“If you can’t dance to it, it is not my revolution”, is an Emma Goldman quote we firmly agreed with and celebrated in the early days of what is now Women’s International Network, WIN of AMARC.

What WERE the roots of WIN? I was asked to address here.

Because if we want to rethink and transform what WIN is and does, and truly build on our strength as a global movement to strengthen women in community radio and women’s radio, well then it is good to look at our history: from where we are coming, and integrate what we have learnt in our plans for the future.

In 1983 600 people from 45 countries came together - many of those women, for the first ever global meeting of community radio. AMARC the conference called: the world assembly of community-oriented radios.

The AMARC website says: “It was in 1983 that a group of community radio fans met spontaneously in Montreal.”

Well, if history is important, then this definitely needs to be changed.

1983 was the World Communication Year, and in a world without internet and social media, only those who happened to work in international circles had any idea of what was happening outside their own immediate action area. The secretariat of the WCY stated in their background documentation that “the WCY is seen as an opportunity for a “Quantum leap” in the development of a complete world communication network which would leave no one isolated from his or her local, national or international community”

This was the ambition of the people behind the WCY – and a secretariat was established in Montreal in 1980 to plan one of the many communication activities that year – on Community Radio, with the objective to do exactly that in the area of community radio.

At the beginning of the work a group of researchers was put together to work on identification of ‘what is community radio’ – and where are they – what do they do. And result of two years of research was presented at the 1983 assembly.
At the same time a group of between 5-10 people in the Canadian secretariat, the Canadian community radio forum and the secretariat of the US National Community Radio Forum worked for two years to raise funding, to identify stations and people to help realise the vision “to leave no one isolated”...

As a young community radio activist in Denmark, working with the people I had met during the alternative forum of the 1980 UN women’s decade conference in Copenhagen, I was called on to map and invite community radio in Northern Europe to the AMARC meeting, whereas the French community radio movement – the only one in Europe in 1981 - was taking care of Southern Europe.

And I mapped and invited women’s community radios or women’s collectives in grassroot stations from most West European Countries to come and take part in the women’s part of the assembly.

Now, how do you do this, when there is no internet, only one national communication radio association, in France, and no prior conferences? Well, I did a traditional search of articles and books – checked my network – and for the rest took my sleeping bag under my arm and travelled from one (West) European capital city to the next, found a telephone booth and one of these thick telephone books (remember?) and called the national broadcaster: Did they know someone working with community radio? The women’s documentation centres or women’s houses: anyone doing radio?

And I stayed with women in pirate stations in squatted houses in Holland, almost legal stations in Belgium, a women’s radio station in the women’s house in the centre of Rome, a women’s station in Oslo, Norway and more...

And I was just one of many, travelling around, mapping and inviting in different parts of the world. This took two years and brought the 600 people from 45 countries together

So not really “a spontaneous meeting of friends”, as the AMARC history tells.

The Assembly took place August 7-12 and was organized as we are here, as a combination of panels and follow-up workshops.
Of the 6 panels, 1 was on ‘Women in Community Radio’ – and in every one of the remaining 5 panels at least one of the panelist addressed the issue of the panel in the perspective of women in community radio and feminism. This was in the other panels on:

- Community radio – a potential world movement?
- Is anybody listening – about audience and audience research – and who is it CR addresses
- Community engagement – are CRs really an integrated part of the community?
- ‘Can you tell a tree by the fruits it bears” about programming
- Technology – between access and excess: what do we need?

The women’s panel – and the women’s perspectives on all the other issues discussed – dealt like the whole assembly a lot with a search for ‘who are we’, ‘what is community radio’ – and for us in the women’s panels: “how do we bring the experiences from the women’s movement into the stations: do we want our own?” Or “do we want to work together with other progressive forces, but within our own autonomous station in the station?” “What is our role in our community? What is it radio can do?” And we used the work forms from the women’s movement working collectively, listening and supporting – building our own capacity while providing a platform for women to engage.

This was all carried by the commitment and conviction in our work of resistance, liberation and celebration!

When we all left each other in 1983 the official report highlights the resolve to:
• Study the feasibility of a second world conference
• Study the possibility of creating a world association
• Get accreditation by international organisations
• Publish a book – to fix the explosion of realization that we are, indeed, potentially, at the beginning of a world movement

And from the women’s circle we agreed to continue our work, with the next international meeting place in the UN women’s conference in Nairobi coming up in 1985 – only two years later.

And we agreed to get to work in which ever way we possibly could, realizing our research and activist agenda – recognizing that women in the established media who were part of our project of liberation and empowerment, should also be invited in, so we – together – could forward our joint cause:

• Researching and documentation the role and images of women in the established media
• The women in the established media / radio
  o Improving content
  o Get women’s voices and viewpoints – women’s lives out in the open
  o Getting women into decision making positions
• Women in the feminist movement should create alternative channels
  o If part of a mixed community / alternative radio: work for 50% women
  o Create women’s autonomous collectives in these mixed stations
  o Create or strengthen all women’s stations were possible

We realized soon that raising funding for global meetings on a regular basis not really was possible, so we agreed to continue the work in our regions. In Europe, where I was active, we continued to map more stations and in the Northern European network we met about every 6 months in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Berlin where we worked on the mentioned agenda and prepared for Nairobi.

In Nairobi we had one big session in the alternative forum on the lawn of the University – and many smaller. And women were seen all over with microphones and recorders (cassettes) interviewing each other on “How do YOU in your reality work with media?”

And the plans to have more AMARC conferences were realized:

1990 in Dublin, Ireland, the women’s network was further formalized followed by 1992 in Mexico, where the plans and hope – after, again, the hard work of many – also here today – resulted in AMARC becoming an international not just movement, but Association.
And the Women’s international Network, WIN, took shape into an organization, where women’s role and importance was - and is - recognized with women’s vice presidents on the board from the Americas, Africa, Asia-Pacific and Europe.

In 1996 we in the WIN movement of Europe updated our directory – now including also all of the women in local or community radio in Eastern Europe – and also here we reiterated our commitment to – as in 1983 – document and collaborate for change.

I have, gratefully, accompanied the emergence of a sometimes strong women’s community radio network in Mozambique, where I worked many years, and I have met with, worked with and read and heard about Women organizing around community radio – including all that has been happening around ISIS in South-East Asia, but also in India, in the US, in Latin America --- all over.

**Now. Where are we today?**

When I spoke with Maru, Wilna and Nimmi before this meeting, I understood that this conference also to WIN is hoped to be a transformation from being a forum of individual contacts, and meetings in conferences, for WIN to actually become a power of transformation. Because while we are talking about strengthening women in community radio – what we are really talking – or at least should be talking about – is why we have to be there and be strong? Because we are there to strengthen women’s rights, to map what is happening and work for engaging women in ways to define their future!

Very much as in 1983: our work is about

**resistance, liberation and celebration.**

And if we CAN dance to it – it IS our revolution!

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