

## Discontinuous Regions: High-Speed Rail and the Limits of Traditional Governance

Paper 13-0408 | 661 Intercity Passenger Rail Issues | #22

### Research Framework

This paper is part of a master's thesis investigating the relationship between local policy and the spatial implications of HSR.

The decision to invest in HSR is a mostly top-down decision from **upper levels of government** (National + EU) predicated on the belief that HSR will enable economic integration without environmental degradation

Whether or not the intended form materializes depends to some extent on **Local Government Policy**, which is in turn a function of:

Local **expectations and perceptions** of likely benefit and the resulting incentives for inter-governmental coordination

The **tools** available for coordination of land use and transportation policy

- **Prospective:** Planned HSR  
Method: Interviews (Jan 2012)
- **Retrospective:** Current Rail-Commuter Cities  
Method: Field Work (Oct 2012)

- **Planning System:** beyond HSR  
Method: Interviews & Document Research (Oct-Nov 2012)

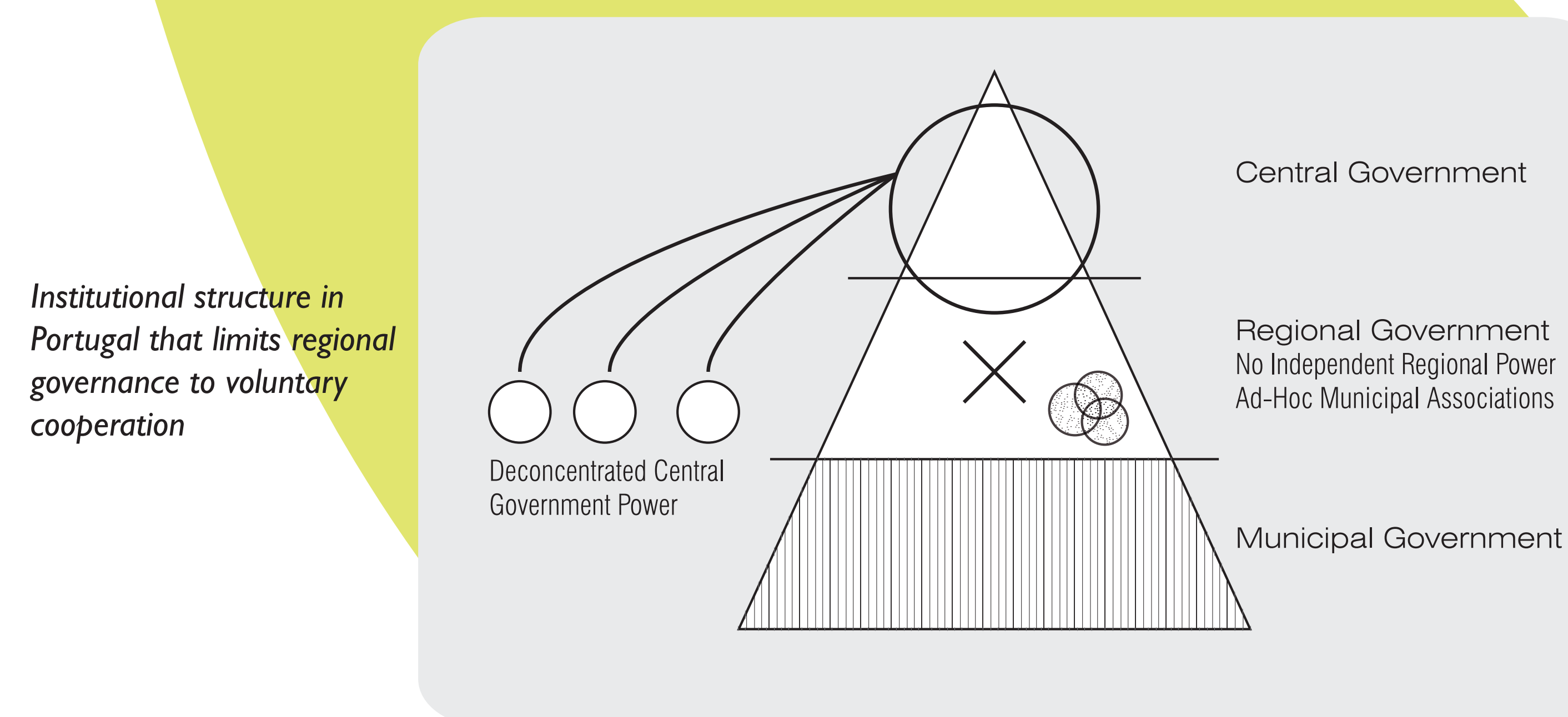
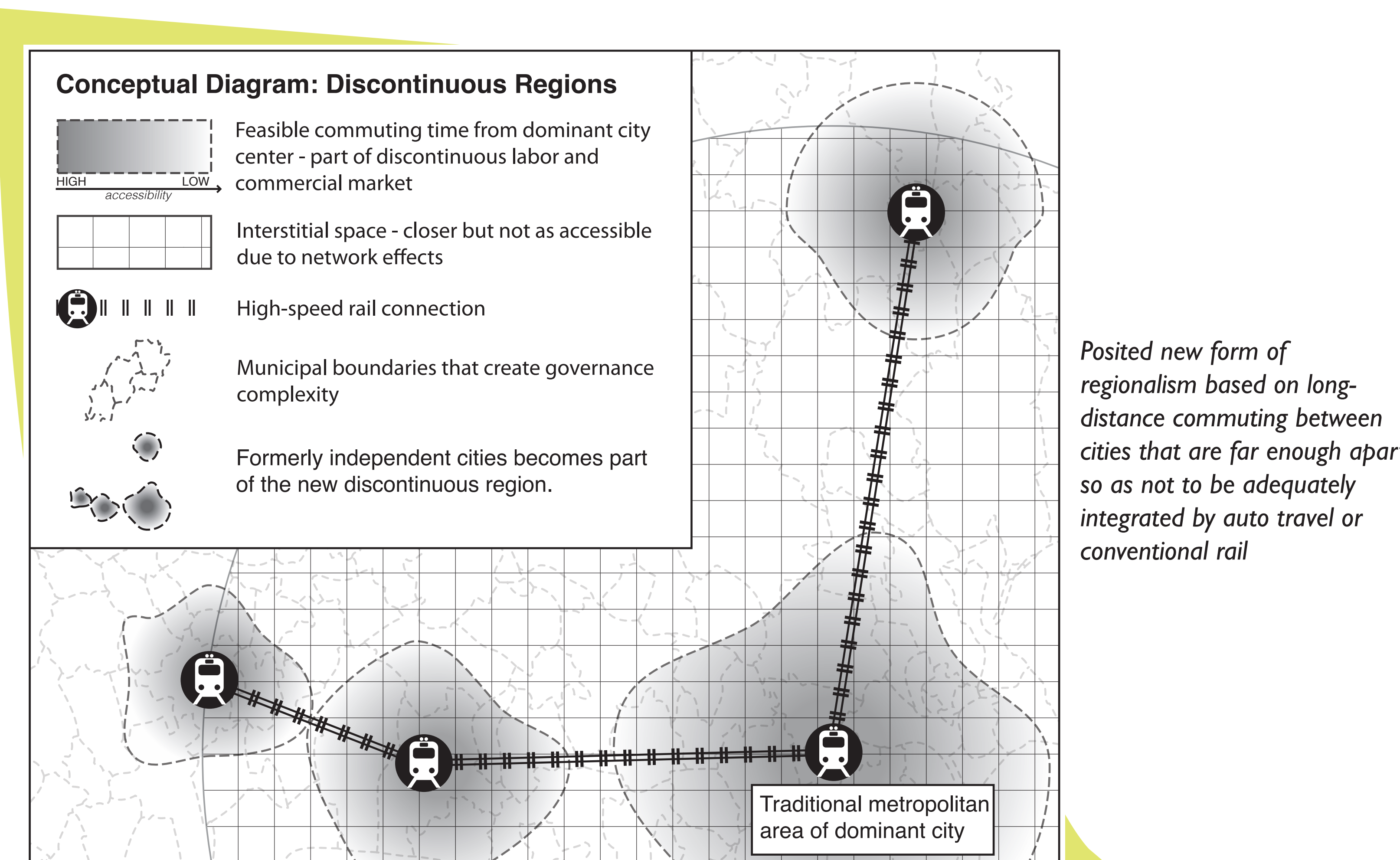
### Research Questions and Methodology

Given the relationship between transportation and metropolitan form, what implications might HSR implementation in Portugal have for:

- Independent cities brought within viable commuting time of Lisbon?
- Governance relationships between newly connected cities?

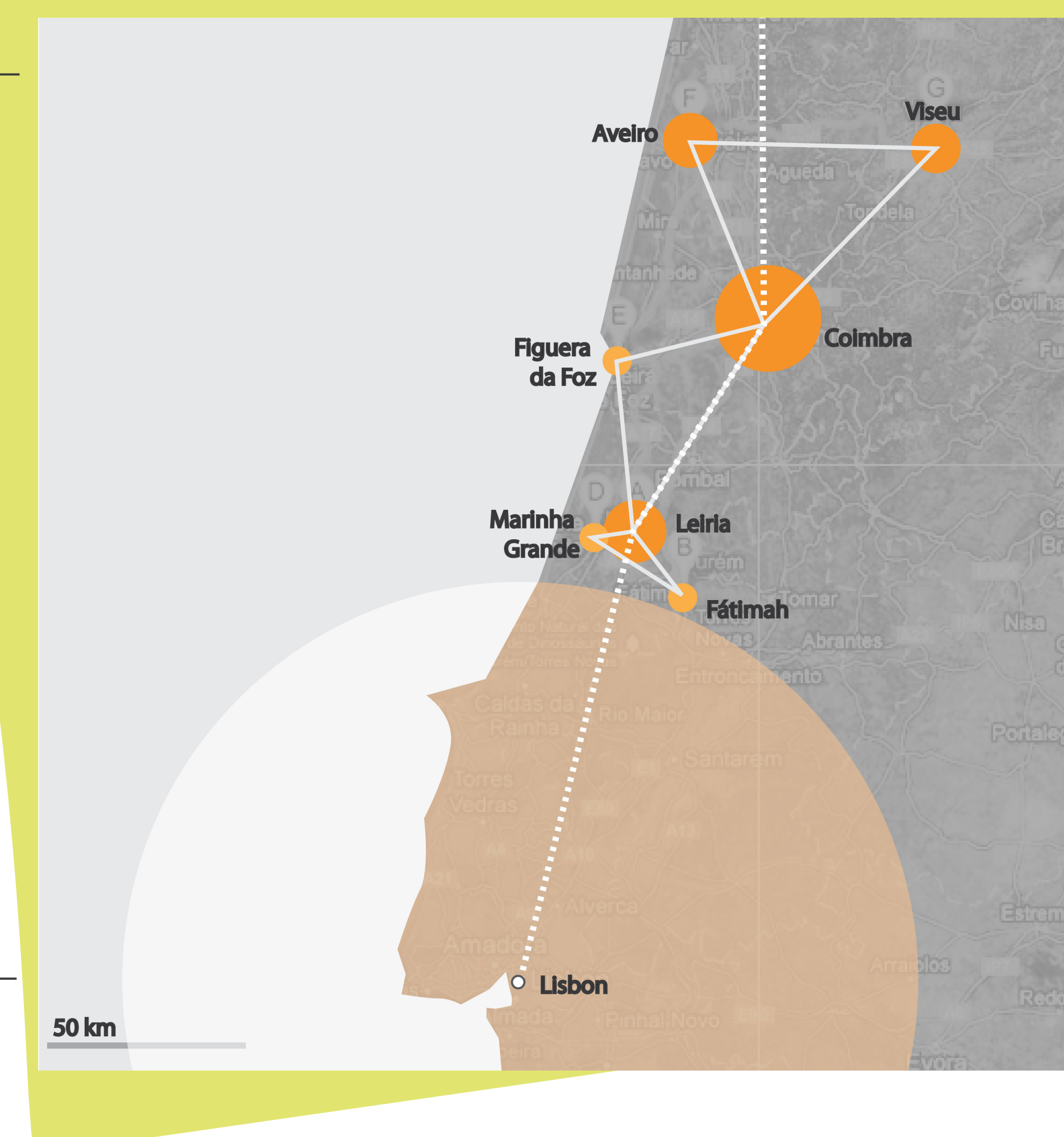
**Case Studies:** **Évora, Leiria, and Coimbra**, cities along proposed Portuguese HSR alignments

**Method:** Interviews with national and local officials, conducted in January 2012



Rethinking inter-municipal cooperation within the Centro Region...

...because HSR can alter relationships with Lisbon and therefore reshape the competitive landscape of the region



### Conceptual Frameworks

**Discontinuous Regions:** HSR may contribute to the spatial reorganization of functional relationships, potentially creating single labor and commercial markets that span large distances but do not include all intermediate areas.

**The Regionalism Argument:** Demands for higher-scale decision making (e.g. MPOs) are often born of the need for more rational land use and mobility planning at a scale that matches expanding daily activity zones.

**Governance and Geography:** Nevertheless, true regional government is less common than more fluid intergovernmental relationships. Since at least the 1990s, there has been a theoretical and practical shift "away from a 'classical,' territory-based, hierarchical structure (i.e., 'government') and towards more fluid, de-territorialised, network-based, multi-actor structures (i.e., 'governance')" [1].

**Expected Benefits and Exogenous Catalysts for Cooperation:** Governments will only cooperate if expected benefits outweigh transaction costs and institutional barriers. External triggers, such as HSR, could change the competitive landscape and provide enough of an incentive to reconsider complementarity between governments.

### Findings

HSR can serve as a catalyst for governments to rethink regional identity, intergovernmental relationships, and competitive positioning. The prospect of HSR helps create a more regional identity and raises the profile of potential intra-regional complementarity.

1) **Inter-scalar collaborative planning:** the simultaneously local and large-scale relevance of HSR creates conditions in which local and national planning entities choose to partner in ongoing planning efforts. The Coimbra Urbanization Plan for the future HSR station-area is governed by a formal cooperative protocol between REFER (national infrastructure manager) and the municipality. There are also spillover effects beyond HSR; despite suspension of the HSR project in Portugal, planning for the new station and real estate projects continue.

2) **New models of commuting:** Because of cost, the higher levels of inter-city accessibility offered by HSR are not uniformly relevant to all but rather are expected to cater to a few particular demographics, namely skilled business, education, and health professionals. Public officials within both Évora and Coimbra anticipate new models of commuting in which HSR enables multi-destination and part-of-the-week commuting patterns.

3) **Incentive to rethink inter-municipal regional cooperation:** Increase accessibility from HSR can be a double-edged sword. Both Leiria and Coimbra officials cited the risk of losing overnight tourism and business stays because of shorter travel times to Lisbon. The changing competitive landscape may, according to these officials, incentivize a shift from competitive inter-municipal relationships to more cooperative planning within the Centro Region.

### Acknowledgments

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Thank you interviewees:

- (1) Arq. José Manuel Pereira, Director of Land Use Planning and Management and Dr. Nuno Camelo, City of Évora, January 10, 2012;
- (2) Isabel Lopes, Eduardo Pires, and Daniel Ferreira, January 10, 2012;
- (3) Rafael António Robalo Ribeiro de Azevedo, REFER, Lisbon, January 13, 2012;
- (4) Lopes, Isabel Mendes, REFER, January 2012;
- (5) José Vilela, Director; António José Cardoso, Municipal Director for the Land Use Management; Helena Terêncio, and Fernando Rebelo, City of Coimbra, January 13, 2012;
- (6) Dra. Sandra Cadima, head of the Planning, Management and Land Strategy Division; Maria João C.G. Neto de Vasconcelos, Técnica Superior; DPGU, DIPOET, City of Leiria, January 13, 2012.
- (7) Luis Santos and Ricardo Grade, SMTUC, Coimbra, November 2, 2012.

Reference: [1] Rayle, L. and Zegras, C. The emergence of inter-municipal collaboration: Evidence from metropolitan planning in Portugal. European Planning Studies, accepted 18 July 2011, forthcoming.