

Alternative vs. conventional food networks: A geospatial analysis in relation to neighborhood sociodemographic characteristics in Montreal

Matthew Cheveley

Department of Geography, McGill University, Montréal (Québec) Canada

2021

Supervisor: Dr. Graham MacDonald; Reader Dr. Sarah Turner

In recent years there has been an expansion of alternative food networks (AFNs), which aim to connect farmers and consumers while increasing the ties in the local community. While the expansion and popularity of these networks is clear, their role in the urban food environment remains understudied. In this study, I aim to address this gap by examining the distribution of different types of food sources in Montreal, including how equitable the availability of AFNs is across neighborhoods with different sociodemographic characteristics. Specifically, I categorised an existing spatial database of food businesses and organizations based on a ‘food network’ typology, then compared it to a multivariate classification of neighborhoods (census tracts) based on key sociodemographic characteristics by using the ‘*k*-means’ method. I then overlay the food network categories with the census tract clusters in order to explore their distribution based on sociodemographic attributes (i.e., prevalence of low-income households, population density, prevalence of recent immigrants). While a vast literature has considered social and economic aspects of urban food environments at increasingly fine scales, to my knowledge, none have compared the distribution of different food networks at a city-wide scale. My findings show some distinct patterns in the types of food sources occurring in certain neighborhoods in Montreal, offering a basis for further research to investigate the role of different types of ‘alternative’ food provision and their impacts within the food environments at the city-wide scale.

Alternative Food Networks' Distribution Hubs alongside Montreal Census Clusters

