

# Reassessing “Local”: The Commodity Chains of Fruits and Vegetables Sold at the Jean Talon and Atwater Markets in Montréal, Québec

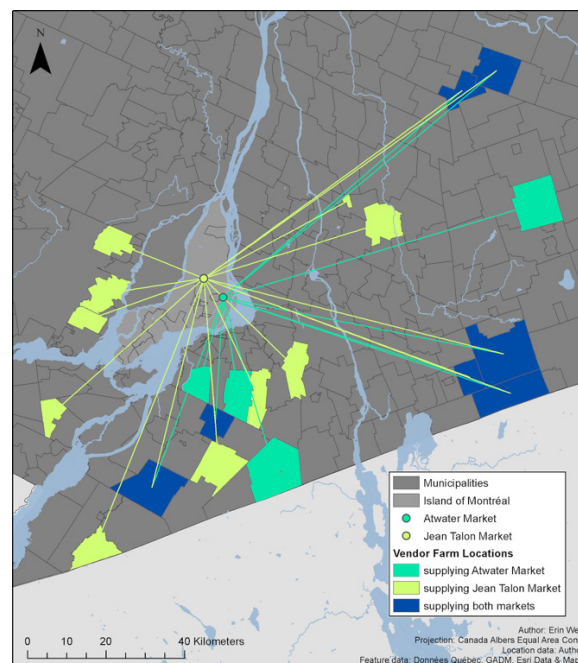
Erin Wen

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

2020

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

Given the perceived failures of the modern food system, there has been renewed interest in the role of local food system initiatives (LFSI); farmers’ markets represent one of many examples of such initiatives. Central to these initiatives are short supply chains which seek to bridge the gap between producers and consumers while re-embedding trust and transparency. Despite the proliferation of farmers’ markets in recent decades in North America, conceptual expectations and the material product flows of local food sometimes clash. In this thesis, I investigate what constitutes ‘local’ for the commodity chains of fruits and vegetables supplied to the Jean Talon and Atwater Markets in Montréal, Québec, Canada. Using a multi-methods approach, including a survey of vendors at both Markets drawing from open-ended and fixed-response questions, informal conversational interviews, and observations, I identify and weave together the actors, food provenance, supply chains, and conceptualizations of ‘local’ that construct the commodity chains of fruits and vegetables. Upon doing so, I examine the relationships amongst the Markets, rural and peri-urban agriculture, and urban consumption that connect the LFSIs on the Island of Montréal to farmers across southern Québec. While vendors delimited ‘local’ to the provincial boundaries of Québec, sourcing of fruits and vegetables sold at the Markets did not always align with this definition.



Map: Municipalities in which vendor farms supplying the Jean Talon and Atwater Markets are located (Source: Author)