

**AS FOMES: DA COMIDA E FALTA DELA À FOME DE LUCROS***HUNGERS: FROM FOOD AND LACK OF IT TO HUNGER FOR PROFITS*

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**RESUMO**

O ensaio apresentado remete ao XIV Congresso Internacional em Direitos Humanos promovido pela Escola Superior da Magistratura Tocantinense (ESMAT), na cidade de Palmas, Tocantins, entre os dias 19 e 21 de outubro de 2022. O argumento central remete à ideia de que o escândalo representado pelos números da fome, longe de ser um flagelo, é a expressão mais evidente de uma sociedade submetida às necessidades do capital, em detrimento à satisfação adequada das necessidades humanas básicas. As ponderações desenvolvidas a partir do argumento central percorrem as dimensões do dever do Estado na garantia das condições de cidadania, debruçam-se na manipulação do imaginário social quanto aos significados da ideia de comida e da insegurança alimentar. Por intermédio de diálogos de autores de referência na temática da fome, comida e segurança alimentar, fundamentou-se a conclusão que atribui às necessidades do capital a determinante principal da condição de insegurança alimentar atual.

**Palavras-Chave:** Fome. Insegurança Alimentar. Comida. Estado e Necessidades Humanas.

**ABSTRACT**

The essay presented refers to the XIV International Congress on Human Rights promoted by the School of Judges of the State of Tocantins, in the city of Palmas between October 19 and 21, 2022. The central argument refers to the idea that the scandal represented by hunger numbers, far from being a scourge, is the most evident expression of a society submitted to the needs of capital in detriment to the adequate satisfaction of basic human needs. The considerations developed from the central argument go through the dimensions of the State's duty in guaranteeing the conditions of citizenship, and focus on the manipulation of the social imaginary as to the meanings of the idea of food and food insecurity. Through dialogues with reference authors on the theme of hunger, food and food security, the conclusion is based that attributes to the needs of capital the main determinant of the current condition of food insecurity.

**KEYWORDS:** Hunger. Food insecurity. Food. State. And human needs.

## I INTRODUCTION

The II VIGISAN Survey, presented in August 2022, revealed in figures the extent of food insecurity in the country. Between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, Brazil had 125.2 million people with some degree of difficulty in ensuring regular and permanent access to the food necessary for a sufficiently adequate, safe and healthy diet for human beings. Of these more than 100 million people in a condition of hunger, 33.1 million, or 26.4%, were literally starving.

The scandal represented by the hunger figures reminds governments and civil society of the unquestionable duty of the state and society to halt at any cost the evolution of a tragedy whose roots are firmly planted in the land of capital's needs, in the field of the exponential appetite for profit. From this perspective, hunger is not what many insist on calling a scourge. Far from it, in a world that produces enough food to supply 1.5 times the total population of the planet, hunger is a scandal (George, 1978)<sup>1</sup>

Assuming that hunger is a scandal and that in order for it to be eliminated, the state must first and foremost fulfill its primary duty to ensure that every individual, without restrictions or considerations, enjoys full health and the capacity for agency with critical autonomy (Doyal & Gough, 1991; Gomes Junior, 2015), requirements for the exercise of citizenship, we present in this essay arguments in defense of a public food supply policy that imperatively sets out to overcome hunger in Brazil.

To this end, we have divided our argument into two parts, in addition to this introduction and conclusion. In the first part, we present the disputes surrounding hunger in the country and question whether income transfer policies, the almost exclusive means of state intervention in the fight against severe and moderate food insecurity, are sufficient or whether they transfer the responsibility of trying to deal with the deprivation they face onto the beneficiaries of these policies.

The second section looks at the Brazilian food supply system, which has evolved from a more active state presence to the opposite, the absence of regulations and other interventions in favor of the idea that supermarkets adequately fulfill the function of ensuring supply, all that is needed is for the consumer to have the money to pay for the food.

## 2 HUNGER IN BRAZIL TODAY:

Hunger is not a scourge, it's a scandal. This is what Susan George (1978) said in *The Hunger Market*, indignant at the hundreds of millions of hungry people in a world that produces more than enough so that no person goes to sleep without having eaten enough to meet all their needs of any kind.

In the 21st century, despite food production maintaining an average growth rate of around 2.5% per year while the population maintains a vegetative growth rate of around<sup>2</sup> 1.16%

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<sup>1</sup> Pesquisa sobre as condições de insegurança alimentar levada a termo por pesquisadoras associadas à Rede de Pesquisadores em Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional, tendo como parâmetro para a avaliação da Insegurança Alimentar a Escala Brasileira de Insegurança Alimentar (EBIA)

<sup>2</sup> FAO

<https://www.fao.org/publications/search/es/?serialtitle=UGFub3JhbWVhWVZGUgU2VndXJpZGFkIEFsaW1lbnRhcmlhIHkgbGEgTnV0cmVjacOzbiBlbiBBbcOpcmVjYSBMYXRpbmEgeSBibCBDYXJpYmU=>  
[www.olheparafome.com.br](http://www.olheparafome.com.br)

(Gimenez & Patel, 2009), hunger, according to data from the Food Security Report 2022, is still at an all-time high. , published by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a United Nations body, continues to rise, claiming the lives of 828 million people worldwide.

In Brazil, the II VIGISAN survey was conducted by researchers associated with the Food Security Researchers Network (PENSSAN). , says that at least 125 million Brazilians live in a state of food insecurity, of which 33.1 million are literally starving. These are pornographic figures, given that the world produces enough food to feed 1.5 times the Earth's population, and that Brazil is one of the largest producers of grains and animal protein of the world.

The roots of hunger have been known and discussed for a long, long time. They don't lie in the availability of food, but in the asymmetry between disposable income in the hands of the broad masses of people and the prices of food in the distribution circuit; the explanation for the fact that a few are eating much more than they should while many are eating less, subjected to an inadequate and unsafe diet that exposes them, beyond hunger, to real risks to their lives is the perverse face of a society marked by a high concentration of income and opportunities, excluding the masses of people from participating in a meaningful life.

The publication of the II VIGISAN, in August 2022, exposed in the form of data a reality of misery and hunger that has long been perceptible to the empirical eye of anyone who walks around Brazil's cities and countryside. In large and medium-sized cities, urban space has deteriorated rapidly since 2015, perhaps even before, with thousands of people living in undignified conditions camped out in the streets and squares, sleeping in cardboard boxes, turning through garbage in search of scraps of food.

In the analysis of the results obtained from the data collected during the mentioned survey, the degrading scenario of thousands of individuals living on the streets was reinforced by the fact that in households where people lived with moderate and severe food insecurity, there were reports of shame and embarrassment in order to get food: "... the use of socially and humanly unacceptable strategies to obtain food, thus violating their dignity and their Human Right to Adequate Food" (p 55).

There are 33.1 million starving people living in households unprotected from any public policy that provides a minimum of dignity in the form of food, hygiene and cleaning products.

Even for those families who receive Brazil Aid, the current name for the "Bolsa Família", created in 2003-2004, a cash transfer of R\$400.00 (four hundred reais) is incapable of altering the conditions of real risk to life that hunger entails, as it would be if the transfer were raised to R\$600.00 (six hundred reais). The research on food insecurity that has been guiding our argument notes that in Brazil, between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022, 36.8% of the Brazilian population had an average per capita income of around half a minimum wage, that is, R\$606.00 (six hundred and six reais) or just over R\$20 (twenty reais) per capita per day, while 19% of the population tried to live on a monthly per capita income of R\$304.00 (three hundred and four reais) or R\$10 (ten reais) per day. Thus, if we assume that all families with this income received a transfer of R\$ 400 (four hundred reais) or R\$ 600.00 (six hundred reais), family income would reach, for families with a per capita income of half the minimum wage, R\$ 2,624.00 (two thousand six hundred and twenty reais) (2.2SM) and R\$ 1,612.00 (one thousand six hundred and twelve reais) (1.3 SM), respectively.

The Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies (DIEESE) said that the average value of the basic food basket in Brazil for August 2022 was equivalent to 58.54% of the net minimum wage, minus the 7.5% of the INSS, i.e. one third of the country's population with an average family income of between 2 minimum wages (R\$ 2,424.00) and 1 minimum wage (R\$ 1,212.00) respectively. 424.00) and 1 minimum wage (RS 1,212.00) in gross values, spend

between 27.36% and 54.73% of their disposable income, respectively, just to buy the 13 products in the basic food basket.

It's important to remember that people's lives are not restricted to food. By constitutional mandate, the minimum wage should cover the expenses of a worker and his family with food, hygiene, clothing, housing, health, education, transportation, leisure and social security. In accordance with this imperative, DIEESE calculated that, in September 2022, the minimum wage should be R\$6,306.90 (six thousand three hundred and six reais and ninety cents). The reality, however, is that the poorest people in the country spend between 1/3 and half of their family income on food alone. This projection does not include spending on cooking gas, whose national average price for a 13kg cylinder in September 2022 was around R\$113.00 (one hundred and thirteen reais). This is only the most visible face of the misery and hunger that plague the country.

In *Roots of Hunger*, a work organized by Maria Cecília Minayo (1985), Paul Singer dealt with the condition of stabbing hunger as epidemic hunger, surrounded by urgency, which does not allow for procrastination in state intervention and demands solidarity from civil society, from the band that eats in favor of those people who are hungry, as a 10 or 11 year old girl reported in 1999, "they eat even thoughts"<sup>3</sup>. The urgency of pushing back this social scandal is indisputable; getting the world off the Hunger Map markers, however, is far from representing overcoming hunger. The cutoff line that establishes the minimum percentage of hungry people at which a nation leaves the Hunger Map signals that the "urgency" has been lifted without this meaning that hunger has been extirpated; the open shame retreats, still as shame, to the privacy of the homes of the poor while thousands of hungry people who have not managed to overcome the Hunger Map cutoff line follow.

However, once the country is off the Hunger Map, the message to the social imagination is that the "worst is over" and that residual hunger has always existed, as if a single hungry person were acceptable in a world of abundance and excess.

For Singer (1985), epidemic hunger is one side of the coin, while the other side shows endemic hunger, which is silent and does not reveal emaciated faces and dull eyes in the appeals for help made by solidarity organizations or in the news about misery in the poor part of the world. In this area, hunger takes the form of the substitution of nutritious foods with others of high energy density and poor nutritional composition, sold at prices accessible to the available income, or the intermittent presence of all the components of a meal, or even the reduction in the amount of food available for each meal.

Whether in the territory of epidemic hunger or in the oceanic dimension of endemic hunger, the coping alternatives that have prevailed around the world are those based on direct cash transfer initiatives.

Cash transfer schemes to alleviate hunger by leveraging the purchasing power of the poorest are not exactly new, and references to such initiatives can be found in the Bible (Drèze&Sen, 2002). There is no doubt that this mechanism is a powerful ally in alleviating the individual conditions of food insecurity among the poorest.

However, as we have already seen in a previous passage, in order to be lived meaningfully, life is not just about food. This is one of the requirements that, if adequately met, certifies that the person will not die of hunger, which is not enough when we consider that basic human needs refer to the enjoyment of full health and the exercise of the capacity for agency with critical autonomy,

<sup>3</sup> Frase escrita num desenho selecionado, em 1999, pelo Banco de Alimentos da Prefeitura de Santo André, SP, por ocasião de um concurso que escolheria o cartão de Natal do Banco de Alimentos daquele ano.

conditions that involve many other "satisfiers" besides food. The Human Right to Adequate Food in its requirements for fruition goes beyond pure and simple access to food and encompasses the determinants of Food Sovereignty, what to produce, how to produce, for whom and for what to produce and with whom to produce.

In the 2000s, in its World Development Report, the World Bank noted its concern to recover the consumption capacity of the under-consumption segments in Latin America, and in the document entitled Poverty Reduction Strategy 2000-2001 it advocated income transfers and chose the family as the best manager of the transferred income. During this period, the notion that encouraging entrepreneurship would be the surest way to recover the insertion of the economically excluded into consumption was born. For Siqueira (2021), the income transfer initiatives in the fabric of poverty and misery, advocated by the World Bank, capture the social imaginary, stifling notions of class belonging among the popular masses by improving consumption conditions. In a market democracy (Dowbor, 1998) in which citizenship is not based on rights, but on consumption, changes in the ability to consume tend to give new meaning to all things, even food, which has become a commodity like any other.

From what has been said so far, hunger and overcoming it do not fit, as has been the predominant idea in the formulation of public policies stimulated by national states and supported by international organizations such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Organization for Economic Development Cooperation and even the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in policies to transfer income and encourage entrepreneurship and emulation of consumption among the poorest. Without denying the importance of income as a decisive factor in improving the conditions of access to food consumption, to leave it up to the market and families to find the best rationale in the face of each other's needs would be to blame the individual for the eventual failure of their strategy to overcome hunger and at the same time consume in other sectors in the search for meaning in life.

### 3 THE FOOD VACUUM: FOOD UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE MARKET

The supermarket is a recent American invention, 1916 (Patel, 2008). It was created in response to the needs of a food industry that was modernizing and diversifying so quickly that the original retail formats, the conventional warehouses, no longer met the needs of the industry.

In the realm of merchandise, under the capitalist mode of production, things arrive on the market emptied of their meanings (Fontenelle, 2017). It follows that advertising is responsible for explaining the usefulness of that thing, so that the consumer identifies in the product the quality to satisfy their need, whether it comes from the stomach or from fantasy (Marx, 2013). In other words, a commodity on the shelf is only exchange value, and what leads us to buy it, which in the end is the only way its usefulness can be realized in consumption, is what we have learned about its usefulness, either through the accumulation of previous information or through advertising, which is responsible for showing dimensions and meanings that we were previously unaware of.

These first movements give rise to a few considerations before we go any further. The emptying of meaning and advertising as an instrument for re-signifying things hides a trap. Let's take as a practical example the advertising that recommends the use of this or that washing powder; the advertising pieces highlight the obvious, such as qualities: leaving clothes clean, not destroying the fabric, keeping colors, and add inscrutable qualities: clean smell, polar shine, etc. But what other function would you expect from a soap that doesn't clean or destroy the clothes being washed? The same goes for the food we buy every day. There are so many predicates added

to the qualities expected in food that, when we buy one of these products, we take with us the plot of an adventure, of the unusual, of rejuvenation and so on.

The food industry, in its vertiginous movement of production, as with any industry in any field, pursues the capture of the largest possible slice of profits and to do this it bets on innovation that can put a company ahead of its competitors, on the expanded domination of production chains and finally on controlling people's willingness to consume that type of merchandise, so that this willingness converts to what that company produces.

However, we must bear in mind that the nature of what is considered food and the formation of taste are more associated with social relations than with the biological notion of the possibilities of what is edible (FISCHLER, 1995).

Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that taste is definitely not a physiological determination built into the taste buds of the tongue or the cells of the palate (ONFRAY, 1999; POLLAN, 2008; MONTANARI, 2008). The development of social relations between people subject to the power arrangements that a class society engenders influences the construction and changes in the meanings of practically all the things that give meaning to our idea of life. This gives rise to traditions, taboos and prejudices, preferences and habits that mark societies, that distinguish social classes, that encourage imitation as an evolution or even just as a stereotype of the distinction that accompanies custom and consumption.

Given the meanings of food and its consumption, it seems reasonable to accept that the social determination of taste in the realms of fantasy sometimes has a greater or lesser impact on consumption; socially determined taste can either strengthen the consumption of a certain food or make it outlawed until new interests, derived from another power arrangement, rehabilitate it while outlawing the other. The advertising expenditures made by the food giants, the Ten Sisters<sup>4</sup>(ESTEVEZ, 2017), in an effort to promote almost two thousand new food items launched onto the market every year. According to Pollan (2008), Omnstead (2017), Montanari (2008), among others, techno-scientific development applied to food engineering has been successful in creating food that imitates food from a few food varieties (soy, corn, rice, wheat, sugar), which practically reproduce the flavor, texture, color and to some extent taste, of practically any real food we know; a legalized counterfeit of the original product, cheap and very profitable for those who produce it.

For the food market, the assumptions that evoke the gastronomic memories, practices and eating habits of peoples, work in practice as an obstacle that hinders the expansion of sales and profits. One of these obstacles has always been that represented by the conventional food retail system, by restaurants and bars based on daily menus and made-to-order dishes. Food sales basically depend on two factors: the first, as already seen, in the form of advertising conveyed by the intensive use of synesthetic resources, whether in the form of direct advertising broadcast on television, radio and social networks, or subliminally in films, television series and soap operas; the other, on an always favorable relationship between disposable income and the prices of goods; food that imitates food must bring together distinctive appeals that encourage the desire to consume them and cheap prices that make them accessible to as many diners as possible.

As Veras (2017) notes, supermarkets, with their sales logic, advertise practicality combined with diversity and low prices, all brought together in a single, modern space in which consumers can finally exercise their right to choose, and they have changed the way we eat and consume,

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<sup>4</sup> Para identificar os 10 maiores conglomerados da indústria de alimentação, conhecidos como as 10 Irmãs, buscar nas referências por Veras, Ester; O negócio da comida.

shredding our memories and convictions about how to satisfy our food needs properly and safely, subjecting everything and everyone to the needs of capital.

From this perspective, what we consider to be normal turns out to be a trap. The maxim that the consumer is always right, repeated over and over again in academic textbooks and common sense, is just propaganda. As Patel (2008) and Giménez & Patel (2009) point out, the consumer is the enemy who needs to be submitted, and the most lethal form of submission is the capture of their ability to decide, to choose. In this battle, companies linked to food production, from farm to retail, competitors in the market dispute become allies against the common enemy, consumer autonomy and everything that can offer shelter to this "dangerous" exercise in rationality. The consumer is always right as long as he chooses what the food oligopolies want him to choose, a reinterpreted Fordist logic.

The entry of the supermarket into the food retail system is directly linked to the weakening of capillary retail chains. Traditional food retail outlets have always played an important role in providing food, especially for families belonging to the lower income strata, which consumer studies now refer to as "class C"<sup>5</sup>, because it is these outlets that generally offer direct credit via passbook and also ensure that food can be bought in fractional units, which is common in income emergencies.

Supermarkets, on the other hand, operate with cash sales and convey a very simple and clear idea as advantages, in addition to the low prices they offer: everything the consumer needs, in one place; packaged and processed food products, from breakfast to snacks, from quick and practical meals to the elaborate dish that goes to the table in the microwave in minutes. There are many messages highlighting the modernity of the equipment and distinguishing those who shop there with the mark of the same modernity.

With the spread of self-service stores, the dispute between the conventional and the modern has been strongly tilted towards the latter. Cheap, practical food, which saves preparation time and can be stored for long periods without losing the condition it needs to be consumed, has also had an impact on reducing the costs of reproducing the workforce, and for capital this is what really matters. In addition, the new food products have brought with them new needs in the kitchens where meals are prepared, everything has turned to the modernity of ready-made or pre-prepared food, the empire of the wrapped, the canned, the frozen has been established to the total detriment of the practices of peeling and cooking food in time (Monteiro et al., 2022).

Studies on urbanization in Brazil have in common the idea of a city that develops according to the needs of capital, but not necessarily those dictated by industrialization, as would be expected if the generalization of the urban question were taken as a guideline. Agro-export activities and the fluctuations in occupations throughout the economic cycles that have operated as an emulating agent of accumulation for centuries help us to understand the constant movement of masses of migrants who, expelled from the countryside, seek survival in the city, and this enterprise does not refer to the offer of employment, but rather to the urgency that a miserable life imposes.

In her magnificent book "Death and Life of Great Cities", Jane Jacobs (2000) dedicates an entire chapter to discussing the conditions for urban diversity and its importance in city life. For the author, the diversity of uses gives vitality to a neighborhood, far beyond aspects related to the economy. The diversity of uses "animates" the place, and it is precisely this condition that influences the social relationships that develop there; the criticisms of "anarchy" and "anti-

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<sup>5</sup> Classe C é um estágio de consumo que alberga, no Brasil, algo em torno de 100 milhões de indivíduos, 55% da população com rendimentos familiares que variam entre R\$ 2000,00 (duzentos reais) e R\$ 8000,00 (oitocentos reais) mês.



aesthetics" that many attribute to spaces in which several activities mix at the same time are aspects that Jacobs refutes by arguing that diversity does not presuppose vulgarity, much less anarchy.

In the "Political History of Food Supply" (1918-1974), by Linhares and Teixeira da Silva (1979), and in the work of Graham (2010), among other authors who are essential for understanding the foundations of urban food supply, two elements are constantly present: food crises in the form of instability in supply and the weight of inflation, which aggravates the asymmetries between income and food prices, and, no less important, the multifaceted supply system in which formal and informal retailers coexist and complement each other, local and foreign food are integrated, the modern and the old vie for preferences that sometimes mark the distinction between the wealthiest and sometimes lose vitality with the assumption of the old as an expression of the modern and adequate.

The advent of the modernization of the food retail system devastated the conventional retail network, leading to the disappearance of the department stores and reducing the importance of conventional retail, without, however, liquidating it, as happened with the department stores installed in middle-class neighborhoods, the first and most robust segment to adhere to the modernity of self-service. In the suburbs, the conventional chains and their sales strategies remained in place even after the supermarkets captured part of the demand from the popular masses, precisely because conventional retail is the right measure of help to cover what the asymmetries between income and prices compromise in self-service purchases.

However, there is no such thing as magic, nor is there a shred of benevolence in business in a market economy. All the modernity and advantages that self-service can offer is based on an intricate commercial-financial operation which, roughly speaking, can be summed up in installment purchases from suppliers, on a scale capable of inevitably generating some degree of dependency on the part of the producers of goods who quickly realize that the supermarket is the main or most important buyer in the portfolio of customers of those suppliers; this condition has the power to shift the negotiating relationships from production to marketing.

The income of people living in peripheral regions has always been characterized by the asymmetry between the availability of money and the price of the goods needed to meet minimum consumption needs. As already discussed here, the operational devices present in the capillary retail network operated, and continue to do so, as a mechanism to "stretch" the purchasing power of families dealing with restricted budgets, either because of the low remuneration of labor, or because income is intermittent as it is captured in the informal sectors of the economy.

So, while on the one hand the presence of supermarkets in dynamic areas on the outskirts represents an improvement in the conditions of access to goods due to the lower prices practiced in these outlets when compared to traditional shops, on the other hand, competition is hitting small retailers hard, who usually used supermarkets as their wholesale supplier.

In working class neighborhoods, the diversity of the capillary food retail network is linked to the daily movement of stores and street vendors. Therefore, the vitality of local commerce depends on the situation to which the city's residents are subjected; when there is a downturn in economic activity that impacts on formal and informal labor income, causing a loss of income for the consumer, there is an immediate retraction in local commerce. Retail outlets and the informal agents responsible for street vending rarely have sufficient economic conditions to withstand falls in traffic - in practice these agents carry out short-term planning - because their debt capacity is very limited, and their negotiating power with suppliers rarely allows them to count on payment terms of more than thirty days for their purchases.



These credit restrictions and the difficulties in negotiating prices make conventional commerce very vulnerable to the moods of the economic climate and its impact on people's incomes; scenarios of high food price inflation, unemployment, instability in the informal activities from which the masses derive their income can easily lead to the closure of an outfit, and every drop in the diversity of the capillary retail network increases the risks of worsening food insecurity conditions for the most economically vulnerable populations.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the use of space, the periphery has always been occupied by a network of retail and services, both diverse and anarchic, which creates dynamic places, buzzing with life; a greengrocer can be installed next to a furniture store that has a beauty salon next to it, which houses a dental clinic above; a bar surrounded by a church and a building materials store, followed by a pizzeria that has a pet food retailer next to it and another church. Family-run markets are multiplying and competing for customers with backyard grocery stores, street vendors selling fish, bread, fruit and other products.

In the race for the appropriation of space by capital, among the many possibilities, the strategy of concentrating poverty on the peripheries in rarefied occupations has been the most recurrent. Irregular occupations, unattended by public authorities, have been the scene of social movements since the first occupations. Over time, they have succeeded in their demands to "tame" the land that determines this "animation" in the dynamic areas of local retail, as if it were the "center" of the neighborhood.

This formation of hubs in the peripheries, resulting from older occupations that house populations involved in activities less subject to high turnover and instability and that ensure some degree of income continuity - low-level civil servers, retail workers in central areas, office administrators, drivers employed in freight and passenger transportation, among many other occupations with low pay but regular income - stimulate retail and service activities that also attract customers from the expanded and more recent borders of the peripheral regions.

The frenzy of commerce, especially at weekends when the working population has time off and uses it for shopping and leisure, has attracted regional chain stores and services and, in some cases, large retail chains to these denser, more dynamic areas. This is a more recent phenomenon and one that has yet to be studied, so in this essay, the arguments on this subject reflect more empirical evidence than reasoning supported by regular data and studies.

The attraction of stores belonging to large and medium-sized retail chains seeks to capture effective demand which, subject to the limits of the supply paradox<sup>6</sup>, experiences barriers that could be unblocked if an arrangement of equipment capable of reproducing the scale advantages of the big chains were installed there.

Arrangements in which the wholesale function is combined with retail, known as "wholesaler", have been the most constant form of intervention. The most recent research on food retailing in times of inflation at a forced pace not only confirms the role of the "wholesaler" for the periphery, but also indicates that a growing number of consumers anchored in the C consumption brackets - which can reach the lower end of the B income bracket - have returned to monthly shopping and that this hybrid arrangement is the most sought-after alternative for improving the relationship between purchasing power and food prices on the shelf.

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<sup>6</sup> Paradoxo do Abastecimento diz respeito ao fato de a população mais pobre comprometer parte maior da sua renda com a compra de alimentos em volumes insuficientes e a preços mais elevados do que os praticados nas redes de supermercados que atendem aos segmentos de renda mais elevado.

If, on the one hand, these stores can reduce the burden of spending on food for the population, both because of the common prices of the big chains and because of their proximity, which in theory would eliminate the cost of traveling to other regions where they used to get their supplies; on the other hand, the weight of competition shrinks the conventional chain, either because of the decline in demand or because of the extinction of points of sale due to their own fragility.

The shrinking of this peculiar retail sector common in working class neighborhoods doesn't take away from the precariousness under which local businesses operate. Bankruptcies or the simple closure of activities when informality has been the way to sustain sales operations are recurrent events and, in scenarios where consumer income is restricted or the possibilities of obtaining it cease, food deserts emerge which, in the end, exacerbate the conditions of food and nutritional insecurity that are always present among the most vulnerable sections of the population.

The logic of capturing profits by subverting the idea of food is undoubtedly an important factor in the rise of food and nutritional insecurity, and the absence of the state in resuming public food supply policies is a lever that drives the hunger for profits at the expense of the hunger of the poorest populations.

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