

exactly the opposite direction. That is disastrous. We see this all the time, in all walks of life: organizations becoming very defensive and protective in the face of problems they do not understand, stumbling from incident to incident while holding on to their old frames and rationalities (Boutellier 2013). But how can one avoid such an inappropriate reaction, when the knee-jerk reaction is quite understandable and initially seems the reasonable thing to do? The answer lies at a structural level. An organization that needs to tackle these open, complex, dynamic, and networked problems will effectively have to become open, complex, dynamic, and networked in its own processes, structure, and organizational culture. This is a formidable challenge because organizations are, by definition, established to create order and tend to stasis. The million-dollar question is: “How can an organization become more open, complex, dynamic, and networked without descending into chaos?”

The fear of losing control runs very deep (remember the “rational high ground” syndrome from chapter 1). The frame creation approach leads to an alternative practice that allows us to deal with complex realities in layers and at its deepest level, that of themes, offers a respite. These themes are stable, and a deep understanding of them allows an organization to deal thoughtfully with the chaotic and messy everyday incidents from a stable core. The possibility of being simultaneously flexible in daily action and well-grounded at the root is a key quality that frame innovation can offer organizations. Not only will an organization that has adopted frame innovation become more nimble and resilient in dealing with challenges, it can become proactive in building an understanding of the themes that lie underneath the problems that reality throws up. An organization that monitors the themes in its environment is ready to create frames and move to action when needed. For instance, a housing authority that understands, on a deep theme level, teenagers’ process of identity formation will be more flexible in its responses when a problem arises (say, when a group of loitering teens causes trouble in a neighborhood).

This familiarity can engender a fundamental confidence that the organization can deal with any problem that arises. A frame-innovating organization should constantly be investigating the themes in the broad area that touches upon its operations, scouting out for developments that may give rise to new problems or possibilities. This cuts to the core of the matter: a basic issue with conventional problem-solving methods is that they require a problem to start with. An active, really proactive organization should be able to develop new “solutions” before the problems even arise or get the chance to develop into