Station area developments in Tokyo and what the Randstad can learn from it
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This research has first focused on the roles that the public and private sector play in the planning and development of station areas in Tokyo, and on the planning instruments used to stimulate such developments. This made it possible to formulate in chapter 8 an answer to the first part of the central question underlying this research, i.e. “What are the driving forces behind the development of station areas in Tokyo…” Second, the extent to which similar roles and instruments could be applied in the Randstad/Netherlands was explored, which consequently made it possible to answer the second part of the central question underlying this research, i.e. “…and to what extent can similar forces be activated in the Randstad?” The aim of this final chapter is to give a reflection on the research and its outcomes from a theoretical and methodological point of view. The hypotheses formulated in chapter 1 will be answered and recommendations for future research will be given. Subsequently some (policy) recommendations will be given regarding the elements that might be needed to stimulate the development of station areas in the Randstad. The chapter ends with some final thoughts regarding the more fundamental changes that are needed to improve station area developments in the Randstad/Netherlands.
13.1 Theoretical and methodological reflection and future directions for research

Reflection on the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework within which this research was carried out consisted of three theories. They were about 1) the interaction between transport and land use, which was explored using the node-place model, 2) market-conscious planning, and 3) institutional transplantation and learning. The first theory is related to the object of planning. The second theory is related to the process of planning, and the third theory is about the possibilities and limitations of learning across different contexts.

1. Interaction between transport and land use

The first theory focuses on the interaction between transport and land use for which the node-place model (Bertolini, 1999) serves as a starting point. The node-place model is used to identify the position of a station in the urban and railway network as well as its development potential. In this research, however, the node-place model was used to find out which transport and land use factors were responsible for structuring station area developments in Tokyo and to what extent. In order to understand how to conduct the node-place model analysis to a number of station areas in Tokyo a previous study conducted in Switzerland that used this model served as a reference. When applying the model and presenting the first results from Tokyo to university colleagues in Tokyo, they were rather sceptical about its outcomes. In particular, the assumption of a provisional equilibrium between node and place variables, envisaged by a diagonal line in the model, was highly questioned. In addition, the relationship between some of the transport (node) and land use (place) factors was questioned. For example, the relationship between the number of train connections and the population living around stations was questioned. Similar criticism was voiced at a congress in Chicago where the results from the node-place model were first presented to an international audience. In response to these criticisms some adjustments were made to the model. For example, a correlation analysis was carried out to find out which individual combination of node and place criteria was most influential in structuring the urban development of station areas in Tokyo. In addition, combinations of node and place criteria were compared to find out whether this influence would get stronger. In this way an empirical basis was provided for the supposed relationship between particular node and place values.

When the node-place model was applied to the station areas in Tokyo the idea arose to further analyse the relative position of a station within the urban regional network by focusing on railway corridors. The additional analysis clearly showed that a railway corridor can be a logical unit for coordinating transport and land use developments at a regional level. This insight proved to be of crucial importance for the remainder of the research. Moreover, the railway corridor formed one of the core elements of the approach used for developing station areas in Tokyo that was later tested in the Dutch cases.
2. Market-conscious planning

The second theory was introduced at a later stage in this research as a result of the findings from field work that was conducted in Tokyo between 2005 and 2007. Whilst analysing station area development projects in Tokyo the close interplay between the public and the private sector was noted. Back in the Netherlands this resulted in looking for theories that dealt with the role of the government and private sector in land use planning. This search initially led to libertarianism, a political philosophy that holds individual liberty as the organizing principle of society. Libertarians strive for maximum individual freedom and advocate a minimization of government interference. Translated to land use planning this means that government interference in planning should be limited, allowing market actors themselves to decide how to use their own land and property. However, this theoretical focus did not appear to give an accurate description of the planning approach used in Tokyo/Japan. Discussions with planning experts and an extended analysis of the role of the government in coordinating land use changes in Japan made me realize that the previous image I had of Tokyo/Japan (i.e. that of a market-led planning system) needed to be revised. The government appeared to have a much stronger role in steering land use developments than expected from a system in which most of the planning and development is led by the private sector. Consequently, a different theory was found which more adequately described the planning approach characteristic of Tokyo/Japan. This theory was market-conscious planning (Hoetjes et al., 2006), which refers to government planning that recognizes the role of the market in coordinating land use changes.

The use of two different theories that related to the object and process of planning appeared to work quite well in this research. They were used in a combined way throughout the research and appeared to complement each other well, particularly regarding the selection of participants for the focus groups and focused-group interviews. Here the participants were categorized into private node and private place actors and public node and public place actors which proved to be a useful working method.

3. Institutional transplantation and learning

The third and last pillar of the theoretical framework basically dealt with the adoption of well-working planning approaches from one country to another. Here thus Japan versus the Netherlands. At first the concept of policy borrowing, or institutional transplantation (de Jong, 1999) was used to explore the extent to which instruments, policies, procedures and roles of actors in station area developments in Tokyo could be applied to similar projects in the Randstad. This concept provided a method regarding how the transplantation process was supposed to occur (i.e. the practical and administrative matters) and what was crucial for its success (i.e. matters of congruence). Under the influence of the revised structure of the research (i.e. a shift from describing and explaining station area developments towards exploring how to improve them) the necessity of using the concept of institutional transplantation
disappeared. Instead focus was placed on the actual institutional learning process itself as illustrated by the use of the experiential learning cycle and the specific research methodology related to it (see reflection on methodology).

**Reflection on the research methodology**

The incentive to carry out this research was based on a personal observation that in Tokyo transport and land use developments are well coordinated in station areas, while in the Randstad/Netherlands this is often not the case. This made me curious about the ‘secrets’ behind Tokyo’s approach for developing station areas. As a result I decided to start ‘my own’ PhD-research which was not part of a research programme at the university and was mainly sponsored by private companies and a non-profit organization. The initial idea was to carry out a comparative study between station area developments in Tokyo and the Randstad. Here a detailed analysis of the approach used in Tokyo would be carried out first, followed by an analysis of the approach used in the Randstad. Accordingly, lessons could be drawn from the approach used in Tokyo. However, during the course of the research this idea changed due to the influence of the private sponsors and supervisors involved. Instead of only focusing on drawing lessons from Tokyo, the idea was suggested to take the research a step further by also looking at how these lessons could be applied to station area development projects in the Randstad. This proved to be a fundamental change in the research as it resulted in a different design and structure of the research and the use of different research methodologies compared to those originally envisaged. The research frame changed: it was no longer decided to analyse the Randstad in a similar way to Tokyo. Rather than just being concerned with understanding how station area developments worked in the Randstad, as would be the case in a traditional comparative case study analysis, it was suggested to primarily focus on how, if at all, insights into Tokyo’s experience could lead to better station area development practices in the Randstad.

Consequently, the orientation of the research shifted from describing and explaining station area developments in the Randstad towards improving them; or in the words of van Aken (2004, 2005) from an ‘explanatory science’ type of research to a change oriented type of research which he labels ‘design science’. This was reflected in the structure of this research: the Tokyo case as described in chapters 4 to 7 was an example of explanatory science and mainly focused on getting a comprehensive overview of how station areas were being planned and developed in Tokyo. The transition to design sciences took place from chapter 8 to 11.

This shift in orientation also had major consequences for the way the research was approached. Rather than describing and explaining case studies in the Randstad and accordingly comparing them with Tokyo in terms of their similarities and differences, it was suggested to test the worth of the Tokyo approach in multiple case studies to find out whether it could be used to improve station area development practices in the Randstad. The underlying idea was that learning could only be generated through trying and probing potential lessons in action. It was decided that this would take
place through an iterative process in which hypotheses about possible improvements to station area development practices in the Netherlands would be tested and reflected upon in a number of case studies by the actors involved in rail transport and/or land use development related to station areas. This method is known as ‘experiential case study analysis’ (Straatemeier et al., 2010). The aim of this was to identify a number of key points from the Tokyo approach that could be applicable to the development of station areas in the Randstad.

In 2010 two focus groups and two focused-group interviews were organized in which the applicability of the Tokyo approach was tested and assessed in station area developments in the Randstad. Two case studies involved projects in the so-called North Wing of the Randstad, and another two case studies involved projects in the South Wing of the Randstad. In all but one of the focus groups (i.e. the Rotterdam Blaak case study) the private sector (i.e. other real estate developers besides NS Poort) did not participate. This was a pity as it would no doubt have fuelled the debate about the interplay between the public and private sector and the specific role/function of the public sector in station area developments. Consequently, discussions were rather unilateral as the private sector could not react to the suggestions put forward by the public sector. In addition, the absence of the private sector could to some extent be responsible for the fact that the discussions about possible measures for improving station area development practices in the Randstad remained somewhat underexposed.

Most of the public sector participants lacked market awareness and therefore had an insufficient understanding of the needs of the market. Another factor responsible for this was the time constraints of the focus groups and focused-group interviews, as some parts of the focus group programme required more time than was expected. In particular, the construction of the integral corridor design took considerably more time than was allocated for this. Consequently less time was left for the discussions at the end.

Before and after the focus group sessions questionnaires were handed out to the participants in which they were asked whether they believed something could be learnt/had been learnt from Tokyo. Prior to the sessions the majority of the participants believed that something could be learnt from Tokyo. After the focus group sessions this number increased slightly. However, hard conclusions could not be drawn from these results as the participants were not randomly chosen and consequently their opinions could be biased. Moreover, the internal validity of the results could be questioned as it is very difficult to prove to what extent the lessons identified by the participants were influenced by the Tokyo approach introduced during the sessions rather than other means. Theoretically this could have been explored by establishing an experimental group and a control group consisting of participants with similar affiliations. The former group would have been asked to make an integral corridor design inspired by the Tokyo approach. The latter group would have been asked to make a plan for a particular corridor without being told about the Tokyo approach. Accordingly, the similarities and differences between the two groups would have been compared. However, conducting such an experiment would have had practical constraints. Where
it seems plausible that in the case of students the composition of experiment and control group would be more or less similar, this is highly unlikely for the practitioners due to their more diverse backgrounds in for example work experience and education. Consequently, this would make it rather difficult to compare both groups. In addition, conducting such an experiment could lead to ethical constraints as participants would not be treated equally.

Individual interviews were held to complement the focus groups and thus compensate for the under-representation of the private sector and the possible self-selection of participants, and strengthen the internal validity by triangulation. The interviewees were selected, rather than randomly chosen, based on their involvement in the case studies. Furthermore, they had to represent either the node or the place function of a station area, and they had to be affiliated with the public or the private sector (see chapter 11). These interviews, which followed after the focus group sessions, demonstrated some rather surprising results. First it was interesting to see that the private sector seemed to be more aware of what was needed to improve station area development projects, while the public sector seemed to lack such a vision. Second it was rather striking to see that the private sector wanted a more focused land use control, as this was something one would expect from the public sector reflecting their quest for municipal control which is a typical feature of Dutch land use planning. Consequently, it would have been interesting to see whether a focus group session with only the private sector and a session with only the public sector would have led to different results compared to the joint sessions. In addition, one could question the value of making a distinction into ‘node’ and ‘place’ actors, as their opinions regarding the hypotheses hardly varied, while the differences in opinion between the public and private sector proved to be more valuable. It should be noted, however, that the sample of interviewees was rather small (i.e. thirteen interviews) and therefore one should be careful in drawing conclusions from the results. On the other hand, the outcomes of the interviews were in line with the findings from other research recently carried out in the Netherlands (Tan & Bertolini, 2010; Rutten et al., 2011). Consequently, it seems unlikely that new information would emerge from an additional round of interviews. In other words, theoretical saturation seems to have occurred (Bryman, 2008).

This research was an example of comparative research in which station area development practices in Tokyo were described and explained with the aim of providing learning experiences for the Randstad. This made the research rather one-sided. Although there is nothing wrong with this, it would have been more useful for Tokyo if the research had also considered the potential lessons that Tokyo could learn from the Randstad. However, it would have been difficult to conduct focus group sessions in Tokyo due to language and cultural barriers. Typically, Japanese people are rather modest in group situations as it is custom to not be overtly expressive (Hofstede & Soeters, 2000). Obviously this would have made the research rather complicated.
Hypotheses

The hypotheses regarding station area developments were generated from the three theories outlined at the start of this chapter. They were then empirically examined. They were as follows:

1. Interaction between transport and land use

The node-place model is a useful tool for deliberating on investment and policy decisions regarding the development of station areas.

This hypothesis seems to be partially confirmed. The node-place model cannot predict nor advise developments, but it does seem to be useful for gaining a better understanding of development dynamics of station areas. As the node-place model has demonstrated in Tokyo, land use and transport factors are not the only factors that influence investment and policy decisions. Other factors that are not included in the model (i.e. external factors) play a role such as the availability of land or supportive governmental policies. However, without the node-place model the relative position of a station area on different levels, i.e. the urban regional network (as discussed in chapter 5) and the corridor (as discussed in chapter 6), would not have been known. Accordingly, this would have made it more difficult to compare the potential and actual development outcomes between station areas. The relevance of this way of thinking was that it helped the participants in both focus groups to plan transport and land use developments in a more coherent way. This was especially the case for the functional programming of station areas (see chapter 9).

2. Market-conscious planning

Market-conscious planning in combination with safeguards of related public interests can lead to more integrated station area developments in the Randstad/Netherlands.

This hypothesis seems to be confirmed. In Tokyo land use planning is mainly concerned with facilitating and conditioning markets as regulations are more flexible and can be deviated from under certain conditions. The case studies based in Tokyo have demonstrated that this can be an effective way of using market forces to implement public policies. Tokyo seems to have found a working balance between the usage of market conscious tools and the usage of command and control tools. This has enabled government planners to successfully explore synergies between public and private sector goals. The authoritative nature of Dutch planning with a strong quest for municipal control can, at least in part, be held responsible for the weak efficiency and effectiveness of securing public planning goals in the case of current station area development practices. However, this has not always been the case. Before the 1990s such a system proved to work quite well, as the dominant position of municipalities in the land market allowed them to impose conditions on a developer and consequently steer developments with a greater level of control, than they would have been able to do without this land ownership. Since the 1990s, however, municipalities started to lose this dominant position and consequently came to rely on the private sector for
realizing their public planning goals. This has made the use of strong command-and-control tools an authoritative planning approach has become more difficult and less attractive in the Netherlands.

3. Institutional transplantation and learning

The Randstad/Netherlands can benefit from transplanting and learning from experiences in Tokyo/Japan regarding its development of station areas.

This hypothesis seems to be confirmed. Various aspects were identified by the participants in the Randstad focus groups and further emphasized in the individual interviews. Ideally, these aspects should be used in pilot experiments as one can only fully explore their potential when trying and probing them in action. Multiple pilot experiments are needed in order to be able to understand if a certain aspect can actually lead to the improvement of station area development practices in the Randstad. Consequently, one cannot categorically conclude that something can be learnt from the Tokyo approach to station area developments based on the outcomes of the focus groups and interviews alone. For this further research is required. What can be concluded, however, is that Tokyo at least offers some potential elements from which the Randstad might be able to learn.

The shift in orientation from describing and explaining station area developments towards exploring how to improve them not only had an impact on the outline and structure of the research, but also on the way the hypotheses were used. The original hypotheses, as outlined above, were rather general as they were initially only orientated towards providing descriptions and explanations. When this orientation changed towards identifying potential solutions for station area development practices in the Randstad, these hypotheses were no longer considered satisfactory. A further refinement was needed in order to assess the potential of the Tokyo approach for the development of station areas in the Randstad. This was done in two steps. First, a number of focus groups, focused-group interviews and surveys were organized in which discussions were held about the potential of using the Tokyo approach for station area development practices in the Randstad. Based on these discussions a number of hypotheses were constructed which focused on incentives and barriers for station area developments in the Randstad. These refined hypotheses formed the core of the subsequent individual interviews that were held. The aim of these interviews was not to verify whether the hypotheses were true or not, but rather to come up with a further refined version of the hypotheses. These were presented in chapter 12 in the form of six lessons. In addition to this, further elements that were not addressed by the participants were reflected upon by the researcher in the form of observations.
Chapter 13 - Reflections and recommendations

Research agenda
This research was oriented towards finding out whether the approach followed in Tokyo for developing station areas could work in the Randstad, and if so why and if not why not. This was tested by using the experiential learning circle of Kolb and Fry (1975). The first recommendation for further research is related to the application of this learning cycle. The Tokyo approach was tested in a series of focus groups and focused-group interviews. The findings of which highlighted a number of aspects from the Tokyo approach that could be used to improve the development of station areas in the Randstad (see chapter 12, paragraph 1). However, these aspects were not tested in practice. In order to validate whether these aspects would actually improve the development of station areas in the Randstad they must be tested in practice. Thus future research should focus on testing these aspects in practice for instance in pilot projects, and subsequently reflecting on the results. Only in this way can one determine whether something can actually be learnt from Tokyo. In addition, the observations made by the researcher (see chapter 12.2) should be tested through new rounds of focus groups and focused-group interviews in order to explore and assess their potential use in the Randstad.

The second recommendation is related to the internal validity of the research findings. In the focus groups, focused-group interviews and individual interviews the participants assessed potential aspects of the Tokyo approach that could be used in station area development projects in the Randstad. However, it is very difficult to prove the extent to which these aspects were generated from the Tokyo approach itself. It could be the case that these ideas had already been considered by the participants prior to the focus groups and focus group interviews, and that these sessions merely served as a confirmation of these ideas. Consequently, in future research more attention should be paid to the organization of the focus groups. For example, instead of working with two groups that are required to do the same tasks, as was the case in the Stedenbaan and Zaancorridor focus group, one should work with an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group should be introduced to the Tokyo approach and subsequently asked to make an integral corridor design and an implementation strategy. The control group should be asked to do the same without being informed about the Tokyo approach. Following this both corridor designs and their related implementation strategies should be compared. The extent to which the designs differ would indicate the level of influence of the Tokyo approach. Involving the control group in the comparative reflection would overcome the ethical concerns regarding the unequal treatment of the participants.

A third and final aspect relates to the consistency of the focus groups. In this research it was chosen to evenly distribute public and private transport and land use actors among the focus groups. It was assumed that this would generate fruitful discussions among the members. However, it would also be interesting to explore the extent to which the results (i.e. the aspects identified as having potential for the Randstad) would change if participants with a similar affiliation were put in one group. Thus by putting for instance transport actors in one group and land use actors in another group. Perhaps
it would be even more interesting to separate the private sector participants from the public sector participants; as the results from the individual interviews demonstrated (see chapter 11) that the opinions between the public and private sector varied considerably, while the further distinction between the transport and land use actors seemed to matter less as their opinions were similar. Consequently, a separate public and private sector group might lead to some interesting results.

13.2 Recommendations

In the previous chapter the participants identified aspects in the development of station areas that they considered to be lacking in the Randstad/Netherlands. The recommendations made in this final paragraph are based on that chapter and assume that the development of station areas is a desired/agreed policy goal. As the research agenda mentioned in the previous paragraph has already pointed out, the findings from the focus groups and focused-group interviews lacked validity, i.e. they were not tested in practice, as they were set in a largely simulated environment. In other words, only three out of the four steps encompassing the experiential learning cycle of Kolb and Fry (1975) were used (see chapter 2), which made it impossible to fully determine whether something could actually be learnt from the Tokyo approach. The recommendations given below should thus be regarded as elements that should be tested in pilot experiments in order to verify if and how they can lead to the eventual adaptation of existing station area development practices in the Randstad/Netherlands. This is the fourth and final step in the experiential learning cycle.

### Recommendation 1  Prioritize the development of station areas

The participants concluded that the Randstad lacked scarcity (too many alternative development locations available). Having scarcity was considered an important driving force missing in the Dutch context for stimulating station area developments. Without some form of scarcity it is very difficult to direct development towards stations. However, as Tokyo has demonstrated, such scarcity can be ‘artificially’ created by assigning higher densities to station areas and consequently lower densities to other areas. This has enabled the prefectural government to direct developments to station areas. It would be interesting to explore how in the present situation in the Randstad/Netherlands in which many municipalities are having too many residential and office plans, developments around station areas could be prioritized.
**Recommendation 2**  
*Give station areas a flexible planning treatment*

Unlike Tokyo/Japan station areas lack preferential treatment in the Randstad/Netherlands. As the case studies in chapter 7 have demonstrated, a more flexible application of land use regulations around station areas in Tokyo has resulted in larger building volumes and a larger variety of land uses around station areas. In the Randstad/Netherlands land use regulations are rather detailed and rigid compared to Japan. It would be interesting to explore how these land use regulations and other regulations could be made more flexible in order to help improve the development of station areas.

**Recommendation 3**  
*Develop planning instruments for triggering private sector investments*

There is a lack of market-conscious planning tools in the Randstad/Netherlands. Municipalities seem to lack the ability to trigger private sector investments which might be related to the way that they have been involved in the land market in the past. Their dominant position in the land market enabled municipalities to successfully realize their public planning goals. Consequently, market-conscious planning tools were not needed. However, since the 1990s this has changed due to the decreasing power of the municipalities and the increasing power of property developers in the land market. Consequently, municipalities have come to rely more on the private sector for realizing their public planning goals. The recent financial and economic crisis has exacerbated this problem. As Tokyo has demonstrated this might require a different way of regulating developments. Instead of mainly focusing on inducing markets, as is the case in the Netherlands, regulations in Tokyo are mainly concerned with facilitating and conditioning markets. It would be interesting to further explore how such a market-conscious approach to planning could be introduced in the Dutch planning system. This would mean a change in the government’s role in land use control. However, this would not necessarily mean that the government’s role would be weaker as it would still be able to influence developments through the use of conditions. In turn, market-conscious planning would allow property developers to play a greater role in planning developments. For instance, as the Osaki station area development has illustrated (see paragraph 7.5), this could even mean that detailed urban plans are drafted by property developers instead of local governments.
Recommendation 4  Think and act corridor wise

In Tokyo, but also in other cities of Japan, private railway operators are used to ‘thinking’ and ‘acting’ in railway corridors. Not only do they make long term plans (i.e. area strategies) involving one or more corridors, but their business activities are also carefully aligned along railway corridors in order to generate bi-directional travel flows and maximize fare revenues. As chapters 4 and 8 have demonstrated the railway context in the Netherlands differs considerably from that in Japan. The most striking difference is that the railway infrastructure is owned and operated by the same organization, while in the Netherlands this is separated. In addition, Japanese railway operators are awarded with a life-time concession, while in the Netherlands railway operators are granted a temporary concession. In particular, the latter has encouraged private railway operators to ‘think and act’ in corridors.

In the Netherlands NS is not solely responsible for drafting and implementing corridor strategies. This is, besides the contextual differences mentioned earlier, also because its landownership is not equally distributed along the corridor. Along some stations it has a relatively strong position and is thus able to exert considerable influence on the development of a station area. In the cases where its landownership is limited its influence is limited as well, unless of course it wants to increase its influence and consequently decides to acquire additional land. There are, however, financial and juridical limits to this. In other words, in the Randstad, unlike in Tokyo, no single actor can plan and develop a corridor strategy alone. Therefore, coordination with multiple actors is necessary. The challenge would therefore be to explore how the various goals of the actors involved could be aligned into one integral corridor design, and to explore how this design could be realized.

Recommendation 5  Give provinces a guiding role in the regional coordination of transport and land use developments

Most of the participants in the focus groups and individual interviews seemed to be aware of the importance of transport -land use coordination. There seemed to be, however, less of a consensus about how this should be done. The discussion mainly focused on the extent to which this should be controlled. The corridor studies carried out in chapter 6 demonstrated that in Tokyo the railway corridor seemed to be a logical unit for coordinating transport and land use developments at the regional level. For the Randstad this would imply that either the city-region serving the sub-regional level or the province serving the regional level would become involved. Since city-regions are no longer authorized to carry out spatial planning tasks, there is basically only one government tier left to do this, i.e. the province. As an equal distribution of functional programmes at the regional level is considered a provincial interest, provinces should at least provide a platform for organizing this coordination. Provinces should get a more guiding role in the coordination of transport and land use developments for two reasons: the first reason is that municipalities appear not (yet) to be able to think
regionally and act locally. Consequently, municipalities do not take into account their neighbours’ plans when planning and developing station areas, thereby risking possible destructive competition between them. The second reason is that provincial governments are required to make a structural vision. This plan seems to be an appropriate platform to launch a corridor strategy, as in the case where a municipality does not act in compliance with a corridor strategy, the provincial ordinance would provide a legal basis for issuing a directive. However, this is a rather politically sensitive issue in the Netherlands, as the use of such powers does not suit a consensus society like the Netherlands. Therefore further research is needed to understand how a more guiding role of the province should be operationalized.

13.3 Final thoughts

In addition to the recommendations mentioned above, the approach followed in Tokyo for developing station areas contains some aspects that require more fundamental changes to the way planning is perceived and carried out in the Randstad/Netherlands. These are presented below.

The first aspect to consider concerns the prominent role end users (i.e. passengers, office users, residents) are playing in determining the functional programmes in and around station areas. As chapter 6 has illustrated, private railway companies in Tokyo are well aware of the characteristics of the people living along their railway lines. For instance, Tokyu Corporation knows the average consumption expenditure, how many people are subscribed to the internet and what the average taxable income is for the people living along its railway lines. This has enabled it to develop tailor-made functional programmes for its station areas. NS knows how much its clients spend within a station, but lack detailed knowledge regarding the people that live within the catchment area of its stations. Furthermore, railway operators in Tokyo/Japan seem to be well aware of the demographic trends and life and/or work styles of people living within their railway territories. For instance, the ageing population and falling birth-rate in Japan has urged many private railway companies to initiate businesses to meet these trends, such as senior citizen residences and care services. These businesses are planned well ahead of the population changes. In the Randstad/Netherlands government planners seem to be less responsive to such demographic and life style/work style changes and their consequences for certain markets. This can be illustrated by, for example, the current mismatch between office supply and demand.

A second aspect and closely related to the previous one is that governments seem to lack strategic planning capacities in the Randstad/Netherlands. All too often plans are produced that contain a long term vision, but are not well structured and thoughtfully prepared around the preferences/conditions brought forward by citizens and societal groups. As a result, external opportunities (e.g. the population group aged 65 years
and over is a group with time and generally also money) and threats (e.g. decline of population will affect the support for certain facilities) are missed. In addition, long-term plans are not very sustainable in the Randstad/Netherlands given the short timeframe in which they are revised or abolished. For instance, in 2008 the policy document 'Randstad 2040', which contained a long-term vision for the Randstad, was presented with a lot of fuss. However, it was replaced only three years later. Conversely, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government launched a long-term vision for Tokyo in 2000 which is at present still the prevailing vision. Interestingly, this vision has set out not only a number of goals/actions that need to be fulfilled by the year 2015, but also how (i.e. through which financial means) these are supposed to be realized.

Private railway operators in Tokyo work in a similar fashion. For example, to reduce the congestion on some of their railway sections, Tokyu Corporation has made a plan to increase its number of railway carriages. This plan clearly specifies in what year which amount of cars should be added and the costs associated with this.

A third and final aspect relates to the diversification strategies used by private railway operators in Tokyo/Japan. As chapter 4 and 6 have illustrated generating synergy between transport, retail and real estate activities forms the core of a private railway operator's business strategy. This has enabled private operators to expand their profit margins and generate stable ridership. As a result today most of their revenues stem from their side-businesses, in particular their retail businesses. NS does not have such a strong business diversification as the majority of its revenues still come from its transportation activities. However, the majority of its profits stem from its real estate and retail activities (see chapter 8). If NS wants to further expand its profit margins and at the same time generate stable ridership it should give the utilization of synergies between its transport, real estate and retail activities a more central place in its business strategy. This would mean that it should become more actively involved in side-businesses. As Vaessens (2004) has already demonstrated, such an integral focus could be rather beneficial for NS. This does not mean that NS at present is underperforming, but rather that it could perform so much better!