

THE BIOPOLITICS OF HUNGER AND THE SPATIAL CONQUEST OF THE COMMONS: A CRITICAL INTERVENTION INTO TURKEY'S SCHOOL MEAL CRISIS

A BIOPOLÍTICA DA FOME E A CONQUISTA ESPACIAL DOS BENS COMUNS: UMA INTERVENÇÃO CRÍTICA NA CRISE DA REFEIÇÃO ESCOLAR NA TURQUIA

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Abstract

In this paper, the school meals crisis is seen not just as a technical failure in welfare provision but as a matter of cultural politics. Drawing from social reproduction theory, Foucauldian biopolitics, and Lefebvrian spatial analysis, the study argues that the lack of public school meals in Turkey shifts the cost of labor-power reproduction to households. It also turns hunger into a disciplinary force within schools. As a result, schools become places where deprivation quietly shapes learning and amplifies inequality. This article challenges state-centric solutions. It introduces non-state publicness to explore collective provision through municipal logistics, local food networks, and academic oversight. By reimagining the school kitchen as both a site of struggle and a possible food commons, the study shows how everyday school infrastructure can be reclaimed from marketization and capitalist control. Thus, the article offers a spatial and material perspective on education policy. It places nutrition at the center of educational justice rather than treating it as a mere welfare issue.

Keywords: Social Reproduction. Food Commons. Biopolitics. Non-State Publicness. Social Self-Defense.

Resumo

Neste artigo, a crise da merenda escolar é vista não apenas como uma falha técnica na provisão de bem-estar social, mas como uma questão de política cultural. Com base na teoria da reprodução social, na biopolítica foucaultiana e na análise espacial lefebvriana, o estudo argumenta que a falta de merenda escolar pública na Turquia transfere o custo da reprodução da força de trabalho para as famílias. Também transforma a fome em uma força disciplinadora dentro das escolas. Como resultado, as escolas se tornam lugares onde a privação molda silenciosamente o aprendizado e amplifica a desigualdade. Este artigo desafia soluções centradas no Estado. Introduce a noção de publicidade não estatal para explorar a provisão coletiva por meio da logística municipal, redes alimentares locais e supervisão acadêmica. Ao reimaginar a cozinha escolar como um espaço de luta e um possível bem comum alimentar, o estudo mostra como a infraestrutura escolar cotidiana pode ser recuperada da mercantilização e do controle capitalista. Assim, o artigo oferece uma perspectiva espacial e material sobre a política educacional. Coloca a nutrição no centro da justiça educacional, em vez de tratá-la como uma mera questão de bem-estar social.

Palavras-chave: Reprodução Social. Bens Comuns Alimentares. Biopolítica. Esfera Pública Não Estatal. Autodefesa Social.



1 INTRODUCTION

Despite global evidence that school meal programs promote educational equity, Turkey is one of the few countries without a publicly funded school meal program (WFP 2025). Many children in Turkey attend schools without adequate nutrition. This shifts the duty of feeding them to families and private canteens. The crisis has mostly been framed as a fiscal or administrative problem, not a political issue of social inequality. Rather than treating school meals as a minor policy tool, this article situates the crisis within broader debates on neoliberal state restructuring and the governance of social reproduction. In this light, the article offers a new approach by treating the school meal crisis as a question of biopolitics and social reproduction. By connecting the politics of hunger to critical theories of neoliberal governance, the article contributes to critical sociology. It demonstrates that everyday infrastructures, such as school food provision, are central arenas in which class power, social reproduction, and the boundaries of the public sphere are renegotiated.

The neoliberal state sees education mainly as a generator of human capital (Becker 1964; Schultz 1961). Yet it treats nutrition as an unimportant factor, even though nutrition is the primary requirement for human capital to exist. Turkey's systematic exclusion of school meals from the central budget is more than just budget discipline. Agamben (1998) describes this as creating a normalized state of exception. The state enforces a silent but damaging biopolitical process. It separates lives worth protecting (*bios*) from those left to market forces (*zoe*). The goal of education shifts from enlightening minds to treating the body as a subject of biopolitics under the neoliberal state (Foucault 2008). Because of this, child nutrition and school meal programs become key areas in which the definition of public responsibility is changed and slowly shifted toward the market. More specifically, the withdrawal of public provision places the biological cost of social reproduction on families, changes school infrastructure to fit market needs, and renders hunger invisible as an administrative issue rather than a structured political choice under neoliberal governance.

The school meal crisis is not just a technicality in educational sciences. It reveals a class divide at the heart of social reproduction (Bhattacharya 2017; Federici 2012; Vogel 2013). The capitalist state retreats from its role in supporting the material needs of the

labor force—such as food, housing, and care—leaving the burden to precarious families, especially women's labor (Federici 2004). Foucault (2003) describes the state's role as choosing "to sustain or to abandon to death." This is seen in Turkey's disadvantaged school corridors, where children are left to the canteen system. Here, hunger is not a technical issue, but a class-driven political decision on the distribution of surplus value. The state spends on war or capital transfers while neglecting to provide school meals, thereby controlling and pacifying future generations. This results in the starkest form of capital saving at children's expense. Thus, the lack of school meals is not a policy mistake; it is a structural result of neoliberal control over life and reproduction. The article theorizes hunger as a biopolitical tool and proposes a commons-based alternative to commercial school food provision. By viewing school hunger as embedded in the political economy of social reproduction, the article widens sociological discussions on neoliberal governance. It shows how everyday infrastructures become central to the struggle for the public sphere. The rest of the article first places the crisis within theoretical debates on biopolitics and social reproduction. Then it examines how hunger is reproduced within schools, and finally it outlines a commons-based alternative. The study reimagines school food as a collective public right rather than just a market product.

2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study has several aims. First, it sees the crisis in Turkish school meal provision not as just a fiscal or administrative problem, but as a cultural and political process. This process is rooted in the neoliberal state's decision to withdraw from social reproduction, using hunger as a biopolitical tool. Second, the article goes beyond usual critiques of state-centered capitalist solutions. It explores non-state publicness as an alternative for collective provisioning. Third, the article uses a spatial and practice-based analysis to propose a model for transforming school kitchens into food commons. This model involves municipal logistics, local food sovereignty, and academic oversight. The study further links critical debates on biopolitics and social reproduction with new discussions of infrastructure commons and the governance of daily life. By making nutrition central to educational justice and suggesting a radical alternative to

marketization, this work adds to debates in education policy and political economy. More broadly, it argues that debates about school food production—whether to separate public duty from market supply, or treat commons as alternatives—are important sites of conflict.

3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Biopolitical neglect: hunger and the discipline of the body

In Turkey's market-driven economy, hunger is more than food deprivation. It is a silent form of violence and an effective disciplinary tool. From a Foucauldian perspective (1977, 2003), hungry children become docile bodies within the educational system. Research shows that chronic malnutrition lowers cognitive capacity and disrupts neurological development. This physically limits students' ability to protest or think critically (Kar et al. 2008; Kirolos et al. 2022). Hunger is the neoliberal state's cheapest and most silent disciplining method. Power prefers the numbness of the hungry, not the rebellion of the well-fed (Hardt & Negri 2000; Mbembe 2003; Agamben 1998). The school, therefore, shapes not only the mind but the body's nutrition and nervous system into class-based submission.

Schools now place cafeterias at their centers, which act as class-based filters, serving high-priced, low-nutritional food. This shows that schools are no longer common; they have become small zones for capital accumulation. Harvey's (2003) concept of accumulation by dispossession appears here in sharp form. The right to food is not a commercial right, but schools are now commercial centers making profits for businesses. School corridors have become spaces of segregation. Those who can pay are treated as bios (political life), while those who can't are reduced to zoe (bare life).

Children in Turkey now experience the harshness of the market economy before learning the alphabet; the lunch line reproduces social inequality on a daily basis. This is where the fairy tale of educational equality collapses into the rumbling of children's stomachs. As Bourdieu (1984) suggests, distinction begins in the stomach, 'what one eats is the most primitive term of defining where he/she fits in the social order.'

The decoupling of nutrition from the state's ideological obligation and its relegation to the volatile sphere of capitalism is a typical instance of a passive revolution in Gramscian terms (1971). In this case, the neoliberal apparatus manipulates structural shocks with great precision, masking them behind the private sector. The state thus essentially depoliticizes one of its central mechanisms of class reproduction by framing the reproduction of the self as a personal act left to capital owners (Harvey, 2012). The privatization of public services, as McGoey (2012) illustrates, expands under the calculated narrative of governmental resource scarcity, creating a theatre of hegemony among classes. This tactical retrenchment is not merely a cost-saving measure; rather, it grants capital sovereignty over everyday life while methodically eroding the state's constitutional responsibility (Patel 2012; Zizek 2008).

3.2 Non-state publicness: the conquest of space and mutual aid networks

In light of the deliberate negligence of the central state's bureaucratic elite, the concept of "mutual aid," as asserted by Kropotkin (1902), argues that the provision of food, clothing, and other consumption goods should not be seen as a benefit from the state but rather be perceived as a societal form of survival. Inequality between individuals prevails when some can afford to pay their children to eat in upper-class dining environments, while most students can usually afford only what the other students can usually afford. From a Lefebvrian perspective, the repossession of the school kitchen can also be seen as a liberation from catering companies. School kitchens ought to conform to and be structured into the 'food commons' (Vivero-Pol 2017) with no incentives to profit-making and a strict focus on societal needs as the principal aim. From the perspective of school food provision, these places are not available through the government but are, in fact, incumbent upon society.

The logistical power of local governments (municipalities) forms a regional shield of resistance against the neglect of the central state (Bacchi 2000). The flow of locally produced food from municipal kitchens to school kitchens establishes a local network of food sovereignty (Patel 2009) in opposition to global food monopolies. In this autonomous structure, the school is not an outpost of the central bureaucracy, but instead a "resistance base" where the local community feeds, manages, and defends itself (Shiva

2015). The organized environment here is an example of non-state publicness, constructed by the community in defiance of central authority, free from the state's laziness and capital's greed. Space needs to be liberated from the exchange value of commodities and restored to the use value of life. In this process, teachers and parents become not just passive observers but also active co-managers of food cooperatives. As Scott (1998) points out, while the central state's ways of seeing often miss local realities, the horizontal organization we propose here provides "bottom-up" visibility and management.

3.3 Praxis implications: building commons and class self-defense

As this discussion has demonstrated, the school meal crisis in Turkey cannot be attributed solely to inadequate welfare provision; rather, it is a structural manifestation of neoliberal governance that places the responsibilities of social reproduction on vulnerable communities and families. As a result, hunger is not only a form of deprivation but also a form of discipline, and it is strongly linked to both student learning and school attendance. This theoretical diagnosis can be translated into the following recommendations, which constitute a set of praxis-oriented directions for reconstructing school food infrastructures.

To begin with, the nutritional requirements for child development and school meal programs must be recognized as a social right and as part of the state's core responsibilities. From the perspective of social reproduction, food is not a support service or a secondary material dimension of education, but rather a material precondition for education. On this basis, school meals must be established as a universal public provision, instead of being contracted out to catering markets or left to charitable provision.

Second, the school kitchens ought to be viewed as public infrastructures, rather than insignificant service units. Using a Lefebvrian spatial analysis, the recovery of the unused or outsourced kitchen spaces allows the realignment of school spaces away from their reduction to exchange value. On-site preparation and collective organization re-establish the kitchen as a commons-based space that facilitates care and communal learning.

Third, external financial resources must be strictly regulated through public oversight to avoid the repetition of symbolic or managerial forms of authority exercised through philanthropy. In that regard, capital should act only as technical infrastructure under transparent, scholarly control, rather than serving as a governing body. This type of decommodification counteracts capitalist influences and preserves public material capacity.

Lastly, the concept of non-state publicness suggests that collective provision may be structured around logistics coordinated at the municipal level, bringing local producers, families, and universities together in collaborative efforts. These decentralized networks provide an alternative to centralized bureaucracy and market outsourcing by embedding food systems within local democratic governance. In this way, schools are reconstituted as commons-based spaces.

4 METHODOLOGY

This study rejects the traditional positivist boundaries of the social sciences, namely the reductionist approach that views data solely as a statistical record of what is; instead, it adopts an interventionist methodology based on the principles of critical realism. Methodologically, the research focuses on the tension between visibility and neglect by investigating not what exists but what is strategically neglected and eliminated from the public sphere by the neoliberal state apparatus. As Andrew Sayer (1992) argues in his theory of critical realism, the empirical manifestations of social phenomena (e.g., child hunger in school corridors) cannot be understood without analyzing the deep structural mechanisms that produce them (e.g., the state's accumulation strategies). Therefore, our methodology codes empirical data scarcity not as a technical deficiency but as a practice of agnotology (ignorance production) used by the state to conceal its responsibility in the crisis of social reproduction, and it treats this silence as a primary data source.

The first stage of our method is a process of tracing, inspired by Smith's (2022) institutional ethnography, extending from the micro-experiences of everyday life to the macro-structures of institutional power. Here, data are sought not in the boxes of a questionnaire, but rather in the absence of parents' and teachers' answers to the question

“how is the child's stomach filled at school?” and in the lines of the bureaucratic regulations that govern this impossibility. This institutional ethnography process leads us directly to the profit-oriented logic embedded in state cafeteria tenders and the centralizing obstacles that paralyze local governments' capacity for public intervention. Thus, the research becomes a political laboratory that redefines an individual's story of deprivation as a systematic practice of abandonment by the state.

The second and most radical level of the methodology is the process of “Spatial Archaeology” and “Mapping the Invisible,” built upon Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space. We take the architectural inventory of the shuttered kitchen, the refectory turned into a warehouse, and the dysfunctional hallway as raw empirical material. It is the material imprint of capital's violation of the communal. To us, a statistic is not the main piece of data; rather, a politically informed intent behind a closed kitchen door is. This disuse that we interpreted is not neoliberal efficiency; on the contrary, we define it as the deliberate mutilation of public space. Where empirical obscurity is concealed by state secrecy, we apply a Gedankenexperiment. This is used to justify the structural potency of that which was suppressed, revealing the municipality's secretive synergy as an entity historically represented as a priori negativity. What emerges from our findings cannot be captured by existing statistical records. Instead, it is produced at the barricades and boundaries of the legal, bureaucratic, and ideological gateways, which have thus far obscured the coupling of municipal logistics and idle school infrastructure.

5 CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study discusses the school meal crisis in Turkey. It is not a technical budget management error, but rather a strategic practice of social abandonment by the neoliberal state. Unlike many national systems that institutionalize universal or publicly funded school meal programs, Turkey does not operate a comprehensive school food policy. Nutritional provision is largely relegated from the public sphere to households and commercialized canteen markets, where food is organized as a private commodity rather than a social entitlement.

International assessments and policy reports consistently indicate that child poverty and food insecurity in Turkey remain widespread, with a considerable number of

students attending school without adequate nutrition (FAO 2023; OECD 2023; UNICEF 2022). In this sense, hunger appears not as an episodic welfare gap but as an ordinary and systemic feature of schooling.

The state-mediated displacement of children's nutrition within the framework of social reproduction theory places greater financial strain on family members and shifts the cost of child-rearing to parents, who are disproportionately borne by the already disadvantaged socioeconomic groups (Neuman 2019). By questioning this effect through a Foucauldian paradigm of biopolitics, one is likely to notice the absence of nutritional provision as a rather minor yet influential apparatus of control: malnutrition reduces participation, attention, and academic achievement, thus carving the educational trajectories along the lines of embodied disparities. Today, outsourcing and canteen economies organize everyday infrastructures in contemporary schools in ways that restructure the spatial logic of school settings, moving away from communal provision toward transactional exchange relations. Such a reordering of the system is precisely why it is so important to reconceptualize nutrition not just as a secondary service to welfare or a form of charity, but as a constitutional dimension of educational justice.

On this basis, the infrastructuring of school food as a publicly organized and collectively governed system, coupled with municipal logistics, local production networks, and institutional regulation, emerges as a potential avenue for reimagining schooling as a place of collective social reproduction rather than a space where deprivation is institutionalized.

5.1 Municipal logistics and local food sovereignty

The municipal capacity of cities forms the first line of defense that urban settings can mobilize against the sharp neoliberal advance of centralized governance. The disruption of traditional food regimes by positioning a nexus between local food production and school kitchen activity, as supported by Brazilian and Italian cases, inevitably delegates the role of supplying food to local communities, leaving them responsible for this provision (Hartmann et al. 2025). A systematic survey of modern municipalism in practice in Turkey shows that municipal kitchens have considerable production capacities, although bureaucratic barriers that prevent their smooth integration

with school kitchens actively stifle these capacities. This kind of rupture provides the logistical explanation for why the food industry has been thrown into the control of catering monopolies. In this context, the food sovereignty concept, as defined by Patel (2009) and Wittmann et al. (2011), is operationalized in an urban context. Therefore, the municipality goes beyond being an administrative organization that provides sustenance to become a key channel between the local food producers and institutional kitchen structures.

Italian municipal geography, structured around the circulation of farm produce within a 50-kilometer radius, is not merely a simple move to block predatory pricing by the world food regimes; it represents more than a socio-economic boundary (Sonnino 2009). The model reorganizes food provisioning by providing raw agricultural products of cooperatives to the school gate. It is mobilized as a political strategy, aimed at strengthening the local economy and reestablishing social well-being within community life. Combined with the municipality's shape, which subverts the traditional idea of a service provider, it represents a countermove against the calculated, outrageous carelessness of the state.

The doctrine of mutual aid, laid out by Kropotkin (1902), is no longer a far-fetched vision, but an immediate survival architecture—a horizontal one. Just as in the case of the French dialectic of central and satellite kitchens, this independent nexus, a configuration of local producers, urban authority, and pedagogical institutions, organizes resources to survive socially without succumbing to the caprice of central bureaucracy (WFP 2025). The municipal kitchen has thereby undergone a profound ontological transformation: it ceases to be a service and becomes a sovereign bastion for the protection of social rights. Moreover, this logistical shield interrupts the predatory commodification of life almost at the school entrance. The coercive tyranny of the exchange value, the driver of market-related starvation, is rendered ineffective within this protected zone. The municipality's logistical footprint produces a form of sovereign insulation, securing the school kitchen as a recovered commons against the instabilities of global markets. It is a form of practical insurgency. It transforms nutrition from an invisible, everyday necessity into a technocratically secured, non-negotiable responsibility of local government.

5.2 The ontological transformation of the school kitchen

School kitchens in Turkey, intentionally left idle or transferred to the market under neoliberal governance, have become objects of dispossession. Interpretation within the theory of the production of space developed by Henri Lefebvre (1991) of the closed or rented school kitchen, and of canteen companies, leans towards the occupation of public space by capital. We emphasize the need for a profound ontological transformation of the physical space. The model of on-site production in Japan illustrates the concept of school kitchens located within the heart of the school, thus providing a catering environment liberated from commercial motives, a space devoid of profit orientation (Asakura & Sasaki, 2017). Redesigning the setting to make preparing and serving food part of social learning experiences. Today, eating is ritualized into a measure of class where only those with money wait for their meals at the cafeteria. However, the space that became a kitchen classroom in the Thai example demonstrates usage beyond mere feeding, potentially accommodating various productive activities. It is an emancipated space where all class boundaries are symbolically suspended, and sharing is not obligatory but natural to one's life (Keeratichamroen et al. 2024). Here, a child ceases to be a mere object consuming food but becomes a subject partaking in the collective labor that sets the table.

A pedagogical laboratory is established within the school by transforming the idle kitchen, challenging the hierarchy in food service. In-depth study of Japan's school meal program highlights the significance of committed labor and the sharing of political authority. Setting the table and cleaning communal spaces are acts of retaliation, launching a counter-disciplinary method that challenges the child's bodily growth in a context where neoliberalism erodes moral boundaries and promotes self-interest. The school kitchen heals children's alienation from food, placing it at the center of life rather than treating it as an object in the market. Such spatial transformation brings changes to the school's power maps, with the kitchen now emerging as the most respectful and dynamic center of the school against cafeteria capitalism. This autonomous space, with money matters taken care of, where rights and needs are the only topics discussed, should, according to Sonnino (2009), be integrated into all other social relations within the school. This is the assertion of Lefebvre's theory of the conquest of space: what is declared is the architectural existence of this revolution, reinstating that space was defetishized, wrested

from the logic of capital accumulation, and restored to society. This is a spatial rejection of neoliberal silencing and false docility constructed on hunger. As in the Swedish model (Sonnino 2009), kitchen staff are considered an integral part of the teaching staff. The chef is not just a cook, but a nutrition educator who teaches children about food policy, health, and solidarity. This change elevates the kitchen's status at the school from a secondary service to a core department. The kitchen becomes a symbolic center where the school's spirit and body are healed. This ontological transformation of the school kitchen is undeniable proof that education is not just a matter of the mind, but also of the body and stomach. Expecting free thought from a body disciplined by hunger is neoliberalism's greatest hypocrisy. The smell of food wafting from the kitchen reminds us that school is not just about exam papers, but a living organism in which life is reproduced. This space is an oasis of freedom that reclaims children's bodies neglected by the state from the clutches of capital, liberating them from the discipline of the market and making them subjects of the commons.

5.3 Academic oversight and the scientific barrage against political populism

The sheer fact that this model is practically inaccessible to the corrosive elements of political populism and capitalist instability is a major strength for its long-term viability. Unlike the waves of partisan politics, academia creates a scientific protective mechanism, a system of non-negotiable rules through which caloric density and food safety are regulated. In this regard, it is not only a technical but also a structural matter, aimed at ensuring that the radical right to food is not reduced to a patronizing form of social assistance (Taras 2005). The university can organize the operation of school kitchens across urban regions to ensure that children's health is a top priority, unaffected by political fluctuations. Scientific rationality, in such a scenario, acts as a protective shell for the child (Marmot et al. 2008; Flinders & Muller 2006).

Such a pedagogical intervention reinforces the social contract. Although political leadership changes, the nutritional minimums cannot change, which allows the separation of the school meal issue from the short electoral cycle and transforms it into a question concerning the functioning of a rights-based institution grounded in science. This is where the ivory tower is left behind as academia breaks down conventional walls and goes

directly to school kitchens, thereby occupying the material spaces of everyday educational environments (Nowotny et al. 2001). Furthermore, this scientific fortification is the last line of defense against the degradation of living conditions. The university's nutritional and food safety standards are treated as sacrosanct in a neoliberal environment where catering conglomerates habitually compromise food quality to maximize profits. These academic requirements aim to integrate technology and municipal logistics (Barlow & Thow, 2021).

The university can transform this lived process into a dynamic database, and the longitudinal impacts of this intervention on child development can be disseminated to the global scholarly community. The triangle of city, school, and university would not only alleviate hunger but also initiate a new pedagogy of nutrition within educational discourse. This university-based paradigm is, finally, the governance mechanism that binds municipal capacity and otherwise idle capital to the school space. Academia occupies the middle ground in the unstable conflict of financial interests. It is not merely an act of interpreting the world, but a political intervention aimed at ending the systemic hunger experienced by children through scientifically grounded principles.

6 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated throughout this study, this crisis is a conscious and systematic practice of social abandonment whereby the Turkish state suspends its most fundamental biopolitical responsibility and subjects children's bodies to a process of class-based selection. The state has withdrawn nutrition, a fundamental right, from the public sphere, leaving it to market speculation, the mercy of cafeteria cartels, and the randomness of charity. This strategic neglect is the concrete manifestation in school corridors of Agamben's (1998) conceptualization of bare life; the state operates a biopolitical sorting mechanism by deciding which bodies will be sustained by public food and which will be abandoned to the silent violence of hunger. This abandonment is the darkest face of the neoliberal accumulation regime in Turkey, which transfers the costs of social reproduction to households and women's labor. The education system has been stripped of its role as a place where minds are enlightened and has been turned into an instrument of pacification and discipline produced by hunger. Foucault's (1977) thesis of "docile

bodies” is reproduced here through stomach rumbling and cognitive paralysis. Therefore, the school meal struggle is not only a defense of the right to food, but also a physical and political act of resistance against the state's destructive control over children's bodies (Bennett et al. 2025).

The article's most fundamental conclusion is that hunger is not a fate but a class crime. However, in the face of this crime, social opposition and academic theory must go beyond merely calling on the state to resume its duty. To wait is to condone neglect. This study has shown that the void created by the state's own state of exception can only be filled by society's collective capacity and autonomous networks. As long as the state continues to distribute food as a favor through its cumbersome and centralized structure, the class hierarchy will remain intact. The real solution lies in non-state public models that bypass this state hierarchy and organize food directly as a “commons.”

The core of our idea is the reconstruction of the school's physical space as a Food Commons, detached from the logic of capital and bureaucracy. In the context of Lefebvre's (1991) theory of the production of space, maintaining closed school kitchens and cafeterias, or renting them to canteen companies, is simply the occupation of public space by capital. This study calls for an end to this occupation and for the recapturing of every square centimeter of the school as a place of operation based on social needs.

The most powerful challenge to the atomized nature of the school is this spatial reconquest. The approach observed in Thailand and Japan, which we term the operational base, is one in which the kitchen is no longer a peripheral attachment to the school but the center of the school. The kitchen is a radical place for promoting equality. In this case, food loses its exchange value and instead sustains life itself. School lunch in the school kitchen is a way for society to re-appropriate food systems in response to the mechanism of dispossession by capital. The construction of food commons also opens a new pedagogical horizon. Meals for children are not mere objects to be consumed, but part of a process of food preparation, eating with others, and post-consumption cleaning. It is a school that practices mutual aid, in contrast to the competitive ethic of neoliberalism. The school kitchen does not merely feed stomachs; it orchestrates class-consciousness, solidarity, and the celebration of collective life. The conquest of space in this sense is more than a plate of food; it is the foundation of a new form of social existence.

The main pillar of our manuscript is the termination of capital's symbolic power over the public sphere. Private capital cannot serve as the master. Capital must be reduced to a silent, nameless, and powerless source that merely provides the system's technological infrastructure and equipment (McGoey 2012; Wacquant 2009). The entire process is subjected to a transparent, academic, and public protocol of discipline; thus, the power of money curtsies to the authority of science and social need.

The system established in this article does not grant the capital owner a symbolic capital space. On the contrary, it anonymizes the rich person's money by turning it into a building block of public infrastructure. This is an institutional and technical way of combating the private character of property. When capital is drawn into the position of a servant of the school meal system, which is a social commons, the principle of the supremacy of private property, the most fundamental ideological basis of neoliberalism, is rendered practically invalid in the school kitchen. This is the defeat of the power of money in the face of society's collective intelligence.

Municipal logistical power is the local guarantor of food sovereignty against the cumbersome and negligent bureaucracy of the central state. The most important lesson taught by the Brazilian and Italian models is that food must follow the shortest route from the local producer to the school. Municipal logistics eliminates the profit margins imposed by catering cartels and industrial food giants. The autonomous coordination established between municipal kitchens and school kitchens detaches food from the speculative prices of global supply chains, halting the commodification process of food within the school. Here, the municipality is not a neoliberal service provider, but the logistical defense center of the community's right to food. Kropotkin's principle of "mutual aid" is embodied in this horizontal network between the municipality's trucks, the local producer's field, and the school kitchen. This network mobilizes local resources for local needs without requiring central authority approval or budget transfers. Municipal logistics are a revolutionary instrument that exposes the political blindness of the central state, using technology and public power for the benefit of the people. This organic bond established with local producers also preserves the cultural memory and freshness of food. School meals are no longer packaged food, but rather products of collective labor. This logistical revolution transforms food from a commodity into a local common good.

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Authors' Contribution

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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