Station area developments in Tokyo and what the Randstad can learn from it

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Citation for published version (APA):
Chorus, P. R. W. E. (2012). Station area developments in Tokyo and what the Randstad can learn from it.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The Daruma is a traditional Japanese doll and seen as a symbol of perseverance and good luck. The eyes of Daruma are often left blank when sold. The recipient of the doll fills in one eye upon setting their goal and fills in the other upon fulfillment of said goal. Every time one looks upon the one-eyed Daruma, one would be reminded of their goal. I also had a Daruma after returning from my two year stay in Tokyo. It has been staring at me with a single eye for the last couple of years, constantly reminding me of the task I have yet to fulfill. The day has now finally arrived that I can color in the second eye, marking the achievement of my goal, the completion of my thesis. This act of giving the last eye to the Daruma puts an end to my adventure for which the foundations were laid a decade ago.

I was about to write my master thesis in 2002. I knew I wanted to do ‘something international involving a large city’ and found myself considering two options. The first was to go west to New York City. With English as the native language and relatively relatable cultural differences, I considered New York City the easier route. The second option was to go east and the first city that came into my mind was Tokyo. I considered it a more difficult route as both the language and the culture would be radically different. Carrying out a research here would be a truly challenging task. The way that Tokyo was and still is, has always fascinated me. Tokyo has consistently been the most populous metropolitan area in the world but it gets much less attention than other world cities like London or New York.

I eventually took the plunge and went for Tokyo. A Dutch professor with whom I was acquainted happened to teach in Tokyo at that time. He drew my attention to the possibility of an internship at the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Tokyo. With that opportunity and due to a combination of fortuitous circumstances, I was able to turn this idea of researching Tokyo into reality. This very same professor, Ton Kreukels of the University of Utrecht, later became the instigator of my PhD research. I would therefore like to start by taking the opportunity to thank Ton for supporting me all these years. Although I was at first a ‘stranger’ belonging to a different university in the Netherlands this never stopped you from helping me in fine-tuning my research proposal. Please accept my gratitude for that! Unfortunately official university regulations have made it no longer possible for you to be named as one of my supervisors, I still personally consider you as one. Thank you for our pleasant collaboration throughout the years and for sharing a similar passion about Japan. It has been nice to share this ‘hobby’ with you and I hope we will be able to continue it in the future.
Next, I would like to thank my supervisor Luca Bertolini. Where do I start to express my thanks? I am blessed to have Luca as my supervisor. During the often difficult periods of the PhD trajectory he always managed to infuse me with new energy thanks to his resilient enthusiasm. I really enjoyed our collaboration and hope we can continue collaborating in the future. I hope one day to show you Tokyo in all its glory, where I think we both agree on, you must see with your own eyes at least once in your life. I am pretty sure that after all these years of discussing Tokyo, I have in return been able to make you enthusiastic about it.

This research would have not been possible without the generous support of a number of organisations. I would first like to thank the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan. Winning a scholarship from MEXT allowed me to carry out two years of field work in Tokyo. This two-year stay has enabled me to gain a better understanding of the country and the people living in it. I was fortunate to be able to conduct my research at the University of Tokyo. I would like to thank all the colleagues there for offering me a pleasant working environment. A special thanks goes out to Professor Takashi Onishi for kindly hosting me in his research lab.

My time in Tokyo also gave me an opportunity to lay down the initial contacts to further my research in the Netherlands. A delegation of the Dutch Railways (NS) happened to be in Tokyo at that time for a business trip. After speaking to one of the delegation members, I managed to cultivate contacts who eventually led me to working in the real estate department of Dutch Railways (NS Stations). I was able to work in NS Stations for a year on various interesting projects, while working on my research at the same time. I would like to thank Paul Schulten of the former Strategy and New Business Department in particular for accepting me into his department. It was an ideal situation where I could combine my research with practice. A special thanks also goes out to Sebastiaan de Wilde and Joost de Waal for providing useful comments on parts of my research.

After a year at NS, I moved to Movares. I was fortunately allowed to carry out my research in combination with working in practice. I would like to thank Jaco ter Wal for accepting me into his department. Furthermore, I would like to thank my former colleagues of the Mobility and Spatial Planning Department for creating a pleasant working environment.
During the final stages of my research, I was more often to be found at the University of Amsterdam. I would like to give thanks to all the colleagues of the department and in particular to the colleagues I was lucky enough to share a room with: Marco, Els, Thomas, Jan, Andrew, Bas, Wendy and Rick, I will miss our cozy Fridays.

A special thanks goes out to Wendy for helping me make a large part of the illustrations in this book. My gratitude goes out to Rachael Hickmott for proofreading my research and Nicole for making the cover design and layout of this book. I am very pleased with the final result.

This research would not have been possible without the help of several key individuals from practice. I would like to thank all those who participated in the focus groups, focused-group interviews and individual interviews. In particularly I would like to thank Lodewijk Lacroix for co-organising the Stedenbaan focus group and Pascal le Gras for co-organising the Zaan Corridor focus group and Koog Zaandijk group interview.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank my family and above all my parents in particular for their enduring love and support. I would like to dedicate this book to my parents. Finally, I would like to thank Saori, for coming into my life and for supporting me through the final and sometimes rather hectic stages of my research. Kokoro kara hontou ni arigatou gozaimashita!