These open, complex, dynamic, and networked problems just do not gel well with the assumptions behind our conventional problem-solving methods, because most of our conventional strategies were conceived to work in a reasonably isolated, static, and hierarchically ordered "miniworld." When problems appeared, we could isolate them in a separate problem arena, decompose the problem into relative simple subproblems and analyze these, create subsolutions, and then build those subsolutions together into an overall solution that satisfied all concerned. If this strategy of divide-and-solve failed, we could use the alternative strategy of exercising authority to "simplify" the problem area by overruling some parties, and force a solution that satisfied the most powerful player.

But neither of these strategies works for today's problems. We are living in a state of hyperconnectivity. Each of us has become newly connected to innumerable other people. By networking our society, we have inadvertently networked our problems, too—we have made them more open, complex, and dynamic! The enclosed miniworlds of our societies, economies, and cultures have been replaced by a tangle of relationships within complex and overlapping networks, where problems cannot be simplified by being split up (the network of relationships is too strong) and power doesn't rest in one place anymore (so overrule-and-conquer is out of the question). Moreover, problems are so intimately related to each other (and there are so many interdependencies) that they become impossible to isolate (Stacey, Griffin, and Shaw 2006; Lawson 2001). Solving problems nowadays is like trying to undo the Gordian knot in Greek mythology: whatever string you try to pull to unravel the knot, you end up in more of a jumble.

From the three case histories above, we can also learn that these peculiar open, complex, dynamic, and networked problems cannot be pinned down very easily—if at all. They are more like "problem situations" in which the issues keep shifting around, and any premature attempt to draft a problem definition can lead to suboptimal or even counterproductive solutions. Yet in conventional problem-solving, the "definition of the problem" is always the first step, and it is the solid ground on which the problem-solving practices of organizations are built. Often, organizations that do not realize the open, complex, dynamic, and networked nature of the world around them get tricked into using their established routines because the problem, as they define it for themselves, mostly looks the same as earlier problems. And indeed, the core problems themselves may not have changed much over time (after all, we have planned train lines