

Communities of Indian origin in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area – entrepreneurial initiatives and socially creative strategies in the city

Jorge Malheiros*

Abstract This article aims to interpret the entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrants of Indian origin settled in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) as factors of change in the city's dynamics, particularly in relation to the revitalisation of run-down commercial areas, the introduction of new products and new commercial strategies, the potential impacts for the modification of some aspects of the formal regulatory systems, the introduction of new features to the urban landscape and the development of commercial ties with foreign countries.

In addition to the description of some basic features of the Indian migrant groups and also of the commercial structures associated with them, an analysis of the creative and innovative features that may be incorporated into the afore-mentioned entrepreneurial initiatives is also provided. In order to undertake this analysis, the analytical framework of Socially Creative Strategies (SCSs) inspired by the work of researchers such as Frank Moulaert, is used as a reference tool.

The conclusion reached by the empirical analysis shows that the majority of the entrepreneurial initiatives developed by businesspeople of Indian origin in the LMA incorporate some innovative and creative features and contribute in diverse and visible ways to the changing dynamics of some urban spaces, but cannot be fully interpreted as Socially Creative Strategies.

Keywords Indian ethnic entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial initiatives, Socially Creative Strategies, social innovation, urban dynamics.

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Introduction

This text seeks to analyse the commercial initiatives of citizens of Indian origin resident in Lisbon, as contributors to the dynamics of the city, or, more specifically, as contributors to the processes of social innovation underway in the city, viewed as a space of cultural and ethnic diversity.

As well as interpreting the motives that form the basis of the emergence of the entrepreneurial initiatives of the above-mentioned citizens, typifying their branches of activity and describing their economic strategies, it is also interesting to verify in what way their activities introduce innovative features into the city, considering three distinct domains: i) the dynamism and revival of run-down areas, both in economic terms and in terms of the creation of a new spatial symbolism; ii) the supply of new products and services associated with the implementation of new market practices and iii) the opening up of new long-distance commercial relationships, interpreted as a component of the secondary internationalisation of the city. Complementary to these domains, the entrepreneurial activities of these citizens contribute, albeit in an indirect way, to the introduction of new cultural practices and also to the revision of some of the regulatory mechanisms for economic activities, in terms of working hours and commercial urbanism, among others.

In order to respond to the central question of this article – what are the contributions of immigrants of Indian origin to the dynamics and the introduction of social innovations in the city of Lisbon –, we seek to interpret the entrepreneurial initiatives under analysis in relation to the criteria associated with Socially Creative Strategies. The use of this interpretative framework seeks to, on the one hand, facilitate the examination of the initiatives with a focus on the identification of dimensions of creativity, and, on the other, contribute to identifying their impacts on urban dynamics, in terms of the incorporation of innovative features.

1. Immigrant entrepreneurship and innovation in destination cities – towards an interpretative framework

Socially Creative Strategies and the entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrants

Traditionally, studies on immigrant entrepreneurship were centred on the identification of the motives that justified the economic initiatives, and, also, on the possible specificity of strategies of economic insertion. From the work of Light (1972) and Bonacich (1973) on the characteristics of the commercial strategies of minority ethnic groups and the role of immigrants as minority intermediaries to the model of “mixed embeddedness” proposed by Kloosterman and Rath (2001), drawing attention to the relevance of the institutional context of the destination spaces in the process of the development of entrepreneurial initiatives by immigrants, several theoretical explanations for this process have been proposed. To summarise, they tend to either value the role of cultural heritage and ethnic resources (the professional experience of the group itself, financial capital, labour, and so on – for example, Light and Gold (2000)) in the construction of an ethnic economy in the destination (the so-called ethnic enclave, that is, the spatial concentration of economic units belonging to immigrants), or they give more attention to the structure of opportunities and constraints – above all of an economic nature – felt by immigrants in their areas of settlement. Waldinger (1989) and Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward (1990) developed the first structured theories of integration with an intrinsic dimension for the immigrant ‘entrepreneurial’ community (ethnic resources) and a component referring to the opportunity structure in the destination society. More recently, authors such as Oliveira (2004) sought to incorporate a dimension corresponding to the individual resources of each immigrant entrepreneur into the explanatory framework.

Throughout the last ten years, apart from this focus on entrepreneurial initiatives, on their genesis and their characteristics, various studies have been undertaken (Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath, 1999; Santokhi, 2002; Mapril, 2002) that emphasise the contribution of these immigrant entrepreneurial initiatives, above all in the commercial domain, to the dynamics of transformation of the socio-geographic contexts in which they are inserted, particularly the destination cities. Within this framework, entrepreneurship (the act of introducing something new, of innovating) is valued over business creation (businesses, their formation and their activities) and an approach is developed combining the context of socio-spatial insertion with the features and strategies of immigrant businesses, aiming to shed light on reciprocal dynamics.

In this article, we seek to take as a reference the principles inherent in this latter perspective, which leads us to use the interpretative framework of Socially Creative Strategies (SCSs), based on the works of Frank Moulaert and his co-authors

on questions of social innovation and creativity (Moulaert and Hamdouch, 2006; Moulaert, DeMuro, Hamdouch and Cameron, 2006). In addition, the afore-mentioned analytical framework also incorporates the adaptations that have been proposed by Portuguese researchers (André and Malheiros, 2001; André and Abreu, 2006) with the goal of adjusting it to the Portuguese empirical context. Used as a basis for the interpretation and analysis of the initiatives of entrepreneurs of Indian origin in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), the main features of the SCSs are, on the one hand, the innovative content (the introduction of something new and different to what has traditionally been undertaken and which will be socially incorporated and accepted), and on the other, the explicit or implicit intention to contribute to combating exclusion and increasing social opportunities for vulnerable groups. The fact that “the ‘weak’ actors” (individual immigrant entrepreneurs, small businesses...) are the main protagonists of these actions, associated with the relevance of social capital, juxtaposing, in a certain way, the role of economic capital itself, is another fundamental element in interpreting the actions as Socially Creative Strategies (see Table 1).

In a more explicit and concrete form, in relation to economic initiatives, NGOs, immigrant associations and immigrants themselves implement ‘alternative’ actions that contribute to:

- i) employment growth and enhancing immigrants’ employability;
- ii) creating ‘new’ jobs;
- iii) setting up new types of businesses or ‘traditional’ businesses with new characteristics (for example, shops with longer opening hours, the adjustment of the characteristics of the products to the demands of consumers in the destinations);
- iv) the dynamism and the potential development of locations, both in the origin and the destination.

**Table 1 – Basic Criteria to identify Socially Creative Strategies (SCS) –
– Framework adapted to the economic initiatives of immigrants**

1. Nature of the Initiatives

- Innovative response to situations of vulnerability/exclusion in the domain of employment or of access to independent economic activities;
- The relevance of principles such as 'économie solidaire' (certain economic activities that have the objective of satisfying the needs of disadvantaged communities, which are not assured by liberal or neo-liberal strategies), cooperation over competition; strengthening the competences of the actors;
- The relevance of social capital as a key resource.

2. Structure of opportunities and limitations

- Conjuncture of economic crises (significant effects on immigrant employment);
- Changes in consumer preferences (taking advantage of and/or promoting);
- Principles and values of the receiving society (levels of discrimination, formal rights and recognition of foreigners);
- Resources 'supplied' by the receiving society (microcredit, technical orientation in the process of business creation, professional training, etc.);
- Individual limitations in the response to the demands of the receiving society (inadequacy/inexistence of competences; social capital deficits).

3. Agents involved

- NGOs, foundations and immigrant associations – third sector...;
- Incorporation of individuals (immigrants in need or potentially in need) into the products/actions;
- Interaction between agents (local, national and transnational links).

4. The nature of the 'places'

- Plasticity, corresponding to the capacity that some bodies have to alter their form without losing the basic elements of coherence and unity (Lambert and Rezsóhazy, 2004). In order for a place to be able to promote diversity and stimulate creativity it has to have a reasonable flexibility and, simultaneously, to be sufficiently resilient to be able to change, while at the same time maintaining cohesion and identity;
- Local embeddedness (involvement/participation of the local communities);
- Non-hegemonic globalisation (involving 'weak' actors, with less formalised strategies and with flows of people assuming a greater role as protagonists than the financial or commercial sector, questioning traditional spatial hierarchies...).

Immigrant entrepreneurship – contributions to dynamism and innovation in the city

As mentioned above, the perspective of innovation highlighted in this article refers to social processes involving weak actors, aiming to combat exclusion and capable of transforming a new product, a new form of organisation or new values and new principles into something socially recognised and appropriated, that satisfies certain social needs. Therefore innovation loses its eminently hierarchical² and top-down character, as it is necessary to recognise that innovative activities are not restricted to formal Research and Development, but also cover the daily activities of many unknown individuals (Alter, 2000). From this perspective, and again re-focusing the discussion around the economic dimension, innovative processes are present as much in the ideas and the products of Bill Gates and of Microsoft and in the actions of Colonel Sanders when he created and expanded the Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant chain, as they are in the activities of Chinese and Indian immigrants who disseminate and renew tastes in food.

Taking as a reference the definition presented by Bassand *et al.* (1986: 51), innovation corresponds to the “re-creation, the launching of a new idea and, possibly, its propagation and dissemination” (...) “Through the mobilisation of active forces, innovation is characterised by its capacity to adjust to these forces with the intention of developing concrete actions with a specific social impact; therefore, innovation intersects with social dynamism”. Following from this notion, we can admit that *social innovation* corresponds, in a broad sense, to the emergence and diffusion of new values and cultural and social practices that contribute to - at least potentially - modifying power relations, and which are progressively adopted by individuals and institutions. After a period of marginality and reduced social acceptance due to non-conformity with the dominant norms and values, the process of diffusion of innovation is set in motion and the new practices and values are generalised and substitute (or complement) those already in existence. If they become the norm, especially among local organisations and authorities, they become institutionalised, which means the loss of their original innovative content (Bassand *et al.*, 1986). The cycle of innovation is therefore complete, opening up space for more innovation and change, but anchored in different bases.

Although they do not adopt a perspective centred on innovation, Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath (1999: 252) highlight five processes of transformation of destination cities associated with the presence of immigrant entrepreneurs: i) the revitalisation of run-down and commercially stagnant areas, ii) the supply of new products and new market strategies, iii) the emergence of new forms of social cohesion, iv) the opening up of new commercial links with distant areas and v) the contribution to the alteration of formal regulatory systems. If we take into

consideration the visible modifications of the (physical) space of the city, we can also add further processes - the reconstruction of the public space and the introduction of new symbolic elements in the city.

These processes correspond in some cases to the initiative or the actions of the immigrants themselves (the supply of products or the setting up of commercial ties), while in others they indirectly result from them (the revitalisation of some areas of the city or the modification of forms of regulation). In some circumstances, there is a combination of the processes and these take on a greater significance, while in other cases, just one or other of the various possible processes is manifested, and, frequently, in a form that is less clear.

2. Entrepreneurs of Indian origin in the city of Lisbon – contributions to the dynamics of innovation and the transformation of the city

The migratory genesis and its characteristics

Until 1974, the Hindus present in Portuguese society were no more than a few dozen and comprised students attending higher education institutions and a few professionals. As one engineer who had arrived in Portugal in 1960 with the intention of attending a higher-level course commented, “there were already some Goans here, but when I arrived you could count the Hindus on the fingers of one hand... almost all of us came from Mozambique to study at the universities of the metropolis.”³

The integration of the territories of the former State of Portuguese India into the Indian Union in December 1961 was the origin of the first small-scale concentrated migration flow, associated with political causes. However, even before that there was an increase in international migration flows from Diu (an island in Northwest India and former Portuguese colony), namely to Mozambique, during the period of the Indian blockade during the 1950s. After integration into the Indian Union, some individuals with links to the administration, to the armed forces and to the Portuguese Government services decided to leave India. This flow comprised mostly Goan Catholics who, in the first phase, headed directly to Portugal, even though, in many cases, they were subsequently relocated for functions in the African former colonies, namely in Mozambique (Malheiros, 1996).

The constitution of a Hindu community in Portugal, largely concentrated in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, which in 1992 approximated 9,000 individuals, was nevertheless rooted in the process of decolonisation in Mozambique and in the political vicissitudes of that country, above all during the decade subsequent to independence, which occurred in 1975. Though Goans and Ismailis (Shi'ite Muslims) concentrated their arrivals during the period 1974-1976, the number of Hindus

entering Portugal at that time was smaller than that registered in subsequent years, particularly during the period 1982-1984 (Malheiros, 1996).

During the first phase, more well-to-do individuals made the move (Ismaili, Muslim and Hindu businesspeople), as well as people who had stronger connections with the Portuguese administration and culture (Goans). As the Hindu community presented a relevant internal social diversity, many less well-off individuals, with an important local rooting and conscious of the geographic proximity of Diu, a space with which they maintained important relations, decided to remain in Mozambique.

The passing of time and the deterioration of the politico-economic situation did not facilitate small private individual initiative and left many Hindus fearful of possible abuses of power perpetrated by Mozambican institutions. Their desire to leave was therefore strengthened, and materialised in a visible form, during the peak of departures during 1982-1984, when Hindu populations were accompanied by many Muslims of Indian origin. It should be pointed out that during this period the Mozambican Government passed legislation that placed individuals who qualified for applying for citizenship, but who did not do so, at a disadvantage in political and economic terms.

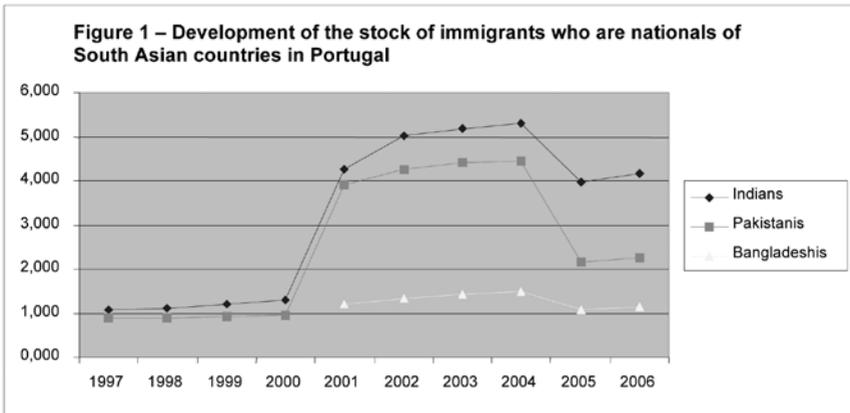
From the second half of the 1980s onwards, we can say that the emigration of populations of Indian origin to Portugal entered into a third phase, after the cycles of emigration of elites and emigration of a political character. This third phase is characterised by the predominance of labour emigration, usually low-skilled, with direct arrivals from Diu – in the case of the Hindus – coinciding with arrivals from Mozambique. From this phase onwards, it becomes clear that a spatial network was created with multiple links, involving Lisbon, Mozambique (mostly Maputo, but also Inhambane and Beira) and Diu, as well as some cities in Gujarat.

The existing data show that Indian citizens with legal residence in Portugal experienced a significant increase between 1986 and 1996.⁴ However, this value only corresponds to a part of the total of citizens with origins in that country settled in Portugal. On the one hand, it does not consider the ethnic Indians from Mozambique and from other States on the East Coast of Africa who, in virtue of group and familial links, have also settled in the country. On the other hand, the Portuguese legislation that regulates the acquisition of nationality by citizens born in the former State of Portuguese India before 1961 and by their descendents has exceptional characteristics, allowing them to directly request Portuguese nationality through the presentation of documents that attest to their birth at consular services in Goa.

Finally, the last section of citizens of Indian origin present in Portugal is individuals in an irregular situation, with a significant increase in requests made un-

der the terms of the extraordinary regularisations of 1992/93 and 1996, which increased from 261 to 915,⁵ the majority of whom were not admitted (Malheiros, 2001). Between the late 1990s and 2004, features associated with the third phase of immigration with origins in the Indian subcontinent were accentuated, and so one could speak of a new cycle, marked by the acceleration and diversification of origins, where colonial links from the past became less significant as causes for immigration.

The observation in Figure 1 shows that foreigners holding residence permits and stay permits from India and Pakistan quadrupled their number in Portugal between 1999 and 2004. During this period of strong growth in immigration to Portugal, populations from South Asia followed the general increasing trend, though they registered a relative growth significantly lower than that of citizens from Eastern Europe and showed numbers much smaller than those observed for the latter group, for Brazilians and also for Chinese.⁶ Concomitantly with this process of growth, a diversification in populations originating from the Indian subcontinent occurred, visible in the emergence of small – though growing – Sikh and Bangladeshi communities, evident in Figure 1 (Mapril, 2004).



Please note: These figures are based on the total of immigrants with both Residence Permits and Stay Permits (from 2001 onwards).

Source: Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) – several years.

It should be noted that throughout the 1990s and during the first years of this century, England, and particularly some areas of Greater London (for example, Wembley), represented alternative emigration destinations to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area. Links between people from Diu and other Indian groups who moved to Great Britain, namely from the East Coast of Africa, contributed to the diffusion of information about existing opportunities in London, and this migration was facilitated

by holding Portuguese documentation that permitted free movement within the context of the European Union. Additionally, the Hindu-Diuese migratory system cannot be dissociated from the broader framework of the great Indian Diaspora, which, in the European case, has England, and particularly cities such as London, Leicester or Bradford as structural focal points in the network. They have greater populations, distribute and/or create more cultural or religious products, and are synonymous with Indian economic success (Pereira Bastos and Pereira Bastos, 2005).

To conclude, it should be pointed out that this process of diversification has had an impact at the level of the expansion of small commercial activities undertaken by populations of Indian origin, such as street vending (of toys, flowers and other products) and restaurants. However, a strong nucleus remains linked to the original migrations of the 1970s and 1980s, with activities in the domain of retail of products originating in the Far East. There is also the continuing prevalence of a cluster linked to the sale of furniture in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, pertaining to some Ismaili families.

The ethnic commerce of Indians and the transformation of the city I: the separation of the central areas or the 'front' and the 'rear' of the centre

The most ethnicised commercial area in Lisbon is along a relatively linear route which developed on the basis of what we could term the *rear of the traditional centre*. These are the streets that link Poço do Borratém/Martim Moniz to Praça do Chile, about 2,200 metres in length, and roughly corresponding to Rua da Palma and Avenida Almirante Reis. Apart from these streets, it should be considered that this commercial area includes other parallel and perpendicular streets to the system of main axes, particularly Rua dos Cavaleiros (perpendicular to Rua da Palma) and Rua do Benfornoso (parallel to Rua da Palma), which project out from Martim Moniz.

With respect to the attractiveness of Martim Moniz and its immediate surroundings, it should be taken into consideration that traditional city centres and inner-city areas usually take on the role of social entry-points into the urban space, functioning as a point of reference and of contact. This applies above all to immigrants, who are still searching for 'their place' in the city. Effectively, the area of Martim Moniz constitutes, historically, a space of entry to and departure from the less 'noble' city. This was also a space of transition for people from rural areas, justifying the installation of functions aimed at a transient population, such as garages for transport companies (today no longer in existence), the wholesale trade (which permitted vendors from the outskirts of the capital to receive supplies of products) and even prostitution.

While until the 1970s migrants who walked around in Martim Moniz and in other spaces in the Baixa (Lisbon city centre) were from regions in the interior of Portugal, from that moment on, citizens of foreign origin began to assume increasing visibility, becoming the main users of this public space. Gradually, Martim Moniz (like other spaces nearby, such as Rua do Benfornoso or Largo de São Domingos, beside Rossio Square) became a reference point for these population groups, whether because of its commercial supplies directed to the least prosperous segments of the population (where ethnic minorities are over-represented), or whether because some non-Portuguese traders were already established there.

The genesis of the spatial concentration of the businesses of population groups of Indian origin in this area is situated in the years following decolonisation, namely during the period 1976-1980, with this phase being marked by almost mono-ethnic features (predominance of owners of Indian origin) and by an orientation that essentially privileged two types of business: furniture, with Ismaili owners, and retail of products imported from the Far East (toys, electronic goods, jewellery, and so on), by Hindu and Muslim traders (Malheiros, 1996).

These individuals of Indian origin, the majority of whom were traders who had undertaken activities in Mozambique before decolonisation, have sought to identify niches in the market where they could reinitiate their activities, orientating themselves not towards their own ethnic group, but towards the whole population, as they had been doing in that former Portuguese colony. Therefore the logic of re-establishing their activities in a new spatial context prevailed, with Indian businessmen making the best of the opportunities offered by Portuguese society during that era, namely because economic constraints and the features of the endogenous commercial sector created niches in certain branches of activity. The furniture sector, for example, made the best of the process of return from the ex-colonies itself, catering to their need to furnish accommodation as people were stabilising their situation.

The importation of toys and electronic goods from the Far East benefited from the experience and the contacts of the Indian traders,⁷ as well as from the fact that competition was not very intense, because outlets and large wholesale centres had not yet been set up. It can also be determined that the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were successful business years among people of Indian origin established in Martim Moniz and nearby streets, with more difficulties emerging after this period, even though the number of shops did not decline (interview with a businessman of Indian origin settled in Lisbon, February 2000).

Around 1989, businesses owned by people of Indian origin began to be consolidated in this area. It was in this year that the controversial Mouraria Shopping Cen-

tre (*Centro Comercial Mouraria*, CCM) was opened. Because of its characteristics and location, it was not very attractive to Portuguese entrepreneurs, particularly the more prestigious ones. On the other hand, the necessity for new spaces for businesspeople of Indian origin led them to establish themselves also in this shopping centre, which accentuated the 'Indianisation' of the area (a Portuguese-style 'Little India'), even if the majority of owners continued to be of Portuguese origin, both outside and inside the CCM.⁸

From the beginning of the 1990s, an ethnic diversification of the traders can be observed, associated with the emergence of some new commercial sectors. Initially, this process was above all evident in the new supply of commercial spaces planned from the beginning of the 1990s, particularly the exterior galleries and some kiosks situated in Martim Moniz Square and the floors situated on the basement level of the new Martim Moniz Shopping Centre (*Centro Comercial Martim Moniz*, CCMM).

Though it is true that the process of diversification included entrepreneurs of African origin, not only in the establishments with a door opening onto the street, but above all in those situated in the older shopping centre on the square (Mouraria Shopping Centre, where hairdressers, cosmetics shops, cafes and grocery shops were opened), the Chinese were the main protagonists of these transformations after the mid-1990s. Effectively, from a potential 'Little India', Martim Moniz and the Rua da Palma/Almirante Reis strip transformed themselves into an ethnically diversified space, with a preponderance of Chinese traders (mainly clothing retailers, but also present in other kinds of shops, such as mini-markets), who not only established themselves in new commercial spaces, but also acquired by sublease many older shops with doors onto the street, substituting not only Portuguese traders but also those of Indian origin. To this framework of diversification of establishments should also be added cafés and restaurants with owners of various origins, hairdressers and African cosmetics shops, first-generation Indian wholesalers – above all Hindus and Muslims –, Ismaili furniture houses and a set of shops of diverse types owned by Portuguese people.

The ethnic commerce of Indians and the transformation of the city II: retail shops in the ethnic residential districts on the peripheries

In the slum-like and self-built districts of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, the flexibility of the space and of relationships is combined with the necessities of the population groups, leading to the establishment of small individual businesses that ensure a supply of daily groceries, complementing practices of buying in bulk at supermarkets or hypermarkets at weekends.

An example is one of the slum districts which, at the beginning of this decade, still had a relevant percentage of population of Indian origin, Quinta da Vitória (Porte-

la), in the municipality of Loures. The four groceries owned by individuals of that community and the various African hairdressers provided daily and weekly goods and services to the population (to ethnic minorities, but not exclusively), contributing to the tiny economic revival of the district and to the existence of alternatives to the small retail shops located in the Portela Shopping Centre (CCP). Effectively, as this is the only shopping centre in the parish, the small low-skilled trade of Quinta da Vitória facilitates the satisfaction of immediate needs without the need to travel to the CCP which, as well as being more than five minutes away by foot, has a social and commercial atmosphere quite distinct from that experienced in the district. The shops in Quinta da Vitória are embedded in the socio-spatial fabric of the district, offering the most necessary products (and specific to some minorities), adjusting commercial practices (buying on credit, sale of products in individual units) to the characteristics of the population and promoting a relationship of mutual trust and knowledge.

This framework detected in Quinta da Vitória also exists in other run-down districts on the periphery of Lisbon, which started as informal housing and are composed of self-constructed buildings, whether with slum characteristics or not. Although in Quinta da Vitória the supply of trade and services is quite low, in other clandestine districts (for example, Cova da Moura) with more perennial urban features, a relatively intensive economic dynamic has been created. This supply of small retail shops and services, capable of creating a volume of employment of some significance, is the product of the neighbourhood's spatial flexibility, combined with the existing web of social relationships, the level of familiarity and, naturally, the existence of a supply designed to satisfy certain specific needs.

This embeddedness in the socio-spatial fabric is fundamental for its maintenance, meaning that re-housing projects may result in a complete change of this element of the social life of the districts. It is not sufficient to register all the establishments and offer alternative spaces in the new district (which could lead to problems in terms of cost or inadequacy for the activities);⁹ one has to take into consideration other fundamental elements for the survival of the commercial units, such as the type and the volume of clientele (and the location of their housing in the new district), their position in the re-housing district, accessibility, and proximity to other shops or the residence of the owner, among other factors.

In consolidated residential districts with a strong presence of ethnic minorities, small trade by non-indigenous owners, apart from placing new products on the market, facilitates the resolution of shortages at the level of general commercial supply. This happens in Cidade Nova, also in the municipality of Loures, where it is possible to identify two kinds of shops belonging to owners of Indian origin: those more specialised in the supply of products such as spices used in Indian cuisine and those offering general products (groceries, drinks shops, electronic

goods, goldsmiths...) aiming at a local clientele. The latter, which are more numerous, maintain a strong stability, enlarging the commercial supply in the area. During the course of the *focus group* session undertaken here, the participants highlighted the good level of local insertion of this trade, the diversity of which facilitates the resolution of the problems of supply of frequently needed, occasional and, in some cases, infrequent goods. Therefore 'immigrant' trade has become a key element in the local supply, guaranteeing the satisfaction of the needs of the entire population, mainly of Portuguese origin.

3. Commercial activities and the dynamics of transformation and innovation in the city of Lisbon

Taking into consideration the characterisation above, it is important to systematise the processes of transformation of cities and the possible emergence of innovative features associated with the development of ethnic commerce. Taking as a reference Kloosterman, van der Leun and Rath's (1999) proposal referred to in the initial part of this article, the following set of aspects are highlighted:

1) The revitalisation of run-down and commercially stagnant areas

In the area of Martim Moniz, the contribution of individuals of Indian origin to this process is remarkable. The use of spatial observation techniques as well as the systematic contacts established with various Portuguese residents has presented both the attenuation of social and urban degradation processes and also some valuing of commercial spaces. Using the small square located at the intersection of Rua do Benfornoso with Rua do Terreirinho as an example, before the settlement of traders of Indian origin at the end of the 1970s/beginning of the 1980s, there were in this place two bars (expanding towards the south the tense atmosphere of the northern section of Rua do Benfornoso) and a scrap iron warehouse. On occupying these spaces, the owners of Indian origin contributed to diffusing the atmosphere of tension related to the taverns, and introduced new businesses. Furthermore, this is not an exceptional case, as shops created by Indian businessmen came to substitute establishments that belonged to a commercial context that had become obsolete (sewing machine repairs, traditional pawn-brokers, antique and low-quality furniture dealers), strongly contributing to recovering the dynamism and the commercial attractiveness of this space.

Despite the urban and social degradation occurring until the beginning of the present century, it can be affirmed that the presence of the Indian traders was fundamental in alleviating that decline. During a period when the indigenous traders showed a lack of interest in this area, even devaluing the Mouraria Shopping Centre, which could have been an even greater failure, appropriation by ethnic

minorities was fundamental for the survival and the maintenance of a commercial structure.

ii) The supply of new products and the emergence of new market strategies

In this domain, it is also important to consider immigrants of other origins, in order to obtain a wider panorama that enables us to establish comparisons between businesses belonging to groups of Indian origin and businesses belonging to other groups, such as the Chinese and the Africans.

Although much of the commercial supply and provision of services associated with immigrants and ethnic minorities was directed at their own group, there are various examples of population groups who sought to reach the entire market in the areas of destination, based on the supply of products originally connected with the spaces and cultures of origin, subsequently reconstructed. The classic – and the most successful – example is that of the Chinese restaurants, which directed their product towards an indigenous clientele, proceeding to adapt the flavours of meals served, but continuing to rely on characteristics appreciated by ‘Westerners’, such as food chopped into small pieces, steamed vegetables and a diversity of dishes. Additionally, the success of these initiatives is also based on some economic advantages, such as employing family members and co-ethnic workers, the use of self-capital, an image of low-cost meals and the proliferation of fast-food strategies. However, Europeans’ appetite for exotic and different cuisine has also allowed other groups to find a place within this expanded market and to establish themselves in the restaurant sector.

In Lisbon, the expansion of the ethnic restaurant sector is a recent phenomenon, related to an increase in purchasing power and the rapid shift in consumption patterns. Chinese restaurants are the most widespread and the most popular, both at the time that these data were collected – 1999-2000 – and today. Nevertheless, some signs of market saturation have started to appear and the image of the Chinese restaurants has also been affected in quite a negative way by the results of a number of Food and Economic Security Authority (ASAE) inspections, widely exaggerated by the press. Actually, it seems that a process of reduction in the provision of Chinese cuisine is occurring, with a greater diversification emerging, as shown by the recent growth in the number of Indian and Japanese restaurants (see Table 3).¹⁰

Table 2 – Frequency of use of ethnic commerce and services by Portuguese people surveyed in Lisbon

	Monthly / Occasionally or more frequently	Never
African Restaurant	12.9	87.1
Chinese Restaurant	53.3	46.7
Indian / Goan Restaurant	9.9	90.1
Tropical food shop	8.8	91.2
African Hairdressers	4.7	95.3
Non-European crafts	19.3	80.7
African disco	11.7	88.3
African Astrologer	1.2	98.8
Brazilian Astrologer	1.8	98.2
Traditional Chinese Medicine	3.4	96.6
Evangelical Church (Brazilian)	2.9	97.1

Source: Survey of the Portuguese population conducted by the author, Lisbon (1999).

Table 3 – Evolution in the number of establishments in selected sectors of ethnic commerce and services in the City of Lisbon (1975 2007)

	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2007
Chinese Restaurants	7	15	32	36	36	63	41
Indian Restaurants	5	9	5	3	4	8	23
Oriental Goods	10	10	10	24	29	16	**
Acupuncture Centres				9	7	19	**

Source: Telephone book, Yellow Pages (various years). Fieldwork and internet survey – 2007.

(**) Information not collected.

It should further be mentioned that the interest engendered by the products and services associated with the specific cultural practices of migrants is founded not only on the product itself but also, in a certain way, on the experience that this provides. Indeed, immigrants are essentially placing the exotic on our own doorstep. Effectively, in the case of the restaurant sector, whether Chinese, Ja-

panese, Indian or even African, it is not only the products that are consumed, but the entire ambience, which includes the décor of the restaurant, the music, the waiting staff's clothes and the exoticism attributed to them. Other services such as acupuncture and discos, above all African ones, have also been affirmed as alternatives to the Western versions, with an apparently stronger acceptance in the latter case, particularly among young consumers (see Tables 2 and 3). Similarly to the restaurants, the discos recreate ambiances and facilitate contacts and socialising processes, representing a consumption process that is clearly multi-dimensional.

This process of introduction of new products and services, reconstructed in order to gain acceptance from consumers in the cities of destination, depends upon the framework of connections between the destination and the origins (where many products and workers come from; where the references for the reconstruction of the atmospheres are positioned) and also upon the innovative actions of some entrepreneurs.

The examples presented in Tables 4 and 5, corresponding to businesspeople of Indian origin supported by the extended family framework or by co-ethnics, illustrate some of the strategies with the most innovative content:

- a) Modernisation of wholesale strategies and relocation in the destination country as a form of expanding the market (essentially constituted by indigenous people) for imported products that benefit from the transnational experience of the entrepreneur (contacts with Asia)

**Table 4 – Relocation and specialisation of wholesale trade in toys and stationery
(a family of Hindu traders of Gujarati-Mozambican origin)**

In the wake of the process of decolonisation in Mozambique, business conditions completely deteriorated and they resolved to leave the country in 1975 and travel to Portugal (Lisbon). When the leading businessman of the family looked for a space to reopen his establishment, he discovered the Martim Moniz area which he found attractive due to a certain typicality and to the commercial movement, with some tradition in wholesale. He discovered a space and resolved to establish the business there around 1976, becoming, probably, the first trader of Indian origin in the area. He invested in the importation of products from the Far East (toys, stationery, etc...), using contacts that he had already brought from Mozambique. As the option seemed interesting, various other traders of Indian origin began to establish themselves in the area, increasing competition but bringing advantages in terms of image and mutual support.

Until the first half of the 1990s, the business was able to expand, but from then on a saturation began to occur, with the affluence of clientele affected by the emergence of hypermarkets and outlets. In order that the expansion could continue, he decided to implement innovative strategies because demand in Martim Moniz was no longer increasing (“traditional small trading is not expanding; just sustaining it is quite an achievement”). During the second half of the 1990s, the strategy of expansion led to finding well-located and larger spaces with better access, which would permit him to put in practice the concept of “cash-and-carry”, directed at shopkeepers and retailers.

Consequently, he opened a warehouse in an industrial and logistical zone in Prior Velho (to serve Lisbon and its surroundings) and another in a busy area on the old National Road n.1 (EN1) in Leiria (in the Central Coastal Region of Portugal), trusting in the opportunities for expansion that he thought existed in that city and its surroundings (50 km). As he said, “setting up new warehouses is not easy, but the locations are good and the clients value the location. To gain the loyalty of clients in the new spaces is sometimes complicated, but we have achieved it. At the beginning, they came here once and only came back after almost three months. Now it is no longer like that. We also use a strategy that is exclusively orientated towards shopkeepers and retailers, giving them all of our attention and avoiding the final customers. In Leiria the process is still in its initial stages, but the warehouse is also newer.”

The business strategy continues to be based on a family logic, but the improvement of the education of the future generations has been prioritised – “I am already creating the conditions for the next generation to take over the business in the future”. “We are thinking about branching out into the IT sector and IT consumer goods, with the help of my son who is completing a course in company management.”

- b) Reconstruction of traditional food products, supported by the modernisation of factory processes, in order to respond to the regulatory framework of the destination and also to the demands of Western consumers

Table 5 – Adapting and valuing a traditional product: samosas for the Portuguese market (Ismaili partners located in the Sintra municipality; the family of one of the partners has a food business establishment near Avenida Almirante Reis)

The two partner-managers of this factory also come from Mozambique. When one of them arrived from that country after decolonisation, he had some experiences in the restaurant sector that did not prosper. Thereafter, taking advantage of the fact that his mother had a good recipe for samosas and that this product was relatively new to the Portuguese market, he started, at the beginning of the 1980s, an informal system of production and distribution of samosas by various clients in the Porto area (where he lived), using his house for production, and his own vehicle for distribution. With time, the original recipe was improved.

Contact was established with the other partner during the mid-1990s and they resolved to invest in the business in a more professional way. They found their present location in the municipality of Sintra, where they established a completely regulated factory that only employs Portuguese people and is in accordance with all of the hygiene norms defined by the EU. In the management of the business they divide the work, with one partner dedicating himself to the trade and the management of clients and the other to controlling production.

They sell only frozen samosas of a standard size, as well as some small samosas (for parties and receptions) and 'Chinese spring rolls' for one client whom they have served for a long time. They have a series of permanent clients, the majority of whom are retailers who distribute the samosas to the final customers and the intermediary customers (restaurants, cafes, groceries and supermarkets). In addition to the formalisation of production and the improvement of the factory process, they have analysed the Portuguese palate, resulting in a type of modified and improved samosa (potentially less greasy, crunchy and with a different type of seasoning).

iii) The establishment of commercial links with new areas

As we have seen from the examples presented, ethnic business serves as a bridge for commercial exchanges between areas of destination and origin. This phenomenon is evident among South Asian entrepreneurs, both of Indian and Pakistani origin, and Chinese, many of whom base their businesses and services on products imported from the Far East and to a lesser extent from India itself. Data collected and analysed by Oliveira (2005) on 562 Chinese and Indian ethnic entre-

preneurs precisely show the relevance of Asia as the place of origin of a large proportion of the imports; in fact, approximately 20% of the entrepreneurs surveyed declared that they had received direct supplies from Asian countries.

In addition, the use of traders settled in Portugal and in other European countries does not necessarily mean that the products do not come from China and other Far East countries, because several wholesalers and importers are Chinese people settled in European cities (Oliveira, 2005). These entrepreneurs are part of specific transnational trading systems, developing the import-export of Chinese and other Asian goods. These goods are then re-distributed within Europe through the Chinese entrepreneurial network in this continent. These activities imply an opening up of alternative commercial relationships to the dominant networks; though some trading spaces are identical (in the case of China and other countries in the Far East), the methods of access follow different trajectories to those followed by large import-export companies with a transnational character. Basically we are dealing with the 'weaker' and less visible facet of the intensification of present-day interactions; something that can be interpreted as a secondary process, albeit complementary, to globalisation.

iv) The contribution to the change of formal regulatory systems in the destination contexts

The commercial customs and practices of ethnic entrepreneurs have contributed to the introduction of alterations in some regulatory mechanisms, both in the sectoral and the spatial contexts. In relation to the regulatory aspects of a spatial character, we can focus on the case of Martim Moniz in Lisbon.

A first element of interest is the recognition on the part of the Local Mouraria Office (GLM) of the Lisbon Municipal Council of the specificity of what they refer to as "immigrant commerce" as an element that characterises and adds value to this area of Lisbon (GLM, 1999: 3). This led to the creation of a promising project, "Mouraria: an inter-ethnic commercial space", launched in 2000, which seeks to enhance knowledge about the traders of non-European origin in this area, the objectives of their relationships with the space of Mouraria, and their problems and intentions, in order to design strategies of intervention for the future.

In spite of the interest and relevance of this project, there are two basic criticisms of its conception. On the one hand, it 'breaks' the spatial unity of the ethnic commercial space of Martim Moniz and its adjacent areas, leaving out the streets outside Mouraria, the Martim Moniz square and the new Shopping Centre of the same name. On the other hand, despite the inter-ethnic designation, it focuses exclusively on traders of non-European origin, leaving aside their indigenous colleagues, a fundamental element in understanding the functioning of this spatial-economic context.

More recent programmes such as URBCOM in Mouraria adopt a more integrated perspective, considering all traders – of Portuguese and of foreign origin –, yet they continue to value and give particular attention to elements related to the supply of products by shops owned by foreign people.

v) New urban features and new symbols

New public buildings such as newly constructed mosques introduce relevant changes in the urban landscape, bringing with them new aesthetic concepts, discordant with the features that surround them. However, leaving aside these public and collective landmarks containing a relatively strong symbolic spatial meaning, there are a series of spatial markers that allow the identification of several forms of spatial appropriation by the different groups present in the neighbourhoods of the city.

The Chinese and Indian restaurants contribute to the introduction of new features to the cityscape, both at the level of visual features present in the landscape as well as in what we may call the 'smellscape'. Dragons and entrance halls in golden and red tones, more or less discreet, and smells of curry and cardamom, characterise certain streets or even areas of the city, contributing to the diversity of the landscape and functioning as an alternative to the yellow-red of the McDonalds arches and to the characteristic odour of hamburgers and other fast food.

4. Notes of conclusion – entrepreneurial initiatives of the Indian populations in Lisbon: Socially Creative Strategies?

What has been presented here evinces the impact of the commercial initiatives of immigrants of Indian origin in the central and peripheral neighbourhoods of the Lisbon metropolis, with consequences in terms of the transformation of the landscape, of certain economic strategies and of the shift in the framework of values and social behaviours. Despite the empirical evidence set out above, it is nevertheless pertinent to return to the initial analytical table and pose questions in relation to the innovative content of these processes or to their interpretation as Socially Creative Strategies (SCSs).

Careful observation of the type of businesses most frequently established by traders of Indian origin (for example, shops specialising in the importation of stationery, toys and electronic consumer goods originating in the Far East or furniture shops owned by Ismailis), makes it clear that we are not exactly dealing with a supply framework characterised by great originality in terms of marketing, products or selling strategies. However, in the creation of the shops, innovative features were incorporated, associated with the price of the products (relatively low and

competitive), the form of presentation (more exuberant, visible and attractive, a good example being the furniture houses) and their geographical origin, particularly because during the second half of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, large distribution and retail shops had not yet taken root in Portugal.

During recent years, strategies of differentiation have been either based on the classic features of price and location or, in the case of some products, the incorporation of added value is associated with adaptation to the tastes and characteristics of the clientele in the destination country. It is in the context of this latter process that the more creative initiatives are detected – as we have seen in the case of the food production and distribution of Indian snacks –, even though it must be conceded that these are not very frequent.

Focusing on other dimensions associated with SCSs, it should be noted that entrepreneurs of Indian origin are not, in the majority of cases, weak actors as such, because they frequently have access to sources of capital, the ability to negotiate and experience in their sector of activity. However, considering that the 'pioneers' arrived to a country experiencing a serious political and economic upheaval that generally did not welcome them in a positive way, that they were barely prepared for the migratory process – with the possible exception of some more prosperous families – and that they were unfamiliar with the specific features of the national and local market, it could be considered that, at the time, they were vulnerable actors who have been able to identify opportunities, take advantage of them, and, in some way, 'create a market'. Otherwise, needs and some alteration in Portuguese tastes have contributed to securing business over time, namely in relation to the restaurant sector.

Finally, if we focus on the nature of the places and the spatial and social relationship structures that are associated with the initiatives analysed in this work, we see that the socio-spatial embeddedness of small businesses in the peripheral neighbourhoods, and, above all, the importance of social capital for the running of businesses – in the establishment of commercial links with the Far East, for example –, are relevant features in the analytical framework of SCSs. Finally, in the general context associated with the creation of international connections with foreign places, these commercial initiatives play an interesting role, promoting the flow of goods, people and information necessary for their establishment and functioning. Within this perspective, the import and wholesale businesses of Indian businesspeople are contributing to the secondary internationalisation of the city of Lisbon.

Taking all of this into consideration, it seems that the most typical entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrants of Indian origin settled in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area contribute to the construction of new urban landscapes in certain areas and in-

corporate aspects that are characteristic of SCSs, but they do not fully constitute creative and innovative strategies. There are, however, some examples of more original and risky initiatives, and it should also be kept in mind that the initial establishment of the most common types of businesses (trade in products from the Far East, furniture, restaurants, and so on) was a more explicit moment in terms of novelty and seizing opportunities, which is in line with the features that characterise the initial phase of the innovation diffusion model.

Notes

¹ This article was developed within the research context of WP1.1 (coordinated by Isabel André, at the Centre for Geographic Studies) of the Coordination Action Katarsis (European Commission – FP6 Programme), under the overall coordination of Frank Moulaert and Jean Hillier of the University of Newcastle (UK).

² It is true that the geographical typologies of spatial diffusion processes encompass, in addition to hierarchical diffusion, diffusion by contagion (where there is a direct contact between the diffusing agent and the receivers) and diffusion through relocation (the diffusing agents themselves move, leaving behind the origin of the phenomenon, but spreading it within the space and over time). However, despite the fact that spatial diffusion is very much associated with the dissemination of innovation, it is not always like this, as it is difficult to consider infectious diseases (one of the most studied phenomena in geography, under the perspective of diffusion – Arroz, 1979; André, 1988) as something with an innovative content. Otherwise it is significant that, in a chapter dedicated to spatial innovation, Abler, Adams and Gould (1971: 389–392) refer for the first time to the term innovation to explain hierarchical processes.

³ Interview with a Hindu association leader from Santo António dos Cavaleiros, undertaken on 27 July 2000.

⁴ The rate of variation among Indian citizens with residence permits was 66.2% between 1986 and 1991, and 68.9% between 1991 and 1996. During each of these periods, these values were higher than the variation in the total stock of foreigners in Portugal (31.1% and 53.9% respectively).

⁵ This growth is even more significant from a relative point-of-view, taking into account that the total number of requests presented suffered a small reduction (from 39,166 to 35,082), while requests presented by Indians increased three-and-a-half-fold.

⁶ It should be noted here, as mentioned above, that under-counting of populations of Indian origin is quite extensive if we take into consideration only data relating to foreigners in a regular situation.

⁷ In the interview mentioned above, the businessperson in question commented that he has worked with the same “middleman” (contact with Chinese companies which serve as a bridge between producers and traders) in business with China and neighbouring areas since the beginning of the 1970s. According to the interviewee, “confidence is fundamental for the establishment of good business in this area of the globe, and so the option of maintaining the same contact has been beneficial, helping to establish credibility in relation to the producers”. This demonstrates the relevance of social capital in its dimension as a bridge for long-distance importation businesses.

⁸ In 1992, around 23% of the commercial spaces in the CCM were occupied by traders of Indian origin, though the Portuguese were still dominant (Malheiros, 1996).

⁹ Taking as a reference the context of policies of rehabilitation in Dutch districts, Kloosterman and Van der Leun (1999) mention the need to create conditions for the installation of immigrant entrepreneurs, highlighting the supply of non-residential spaces with multi-functional characteristics, that is, spaces that can be used for the establishment of different types of commerce.

¹⁰ A survey undertaken in May 2008 recorded 41 Chinese restaurants functioning in the City of Lisbon, as against 23 Indian restaurants and 10 Japanese.

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