GROUP 3
QUESTIONS OF ACCESS

This discussion group noted how important is it to take into account the right to communicate within different community spaces. New information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as the Internet, constitute important tools for people and populations wanting both to be informed and to communicate. ICTs (including the Internet) represent a tool for civil society to become a "living" society, a favourable place for individuals and populations that want to interact.

It was duly noted that the Internet is, above all, a universal tool enabling civil societies to claim their right to information and communication. Unlike television, the Internet is an active (not a passive) tool that must, above all, meet the real needs of populations. "Evangelizing" it and making it accessible gives individuals direct access to information and allows them to interact with other users. Nevertheless, access to a "high-speed Internet system", one that enables people to do research using advanced technology, represents a problem in both developed and developing countries. A new, alternative Internet model, one that is universal and that would see the creation of community telecentres such as the "cabinas publicas" in Peru, was therefore suggested.

Special importance was given to content because it indicates authors' intentions and allows interaction between groups working in similar fields. It was thus mentioned that too much marketing on the Internet could jeopardize the space set aside for the opinions of civil society.

Finally, it is important to note the difficulties of accessing the Internet in more remote areas. In certain cases, we would have to facilitate connection methods for individuals who are far away from telephone lines. We would also have to decrease cost prices, operating costs and the cost of computer equipment and line use. In other cases, access to the new technology requires the creation of a complete communication network. Literacy is also an issue in the transmission of technological knowledge.

In addition, language can become a restriction, not only in the area of communication, but also when the time comes to understand and teach the techniques that we want to develop locally. Language and culture also lead us to note that marginalized groups considered to be unsuited to using a tool such as the Internet are excluded from ICTs.

The group also emphasized the subject of regulatory methods as a factor hindering access to ICTs. The management of information techniques impedes access to information and the dissemination of information in certain political, commercial and ideological sectors. Finally, the lack of co-ordination between users and site developers leads to a lack of co-operation between groups associated with the same field of activity.

This the active & accessible qualities should be emph. There are however some problems of exclusion from the Internet: marketing on the I can ↓ avail space; remote areas can have tech & finan. impediments; language can be a barrier; regulatory methods can hinder access; & lack of coord b/w group in the same field can also be problematic.