

The background is an abstract painting with a rich, textured surface. It features bold, expressive brushstrokes in a variety of colors, including deep reds, vibrant blues, bright yellows, and dark browns. The composition is dynamic and layered, with some areas appearing more saturated and others more muted. The overall effect is one of intense energy and visual complexity.

BRUNO LOPES  
ROGER LEE DE JESUS  
(ORGS.)

IMPRENSA DA  
UNIVERSIDADE  
DE COIMBRA  
COIMBRA  
UNIVERSITY  
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FINANÇAS,  
ECONOMIA E  
INSTITUIÇÕES  
NO PORTUGAL  
MODERNO

SÉCULOS XVI-XVIII

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## THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION OF PORTO MEAT MARKETS, 1780-1800

### A GRANDE TRANSFORMAÇÃO DOS MERCADOS DAS CARNES NO PORTO, 1780-1800

**ABSTRACT:** This chapter is divided in three sections. In the first we present the traditional circumstances of meat supply to Porto market and the rise on price that took place between 1780 and 1786 with an attempt of public administration in 1784. The second section deals with the long phase of public *Meat Administration* and dual system that results from it. During this phase, we analyse the relations between cattle fairs, marketplaces and prices through a quantitative analysis of the data provide by the accounting of the public *Meat Administration*. The last part of the paper put the conflict between meat supply and market prices within a general overview of grow and changes of Porto city at the end of Ancient Régime, aiming at putting forward some analytical hypothesis and suggest a further research agenda.

**Key words:** Early Modern markets, 18<sup>th</sup> century, Porto, City Council finances.

**RESUMO:** Este capítulo é constituído por três secções. Na primeira, apresentam-se as circunstâncias tradicionais do abastecimento de carnes no mercado da cidade do Porto e a

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subida de preços, que teve lugar entre 1780 e 1786, motivando uma primeira tentativa de administração pública desse mercado – às mãos do município, em 1784. Na segunda parte, pretende-se estudar a longa fase de administração pública das carnes, ocorrida entre 1786 e 1797, que teve como resultado o *duplo-sistema*. Nesta secção analisam-se, ainda, as relações entre as feiras de gado, os açougues e os mercados de carne e os preços pelos quais eram vendidas as peças de carne e as cabeças de gado, utilizando-se, para isso, os livros de contas da administração municipal. A última parte analisa este conflito entre as necessidades de abastecimento de carnes e os seus preços, tendo em conta a visão geral de crescimento e mudança verificada na cidade do Porto, nos finais do Antigo Regime, com o objetivo de apontar algumas hipóteses de análise e futuras vias de estudo.

**Palavras-chave:** Mercado, século XVIII, Porto, finanças municipais.

## Introduction

This chapter has a three-fold aim: to introduce a valuable source for 18<sup>th</sup> century history of prices to the scientific community; to produce the first analysis resulting from the investigation; and to discuss the preliminary questions that arise related to interrelated pairs including: prices and economic growth, monopoly prices and free prices, city prices and hinterland prices, changes in marketplaces related to the «demand creation» and demographic growth related to food demand.

The City Hall Archives of Porto (Portugal) keeps a series of books related to the public administration of oxen meat markets between 1786-1797. As part of this collection an extraordinary book includes every single invoice of the purchases made by the municipal officials in the nearby village market places. Furthermore, analysing the books of the Council deliberations, it is possible to understand the processes and conflicts generated within the meat market supply and projected in this unusual source. The phenomena is even more interesting when we consider that, through a particular interpretation of the Council regulations, that was a time when both public and private meat markets operated simultaneously within the city. As a result, this gave rise to an escalate in prices.

Within the city, this process clearly mirrors the conflict arising between a certain group of merchants, who carried out monopolistic activities, and the urban community civil power, represented by the City Council. As a result, ris-

ing prices affected not only the meat market, but also the market of oxen meat by-products, such as wax and leather. We can look at this historical process from two different viewpoints. On the one hand, prices within the city rose dramatically, while on the other, price for the pair of oxen grew very little in the nearby villages. Following the prices *geographically*, we may notice how the officials had to search further and further abroad and for longer periods of time to find cattle for lower prices. In 1794, they reached Valença do Minho, a village in front of the Spanish frontier and at 115 km from Porto city, and even went into the neighbouring territory of Galicia at Pontedeva (Ourense, Spain), 150 km away from Porto city.

Looking at it from an institutional point of view, we find the Procurator's endeavours to put an end to the monopolistic manoeuvres of the major meat suppliers, by taking on the task of providing meat to the city *officials*. At the same time, Procurator's interpretation of law allowed a practical difference between the businesses of supplying cattle to the slaughterhouses and the –«free»– trade of meat. The goal was to attract new merchants to the meat market with the tempting offer of the benefits that a single «public offer» of cattle could bring to the providers.

In our opinion, the ideas of Karl Polanyi related to the defence of society from markets and the ideas of David Harvey related to the spaces of capital can be useful tools of analysis and can be tested against historical evidence<sup>2</sup>. Finally, this research, pursued in connection with social and demographic trends, allows further comprehension of the connections between prices and the standards of living from a historical perspective.

## 1. Traditional structures

The meat trade in the city of Porto during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was carried out under the general «regiment of exclusivity» (*obrigados*), just like in others Early-modern European cities. This regiment under which it was ruled dis-

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<sup>2</sup> Polanyi, Karl (1944-1970), *The Great Transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*, Bacon Press and Harvey, David (1982), *The Limits to Capital*, Oxford.

criminated three different kinds of meats: *vitela* (first class young beef); *carneiro* (mutton) and *carnes* in general, which meant ox meat. Meat from lesser herd, such as pork and chicken, was annually priced at the beginning of the year (by *posturas*, public ordinances) and did not work under the exclusivity supply system<sup>3</sup>.

The time span of our research starts at 1780 and goes until the end of the century, focusing on the ox-meat trade. At the time, authorities referred to it by the simple word «meat», and established the formal prohibition to include young cow-beef under this label. Meat distribution was centralised in three «public» slaughterhouses (*açougues*), supervised by the City Council (*Senado*)<sup>4</sup>. The corporative slaughterhouses of the bishop and the cathedral did not fall under this control, but «supervision». The three public slaughterhouses were: the *Principal* – also known as the Royal Slaughterhouse –, the *Porta Nova* (New Gate) and the *Porta dos Carros* (Carts Gate). The first owned four butcher's places (*talhos*) and the other two just two shops each. Altogether, we are looking at eight butcher's places. The use of those facilities was annually allotted through a yearly public auction, organised by the City Council. The facilities were allocated for the year to whoever offered the lowest price per unit of meat (*arrátel*<sup>5</sup>). The highest bidder would thus be in charge of providing meat for all the demand that «was necessary» across that year. However, due to rising prices at the end of the Ancient Régime in Europe, contractors started to request a rise in the price allotted in auction as the year progressed. In other cases, they would simply give up, and abandon

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<sup>3</sup> For the «regiment of exclusivity» as a European phenomenon see Braudel, Fernand (1979-1992), *Civilização material, Economia e Capitalismo. Séculos xv-xviii. Os Jogos das Trocas*, vol. II, Lisboa, Editorial Teorema, pp.11-74. For the development of meat municipal markets in Portugal during 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries see the cases of Porto and Coimbra: Silva, Francisco Ribeiro da (1988), *O Porto e o seu termo (1580-1640). Os homens, as instituições e o poder*, vol. II, Porto, Câmara Municipal do Porto, pp. 357-371 and Oliveira, António de (1972), *A vida económica e social de Coimbra de 1537 a 1640*, Coimbra, vol. II, pp. 197-239.

<sup>4</sup> For the institutional aspects of the Senado of Porto and its mechanism see Silva, Francisco Ribeiro da (1988), *O Porto e o seu termo (1580-1640). Os homens, as instituições e o poder*, vol. II, Porto, Câmara Municipal do Porto, pp. 357-371.

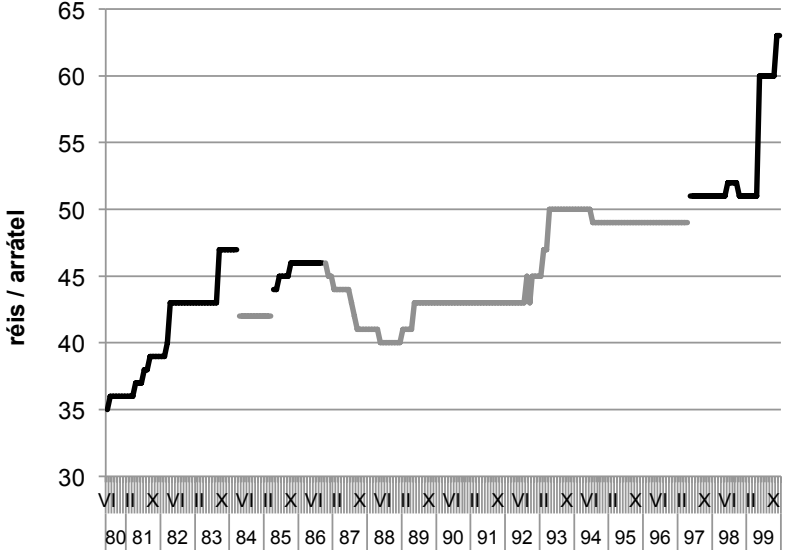
<sup>5</sup> Arroba = 32 arrátéis = 14,688 kg; Arrátel = 2 marcos = 459 g. See *Pesos e medidas em Portugal: Catálogo: Exposição Nacional de Metrologia*, Lisboa, Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1990 and Viana, Mário (ed.), *Estudos de história metrológica: medidas de capacidade portuguesas*, Lisboa, Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa, 2015.

the supply of the public slaughterhouses. The *Senado* was also responsible for the slaughterhouses in the hinterlands. These were also allocated with the same exclusivity system as the public urban slaughterhouses, although in a different auction, and of course, with a different set of prices. On this dates, we found two of these ones, one at Valongo (13 km from Porto city) and other at Aguiar de Sousa (18 km), both at the East of the city<sup>6</sup>.

**1.1. Rising meat prices and the merchants’ challenge to the *Senado***

Following the Council records we reconstructed the series of varying prices in ox meat and noticed a clear rising trend (Figure 1). Starting in 1781, the increase in meat «auction prices» went from 36 réis to 47 by the end of 1783.

**Figure 1.** Nominal prices of oxen meat at Porto market 1780-1799. Under public-*Senado* (grey) and private-auctioned (black) administration



Source: AHMP, atas de vereações, 1780-1799.

<sup>6</sup> For the hinterland of Porto under municipal rule see Silva, Francisco Ribeiro da (1988) *O Porto e o seu termo*, pp. 49-65.

Over the course of long and difficult negotiations, the local authorities tried to use the possibility of taking over the meat supply at the expense of the town as a threat at the negotiation tables. So, on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1782, in the face of a price rise to 45 réis/arrátel, the *Senado* itself offered the price of 42 réis/arrátel<sup>7</sup>. This shows just how powerful an institution the *Senado* of Porto was –as the merchants knew full well. Indeed, with its strong financial structure, the *Senado* was able to deal with large sums of money in a short time. The *Senado* owed its excellent financial position to the structure of the municipality accounting system, as well as to the commercial vitality of the city. The high revenues coming from indirect taxes, which had been negotiated historically with the Crown, were well coordinated on a complex multi-chest system that allowed transferences of cash between different chests<sup>8</sup>.

The fact that the tallow candles manufacturers were the first to decry the rising meat prices demonstrates the tight connection between ox meat and their industrial by-products, such as tallow and leather. On May 5<sup>th</sup> 1781, Domingos Gomes and António Pinto, representing the community of candle manufacturers, filed a complaint against monopolistic manoeuvres concerning price offers at the meat auctions, and also for the liberties taken regarding wax exports by some of the merchants, which in their words, were *foreign*<sup>9</sup>. This allegation takes an even more significance if we consider this was the only time that exports were ever mentioned all across the conflict, and these exports were restricted to tallow, and not to the meat itself.

«[...] e logo nesta vereação foi proposto o requerimento de Domingos Gomes, António Pinto e outros fabricantes de vela de sebo desta cidade os quais querem que em utilidade pública se proíba com as devidas providências a extração do sebo desta cidade para fora e que os arrematantes das carnes não excedam os presos costumados na venda do sebo em rama por constar por provas autênticas que **há poucos tempos tinham chegado a esta cidade alguns sujeitos que constituindo**

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<sup>7</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 89, *Atas de Vereações*, 20 -3-1782, f.196.

<sup>8</sup> Costa, Patrícia (2014), *Finanças e Poder na Cidade do Porto (1706-1777)*. Do registo à fiscalização, *estabilidades e ruturas*. Tese de Doutoramento em História, Porto, FLUP.

<sup>9</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 89, *Atas de Vereações*, 5-5-1781 f. 98.

**o monopólio deste género tinham comprado grandes partidas de sebo aos contratadores das carnes a fim de o exportarem para fora** ficando a cidade não só privada das velas tao precisas ao público mas sujeito o povo a comprá-las por grande preço [...].

The *Procurator's* response to this conflict in the (now) monopolistic situation of the meat market, brought in a second element that might also explain the rise in prices: the drop in offer for cattle in the foreign neighbourlands of Castile and Galicia, resulting in decreasing imports to Portugal of Galician and Castilian meat<sup>10</sup>.

«[...] o gado que se matava [...] tinha subido a um tal excesso que bem manifestava a necessidade que havia de rezes para o consumo público e que se devia dar providência por quanto dos Reinos de Castela e Galiza havia tempos que não vinham bois e era voz geral».

As we know from the studies of Madrid meat supplies, the Castilian sheep crisis resulted in a higher demand for beef and ox meat, which raised the demand for Galician cattle, which was previously intended to the export market<sup>11</sup>. Exports of Galician cattle to Portugal were a key occupation of populations at both sides of the border of the Minho, all through the Early Modern Age<sup>12</sup>.

## **1.2. The «failure» of 1784**

The rising prices continued and the *Senado* meeting of 24 September 1783 was particularly difficult. Only one offer was made at the price of 48 réis/

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<sup>10</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 89, *Atas de Vereações*, 28-3-1781. f. 89v.

<sup>11</sup> Bernardos Sanz, José Ubaldo, (1997), *No solo de pan: ganadería, abastecimiento y consumo de carne en Madrid (1450-1805)*, Tesis doctoral, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1997; *Idem* (2012), «El abastecimiento y consumo de carne en Madrid durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII. Una interpretación de la crisis ganadera en Castilla» in *La historia como arma de reflexión: estudios en homenaje al profesor Santos Madrazo*, Madrid, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, pp. 191-214.

<sup>12</sup> Meijide Pardo, Antonio (1974), «Aspectos del comercio gallego de exportación a Portugal en el siglo XVIII», in *1 Jornadas de Metodología Aplicada de las Ciencias Históricas*, La Coruña.



*arrâtel* for the first six months and 49 *réis* for the next six months. This offer was also limited to the Carts Gate (*Porta dos Carros*) slaughterhouse. In response, the *Senado* decided to take on the city meat supply as from Easter Day of 1784. However, at the end, the merchant Bento José de Faria offered the price of 47 *réis/arrâtel* for all slaughterhouses<sup>13</sup>. It must be presumed that Faria did not comply with his obligation, because in April the *Senado* started to supply meat to the market at the price of 42 *réis/arrâtel*. The *Senado* threatened the merchants with reporting their monopolistic manoeuvres to the Crown, and imposed its own price, since the high price of the city did not allow corporative slaughterhouse merchants to sell meat above the set price. As our study progresses, we will delve further into the contradictory effect that this prohibition had in practice.

In their first attempt to supply meat at the expense of the town, local authorities appointed the task to merchant Francisco Bento Correa, who had won the 1780 auctions for *vitela* and mutton. We were not able to find any records about purchases of cattle or the amount of meat sold during this first period, so we had to follow the conflict along the municipal records. In January 1785 the losses of the Meat Administration already reached three *contos* [=million] *réis* and in March, just two months later, the amount had upped to 5 million (4:889.395 *réis*). For this second meeting, the *Senado* seriously considered the option of splitting the slaughterhouses and putting some of them out to auction again, although finally this did not occur.

In April public *Meat Administration* trade was suspended and foreclosed again to the merchant Bento José Faria, at the price of 44 *réis* for the first six months and 45 for the second semester. In addition, and to compensate the losses of the administration and to clear the balance with the City Treasury, which had funded part of the expenses resulting from administration of the meats issue, the *Senado* levied a tax of 1 real more for each unit of meat. Thus, prices went from 45 to 46. In October, we find António Ribeiro de Castro as winning bidder for the slaughterhouses, at the price of 46 + 1. The *Senado* was forced to find a second merchant and give him a price of one more real

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<sup>13</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 89 *Atas de Vereações*, 24-9-1783, f. 318.

in order to reach the second semester. In October 1786 the *Senado* restarted its moves to bring back the public Administration of Meat.

«[...] dando-se por agora o preço de quarente e dois réis o arrátel de carne, o haver açougues particulares que se notifique que não podem vender por mais do dito preço,...

Outrossim que como em todos os tempos de esta arrematação há semelhantes conluios entre as pessoas interessadas neste género se devia fazer representação a Sua Majestade para de este caso mandar tirar devassa ainda no tempo futuro e serem castigados os culpados com as penas declaradas nos regimentos e leis publicadas o respeito das arrematações das rendas da fazenda real [...]».

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## 2. The long Meat Administration: 1786-1797

What had first started out as a «traditional» rise in prices resulting from monopolistic competition and its «traditional» response (to take on the meat supplies by the Senado), gave way to a new transformative scenario in 1786, through a new intervention from the Procurator<sup>14</sup>.

«[...] a senhoria mandaria dar a carne por três ou seis meses ou por aqueles que fossem necessários **até se estabelecerem talhos particulares** que cheguem com fatura, poder publicar que **toda pessoa que quiser possa vender vaca ou possa fazer pelo preço que quiser** donde ora que Vossa Senhoria entra nesta administração».

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<sup>14</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 90, *Atas de Vereações*, 1786, 5-10-1786 f. 272-278.

At this stage, Procurator José Pedro Antunes Pereira took a course of action that split the traditional system of exclusivity into two separate portions. This he did by limiting beef cutting and sales to the public slaughterhouse. This produced the effect of dividing the market in two: cattle supply for the council slaughterhouses on the one hand, and the private sales of meat on the other. First, he interrupted the *Senado's* supply of oxen to the slaughterhouses, and on the other, he allowed «lesser» merchants the freedom to open butcher shops, with sales prices limited to those pointed out by the *Senado*. With this, his goal was to attract smaller capitalistic negotiators to the markets, by inviting a centralised cattle offer, at reasonable prices and fewer capitalist investments to start up a shop. However, this had the effect of disintegrating the structure of the cattle-meat business. The Procurator expressly stated situation would be temporary until the monopolistic practices came to an end. However, ultimately, his implementation proved to be a non-return path.

The ability and knowledge of Procurator Antunes to face up to the pressures and contriving of the oligopolistic elite and its representatives at the *Senado* proved to be crucial for the meat administration system. Furthermore, the administration built up a complex structure to acquire cattle at the various local cattle markets, which went as far as the Galician frontier and more importantly, managed to put an end to the increasing prices for almost twelve years. Over this time, meat price only rose from 45 to 55 reis. At the return of the system to private administration in 1798, price per arrátel rose to 63 réis in just one year (see Figure 1).

### **2.1. The double system: privilege and change**

To substitute the theoretical system laid out by Procurator Antunes's political economy, the monopolistic merchant elite promoted a double system that drew upon the old mechanism of corporative slaughterhouses, endorsed by the Church and the Crown, while it broadened its own privileges.

At least from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, corporative slaughterhouses that were not under control of the *Senado* were to be found at the city of Porto. Both the bishop and the cathedral owned one, and so did other institutions, such as

the *Relação Court* or the Guild of Moneyers<sup>15</sup>. However, by 1780 we only find records of the two slaughterhouses that operated under the Clergy. Nevertheless, even the information we found for these has proved to be quite scarce. We do know that merchants managed them with a system of yearly allocating, very much like the Council slaughterhouses<sup>16</sup>.

Right at the offset of the conflict in the rising meat prices, several merchants started making moves to look for new areas for capital (Harvey). So it was that in November 1782 merchant Cristóvão António de Oliveira informed the *Senado* that he had requested permission from the Crown to open a new slaughterhouse to provide meat supplies for the city Orphanage<sup>17</sup>. In August 1785 after the short period in which the Council took over meat supplies in 1784 the same merchant undertook the commitment to sell off «surplus» meat from «his» corporative slaughterhouse providing the Orphanage, to the general public. The price was one rei below the official *Senado* price. This measure, which to begin with could be classified as a measure for social protection, (aimed to protect children at the orphanage from the turbulences of the Porto meat markets and to provide the general public with better and more reachable meat prices) was at the end a backdoor for capitalists (Polanyi).

Between 1782 and 1794, several of these capitalistic meat merchants, supported by traditional law and with the support of clergy and Crown opened at least seven corporative slaughterhouses. Therefore, together with the two previous ones owned by Bishop and Cathedral, we find a total of nine slaughterhouses in the city (see figures 2 and 4). At the beginning, the process backed the opening of specific slaughterhouses associated to charitable institutions such as orphanages and hospitals. This trend later extended to almost all the monasteries of the city. This new tendency shows how the *feudal rents* of ecclesiastical institutions were successfully merged in the capitalistic dynam-

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<sup>15</sup> Silva, Francisco Ribeiro da (1988), *O Porto e o seu termo...* pp. 724-746. The same for Coimbra: Oliveira, António de (1972), *A vida económica e social...*, vol. II, pp. 200-210.

<sup>16</sup> Bishop and Cathedral had two at Sé and Cedofeita neighbourhoods. The merchants in charge of administration of those corporative slaughterhouses were Bento Francisco Correa, Antonio Ferreira Lima e Luís Coro da Cruz. AHMP, A-PUB 91, *Atas de Vereações*, 28-12-1787, f. 85.

<sup>17</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 89, *Atas de Vereações*, 20-11-1782, f. 250v.

ics of the city. More importantly, we can see an emerging new structure that would split the offer of meat in markets in ways the Procurator himself had not envisioned. This would jointly affect both cattle and meat supplies, but in new proportions, and under a different set of circumstances. The merchants opened slaughterhouses, not only butchers' shops, while they continued to exert their demand on cattle, pushing the prices at cattle fairs and competing with the *Senado* in the public meat administration.

**Figure 2.** Dates and places of the slaughterhouses

MUNICIPALS	
previous	Principais or Reais
previous	Porta dos Carros
previous	Porta Nova
CORPORATIVE	
previous	Arcebispo
previous	Cabido
20-11-1782	Colégio dos Órfãos
7-12-1786	Hospital Ordem Terceira de São Francisco
4-7-1788	Convento da Conceição
2-2-1790	Agostinhos Descalços de São Lourenço
21-4-1790	Congregação do Oratório
19-1-1791	Recolhimento do Anjo
14-6-1794	Seculares do Evangelista
DISTRICTS	
previous	Aguiar de Sousa
previous	Valongo
?	Couto de Cete
?	Vila Nova de Gaia
4-6-1788	Vilar de Paraíso
6-2-1790	Carvalhos (Gaia)
23-8-1794	2.º de Aguiar de Sousa
21-3-1795	2.º de Valongo

SSource: AHMP, *atas de vereações*, 1780-1799.



This novel «market geography» transformed both the city of Porto and its hinterlands, particularly when the *Senado* allowed new slaughterhouses to be opened across all the territories under its jurisdiction. Valongo and Aguiar de Sousa, two of the most prominent villages, operated under the same auctioning system as the city, but now had six new slaughterhouses. So far we have not yet found historical records with which to evaluate how much meat was sold in the outskirts of Porto, but we can make an hypothesis on the effects it might have had over cattle prices in nearby fairs.

## 2.2. Prices and evolution of marketplaces and fairs

The level of detail of our information sources, recounting every single purchase effected by the Meat Administration marshals is truly extraordinary. With such a valuable data source, at this initial stage we can confirm the extent to which the geography changed both in fairs and in marketplaces. A second source of information was the «summary book», which details the number of cattle sold and the total amount paid at every fair. These summary books have been our main sources in this preliminary stage of our study<sup>18</sup>.

Following the data for 1787, when the Administration had been working for just three months, the main cattle fairs for city cattle supplies were the following: Paredes (17%), Coreixas (15%), the city itself (15%) and Santa Ana (13%). These four main markets supplied 60% of the cattle. As runners up we find a secondary group of medium sized fairs: Chamorra (6%), Carvalhos (6%), Baltar (6%) and Penafiel (6%). They provided 24% of the total cattle supplies. The distinction between one group and another was set at the one hundred oxen mark. Finally, we find a third group, of sixteen minor fairs, that provided 16% of cattle supplies.

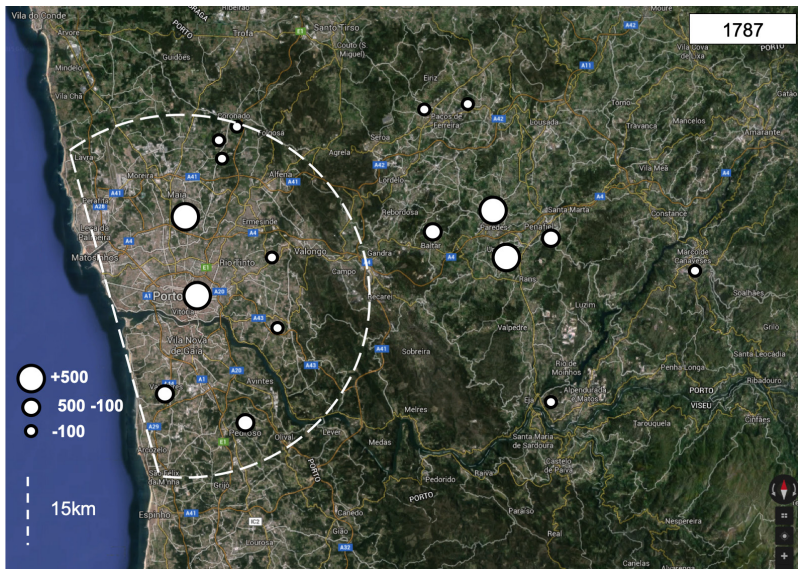
Assuming the inherent difficulties in attempting to exactly discriminate the precise locations of cattle fairs, we believe that at this early stage (1787)

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<sup>18</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 3319, *Livro geral de compras nas feiras*.

all cattle fairs that the city marshals visited were part of the Porto district (figure 3)<sup>19</sup>.

**Figure 3.** Cattle fairs and supplies levels for Porto Meat Administration 1787.  
(n oxen heads purchased)



Sources: Map basis from Google-Maps.5km. Data (white) from AHMP, A-PUB, 3318-3319. Radius of the circle, 15 km from Porto city.

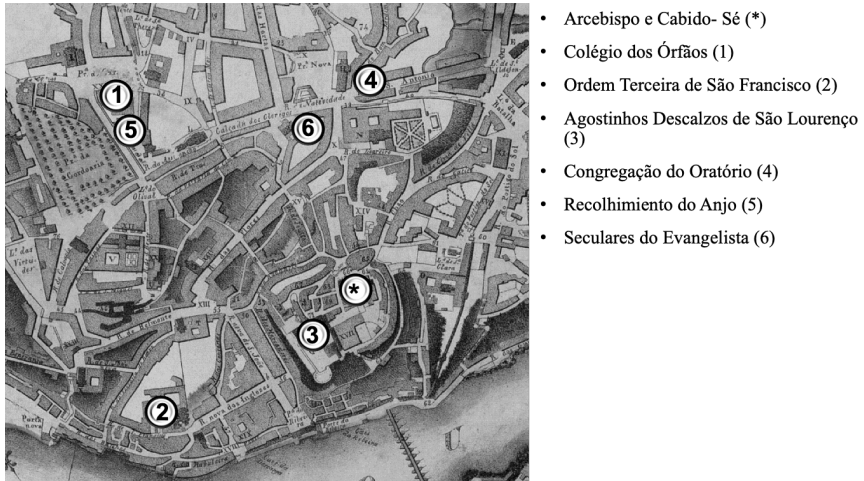
The system of seeking out supplies at cattle fairs seems to have been based on three geographical areas: The first, and also the main supplier in terms of quantity was the valley of the Sousa, at the East. The other two, both within a 15 km radius, were located at the North (Maia) and at the South (Gaia).

The first area of supply was located East of the city and revolved around the valley of the Valley of the Sousa. It included the fairs of Baltar, Paredes, Penafiel, Coreixas, Recensinhos, Freamunde and Cò, among others. The second area was located in the area of Maia. It included the fairs of Santo António da Maia, São Mamede de Coronado and Santa Ana. Thirdly, and on the other

<sup>19</sup> On this point we found useful, Capela, José Viriato; Matos, Henrique and Borralheiro, Rogério (2009), «As freguesias do Distrito de Porto nas memórias paroquiais de 1758: memórias, história e património», *Coleção Portugal nas memórias paroquiais de 1758*, Braga, [s.n.].

side of Douro River, we find the area of Gaia, and its fairs at Madalena, Carvalhos and Chamorra. Each of these areas had a main fair, and other secondary fairs: Paredes in the East, Carvalhos in the South and Santa Ana in the North.

**Figure 4.** Location of Institutions whit corporative slaughterhouses in the city of Porto



Sources: map from Porto City Hall Archive:  
Planta Redonda. Data from AHMP, atas de vereações, 1780-1799.

Adding up the values of the fairs and only counting the main and secondary fairs, we have the following figures: the city itself, accounted for 15%, the South for 15%, the North for 13% and the East 43%. Therefore, it can be stated that the Valley of the Sousa was the main spot for the Porto cattle supplies. Furthermore, different fairs covered different functions in the structure of cattle purchases: Porto and Santa Ana were weekly, very frequently attended fairs, while the fair in distant, Paredes, worked on the basis of single bulk purchases of over fifty oxen. This coherent geography of cattle supplies for the city district, which we assume had been going on for centuries, would be thoroughly revolutionised by the crisis of the escalating prices. It became necessary to seek out alternative market areas in distant places, in an attempt to stay within the maximum allotted price.

By 1791 these clearly defined boundaries that allowed us to group the fairs in this fashion become blurred, and the structure, fragmented. First of all, purchases at the cattle fair of the city itself decreased from 15% to 7%, showing the pressure of demand within the city. Secondly, the proportion of supplies at the larger fairs also decreased as follows: Paredes (10%), Carvalhos (9%), Coreixas (9%) Santa Ana 9%, Baltar (8%). Finally, the lesser fairs now took on a more prominent role. Thus we find Torrão (8%), Airas (3%) and Venda Nova (2%). This, of course, had the implications of rising transport expenses, which were transferred into the lesser quality in the cattle acquired.

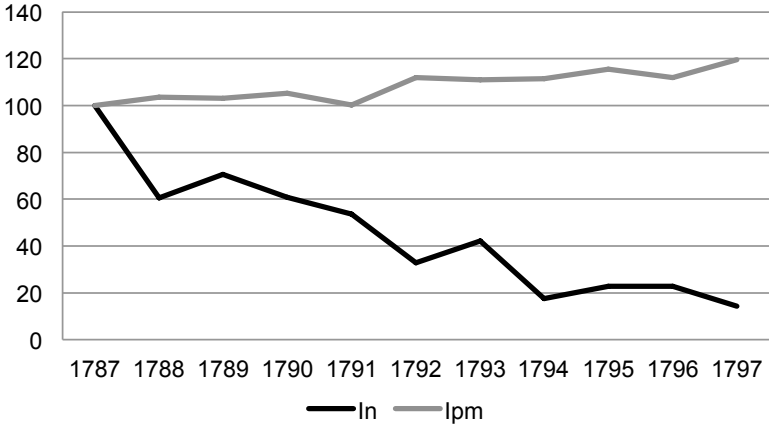
The only way to continue cattle purchases at a reasonable price was to expand purchases towards the natural geographical limits of the city and its area of influence. More specifically, it meant moving out towards the river Ave in the North and to the region of Arrifana, on the border with the region of Aveiro, on the South. Other lines of movement towards the East followed the course of the rivers Tâmega and the mid-section of the river Douro, moving out towards the fair of Touro and the region of Marco de Canaveses. This route had the advantage of making good use of the boats descending the Douro on the international wine trade. However, it also held the potential for creating conflict with the rising demand for oxen as animals for labour.

A secondary mechanism was to buy fewer oxen at each fair, and even halt all purchases at a given fair, until prices went down. We should not forget that the Meat Administration was unmistakably the largest player in the market at the time. This strategy was carried out with the fair of the city itself. As an illustration of what we are saying, we can provide as an example, what we find for the year 1790. In this year, the Administration made no purchases at all during October and November in Porto. Likewise, in 1792 and 1794 the Administration made no purchases at the city fair from September to December (figure 5).

Both these mechanisms attained their highest point of development in 1794. In this year, in the face of escalating cattle prices, the Meat Administration resorted to the markets right on the frontier between Portugal and neighbouring Galicia. The fortified village of Valença do Minho was the most important cattle fair in the area. Just here, the Administration of Porto bought 2,124 oxen that year. However, this operation came at a price. We may sum-

marise the effect of this operation in three consequences. Firstly, it became necessary to appoint a new agent in the village. Secondly, transport costs across more than one hundred kilometres increased enormously. Last, but not least, we have the monetary cost: the Minho market only accepted cash in Castilian silver *pieces of eight*. In order to carry out this monetary intermediation the city had to deal with one of the largest companies of Galicia, the Marcó del Pont family, who had come from Catalonia to settled in the city of Vigo (Galicia, Spain) and operated from there. Even then, when prices at Valença started to increase as an effect of the huge upsurge in demand, the Administration crossed the border and continued its search for cattle in Pontedeiva, a village in the province of Ourense (Galicia, Spain)<sup>20</sup>.

**Figure 5.** Index (=1787) of Average prices [Ipm] (grey) and Number of oxen purchased [In] (black) at Porto city cattle fair



Source: AHMP, A-PUB 3318-3319.

The indicators of this transformation in the geographical structure of purchases and the differences that we see in prices allow us to establish the turn of 1791 to 1792 as the key moment. At this point, the fragile balance in the market came to an end and the escalade in cattle’s prices paid by the Administration started. From this date, the rising transport and monetary costs,

<sup>20</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 3345, f.20; A-PUB 3301, f.322, 340, 359, 583 and 649; A-PUB 3346; A-PUB 3319.



together with the decreasing quality of the meat per ox ballasted the structure and performance of the *Meat Administration*. Indeed, that purchase at the Galician market in 1794 was due to its individualities and circumstances, a mere emergency contrivance that could not be maintained over time.

Together with the geographical fair distribution, we also found a geographical pattern in meat marketplaces. Generally speaking, at the start of period studied, both fairs and market places were different, and set in different places. In other words, trading meat and trading cattle were separately carried out. The only exception to this was the city itself, which only accounted for 15% of the offer, and the two slaughterhouses of Aguiar de Sousa and Valongo, both on the way to the Sousa valley.

However, these changes in market locations had two consequences. First, the geographical distribution of the Meat Administration purchases changed. Secondly, new market settings at the fairs in the city hinterlands ended up by unifying the areas of buying cattle and selling meat. This, of course, had an effect on cattle prices, laid out in the rural areas, and on the purchase decisions taken by urban buyers.

New slaughterhouses opened, and the ones that already existed continued to develop. One of the first opened on the *couto* (a minor unit of jurisdiction) of Cete, just on the «heart» on Valley of the Sousa fairs, and other permissions to open new slaughterhouses were granted in 1788 and 1790. The first opened in the North, at Vilar de Paraíso, and the second at the south in Carvalhos. Hence, the areas that traditionally pertained to supplies, were now expanding to include meat sales to final consumers.

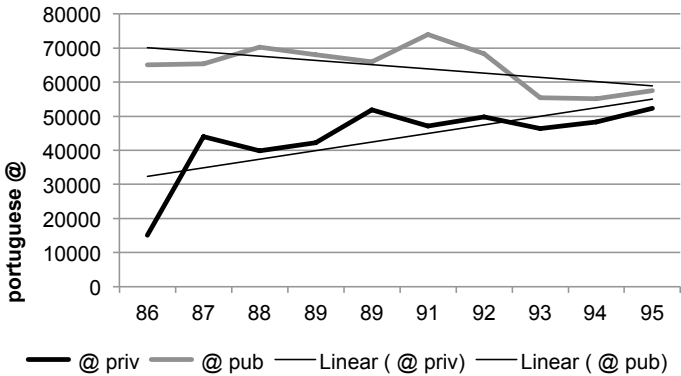
Sequentially speaking, the first movement of capital implied splitting council auctions between all the council slaughterhouses. In practice, this sectioning worked as a bargaining tool within the backdrop of strong monopolistic pressures. Now, instead of compensating gains against losses within the structure of fixed prices, it was possible to enforce different prices in the growing number of city market places. As a result, a sort of «liberalisation» was entering the market.

Secondly, and following the Procurator's theoretical system, we have what we have called the «double system». The double system meant that on one hand, the previous council structure was absorbing over half of the Porto mar-

ket supplies. On the other, smaller commercial structures were now finding themselves in an improved competitive position. They could now operate with a guaranteed demand of lesser proportions and for higher quality. They would presumably have dealt with improved liquidity, which would make them more competitive, since the Meat Administration did not pay in cash to the cattlesellers. In the district fairs, officials of the Meat Administration provided promissory notes to the sellers that they had to present later on in person to the City Council treasury at the city. Structural changes, increasing figures of slaughtered cattle and differed payments all gave way to a rise in prices.

Slowly, the corporative offer increased, at the expense of the Administration's decrease (figure 6). Corporative slaughterhouses responded to the logic of concentrating efforts, and so, at the beginning of the process we find at least four different companies. At the end of the period we only find large groups, which encompassed all concessions in just five slaughterhouses (figure 9). Moreover they were able to assemble different concessions in the premises of one single slaughterhouse. At that time, concessions operated as «titles of right» associated to a certain legal offer without a strict geographical implication to the area of influence of a monastery. As a result of this concentration, slaughterhouses located in the centre of the city and across the river came to have advantages over others located at the North.

**Figure 6.** Yearly volumes of meat sold during the dual period 1786-1796. Public (grey) and corporative (black) offers



Source: AHMP, A-PUB 3348-3349.

Thirdly, after the decentralising movement, the opposite centralising movement started to become apparent. Thus, in 1796, we found the decision of build a new centralised slaughterhouse commissioned by the *Senado*, just when the public *Meat Administrations* was becoming obviously unsustainable. Thus, once the *Meat Administration* had come to its end, the *Senado* seemed no longer amenable to opening new private slaughterhouses. In April 1799, it responded negatively to the request to open a new slaughterhouse in the monastery of *Nossa Senhora do Bom Despacho de Mampoderosa* at Valongo<sup>21</sup>. This should be understood as a rebuild of the monopolistic bourgeoisie at Senado powers.

«[...] que não era conveniente que os suplicantes terem açougue em Valongo tanto porque já ali haviam dois açougues públicos e muito bom socorro [...] **como porque nenhuma utilidade dos açougues particulares, antes prejudicavam os açougues públicos e faziam com que a carne subisse a mayor preço**, só poderem tender o requerimento para que poderem no seu convento matar».

### 3. Population, demand and capital: few conclusions, many hypotheses

Finally, the global perspective of available indices of growth and development in the city of Porto for the last decades of the century reflects the dynamics related to the meat supplies conflicts. We also put forward a large number of working hypotheses for future research on the causes and nature of the economic transformations at the end of the *Ancien Régime* in Porto.

Regarding the origins of our data source, we would like to note that prices for wheat were taken from the accounts of the Misericórdia (WPx), a well-known charitable institution<sup>22</sup>. The ways they are presented, and the fact that they are relatively low, lead us to conclude that these prices were the result of previous supply negotiations, carried out in a similar fashion to those of the

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<sup>21</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 94, *Atas de Vereações*, 24-4-1799, f. 365.

<sup>22</sup> Wheat prices and oil prices data from: Godinho, Vitorino Magalhães (1955), *Prix et Monnaies au Portugal, 1750-1850*, SEVPEN, Paris, pp. 81-85.

meat auctions. On our opinion, and for the case of study, the clearest index of economic crisis is the rate of child abandon (CAx), although we are concern with the institutional transformations and risks as indicator of the economic cycle<sup>23</sup>. We are confident about this point because of the «unexpected» correlation whit prices of olive oil index (OPx). It is reasonable to state that olive oil was the item closest to what we would call «free market prices» in the city, consumed by elite and whit not institutional restrictions. We have also included the settled prices for ox meat, (PMx), both coming from the *Senado* and from private sellers, as well as average prices paid by the *Senado* for cattle at the Porto fair (CPFx). With this data we can now understand the intensity in the reducing prices of meat and cattle in comparison to the global trend (figure 7).

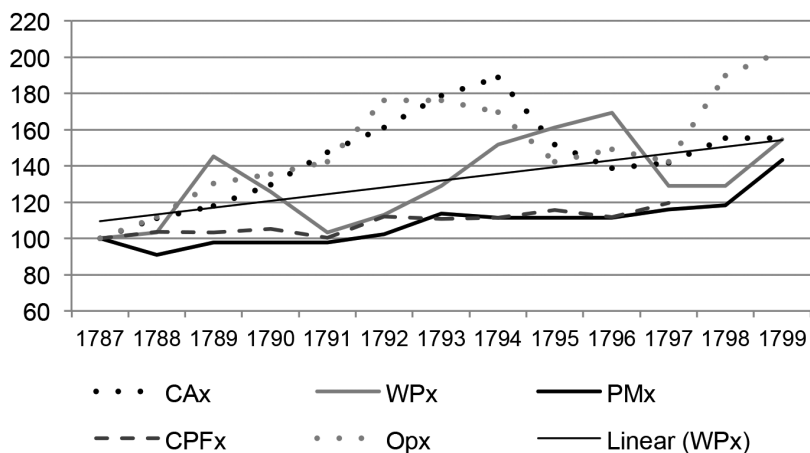
**Figure 7.** Indices (=1787) for Porto city between 1787-1799

	CAx	WPx	PMx	CPFx	Opx
1787	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00	100,00
1788	111,18	103,23	90,90	103,52	111,86
1789	118,01	145,16	97,73	103,15	130,17
1790	129,69	125,81	97,73	105,28	135,59
1791	147,58	103,23	97,73	100,29	142,37
1792	161,24	112,90	102,27	111,95	176,27
1793	178,63	129,03	113,63	110,89	176,27
1794	188,82	151,61	111,36	111,50	169,49
1795	151,80	161,29	111,36	115,57	142,37
1796	138,63	169,35	111,36	111,82	149,15
1797	141,74	129,03	115,91	119,68	142,37
1798	155,28	129,03	118,18	-	189,83
1799	155,40	154,84	143,18	-	203,39

Sources: Prices wheat accounts from Misericórdia (WPx) Godinho, Vitorino Magalhães (1955), the rate of child abandon (CAx) from Santos, Cândido dos (1979); prices of olive oil index (OPx) from Godinho, Vitorino Magalhães (1955); settled prices for ox meat, (PMx) AHMP, *atas de vereações*, average prices paid by the *Senado* for cattle at the Porto fair (CPFx) AHMP, A-PUB 3318-3319.

<sup>23</sup> Child abandon data from: Santos, Cândido dos (1979), *A população do Porto de 1700 a 1820. Contribuição para o estudo da demografia urbana*. Porto, Universidade do Porto, pp. 37-39. For the risks of orphans figures as economic indicator see Dubert, Isidro (2013), «L'abandon d'enfants dans l'Espagne de l'Ancien Régime: Réévaluer l'ampleur et les causes du phénomène», *Annales de Démographie Historique*, n.º 125/1, pp. 141-164.

**Figure 8.** Indices of prices and other economic indicators for Porto city 1787-1799 (1787=100)



Sources: see figure 7.

Although we may question the actual accuracy of the data available for the first year of the corporative offer of meat (which was only for 15,000 arrobas) it is obvious that there was an increase in the total amount of meat sold at the Porto market under the double system. More specifically, between 1786 and 1797 it rose from 80,066 to 109,806 arrobas. Even if part of the meat consumption from private offer could be hidden during the early years scenario, we are facing a 37,1% of increase. If we compare the number of oxen sacrificed with other cities of Europe, we can place Porto between Brussels and Lyon: Brussels (in 1790: 7,200 oxen), Porto (in 1791: 9,160) and Lyon (in 1788: 11,160)<sup>24</sup>.

First, the population have increased strongly between 1765 and 1787, and at the beginning of the meat conflict Porto had at least 60,000 inhabitants. However, demographic records show that in the last decade of the 18th century the population of the city became stagnant and the population of the

<sup>24</sup> Ferro, João Pedro (1995), *População Portuguesa no Final do Antigo Regime (1750-1815)*, Lisboa, Editorial Presença, pp. 54-55. Argant, Thierry (2003) «L’approvisionnement en viande de boucherie de la ville de Lyon à l’Époque Moderne», *Histoire Urbaine*, 2003/1 – n.º 7, pp. 205-231 and 214.



diocese only grew about 1%<sup>25</sup>. Notwithstanding, we find another index that might shed some light on the matter: the growing number of new buildings in the periphery of the city since 1770. It is possible to think that the available demographic data of 18<sup>th</sup> century Porto might underrepresent the rural migration in the recently areas in the city<sup>26</sup>.

Furthermore, we should bear in mind that Porto was an extremely busy riverside town, with an important «floating population» on ships. We therefore see a comparative rise in the sales of meat in corporative slaughterhouses closest to the river rather than the other situated at the north part of the city (figure 9). We can also think about the effects on the «floating» demand which are similar to those in England at roughly the same time related to supplies of salted meat for the Navy. In the case of Porto, the War of the First Coalition (1792) might have had a strong impact and also the Anglo-Spanish War (1796). This hypothesis is partly confirmed by the sources, as the Meat Administration itself sold small proportions of meat (only between 45 and 360 arrobas annually) to ships at higher prices (between 44 and 60 réis/arratel) (figure 10). Moreover, it seems easy to imagine that the merchants of the corporative slaughterhouses did the same, increasing oxen demand and pulling up meat prices<sup>27</sup>.

A secondary aspect to take into consideration is the changes that diet habits underwent in Europe in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The case of Castile and its effect in Galicia and Portugal have already been pointed out. In any case, changes in diet and their effects on economies were general phenomenon at the time. They affected major European cities, including Lyon, Paris, Rome, London, just to mention a few<sup>28</sup>.

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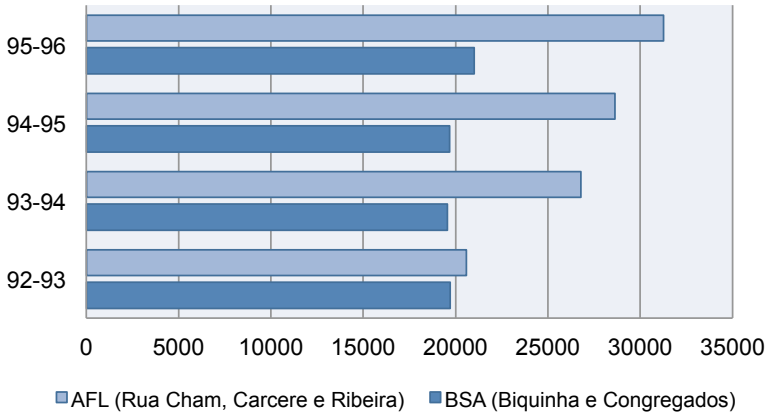
<sup>25</sup> Osswald, Helena (2002), «A evolução da população na diocese do Porto na Época Moderna» in *I Congresso sobre a Diocese do Porto. Tempos e Lugares de Memória, Homenagem a D. Domingos de Pinho Brandão*, Atas vol. II, Porto/Arouca, pp. 73-93.

<sup>26</sup> Marques, José Augusto Maia and Tavares, Albérico (1980) «Ritmos de construção civil no Porto do século XVIII, (1698-1789)», *Revista de História*, n.º 3, pp. 39-52.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, Cynthia (1996), «Drovers, cattle and dung: the long trail from Scotland to London» in *Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, xxxviii part 4, pp. 428-441.

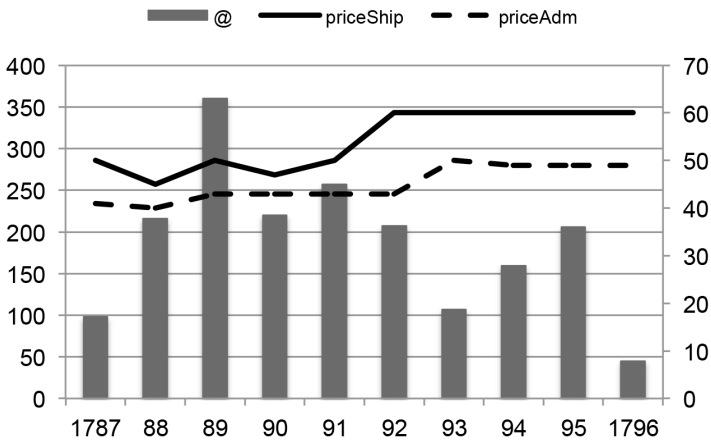
<sup>28</sup> Argant, Thierry (2003) «L'approvisionnement...» and Bernardos Sanz, José Ubaldo (2012), «El abastecimiento y consumo de carne...».

**Figure 9.** Volume of ox meat sold at the two big groups of corporative slaughterhouses (1792-1796) [Portuguese @]



Source: AHMP, A-PUB 3349, *Livro de resposta*.

**Figure 10.** Volumes and prices of meat sold by the Meat Administration "to ships". (volumes of meat in arrobas, left; mode annual prices in reis/arratel right)



Sources: Volumes in arrobas and prices to ships in AHMP, A-PUB 3325-28; prices of the Meat Administration in AHMP, *Atas de vereações*.

A third factor to take into account is the old issue related to institutional changes and the «endogenous» creation for demand following discussions

generated by the Say's Law, that is, the extent to which changes in the «market» and the meat-markets (as we see in section two) can generate «their own demand». The division of the market in two sides between the Senado and the corporative slaughterhouses could not only had benefit the merchants but also facilitated the urban popular class demand of meat. In addition, even if is not possible to clearly accounting the process, it seems that this conflict leads also to a regional demand response, including the opening of public slaughterhouses in the hinterland.

The fourth reason to consider in this increase is the budding industry and the consequent growing workforce. When studying the Council records we found permission to open four new factories<sup>29</sup>. At the same time, the city was going through a tremendous renovation with massive rebuilding of common areas and facilities. In August 1786, 16,000 *cruzados* (more than 7 million *réis*) were budget on a new aqueduct, new roads –for the city and its suburbia – and expanding the port facilities to the sea at São João da Foz<sup>30</sup>. This is the basis for our hypothesis regarding demographic movements that were not accounted for. In this case, we would be talking about work force being attracted from the rural areas into the city, on another form of «floating» population. Lastly, we must include the expense of two military brigades with six hundred men each, which cost the *Senado* 1.5 million *réis* between 1794 and 1796 at least<sup>31</sup>.

To conclude, we would like to consider the theoretical approach of K. Polanyi on *double movement* and the *mechanisms of self-protection* developed by societies to counterbalance the effects of markets as useful tools to better understand the *Meat Administration* and its conflicts. We would also like to consider Harvey's ideas regarding the link between capital and spaces<sup>32</sup>. On the one hand, to overcome the crisis that brought about an increase in meat prices, a social response was necessary. This was the *Senado's Meat Admin-*

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<sup>29</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 90, *Atas de Vereações*, f. 82.

<sup>30</sup> 1 cruzado = 480 réis; total amount aprox. 7,680,000 réis. AHMP, A-PUB 90, *Atas de Vereações*, 00-08-1786, f. 264-26.

<sup>31</sup> AHMP, A-PUB 93, *Atas de Vereações*, f. 67-69 and 127.

<sup>32</sup> Polanyi, Karl (1944-1970), *The Great Transformation. The political and economic origins of our time*, Bacon Press and Harvey, David (1982), *The Limits to Capital*, Oxford.

*istration*. This in turn produced the oligopolistic's class commercial reaction, giving way to the corporative slaughterhouses. The resulting structure, which we have called the dual system, supported the pressure exerted on the markets by lowering prices for ten years, but it came at a price, too. At the same time, losses caused by the low prices were socialized by the *Senado's* taxes. These contributed to feed the workforce working on the new public areas that were in course. However, conditions for a new phase of accumulation came into force, to counterbalance the «logical» functioning of the market. Such conditions are indeed inherent to accumulation of capital. On the other hand, instability in the surplus realisation circuit had two consequences, visible in the spatial layout of the meat market within the city. The first was that new *spaces for capital* came about, while the previously centralised slaughterhouse management became fragmented, only to later be regrouped after the crisis, following the previously mentioned logic of capital. The second was that the city market model for cattle supply was mirrored in the hinterlands, as a consequence of the *Senado's* continuing endeavour to find the most inexpensive cattle. This in turn brought the city conflicts -as market logics- out to the rural areas.

As a final word, we would like to lay out future lines for investigation which have opened up as a result of this study. Specifically these are: identifying individuals (merchants, public officers and marshals) and their relations to the conflict; estimating the meat offer coming from countryside slaughterhouses; constructing a proper quantitative model of analysis for cattle fairs and delving further into the geography of prices and their influence on History.