactive radio journalism as well as other news genres that people can easily understand and identify with, such as infotainment (Jonathans 2006:102; Masduki 2003:2-3) and Suara Padang's mixed format of news and religion. At the same time, interactive radio journalism does not necessarily turn listeners into critical thinkers, and brings with it the risk of listeners creating news that is biased, unstructured or superficial (Masduki 2004:28, 32).

According to Masduki (2004:18-28), journalistic development is also hampered by more general social, political and economic aspects of the Reformasi period. For instance, by companies attempting to create monopolies in the media market, politicians issuing legislation that restricts press freedom, individuals and groups in society exercising physical violence against journalists, and journalists and other media practitioners adhering to low professional and moral standards. This explains the strong efforts of media practitioners, scholars and activists to defend the freedom of the press and increase the standards of the journalism profession (Romano 2003:66).

In his book *Kebebasan pers dan kode etik jurnalistik* ('Press freedom and the journalistic code of ethics', 2004), Masduki explains that two positive results of these efforts have been the 1999 Press Law and the Kode Etik Wartawan Indonesia (KEWI, Indonesian Journalists Code of Ethics) (see also Romano 2003:66-7). The Code of Ethics was signed in Bandung, 1999, by 26 professional organizations including AJI, Persatuan Wartawan Indonesia (PWI, Association of Indonesian Journalists) and Himpunan Praktisi Penyiaran Indonesia (HPPI, Association of Indonesian Broadcasting Practitioners). The first statement of their declaration was that 'Indonesian journalists respect the people's right to obtain correct information' (Masduki 2003:54). This confirms the centrality of the concept of 'the people' (*masyarakat*) in the attempts to

reform the Indonesian print and broadcasting press. Important articles in the first paragraph of the Press Law are Article 11 on the people's 'right of reply' (*hak jawab*) and Article 10 on the journalists' 'right of refusal' (*hak tolak*). Media consumers can use the right of reply to object to unfair treatment in the media (Romano 2003:67), while journalists can use the right of refusal to protect the identity of their news sources (Masduki 2003:81-2). Both articles are meant to strengthen relations between journalists and the public and secure the independence and ethical standard of the press.

Masduki (2003:171), being a university lecturer himself, believes the key to the improvement of Indonesian radio is high-quality journalism courses in tertiary education. According to Masduki (2003:177-8), the current curricula do not have a specific focus on radio journalism, but offer a methodology purely based on the principles of print journalism. He strongly recommends the institutions and their lecturers to have a better understanding of the characteristics of radio broadcasting, and also be prepared to send their students for practical training periods to local radio stations (Masduki 2003:173-4).

Local and international media institutions and NGOs have also emphasized the importance of education, and organized workshops on such diverse concepts as independent journalism, peace journalism, meta-journalism and interactive journalism. The following chapter will discuss these institutions and their activities and concepts in detail. The analysis will confirm that the trial and error period of contemporary Indonesian radio journalism – with its attempts at dialogism, and its focus on business and the public interest – is a dynamic, but far from complete or flawless project in reaction to the monological information culture of the authoritarian New Order regime.