This analysis shows that the problem situation badly fails all the assumptions that are needed for a rationalistic approach. Yet that approach was followed, as the problem owner felt there was no other choice. The cracks in the ensuing problem-solving process were not due to incompetence or to certain stakeholders being "difficult"—they run much deeper than that: the problem-solving process itself was fundamentally flawed (this case will be continued in chapter 8). The realization that these seven prerequisites for rational action are obviously unrealistic assumptions for most if not all real-life problem situations has led to the creation of a distinction between "theoretical reasoning" and "practical reasoning." While "theoretical reasoning" strictly adheres to the seven assumptions, "practical reasoning" is more lenient, in that it accepts that we are limited by "bounded rationality" in our decision-making—purely because our poor brains run out of information-processing capacity as soon as we have to hold more than "seven plus or minus two" chunks of information in our heads simultaneously (Newell and Simon 1972). But this fact doesn't lift the burden of being literal, logical, conscious, disembodied, and dispassionate in our thoughts.

Perhaps we should see this view of rationality as an ideal and use it as a beacon, knowing that we will seldom achieve it. And perhaps we should be content with our incomplete attempts to prerationalize our actions (in an effort to be strategic) and our use of rationality after the fact to justify decisions we have arrived at by other means (postrationalization). But what could those "other means" be? How can we think and make decisions, if not through rational reasoning? The Dutch writer Van Zomeren likened his own thinking process to a colony of chipmunks: thoughts pop up in unexpected places, disappearing just as quickly (Van Zomeren 2000). Poet and writer Robert Graves has similarly described poetic intuition in his essay "The Case for Xanthippe." Xanthippe was the wife of Socrates, and was portrayed by Plato as bad-tempered, bossy, and unreasonable. Yet Graves sees her as an emotional and practical thinker, and the necessary antidote to the overrationalization of Socrates and his circle (Graves 1991). Heidegger, in turn, has described how being "thrown" into a situation limits our ability to use our capacity to reason rationally (Heidegger 1962; Winograd and Flores 1986). One of his examples is the position we operate from when participating in a meeting: our situation is characterized by a limited overview of the issues, a limited capacity to influence the direction of the discussion, and the vexed problem that saying nothing is also an act that affects the situation. Heidegger uses this example to highlight how, in this