

was coming of age and the number of stakeholders involved in these processes skyrocketed: apart from the obvious institutional stakeholders like the railway company, the main airport, or the local councils, the project was besieged by a wild variety of environmental groups, NGOs, and lobbying groups of concerned citizens expressing their views and gathering support. Interest groups started to come up with their own proposals for where to situate the train line, and launched those schemes in the press complete with “independent” studies to support their merit. In a desperate effort to reach a consensus, the government felt duty-bound to consider every new alternative. It kept commissioning extra studies to evaluate these proposals, thus dragging out the decision process even more. The local interest groups were supported by the local councils, who were getting caught between the interests of the state and the need to represent the views of their angry citizens. The councils of the towns and cities along the proposed routes sought to resolve this paradox by explaining that while they didn’t want the noise, they could live with it if they were compensated with the economic benefits of their own station on the train line (a compromise that, unfortunately, does not make sense for a high-speed train).

The planning process dragged on for fifteen years, with no conclusion in sight (Priemus 2009). Meanwhile, the people living and working along the proposed routes were becoming traumatized by the constant uncertainty caused by this prolonged decision process. In the end, even the press got tired of it. Voices of those wanting to just forget the whole project were getting louder and louder: not because the train link was a bad idea, for there was general consensus that the country could ill afford *not* to be connected to the European network, but because no agreement could be reached on the route. After fifteen years of planning and deliberation, this process ground to a halt, collapsing under the weight of the paradoxes in the problem situation and the dilemmas presented by the different solutions. It could have remained stuck forever ... but, in the end, the deadlock was broken by the election of a new government, which included parties that had pledged to forge ahead with the project.

By that time, two dominant trajectories for the rail link had emerged, the first of which more or less followed a straight line from the border to its terminus in Amsterdam. This proposal, created by the government planning office, was the one the ministry had been pushing all along. The second proposal was created by an ex-civil servant and cleverly minimized the impact of the new train line by linking its trajectory to the existing freeway network at the cost of just a couple of minutes in extra travel time. In the end, the government