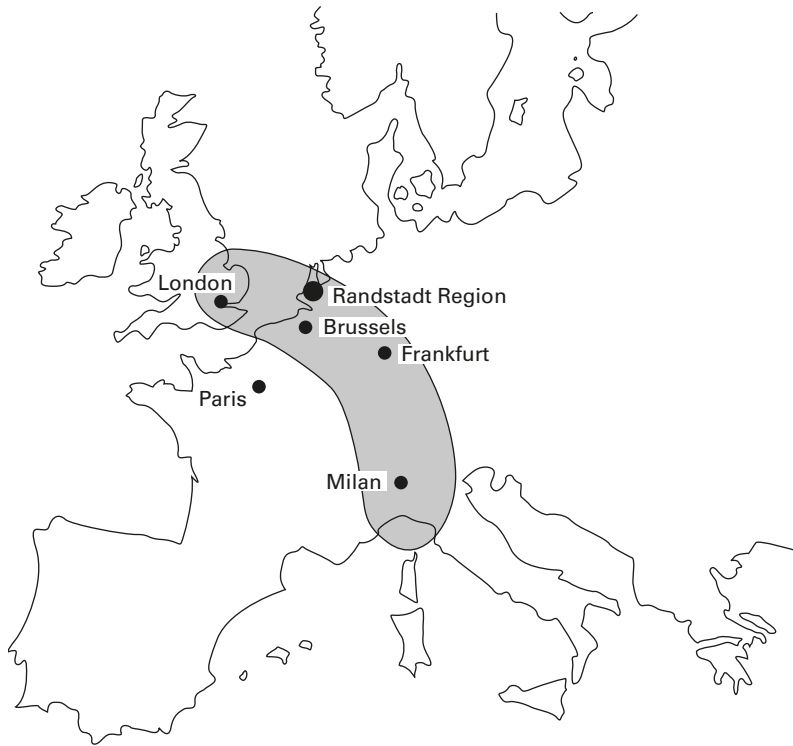


Figure 3.2
The 'blue banana'



polycentric mega-urban regions. . . . But, at a finer geographical scale within these regions, there is a noticeable geographical deconcentration from the most heavily urbanised areas which form their cores' (Hall, 2001). The globalized world is now experiencing a complex dynamism caused by different layers of city-regions which have distinct scales of development (both within the region itself and compared to other city-regions) which are spatially integrated.

Randstad

The comparison of Tokyo with Randstad focuses on city-regions at a wider regional level which extends to a spatial area with a diameter of 100 km. Kloosterman and Lambregts (2001) define polycentric urban-regions as having the following three conditions: a number of historically and spatially distinct cities which are closely located, none of which is a clear hegemony, and which have maintained their own administrative independence. Randstad is located at the heart of Europe and is a classic example of a city-region based on a polycentric urban

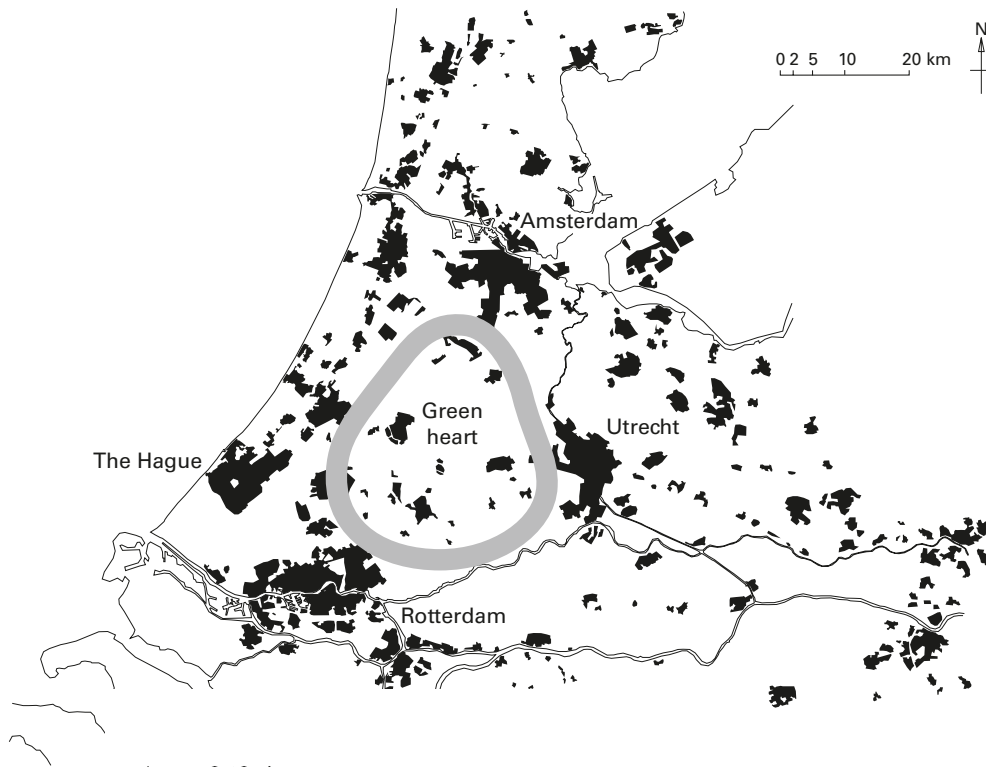


Figure 3.3
The Randstad and its green heart.

system on a greater regional level. It covers an area of 7–8000 km² which is accessible within 1 hour by high-speed transport infrastructure. The polycentric urban system is composed of four main cities: Amsterdam (the state capital), The Hague (the seat of the Dutch government), Rotterdam (an international port) and Utrecht (the convention and service centre in the middle of the country). These four principal cities have different urban functions. The population of each city is no more than 1 million inhabitants but the population of the city-region as a whole reaches 6 million. Randstad is well known for its protected green area in the middle, dubbed the green heart (Figure 3.3). The cities are located on its edge ('Rand' in Dutch).

Randstad is economically strong enough to compete with monocentric cities such as London or Paris, the largest in Europe. The primary competitive edge that Randstad holds is due to its privileged location within Europe. But the green heart of the area can be highlighted as a uniquely competitive factor. The existence of the green heart and the polycentric urban system with medium-sized cities ensures that urban life is always close to a rural area, which is impossible to achieve in