

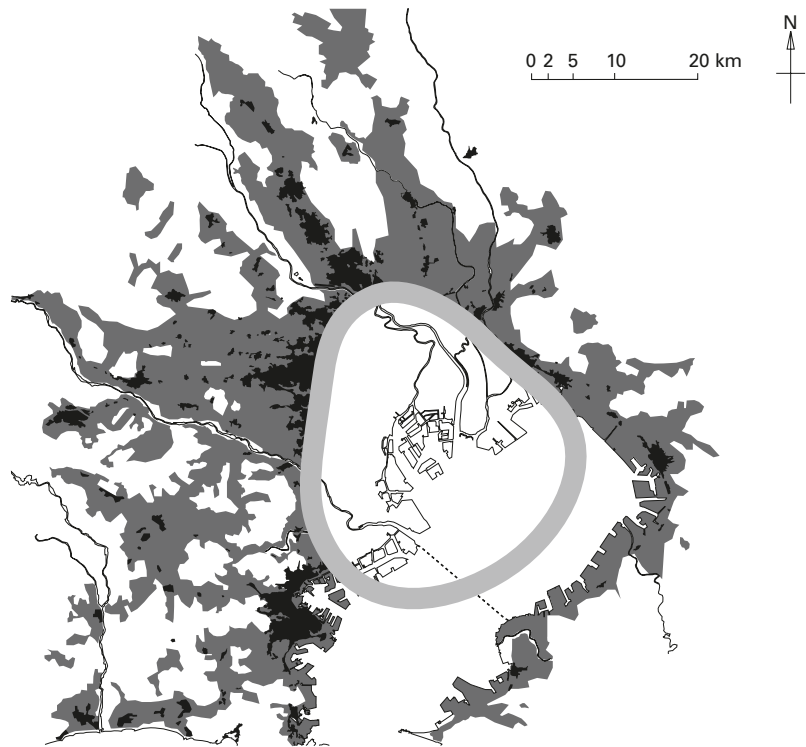
Tokyo region. To ameliorate the over-concentration of urban functions, it was proposed to promote the business core cities (Yokohama, Saitama, Hachioji and Chiba) at the edge of Tokyo, by transferring business functions from the central core to the edge cities, and make it possible to live and work there. Both the central and metropolitan governments have taken steps to decentralize the urban functions of Tokyo in the *Tokyo Metropolitan Planning* and the *Tokyo City Planning Policies*.

The policy to reinforce the polycentric structure of Tokyo's wider region has worked effectively to a certain extent. In the centre of Tokyo, employment has decreased and office buildings reduced in number. However, when the Japanese economy moved in recession after the bubble period, the decentralization policy was questioned and the demand to reinforce the economic activity in the centre grew. Those who support the concentrated accumulation in the single-central core of Tokyo insist that the external economy favourable to business activities results from financial and administrative functions being highly concentrated, and thus Tokyo could be more competitive in the global market. At the same time, they say that the deficiency caused by the over-concentration could be minimized by introducing measures, such as a congestion charge (Hatta and Yashiro, 1995).

Having experienced rapid urbanization since the Second World War, it has been questioned whether being a monocentric concentration or a polycentric diffusion would be the more appropriate urban form for Tokyo. That is, should Tokyo pursue the benefits produced by the concentration of economic facilities in the business centre core, or should it distribute urban functions to the existing business core cities scattered in suburban Tokyo and therefore avoid the deficiencies caused by over-concentrated accumulation?

As a means of comparing Randstad with Tokyo, a map of Randstad was superimposed upon that of Tokyo (Figure 3.5). This shows that the monocentric core of Tokyo spatially fits within the green heart of Randstad. If we imagine Tokyo with its densely built-up centre substituted by green, open space, the four local cities (Saitama, Chiba, Hachioji-Tama and Kawasaki-Yokohama) absorbed into the Tokyo metropolitan wider region lie along the edge of this green heart where the four major cities of Randstad are also spatially situated. This simulation clearly reveals the hidden polycentric structure of Tokyo.

Figure 3.5
Tokyo with Randstad's green
heart superimposed.



Towards sustainability

Tokyo is facing an ageing society and depopulation. Depopulation has led to economic decline by weakening its competitiveness in the global market. However, a decrease in population can be dealt with as an opportunity to improve the quality of life in the densely populated and continuous, built-up area. Depopulation means more physical space per person and also makes it possible to provide more green spaces. To ensure an urban life with access to green spaces, the 'Renovation program for the Tokyo and Hanshin Area'¹ suggests the insertion of 'environmental infrastructures'. These infrastructures consist of green networks in homogeneously spread built-up areas (Figure 3.6). This programme is based on the assumption that the population in 2050 will have decreased to the same level as in 1975 and the elderly will have increased to account for 30% of the population.

There is a problem in that urbanization seems to be an irreversible process. Many medium-sized cities in Japan have