Introduction: the end-of-century crisis and small businesses

At the end of the nineteenth century, Lisbon had a pattern of urban growth similar to that identified in other European cities not included in the first category of large cities – such as Barcelona, Bilbao, Lyon, Turin or Stockholm – where, until 1914, the central areas and historic centres were endowed with a great social diversity.¹ But in the new neighbourhoods that emerged on the outskirts of the traditional city, a much greater homogeneity regarding its inhabitants was experienced, essentially gathering workers, artisans, women employed in domestic service and retail traders. At the same time, Lisbon’s shopkeepers suffered an economic downturn, most likely similar to the one referred to in August 1902, by the British newspaper The Times, in an article announcing ‘The passing of the grocer’. In an interview with the local representative of the London shopkeepers’ movement, the newspaper recorded a crisis in the small retail trade that had apparently led more than 900 stores to bankruptcy.² Across the Atlantic, Canada’s shopkeepers faced an equally significant crisis, with an overabundance of shops and a great number of bankruptcies.³ The same happened in other continental European cities, such as Paris and Milan, in the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁴

Much of what happened was the result of a stepped demographic growth in the nineteenth century that would come to have important consequences in the reorganization of urban space almost everywhere, leading to changes in the economic and social geography of several cities. Lisbon was no exception, and the city’s retail trade, after a phase of rapid growth in the 1880s, faced a crisis in the last ten years of the century. Nevertheless, during the following decade and until 1910, the year of the Republican Revolution, retail trade resumed the growth trend, albeit at a slower pace. This occurred while the city was undergoing a transformation, witnessing an expansion into new urban areas to accommodate an increasing volume of inhabitants. At the same time, the weakness of the labour movement in Portugal during these decades and the particular political context of the city, which was the main political base of the Portuguese Republican Party, pushed Lisbon’s shopkeepers to the left of the political spectrum until 1910, a trend that in some aspects was contrary to that observed in some European countries.⁵

Through the analysis of the retail trade distribution, between 1890 and 1910, it is possible to characterize the main features of this activity and to verify the impact of the crisis on small businesses geography, as well as the opportunities and risks that those changes could represent to them. This quantitative analysis can be combined with a qualitative one about the political discourse of the Lisbon’s Shopkeepers Association, founded in 1870, so as
to help shed some light onto the peculiar political alignment that brought Lisbon’s shopkeepers to the sphere of influence of the republican movement in the final decades of the Monarchy.

The study is mainly based on very detailed information about the localization and characteristics of every single shop in the city streets for the three years covered, 1890, 1900 and 1910, gathered from fiscal sources in the municipal archives and analysed through the use of spatial analysis tools. This volume of digitized information and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) opens up new research possibilities and creates new research questions, namely concerning the role of women in the retail trade business, or the influence of the dwelling rents in determining changes in the social and economic space of a modern city, questions that were misrepresented or even ignored in previous studies about the retail business in Lisbon.\(^6\) As a case study with a comparative dimension, based on work previously done for Paris, Milan and London,\(^7\) this focus on Lisbon may contribute to a wider understanding of the urban economy transformation process that was occurring in major European cities during the so called Belle Époque.

**The sources and the methodology**

The City Council licences for commercial establishments were the main sources for this approach. Similar listings of municipal taxes have been used in other studies, namely for Paris’ grocers and Milan’s shopkeepers. However, similar to the French study, for Lisbon there was a problem of information overload, as the quantity of licences (on average about 16000 each year) and the lack of any organization apart from their sequence number require a ‘whole team of researchers’ and a lot of time spent on data collection.\(^8\)

Stored in Lisbon’s Historical Municipal Archive, the wealth of data that these sources provided allowed for a quantification of the general number of ‘open door’ establishments existing in the city in each year, as well as the study of the main features of each one of them. Among other data, it provided information about the owner of the shop, the type of business, address, the rent paid by the retailer and the periodicity of the licence (figure 1).

The levying of a tax licence for the sale of food, groceries and other products in the city was set in medieval times and regulated by several royal provisions, between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1766, the City Council defined a new way of collecting tax and set specific rates according to the type of product sold, taking into account how privileged the location of the shop was. Although contested for generating ‘confusion and vexation in its collection’, these licences remained almost unchanged until 1873.\(^9\)
However, for Lisbon’s shopkeepers of the second half of the nineteenth century, this no longer made sense, as the organization of small business had changed and shops, in most cases, were not dedicated exclusively to the sale of a single product or a limited number of products. The phenomenon was common to other European cities, where the shopkeeper was less of a ‘specialist dealer’ in a certain type of product and more of a supplier of a broad range of products and services. This was happening in England, in Germany, and in Italy, for instance, and the change was felt, in particular, in grocery stores, who now offered an increasing diversity of products to their customers.\textsuperscript{10} This occurred in other kinds of stores as well. In Paris, for instance, ‘the chemisier of yesteryear vanished only to reemerge as a men’s clothing store’, where he sold not only shirts, but also ‘ties, socks, canes and umbrellas’.\textsuperscript{11}

After a campaign of protest carried out by the Lisbon Shopkeepers Association, the matter would be resolved with a City Council edict, on 13 March 1873, which regulated the levying of tax licences based on ‘graduated rates’, charged on the value of the rents paid by shopkeepers. The new licences were required for all ‘the establishment of sale, exchange or lease of any objects or valuables; pawn shops; for hostels and premises for keeping animals...’
or things’. The fees varied according to the rent paid by the retailer (up to 50$000 réis\textsuperscript{12}, between 50$000 and 100$000, 100$000 and 200$000 or above 200$000). Until 1910, this form of municipal control over the retail trade only changed in 1886, increasing the fees and changing what the City Council now understood by ‘open door’ trade. Licences became compulsory for all ‘the establishment, shop, office or similar, in the municipality of Lisbon, where it was performed any commercial transactions on objects or valuables, or provided paid services to the public’\textsuperscript{13}

There were two main challenges to working with these sources, specifically concerning data collection and its georeferencing. The first was associated with the fact that all sources are handwritten, drawn up by several employees, with equally different handwritings, which would make it impossible, given the current state of handwritten character recognition technology,\textsuperscript{14} for an automatic or even semiautomatic data handling. The solution followed a close approach to crowdsourcing projects\textsuperscript{15} using shared databases and collaborative work from history degree students,\textsuperscript{16} a method already carried out in other studies about Lisbon.\textsuperscript{17}

The second challenge was to georeference and spatially analyse about fifty thousand addresses that were obtained through those sources. The advantages and disadvantages of using geocoding methods have long been acknowledged.\textsuperscript{18} There has been some debate concerning the ease in handling large volumes of information and on some of the problems related to the accuracy of the georeferencing process.\textsuperscript{18} Its application to Lisbon is made difficult due to the fact that the city has gone through a deep urban morphology transformation and experienced significant changes in street names throughout the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{19} Furthermore, the available cartographic sources have not made possible the recreation of all the buildings and their functional classification in a GIS environment, as was achieved in other projects.\textsuperscript{20} The remaining option was to reconstruct the existing street network of the time, based on georeferenced digital cartography for the years 1878, 1891 and 1911,\textsuperscript{21} and old street gazetteers for 1890, 1895 and 1909.\textsuperscript{22} A database of addresses was created and slight adaptations introduced on the geocoding algorithm of the GIS platform used, in order to better work with Portuguese names and spelling. The process allowed for a success rate of over 90%. Although this street level detail was the best choice for a spatial analysis, in order not to lose the other 10% of the data, all the licences were interpolated to parish level. This allowed for the analysis of all the available data, making it easier for the crossing of information along the three chosen years and the comparison of the retail trade features with other urban information, namely demographic data that only exists at parish level.
After overcoming these issues, it was possible to get a far more dynamic source, a kind of ‘metasource’ using the concept introduced by Jean-Philippe Genet, able to respond to old research questions and to introduce new perspectives about Lisbon and its retail trade. While recognizing the limitations of GIS, its spatial analysis, processing and data visualization tools must be highlighted, a few of the capabilities that have been particularly useful in the context of urban history. In recent years, the use of GIS for the study of cities and their retail trade has enhanced the available theoretical framework and the possibility of international comparative studies, which represented a definitive stimulus to the application of these methodologies to this case study.

Finally, this focus on quantitative and spatial data exploration was combined with a discourse analysis based on Lisbon’s Shopkeepers Association documents and publications, on political newspapers and, whenever possible, on a comparative look on several case studies of European urban shopkeepers developed in the past decades.

The main goals were, firstly, to contribute to a better understanding of the process of economic and social transformation of cities prior to the First World War, and, secondly, to push forward the comparative and international knowledge on the evolution of the urban retail trade and the political alignment of the shopkeepers in Southern Europe, particularly in the context of the Iberian Peninsula.

Details and geography of Lisbon’s retail trade (1890-1910)

After the last revision of the licences tax in 1886, the City Council decided to conduct a survey in order to better grasp the full spectrum of the city’s retail trade reality. It was carried through precisely, using the licences registered in 1887, and then repeated in 1893. The survey showed an almost stagnation of small businesses for the whole of the city between those two years. It was also possible to observe that the geographical distribution of trade began to show some changes, losing shops in Lisbon’s old commercial centre, and strengthening its numbers in areas that were growing more rapidly in terms of population. However, this City Council survey does not provide more details, and it is not possible to disaggregate the data by type of business, the rent paid, the gender of the shopkeeper or even the average rent value for each parish. That data was important, because, in the discourse of the Shopkeepers Association, the issue of rent and its increase in the final years of the century were very relevant. So the three year sample collected, amounting to 51002 licences, is fundamental for a better characterization of retail trade and its evolution between 1890 and 1910.
The general evolution

The first step was to try to understand the general evolution of the number of shops, using the total licences registered annually in the City Council services. The licences could be obtained either every six months or annually, which could become an issue, seeing as the same shopkeeper could be counted twice in the same year. However, as the series is stable between 1886 and 1910, the values found can be used as a good indicator.

A first glance at figure 2 highlights an increase in the number of licences in the city of Lisbon, between 1878 and 1911, as a general trend. However, the periods of 1878-1885 and 1886-1911 correspond to distinct realities. On the one hand, Lisbon had grown administratively in 1885/1886, covering a larger area now and, consequently, having a larger number of shopkeepers. On the other hand, the amendment introduced in the tax licences in 1886 placed a greater number of shops and other small businesses under the City Council’s supervision. The result of the new provisions did not go unnoticed by the Shopkeepers Association, who said that the changes would make it so that only ‘large landowners, capitalists and bums’ could manage to escape them.

Figure 2. Evolution of the number of licences in Lisbon (1878–1911).
These two combined factors explain the leap given by the number of licences between 1887 and 1888. Bearing this in mind, it is possible to distinguish three different periods in the evolution of small business. The first corresponds to a notorious expansion of the retail trade in the city between 1878 and 1885, with the number of licences raising almost 12%, in an average annual growth rate of around 1.6%, the highest of the three periods. After the transition of 1886/1888, the numbers reached a first peak in 1890, with 16432 licences. The following decade was one of crisis, first with a stagnation, then, between 1895 and 1900, with a fall in the number of licences. Between 1890 and 1900, the fall amounts to -4.7%, registering a negative average annual growth of about -0.5%. In the last period, a new trend of quantitative expansion of the retail trade can be identified. The total number of licences grew from little more than 15664, in 1900, to almost 17418, in 1910, an increase of about 10%, almost 1% per year on average.

Calculating the total number of licences for each of the years was a relatively simple task. The same cannot be said for the systematic collection of all licences for each of the years. The choice of 1890 was made for several reasons, as it was the year when the political crisis generated by the English *Ultimatum* (regarding colonial disputes between the two countries) began, helping to strengthen the Republican Party. It was also the start of the financial crisis that would lead the country to near bankruptcy and would affect all economic activities, retail trade included. In turn, the year 1910 was chosen for being the year of the Republican Revolution, which took place on 5 October, and 1900 was chosen because it represented the lowest point of the series in this period of 20 years.\(^{30}\)

Given that we intended to analyse these licences while also taking into account their geographical distribution and the impact this may have had on the remaining features of the retail trade, the following results were calculated using not the general figures given in the City Council services, but the actual figures gathered in the database for each of the three years. These figures differ slightly because some licences mentioned more than one shop. In this case study, we had 17118 licences for 1890, 16201 for 1900 and 17683 for 1910.

Although the year 1900 was the lowest point when it came to the number of licences, the turn of the century seems to give off mixed signals, some reinforcing the idea of crisis, others pointing to some recovery and, more meaningfully, to structural changes in the retail trade geography and composition. In 1890, approximately 15% of the shops had obtained licence to operate for the first time. That figure rose to 23% in 1900 and then dropped to almost 17% in 1910. This can be interpreted in two ways: on the one hand, it's a sign that the retail trade went through a significant renewal phase, with a specific impact in the final years
of the century; on the other hand, it can also be a sign of a strengthening of the traditional volatility and instability of these small businesses. These figures help to reinforce the idea of the crisis, because one should not look only at the absolute number of licences lost between 1890 and 1900, around nine hundred, but understand that that number still hides several thousand retailers that disappeared and were replaced by others, or were at least forced to move away from their previous locations. This last hypothesis can be reinforced with the Shopkeepers Association discourse when they presented the relocation of a shop as one of the major risks to its business. It was impossible for the trader to ‘carry with him all the commercial movement of the shop’, and ‘experience shows that, in most cases, evictions [caused by higher rents] bring with them the ruin of the shops’ that are forced to change location.

In addition, as for these new licences, the percentage of those which were taken for a period of one year increased from 20.6% in 1890 to 31.9% in 1900, dropping again to 22% in 1910. The six-month duration licences were the preferred choice of retailers when starting a business, but at the peak of the crisis, something was changing. If we extend the analysis to all the licences, and not just the new ones, including those retailers which were already in business at least since the previous semester, we see that the choice for annual licences was increasing rapidly. In 1890, they represented 26% of the total number of licences. In 1900, this number rose to 34%, and, in 1910, they already represented 37% of all licences. This can also be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, the city population had increased between 1890 and 1900, from a total of 298 to 356 thousand people (an increase of around 19%), and then again from 356 to 435 thousand in 1910 (22% increase). This must have represented an increase in the number of customers, signalling more confidence in business for those retailers who had managed to overcome the crisis or to those who now entered the retail trade for the first time. But the reinforcement of the annual licences could also be just another reflection of the crisis, linked to the increase of rent and a requirement for longer leases from urban owners. Possibly as a reflection of this, in 1906, the Shopkeepers Association protested against ‘excessively long lease terms’ that affected Lisbon’s retail trade.

The rise in the commercial rents in the city of Lisbon was related to several factors: the population growth from the 1870s; the dynamics of housing construction; a policy of ‘embellishments’ of the city with the construction of new boulevards, renovation of squares, expansion of public lighting and works of basic sanitation; and the renovation of the port of Lisbon, that forced the conquest of lands in the river Tagus. But the effects of these factors on the rising rents were boosted, according to shopkeepers' opinion and an analysis of the
legislation, because the leasing regulations defined in the Civil Code of 1867 were very liberal and allowed for ‘all kind of abuses from proprietors’.35

Rents and shops: numbers of a crisis in the retail trade

On average terms, there was a general increase of the value of rents. While in 1890, they amounted to 107$964 réis, they were 128$134 réis in 1900, meaning they underwent an increase of almost 19%. If we analyse the span of twenty years, the increase reaches 28%, since the average rent in 1910 was 138$073 réis. Observing that variation by classes, with the exception of the rents of less than 50$000 réis, which lost in number and in percentage of total licences, all other classes increased, whether we look from 1890 to 1900 or compare the first year with 1910 (table 1). In 1890, the majority of shops payed less than 50$000 réis of annual rent, at the end of the century the percentage had dropped below 40% and, in 1910, represented a little less than 38%. Taking into account this fall in lower rents, and combining this reading with the observations above about the high turnover of shops, this might have meant that when rents began to rise, a significant part of the small shopkeepers had no possibility to follow the change, and the result was very likely either bankruptcy or simply the closing of the shop.

Others, of course, could move upwards in the scale bar of rent values, but even thinking that all the growth in the other classes was generated by a resilience of those in the lower class, something almost impossible to have happened, there were almost one thousand licences that simply disappeared. Looking at other features of this retail trade, it is possible to start answering who these people were and why they left the retail trade, apart from the natural reasons of retirement or death.
### Table 2 - Licences for type of shopkeeper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopkeeper</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>diff. 1890-1900</th>
<th>diff. 1900-1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>2090</td>
<td>2263</td>
<td>2923</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>12600</td>
<td>11818</td>
<td>12607</td>
<td>-782</td>
<td>789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>2428</td>
<td>2120</td>
<td>2153</td>
<td>-308</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17118</td>
<td>16201</td>
<td>17683</td>
<td>-917</td>
<td>1482</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3 - Average rents for type of shopkeeper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopkeeper</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
<th>diff. 1890-1900</th>
<th>diff. 1890-1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Firm</td>
<td>220939</td>
<td>259873</td>
<td>299953</td>
<td>17.62%</td>
<td>35.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>98132</td>
<td>111172</td>
<td>109911</td>
<td>13.29%</td>
<td>12.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>61736</td>
<td>82070</td>
<td>83207</td>
<td>32.94%</td>
<td>34.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This effect seems to have reached more women than men, in relative terms, and more individual shopkeepers than firms or societies, as is possible to see in table 2. The percentage of women was 14% in 1890, and consistently dropped to around 12% in 1910. What may partly help explain this trend is also related to the rent issue, because it was possible to verify that in the case of shops managed by women, the increase of rents was around 33%, between 1890 and 1900, or 35%, between 1890 and 1910, much higher than the average (table 3). Again, that could mean that women were able to occupy stores in more expensive spaces or with higher value-added business and therefore also subject to higher rents. But the other side of the matter seems more likely and it probably implied that it would be increasingly difficult for women to maintain or open their business. Of all the licences lost between 1890 and 1900, almost a third were for shops run by women. When the number of licences began to grow again, those paid by women only represented 33 in a total of 1482 between 1900 and 1910, a mere 2.2% (table 2). So, they were unable to recover from the turn of the century crisis that seems to have pushed a lot of women away from the retail trade business, or at least created the conditions that made it difficult for them to take advantage of the demographic growth of the city as it seems to have been the case for men (table 2).

Around 89% of all women were present in only one of the three years studied and some of those who could resist for ten years or more in the business had to deal with higher rents. Such was the case of Leopoldina de Oliveira, a woman that sold small hardware in Luz Soriano Street (a street near the city centre) in 1890, with a rent of 35$000 réis. In 1900, she
was already in a different yet nearby street, with a rent of 60$000 réis. She kept this last location in 1910 with the same rent. Another example is Maria das Dores Monteiro da Silva, with a shop that sold coal and wine, in Ajuda Square, a location far from the city centre, with a rent of 12$000 réis in 1900 that was raised to 18$000 réis in 1910.36

To be a shopkeeper in Lisbon was essentially a men’s business and the trend set in these years tended to reinforce that image. In 1890 or 1900, about 74% of the licences were requested by individual men, and although their percentage dropped to 71% in 1910, in absolute terms, they were able to better resist the crisis and return to the level of 1890 in the year of the Republican Revolution (table 2). It is worthwhile mentioning that the vast majority of the firms were run by men and that they were the only gender represented in the Shopkeepers Association, which during these two decades also reinforced its representation in the city retail trade, with 10% of all the city’s shopkeepers registered as members in 1890, and around 20% in 1910.37

As for firms, they reinforced their presence in the commercial geography of Lisbon, especially after 1900, increasing more than 8% between 1890 and that year, and growing almost a third more in the subsequent decade, although the rents of the shops they managed also increased (tables 2 and 3). This clearly seems to be a result of a strategy of commercial concentration generated by the crisis and by the increase of rents, probably a survival choice of some of the men affected by the downturn of the previous decade. That was possibly the case of Augusto Carlos Jelles, owner of a tinplate store with a rent of 280$000 réis, in 1890, in one of the more commercial streets right in the city centre (Bela da Rainha Street). In 1900, the rent for that same store was 350$000 réis, but the shopkeeper was now a firm named Augusto Carlos Jelles & Co.38

*Types of business and the retailer structure of the city*

In the discourse of an employee of the City Council licences service, Lisbon was essentially a ‘city of grocery stores and taverns’.39 The sale of daily consumer products, such as meat, fish, vegetables, bread, wine and groceries, corresponded to almost half of the existing shops in Lisbon and these suffered a breakdown, either in absolute or relative terms, between 1890 and 1900. However, more telling, with almost 1000 fewer licences, was the break in the shops that sold non-daily products, where clothes and accessories, footwear, furniture, books, crockery and hardware were included, as well as drug stores, pharmacies and barbershops. In reverse, the luxury trade, such as gold, silver, jewellery, watches, silks, pianos, cars and some products imported from abroad, had a slight rise. More significant was
the growth of a set of stores included in a more open category, where the sale of tools and building materials, such as wood, sand, iron, bricks, glass and ropes, corresponded to the more represented sector, followed by a group of small workshops and commercial agents dedicated to the import/export business (table 4).

It is possible to see that the crisis of 1890-1900 affected shopkeepers unevenly, depending not only on their gender, as previously stated, but also on the type of products they sold. The shops selling daily consumer products, after all, responded well to the crisis in the ensuing decade. Their specificity and the type of products sold, in a city with a strong demographic growth, probably allowed for some resilience, and the factors of the crisis must be found elsewhere, probably in the reconfiguration of the commercial geography, as we shall see. However, the population that was coming in droves to the city would certainly be more concerned with finding housing and meeting their basic needs, and this can help explain both the drop in licences of non-daily products shops and the rising trend of the category that includes construction materials (table 4).

**Table 4 - Licenses for type of selling article and average rent**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of selling article</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily products</td>
<td>8287</td>
<td>48.41%</td>
<td>81166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-daily products</td>
<td>6052</td>
<td>35.35%</td>
<td>124654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other products</td>
<td>1880</td>
<td>10.98%</td>
<td>139791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury products</td>
<td>858</td>
<td>5.01%</td>
<td>175261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not defined</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.24%</td>
<td>192829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17118</td>
<td>16201</td>
<td>17683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At the same time, there had been increases in rent in all categories. The most significant was the increase felt by the shops that sold luxury items. By comparison, the smallest increase seemed to have affected the daily products stores (table 4). However, when we combine this with the analysis of the average rents per parish and with the visualization of the spatial distribution of the different types of stores, we see that the phenomenon was a little more complex. To a large extent, a specialization in certain areas of the city in certain types of business was occurring, and this was influenced by the evolution of rents in the city and by the distribution of population density.

*The spatial economy of the retail trade*
Analysing the evolution of the spatial distribution of the number of licences per parish, we can start by identifying the areas of the city that had a higher concentration of shops. The area along the river remained constant in terms of the distribution of the number of licences over the period, reaching peaks downtown and in the western part of the city, in a number of parishes that were industrialized earlier, mid-nineteenth century. But something was changing and, in 1900, we perceived a certain effacement of the city centre and of the westernmost parishes in favour of a growth in some parishes in the eastern side of the city (figure 3a). Quantifying and mapping this evolution allowed for a clearer picture of what was happening. To a large extent, it was from the downtown and the surrounding parishes, especially those in the western side, that the retailers seemed to be running away from, strengthening a new industrial zone that was growing in the eastern part of the city in the late nineteenth century. After 1900, although it is possible to observe a small recovery in parishes that had lost commercial licences in the previous decade, the downturn clearly persisted in the city centre (figure 3b).

Figure 3. (a) Spatial distribution of licences per parish between 1890 and 1910. (b) Evolution of licences per parish between 1890 and 1910.

One possible example of this movement towards the new industrialized neighbourhood can be the case of the small grocery shop owned by Cândido Jorge dos Ramos, that, in 1890, paid a rent of 60$000 réis in Junqueira Street, a major avenue along the river that connected
the city centre to the western neighbourhood of Belém. At the turn of the century, the shopkeeper still ran a small grocery store, but now in Terreirinho Street, in the north-eastern neighbourhood of Anjos and with a rent of 36$000 réis. In 1910, he was in the same location but the rent had been raised to 45$000 réis.40

The comparison of this spatial distribution with the one of the rents declared in the licences is proof that this was occurring, in part, influenced by the values of the rents (figure 4). These were already high in 1890, in the parishes that lost more shops, and would continue to increase in a nearly concentric distribution, from downtown, in 1900 and 1910. The shopkeepers were to follow the natural growth of the city, but were also pushed out of the old commercial centre of Lisbon by an increasingly high value of the rents. One example of this was the case of Alberto Abilio Gonçalves, who owned a shoe store in 1900 in Madalena Street, one of the main streets in the city centre, near the river and the central square of Lisbon, Comércio (commerce) Square, paying a rent of 240$000 réis. Ten years later, we find the same shopkeeper, with the same type of business but with a smaller rent, of 115$200 réis, and in Silva e Albuquerque Street, a street still close to the city centre but 0.4 miles north from its previous location.41

![Figure 4. Spatial distribution of average shops’ rents per parish between 1890 and 1900.](image_url)

At the same time, this geographical change was being accompanied by a greater specialization in the type of services or products offered in various parts of the city, as can be seen in figures 5 to 8, in particular concerning the licences for shops selling daily products and those dedicated to the marketing of luxury goods. In the first case, one can observe a certain spatial redistribution that accompanies the abovementioned general trend, with a decrease in the centre and reinforcement in the eastern part of the city (figure 5). In the case of shops dedicated to the sale of jewellery, watches and other luxury products, the trend is even clearer, with a definitive conquest of the downtown area, along the river, and in some
northward axes that corresponded to new boulevards built in the two last decades of the century (figure 6).

![Figure 5. Licences for shops that sell daily products (per parish).](image)

![Figure 6. Licences for shops that sell luxury products (per parish).](image)

In the case of non-daily products shops, their diversity prevents getting a very clear idea of the spatial trends but, in addition to the general decline that is clearly visible when comparing 1890 to 1900, a greater loss is also discernible in the central and western areas of the city, although with some recovery in the first decade of the twentieth century (figure 7). The last set of shops, where we highlighted the ones dedicated to the sale of construction materials, small workshops and the import/export business, perhaps by this same feature, appeared to have followed more clearly the urban growth of Lisbon, which took place along several axes, starting from the old centre and moving northward and along the river. In fact, these type of licences and businesses seemed to have followed a certain economic development of the city related to housing construction and the growing dynamism of the port, that started being built at the end of the 1880s.
The political impact of the crisis

As we have seen, the signs of the crisis were not equally expressed throughout the city and between all kinds of retailers. The first aspect was related to the population growth and urban development of the city, as well as the increase of rents from the shops in the central or traditionally more commercial area. This had been occurring, at least, since the mid-1880s, and had resulted in a geographical redistribution of shopkeepers to other neighbourhoods, with the number of establishments decreasing downtown and in a few close parishes. What could be a natural process, similar, in fact, to what was going on in other European cities, i.e. the fact that the shopkeepers moved in the same direction in which the customers were moving, was accompanied in Lisbon by two external pressures that greatly contributed to building up a sense of crisis among the retailers that somehow influenced their political alignment.

On the one hand, since the late 1880s, those signs of increased insecurity from the retail trade were accumulating, namely the increase of shops’ rents and the idea that the political and economic elite of the monarchy was hardly preoccupied with the rent issue or even prepared to give it a satisfactory solution. In 1888, for example, the newsletter (Boletim) of the Shopkeepers Association started a set of articles on the subject with the suggestive title,
‘The exaggeration of the shops’ rents is a reprehensible extortion’. These related to the practice of ‘greedy and avaricious owners’ who took advantage of the property ‘created at the expense of a lot of work, permanent care and, sometimes, a lot of hardship’. And by propriety, the shopkeepers meant their customers.

On the other hand, the beginning of the 1890s brought with it financial and economic instability, coinciding with the political crisis of the Monarchy and introducing a new degree of uncertainty about the future and distrust in relation to solutions implemented by politicians for the hardships of the time. At the same time, the Republican Party propaganda – namely their political programme published in 1891, where they promised lower taxes, to defend free trade and to resolve the rent issue – facilitated the political choices of a set of traditionally very pragmatic individuals.

Thus, as the shopkeeper saw the conditions to open and maintain his establishment become increasingly difficult and watched the clientele grow in other areas of the city or decrease their consumption, forcing him to change location, an idea began to grow: that he would not get from the State and the conservative politicians that held government the necessary help to overcome his difficulties, but would be subject to a growing fiscal exigency, that faithful enemy of the petit bourgeoisie who always had a ‘hatred of taxation’. In the press that advocated their cause was touted the idea that the monarchical Governments only remember the men of the retail trade ‘to increase taxes and ask for votes’. And the second feature was important not only because they were allowed to vote but because, comparatively to other social groups in the city, they usually voted in larger percentages in the municipal and parliamentary elections.

Even so, there was a good chance that everything was just another moment of radicalization of the shopkeepers’ discourse, were it not the case that it was reinforced, in Lisbon, by the absence of other factors that across Europe were framing the resentment and insecurity of these social groups and leading them to more conservative political positions. Indeed, in the Portuguese capital, both commercial competition and concentration, internationally expressed in the appearance and strong development of department stores and consumer cooperatives, and the problem of socialism, with implications in labour relations and in electoral and political dynamics, were far from representing the almost natural scapegoat that the shopkeepers tended to cling to or to where they were driven by the intervention of right wing political parties in other countries.

On the contrary, before 1910, in Lisbon, the late and anaemic growth of those competitive factors did not have enough strength to introduce themselves to shopkeepers or
to be used by third parties as any real or imagined problem.\textsuperscript{50} The owner of the most successful department store in the city was a member of the Shopkeepers Association, a respected republican and a man always praised by the Association’s newsletter as a self-made and honourable man.\textsuperscript{51} In addition, the weak development of socialism, a result of a late and very shy industrialization, did not pose a real threat to the social and political equilibrium of the monarchy, not even in Lisbon, where the socialist movement impact on elections, for instance, was classified as ‘insignificant’.\textsuperscript{52} So, the political elites of the monarchy, linked to the two main parties (Regenerator Party and Progressive Party) that monopolized the government in the final decades of the regime, did not feel the need for any appeal towards the petty bourgeoisie; on the contrary, they even criticized and ridiculed them when they were already feeling the crisis. That happened in 1890, for example, with a newspaper that supported the Conservative Government in power at the time (from the Regenerator Party) characterizing ‘mister shopkeepers of the retail trade’ as ‘creeps and quacks’ and their discourse as rhetoric of ‘Jacobin flavour’.\textsuperscript{53} Or in 1908, when a monarchical, catholic and anti-socialist newspaper ranked the Shopkeepers Association as a ‘distinctively Jacobin and Masonic society’. But the newspaper also recognized that the option for a ‘conservative politics’ was happening ‘everywhere [in Europe] except in Portugal, where everyone knows that in Lisbon mainly many shopkeepers and merchants belong to the party of disorder’, meaning the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{54} Through all this, it was possible to assert, in a previous study comparing Lisbon, Paris and Milan, that ‘the Lisbon petty bourgeoisie [between 1890 and 1910] was always more convinced that it was effectively threatened by privileges, by corruption, by the monopolies of the rich and powerful, than by the socialism of the working class.’\textsuperscript{55}

The combination of these factors, alongside the fact that the owners of the shops were in most cases men, and men were also the only ones to participate in the Shopkeepers Association, is probably a good indicator to understand why the different paths of political alignment of Lisbon and other European cities. In those cities, shopkeepers were leaning toward conservatism, and those from Lisbon were strengthening their connection to radical left-wing ideals represented by the Republican Party. To understand the relationship between shopkeepers and republicanism, it is also important to note the absence of economic pressure from above, after the end of the century crisis, and of social pressure from below, enabling the resentment and the radicalism of the discourse to shift from the purely economic or social features to a politically engaged agenda where the rents issue was fundamental.
In this way, a peculiar image of the crisis was built among shopkeepers, one that did not take into account the constraints of a business life that was very volatile, yet little modernized and affected by population dynamics. As a matter of fact, they saw in the government instability, in the monarchists politicians, in the crisis of parliamentary regime that the country experienced at this time, and, ultimately, in the monarchy itself, the primary causes of their economic frustrations. These aspects were visible in the shopkeepers’ speech in the early 1890s. For example, in a general assembly of the Shopkeepers Association, in September 1890, protesting against a tax raise, ‘some considerations unfavourable to the monarchic institution’ were made. An even more radical discourse can be found later, in 1908, after the economic crisis had passed, when a republican newspaper claimed that the Shopkeepers Association had been ‘the first to understand that there is a link between public freedoms and commercial progress’. The Association itself, at a general meeting, characterized the monarchy as ‘obsolete and antagonistic to liberal principles’ and the only bulwark of ‘governments adverse to the interests of the country’.

The departure of the idea of crisis from its economic aspects was also linked to another divergent route when comparing Lisbon with other cities. In almost all major European cities the growth in the number of shops happened faster than the increase in population, which raised difficulties for retailers, which resulted in the decrease of the average number of customers per shop. In Lisbon, it is likely that a similar phenomenon may have occurred until the early 1890s, which would help to understand the contours of the crisis experienced by the small businesses during that decade. However, in the opening decade of the twentieth century, the compared growth between shops and inhabitants of the capital had become very favourable to shopkeepers, with the population growing at an average annual rate of 2% between 1900 and 1911. Thus, retailers saw a gradual increase of their customer base, probably allowing them to forget the economic problems of the previous decade. What they most likely did not forget were another kind of difficulties, leading them to maintain an idea of an uncertain future, increasingly linked to political factors and the unresolved issue of the rents, leading them to say, in 1908, that it was to the ‘oppression [the Monarchy] and not to freedom [the Republic]’ that a ‘class of those who have things to lose’ should demand responsibilities by the difficulties experienced by the retail trade.

Conclusion

Between 1890 and 1910, the retail trade of Lisbon underwent a reconfiguration related to the demographic growth of the city, but mainly with the issue of urban rents. It was a
small-scale trade, where the sale of daily consumer goods occupied a very prominent place. Of course, their geographical distribution appeared to follow the geographical distribution of the population and urban growth that was felt in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This small business had been affected by the financial and economic crisis that hit the country in the 1890s, leading to a fall in the total number of licences that were requisitioned every year to the City Council. However, the first decade of the twentieth century was one of recovery, with the overall numbers of 1910 to exceed the figures recorded in 1890.

However, the retail trade we observed in the year of the Republican Revolution was not exactly the same as it had been twenty years earlier. The fall in economic activity, together with the rise in population, accompanied by increasing pressure from the rising shops’ rents, caused a spatial redistribution process of the shops, with a relative effacement of the city centre and a transfer of a certain commercial concentration from the western to the eastern part of Lisbon.

This new commercial geography was accompanied by more or less significant changes in the retail trade internal structure and characteristics. The difficulty in coping with the rising rents, much higher in the centre than in the periphery and always increasing throughout the period studied, led to the impact of the end of the century crisis to be felt differently by various types of businesses and various types of retailers. Smaller shops, or at least those who paid lower rents, were very affected, as were shops selling non-daily products and, to a lesser extent, shops of daily consumer products. For these, staying in the city centre had become increasingly difficult. At the same time, this move was accompanied by a strengthening of the presence of shops selling luxury goods in this same space. Living from a business that would bring them greater added value for each sale made, this type of shopkeeper had strengthened its presence in the political, financial and cultural centre of Lisbon, corresponding to the downtown parishes. The trade linked to housing construction and import/export took advantage of the population growth and the new opportunities of a seaport in development to also reinforce their positions, especially after 1900.

A retail trade where the male sector weight was strengthened, not only because the individual male shop owners managed to recover their position more easily after 1900, but also because the very significant growth of firms, also controlled by men, had proven to be a good strategy to overcome the difficulties of the previous decade. In relative terms, the main impact of this reconfiguration, both geographically, and economically, seems to have been felt by women. Most of them held small businesses, linked to the sale of essential products or small objects of non-daily use, and lost positions in the internal trade structure of Lisbon,
both in relative terms, compared to men, and objectively, compared to the total number of shopkeepers. Perhaps more significant than that was the fact that with the continued rise in the shops’ rents, it was now apparently more difficult for them to maintain or enter the small retail business.

All of these facts, alongside the peculiar social and political configuration of the city in the last years of the Monarchy, with the strength of the republican movement and the weakness of the workers' and socialist movement, allowed the radical discourse of the Shopkeepers Association, who had been always present since its founding in 1870, to be strengthened by building up an image of the end of the century crisis as having been caused by the inability or lack of political will of the monarchical elites, which were also largely the proprietary elites of the country, to solve the main problem of small businesses in Lisbon, the tenancy. And this was probably instrumental in strengthening the republicanism within the associative movement of the shopkeepers, leading them to take a somehow different political path from the one that was trailed by others in several European cities prior to the First World War.

2 Michael J. Winstanley, The Shopkeeper’s World, 1830-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 120.
3 David Monod, Store Wars: Shopkeepers and the Culture of Mass Marketing, 1890-1939 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
6 Ibid.
7 Nord, Paris Shopkeepers; Morris, The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan, 1886-1922; Winstanley, The Shopkeeper’s World.


A special thanks to 35 history degree students from Universidade NOVA de Lisboa that volunteered to help collecting the data from the City Council archive in the beginning of the Summer Holidays between 2012 and 2016. This article is also theirs!


28 These general figures were collected only between these two years because they correspond to the dates of two of the population censuses that we can use to compare the demographic evolution with that of the retail trade. Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, Licenças para Estabelecimentos de Comércio e Indústria, 1878 to 1911.

29 ACLL, Relatório e contas de 1887, 1888, 49.


31 See, for instance, Denecke and Shaw, ‘Traditional Retail Systems in Germany’, 86; Nord, Paris Shopkeepers, 200–204.

32 ACLL, Relatório e contas de 1889, 1890, 80–82.

33 ACLL, Relatório e contas de 1906, 1907, 21.


35 Código Civil Portuguez aprovado por Carta de Lei de 1 de Julho de 1867 (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1868); O Lojista, 1891.
36 Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, *Licenças para Estabelecimentos de Comércio e Indústria*, 1890 (licences 588 and 15316), 1900 (licences 4235, 10470 and 13199) and 1910 (licences 1367, 9295, 12220 and 16203).


38 Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, *Licenças para Estabelecimentos de Comércio e Indústria*, 1890 (licence 1544) and 1900 (licence 407).

39 *Comércio de Portugal*, 1892.

40 Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, *Licenças para Estabelecimentos de Comércio e Indústria*, 1890 (licence 16052), 1900 (licence 12122) and 1910 (licence 11261).

41 Ibid., 1900 (licence 9216) and 1910 (licence 2015).


44 *Boletim da Associação Comercial de Lojistas de Lisboa*, 1888.

45 Alves, *A República atrás do balcão*.


47 *O Lojista*, 1892.


51 *Boletim da Associação Comercial de Lojistas de Lisboa*, 1907.


53 *Diário Ilustrado*, 1890.

54 *Portugal*, 1908. About the political stand of this newspaper see Marie-Christine Volovitch, ‘As organizações católicas perante o movimento operário em Portugal (1900-12)’, *Análise Social* 18, no. 72/74 (1982): 1197–1210.


56 *Diário Popular*, 1890; *O Século*, 1890.
57 Mundo, 1908.

58 Boletim da Associação Comercial de Lojistas de Lisboa, 1908.


60 Boletim, 1908.