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Food (in)security in urban peripheries: the case of Maré, Rio de Janeiro

ANTONIS VRADIS and TIMO BARTHOLL

Abstract: This article discusses urban food insecurity and the right to the city in the case of Brazil overall, and in the Maré complex of favelas in Rio de Janeiro in particular. It presents the key questions that guided our research project, *Nutricities*, as these stemmed from our four working groups on urban agriculture; agroecological markets and food distribution; the genealogies of pacification; and food sovereignty in the favela. In addition, the article presents the action-research approach deployed by our team for the study of food insecurity. This study was situated in the context of the increasing securitisation of Brazilian urban peripheries, and the ensuing obstacles caused to their populations' right to the city—by which we mean their claim to fundamental urban rights, which include access to affordable and good-quality food. The article proposes the agroecological approach as a potential avenue to reach popular food sovereignty in the areas where this prospect seems most distant at present: the urban peripheries of the Global South.

Keywords: Action-research, food insecurity, right to the city, urban periphery, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

INTRODUCTION

This article reflects on research around urban food insecurity as conducted by our research team, *Nutricities*. The academic and practical challenge in *Nutricities* was to better understand the relationship between urban space and social exclusion in cities of the Global South. In other words, the project has used questions around food in order to grapple with the unabating urbanisation of Global South cities, and what this means in terms of the right to access, and the right to key social services and infrastructures for their populations. In short, this is a project that looks at the renewed right to the city for residents of the marginalised sections of the urban South, using food as the instigator of a discussion over the right to the city and urban informality, that already includes gender (Chant & McIllwaine 2015), labour (Auerbach *et al.* 2018) and its role as practice (McFarlane 2012). Our research builds on this notion of

informality-as-practice to grapple with the very practical questions around food: what, where and how we eat is a cornerstone of our lives and is becoming even more so at a time when one ninth of the world's population is undernourished (United Nations 2015), and a great proportion of this population's growth is increasingly concentrated in the cities of the Global South.

In setting up *Nutricities* we chose a research approach that takes into account first and foremost the experiences and views of the local community in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Our aim has been to develop a more equal working relationship between our local (Rio-based) and overseas (UK) researchers, to the extent this is possible. We were under no illusion that our small team would be able to single-handedly wipe out centuries of structural injustice, the kind of injustice woven into the long thread of systemic exploitation that links colonialism to present-day capitalism. Yet we believe that being open and upfront about these gigantic historical inequalities might help build a more transparent research approach. This is an approach that could in turn help ameliorate, even if in the smallest of ways, the devastating results of this systemic injustice against populations living in urban peripheries today.

This article begins with the example of the Brazilian truck drivers' strike of May 2018. This strike showed exactly how important the reliance of Brazilian cities upon food production from rural parts of the country really is ('Crisis, transportation and food sovereignty'). Bearing this in mind, we then go on to show how we went about setting up our research team locally ('Building our action-research (AR) approach') in a way that would be both woven into the local community, as opposed to being conducted by outsiders, while also reflecting this geographical dependence of the city on its own 'outside'. We then go on to explain how we divided our research into four distinct but interrelated working groups, and the key findings they each reached. The next part ('Favelas, food sovereignty and the struggle for the right to (be in) the city') broadens the scope of our reflections to explain the importance of food sovereignty in the context of the wider right to the city, before we reflect on the questions we posed ourselves both during our field research and during our 'Week of Food Sovereignty' (Maré, Rio de Janeiro, December 2018) ('Questioning food sovereignty'). The penultimate part of the paper presents our mapping of 'The nutritional landscape of the Maré', and the final part of the paper ('Taking food sovereignty in Rio and the urban periphery forward') reflects specifically on some of our key research experiences in Maré and Rio overall, and it proposes avenues for future research and action.

CRISIS, TRANSPORTATION AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

In May 2018 (during what was already a challenging political time, with Brazil's political crisis raging), the near-complete dependence of the country's cities upon food production from distant rural areas became painfully clear. A truckers' strike saw street blockades nationwide, essentially shutting down the country for more than a week. The shelves of vegetable and fruit stores (called *Sacolé* or *Horti Fruti* in Brazil) were immediately emptied, and stayed empty throughout the strike; weekly markets were cancelled; supermarkets ran out of produce, and whatever fruit and vegetables remained available soared to unaffordable prices. Brazil depends greatly on one means of transportation for the circulation of its produce—trucks—be it from agroindustrial complexes or from small farms to the cities. Should highways be blocked or gasoline run out (another effect of the blockades, as petrol tankers were unable to reach petrol stations), cities simply cannot receive the produce that their inhabitants need.

There was an important lesson learnt from the truckers' strike, and this concerned the high dependence of Brazilian cities (especially those of metropolitan size, such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro) both on rurally produced food and on the transportation of goods from all over the country. After all, Brazil is a country the size of a continent. Here, transportation matters very much. The strike reinforced the significance of the question we were grappling with when we commenced *Nutricities*: will it ever be possible to achieve food security and guarantee access to high-quality food in the peripheries of Brazilian metropolises? Will it ever be possible to build food sovereignty there?

BUILDING OUR ACTION-RESEARCH (AR) APPROACH

To explore the question about the possibility of food sovereignty in urban peripheries, we chose a collective community research approach that is both on-the-ground and bottom-up. Our project entered into a partnership with the local community space and collective, *Roça!* Others before us (Scott 2012) have shown that social scientists are persistently inconsistent in the way they study elite and non-elite social groups. When trying to understand social behaviours and patterns, they have considered the opinions and reflections of elite groups on their own actions; yet when it comes to non-elite groups, these groups do not have any similar voice in the interpretation of their own actions. Statistics, consumption patterns, voting behaviour and all other indicators social scientists can grasp are used to interpret what non-elite groups do:

always in their abstract, de-individualised form, as objects of study, and never as subjects of social intervention or change; never as people who have their own agency.

In our collective community research approach, we both spoke to individuals living in Maré, and gave great importance to what they think and do. The participation of people who reside in Maré was pivotal in the development and the carrying out of *Nutricities*: of the people who live, work and eat in the favelas. These are people who would benefit from better knowledge of how food security and the urban periphery relate to one another. This is why *Nutricities* was based on an action-research (AR) approach. This approach has already been discussed by geographers (Pain 2003) and others (Fuller & Kitchen 2004, Herr & Anderson 2005). It stems from a genuine Global South tradition of militant investigation, as already discussed and experienced, for example, by the Colombian social scientist Orlando Fals Borda (2009); the Indian social scientist Muhammad Anisur Ramnath (Borda & Ramnath 1991); or members of our team who have already considered it in the Brazilian context (Bartholl 2018). Action-research is based on integrating practice and theory. Here, theory originates from practice, in consecutive cycles of action and reflection. In this way, AR overcomes the dichotomy of the researcher as subject and the researcher as object of study. AR intervenes while it happens, and its intervention in return becomes part of the research process.

The way we understand it, a more ‘typical’ research project would still include those who live and work in an area under study—whether this is a city in the global periphery or anywhere else. There is, after all, a long tradition of participatory action research (PAC) in the social sciences overall and in geography in particular, where emphasis on participation and action means the researched communities actually participate in their research, and these communities evolve as they address questions that are important to them (Reason & Bradbury 2008). PACT is a particularly good fit for geographical research, where ‘people’s relations with and accounts of space, place and environment are of central interest’ (Pain 2004: 653). In this way what *Nutricities* is undertaking is not new. But its novelty does lie, we believe, in the fact that we worked closely with local residents and users in the Global South as *research members*, not just partners: asking them to join us, to help co-design the research we would be undertaking together, to set out its aims, to develop the research methodology, to re-focus the research, and to decide how this would be disseminated. Our team included two groups of researchers: those overseas (Europe-based) and those who were local to the Maré. In trying to find how best to work out the relationship between the two groups, and given the obvious, and unavoidable, structural differences posed by the Global North–South dichotomies, we decided that the local group of researchers should have a certain degree of autonomy when it came to self-education on matters of nutrition in Maré, as well as in practical issues concerning the local

dissemination of the research (for example, by purchasing and setting up stands in local markets). We carefully chose community members to participate in the research. They were each experts in one or more aspects of food production and distribution as well as community mobilisation; and they showed great interest in researching and also educating themselves about the other parts of the food production and distribution chain. Our community researchers all continued to work in their usual contexts, while dedicating some of their time to joining in with the collective research effort. They were largely asked to integrate perspectives from what they already worked with, and to answer questions that had high relevance to their community and that related to their working lives. In this way they were involved, either directly or indirectly, in building what we called ‘grassroots food infrastructures’.

Our local team, which named itself the ‘Minhocas Urbanas’ (‘Urban Worms’ Collective) included Timo Bartholl, a geographer with experience in social movements, who was the contact point with the overseas group of researchers; Geandra Nobre do Nascimento, Alessandra de Lima and Bruna Pierroux, all members of our local research partner, the Roça! Collective, which works on the distribution of small and agroecological farmer products; Joelma Nobre do Nascimento de Oliveira, a local market vendor; Amanda Mendonça, a community social worker and Jamylle Andrade, a nutritionist, who are both joining efforts to form community groups on nutrition and health; Juliana de Medeiros Diniz, an agroecological farmer from the periurban area of the Magé; Rosinaldo Lourenço da Silva, a community media activist engaged in mobilisation for the maintenance of one of the few green areas in the favelas of the Maré, where a local community association maintains an urban garden. With the exception of Juliana, who is a farmer in the Magé (a municipality in the greater Rio de Janeiro region) all our local researchers live and work in the Maré.

The participation of an agroecological farmer in the community researcher group, one who is engaged in the *Articulação de Agroecologia do Rio de Janeiro* (AARJ, Agroecological Co-ordination of Rio de Janeiro), had a great impact on our research. All researchers with non-agroecology experience stated how much their views on their inner-urban fields of work within the favelas—such as public health, community nutritional support, community communication and craft food production—widened through their contact with this approach. A genuine grass-roots food-infrastructure-based set of solutions was produced to address the issue of food (in)security locally, be it on an educational and symbolic or a much more material and concrete level. This set of solutions starts with the (re-)education of urbanised subjectivities and can lead to the (re-)appropriation, at least partially, of the means of (re-)production of our lives.

Our AR approach has allowed us to do two things: first, to gain empirical first-hand data and experience on the ground in one of the most populous favela areas of

Rio de Janeiro, the Maré; and, second, to gain a novel perspective in studying the larger picture, regarding international debates and policies over food politics. Who are the decisive agents, how has poverty and food access developed globally over past decades, and what does the situation look like today, in crisis-ridden Latin America, and from the perspective of the urban periphery? The continuous exchange and discussion between our overseas and local community researchers helped us identify four key thematic fields for research and action. We focussed on these by forming four corresponding working groups, which were:

1. Urban agriculture and the right to the city;
2. Agroecological markets and distribution patterns of and access to organic and agroecological products;
3. Genealogies of pacification, development theories and the food question;
4. Favela food habits, food sovereignty, and agroecology.

The two first working groups focussed on local realities on the ground. They combined active intervention with reflection and analysis. Specifically, working group 1 on urban agriculture had already visited numerous urban gardens across the Maré and mapped these, as well as rooftop gardening initiatives in the area. In addition, this working group investigated the role of public policies and intervention in some of the more widely known urban gardens that came into being through a combination of local resident initiatives, with support from the public authorities. Finally, the group, together with neighbours, helped convert a pavement into a small community garden in the Timbau (Maré), and is actively involved in the larger-scale community garden and park area of ‘Mata Ecológica’, which is situated in the southeastern end of the Maré. This gave our working group first-hand experience of the challenges to be faced in trying to transform the favela into a greener, food-producing territory.

Working group 2, on agroecological markets, visited markets across the city and is currently mapping spatial patterns in the distribution of agroecological and organic food items across the Rio de Janeiro metropolitan area. At the same time, the group will be establishing a weekly market stand in the local street market of the Vila do João (Maré) favela. The plan now is for the stand to distribute agroecological products as well as our research findings, to disseminate knowledge and ideas on agroecology, nutrition and health.

Working group 3, on genealogies of pacification, development theories and the food question, investigated the ways in which the food question relates to the overall public security agenda, and the pacification agenda in particular. First, the working group highlighted the ways in which agricultural modernisation—that is, the Green Revolution—was implemented in Brazil in the Cold War context. This was part of an international pacification process with regard to the ‘Third World’ question, the

negative effects of underdevelopment and poverty and their connection to international political instability—and, of course, the wider danger of communist expansion. At the same time, the group focussed on the ongoing pacification process in the favelas, investigating its links to the food question in light of the sustainable development agenda and the discourse on the resilience of cities of the Global South. The aim here was to understand these continuities and discontinuities through the lens of pacification, following the thread of the food question during the shift from Green Revolution to Green Governmentality; from the grand narratives of development and modernisation to declarations of sustainable development, resilience and self-reliance.

Working group 4 on favela food habits, food sovereignty and agroecology is where we built the links between the local and global scale. We analysed the local situation in relation to global perspectives, solutions and a possible movement toward more secure food futures for all. This working group was also where contributions from our project co-investigator, Dr Oonagh Markey, help orientate our research investigations, both methodologically and theoretically.

From the very outset, when we were designing the Nutricities project, we recognised that there were strong conceptual frameworks already developed on the questions we were to deal with. Such frameworks derived primarily from social movements in rural areas, movements that had already attempted to tackle the challenge of food security. This same challenge has now become one of the big tasks for the increasingly fragmented 21st-century global community. For example, groups and organisations of ‘Via Campesina’ (an international grassroots agricultural movement; see the following section) have developed a conceptual approach that goes beyond the idea of food security alone. It grapples with what it terms ‘food sovereignty’.

We take this ‘food sovereignty’ idea as a horizon, as a plausible aim for the not-too-distant future. And we scrutinise the set of practices and concepts of the agroecological approach as a potential avenue to get us there. More than just organic food produced in response to consumer demand, agroecology seeks to adapt to local conditions, to combine local and traditional knowledge with the latest methods of production without causing harm to natural resources, and more importantly: to preserve these resources for future food production and future generations. Here, in this multi-focussed approach, the consumer and the producer are given equal importance.

Using this agroecological approach, social movements have shown in practice that food sovereignty is not an abstract concept. Fair food distribution and access to quality food for all are possible. This can and must take place on the ground, in the thousands of small farms, and in community and rooftop gardens. Every consumer can also produce the food they subsist on and every individual who works in food production and/or distribution can also be a consumer of their own food items.

FAVELAS, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE RIGHT TO (BE IN) THE CITY

In the 1990s, a diverse set of important social movements of small farmers, peasants and landless workers formed the international Via Campesina movement. Joining their struggles across continents, members of the Via Campesina set out not only to struggle for land and territory in material terms: they understood it was also necessary to struggle for terms, definitions and concepts involving food and its production at a more theoretical, semantic and symbolic level. In this sense, Via Campesina critically reviewed the idea of ‘food security’ as found in documents concerning international cooperation at the time, and contrasted it with the idea of ‘food sovereignty’ (Lee 2007). Since then, three short key documents have been produced by the movement, outlining and defending the basic concepts of food sovereignty from its own perspective. Right at the outset of what we could consider the semantic and conceptual dimension of its struggle, Via Campesina went public to proclaim ‘Food Sovereignty: a World Without Hunger’. In the document, signed at the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996, Via Campesina states:

We, the Via Campesina, a growing movement of farm workers, peasant, farm and indigenous peoples’ organizations from all the regions of the world know that food security cannot be achieved without taking full account of those who produce food. Any discussion that ignores our contribution will fail to eradicate poverty and hunger. Food is a basic human right. This right can only be realized in a system where food sovereignty is guaranteed. Food sovereignty is the right of each nation to maintain and develop its own capacity to produce its basic foods respecting cultural and productive diversity. We have the right to produce our own food in our own territory. Food sovereignty is a precondition to genuine food security (Via Campesina 1996: 1).

The document underlines the central role of those who produce food, especially small farmers and peasants, and contains a general critique of the liberalisation of trade, especially considering that food is primarily a source of nutrition and (should) only secondarily (be) an item of trade. It defends food as a basic human right; points to the importance of agrarian reform in guaranteeing food sovereignty (especially in countries of the Global South, we should add); points to the importance of the protection of natural resources; and positions itself against the World Trade Organization’s International Property Rights Agreement, defending instead the right of farmers to freely use the genetic resources and seeds needed for food production. The document also underlines the central role of women in food production, and calls for an end to the globalisation of hunger and for a democratic control of food production. The document set a starting point to what are by now more than two decades of broad debates over how food should be produced; how nations should formulate their

politics and policies around the food issue; and in particular how these should relate to the question of sovereignty. This initial conceptualisation of food sovereignty took the national scale as central. It departs from the idea that the national political sphere is where mechanisms of global economics should be challenged and dealt with—and particularly those with any direct or indirect negative impacts on a nation's vulnerable social classes. As such, the approach is based on the idea that the national scale is where social movements struggling for food justice, or for the right to produce, can best intervene. This is where, this reasoning goes, these movements can shape the making of politics while not ignoring the importance of international networking and links, as best demonstrated by Via Campesina and the international movement it represents.

In 2003, Via Campesina released another short document entitled 'What is Food Sovereignty?' Here the movement summed up debates since the birth of the concept five years earlier and took an important step in forging food sovereignty as a concept capable of guiding social mobilisations and the self-organisation of these struggles. In this document, the movement argued that food sovereignty is the right of the people, countries or state unions to define their own agricultural and food policy. According to this conceptualisation, food sovereignty includes:

- prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed the people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. Hence the need for land reforms, for contesting GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), for free access to seeds, and for safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.
- the right of farmers, peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to decide what food they consume, and how and by whom this is produced.
- the right of Countries to protect themselves from too low priced agricultural and food imports.
- agricultural prices linked to production costs: they can be achieved if the Countries or Unions of States are entitled to impose taxes on excessively cheap imports, if they commit themselves in favour of a sustainable farm production, and if they control production on the inner market so as to avoid structural surpluses.
- the populations taking part in the agricultural policy choices.
- the recognition of women farmers' rights, who play a major role in agricultural production and in food (directly quoted from the Via Campesina website (2003)).

In Nutricities we linked an empirical, on-the-ground research perspective with a localised grassroots experience. We did so by forming a local group for research and intervention in the favelas of the Maré in Rio de Janeiro to take on the research. When reflecting on the relation between the urban periphery and food security, one question

we raised was: what role do the urban poor play in the construction of the food sovereignty concept? And, conversely, what role does the concept have—or can, or should have—for the urban poor and their territories?

As discussed already by Richard Lee (2007), food security as understood presently and food sovereignty are not indistinguishable; rather they relate to each other in an antagonistic and even oppositionary way. And, as Via Campesina explains, ‘true food security’ can only be reached through ‘food sovereignty’. Given this, what possible connections are there between the urban periphery and food sovereignty?

Dwellers in the urban periphery are directly mentioned in two points of the Via Campesina definition of food sovereignty: As ‘consumers [... who should have the] right to be able to decide what they consume’ and as ‘populations [in general] taking part in the agricultural policy choices’. With so little defined, these gaps in the definition of food sovereignty in relation to the urban periphery open up a range of questions for the future.

QUESTIONING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

We argue that the concept of food sovereignty must be looked at from a viewpoint that permits different scales and angles of analysis and practice. It needs to be urbanised both more broadly and more deeply, in the sense that, even though it currently has a primarily rural focus, social movements from rural and urban areas actually constantly cross and connect their perspectives and horizons of struggle.

Throughout our entire research process, including our monthly meetings for reporting, reflection and planning, as well as their culmination in the debates of the ‘Week of Food Sovereignty in the Maré’ (December 2018), we came to formulate the following set of questions. We see these as a result of our research effort in bringing our experience of urban social struggles at the periphery in contact with food sovereignty struggles.

- What kind of food access is there in the favelas and how do we eat there?
- Which forms do we find here to produce, distribute, sell, buy, prepare, process and consume food?
- What is our role in the above (as residents, researchers, militants of grassroots movements)?
- Considering that ‘food sovereignty as horizon’ is a concept supported by practices of agroecology and urban agriculture, how do the favelas organise in the face of these respective knowledges and practices?

- What interventions are possible to disseminate knowledge and practices aimed at an urban periphery that is less dependent on supermarkets, the agroindustry and large-scale networks of food distribution, much of which is poisoned with pesticides?

As the last question contains answers to some previous ones, we now explain how we have been discussing these questions and what we have discovered throughout our action research process and intense debates during the ‘Week of Food Sovereignty’. The next section provides a short overview of how we have approached each of these questions in our research, with a particular focus on the first two, namely:

What kind of food access is there in the favelas and how do we eat there?

Which forms do we find here to produce, distribute, sell, buy, prepare, process and consume food?

THE NUTRITIONAL LANDSCAPE OF THE MARÉ

As is the case for big cities in Brazil in general, Rio de Janeiro’s main hub for the arrival and redistribution of food items is the so-called CEASA (the centre for the supply of fruit and vegetables in a certain region). Thousands of trucks reach Rio’s CEASA, located in the northern zone neighbourhood of Irajá. Here, thousands of resellers buy daily from the distributors. It is therefore possible that a big supermarket chain or even an independent supermarket buys from the same supplier as an individual and often a precariously working market vendor. That means that from the small to the large scale, resellers’ demands are met at CEASA. Of course, the main supermarket chains have their own redistribution networks beyond this hub. But what is mainly important here for favela residents as regards the produce they have access to, is that it is nearly impossible for them to know the origin and means of production of any product. This, in turn, makes it impossible for them to choose between different origins or modes of production.

A tomato bought at the weekly market in one of the favelas in the Maré could be from a family farm or from an agroindustrial production complex. This of course is information that is not revealed to the end consumer. The use of pesticides is very intense in Brazilian agriculture (see Nutricities 2018), whether we deal with industrial or family agriculture. As a consequence, no matter where consumers in the Maré buy their food, they do not know where it comes from or how it was produced. Yet the chances are very high that pesticide and GMO-based conventional production methods are used for most of the food they have access to. In general, and as we can

see from an analysis of the interviews we conducted on food habits with residents in the favelas of the Maré, most buy much of their food either in local supermarkets or in one of the big supermarkets in nearby neighbourhoods, such as Bonsucesso. Many residents also buy fruit and vegetables at the weekly street markets and local *horti fruti* shops. In their daily routines, the vast majority of residents have no access to any kind of alternatively produced food, be it organic or agroecological. The nearest weekly markets where such food is offered (but at relatively high prices) are the Federal University and the Olaria neighborhood; neither, however, are visited by Maré residents in order to buy food items.

In terms of common routines of food habits, most people in the Maré have a rather 'light' breakfast, consisting of white bread, either with margarine or butter or some cheese or *mortadella* and much coffee with a reasonable quantity of white sugar. A meal that is of great importance is lunch, that is usually composed of different kinds of carbohydrates; this nearly always contains rice and black beans, complemented with potatoes (often in the form of french fries), *farinha* (a manioc flour), noodles (spaghetti) accompanied by some kind of meat (beef, pork, chicken) or less frequently, but still commonly, fish, and not necessarily but also rather commonly some kind of vegetable and salad. Families who cook at home either by choice or necessity (to cut down on their spending), will always have rice and beans as their base; their meals vary only in what accompanies this base.

At the same time, however, it is also very common to have lunch in one of the numerous street restaurants: either set dishes or serving from a buffet that tends to vary little, yet always contains a variety of vegetables, salad, carbohydrate sources plus meat and eggs. Lunch is the main meal for people in the Maré, as later in the day their routine is much less regular and differs more from one individual to another. It is not unusual for people to have the same food they had for lunch, heating up what was left over. But another common way to satisfy hunger at night or any given time of the day, beyond the two meals of breakfast and lunch, is to have so-called *lanche* snacks. There are four main types of *lanches*: hamburgers and their variants (adding egg, bacon, cheese, etc.); *salgados*, which are wheat flour-based variations of oven-baked bread-type snacks, always with some meat filling; *pastels*, which are a wheat flour-based dough bag with a meat filling fried in hot oil; and, finally, another form of fast food is meat and chicken sticks, fried on a grill, sometimes accompanied by rice and a tomato and onion sauce (*molho a campanha*).

Many of the numerous street snack restaurants in the Maré offer one or more of these four main types of snacks, and there are restaurants that exclusively offer lunch, as mentioned above. At night there are very few restaurants offering food comparable to what is available at lunchtime. Most snack restaurants also offer fruit juices or acai cream (a frozen ice-cream-like sweet snack without milk) to accompany the snacks or

to be consumed separately. There are also a number of different ice cream shops, many offering low-quality ice cream.

Another category that should be mentioned is pizzerias, that are again quite numerous. All snack food items are also delivered to the homes of residents if they pay a small service fee. Also very common is the takeaway or delivery of lunch in a throwaway aluminium plate with lid called a *quentinha*.

In general we can observe that many food items that are low in nutritional value represent a certain set of urbanised food habits; these take up more and more room in the menus of daily meals compared to traditional food habits that older generations might still maintain to some degree, many of whom migrated from rural areas in the northeast of Brazil to Rio. New food items or food types that appear in the routine of at least some residents usually come in form of waves, following trends. This can be said of *Yakisoba*, a noodle dish with a few vegetables and some meat fried on a hot plate, inspired by Asian cuisine; or to a lesser degree also of sushi, as quite a few restaurants have opened over recent years in the Maré. Finally, some 'craft' hamburger restaurants have also opened, offering more expensive, higher-quality fast food. These, however, are only consumed exceptionally and are not usually integrated into the daily food routine.

It is finally worth mentioning that on most social occasions families and friends organise so-called *churrascos*, or grill parties. This once again signifies that meat makes up the main ingredient in menus for social events. Last but not least, beer is also consumed in high volumes on these occasions and is generally consumed regularly by a large proportion of Maré residents.

TAKING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN RIO AND THE URBAN PERIPHERY FORWARD

Through this brief and early summary of our observations on food habits and the patterns of food consumption patterns in the favelas of the Maré, we can observe two main characteristics in relation to the food sovereignty perspective. First, in terms of primary resources, residents of the Maré have little to no choice over where their food comes from, or how it is produced. We can say that there is a high degree of non-sovereignty at stake when it comes to primary food production in the favelas, even though the role of initiatives at the very small scale of urban agriculture still has to be considered and discussed more extensively. Second, however, is our observation that much of the food available in the favelas has been processed (that is, raw food transformed into consumable food items) and prepared locally, in small-scale production units. It is evident that a high proportion of the workforce employed in the Maré

is occupied in the wider food sector, often organised as small family businesses (restaurants, snack restaurants, bakeries, street vendors).

As the next step forward, starting from the initial analysis laid out here, we need to critically discuss how it might become possible to rethink the role of residents of the urban periphery in the struggle for food sovereignty. Other than just consuming and influencing food policy by campaigning or voting, or by supporting rural social movements, what can be done so that residents of the urban periphery can gain more sovereignty over what they eat and how they supply themselves in the favelas? These issues guided our discussions during our ‘Week for Food Sovereignty’. During this week, we asked:

- What is our role in how food is produced, distributed, sold, bought, prepared, processed and consumed (as residents, researchers, militants of grassroots movements)?
- Considering that ‘food sovereignty as horizon’ is a concept supported by practices of agroecology and urban agriculture, how do the favelas organise in the face of these respective knowledges and practices?
- What interventions are possible to disseminate knowledge and practice aimed at an urban periphery that is less dependent on supermarkets, the agroindustry and large-scale networks of food distribution, much of which is poisoned with pesticides?

In its writing-up phase, *Nutricities* will be following the conceptual path set out by these questions. In this way, we anticipate being able to elaborate strategies for residents and their organisations and movements, as well as for public institutions, on how to rethink the role of food and its access in 21st-century urban peripheries. Last but not least, we expect that a multi-territorial approach to the reality of the urban periphery and its struggles can help rethink the concept of food sovereignty by loosening it from the scale of the nation, turning it instead into a multi-scale rural–urban concept. In this way, *Nutricities* will be addressing, and expanding upon, the question of the right to the city, particularly as this has been posed in the context of the Global South. This growing body of literature (Morange & Spire 2015, Samara *et al.* 2012) is nevertheless by and large not quite at a stage where this largely abstract and Western-originated concept can address the pressing and everyday needs of urban populations in the Global South overall, and its peripheries in particular. We believe that the encounter between agroecology/urban agriculture and the link between urban–rural social movements and the urban periphery is where this can start to become possible.

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