



Figure 3.6
Renovation programme
for the Tokyo area.
(Source: Land Use Agency,
2000.)

already experienced a decrease in population, nevertheless, the urban sprawl process is still continuing. Once it has materialized, the built-up area appears to spread like an oil spill, whose surface is very difficult to reduce. It would be more realistic to insert new green areas into existing built-up areas. The renovation programme proposes the strategic connection of small green areas and the creation of a green network extended over the whole territory of the wider Tokyo region (Ishikawa, 2001). Also, the networked environmental infrastructure will divide the continuous, built-up area into smaller units of mixed uses. The present trends of depopulation and an ageing society could mean future citizens of Tokyo will experience an attractive lifestyle in compact living areas close to water and green areas. This reveals the potential merits of a polycentric system for its higher quality of life and as a sustainable urban form.

Statistics show that the demands on transport for connection between the medium-sized cities (which form the outer ring) are

increasing more rapidly than the transport demand between the metropolitan core and suburban sub-cores (Tokyo Metropolitan Government, 1998). A network-based transportation system is now required, in place of the modern transport infrastructure with a radial pattern, to support the increasingly dispersed traffic within the region. These observations reveal that the polycentric system would be more suitable for the future society in the Tokyo wider region.

The regeneration programme led by the Japanese Central Government has given priority to a different policy direction by the establishment of an *Urban Renaissance Headquarters* within the Prime Minister's Cabinet in May 2001. The initial task was the introduction of the *Urban Renaissance Special Measure Law* that came into force in June 2002. The committee that prepared for its introduction presented an action-oriented report entitled 'Towards regeneration of the Tokyo area' in November 2000. This report admits the importance of polycentricity in the Tokyo wider region and refers broadly to an environmental infrastructure. However, the *Urban Renaissance Headquarters* gives absolute priority towards the use of urban regeneration to reactivate the Japanese economy on a very short-term basis. The fruit of this urban regeneration policy is more than 30 skyscrapers in the central district of Tokyo, with the expectation that increased construction demand will improve the economic situation (Igarashi and Ogawa, 2003). As a result, urban policy is reinforcing the concentration of urban functions and social segregation in the monocentric core.

The Tokyo wider region seeks a delicate balance that allows the coexistence of a monocentric and a polycentric system. However, lacking efficient planning regulations, market-motivated development promotes the monocentric system. Hall and Pfeiffer (2000) suggest that 'In market or mixed economies, planning regulations tend to work best when they are consistent with market behaviour. . . . Land-use regulations that ignore such market-behavioural tendencies are not likely to succeed'. However, they also admit that 'planning sometimes has to work against trends too, when they become self-destructive and blind to the needs of the wider society' (Hall and Pfeiffer, 2000). This reality of Tokyo demonstrates that it is quite difficult to recreate a contrast between built-up and green areas, and to shift towards polycentricity without imposing more planning controls, even if both public and private sectors