ABSTRACT

After reformation at 1998, Indonesia had the new phase of democracy, but many problems occurred in this time. A forum, named Bang Bang Wetan, has debate and discussion about these problems between audience. It has monthly gathering in Surabaya. Jurgen Habermas has concept of public sphere, which common interests has discussed in debate and consensus. Media, as public sphere, nowadays based on liberal market capitalism and too far from the function of public sphere. This study explores two main issues, how the forum construct public opinion toward problems in society and how the role of forum as public sphere.

This qualitative study was conducted at Surabaya. Subject of research were audience who attends intensively at forum. In-depth interviews were conducted with 7 informans, to give more complete data in this research.

As result, forum Bang Bang Wetan constructs public opinion from the topics as bridge of individuals opinion, then discussed at monthly gathering and through internet media. Topics raise aspiration and idea, then influence behaviour and valuation of audience.

The roles of forum as public sphere are: (1) This forum is informal public sphere, which religious arguments can be expressed in order to public opinion. (2) This forum has integrated groups in society, but it is not its obligation to do it. (3) This forum as a vessel to find solution of conflict, especially attitude solution, but can not influence decision-making.

Keywords: public sphere, public opinion, religion