

An ecology of communication

An “ecology of communication” in order to confront the contamination of the media by globalising powers was called for by the editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* Ignacio Ramonet. The French journalist was one of several panellists at the conference ‘Democratising Communications and the Media’. The conference was part of the II World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, between 31 January and 5 February 2002 and was one among several seminars and workshops which looked at communication issues during the forum.



Alongside Ramonet other well known journalists and communicators argued the case for a different kind of communications. Roberto Savio, one of the founders of the independent InterPressServices argued

that grassroot communications have to be based on the assertion of ideas which contribute to the creation of spaces for exchange and the participation of civil society. Communication based on citizen's values must take precedence over news governed by the principles of globalisation insisted the journalist who made reference to the struggles to create a new information and communication order (NWICO).

The session, chaired by Anriette Esterhuysen of the Association of Progressive Communications also heard Osvaldo Leon of the Agencia Latinoamericana de Información of Ecuador insist that the 'democratisation of communications is above all a question of citizenship and social justice, framed in the human right to information and communication. Other panellists included Joëlle Palmieri of the French-based international feminist press agency Les Pénélopes and Jeff Cohen of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, of the USA.

CRIS, the Campaign for Communication Rights in the Information Society, was discussed at the seminar on 'Communication and Citizenship: the appropriation of civil society and control of information and communication technologies' organised by ALAI, APC and APRESS. Séan O'Siochrú of NEXUS gave the presentation on behalf of the Platform for Communication Rights which launched the campaign last November in London. WACC is an active member of both the Platform and the CRIS campaign which seeks to demand the right to communicate and work for communication for social change at the local, national and global level.

A second airing of the campaign took place during the 'Democratising Communication' session sponsored by IPS and *Le Monde Diplomatique*.

Communication issues were also the focus of a number of other workshops and seminars during the Forum including 'Globalization and Communication', sponsored by *Le Monde Diplomatique*-Brazil, three workshops organised by The Friends of LM *Diplomatique* on 'For a New Communication: Bolstering Civil Society and the Public Real'; 'The Convergence of Internet and The Democratisation of Information' organised by the Brazilian Forum for the Democratisation of Information; 'Grassroots Media Against Mainstream Media', organised by Peacelink, Italy; 'Democratising Information through Community Radios', organised by the Conselho Federal de Biblioteconomia of Brazil; and 'Alternative Media' organised by the Community TV Programme of the Fluminense Federal University.

WACC members were well represented in the radio group broadcasting live from the Forum which brought together some 50,000 people to the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre. Raquel Figur (Brazil), Nestor Busso (Argentina), Arturo Bragaglio (Uruguay), and Carlos Dreher (Brazil), were only a few of the WACC members which covered the Forum. Twenty journalists produced radio

material broadcast via Internet to community radio stations in Latin America and to South Africa through a partnership with the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF). The Feminist Internet Radio Endeavour, FIRE from Costa Rica, which has participated in a number of WACC-sponsored events, was also part of this 'multimedia initiative' along with WACC-LA, AMARC, ALAI and ALER. Broadcasts were made in French, English, Portuguese and Spanish.

Maria Teresa Aguirre, WACC