

Back to the Hunger Map in Brazil: relearning from local innovation based on Belo Horizonte's food security policy

De Volta ao Mapa da Fome no Brasil: reaprendendo com as inovações locais a partir da política pública de segurança alimentar de Belo Horizonte

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Abstract

At a time of Brazil's return to the UN Hunger Map, this paper focus on the almost 30-year-long trajectory of Belo Horizonte's (BH) food security policy, suggesting a relearning from alternative solutions brought about by local innovations. Methodologically, the research is a case study that integrates bibliographical revision and documental analysis to identify complementary hypothesis about the genesis and (re)production process of such a policy, which have been a stablished academic reference and inspirational experience to structural national initiatives on the topic. Having the multiple streams and policy feedback approaches as a starting point, the study takes into account the interpenetration between the state and civil society to suggest new explaining mechanisms, whose general application may be verified in future research in order to guide policy planning. The mechanisms are: the transformation of social innovations in policy instruments, the role played by an autonomous, competent and stablished bureaucracy, and the institutional hybridism in service provision.

Keywords: local governance. municipal government, food security

Resumo

Em uma conjuntura de retorno do Brasil ao Mapa da Fome da ONU, este artigo joga luz na trajetória de quase 30 anos da política pública de segurança alimentar de Belo Horizonte (BH), aventando uma (re)aprendizagem em torno de soluções alternativas a partir de inovações locais. Metodologicamente, a investigação é um estudo de caso que integra a revisão bibliográfica com a análise documental para identificar hipóteses complementares sobre a gênese e o processo de (re)produção dessa política pública municipal que serviu de referência acadêmica e outrora inspirou ações governamentais estruturantes na União. Partindo das abordagens dos múltiplos fluxos e do *feedback* de políticas públicas, o estudo considera a interpenetração da administração pública e da sociedade civil para sugerir novos mecanismos explicativos, cuja aplicabilidade geral pode ser verificada em estudos futuros de modo a orientar o planejamento de políticas públicas. São eles: a transformação das inovações sociais em instrumentos de política pública, o papel desempenhado por uma burocracia autônoma, competente e estabelecida e o hibridismo institucional da prestação de serviços.

Palavras-chave: governança local, governos municipais, segurança alimentar e nutricional

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1 Introduction

This article juxtaposes the public problem of hunger and nutritional food insecurity aggravated in Brazil in the 2020-2022 period, with innovative local public policy solutions proposed in the past and which remain. On the one hand, these past solutions serve as a basis for identifying good practices of subnational governments and, on the other hand, as an instance of (re)learning that can (and should) inspire ideas and proposals for the resumption of a macrogovernmental agenda in the Brazilian State on this front. Here, in this case, is Belo Horizonte's food and nutrition security policy.

To contextualize this comparison between the return of Brazil to the FAO/UN “Hunger Map” today (with around 33 million people in a situation of hunger¹) with the local innovations – from Belo Horizonte policy – that come from the past and contribute to face, territorially, such crisis, let us recall the Public Management and Citizenship Program (PMCP) of the Center for Studies in Public Administration and Government of the Getulio Vargas Foundation of São Paulo (FGV-SP).

Created in 1996, the Public Management and Citizenship Program at FGV-SP consisted of organizing an annual contest to award innovative practices by subnational governments and indigenous territories – with the BNDES and the Ford Foundation as partners. In all, 10 editions were held (1996 to 2005), from which numerous studies, analyzes and dissemination of local public management actions and a bank of experiences with more than 8,000 registered initiatives² emerged. Data analysis carried out by researchers from that program – see Spink et al (1999) – showed a municipal profile willing to overcome problems in an innovative way, often with its own resources (and social technologies) and through co-productions, through its own ideas or by adapting other practices to the local “way”, often with cross-party political support and a process with administrative continuity. In a period when the Brazilian public administration academy was shedding light on the macrostructural reforms that were taking place in the Federal Government (for example, the Brazilian economic program Real Plan and the Master Plan for Reforming the State Apparatus), the Public Management and Citizenship Program sought to catalog the incremental innovations with territorial impact, which recurrently went unnoticed by the national political radar and the media spotlight.

In addition, they alerted researchers to the biased sample “towards innovative administrations and not practitioners of more traditional forms of local government”, indicating a type of municipal policy that is neither “the exception nor the rule”, but represents “elements of a different narrative of the complexity of the developmental debate, as it does not occur because of decentralization or any mechanism for the transfer of powers”. Such elements could point to the emergence of a new local governance, and not just a decentralized model “which would only serve to confirm the center” (Spink et al, 1999, p. 67).

More than 25 years after the beginning of the Public Management and Citizenship Program, the reforms of social policies, initiated with the Federal Constitution of 1988 and implemented in the following decades, were guided by the increasingly widespread presence of the induction, coordination and regulation of designs and guidelines at the central level (Abrucio, 2005; Arretche, 2012). It should be noted that such a movement did not occur disconnected from municipal institutional trajectories (Bichir, 2011), nor did it fail to generate positive effects on local capacities and dynamics (Bichir, Junior, & Pereira, 2020).

However, the municipality played an almost exclusive implementing role in these reforms, especially in the context of more institutionalized systems. In these systems, the rigid division between what Arretche (2012) called policy decision making concentrated in the



Federal Government and policy making under the responsibility of subnational entities is noticeable. The state capacity attributed to the local scope, therefore, is limited to the notion of “implementation context”, with reduced autonomous formulations.

Since 2014, however, with the federal government in a serious fiscal and political crisis, and more recently (2019-2022) under an administration that showed little willingness and capacity to coordinate public actions in the federation, subnational initiatives once again stood out as the “last hope” or as a promise of innovation capable of transcending the local/regional scope. During the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, this was the case with the CoronaVac vaccine produced by the Butantan Institute of the Government of the State of São Paulo in partnership with the Chinese medicine manufacturer Sinovac Biotech, or with the adoption of social isolation measures by local government, among other numerous actions that were successfully carried out by subnational governments, alone or in collaborative arrangements such as public consortia.

Faced with this scenario of rediscovery of local initiatives, and with a view to exploring their potential contribution to a possible new cycle of reformulation of the Brazilian System of Social Protection and its institutional mechanisms, this article analyzes an emblematic case of municipal social policy, namely: Belo Horizonte's food and nutrition security policy. Created in 1993, the Belo Horizonte policy for supplying and combating hunger was already articulated under the axes of food and nutritional security (Machado, 2006), being a relevant case study for three important reasons: (i) it does not explicitly include any of the consolidated systems of Brazilian social policies, such as health, social assistance or education, although it has a relevant role in partnership with these policies; (ii) its institutional genesis in the nineties occurred at an eminently municipal level, preceding the institutionalization of this policy at the federal level by more than a decade; and (iii) it has a trajectory of almost 30 years of uninterrupted performance³.

The investigation starts from hypotheses explored in previous works, such as: the creation in 1993 of the Municipal Supply Secretariat (Smab) had typically *Kingdonian* contours (Chappel, 2018); the success of its initial actions bequeathed a certain path dependency to the following years (Machado, 2006); and there also an important role played by the induction of coordination at the federal level, notably after the creation of the Zero Hunger Program (*ibid.*).

Methodologically, the article consists of a case study of a descriptive nature and written in a historical perspective, elaborated from methods of bibliographic review and documental analysis. As part of the studies derived from the Public Management and Citizenship Program, this is a descriptive report of a unique case of local action that does not intend to point to a better practice. On the contrary, what is intended is to describe a phenomenon, expanding the systemic factual knowledge of an aspect of reality that is still little explored in the literature. As it is known, a descriptive study is relevant when there is still much to know about a phenomenon, when our explanatory capacities are still limited and because it is fundamental to the subsequent explanatory work (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994). Thus, we seek to identify additional hypotheses that reveal events and explanatory mechanisms regarding the genesis and (re)production of the public policy under analysis, to be verified in future studies.

The documentary research method is supported by official publications, published interviews, institutional research reports, award reports and others cataloged in the Institutional Development Nucleus (*NDI*), a department of the current Municipal Undersecretariat for Food and Nutritional Security (*SUSAN*), which preserves a considerable historical collection. The literature review, in turn, starts from academic works carried out by practitioners (*e.g.*, Machado, 2006; Braga, 2019) and visiting researchers (*e.g.*, Chappel, 2018), but goes beyond,



exploring canonical, historical, or biographical research related to the topic. The triangulation of these secondary sources resulted in a compendium of the trajectory of the municipal food security policy in Belo Horizonte.

2 Belo Horizonte's municipal food and nutrition security policy revisited

Vasconcelos (2005) historically situates the emergence of a social food and nutrition policy in Brazil within the scope of the social and economic changes that occurred in the 1930s, in a simultaneous process of “scientific discovery of hunger”, which the author attributes to the emergence of Nutrition as an academic discipline and the dissemination of nutritional practice through training courses for nutritionists (p. 440). The first Nutrition course in Minas Gerais was instituted by the Federal University of Viçosa in 1976, followed in 1978 by the Federal University of Ouro Preto. Only decades later, in 2004, would the bachelor's degree in Nutrition be instituted at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, located in the city of Belo Horizonte, under the strong influence of the two pioneering experiences (Viveiros, 2016). This did not, however, prevent the Minas Gerais capital from being the scene of an intense discussion regarding the right to food. Such effervescence is due to the fact that the history of food security is also intertwined with the history of the sanitary movement and practical knowledge connected to the area of Public Health (Vasconcellos, 1999).

In Brazil, the shift from the hygienists' practical notion of public medicine to the more specialized and administrative conception of sanitarians took place based on the training provided in Public Health Schools. Created in 1947 by the then governor and physician Juscelino Kubitschek, the Public Health School of Minas Gerais (today ESP/MG, formerly ESMIG) was headed, for a brief period in the 1980s, by the Argentinean sociologist Dora Beatriz Barrancos⁴, who was in Belo Horizonte as an exile from the Argentine authoritarian regime. Dora directed ESMIG during the years 1983 and 1984, integrating the Government of Tancredo Neves. During her management, Dora promoted a series of seminars whose focus was the role of health in the realization of Human Rights, among which was the food issue. On some of these occasions, an economist from the Center for Development and Regional Planning at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Cedeplar-UFMG), who had just completed her doctorate at the University of Manchester, in the United Kingdom, attracted attention with heated debates on the competences of the state in promoting the Human Right to Adequate Food. Her name was Maria Regina Nabuco (Barrancos, 2017).

Such discussions, which reverberated in the halls of academia and institutional spaces, however, make up only a portion of the sociogenetic core of the food security policy in the city of Belo Horizonte. In order to effectively understand the environment that gave rise to what would become one of the longest-lasting municipal initiatives in the food field, it is necessary to break state boundaries and involve popular movements and demands. In this brief foray into recent history, it is important to mention the Cost of Living Movement (*MCV*), also called the Movement Against High Cost (*MCC*), which took place in the 1970s and early 1980s.

The Movement Against High Cost originated from the organization of women in popular mothers' clubs in the city of São Paulo, with the support of the Catholic Church. According to MONTEIRO (2015), the first action of the movement was the articulation of a “letter to the authorities” accompanied by a survey of food prices carried out by the women members themselves in two different regions of the city. In the following years, the Movement Against High Cost (*MCC*) carried out signature collections and public acts, establishing coalitions and receiving support from other popular movements, notably the workers'



movement. Their claims were: price freeze on essential items, increase in the minimum wage, bonuses for all categories and agrarian reform. In July 1979, the 2nd National Congress of the Movement Against High Cost was held in Belo Horizonte⁵, followed by several state congresses, as well as protests, which became known as “empty pot marches”. Popular pressure culminated in the establishment of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry to investigate the situation of hunger, also called the *CPI da Fome*⁶ (Monteiro, 2015; Alvim, 2016).

At that time, however, the issue of combating hunger figured centrally on the national and local agenda, alongside issues such as the impeachment process of the first president elected after redemocratization, in the wake of corruption allegations; the return of high inflation following the Collor Plan; and high food prices. In the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte, official bodies estimated that 382,543 people, equivalent to 10.53% of the population, were in a situation whose family income was barely sufficient to purchase a basic monthly food basket (1990 data). The Belo Horizonte population, in turn, spent an average of 2.44 minimum wages (MW) on food (data from the Family Budget Survey - POF, 1987) and families that received up to 4 MW, in 1996, committed a third of these resources on food. In 1992, the estimate of people who depended monthly on the Food Supplementation Program (pregnant women, nursing mothers and children younger than 36 months, belonging to families with an income of up to 2 MW) was 301,385 mothers and 747,995 children (Lavinhas & Nabuco, 1992; IPEA, 1993; Mafra, 2004).

It is in this context that a team coordinated by Maria Regina Nabuco met to elaborate the government program of the councilor Patrus Ananias de Sousa, who was running for the first time as municipal mayor. Patrus Ananias' campaign, as he himself states in interviews, was a long one, guided by conversations with citizens in several regions, in which he was able to verify, among others, the pervasive situation of hunger in the city. Disputing with two other former mayors of Belo Horizonte, Maurício Campos, and Sérgio Ferrara, and with the then federal congressman Aécio Neves, Patrus is elected. When he initiated his work as a mayor, he appoints Nabuco – who had once urged the state to take responsibility for food in ESMIG debates – as Municipal Secretary of Supply. For the first time, therefore, the theme was put at the top of the agenda, with a dedicated agency led by a specialist in technical and political action.

Supply, however, was not an entirely new problem in the municipality of Belo Horizonte. In 1982, the City Council held a seminar to discuss the theme in the city. The result was the recommendation, accepted by the City Hall, for the creation of the Supply Coordination, located in the then Municipal Department of Urban Activities (SMAU). The sector was responsible for establishing the People's Food Program and, shortly afterwards, Low Cost Supply; institutional predecessors that would be incorporated into Smab's actions years later, and whose purpose was to fulfill the main function of regulating the food market. In addition, the first Popular Restaurant in Belo Horizonte was created in 1988. It, however, never got to work due to a fire that destroyed part of the equipment (Santos, 2000; Machado, 2006).

The commitment to tackling the issue of hunger in an urban capital such as Belo Horizonte was inspired by three important institutional landmarks: (i) The Hunger Map, a study prepared by IPEA in 1993, which revealed the problem in terms that the State could understand; (ii) the Plan to Combat Hunger and Misery, which articulated a series of government commitments to overcome it; and (iii) the National Food Security Council (Consea), of an advisory nature and linked directly to the President's office, which materialized strategic and participatory governance, with notable mobilization of civil society. Other local initiatives, in particular the PT (Workers' party) administrations of Mayor Telma de Souza, in Santos, and



Mayor Leonardo Dias Diniz, in João Monlevade, as well as several studies conducted by Maria Regina herself and the economist Lena Lavinias also inspired Belo Horizonte's initiative (Lavinias & Nabuco, 1992).

Even so, the local proposal was considered daring at the time. In this challenge, the construction of a systemic, organic, and resilient food security policy was of great importance. Machado (2006) offers a comprehensive review of the programs created by Smab, which at the time were classified into three dimensions: production, market regulation and consumption. From the production point of view, the main tone seems to have been to encourage farmers through the direct connection with the consumer market in Belo Horizonte. Along these lines, the programs *Direto da Roça* [Straight from the farm] (1994) and *Armazém da Roça* [Farm warehouse] (1996) were created to sell food produced in vegetable gardens, orchards and farms in the countryside. The *Campanha da Safra* [Crop Campaign Program] (1994) was also created, which allowed the commercialization of seasonal food on public locations. Another initiative was the reformulation of a supply warehouse in the capital of Minas Gerais so that the space was reserved for small farmers, in addition to the *Bolsa Verde* [Green Grant] Program (1994) which induced restaurant owners to buy vegetables grown by family farming.

The production dimension also sought to promote agricultural spaces as a way of using and occupying urban land, creating the Community Orchards and School Orchards programs (1993), in addition to the *Pro-Pomar* [Pro-Orchard] (1994). The latter was supported by the donation of fruit trees to be planted in the backyards of private homes. Four *Centros de Vivência Agroecológica* [Agroecological Experience Centers] – Cevaes (1995) were also implemented in peripheral areas of the municipality. Established in partnership with the Municipal Department of the Environment (SMMA) and the Non-Governmental Organization Alternative Technologies Exchange Network (Rede), the Cevaes had the proposal to promote environmental education and the construction of sustainable communities (Machado, 2006). Table 1 summarizes the programs, classifying them by main type of governance⁷.

Table 1 – Smab programs and initiatives for the production axis

Dimension	Program/initiative	Description	Type of governance
Production	Straight from the farm	Selling of foodstuffs by producers	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Farm warehouse	Selling of foodstuffs by producers	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Crop Campaign	Selling of foodstuffs by producers	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Green Grant	Intermediation between producers and restaurants	Non-hierarchical networks with restaurants and producers
	Community Orchards and School Orchards	Implementation of production units	Non-hierarchical networks among producers, civil society and institutional agents
	Cevaes	Promotion of environmental education	Non-hierarchical networks with civil society



		and sustainable communities	
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Source: Authors' own elaboration

Despite the comprehensiveness of the established action, some initiatives were soon discontinued. This is the case of the Crop Program, which in 1997 became impossible due to new urban regulations that prevented the sale of products in vehicles on public roads. Another example is the commercialization warehouse for products from small farmers, which failed to establish a competitive format compared to the commercialization capacity offered by the State Supply Center (CEASA Minas). The Cevaes, although still installed in Belo Horizonte, ceased to operate in the manner initially intended after 1997, the year in which Smab abandoned the project due to internal disagreements with the Municipal Department of the Environment (Machado, 2006).

The purpose of the market regulation dimension, in turn, was to induce competition in the private food market, in order to make prices accessible to consumers, correcting any distortions and guaranteeing product quality. This dimension benefited from some actions that already existed in the municipality of Belo Horizonte, notably **Street Markets**, **Municipal Markets**, and **Alimento a Baixo Custo** [Food at Low Cost] (FLC) program. All these programs were carried out through partnerships established between the city hall and merchants, who were granted permissions to use equipment or public roads for commercial activity in the food sector. The FLC Program was reformulated and gained a new direction for the creation of "sacolões", that is, equipment for marketing fruit, vegetables and poultry, in the peripheral areas of Belo Horizonte. FLC permit holders were offered public land, on which they built their sheds themselves. In return, licensees made a commitment to offer a list of products at a limited price, regularly corrected by Smab (Machado, 2006).

In terms of market regulation, the **Cestão Popular** [Popular Basket] and **Pesquisa Cesta Básica** [Basic Food Basket Monthly Survey] programs were also created. The first functioned through the purchase and resale by Smab, at subsidized prices, of basic food and hygiene and cleaning products to the previously registered population of certain areas of the municipality. Families with an income of up to 2 minimum wages per household were entitled to the benefit. The Basic Food Basket Monthly Survey published the average and minimum prices of 45 foodstuffs, cleaning and hygiene products to the population of Belo Horizonte, linking them to the names and addresses of the supermarkets that sold each product. The disclosure took place twice a week, in partnership with Cedeplar-UFMG (Machado, 2006). Table 2 presents the synthesis and classification of the programs.

Table 2 – Smab programs and initiatives for the market regulation axis

Dimension	Program/initiative	Description	Type of governance
Market regulation	Street Markets	Selling of food and foodstuffs by traders	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Municipal Markets	Selling of food, foodstuffs and others by traders	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Food at Low Cost	Selling of foodstuffs by traders	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
	Popular Basket	Subsidized commercialization of	Direct provision



		foodstuffs, hygiene, and cleaning products by the public authorities	
	Basic Food Basket Monthly Survey	Disclosure of prices of foodstuffs, cleaning, and hygiene products	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Finally, on the consumption axis, the two main actions are related to **School Meals** (-/1995) and **Popular Restaurants** (1994). Inspired by the municipality of Santos experience, in 1995 Smab assumed responsibility for providing school meals, which ceased to be the responsibility of the Municipal Education Department. Smab's nutritional perspective promoted the substitution of several processed foods for *in natura* foods. Popular Restaurants, as mentioned, existed since 1988 without functioning, being inaugurated in 1994 with the supply of ready-to-eat foods, along the lines of the Social Security Food Service (Saps) of the *Estado-Novo* (see ARANHA, 2020). The difference, however, is that Popular Restaurants provided universal access, in tune with the social rights approach enacted by the Federal Constitution of 1988.

In addition to the actions mentioned above, the *Assistência Alimentar* [Food Assistance] Program (1993) was implemented, which provided for the purchase and distribution of foodstuffs, as well as nutritional guidance for creating menus for various entities in partnership with the city hall to implement services in the area of Social Assistance. Another important action was *Educação Alimentar e Nutricional* [Education for Food Consumption] (1993), a program through which a team of nutritionists provided the population with a series of information on the quality and nutritional values of food. The performance took place through workshops, booklets, courses and even a radio program. The same team also offered a course for the professionals responsible for preparing school meals, the so-called lunch ladies⁸.

Smab also had two emergency action programs, the *Prevenção e Combate à Desnutrição* [Prevention and Combating Malnutrition] Program (1993), which distributed “enriched flour” to pregnant women, nursing mothers and children in situations of malnutrition, and the *Distribuição Emergencial de Alimentos* [Emergency Food Distribution] Program (1993), which provided food for families and people at risk. Through the *Programa de Ações Emergenciais Básicas* [Basic Emergency Actions] Program (PAEB) of the Municipal Social Assistance Secretariat, basic monthly food baskets were also distributed to vulnerable families, assisted adolescents and families located in areas of geological risk, especially during the rainy season. Table 3 presents the synthesis and classification of the programs.

Table 3 – Smab programs and initiatives for the consumption axis

Dimension	Program/initiative	Description	Type of governance
Consumption	School Meals	Providing meals in schools	Direct provision
	Popular Restaurant	Provision of meals at a subsidized price to the general public	Direct provision
	Food Assistance	Provision of meals in social assistance equipments	Direct provision



	Education for Food Consumption	Promotion of information and training on food and nutrition security	Direct provision
	Preventing and Combating Malnutrition	Distribution of enriched flour to pregnant women, nursing mothers and children suffering from malnutrition	Direct provision
	Emergency Food Distribution	Provision of meals for families and people at risk	Direct provision
	Basic Emergency Action Program	Supply of basic monthly food baskets to vulnerable families	Direct provision

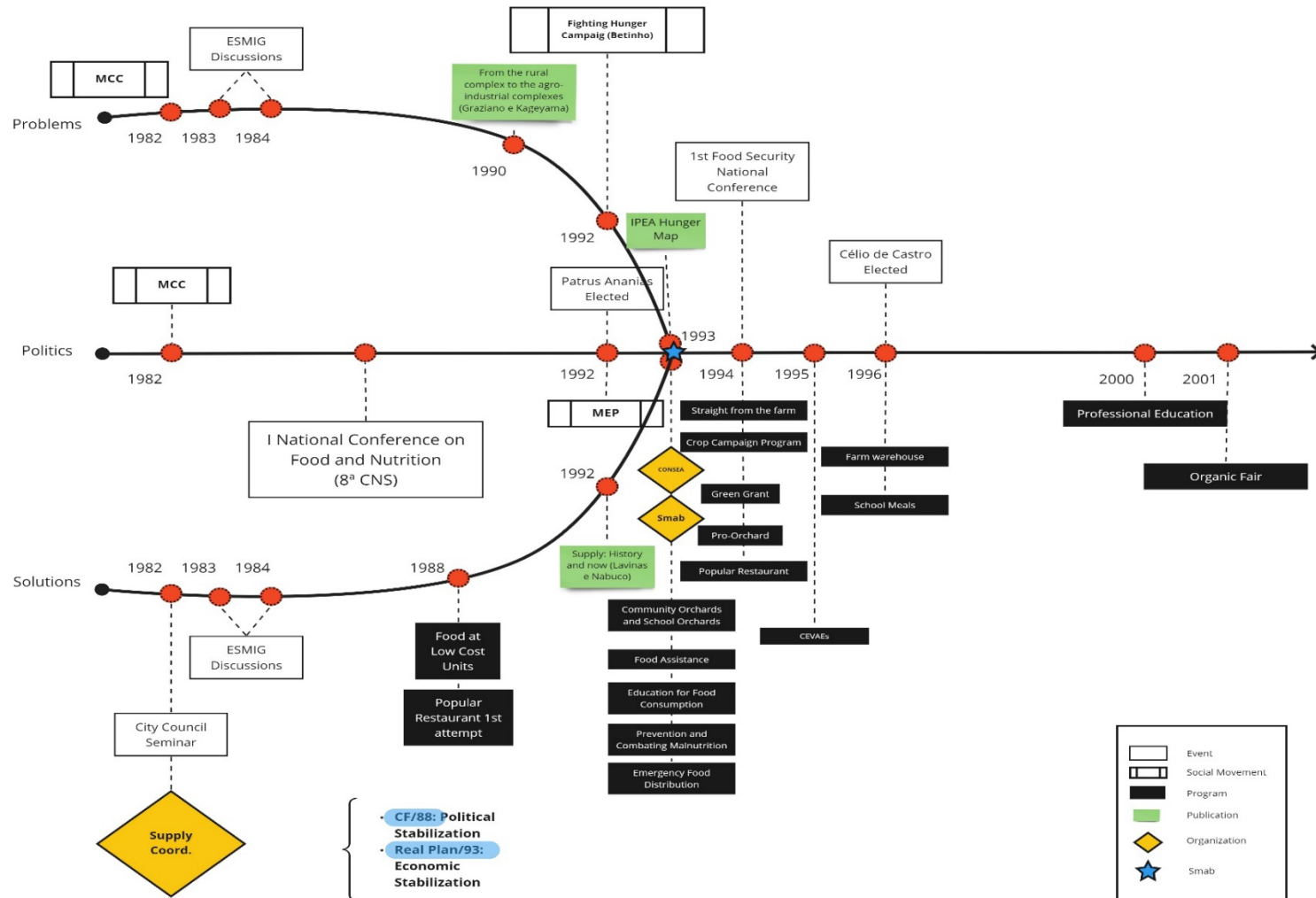
Source: Authors' own elaboration

In 2001, the **Organic Fair** Program was created, initially in partnership with a cooperative of local organic products, and **professional education** in gastronomy were implemented by *Cozinha Pedagógica Josefina Costa* and by *Padaria Escola Nicola Calicchio*, installed in 2000 in the Street Market in Lagoinha. At that time, Belo Horizonte City Hall was already under the command of Mayor Célio de Castro, who had been deputy mayor of Patrus Ananias. Despite the proximity between the two, the Workers' Party (PT) launched its own candidate in the 1996 elections, supporting Célio de Castro only in the 2nd round, against candidate Amílcar Martins. If this temporary rupture had any impact on the continuity of food security actions, this cannot be considered significant, which indicates the continuity of the initial actions even in a scenario of political competition.

Next, figure 1, by way of synthesis, chronologically illustrates some of the main events described so far, demarcating the initial events of such a policy, by the confluence of problems, solutions, and favorable conditions in a policy window – in the sense of the multiple streams approach (Kingdon, 2003).



Figure 1 - Initial events of the Food and Nutrition Security policy in Belo Horizonte



Source: Authors' own elaboration

The tenures of Fernando Pimentel (PT), first as deputy mayor of Célio de Castro when he was re-elected in 2000 – but who ended up acting on an interim basis, due to Célio's licensing for health reasons –, then as mayor (2005-2008), and the first two years of the Márcio Lacerda (PSB) administration, mark a new moment in the performance of the municipal food and nutrition security policy. It is interesting to note that Márcio Lacerda was a candidate for mayor supported both by Fernando Pimentel and by the governor of Minas Gerais at the time, Aécio Neves (PSDB). However, Márcio Lacerda's office quickly divided due to political disputes, being popularly known as the period of *long knives*. It also largely coincided with the administration of Lula (PT), in the Federal Government, which was marked by the attempt to end hunger, firstly through the Extraordinary Ministry of Food Security and Fight against Hunger (Mesa), led by José Graziano da Silva, then by the Ministry of Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS), led by the then federal deputy and former mayor of the capital of Minas Gerais, Patrus Ananias.

At the local level, there was some expansion of food and nutritional security actions, notably the inauguration of three more **Popular Restaurant** units, in the hospital area of the Santa Efigênia neighborhood (2004), in the Venda Nova neighborhood (2008) and in Barreiro (2010). All projects had some type of funding from the federal government, notably from the Zero Hunger Program (PFZ). The PFZ also supported the implementation of the *Banco de Alimentos* [Food Bank] (2003), designed to reduce food waste by receiving, sorting and forwarding to social assistance institutions donations of food unsuitable for sale but suitable for consumption, especially coming from large supermarket chains.

Also in the period, the then Municipal Adjunct Secretariat for Food and Nutrition Security (Smasan), which came to replace Smab after an administrative reform that took place in 2000, received an important international award, the Future Policy Award, granted by the German NGO World Future Council, in its 2009 edition. The award resulted in an international publication, from which the Belo Horizonte initiative would become known worldwide. The international recognition of the local food security experience, in addition to requiring that the public policy team was always prepared to organize information on lines of action, programs and services so that these could be communicated in international and national events of great reach, also bequeathed local credibility to Smasan's performance, which made it, if not a priority, at least shielded from certain allocation decisions in a scenario of growing fiscal restrictions.

Finally, in 2003, the **Municipal Council for Food and Nutrition Security** (COMUSAN) was created. The reestablishment of the Council was a condition for the municipality's access to PFZ resources, another sign of inter-federal coordination as an element of induction of public policies at the time. It is noteworthy, however, that the idea of food and nutritional security, as articulated in the federal government, was eminently based on a choice for a transversal action, not located in a specific organization. This model is substantially different from the coordination format adopted in Belo Horizonte, concentrated in its own administrative body⁹.

After breaking with the PT, the administration of mayor Márcio Lacerda, privileged fiscal solidity over social policy expense on the municipality. It was a period of closure of some food security services, such as Popular Restaurants meals, as well as greater dependence on transfers and voluntary funding from the federal government, who was experiencing a serious fiscal and political crisis, which resulted in the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in 2016. Even so, some initiatives in the area of food and nutritional security in Belo Horizonte can be highlighted, such as the opening of a public test for the position of agronomist engineer, linked to the Municipal Department of the Environment (SMMA) but due to internal

articulations, SMASAN managed to recruit two professionals, reinforcing the production area, so far without a career of its own¹⁰.

Other important actions were the publication of the **Educator's Guide – promoting food and nutrition education in schools**¹¹, prepared by the Food and Nutrition Education team, which gained relative notoriety nationwide. The same team was also awarded the **Nutrir Prize**, promoted by Nestlé, in 2015, which brought part of the actions to the online format from a distance learning platform. In addition, the *Centro de Referência em Segurança Alimentar e Nutricional* [Food Security Reference Center] (Cresan) was inaugurated also in 2015, which incorporated the actions of Lagoinha Market and of Food and Nutrition Education (FNE).

From an international point of view, 2015 was marked by an important articulation of local actions linked to the area of food and nutritional security, the Pact of Milan. Originated on the initiative of the mayor of Milan, the Pact promotes a framework of actions to which the signatory cities are committed. Given the wide international awareness of the Belo Horizonte initiative, the city was one of the guests of honor for the initial signing (CANDEL, 2020), once again raising the status of the public policy in the eyes of local authorities.

Finally, with the election of mayor Alexandre Kalil, there was an invitation for Patrus Ananias to articulate a team to compose the social assistance and food security area of the City Hall¹². The newly created Municipal Secretariat for Social Assistance, Food Security and Citizenship (Smasac) was taken over by a young manager named Máira Colares, trained in Social Service and who had been chief of staff for state deputy André Quintão, an ally of Ananias. Colares established a team made up of bureaucrats and activists, most of them with a historic presence in the area. Led by Darklane Rodrigues, this team was guided by the gradual strengthening of the three original structuring dimension: production, market regulation and consumption. In general, there was a recovery of some of the initial intentions, such as the promotion of social technologies for producer self-organization, with emphasis on agroecology, as is the case of the *Sistema Participativo de Garantia da Região Metropolitana* [Participatory System of Guarantee of the Metropolitan Region], or even the reestablishment of a warehouse for the commercialization of family farming products, as is the case of the *Central de Abastecimento da Agricultura Familiar e Urbana* [Family and Urban Agriculture Supply Center]. There was also renewed action in gastronomy, linked to the **Reference Center for Food and Nutritional Security**.

Finally, it is important to highlight the reopening of some services and units of **Popular Restaurants**, the renewal of the **Food Assistance and School Meals** menus, the renewal of all public notices for permit holders in market regulation and the creation of various intersectoral initiatives, in partnership with other bodies. Even the **municipal market concessions**, although they constitute a novelty in the scope of the municipal food security policy, cannot be considered foreign to the hybrid governance established since 1993, especially with private partnerships established for food supply and commercialization¹³. In general, however, the innovations and changes took place incrementally, as a continuation of the initial systematization started at the origin of the municipal food security policy by Smab, in 1993. All in all, this system runs through the entire trajectory of almost 30 years of food security activities in the municipality. Table 4 summarizes and classifies the programs that emerged after Smab's initial period, according to the main type of governance used.

Table 4 – Smab programs and initiatives for the market regulation axis

Dimension	Program/initiative	Description	Type of governance
Market regulation	Organic Fair	Commercialization of organic foodstuffs by cooperative of producers	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one

Consumption	Food Bank	Sorting and donation of food suitable for consumption	Non-hierarchical network with food donors and beneficiaries
Consumption	Organic fair	Professional training and qualification	Direct provision
Production	Participatory Guarantee System of the Metropolitan Region	Professional training and qualification	Non-hierarchical network of producers and organizations
Market regulation	Family and Urban Agriculture Supply Center	Logistic center for commercialization of food from family farming	Partnership by instrument of agreement or a similar one
Market regulation	Municipal Markets	Market activities, with the sale of foodstuffs, beverages, meals, and others, including cultural activities	Partnership by concession instrument

Source: Authors' own elaboration

Next, based on the trajectory revisited in this section, new interpretative assumptions are presented to explain the longevity of the Belo Horizonte policy.

3 Kingdonian and Piersonian approaches to food security in Belo Horizonte in the light of local governance: new interpretative assumptions

The literature on the case of food and nutrition security in Belo Horizonte explains its exceptionality on the national scene based on the path dependence mechanism generated by a series of factors linked to the moment of genesis and consolidation of this public policy. Such a moment would have occurred from a window of opportunity that emerged in the 1990s, in which the theme of hunger had gained notorious space in the national and local political agenda. At that time, a public policy entrepreneur emerged in a privileged position to unify existing political, problem and solution streams, initiating a strong and lasting initiative (CHAPPEL, 2018). From this singular occurrence, the municipal policy would have been prolonged in time through path dependence mechanisms sustained by feedback effects and consolidation of its practices and routines. These effects, finally, would have been complemented by the institutionalization of initiatives through laws and decrees, increasing the sustainability of programs in the face of political disputes (MACHADO, 2006). We call these complementary analytical models *Kingdonian* and *Piersonian* explanations, respectively, since they mobilize elements from the multiple streams theory elaborated by John Kingdon (2003) and from the neo institutional analysis formulated by Paul Pierson (1993).

Reaffirming the heuristic power of this canonical explanation, we argue that a deeper look at the local governance allows us to consider additional causal inferences, which help to thicken the understanding of policy creation and reproduction dynamics as they occur *in situ*. In doing so, we do not seek analytical generalization, but rather a granular exploration of identifying local mechanisms, dynamics, and relationships, capable of shedding light on a process of institutionalization and capacity building that – without denying federative interconnections – is not supported exclusively in the vertical induction of coordination.

The first aspect that appears recurrently in the trajectory of Belo Horizonte's food security policy is the incorporation of instruments developed elsewhere, not only from public programs previously tested, but also from civil society action. In this process, initiatives are

adapted to the contours of the contextual problems and objectives, not only copied. This is the case, for example, of popular restaurants, initially created by Saps, which reappear with universal service in 1994, and of food supplementation, cornerstone of the policy developed by the National Institute of Food and Nutrition (INAN), which strongly guided the first decade of Smab. Another example is the appropriation of food price surveys as an institutional instrument for market regulation, in re-signification of the activist performance used by the Movement Against High Cost (*MCC*) and the research practice established at CEDEPLAR. It is also worth mentioning programs for marketing food grown by family farmers, notably *Direto da Roça*, which emerged in synchrony with the creation of the Family Farming Strengthening Program (PRONAF) in the federal government, or even the school meals program, which was transferred to a specific body for food security, along the lines of the one that had been done in the municipality of Santos. There are, moreover, several attempts to incorporate agroecological techniques for food production developed within the scope of civil society and the university. Finally, there is an intense exchange of instruments and knowledge within a nutrition specialized field, with a permanent relationship between bureaucrats and researchers in the areas of food assistance, school feeding and food and nutrition education¹⁴. We call this mechanism *displacement and conversion*, referring to the literature of institutional change (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010).

Secondly, there is the development of an autonomous local bureaucracy, although not insulated, with ample capacity to bring about solutions both to policy problems and to management problems. Even though food security in Belo Horizonte has not been built around its own bureaucratic career, a combination of careers linked to the areas of nutrition, agronomic engineering, and administration managed to create a favorable environment for developing ideas and gears for operationalizing local policy. In this context, Braga (2019) highlights the crucial role of nutrition professionals, whose specific technical knowledge spread out to management and planning positions. The ability to overcome local adversities, combined with national and international awards for successful initiatives, generated mechanisms to strengthen the capacity, consolidation, and legitimacy of the bureaucratic body of food security in the municipality (Santiago, 2020). By way of illustration, the first bidding process regulated by legislation 8666/93 in the Municipality of Belo Horizonte took place precisely at Smab, with the purchase of foodstuffs for school meals. After this moment, Smab structured a strong administrative area, specialized in the acquisition of large food lots, which was only demobilized decades later when the city government centralized procurement activities. Still, part of the core procurement team came from the food security body itself. We call this mechanism *embedded autonomy building*, referring to studies on bureaucracy and development (Evans, 1995; Evans & Rauch, 1999).

Finally, it is necessary to pay attention to the multiple governance arrangements established by the municipality of Belo Horizonte to provide services and operationalize the food and nutritional security policy. From the trajectory described, it is possible to identify at least three: (i) direct provision, exemplified in the provision of ready meals in schools and popular restaurants; ii) partnership by means of an agreement, concession or similar, especially in the area of commercialization, through the regulation of the supply of healthy foods and family farming via economic agents (food entrepreneurs or farmers); and (iii) non-hierarchical network of multiple actors, with wide incorporation of social technologies derived from civil society, which is present in instruments built together with the university (*e.g.* Educator's Guide¹⁵), but also in the recent articulation for the creation of the Participatory System of Guarantee of the Metropolitan Region. This mechanism is called *hybridism*, referring to the public governance literature (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2011). In our view, the hybridity of forms of governance comes from capable and creative local action, aimed at overcoming problems, and points to the benefits of maintaining multiple dynamics of interaction between the State, the market and civil society.

4 Final considerations

This article revisits the trajectory of the municipal food and nutrition security policy in Belo Horizonte with the aim of elaborating new hypotheses/assumptions that allow the understanding of its longevity, as a contribution key to a renewed look at the local scope as a locus of innovative experiences of medium range. This particular policy was born during a prolific environment of local innovations, based on diffuse post-redemocratization experimentalism that took place in the 1990s, amidst institutionalization processes of center-driven decentralization: *modus operandi* par excellence of the social policies in Brazil.

The path of almost 30 years described above allows listing at least three additional elements to those already brought by the *Kingdonian* (multiple streams) and *Piersonian* (path dependence) hypotheses articulated by the literature to explain the emergence (Chappel, 2018) and the continuity of the policy (Machado, 2006). First, it should be noted that the municipal food and nutrition security policy in Belo Horizonte incorporates, at different times, instruments and methodologies developed in civil society, including the university, which indicates a rich exchange environment built on the permeability of the State, in its local facet. Second, such an environment seems to revolve around a bureaucracy that, despite not having its own career, demonstrates competences and operates with a certain autonomy. A third element consists of the diversity of service provision arrangements (direct, regulation, partnerships, etc.). This aspect may denote the presence of multifocal governance (Spink et al, 1999), but also the reappropriation and transformation of instruments (Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) by local action.

Although the verification of these hypotheses is beyond the scope of this work, it is ultimately worth recalling the particularly inspiring insight of Peter Spink, Marta Farah¹⁶ and all the researchers who contributed to the implementation of the Public Management and Citizenship Program between the mid-1990s and the year of 2005. It is not a question of “idealistically interpreting” the results found, attributing to the local scope an aura of “new communitarianism with contours of a broad solidarity”, nor denying the innumerable positive effects generated by decentralization dependent on the center, driven in recent decades by the federal government machinery. It is about revealing and critically reflecting on what possible contributions can be offered to the prevailing institutional arrangement by the local governance model which is concrete, empirically verifiable, and whose successes and failures challenge some basic assumptions of the current decentralization.

Last but not least, the case of Belo Horizonte policy under analysis brings, *per se*, insights for the complementary and necessary (re)planning of public food security policies in our federation in a moment of rising hunger index in Brazil, as well as showing how we have continuity in public policies beyond good experiences and significant advances in certain periods. Such insights seem to necessarily involve strategies that articulate the presence of an autonomous local bureaucracy, but also of an engaged and capable civil society, as well as hybrid forms of organizational action that explore and develop these capabilities.

In a current scenario of several setbacks in some public policies in the federal government, investigations that shed light on smart practices of subnational public management are of great relevance – especially in the local sphere which interacts directly with the citizen.

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Endnotes

¹ See <https://olheparaafome.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Relatorio-II-VIGISAN-2022.pdf>, accessed on June 27, 2022.

² See <https://caesp.fgv.br/centros/centro-estudos-administracao-publica-e-governo/projetos/programa-gestao-publica-e-cidadania>, accessed on December 04, 2022.



³ Belo Horizonte's municipal food supply and security policy, moreover, is among the 20 finalist programs of the Public Management and Citizenship Program, mentioned above in this introduction – see the 1999 edition (SANTOS, 2000).

⁴ The reference to Dora Barrancos and her importance for the events preceding the creation of the municipal policy for food and nutritional security in Belo Horizonte were suggested by Professor José Divino Lopes Filho of the Department of Nutrition at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, to whom we are grateful. The allusion to the mentioned period appears in a text of autobiographical memories written by Barrancos (2017).

⁵ Testimonials from the 1st National Congress of the Movement Against High Cost (*MCC*) show that the movement arrived in Belo Horizonte thanks to the action of one of its spokespersons, Aurélio Peres, a factory worker who at the time held the Mandate of Federal Deputy for the Brazilian Democratic Movement – MDB. In Belo Horizonte, the movement was organized by neighborhoods, which were already more or less mobilized due to allotment disputes like the ones performed in São Paulo, carrying out surveys and writing letters to the mayor and the governor (MONTEIRO, 2015).

⁶ Years later, in 1991, a new Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (CPI) on Hunger would be instituted with recommendations for public policies and practices within the scope of agrarian reform, agricultural production and food supply (VASCONCELOS, 2005). The Final Report can be accessed from the following link: https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=9BDFEAED8747948CA1C73AFB4391440AD.proposicoesWeb2?codteor=1243740&filename=Dossie+-PRC+84/1991+CPIFOM, accessed on February 11, 2021.

⁷ The article does not use a typology of public governance previously established in the literature, but instead seeks to contribute to the typological development as new classifications are made. These new classifications, in turn, were based on the work of CHRISTENSEN and LÆGREID (2011) and refer to three ideal types: (i) direct provision of services, when the State autonomously carries out a certain initiative or acts through contractual instruments rigidly defined; (ii) Partnership by means of an agreement (or concession) or similar, when the State performs a certain action through third parties, who appear as partners, but are subject to a hierarchical instrument mutually agreed between the parties; and (iii) Non-hierarchical network of multiple actors, when the State and its partners, especially civil society, act together, based on a more or less formal horizontal relationship.

⁸ According to documentary records available at NDI, in particular the Participatory Strategic Planning report carried out in 2018, which rescues the history of food security and nutrition policy through the words of its servants.

⁹ For a discussion between the intersectoral model proposed at the federal level and the municipal models of Santos and Belo Horizonte, anchored in their own administrative body, see MACHADO (2006, p. 47).

¹⁰ Differently from the Nutrition area, whose first public recruitment was held in 1995. See Braga (2019).

¹¹ Available in:

https://prefeitura.pbh.gov.br/sites/default/files/estrutura-de-governo/smasac/2018/documentos/guia_do_educador_pdf_verso_site.pdf, accessed on February 14, 2021.

¹² “*Chega de Pá Pá Pá*”. News report by Karla Monteiro, based on an interview given by Alexandre Kalil to Revista Piauí, Edition 177, June 2021, available at: <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/materia/chega-de-pa-pa-pa/>, accessed on July 16, 2021.

¹³ See <https://prefeitura.pbh.gov.br/noticias/aberto-edital-de-licitacao-que-permite-revitalizacao-dos-mercados-municipais>, accessed on July 16, 2021.

¹⁴ See, for example, Fraga *et al* (2020) or Lopes *et al* (2017).

¹⁵ *Op. Cit.*

¹⁶ On municipal innovations, see also FARAH (2008).