

Entrepreneurship from a gender perspective: An initial analysis of the case of Brazilian women in Portugal

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Abstract The present article seeks to develop an initial analysis on the subject of immigrant entrepreneurship in Portugal from a gender perspective. Following an international literature review on the theme, the case of Brazilian immigrant women in Portugal is examined in order to provide an illustration of some aspects of interest detected, and cases identified, in a world that remains to be discovered.

Keywords female entrepreneurship, women entrepreneurs, gender, migration, Brazil, Portugal.

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Introduction

Just as gender occupied a central place on the agenda of the 1990s, above all due to, among other reasons, the United Nations conference held in Beijing in 1995, migration has gained ground since the late 1990s on the international agenda and among international Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations. Nevertheless, when we question what has been the advancement of gender and the respective progress in the situation of women since that period, the reality does not always present a positive image of straightforward improvement. This situation is even more worrying if we include immigrant women in the equation, who tend to occupy the worst place in the stratification of the labour force in the global market (Mills, 2003).

Even still, there has been some progress in the theoretical framework, and today when we think of migration it is impossible not to consider the feminisation of migratory flows and immigrant women's participation in the labour market. Although the majority of researchers who study the multiple and diverse profiles of immigrants consider the presence and characteristics of immigrant women, on a more specific level of analysis, women, despite their specificity, continue to have little visibility (Padilla, 2007b). This reality does not result from the lack of tools for analysing gender issues, but rather from the lack of attention on the part of the researchers themselves. Researchers continue to see the majority of social phenomena as not influenced by gender, and prefer to generalise their observations. This distraction has consequences. The lack of observation and discussion around the specificity of women means that many of the policies and programmes that target immigrants - that generalised 'immigrant' - are not appropriate for immigrant women. In this case, there is a gender blindness, rendering immigrant women even more invisible, and victimising them because it does not recognise their capacity for action. Nevertheless, research indicates that women, whether immigrants or not, have shown themselves to be agents and protagonists in their own destinies (Padilla, 2007a and Padilla, 2007b).

In this article, some issues related to entrepreneurship among immigrant women are raised for discussion, based on the state-of-the-art in this topic, reflecting how theoretical contributions developed in other contexts allow us to enrich the study of the phenomenon in Portugal. These contributions also highlight the importance of considering gender in the analysis. The selection of Brazilian women for this initial analysis of the theme is related to the fact that the immigration flow

from Brazil, in contrast to others that dominate the Portuguese migratory panorama, has been feminised over the past few years, acquiring its own texture and dynamic,² making it important now to confront this with the study of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Nevertheless, it is not possible to undertake this contextualisation without first recognising the global inequalities in the labour market that are characteristic of globalisation. These inequalities have been explained by vulnerabilities associated with gender, ethnicity/race, nationality and class (Mills, 2003).

Globalisation and inequalities

Numerous studies have examined the overlapping and the multifaceted effects of gender on inequalities identified in the labour force, both on a global scale and in specific cases in certain places (Elson, 1995; Marchand and Runyan, 2000; Nash and Fernandez Kelly, 1983; Ward, 1990; Finn, 1998, Ong, 1987, 1991; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, 2001, Anderson, 2000; Beneria and Roldan, 1987; Gill, 2000; Rahman, 1999). These studies illustrate the increase in the female labour force in free trade zones (FTZ) and in other sites of new industrialisation, also known as 'maquilas'³ and the feminisation of transnational labour flows both in domestic service, and in micro-entrepreneurship and other types of work in the informal sector. Even though this research comprises an eclectic collection of cases both in the geographical and the occupational sense, they all underline the centrality of gender and of the feminisation of the global economy.

In general, the different theories indicate that "gender inequalities operate simultaneously, but not identically, as systems of dominant meanings and symbolism; as structured social relations, roles, and practices; and as lived experiences of personal identity" (Mills, 2003: 42). This implies that gender is much more than the simple division of the sexes and that gender is one of the multiple categories of domination, as there are various systems of discrimination and exploitation in existence. Therefore, gender inequalities represent "one dynamic within a global labour force that is also segmented by class, ethnicity and race, nationality and region, among other factors" (Mills, 2003: 42). In this way, various hierarchical ideas of gender are identified, gaining specificity in each context and historically contingent in the case of immigrant women, including specificities both in relation to the receiving society and the origin society.

Despite the fact that the literature indicates that international migrants (both women and men) represent the most vulnerable group in societies (Foner, 2000; Malher, 1995; Sassen, 1998; Yeoh *et al.*, 2000), it is women who occupy the lowest rung in terms of salaries in the richest economies of the world. There is a

further stratification among women themselves, according to which social class they belong to. In many cases, we observe the phenomenon of the commodification of reproductive work, which liberates women to enter the working world. However, as a redefinition of gender responsibilities in the domestic sphere has not taken place, these tasks remain in the feminine sphere, delegated in this case to women who are in an ethnically and legally inferior or marginalised position (Mills, 2003).

It should be recognised, on the other hand, that the literature has also identified other situations that have allowed the challenging and the contestation of the condition of immigrant women. Female entrepreneurship, though in many cases informal, has been identified by agents of development as a promising arena for development and combating poverty. The microcredit movement (Dignard and Havet, 1995) and the experiences of Grameen Bank and other international patrons of micro-loans have gained ground in recent years - also facilitating the empowerment of women. However, some researchers argue that many of these initiatives do not challenge the sexual division of work, reinforcing the reality of traditional gender roles that perpetuate the domination of women in all contexts: home, school, work, etc. (Milgram, 2001; Rozário, 1997). It is, however, still recognised that in some cases entrepreneurship has contributed to women earning profits from their economic activities, allowing them to improve their position in the process of power negotiations within the home.

Immigrant entrepreneurship and gender issues

In recent years, possibly due to the passage of time since the arrival of immigrants in Portugal, there has been an increase in the number of entrepreneurs of immigrant origin in the country (Oliveira 2004a, 2004b, 2007). This is a trend that has been observed throughout the European Union and in the majority of immigrant receiving countries. Little is known, however, about the distribution of this entrepreneurship according to gender. Although many studies refer to the importance of considering gender as a central explanatory variable, in reality studies undertaken in Portugal have not done this, as entrepreneurs have always been assumed to be men.

Various studies also show that immigrants have a higher rate of entrepreneurship than the local population in receiving societies. Due to the fact that until a few decades ago migratory flows were predominantly composed of men, immigrant entrepreneurship was also mostly a masculine phenomenon. However, more recently, the consolidation of a number of programmes and incentivising measures for female entrepreneurship has explained its growth (Hammarstedt, 2002; Pearce, 2005; Tal, 2005). In this context it is relevant to observe the businesses

and various initiatives of immigrant women and to discuss to what extent they are a form of combating discrimination and problems of insertion in the labour market. In particular, it is important to understand what could be said in relation to this phenomenon in Portugal. Is entrepreneurship really, or could it become, a strategy and a mechanism for upward social mobility for immigrant women?

Studies undertaken in Portugal confirm that, compared to Portuguese people, immigrants present a greater propensity to take up entrepreneurial activity, with immigrant men predominating (Oliveira 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007). Another Portuguese study on freelance work indicates that in Portugal both men and women prefer to work for other people and not to take risks (Rebelo 2003). Despite the fact that this study does not cover immigrants, it is interesting to note that the proportion of men (21.1 per cent) who would prefer to exercise their profession in self-employment is greater than the proportion of women (15.1 per cent) (Rebelo, 2003).

These results suggest some interesting differences, failing however to question why. It is therefore interesting to discuss whether a similar tendency – men as more likely to start entrepreneurial initiatives than women – is also noted in the case of immigrants. This discussion should be framed particularly by the fact that many entrepreneurial strategies are of a familial nature, that is, it is possible that they could not be established without the participation and involvement of women, even if they are not enumerated in statistics on entrepreneurs.

A question that should be asked is why immigrant men and women are more entrepreneurial. Studies indicate that there are many motives that prompt immigrants, and especially immigrant women, to define an entrepreneurial strategy.

In order to respond to these questions, it is first important to take into consideration that entrepreneurship in general, and that of immigrant women in particular, does not exist in a vacuum. It should be understood and considered within a context, within a legal backdrop and within the reality of the receiving society in its entirety. Therefore it is recognised that the economic and/or entrepreneurial environment and the opportunities of the market can favour or disadvantage this phenomenon, varying from society to society. On the other hand, note should be taken of the stereotypes existing in receiving societies in relation to immigrants, ethnic minorities and women, as many decisions relating to economic insertion are conditioned by access to credit and to the labour market, and even in relation to the fulfilment of clauses of contracts which in many cases render the success of entrepreneurial initiatives difficult (Pearce, 2005). Furthermore, culture, stereotypes and the gender roles defined in the origin society should be considered as elements that influence entrepreneurial behaviours in their form (type of businesses, marketing styles, etc.) and possibilities for expansion or growth.

Another aspect, also closely linked to the conditions of the receiving society, which determines the dynamics of economic systems, is the cataloguing of what activities can be considered as entrepreneurship. Some authors have criticised the theoretical development on the topic, considering it to be elitist, as many researchers consider that only medium and large enterprises count as entrepreneurship (Valenzuela Jr., 2001). Nevertheless, in this article it is considered more important to include than to exclude, and within entrepreneurship, businesses with people working for themselves, as freelancers and those in a self-employed situation are considered, also covering micro enterprises. This option is better adjusted to the reality of immigration in Portugal and to Portuguese society, which is also marked by entrepreneurship of a small and micro dimension.

Another relevant aspect that is associated with the influence of the receiving context in the cataloguing of entrepreneurial initiatives, is the activities that function in the informal economy. Though many researchers have propounded the idea that the Portuguese economy, like those of the other Southern European countries, is characterised by a high level of informality (King and Zontini, 2000), this observation should be adapted relative to the reality of Brazil.

The type of activities undertaken in the informal sector in Portugal is much more circumscribed - above all in relation to activities such as street vending - than what is found in Brazil. Still, even if the informal economy is accepted and legitimated by the majority of the population of Southern European countries, when immigrants are the actors involved, they are stigmatised and seen as free-riders on the national system (Reyneri, 2003). This situation illustrates the application of double standards in receiving societies, rewarding some and punishing others for undertaking the same activities.

In this context, some of the general explanatory theoretical models for immigrant entrepreneurship are used. Two theoretical lines of reasoning are highlighted in the study of the entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrants: one that describes the functioning of the ethnic economy and/or the ethnic enclave on the basis of the existence of the ethnic and class resources among the immigrant community that encourage entrepreneurial initiative; and another that focuses on the interference of the opportunity structure of the receiving societies, together with ethnic resources, in ethnic entrepreneurship. In relation to the first line of reasoning, the middleman minority and labour segmentation emerge from the literature; while the second is an 'interactionist' perspective.

In both cases, however, there are explanatory aspects that have been neglected, such as the use of gender resources, combined with ethnic and class resources (Dallalgar, 1994), and the existence of some specific structural disadvantages associated with women. From the perspective of the 'disadvantage theory' developed by Ivan Light

(1979), immigrant entrepreneurship is the result of overcoming the advantages and/or difficulties felt by immigrants. In this context entrepreneurial initiatives emerge in many cases in order to overcome the various barriers and difficulties found in the labour market of the receiving society – for example, limited knowledge of the local language or culture, racial discrimination, long-term unemployment and constraints in the recognition of qualifications, among others (Light, 1979). Therefore, following the underlying logic of the disadvantage theory, specific vulnerabilities felt by immigrant women in the labour market can explain the choice of an entrepreneurial initiative as an alternative in their economic insertion.

From a more positive point-of-view, other perspectives argue that migrants possess some advantages in the context of the global market. Among these advantages are language, culture and relations with the country of origin. These advantages assist in both identifying niches in the market and in finding suppliers and customers. Therefore it is not surprising that among some communities there is a niche centred both on the ethnic market and on gender, and that as well as these elements, class resources are incorporated in entrepreneurial strategies (Dallalgar, 1994). As a consequence, in some cases, those limitations and barriers that immigrants are faced with can be transformed into competitive advantages and/or added value.

In the literature on the particular case of female entrepreneurship it is also possible to identify some complementary contributions. Many authors highlight the fact that female entrepreneurship is very much characterised by self-employment,⁴ as this condition permits them to combine paid work with domestic work. Even still, this entrepreneurship is not always consensually seen as something positive and/or advantageous for women. While some authors underline the potential association with liberation, autonomy, flexibility and possibilities for upward mobility that entrepreneurship represents for migrant women (Castells and Portes, 1989; Carter and Cannon, 1992; Light and Bonacich, 1988), others argue that women's entrepreneurial initiatives tend to reproduce aspects of self-exploitation and gender injustice that further reinforce the double or triple working day that the majority of women experience (Christensen, 1988; Phizacklea and Wolkowitz, 1995). The latter argument recognises that, apart from some exceptions, women's entrepreneurship does not necessarily imply a change in the division of non-remunerated domestic work in the family context, or in gender roles in families.

In this context it should be questioned why immigrant women choose to be entrepreneurs and/or create their own job (sometimes very much associated with 'working from home'). Seeking to obtain some answers, this article will analyse entrepreneurship among immigrant women in Portugal on the basis of the case of Brazilian women.

As a consequence, and in view of the literature discussed, in order to orientate this preliminary analysis of the phenomenon in Portugal, three complementary explanatory dimensions are considered, which are not mutually exclusive. The first explanatory dimension adopted is classified as *general*, that is, it tends to frame immigrant women's entrepreneurial activity within the particular immigrant and/or ethnic minority group. The second dimension focuses on the specificities inherent in *gender*, thereby explaining entrepreneurship on the basis of the particular situation of women. Finally, the third category is dubbed *origin-destination*, considering the entrepreneurial experience and entrepreneurial strategy that is transferred from the country of origin to the receiving country, without focusing on the particularities of the actual receiving context.

The combination of these three explanatory dimensions helps to identify specific ideal-types of immigrant entrepreneur women. In sum, this analysis uses:

- *Dimension 1 - General*: Focusing on the disadvantages felt by immigrants (including women) in access to the labour market (as suggested by Light, 1979), the influence of the ethnic/community resources of the immigrant group (Light and Bonacich, 1988) and the influence of the opportunity structure (Waldinger et al., 1985), the following elements are considered in the contextualisation of the entrepreneurial initiatives of immigrant women:
 - o The undertaking of an independent economic activity occurs because the qualifications that they hold are not recognised in the labour market;
 - o The choice of self-employment is a form of overcoming ethnic and racial discrimination existing in the labour market;
 - o A niche in the micro-scale economy exists, where economy of scale specifically does not function and opportunities in the ethnic or gender market are identified (types of products, tastes and preferences, and so on).
- *Dimension 2 - Gender*: Includes aspects related to expected behaviours, attitudes and division of labour between the sexes (not necessarily positive):
 - o The organisation of work facilitates better juggling of domestic and childcare responsibilities with economic activity;
 - o Low salaries in the labour market cause women to seek another activity in order to complement their income;
 - o Self-employment or entrepreneurial activity facilitates satisfaction and personal realisation in the professional sphere, as profits are

not considered central, but they are considered to be an indicator of success (these cases are generally associated with the middle and upper classes).

- *Dimension 3 - Origin-destination*: Includes aspects of connection between societies of origin and destination, also termed transnational:
 - o The reestablishment of a strategy previously used in the origin country, with or without interruption during the migration trajectory (the immigrant had already been an entrepreneur or freelancer in the origin country);
 - o Recourse to privileged contacts with the country of origin in the definition of supply channels for products and services.

Other conditions that influence the capacity or propensity for entrepreneurship are related to the combination of conditions both in the receiving society and the origin society (which can change or evolve with time). Among these conditions are some expectations associated with gender roles which, in many cases, are centred on the woman's work in the domestic context and that of the education of children, while emphasising the centrality of the man as the breadwinner. The different levels of autonomy and independence that women experience in both societies are also defined.

In conjunction, these explanatory dimensions assist in better explaining the 'why', the 'how' and the 'when' of immigrant women's entrepreneurial strategies.

Finally, another aspect to be considered is the type of entrepreneurial strategy that is used, classified in the literature (Jurik, 1998) as *survival strategies (getting by)* or *mobility strategies (getting away)*. The classification of entrepreneurial strategies according to this typology includes aspects as diverse as risks, choice/option, investment and residence, among others. This distinction is fundamental as it introduces an element that combines quantitative and qualitative aspects of differentiation of the entrepreneurial strategies that immigrants develop.

'Getting by' presupposes strategies that allow the immigrant to simply survive or maintain a situation of minimum well-being, and generally do not require great risks or investments, because in many cases these are not possible. The second strategy facilitates an improvement that makes the migrant's upward social mobility viable, as well as substantial progress in their migratory trajectory, as these strategies rely on risks and investments.

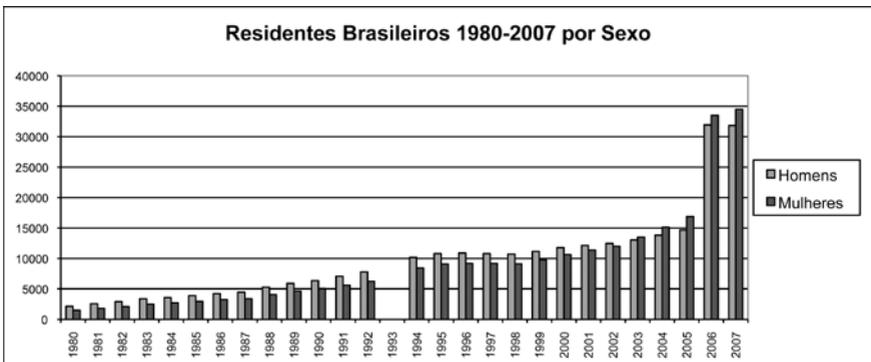
Immigrant entrepreneurs in Portugal: the specific case of Brazilian immigrants⁵

It is not possible to understand the case of Brazilian entrepreneurial immigrants in Portugal without a general contextualisation of Brazilian immigration in that country and the role that women have played in this migratory flow. Currently, Brazilians constitute the largest immigrant community in Portugal, as it is also an older immigration,⁶ which has undergone various phases (Padilla, 2007c).

The Brazilian migratory flow, reinforced during recent decades, has been divided in the literature into two great moments – the ‘first’ and the ‘second’ wave. The first wave was composed of more highly-skilled professional immigrants with various specialisations and staff of companies that assisted in Portugal’s transition and integration process into the European Economic Community (present-day EU). The second wave, in turn, during the 1990s and the early twenty-first century, is comprised of less skilled immigrants who are inserted into less qualified sectors of the labour market – public works and civil construction, and hotel and catering (Padilla 2005, 2007b; Peixoto and Figueiredo, 2007).

According to the Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) data, of the 435,736 foreigners who are currently living in Portugal (including EU residents), 66,354 are Brazilian (corresponding to 15.2 per cent) with different legal residence statuses (residence permit, stay permit and renewals, various types of work visas). The same source indicates that of these 66,354 Brazilians, 31,834 are men and 34,520 are women, with a female proportion of 52 per cent (while the total female proportion among all foreigners is 45 per cent). The graph below illustrates the feminisation trend of Brazilian immigration flows to Portugal since 1980.⁷

Figure 1 – Feminisation trend among the Brazilian community



Source: SEF Statistical Reports (calculated by the author).

Finally, other data can enrich the perception of the immigration phenomenon in relation to entrepreneurial initiatives in Portugal. Table 1 illustrates the number of requests for residence status in Portugal between 2001 and 2005, according to professional situation and sex. Taking into consideration requests for residence status by Brazilian citizens in the categories of employers and self-employed (categories in which entrepreneurs are recorded), the participation of women varies between 30 and 50 per cent, depending on the year under consideration. Even though these data cannot be directly equivalent to the general stock of male and female entrepreneurs of Brazilian origin, for reasons that will be discussed later on in this article, they are an important and preliminary illustration of this reality.

Table 1 – Number of foreigners (total and women) who requested residence status according to professional situation between 2001 and 2005

Professional situation		2000		2001		2002		2003		2004		2005	
		Total	W										
Brazil	Employers	76	33	40	13	58	20	64	25	43	13	51	26
	Self-employed	39	14	29	11	57	20	50	23	42	20	55	29
	Employees	551	245	394	154	512	242	585	257	943	459	974	460
	Others	22	14	19	13	20	7	30	14	13	7	35	21
	Total	688	306	482	191	647	289	729	319	1041	499	1115	536
Total foreigners	Employers	532	152	495	125	407	111	347	104	321	96	318	95
	Self-employed	357	90	400	91	333	96	284	97	215	96	207	89
	Employees	6808	2611	4860	1961	3822	1514	3328	1227	5360	2330	4060	1811
	Others	138	71	119	64	133	66	163	77	93	49	106	53
	Total	7835	2924	5874	2241	4695	1787	4122	1505	5989	2571	4691	2048

Source: SEF Statistical Reports.

In view of the fact that requesting residence status is not the only possible way for immigrant entrepreneurs to enter Portugal, as has been explained in detail by Oliveira (2004a: 67-77), data relative to the number of work visas issued at Portuguese consulates are considered, focusing on type III, between 1999 and 2006 for Brazilians and foreigners (see Table 2). Even though these data are not disaggregated by sex, they evince a decreasing tendency in the relative importance of the granting of type III work visas for all foreigners including Brazilians. Type III work visas were granted under the previous immigration law for foreigners to undertake an independent professional activity both as a self-employed person and as a company (Oliveira 2005: 80). The data in Table 2 are used as a reference only

to illustrate the tendency in the past few years, as the current legal framework, which entered into force with the passing of Law 23/2007 in 2007, foresees new conditions.

Table 2 – Work visas granted between 1999 and 2006

Work Visas granted by Portugal	Brazilians			Total foreigners		
	Total	Type III Visa	%	Total	Type III Visa	%
1999	581	300	51.64	1931	443	22.94
2000	836	276	33.01	3372	545	16.16
2001	521	221	42.42	3024	380	12.57
2002	625	229	36.64	2605	546	20.96
2003	765	124	16.21	2761	300	10.87
2004	781	136	17.41	2769	336	12.13
2005	1012	129	12.75	3054	307	6.78
2006	4091	246	6.01	6735	404	6.00

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Taking this contextualisation as a backdrop, we will examine some concrete cases of entrepreneur women of Brazilian origin in Portugal, for whom gender, class, ethnicity/race and qualifications impact upon their insertion in the labour market. The cases analysed here provide life stories and careers identified during the course of fieldwork carried out by the author, cases of Brazilian entrepreneur women who run their businesses in different zones in the city of Lisbon where there is a residential and neighbourhood concentration of Brazilians. These cases do not seek to be representative but rather illustrative of some ideal-types identified among numerous immigrant entrepreneur women. Particular attention will be given to six cases of Brazilian women who, through their life stories and economic careers in Portugal, highlight the conditions in which entrepreneurship emerges or is defined.

1. **Regina** is from Mato Grosso do Sul, married with two children, did not finish secondary school and does not have any prior work experience. In Brazil she was a housewife, took care of the children and completed domestic chores. In Portugal, her options were limited as she could not work outside of the home (like many of her Brazilian compatriots who work in domestic service), in view of the fact that she had to take care of two children of different ages, because she had

no family to help her, as she could have had in Brazil. However, within her home she found a perfect niche that allows her to take care of her children, keep house, cook and earn money.

Regina found a profitable activity that is multifaceted and could be termed self-employment and service provision from home. It allows her to juggle paid work with family work, although all of the work is considered 'domestic' [for example, house-cleaning, ironing, cooking, care of her own children and other people's]. Regina is not a maid, but she 'sells' her work from her own home. As well as looking after her own children when they are not at school, she takes care of other Portuguese and Brazilian children and irons and cooks not just for her family, but also for the other Brazilians with whom she shares the house.

The interesting aspect of this case is that it shows that entrepreneurship can be defined on the basis of simple projects. This woman's innovation lies in the realisation of two objectives within her own home, based on exactly the same tasks – to engage in paid work and to undertake unpaid work as part of the family routine (see Table 3). This juxtaposition of work and tasks also allows her to maximise her resources (both financial and in terms of time) and to minimise her costs, as she saves both in the consolidation of shopping and in time spent preparing meals. The income or profits obtained amply compensate. Nevertheless, it is not evident whether this is a strategy of survival or social mobility. This Brazilian woman has not as yet become wealthy, yet she has managed to save money, allowing her to regularly send money to her mother who lives in Brazil, and, together with her husband, to buy some property.

Table 3 – Domestic work

Unpaid	Paid
Taking care of her children	Taking care of children, babysitting services
Cooking, ironing, housework	Cooking, ironing, housework

Although in general terms, Regina's strategy is one of survival, it also has features of mobility. On the basis of her micro enterprise, she managed to improve her prior situation of economic dependence on her husband, gaining self-esteem and empowerment. Without leaving the house, this woman was able to earn money for herself and her family, which allowed her to send remittances. Within her family context, she has expanded her bargaining powers with her husband, both in everyday decisions and in relation to the family migration project, as it is she

who would currently like to stay for a longer time in Portugal. Although Regina's case does not challenge gender roles nor the classical division of labour, this behaviour is in keeping with some trends identified in the international literature. The literature indicates that when immigration experiences are 'liberating' from a gender role, women are more reluctant to return to their country of origin (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Levitt, 2001; Goldring, 2001).

2. **Elise** is from Paraná and lives in *de facto* union with a Portuguese man. This woman has a university education and had quite a diversified professional career in her country of origin. Currently, though in her activities she does not capitalise upon her prior work experience (tribunal) nor the degree that she completed in Brazil, she juggles employed work (in order to have a guaranteed income and social security) with informal entrepreneurial activity. The informal activity includes the importation and sale of Brazilian products to women (for example, Brazilian swimsuits and bikinis, lingerie) which allows her to improve her income. It is necessary to recognise that Elise can do this type of juggling of her time at the moment because she does not have children and dedicates her time to her work. This situation could change if she did have children.

In Elise's case, even if the strategy is predominantly one of survival, we can see how she combines paid work with another activity that implies a certain level of risk (importation/sale) in order to improve her economic situation in Portugal. As well as these activities she intends to attend a new course at a Portuguese university which would allow her to have a qualification that is recognised in the receiving society, and would improve her general situation.

Although the literature indicates that people with better qualifications or university training have a lower propensity for entrepreneurship (Hammarstedt, 2004), this premise could be reconsidered in light of various features, among them the fact that many of the liberal professions have a greater tendency towards self-employment. Furthermore, faced with the impossibility of getting qualifications recognised, a person may decide to set up a business, depending on the availability of resources, whether they are ethnic, familial, structural or related to gender. In this sense, Oliveira states that "the level of qualification or the recognition of foreign skills does not determine a greater or lesser propensity for entrepreneurial initiatives, but can constrain the sector of activity of the investment" (Oliveira, 2005: 98).

Therefore the lack of recognition of Elise's qualifications means that she on the one hand chooses employment for security, but then risks part of her available economic resources in another niche as a self-employed person (micro-scale economy), where gender and ethnic resources can be more productive. All of these options of economic insertion resulting from the disadvantage associated with the difficulty of getting her

qualifications recognised in Portugal are also in line with some of the arguments of Ivan Light's (1979) disadvantage theory described above.

Meanwhile Elise is waiting to begin her new higher-level course in Portugal, with the expectation of ensuring her labour mobility in the future and that her entrepreneurship will have some success. In Portugal this micro-scale economy could easily be expanded, as many Brazilian ethnic products can reach a more mass level of consumption, going beyond ethnic consumption and reaching more exotic consumption and consumption of 'world products' (similar to 'world music').

3. **Andrea** is single, trained as a language teacher, with long work experience in a bank in Northeast Brazil. She had been unemployed due to downsizing at the bank, and decided to emigrate to Portugal, where she formed a society with a Portuguese friend in order to create a shop. This case illustrates how the legal status of an immigrant can affect their entrepreneurial initiative, as Andrea experienced various problems in the legalisation process as an entrepreneur, because the immigration law does not allow her to apply as a micro entrepreneur within the framework of her visa to reside legally in the country. Her legal status only allows her to work as an employee.⁸ Therefore, even though she is the owner of half of a small clothes shop, it was the other Brazilian partner, who has been resident for a longer time and does not suffer from these legal constraints, who formalised the creation of the shop. Andrea is officially an employee in the shop in order for her to justify her residence in the country.

In Andrea's case, what best explains the situation, an 'entrepreneur disguised as an employee', are the general features and not those of gender, as in Elise's case. This woman chose to be an entrepreneur due to the combination of various factors. Among them was the fact that she had a friend who invited her to share the risk in an initiative/investment, and the difficulty of transferring her work experience from Brazil in Portugal. In this context, the fact that she neither has children nor housework duties is also significant.

4. and 5. The cases of **Jaqui** and **Caisi**, two sisters from São Paulo who are married to Portuguese citizens, illustrate in this case a situation of legal and economic stability in Portugal. Both hold residence permits obtained at a time, as they explain, when it was easier to regularise their situation in Portugal. They had a varied professional career, working for other people, until finally they opened a cosmetics shop in a shopping centre in a central neighbourhood of Lisbon, where there is a certain commercial concentration among the Brazilians in beautician services.

While they are the owners of the shop, which they opened with their own resources and not those of their husbands, (without explaining what had been their prior work experience or the source of their savings), without recourse to loans, their

husbands helped them and initially sorted out the bureaucratic and legal requirements and made contacts with the suppliers.

If we analyse Jaqui and Caisi's case, we see that a mix of *general* and *gender* elements (according to the classification presented above) explain the entrepreneurial career and the choice of business. On the one hand, they identified a very attractive commercial niche for Brazilian women (cosmetics) in Portugal, choosing a space frequented by Brazilian men and women already accustomed to another Brazilian business in the same sector - a hair salon with Brazilian clients and employees - established in that shopping centre. In Caisi's case, features related to gender also influenced the option of being an owner, as it made her agenda more flexible in order to take care of her daughter, while Jaqui saves money to send to the children from her first marriage in Brazil, who still live there with their grandparents.

6. **Tati** is from Minas Gerais, arrived in Portugal in the year 2000, obtained a residence permit because of her marriage to a Portuguese man and has a shop that sells lingerie and clothes that she makes. The shop is frequented particularly by Brazilians in the same small shopping centre dominated by Brazilian shops. Though she does not aim at a solely Brazilian public, because of the type of product that she sells, the clientele is 90% Brazilian, as "Portuguese women are embarrassed to use Brazilian lingerie".

Tati is the owner of the shop which was opened with her own resources and those of her husband, a Portuguese lawyer. The couple juggles these incomes with the various investments that they have in Brazil, above all in property (such as land and apartments). This is Tati's second business venture in Portugal, as she had already opened a shop in Massamá with a Brazilian woman as a partner, but due to misunderstandings in the division of responsibilities, they parted ways. Tati had had a different career in Brazil, working in telemarketing, but she still juggled work with selling lingerie and clothes to private clients. In Portugal she had various jobs, but she ended up managing to become her own boss, and as she does not have children, the business is a form of subsistence and personal realisation.

In sum, the cases of Brazilian women analysed illustrate the diversity intrinsic to entrepreneurship. The first cases presented (1, 2 and 3) illustrate 'getting by' strategies. The other cases (4, 5 and 6) in turn represent 'getting away' strategies. However, all of the cases illustrate that these strategies have made it viable for the women to have greater autonomy, which contributes to improving their well-being or that of their family (whether the family is in Portugal or Brazil).

Another common element identified in many Brazilian women's and men's businesses is to have a Portuguese partner, as an effective or fictitious owner.

In this sense, the partner contributes part of the social capital of the company (most common in masculine entrepreneurial strategies), or can have a purely formal and not effective role as owner. The latter case is generally observed in women's initiatives, where the Portuguese husband of the Brazilian entrepreneur is the formal owner of the business, as he facilitates the bureaucratic process of training and managing the business (loan request, charter, and so on). This fact illustrates the importance of the relationship between nationals and Brazilians in Portugal, which has been reinforced in recent years with the high frequency of mixed marriages between Portuguese men and Brazilian women.⁹

The specificity of the Brazilian case: Niches of entrepreneurial investment

Immigrant entrepreneurship is also related to the market, the target customer base and business and marketing strategies used. The existence and functioning of social networks has also been widely emphasised for its importance to immigrants, and particularly for Brazilians (Padilla, 2005, 2007c). Despite the fact that in Portugal there is no enclave economy similar to that existing in other migratory contexts such as the United States (Padilla, 2007c) - nor commercial activities located in run-down or commercially deprived neighbourhoods as in Madrid and Barcelona (Cavalcanti, 2006) - , research undertaken in Portugal highlights the centrality of social networks in the development of entrepreneurial strategies. As Oliveira (2008: 110) comments:

“Businesses that emerge in particular local contexts, on the basis of social networks established there, tend to further expand the local economy. In this sense, social networks can act not only as stimulants for entrepreneurial initiatives but also as important sustaining structures for entrepreneurial activity, supplying strategic information that improves the operational efficiency of the business and/or can lead to the identification of new business opportunities.”

In this sense, the existence and consolidation of a large Brazilian immigrant community in Portugal contributed to the development of entrepreneurial strategies that, on the one hand, respond to the cultural consumption needs of the Brazilian population itself, but on the other hand aim at a Portuguese public who over time have developed a taste for exotic products, including Brazilian products. Among the new consumer tendencies are the consumption of food products (for example, flour, tropical juices, *chuchu* pumpkin, barbecued meat, cheese bread, etc.) and a multitude of products with well-known Brazilian brand names (for example, *Havaiana* flip-flops, bikinis, lingerie, cotton clothing, and so on).

While it should be recognised that a part of the target consumer base of these businesses is Brazilian, with the desire to consume products from their country of origin, many entrepreneurial strategies also target a Portuguese public. Either way, Brazilian products could be classified in Portugal as 'world products', due to the extensive exchange and relationship that exists between the two countries, the intensification of tourism and even the importation of television programmes from Brazil (for example, soap operas that also stimulate the creation of consumption patterns).

Furthermore, it is possible to identify references to Brazilian identity (or to representations in Portugal of what is considered to be Brazilian) in many Brazilian businesses and shops. Some recurrent characteristics are the use of words associated with Brazil in the name of the shop or business, such as 'Little Brazilian Corner', 'Brazilian Garments', 'Brazilian Presence'; identification on the basis of the Brazilian colours (yellow, blue and green) and the Brazilian flag in the decoration of the business and even in the dress of those working in the shops; recourse to symbols of tropicalism with which Brazil is associated (for example, wooden parrots, music, photos of beaches). These image and marketing strategies rely on 'Brazilianness' in many of the businesses identified.

From entrepreneurs to employees...

A less studied aspect in relation to immigrant entrepreneurship in general and to women in particular is the process of immigrants who were entrepreneurs or business-owners in their country of origin, and who ceased to have that role in the receiving country. As a consequence of international migration, many women undergo a downward mobility process in all aspects (employment, autonomy, and so on) and stop being entrepreneurs or business-owners.

The literature has ignored this process, which means that we can only attempt to identify some indices of this trend. Some Brazilian women contacted for this study declared themselves to have been entrepreneurs or worked independently in Brazil, in activities that varied from the production and sale of jewellery, snacks and clothing to owning a restaurant or the sale and distribution of beverages. On arrival in Portugal, however, many of them were forced to move to a different sector or professional situation, becoming employees. It remains to be discussed whether this professional transition will be temporary, until a more propitious situation emerges for a return to entrepreneurial initiatives - or permanent. It is further relevant to question, in this context, what it was that motivated the migration: if it was failure in the entrepreneurial initiative or a weak economic situation in Brazil.

Other explanatory factors are related, on the other hand, to the specificities of the receiving economy. The difficulty in accessing credit among immigrants in gen-

eral and immigrant women in particular proved to be a determining factor in the abandonment of entrepreneurial activity (Sou, 1996). Furthermore, differences existing within the sector itself and/or the form in which the informal economy is managed in Brazil and in Portugal, can also determine various possibilities for the entrepreneurial survival of these women.

Therefore it is relevant to discuss to what extent microcredit support policies are defined in Portugal that could benefit immigrants or immigrant women. It is also relevant to identify the existence of policies and whether they are put into practice or are effective. Recently at the National Immigrant Support Centre (CNAI), a support office for entrepreneurship was created in partnership with the National Association for the Right to Credit (ANDC). On the other hand, in the Portuguese Government's *Plan for Immigrant Integration*, specific measures were defined to promote entrepreneurial initiatives among immigrant women.

Other initiatives can also be given as examples, as is the case for the AUDAX programme (a centre associated with the Higher Institute for Employment and Business Sciences, ISCTE), which is developing support programmes for entrepreneurship and family businesses and includes in its target public specific programmes for women and immigrants (in partnership with the Municipal Council of Amadora and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation). Even though these represent some signs of change in the recognition of the importance of supporting entrepreneurship among immigrant women, nevertheless as these programmes are very recent and have not been evaluated, it is still very early to assess the real impact and outreach to the target public.

Conclusion

Although the data used to illustrate cases of Brazilian women entrepreneurs in Portugal are limited, some conclusions and suggestions for further research can be inferred. The first and most important is that the theme of gender should always be considered, above all if the study being undertaken is to be exhaustive, otherwise we should recognise *a priori* that the explanations of the phenomenon are biased and it would not be possible to make consistent generalisations on the trends presented.

This article also sought to analyse how gender is present in all of people's relationships and actions, and particularly how it can influence decision-making and/or the identification of available options in the migratory context, where phenomena such as discrimination and racism can be part of the equation, and ethnicity/race can interfere in possibilities of access to the labour market which would permit the improvement of living conditions.

Despite the fact that in the cases presented here language was never identified as an obstacle in access to the labour market, other difficulties and barriers were identified - both general and related to gender. In particular, we underline the lack of recognition of qualifications and prior work experience, the existence of a micro-scale economy, the need to undertake work in the home because of family obligations, and personal realisation. In the case of Brazilian women, however, the racial and ethnic discrimination of the low-skilled or medium-skilled labour market does not seem to be central, particularly taking into account that one of the investment niches capitalises on the 'qualities' attributed to Brazilians: kindness, good relationship with clients, good mood, happiness, among others, which are necessary attributes for working in trade, hotels and catering and in customer service (Padilla, 2005, 2007c; Machado, 2003, 2006).

Even still, some disadvantages appear more clearly when entry to the labour market presupposes the 'recognition' of qualifications, or particularly work experience from the country of origin. In this case, Brazilians experience more marked downward mobility when compared with the situation in the country of origin. As has been shown, many of them may even have lost their status as a business-owner during the course of the migratory process and ended up working as employees in low-skilled work.

Furthermore they may not yet have encountered propitious conditions (from niches in the market to financial, ethnic, class and gender resources) that promote entrepreneurship, or the structural conditions may not favour them because other survival or even mobility strategies are found to be more useful. All of these questions remain open, although in the case of Brazilian woman, we can risk saying that their easy employability could be an element that contradicts the literature indicating that difficulties in the recognition of qualifications stimulate entrepreneurial initiative as a form of finding alternatives for economic insertion in the receiving country. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that the large flows of Brazilian immigration to Portugal are still quite recent, and that the majority of Brazilians have not yet formed an entirely established and rooted community.

Even still, given that Brazilians form one of the largest groups of immigrants in Portugal, investment in in-depth studies is to be recommended, for example on the Brazilian community as entrepreneurial. This investment would assist in gaining a deeper understanding of many of the trends identified by this article, and others that are yet to be discovered, helping to explain other patterns and integration strategies among Brazilians in Portugal. In the meantime, Brazilian women continue to be exotic in the Portuguese imagination (Padilla 2007a, 2007b), but not attractive to researchers who focus on immigrant entrepreneurs, who concentrate on other groups of immigrants, even those who are less numerous, such as Chinese and Indians. This fact could be investigated *per se* as a research question.

Meanwhile, we continue to perceive an image of the more informal entrepreneurial strategies of Brazilian women in the context of beauticians (for example, manicures, pedicures, hair salons), of restaurants and the female clothing sector (such as lingerie, bikinis, sarongs and flip-flops). Yet there is no consistent and systematic research available that would allow us to make recommendations for concrete policies directed at immigrant entrepreneur women. Therefore, apart from investment in research, a greater investment by the State is desirable – at national and local level – and by institutions such as foundations, banks and financial institutions, non-Governmental organisations, research and research centres in the monitoring and development of policies to promote and support entrepreneurship and immigrant women. This should take place with the objective of investing in the so-called social economy, a proven form of combating poverty and exclusion.

A gender perspective that includes a comparison of the relationships between men and women in their families, and their insertion in the labour market and in organisations, always facilitates a better perception of reality, which is fundamental in designing specific policies. This is the only way to reinforce Portugal's entry into the group of countries with pro-active gender policies, which have proven to be central in the effective progress of women in societies.

Notes

¹ The author would like to thank Filipa Palma for the assistance and support she provided in composing this article.

² For more on this, see: Padilla, 2007a, Padilla, 2007b and Padilla, 2007c.

³ Maquilas/maquiladoras are industries of foreign capital, established in countries that present the following features: low salaries, special tariff programmes, vague or flexible environmental and labour regulations, all of which tend to facilitate international competition due to low prices. For a detailed description of post-colonial and flexible production systems, see: Hoogvelt, A. (1997), *Globalisation and the Postcolonial World. The New Political Economy of Development*, London: Macmillan.

⁴ In the words of Jurik (1998), self-employment is indeed a 'gendered phenomenon'.

⁵ The cases considered here form part of the author's work on the Brazilian community in Portugal, underway since 2003.

Some cases form part of in-depth interviews with immigrants, others were part of work in the ethnographic field with Brazilian families and immigrants in a popular neighbourhood of Lisbon and in Mato Grosso do Sul in Brazil, and still others were obtained through interviews conducted for this article with Brazilian entrepreneur women in the region of Lisbon.

⁶ The General Population Census of 1960 already showed evidence of the presence of Brazilian immigrants in Portugal.

⁷ The jump in the data between 2005 and 2006 is considered to be due to the change in residence statuses and the way in which the Portuguese Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) began to enumerate immigration (stay permits converted into residence permits and the enumeration of long-term visa renewals). The examination of stay permits can be consulted at: http://www.sef.pt/portal/V10/PT/asp/estatisticas/evolucao.aspx?id_linha=4255&menu_position=4140#0 and http://www.sef.pt/portal/V10/PT/asp/estatisticas/index.aspx?id_linha=4224&menu_position=4142#0.

⁸ For a more in-depth analysis on the legal statuses of foreigners that do not permit the undertaking of an entrepreneurial activity in Portugal, see Oliveira (2004a: 74) and Oliveira (2005: 81-83).

⁹ Peixoto (forthcoming), in a retrospective analysis of unions between Portuguese people and foreigners in recent years, shows how in 1996, 34.7% of marriages were to other Europeans, 21.4% to citizens of Portuguese-speaking African countries, 20% to Brazilians and 24% to other nationalities. During the past decade, however, the participation of Brazilians in these statistics rose to 60%, with an imbalance in favour of women. Almost 70% of the marriages between Portuguese men and foreign women are among Brazilians, while in the opposite case, only 38% of mixed marriages of Portuguese women are to a Brazilian man.

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