

The first two steps in the frame creation process, which concentrate on the problem as presented, are necessary because frames are intrinsic—we cannot formulate or approach a problem without framing it. We cannot *not* have a frame. The implicit framing of the problem situation needs to be investigated; it is vitally important to understand the frame that led to the occurrence of the problem situation in the first place. The initial framing could originate in the history of the problem, it could be a general cultural convention (e.g., the close link between “care” and “control” in the health system [case 6]), or it could stem from the interaction between the problem owner and the inner ring of stakeholders. Beyond that core group is the wider field of parties who have not participated in the problem situation before but who have a potential influence, and could develop a direct interest in the problem if it were framed in a different way. In the frame creation approach, the search for new frames is shaped by the need to shed the preconceptions of existing frames. By moving to the outer rim of the field and analyzing the shared themes in the broader problem arena, such new approaches are allowed to emerge. From that moment, the process flips to concentrating on the second nature of the frame and becomes a critical creative exploration of possibilities—applying creative forward-thinking to spot possibilities, while exercising a keen critical judgment in the performance of repeated reality checks. We can then reengage with the inner ring of stakeholders and the problem owner to present them with possible future scenarios that resolve the original problem situation. All elements of the original problem situation are first questioned and then redefined in the frame creation process, step by step—as expressed in the nested-circles model (see figure 7.1).

This model defines the inner logic of the frame creation approach, and should engender trust in the sequence of steps in the frame creation process model. The frame creation approach is consistent and coherent; it is not a cheap trick based on some superficial techniques that designers have dreamt up, but a serious approach to problem-solving that provides an interesting alternative to conventional problem-solving.

However, to really understand the difference between frame creation and conventional problem-solving, we need to delve a little deeper into the assumptions that underlie conventional problem-solving, especially the key concept of “rationality.” Rationality is considered the bedrock of critical discussion and successful action. This is a cultural “given” that runs very deep in our veins: we are used to the convention that we must be able to give an account of our thoughts and actions using rational arguments. We aspire to