

planning office's route was chosen, with the addition of a major tunnel to minimize the impact on a sensitive environmental area on the route. The decision was reached by some old-fashioned political power plays, and the outcome was only vaguely related to reality. The politicians were locked in groupthink, and did not realize that this compromise was both unfortunate in its impact and spectacularly expensive compared to both original plans (Priemus 2009).

Although this is an example of public problem-solving at its very worst, it is by no means an exceptional story. This type of decision-making happens everywhere, all the time—just look at the news ... This example had an interesting sequel: once the bulldozers were rolling through the landscape and the concrete was being poured, Parliament in its wisdom passed a motion to investigate and evaluate the decision process of the high-speed train project, as it was deemed to be clearly flawed. Resorting to political arm-twisting around such an important issue which touched the lives of so many people is highly regrettable. The parliamentary inquiry filed its report a year later, with its main recommendation being that more research should have been done on the various plans under consideration. Yet if we retrace the history of the project, we can only conclude that more research would not have helped at all. One can only surmise that this recommendation was caused by the foolhardy belief that rationality would then prevail. But that is not the issue: conventional problem-solving had reached the end of its tether, which is why the planning process had ground to a halt. The parliamentary inquiry's recommendation for more research demonstrates their complete inability to even imagine a different kind of problem-solving practice. We will get back to this case study at the end of this book (in chapter 8), and will demonstrate that there is a viable way to approach this problem. The journey to get there starts with the realization that *this problem is actually not about the train*.

CASE 2

The dematerialization of products:

On navigating the postindustrial economy

We live in an age in which the industrial society, based on manufacturing physical goods and selling them to consumers, is giving way to a society in which information and services are much more important. This transformation