



Towards the Spatial Sustainability of City-regions: A Comparative Study of Tokyo and Randstad

Introduction: the city-region

One of the main debates in urban planning today is centred on whether the high-density compact city is more sustainable than a diffused low-density settlement. While it can be argued that urban development does not necessarily predicate the physical expansion of urbanized areas, it can also be argued that there are pragmatic limitations to restricting development to urban areas, to the exclusion of rural areas. Land-use management methods have historically been confined to traditional planning practices, which have controlled important factors such as the residential density adopted and the degree of mixed-use activity in a given area. This chapter attempts to overcome these limitations by introducing the concept of the city-region as a spatial scale for urban development.

Within the city-region scale, both monocentric development with a single-metropolitan core, and polycentric development consisting of closely located, administratively independent cities, can be appropriate models. In the spatial economy, the virtues of a polycentric accumulation of economic activities in the wider urban-region may outweigh those of monocentric accumulation *en masse*.