
CASE 1**The high-speed train revisited:****All's well that ends well**

We will now return to the high-speed train link and draw lessons from this classic drama, reporting a fascinating twist at the end of the project.

At the very last planning stage of the project, when the basic decision on the trajectory had been taken and approved in Parliament, scope remained for some changes to be made. The precise position of the tracks could still be tinkered with, a freedom of about 100 to 150 meters on either side. And every segment of the planned railway had been allotted a certain budget for ameliorating the impact of embedding the embankment in the landscape. Consultants were hired to lead discussions within the affected communities to determine how that money would best be spent. One of those consultants was dealing with a rural area, and was faced with the challenge of leading a workshop of about twenty very disgruntled farmers and their families. Picture a slightly nervous consultant in a local community hall, standing next to a whiteboard. In an attempt to clear the air and get a balanced view of the issues, he started by asking the group what was good about the high-speed train. A deep and long silence ensued, which was finally broken by the unwilling suggestion that it was probably good for the economy, and angry shouts about cutting travel time for *those* city people if they want to go to Paris. The next question after this slow start was, of course, what is bad about the high-speed train? This unleashed a barrage of comments that were duly written down. Then a map was brought out, showing the broad zone in which the train tracks had to be positioned. Gradually, the consultant mapped out the consequences of putting the tracks here or there. Crucially, the discussion veered away from its concentration on the problem of the train (see chapter 1) to a much broader discussion on the quality of life of people along the tracks. This is the conversation that should have been had fifteen years earlier, if only the process had been framed right: while a person's quality of life will be negatively impacted by the train, this can be compensated in other ways. For this agricultural community, working intensely with the land, the values that underpin their quality of life included a fundamental sense of ownership of the land that had sometimes been in their families for several generations. It was on the levels of practical problems and this shared outlook that fruitful discussions could be held. The