

it is crucial to understand the underlying structures of the specific situation. By exploring these underlying structures, we will start to see solutions emerge. A problem situation like social housing will have been approached in all its complexity, without any assumptions, generalizations, or convenient simplifications by stakeholders. Engagement in these issues involves quite a bit of courage and determination: as was mentioned in case study 3, networked problem situations can often be so incredibly complicated that people just give up on them and turn away. Yet we will see that the very complexity, openness, and networked nature of modern problems also hold the key to progress in these situations: in the Amsterdam example, who would have expected a historic museum to be a partner in directly effecting such a deep social change? Later in this book, case studies will illustrate that the plight of retail in a postindustrial society and even the train conundrum can be tackled fruitfully through the creation of new frames.

The inability of conventional problem-solving to deal with the new open, complex, dynamic, and networked problems is reaching a crisis point. And these types of problems will not go away. On the contrary, we will have more of these problem situations to deal with in the future—they naturally arise today because we live in a nexus between technological revolutions and momentous social and cultural changes. We have an unprecedented need to extend our problem-solving repertoire so that it can address these issues. In the next chapter we will encounter some of the deliberate strategies that outstanding designers have developed for navigating this terrain—and then we will explore how these strategies can be harnessed by contemporary organizations.