# 11. Conclusions

After considering all evidence, it seems a proven fact that community networks make unique and important contributions to communications freedom and the democratization of technology. Major European networks such as Guifi and Freifunk are growing at exponential rates which creates all kinds of stress and problems, but this is in turn just a sign of their vibrancy. Community networks have also demonstrated that they can make invaluable contributions in poor and thinly populated areas. Those success stories, however, are precarious, always threatened by the general tendencies of the neoliberal information society. The course of development of the information society, which has been characterized by an incomplete paradigm shift, is itself not yet a foregone conclusion. The combination of computer networks and computational devices has potentials for emancipation and empowerment, but also repression, exploitation, and disenfranchisement. Within that scenario, the relation between society and technology is a key issue. Wireless community networks have the potential of closing the digital divide and furthering knowledge about ICT in society, creating more sensibility about how people can make better use of those technologies. But this social aspect is not universally shared by all activists. Even in the world of free networks, where free and open source software is used, elitist attitudes sometimes prevail, which only reinforce other social divisions of wealth, class, education, gender. Therefore, the dispositif needs to be fundamentally revised. It needs to be spelled out what a free network is.

In my view, and this is my real conclusion out of my engagement over more than ten years, it is more productive to ditch the notions of Free networks and wireless community networks and speak of the Network Commons. The Network Commons is not a solution that already exists, but something which yet needs to be defined. The attempts at defining the free in free networks in the past centered on the so called Pico Peering Agreement. But this was very minimalistic, overly determined by English anarchic-libertarianism. What is now needed is a definition of the Network Commons in a strong and normative sense, something that can be read as a kind of constitution and even be turned into a legally binding and accepted license, such as the Creative Commons license package. The idea of the network commons stood at the beginning of this book and also at its end. It is not a ready-made solution but an open horizon to be explored.