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.
Having gained insight into how station area developments are being planned in Tokyo, what planning incentives are used, and what roles the public and private sector play in this, the time has come to explore the potential of this so-called “Tokyo model/approach” for the development of station areas in the Randstad. The aim of the last part of this book is to assess the potential of the Tokyo model for the Randstad. This is done in two steps: Step one concerns a series of focus groups and focused-group interviews in which the approach for developing station areas in Tokyo has been tested in a number of Dutch case studies. Step two concerns a series of individual interviews that further explore the findings generated from the focus groups and focused-group interviews. This chapter presents the results from the focus groups and focused-group interviews. The findings from the individual interviews will be presented in the next chapter.

In the first paragraph the design of the focus groups and the focused-group interviews is discussed along with the motivation behind the selection of the case studies in the Randstad. Then the results of the focus groups and focused-group interviews are discussed in the four subsequent paragraphs. In the sixth and final paragraph some conclusions are drawn.
9.1 Focus group and focused-group interview design

In chapter 7 a number of case studies of station area developments in Tokyo were analysed in order to understand how station area developments are planned in Tokyo. This type of research is a typical example of ‘explanatory science’ as it is oriented towards providing descriptions and explanations (van Aken, 2004; 2005). In this chapter and the subsequent chapters of part three a rather different approach is followed. Here the Tokyo model is explored to investigate how it can be used to improve the planning of station area development practices in the Randstad. This type of research is a typical example of ‘design science’ as it is oriented towards providing solutions (van Aken, 2004; 2005). The eventual aim of this is to find out whether the approach followed in Tokyo for developing station areas could work in the Randstad and to gain an understanding of why or why not this is the case. As was illustrated in chapter two, the experiential learning cycle of Kolb and Fry (1975) provides a useful framework for this.

Figure 9-1 illustrates how this cycle is used to test the applicability of the Tokyo approach (i.e. the potential driving forces behind station area developments) to the development of station areas in the Randstad.

Figure 9-1 Experiential learning cycle as applied in the design science part of this research

- Testing in new situations
  - Application in focus groups and focused-group interviews

- Observation and reflection
  - Assessment in individual interviews

- Forming abstract concepts
  - Potential driving forces behind station area developments in the Randstad
Focus groups versus focused group interviews

As figure 9-1 illustrates, focus groups and individual interviews have been used in this research to test the applicability of the Tokyo model in the Randstad. The focus group method is a form of interview in which there are several participants involved in discussing a specific topic or issue. In this case the focus group method was used to discuss station area developments in the Randstad. Essentially it is a group interview, although some distinctions between focus groups and group interviews can be drawn (Bryman, 2008). In focus groups typically a specific theme is emphasized while in group interviews several topics are discussed. Furthermore group interviews are sometimes carried out for time and money saving reasons. This is not the case for focus groups. And last but not least, in focus groups the researcher is interested in the interaction within a group and the joint construction of a meaning, rather than participants’ individual ideas. In this research two focus groups were held in which the Tokyo approach was further explored on the level of the railway corridor. In addition, the potential of the Tokyo approach was also explored at the level of a station area. However, for this a slightly different method called a ‘focused-group interview’ was used (Bryman, 2008). Here interviewees are selected based on their expertise or involvement in a particular field and are asked to provide specific information regarding this. In this case, the interviewees were selected based on their involvement in particular station area development projects in the Randstad. The interviewees were then asked to provide information regarding their involvement in these projects.

The participants attending the focus groups and focused-group interviews were members from the public and private sector who were involved in transport and/or land use matters. As for the focus groups the participants were divided into two groups. The grouping was done in such a way that public transport and land use actors and private transport and land use actors were evenly distributed among both groups. It was assumed that this would generate fruitful discussions in the focus groups. The focus groups consisted of three parts (see box 9-1). In the first part the Tokyo approach, as outlined in the previous paragraph, was explained to the participants. After this a presentation was given by one of the participants in which a case study (i.e. Stedenbaan or Zaancorridor) was introduced. In the second part both groups were asked to make an integral corridor design for the particular railway corridor that they had been looking at, based on the approach followed in Tokyo. After both groups had completed this task they were asked to think about how they could realize this design. The second part was rounded off with a plenary part in which both groups presented their results. The third and last part of the focus groups involved a discussion regarding the possibility of using the Tokyo approach in the Randstad. Both focus groups were carried out in exactly the same way, allowing the results to be compared. The ultimate aim of these focus groups was to gain insight into the (im) possibilities of applying the Tokyo model to the development of station areas in the Randstad. For this the receptiveness of the public and private sector served as an indicator.
Box 9-1  Design focus group

Programme focus group ‘Thinking and acting in corridors, a Tokyo perspective on Stedenbaan/ Zaancorridor’

Part 1  Introduction
- Introduction of the Tokyo approach (presentation by the researcher)
- Introduction of the corridor (presentation by one of the participants)

Part 2a  Content: making an integral design for the corridor
- Which functions to locate where?
- For which target groups?
- Where to assign what density levels?
- Where to situate local, regional and national nodes?
- What type of transport services?
- In which frequencies?
- Connections to other modes of transport?

Part 2b  Process: how to realize this corridor design
- Which internal and external trends influence the corridor?
- What future challenge(s) does this lead to?
- What means are necessary to meet these challenges?
- Who has to do what and when?

Part 3  Context: lessons from Tokyo?
- What are the opportunities/weaknesses/qualities/threads of the Tokyo model?
- Which conditions (financial, legal and governmental) are required to make the Tokyo model suitable for the Dutch context?

The focused-group interviews focused on a specific location identified in the focus groups: i.e. the station areas of Rotterdam Blaak (Stedenbaan focus group) and Koog Zaandijk (Zaancorridor focus group). Both interviews were carried out in a smaller setting compared to the focus groups. This seemed the most appropriate method for gaining a detailed insight into the development process of the station areas and the roles that the public and private sector played in this. The eventual aim was similar to the focus groups, albeit with a different focus; to explore for a particular station area in the Randstad the (im) possibilities of the Tokyo approach. Also here the participants were land use or transport professionals from either the public or private sector. The participants were selected because of their involvement in a particular development(s) within the station area in question and were asked about their role in that. Unlike the focus groups, participants were not divided into groups nor were they given any specific assignments. Instead the focused-group interviews consisted of a structured discussion in which the participants were asked about their specific role in the development process, the planning instruments and policies used, and their opinion.

Not all questions are included in this overview as some of them are specifically related to the case studies discussed.
about the applicability of the Tokyo approach to the Randstad/Netherlands (see box 9-2). Prior to this discussion the participants were informed about the Tokyo approach and the results of the focus group to which their specific station area belonged. This enabled the participants to understand the context against which the subsequent discussion was held.

Box 9-2 Design focused group interviews

Programme focused group interview ‘A Tokyo perspective on Rotterdam Blaak/Koog Zaandijk’

Part 1 Introduction
- Introducing the Tokyo approach (presentation by the researcher)

Part 2 Roles of public and private sector
- What was the role of the municipality in the development of the station area?
- What was the role of the private sector in the development of the station area?
- According to the municipality what should be the desired role of the private sector?
- According to the private sector what should be the desired role of the municipality?

Part 3 Planning instruments and policies used
- To what extent does the municipality use a specific policy for station areas?
- To what extent does the municipality use specific planning instruments aimed at the development of station areas?
- To what extent are developments in the station area coordinated with developments of neighbouring stations?
- To what extent are target groups taken into account in the development of the station area?

Part 4 Applicability of Tokyo to the Randstad
- What are the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Tokyo model?
- Which conditions (financial, legal and governmental) are required to make the Tokyo model suitable to the Dutch context?
- To what extent is land use control necessary in the Netherlands? For example, to what extent should density be regulated?
- How and by whom (e.g. municipality, city-region, province or national government) should land uses be regulated in the Netherlands?
- Could a preferential planning treatment of station areas work in the Netherlands? Why, or why not?
- Are the planning instruments used in Tokyo applicable in the Netherlands? Why, or why not?
Before the start of each focus group and focused-group interview the participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire in which they were asked about their image of Tokyo and station area developments, and if they believed the Randstad/Netherlands could learn from Tokyo. At the end of each workshop the participants had to answer the same questions again, this time elaborating upon why or why not their opinion had changed. Although such a survey does not say anything about the possible success rate of such a model in the Dutch context, it does give an indication of the elements of the Tokyo approach that would be worthwhile to explore further in the second step, i.e. the series of individual interviews to be held (see chapter 11).

My role in the focus groups and the focused-group interviews was mainly to introduce and explain the Tokyo approach to the participants. After that I observed the participants and where necessary explained additional elements to them. During the plenary sessions I coordinated the discussions. Thus I did not actively engage in the discussions myself.

Case selection
The approach followed in Tokyo was tested in four different cases concerning either a railway corridor or a particular station area in the Randstad. As for the railway corridors, one case focused on a railway section in the province of South Holland, and the other concerned a railway section in the province of North Holland. The case in South Holland was selected because it is part of the so-called ‘Stedenbaan’ project, generally considered as one of the first projects in the Netherlands in which the improvement of the public transport system is linked to a regional urbanization programme. It was agreed upon that until 2020 between 20.000-40.000 residences and 0.7-1.2 million square metres of offices should be built along its railway lines (Programmabureau Stedenbaan, 2007). Regarding the implementation of this programme, Stedenbaan is facing challenges such as how to coordinate and how to prioritize/phase this programme among the different station areas.

The case in North Holland was selected because it is located in an industrial area which is supposed to undergo large transformations in the coming years. In addition, a maximum of 6800 new dwellings is planned in the area until the year 2020 (Metropoolregio Amsterdam, 2009). Furthermore railway services are going to be improved by increasing the number of trains. It will be interesting to see to what extent this railway section, referred to as the Zaancorridor, will be able to benefit from this and/or to contribute to these developments. The case in North Holland is somewhat different from the case in South Holland as this railway section is not yet linked to a regional urbanization strategy. Consequently, one of the first challenges for the Zaancorridor would be to draw up an integral regional strategy in which the proposed spatial developments are matched with the proposed transport improvements.

The cases selected in the focused-group interviews were derived from the discussions held in the focus groups. In the Stedenbaan focus group Rotterdam Blaak was brought forward by the participants as a station that was expected to have a considerable future
development potential. Situated in the city centre of Rotterdam, next to a waterfront, this area was expected to grow into a new sub-centre focused on leisure. The focused-group interview was designed to provide an insight into the factors responsible for its presumed success. In the Zaancorridor focus group Koog Zaandijk was mentioned by the participants as a station that was considered to have development potential. In particular its location near the touristic attraction “Zaanse Schans”, an area with a collection of well-preserved historic windmills and houses, was considered to attribute to its potential. In addition, the station area of Koog Zaandijk is also one of the few places along the corridor where there is still space left for developments not hindered by any regulations\(^50\). However, so far Koog Zaandijk has not been able to benefit from this. The focused-group interview was designed to provide further insight into its development potential and subsequently how this could be realized.

The subsequent paragraphs describe the outcomes of the focus groups and focused-group interviews. This description focuses on the substantive results of the focus groups and focused-group interviews. As for the corridor focus groups, this means that the integral corridor design and its implementation strategy is discussed and that a reflection is given of the plenary discussion in which the participants indicated the aspects that they considered to have potential for the Randstad. Regarding the focused group interviews, this means that an overview is given of the discussions held thereby focusing in particular on the roles of the government and private sector, and the planning instruments and policies used in stimulating the development of the particular station area. Last but not least, the aspects that the participants considered useful to explore in the Randstad are reflected upon.

In the next chapter the results of the ex ante and ex post surveys are discussed. The results are described in the same chronological order that the focus groups and focused-group interviews took place. Therefore, first the results of the Stedenbaan focus group are discussed, followed by the results of the Rotterdam Blaak focused-group interview. Subsequently the outcomes of the Zaancorridor focus group are reflected upon, followed by the results of the Koog Zaandijk focused-group interview.

\(^{50}\) Development opportunities are limited due to the presence of heavy industries causing noise and air pollution and ecological areas protected by European directives (i.e. Natura 2000).
9.2 Focus group 1: A Tokyo perspective on Stedenbaan

Context

The first case in which the corridor approach was tested was Stedenbaan. The Stedenbaan project refers to part of the existing railway network in the province of South Holland. More specifically, it concerns the railway sections between Gouda-Rotterdam, Gouda – The Hague and Sassenheim-Dordrecht South (see figure 9-2). On these railway sections railway capacity has become available, as since 2009 international trains are no longer using these railway sections, but instead are operating trains on its own dedicated infrastructure. The freed up capacity on the aforementioned railway sections is used to improve the regional train services by making a better timetable, increasing frequencies, introducing new cars, and opening new stations. The improved train services, in turn, are supposed to provide a stimulus for spatial development in
the related station areas. In 2007 a regional urbanization strategy was adopted by the governmental partners involved in ‘Stedenbaan’. It was agreed that until the year 2020 between 25,000 - 40,000 residential units and between 700,000 - 1,200,000 square metres of offices should be built within the station areas. In addition, the three authorities responsible for public transport in the province of South Holland (i.e. the province of South Holland and the city-regions of Rotterdam and the Hague) and the Dutch Railways (NS) agreed that the improved train services, particularly the increased train frequency, would be dependent on this spatial programme (Programmabureau Stedenbaan, 2007). This means that the Dutch Railways will only increase the number of trains after a certain part of the earlier-mentioned programme is realized.

Focus group setting

The focus group was co-organized with the project bureau Stedenbaan. The bureau sent out the invitations and arranged the location for the focus group. Furthermore, it gave a presentation in which the case (i.e. Stedenbaan) was introduced to the participants. In total 22 participants from the public and private sector attended the focus group (for an overview see table 9-1). Instead of discussing the whole railway network belonging to Stedenbaan it was decided that only part of the network would be discussed, namely the section between The Hague and Dordrecht where most development opportunities are concentrated. Consequently, most of the participants that attended the focus group were related to the station area(s) belonging to this railway section. At the beginning of the focus group a presentation was given by the project bureau in which the case (i.e. Stedenbaan) was introduced to the participants.

Table 9-1 Representatives of different stakeholders in the Stedenbaan focus group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of stakeholder</th>
<th>Number of representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National government: land use sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional government: land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project bureau Stedenbaan: transport and land use sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-regional government: transport sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government: land use sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator of train services: transport sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner and operator of station buildings: land use sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner of railway infrastructure: transport sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering consultancy: transport and land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural office: land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University: transport and land use sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Actually 28 participants attended the workshop, but only 22 of them were able to attend the whole workshop.
**Step 1 Making an integral corridor design**

The first task that participants were asked to complete was to develop an integral corridor design for the The Hague-Dordrecht section of the railway, modelled on the approach followed in Tokyo. When developing the corridor design the groups were asked to think about aspects such as distribution of functions, target groups, densities, hierarchy (i.e. national, regional, and local scale), transport services, and intermodal connections.

The first group's integral corridor design focused predominantly on the functional profiling of stations (see figure 9-3). What this group seemed to find interesting was the way in which functional differentiation between station areas was regulated in Tokyo. Regarding Stedenbaan it was felt that in terms of functional programming clearer choices needed to be made and that more attention should be paid to creating variation. Or as one of the participants stated “It is not only a matter of how much programme you can realize, but also about the type of programme you can realize”. Prior to making the corridor design the discussion in the group mainly revolved around how to determine the functional profile of a station. Eventually it was agreed upon that the existing spatial programme within a station area should form the starting point for this.

Figure 9-3  Integral corridor design- group 1
The second group seemed to be particularly interested in the way in which densities are regulated in Tokyo. The possibilities it offers for creating scarcity were considered particularly important. It was realized that high building densities cannot be actualized everywhere along the railway line. Therefore it was agreed upon to make a categorization into three different density classes: high-density, medium-density and low-density (see figure 9-4).

Figure 9-4 Ranking of stations in density classes- group 2

The group decided that the level of train service offered at a station would determine its density level. Accordingly, stations with (inter) national connections were considered to have high-densities, while stations with regional connections were considered to have medium-densities, and finally stations with only local connections were considered to have low densities. The values for what was considered “high”, “medium”, or “low” were not specified by the group. Some stations were provisionally ranked into a certain density category on the basis that they would have to improve a train or bus connection before being officially admitted. In addition, this group emphasized that the majority of new urban developments should be targeted at the high-density and medium-density station areas and less at the low-density areas, as in this way scarcity could be created. After this, functional profiles were determined for each station area (see figure 9-5).
The corridor design of the second group differed in two ways from the previous group: (1) all stations were assigned with a functional profile, while the previous group left some stations out as they did not seem to know what to do with them, (2) the residential function seemed to play a greater role in the corridor design of the second group as there were a considerable number of stations categorized as residential. Interestingly, most of these residential stations were assigned with low-densities and limited development opportunities.

**Step 2 Realizing an integral corridor design**

After both groups had finished drafting their integral corridor design they were asked to think about its implementation. More specifically, they were asked to formulate an implementation strategy that needed to take into account the following aspects: internal and external trends affecting Stedenbaan, its resulting future challenges, the means necessary to realize these challenges, and by whom what should be done and when. These questions are typically a part of strategic planning approaches developed by the private sector. It is assumed, following Bryson & Einsweiler (1988), that such an approach can help the public sector in becoming more effective, i.e. making corridor designs that are better capable of achieving the public sector planning goals.

Both groups mainly focused on the internal and external trends affecting Stedenbaan and, in the case of one group, also on their resulting future challenges. The other questions were, due to a lack of time, not discussed within the groups. Instead these questions were discussed in the subsequent plenary part of the focus group.
The first group seemed to focus predominantly on the trends and identified the following:

- Relaxed housing market (this makes it difficult to direct developments to locations with public transport).
- Urban orientation of family composition.
- People have become more mobile and flexible.
- Lack of resources such as oil, energy and commodities.
- Focus on sustainability.
- Aging of society (it was mentioned that this is still not taken into account in the train services. The increase in frequency is especially linked to commuter traffic rather than at traffic generated after working hours or during weekends).
- Target groups are getting more diverse and so is their travel behaviour (it was mentioned that it has become increasingly difficult to assign a person to a specific group such as ‘the elderly’).

The second group focused not only on the trends, but also on the future challenges that these trends could pose for the Stedenbaan case. One sub-group also mentioned potential solutions to the future challenges envisaged:

- Replacement demand for offices (it was mentioned that this could offer opportunities to direct the office stock to ‘the right place’, i.e. near public transportation nodes)

Considered challenges
- Making choices through clear policies.
- Strong control over stations and their density (“offices should be located near stations and not elsewhere”).

Considered means
- Including guidelines in the ordinance.
- Providing station area grants for financing the unprofitable parts of a housing office development.
- Discourage car usage (“choosing for stations, implies punishing car usage”).

- Aging of society (related to this trend it was mentioned that later in life people tend to move back to the city to be closer to amenities)

Considered challenge
- Developing high quality houses with nearby facilities.

- Leisure economy (it was mentioned that activity patterns have become more diverse and fragmented and that the car plays an important role in supporting such patterns

Considered challenge
- Developing places that are accessible by different modes of transportation.
Step 3 Lessons from Tokyo?
The final part of the focus group concerned a plenary session in which the potential of the Tokyo approach for the Randstad was discussed. First both groups presented their corridor design and implementation strategy to each other. After this a plenary discussion followed about the possibilities and limitations of the Tokyo approach. The plenary discussion seemed to revolve mainly around the issue of land use control. It was felt that choices needed to be made about where to increase densities. At the same time, however, it was questioned to what extent this should, and even could, be controlled. Furthermore the implications of the corridor approach for the Randstad/Netherlands were discussed. For example, it was questioned whether a corridor approach would require a special development company or a land bank to be established. Next, it was felt that such an approach required inter-municipal coordination, a creation of scarcity at the regional level, and a revision of current public transport concessions.

The participants seemed to extract two lessons from Tokyo: (1) densities in the Netherlands can be further optimized (2) an assessment framework is needed to make choices (e.g. where to increase densities and where not to increase densities).

At the end of the focus group the discussion revolved around how to use control in the Netherlands. It was believed that three things were important for establishing control: (1) regulations, 2) Courage at the local level, and (3) Instruments for helping the private sector.
In the Stedenbaan focus group a great potential was assigned to the station area of Rotterdam Blaak as an up-and-coming sub-centre. Therefore it was decided to explore in greater detail the development process of Rotterdam Blaak in a focused-group interview. This was done by comparing it to the Tokyo approach.

Rotterdam Blaak is situated in the city centre of Rotterdam and is one of the stations belonging to the railway network of Stedenbaan (see figure 9-6). At present several
development projects are underway in the surrounding area of the station. However, as was stated by the participants in the focused-group interview, these developments are not so much related to the station, but should instead be seen as a part of the development plans for a much larger area. In other words, the presence of the station was not the primary reason for this redevelopment. What triggered this development was that in 1993 the elevated railway line, that used to run through this area, was demolished and replaced by an underground railway line. As a result a large area of land became available for development in the city centre of Rotterdam. Thus by putting the railway line in a tunnel the development of the surrounding area could gain momentum. This was, however, not the case for the areas directly bordering the station of Rotterdam Blaak. Due to insurability and external safety issues\textsuperscript{52} the erection of buildings above and adjacent to the tunnel was not initially permitted. Consequently, the areas directly bordering the station remained undeveloped for a long time (see figure 9-7). When both issues were eventually resolved in 2005, after some additional safety analyses were carried out, its development could finally begin.

\textsuperscript{52} The insurability risk refers to the risk of possible damage occurring to the tunnel from constructing buildings on top of it. The external safety risk refers to the risk of explosion due to the transportation of hazardous good through the tunnel.
Interview setting

The focused-group interview was organized by the city planning department of the municipality of Rotterdam and the researcher concerned. Invitations were sent out by the municipality and four people attended the group interview. The focused-group interview was deliberately organized in a small setting as it was believed this would allow for an intensive and structured discussion to take place. Interestingly, and different from the focus groups and other focused-group interview, the majority of the participants consisted of private sector actors (see table 9-2). Therefore, this focused-group interview offered a rather unique opportunity to explore the private sector’s opinion towards the applicability of the Tokyo approach in the Randstad.

Table 9-2  Representatives of different stakeholders in the Rotterdam Blaak group interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local government: land use sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developers: land use sector</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to the discussion the participants were informed about the corridor approach followed in Tokyo. In addition the results of the preceding focus group (i.e. the Stedenbaan focus group) were presented to them. Following the presentation on Tokyo some remarks were made by the participants. It was felt that Tokyo was more public transport minded and had more of a public transportation culture than was the case in the Netherlands. The Netherlands, and especially Rotterdam, was considered to be much more car-oriented, as most people travel to work by car. In addition, it was argued that the public transportation system in Tokyo owed its existence to its high residential densities. It was believed that the absence of such densities in the Randstad would undermine the viability of such a system here.

After the participants were informed about the Tokyo approach and the results of the Stedenbaan focus group the discussion started. The basic aim of the discussion was to reconstruct the development process of the station area of Rotterdam Blaak. It was assumed that a greater understanding of its development process could provide lessons for other station areas in the Netherlands. The development process of Rotterdam Blaak was analysed from the Tokyo perspective, i.e. the approach followed in Tokyo for developing station areas. The discussion was structured as follows: First the public and private sector participants were asked questions about their role and their desired role in the development process of Rotterdam Blaak. Second, the policies and planning instruments used were discussed among the participants. The third and final part of the discussion focused on the applicability of the Tokyo approach in the Randstad/Netherlands. The results of this discussion are presented below following the same structure as outlined above. In some cases, for clarification purposes, the information derived from the discussions is complemented with information from additional sources.
Roles of public and private sector
The municipality of Rotterdam has been responsible for drafting a vision for the development of the Laurenskwartier, i.e. the larger area of which Rotterdam Blaak is a part of. No vision was developed for the station area itself. Only after ProRail, the owner of railway infrastructure in the Netherlands (see chapter 8), replaced the elevated railway by an underground railway the municipality started to draft this vision. Furthermore, the municipality was co-involved in the planning of sub developments such as the projects located above and next to the railway tunnel. For one project the municipality had organized a design contest. The aforementioned insurability and external safety issues were not considered a responsibility of the municipality, as the railway tunnel was owned by ProRail. However, this did not stop the municipality from becoming involved in both issues. The municipality brought parties to the negotiation table, provided legal assistance and negotiated on behalf of the other parties involved with the national government. Although no national public actors participated in the focused-group interview their role was quite crucial at the initial stage of the development process of the Rotterdam Blaak station area. Therefore their role is briefly described here. First, Rotterdam Blaak is located on a hazardous toxic route and as a result the new developments were subject to strict regulations. These regulations were established by the former Ministry of Spatial Housing, Planning and the Environment. Second, in order to erect a building above and/or adjacent to a tunnel a permit is required from the administrator of the tunnel. This is the same actor that is owner and administrator of the railways in the Netherlands, i.e. ProRail. Usually permission is granted under certain conditions following article 19 of the Railways Act. For example, in order to get permission to build a building above or near to railway tracks then the developer must ensure that this does not adversely affect the safe and efficient usage of the railways (Staatsblad, 2003) These conditions seem to have formed an obstacle for the development of the areas above and adjacent to Rotterdam Blaak (Algemeen Dagblad, 2009)

The developers participating in this focused-group interview were all directly involved in the development of the areas adjacent to Rotterdam Blaak station. Interestingly, each developer had become involved in the project in a different way. One developer won the earlier-mentioned design competition which enabled him to get involved in other projects near Rotterdam Blaak station as well. Another developer was invited to participate in a development by a different developer. Yet another developer owned land near the station and managed to acquire the land and development rights of an adjacent project. Thus the motives and the impetus for investing in the station area varied considerably among the private developers. Interesting, however, was that, when asked to the participants about their motives to invest in this area, the presence of the station itself was not so much considered to give this area development potential, but rather its location relative to the city centre of Rotterdam. What was further considered to contribute to its development potential was the fact that Rotterdam Blaak is located in a neighbourhood (Laurenskwartier) nowadays considered an up-and-coming area.
Interestingly, when the private developers were asked about the desired role of the municipality in the development of station areas, they felt that more municipal pressure, or as indicated by one of the participants "a continued focus", was needed. It was argued that the municipality could provide more clarity about its intentions towards station areas. In addition, and rather surprising to hear from the private sector, was that they believed scarcity could be created when building in the outlying areas would be banned. This was surprising, as it implied the private sector calling for stricter government regulations.

Planning Instruments and policies used

The municipality has no specific policies aimed at the development of station areas. There are, however, policies that indirectly affect the development of station areas. For example, the municipality of Rotterdam has developed a high-rise policy in which it is indicated where, under what conditions, and up to what height buildings can be built within the city (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2011). Here a high-rise zoning was introduced permitting buildings exceeding the height of 70 metres to be built. Two types of zoning were distinguished: in one zone (i.e. the super high rise zone) buildings with a maximum height of 200 metres are permitted. Two areas in the city are designated as such. The station area of Rotterdam Central is located in one of these areas. In the other zone (i.e. the so-called comfort zone) buildings with a height between 70-150 metres are permitted. A large part of the inner-city of Rotterdam is designated as such. The station area of Rotterdam Blaak belongs to one of these areas.

Furthermore, the municipality has designated so-called VIP-areas (Very Important Areas) throughout the city (Gemeente Rotterdam, 2007). The Laurenskwartier, the area in which the station of Rotterdam Blaak is located, is designated as one of these VIP areas. This means that the municipality considers this area as most important in realizing the goals of 'creating a strong economy' and 'realizing an attractive residential city'.

Regarding office developments, the municipality of Rotterdam made the policy that office developments are only allowed in certain areas within the city. However, as one participant mentioned, in practice office developments are still allowed elsewhere in the city due to outdated zoning plans. As was mentioned by one developer, the municipality is constantly facing a dilemma whether to allow or prohibit a development. Prohibiting a development means that the municipality, as major landowner in Rotterdam, is not able to receive any revenues from the issuance of land. Allowing an office development outside the designated areas on the other hand would mean that the municipality is in fact encouraging a further deconcentration of offices.

The city region of Rotterdam is responsible for the coordination of functional programmes between station areas. For this policies have been developed in consultation with the city planning department of the municipality of Rotterdam. In 2005 this led to the adoption of a regional structure plan. In this plan seven station areas were selected that were considered to have potential for further intensification, because of good accessibility (Provincie Zuid-Holland & Stadsregio Rotterdam, 2005). The station of Rotterdam Blaak is not one of these selected station areas.
Besides this the municipality does not have a specific policy aimed at the development of station areas, there is also no specific target group policy aimed at station areas. However, the municipality does have a target group policy for its inner city. Here it aims in particular to attract highly educated people, as this is something that the city is considered to be lacking.

**Applicability of Tokyo to the Randstad**

First the participants were asked about what other station area developments in the Randstad/Netherlands could learn from the development of the Rotterdam Blaak station area. The participants believed that an accelerator was needed for station area developments to start, i.e. something that could set the development in motion. In the case of Rotterdam Blaak, replacing the elevated railway line with a tunnel was considered an accelerator for the area. In addition, it was believed that the completion of an indoor food market adjacent to the station could give a further boost to the area.

After this the participants were asked about the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the Tokyo approach. The following were considered strengths: greater opportunities for other parties to use railway infrastructure, and providing clarity in advance about the conditions a development needs to meet. The following were considered weaknesses: planning seems to be mainly focused on the development of individual sites rather than their integration with the surrounding area, and the high densities around which the Tokyo approach seems to revolve cannot be applied in such a large scale in the Randstad/Netherlands.

Then the applicability of the characteristic elements of the planning approach followed in Tokyo was discussed for the Randstad. Hereby the focus was put on the preferential planning treatment of station areas and the usage of planning incentives. Regarding the first aspect, the participants argued that in the Randstad/Netherlands inner city developments should get a preferential treatment in planning, particularly as such developments were considered to have future market potential. Station areas were considered a part of inner city developments and as such would not have to be promoted separately; instead they would be related to these inner city developments. Consequently, the participants seemed to embrace the idea of preferential planning when its focus would be on inner city areas rather than just station areas. As for the second aspect, the planning incentives were considered interesting as such instruments, it was argued, could help in raising the quality (and thus the value) of a development. Furthermore, the fact that conditions could be attached to the usage of such an instrument in advance of a development, as was the case in Tokyo, was considered interesting as this would allow the private sector to gain insight in advance about the government’s intentions towards station areas. In addition, the participants believed that the planning of station areas should be the main responsibility of the municipality. They also seemed to agree that some kind of sub-regional coordination was necessary in order to prevent destructive competition between municipalities and to prevent the private sector from benefiting too much from this. It was argued that the
private sector could misuse this competition to play municipalities against each other. This latter remark was rather surprising, as it was made by the developers themselves. Apparently a fierce competition between municipalities is not always serving self-interest.

As a final comment, one of the developers remarked that increased cooperation between the public and private sector would only happen if the private sector was given more freedom over development plans. Although he also mentioned that in some cases government regulations were actually needed in order to create choice about where to develop. In other words, this developer seemed to plea for some form of control by which flexibility could be maintained. The second and final aspect that was discussed focused on the applicability of the planning incentives used in Tokyo for the Randstad. The participants seemed to find the Transferable Development Rights instrument an interesting planning incentive to explore in the Dutch context. Again, following the preferential treatment mentioned earlier, inner city developments were considered a useful test case for this. It was argued that such developments were often expensive and confronted with additional costs due to, for example, soil contamination. Therefore, it was argued that an instrument that would be able to generate additional value to a development could be considered useful for a developer. In addition, one private developer remarked that it would be interesting to use the transferable development rights for building above stations and railway tracks. At the same time he acknowledged that this would require additional legislation to make this possible in the Netherlands.
9.4 Focus group 2: A Tokyo perspective on the Zaancorridor

Figure 9-8 The Zaancorridor

Context
The second focus group in which the corridor approach was tested was the Zaancorridor. In this thesis the Zaancorridor refers to a railway section in the province of North-Holland, between Amsterdam Central Station and Alkmaar station (see figure 9-8). The Zaancorridor faces a number of challenges in the future. First, it is located in the oldest industrial area in Europe (Zaanstreek) which is supposed to undergo a large transformation the coming years. The area contains a considerable number of industrial monuments offering opportunities for different land uses. Second, at the regional level it was agreed upon that until the year 2020 in this area

53 The name Zaancorridor also refers to a highly frequent bus service operating between Amsterdam and Zaanstad.
6800 new dwellings need to be built. Third, at the national level it was decided that 4.5 billion euro would be invested to increase the frequency of the trains in the busiest railway corridors in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat, 2010). This is known as Programma Hoogfrequent Spoorvervoer (High-frequency Rail Programme). The idea is that by 2020 six intercity trains and six regional trains will run through these corridors every hour. Consequently, every ten minutes a passenger will be able to get on a train. The Zaancorridor is part of one of the corridors to which this programme is applicable. On this railway section the number of regional trains will be increased from 4 to 6 trains per hour.

Focus group setting
The focus group was organized by the municipality of Zaanstad, which is one of the municipalities located along the Zaancorridor, and the researcher concerned. The municipality hosted the focus group and the invitations were sent out by the researcher. In total 11 participants from the public and private sector attended the focus group (see table 9-3). The participants in the focus group were all directly involved in one or more station areas along the Zaancorridor. At the beginning of the focus group the case (i.e. the Zaancorridor) was introduced to the participants by a consultant who also participated in the remaining programme of the focus group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of stakeholder</th>
<th>Number of representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional government: land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-regional government: transport sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government: transport and land use sector</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator of train services: transport sector</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering consultancy: transport and land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural firm: land use sector</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

54 In addition, both the Zaancorridor and Stedenbaan are part of the so-called R-net (Randstadnet), which refers to the ambition of developing a high-quality network for public transport in the Randstad.

55 Actually 15 participants attended the workshop, but only 11 of them filled out both questionnaires. As a result only the 11 participants were considered valid for the research and analysis intended.
Step 1  Making an integral corridor design
Similar to the Stedenbaan focus group, the first task that was given to the participants was to draft an integral corridor design for the Zaancorridor based on the approach followed in Tokyo. In drafting the design the participants were also asked to take into account aspects such as distribution of functions, target groups, densities, hierarchy (i.e. national, regional, local scale), transport services, and intermodal connections.

For the first group the presentation given by the consultant at the beginning of the focus group provided guidance for assigning functional profiles to stations. In this presentation a number of stations were mentioned that were considered to have development potential from a transport, land use, or a dual perspective. In determining the functional profile of a station the group used the following approach. First the characteristics of the area where the station was located were identified. The characteristics could reflect the spatial, infrastructural and economic characteristics of the area. Subsequently, an idea was formed about the possible identity of the station. Finally, the amount of space available for developments was also examined. This is especially relevant for this corridor as much of the land surrounding the stations is ecologically protected and is not allowed to be built upon. Furthermore, developments are limited due to the presence of heavy industries in the area. Interestingly, this group had developed functional profiles in conjunction with transport changes, unlike the Stedenbaan focus group. For example, for some stations a modification of the existing train service was proposed, while for another station a relocation of the park and ride area was suggested. Also intermodal connections over water were considered as part of the river Zaan runs parallel to the railway line (see figure 9-9).

Figure 9-9   Integral corridor design group 1
The second group started off somewhat differently as they felt the need to reflect upon the approach used in Tokyo for developing station areas first. It was felt that the way in which the public transport sector was organized in Tokyo was representative of its specific culture. Therefore, applying this approach to the Zaancorridor was considered quite a challenge. Eventually, the group seemed to agree that a spatial-programmatic comparison with Tokyo could bear fruit, especially when this would be related to the spatial distribution of functions within the corridor.

Interestingly, this group had developed functional profiles that were not only based on differences in spatial programmes, but also on different transport products aimed at specific target groups. Things that were mentioned for example were train cars equipped for people older than 65, seat less train cars for young people, and reduced ticket prices for people travelling in the counter-peak direction (i.e. in this case away from Amsterdam). The participants felt that in this way passenger flows and particular target groups could be better served. The second group's corridor design focused primarily on non-residential functions, as it was felt that such functions were needed most in the Zaancorridor. For example, the station of Uitgeest was considered a potential location for a university as this would, from a transport point of view, attract bi-directional (i.e. from Amsterdam) and off-peak travel. From a spatial point of view this could help distribute a more balanced functional programme within the corridor.

As in the present situation the group felt that it was only the ends of the Zaancorridor (Amsterdam Central station in the south and Alkmaar station in the north) that had a balanced functional programme, while the functional programmes within the centre of the corridor were less balanced (see figure 9-10).
Step 2  Realizing an integral corridor design

After both groups had drafted an integral design for the Zaancorridor they were asked to think about its implementation. For this they could, just like the Stedenbaan focus group, refer to a number of aspects: internal and external trends affecting the Zaancorridor, its resulting future challenges, the means necessary to realize these challenges, and by whom what should be done and when. Both groups mainly focused on the means they considered necessary for realizing their integral design. In addition, the first group also reflected upon the roles they considered necessary for some of the actors involved in the development of station areas. The other questions were not discussed due to a lack of time.

The discussion in group 1 focused on institutional aspects which participants believed were responsible for the lack of coordination between transport and land use developments in the Netherlands. The following three aspects were mentioned by the participants:

1. Centralized decision-making of rail issues

It was felt that decisions regarding the number of trains, capacity and the train product were too centralized and therefore the needs of the region, in this case the Zaanstreek, were insufficiently met. A solution was proposed to take the Zaancorridor out of the concession for the main railway network and to outsource it to a private railway operator. It was assumed that a regional actor, instead of a national one, would more likely see opportunities in the region and take advantage of them. For similar reasons it was argued that the integration of railways in the surrounding area should be coordinated at the regional level, rather than the national level as is currently the case.
As for this coordination, it was considered, the regional government (the province) should play a role.

2. **Too narrow focus of the subsidy system**
   It was felt that the current subsidy system predominantly focuses on transport issues and that no incentive is offered for also delivering a good spatial product (i.e. a high-quality station area). It was believed that with other incentives more could be done for the same amount of money. However, the participants realized that that this would require changes at the national level.

3. **City-regions lacking a transport and area development focus**
   It was argued that city-regions are too occupied with facilitating traffic flows, and as a result their connections with spatial developments are rather poor. It was felt that city-regions, and also regional and local governments, focus in particular on realizing well-performing public transport systems that are profitable. It was argued that discussions regarding the (financial) performance of public transport systems focus on the current funding methods, and that there is little incentive to explore other funding methods.

The second group philosophized predominantly about the means that could help to achieve better coordinated transport and land use developments. The following were considered:

- **BDU** location grant: usage of BDU-money for attracting particular functions to station areas. The idea was that certain facilities should be given a bonus for establishing themselves in station areas.
- Flexible land use zoning plans: an idea proposed was to make land use zoning plans less rigid in the Netherlands.
- Make a location cheaper (i.e. discount on land price/rental price)
- Relocate shopping centres to stations: it was proposed to transform existing shopping centres into residential areas and relocate shopping centres to stations.

**Step 3 Lessons from Tokyo?**
In the final part of the focus group a plenary discussion was held in which the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and barriers of the Tokyo approach were discussed. The discussion seemed to revolve around three topics which are outlined below:

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56 BDU= Brede Doeluitkering (overall specific grant). See chapter 8.
Assigning densities, something for the Netherlands?
It was felt that one could not simply assign density levels to station areas, as each station area is different. It was argued that for each station area, it should be explored what the possibilities and impossibilities for densification are. In other words, assigning density levels to station areas requires a customization and should be considered a research and design task. In addition, it was believed that the market influences the possibilities for densification as well.
One participant pointed out that density control in Tokyo has resulted in areas where there is relatively few development constraints such as the areas adjacent to stations, and areas where there are many development constraints. Using these development constraints Tokyo has been able to intentionally organize scarcity. It was argued that in Tokyo it is unattractive to build offices far from a railway connection, due to the low density levels assigned to these areas by the government. In the Netherlands, however, such disincentives at present do not exist.

How to trigger the private sector to invest in the Zaancorridor?
Tokyo’s life-time concessions were of particular interest to the participants. It was felt that such concessions would stimulate the private sector to identify itself with the area, feel responsible for it, and thus be encouraged to do more with it. The current concession period used in the Netherlands (6-8 years) was considered too short for a private railway operator to develop an area. It was believed that through the use of area concessions modelled after Tokyo the operation of the railway line could go more hand in hand with the development of the surrounding area. A consequence of this would be that railway companies not only compete with each other in terms of railway services offered, but also in terms of area development. It was believed that such a system could result in more investments from the private sector in the Zaancorridor.

Support for station area developments in the Netherlands
Some of the participants felt that a broad political and societal support for station area developments was lacking in the Netherlands. It was acknowledged that on a regional level this support seems to be there, but on a local level (in particular in case of the smaller municipalities) this support is lacking. It was argued that smaller municipalities still prefer expansion locations where no (or hardly any) public transport means are available. Therefore, it was felt that first a discussion should be organized around the question of whether developing station areas in the Netherlands is a good idea after all. If there appeared to be no consensus about this, it was believed, it would be difficult to discuss the how-question (i.e. the implementation).
Context

In the Zaancorridor focus group development potential was assigned to the station area of Koog Zaandijk (see figure 9-11). In particular, its location near the Zaanse Schans, a touristic attraction famed for its traditional windmills and houses, attributed to this potential. In addition, this was also one of the few stations where there is still room available for development. So far, however, no developments have taken place within the station area of Koog Zaandijk. Therefore a focused-group interview was held to explore in greater detail the development potential of this station. Interestingly, when compared to the other focused-group interview (Rotterdam Blaak), it was the government rather than the private sector that took the initiative for its development by drafting a specific vision for the station area. In Rotterdam Blaak such a specific vision did not exist, instead the station was part of a vision aimed at the development of a much larger area.
Figure 9-12  Location Koog Zaandijk station in the Zaancorridor

Koog Zaandijk is situated in the municipality of Zaanstad and is one of the stations situated along the Zaancorridor (see figure 9-12). In 2009 a vision was drafted for Koog Zaandijk by the so-called Taskforce Ruimtewinst, an independent advisory committee of the province of North-Holland consisting of internal and external experts in the fields of area development and city and regional planning. This plan proposed to relocate the current station closer to the highway and to explore the possibilities of realizing a regional park and ride near the station. Furthermore, around the station a mixed functional programme was suggested based on sports (soccer, tennis and korfball), leisure (e.g. cinema, swimming pool, retail), and living (Taskforce Ruimtewinst, 2009). As one of the follow ups a feasibility study for a park and ride facility near the station of Koog-Zaandijk was carried out (Inno-V, 2010). It was believed that a park and ride facility, whether or not in conjunction with a spatial programme, would have potential here because of the station's location near a highway. The findings of this study were presented at the beginning of the focused-group interview and served as a starting point of the discussion.
**Interview setting**

This group interview was co-organized by the municipality of Zaanstad. Invitations were sent out by the researcher and in total 6 participants from the public and private sector attended the focused-group interview for an overview see table 9-4). The participants in the focused-group interview were either directly or indirectly involved in the development of the station area of Koog Zaandijk. Prior to the discussion the findings of the Zaancorridor focus group were presented by the researcher, followed by a presentation of the results of the feasibility study. The results of the feasibility study were presented by a consultant who also participated in the remaining group interview.

Interestingly, reflection on the Zaancorridor focus group generated considerable discussion among the participants. In particular the measures suggested for realizing a better integration of transport and land use developments evoked (strong) reactions. Therefore first the results of this discussion are outlined below. Following this a report is given on how the participants thought they could set the development of Koog Zaandijk in motion.

*Table 9-4  Representatives of different stakeholders in the Koog-Zaandijk group interview*

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government: land use sector</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operator of train services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultancy firm: transport sector</td>
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*Reflection on the results of the Zaancorridor focus group*

There were three aspects mentioned during the reflection of the Zaancorridor focus group that generated discussion among the participants. They were:

**BDU location grant**

One actor argued that it would be difficult to use the subsidy for other purposes than traffic and transport issues, as this could cause problems with the auditor who is responsible for checking whether the money is spent appropriately (i.e. used for traffic and transport issues). If the money was spent differently, it was feared that the Ministry of Infrastructure & the Environment would intervene. Another participant remarked that real estate taxes could also be used to attract certain functions to station areas by offering temporary tax exemptions. The usage of more flexible land use zoning plans was also discussed, particularly in relation to creating density. It was felt by some actors that local, sub-regional and regional governments should bundle their means and responsibilities for the development of station areas, as it was felt that this could speed up a development. In line with this, it was believed that there should be consensus among the different government tiers regarding the future development direction of
a particular station area. At the same time, however, it was realized that in order to implement a station area development, the private sector should also agree with the development direction suggested by the government. To conclude, the BDU location grant seemed to extend the discussion to other possibly interesting instruments for the Randstad/Netherlands.

Prioritization policies stations
Regarding the distribution of office locations it was mentioned by one participant that the municipality of Zaanstad is using its structural vision to limit the location of new offices. Basically, offices are restricted to three locations in the municipality of which the most important one is located around the station of Zaandam\textsuperscript{57}. In other locations offices are in principle not allowed (Municipality of Zaanstad, 2009). It was felt that in order to increase the willingness of the private sector to invest in the municipality of Zaanstad land use regulations needed to clearly stipulate what is and is not permitted. At the same time, however, it was also felt that these regulations should not restrict private sector developments too much.

It was noted that in Tokyo the government closely cooperates with the private sector in planning new developments. It was argued that in the Netherlands this is not customary, as here usually a zoning plan forms the starting point for planning a new development. Furthermore, it was suggested that the regional government should play a role in regulating land use developments, as it was felt they could use the provincial ordinance (see paragraph 8.3) to put pressure on certain developments and to encourage collective action from local governments. The focused-group interview ended with a discussion regarding the role of the railway operator (i.e. NS) in developing station areas. From this discussion came the idea that, in regards to smaller stations, either ProRail or the relevant municipality should initiate developments in order for NS to then become involved. If neither ProRail nor the municipality was willing to invest in the station then there would be little reason for NS to invest in the development of its smaller stations. There was some disagreement among the participants on whether the role of NS should be passive, as outlined above, or active.

Furthermore, it appeared that the results of the customer satisfaction survey (klanttevredenheidsonderzoek) formed a strong trigger for NS to invest in a station area. When a station is assessed below ’6’ by its clients NS is required to act. In addition, also passenger numbers proved to be an important reason for NS to invest in a particular station area. Stations with more than ten thousand passengers per day are by definition considered important for NS. For the smaller station areas it was felt that incentives needed to be created by other parties in order for NS to get involved.

Support for transit-oriented development
The participants mentioned three examples of station area developments that indicate that support for transit-orientated development is still modest. One participant argued that there are still municipalities in the Netherlands that prefer highway locations to

\textsuperscript{57} Initially offices were limited to only one location, i.e. the station of Zaandam (Bureau Buiten, 2004). This was later changed to three locations so that companies that wanted to establish an office in Zaandam, but not in the station area, would not have to be refused (gemeente Zaanstad, 2009).
station areas when considering expansion locations for offices and leisure. Another participant noted that it is extremely difficult to relocate a station to a more central position within a residential district. In particular, it was felt that the national government (i.e. the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment) is rather reluctant in providing funds for this. Last but not least, it was felt that railway operators typically only get involved in station area developments when the planning is already at an advanced stage.

**Possible stimulus for developing Koog Zaandijk**

It was felt that someone needed to take the lead in initiating the development of Koog Zaandijk. However, there seemed to be disagreement among the participants about whose role this should be. Some participants believed that the development of Koog Zaandijk was of a regional interest and therefore regarded as the responsibility of the regional government. Others, however, questioned the usefulness of a regional government being involved in such a local matter. Subsequently, the desired role of a regional government was further elaborated upon. Thereby the discussion seemed to revolve around whether a regional government should focus on coordinating functional programmes between stations, and accordingly enforce this legally, or whether it should focus on making an agreed idea happen.

The Taskforce Ruimtewinst is an example of the latter. The role of this independent committee is to demonstrate to municipalities their options for inner-city intensification, preferably around stations. The station area of Koog Zaandijk made use of this committee. It was argued that the Taskforce Ruimtewinst should be considered a tool for helping municipalities, rather than a means for imposing regulations (i.e. a functional programme for a station area) on municipalities. One of the participants remarked that this should not prevent a regional government from formulating an integral area strategy at a corridor level, as this is different from stipulating in detail what types of land uses are and are not permitted. Among the participants there seemed to be consensus about this. However, it was felt that the drafting of such an area strategy should not be the exclusive task of a regional government, but instead should be done in conjunction with the private sector. Furthermore, the role of a city-region was discussed. It was felt that a city-region could contribute in some ways to the development of a station area. A city-region could help regarding issues concerning transport and traffic (e.g. pedestrian routes, bicycle tunnel, bicycle storages etc.) by the usage of its BDU-grant. However, a city-region is not equipped to help with issues concerning the overall spatial development of a station area. Therefore, it was argued that a province and perhaps the municipality concerned should have a stronger role regarding these issues.

There seemed to be disagreement among the participants about the usefulness and necessity of investing in the station area of Koog Zaandijk. In particular the participants questioned what would set this station area apart from the other station areas in this region. Accordingly, its unique qualities were pointed out by referring to the fact that it is one of the few locations where there is still space available, it is
situated near a highway and thus considered a multimodal node, and that its land is largely owned by the municipality. Despite its considered potential no developments have been taking place, which none of the participants seemed to be able to explain. Finally, the participants were asked if they considered a role for NS in drafting an integral area strategy at a corridor level. There seemed to be consensus among the participants that NS should be involved in drafting a vision. It was felt that this would improve the commitment of NS to a certain region, something that railway operators are not yet accustomed to in the Netherlands.

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter described the findings of two focus groups (i.e. Stedenbaan and the Zaancorridor) and two focused-group interviews (i.e. Rotterdam Blaak and Koog-Zaandijk). The two focus groups were organized with the purpose of exploring how the corridor approach followed in Tokyo could be applied in the Dutch context. The eventual aim was to gain insight into the (im) possibilities of applying this approach to the development of station areas in the Randstad. The two focused-group interviews were organized with the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the development process of one particular station area in the Randstad. The eventual aim was similar to the focus groups, albeit with a different focus; to explore for a particular station area in the Randstad the (im) possibilities of the Tokyo approach. In this final paragraph some preliminary conclusions will be drawn about what the participants seemed to consider interesting issues to explore further in the Dutch context.

In the first focus group, i.e. the Stedenbaan focus group, the participants seemed to attach considerable value to the functional profiling of station areas in drafting a design for the corridor. Interestingly, the participants seemed to realize that functions needed to be coordinated between station areas in order to prevent destructive competition between them. In addition, one group focused specifically on assigning densities to station areas and related this to their position in the railway network. In the plenary session most of the discussion focused on the issue of land use control. Interestingly, many participants seemed to consider the regulation of densities an interesting tool for creating scarcity in the Randstad. However, there was considerable doubt about the extent to which this could be controlled. By the end of the discussion participants seemed to have learnt two lessons from Tokyo. First, it was realized that densities and the distribution of functions could be further optimized in the Netherlands. Consequently, which could be referred to as the second lesson, it was realized that an assessment framework was needed under which certain choices (e.g. where to intensify and where not to intensify) could be made.

The focused-group interview about Rotterdam Blaak could be considered a continuation of the Stedenbaan focus group, as here the discussion zoomed in on the development process of one particular station area along the Stedenbaan corridor. This might also explain why the participants in the focused group interview seemed to focus much more on the planning instruments used in Tokyo, i.e. the preferential planning treatment of station areas and the usage of planning incentives. Regarding
the first issue, it was believed that such a treatment should not be narrowed-down to station areas, but instead should be extended to inner-city developments. Regarding the second issue, it was believed that planning incentives such as the ones used in Tokyo could be helpful in: a) raising the quality (and thus the value) of developments, and b) in providing more clarity about a government’s intentions towards station areas. It was felt that local municipalities in the Netherlands are often not clear about this, thus making it difficult for the private sector to invest. Accordingly, this could be interpreted as a lesson from Tokyo: governments should provide more clarity about where they intend to develop in order to stimulate the private sector to invest. Interestingly, and perhaps something that might have been highlighted by the way station area developments are carried out in Tokyo, was the general plea from the private sector for stricter regulations regarding building in the outlying areas.

In the second corridor focus group, i.e. the Zaancorridor focus group, the participants also seemed to focus predominantly on the functional profiling of station areas. Interesting, however, was that also attention was paid to transportation issues when drafting the corridor design. The first group developed functional profiles in conjunction with transport changes (e.g. modification of train service), while the second group paid attention to offering different transport products aimed at specific target groups in drafting their corridor design. In addition, considerable attention was also devoted to discussing the means necessary for realizing their corridor design. Interestingly, one group seemed to focus predominantly on the barriers which they felt would impede the implementation of its corridor design, while the other group focused on ways to make its design possible in the Randstad/Netherlands. In the plenary session the discussion seemed to revolve around three issues: whether assigning densities would be meaningful in the Randstad, how to trigger private sector investments, and whether there was sufficient support for corridor/station area developments in the Netherlands. Although the first issue was also discussed in the Stedenbaan focus group, it was different in the sense that whether to regulate densities was not at issue here, but rather how this should be carried out in the Netherlands. What could be considered a lesson here is that the participants seemed to have developed a more critical stance towards the current approach used for developing station areas in the Netherlands.

The second focused-group interview was considered a continuation of the Zaancorridor focus group, as here the focus was put on the development process of one particular station area belonging to the Zaancorridor. Interestingly, the approach followed in Tokyo was used here as a means to speed up the development process of the station area. A central role in the discussion seemed to play the type of role the regional government should have in developing station areas. There was considerable discussion about what its desired role should be, in particular when relating this to the development of one specific station area. In the end there seemed to be disagreement about whether this should be an active (i.e. regulating the coordination of functional programmes) or a passive role (facilitating developments by using the Taskforce Ruimtewinst). However, there seemed to be consensus, and thus can be considered a lesson learnt, that whatever role a regional government would eventually take it would have to carry out this role together with the private sector.