

Mapping the literature on alternative food systems in the Global South. A scoping review

Esperanza Arnés^{a,*}, Tanya Zerbian^b

^a SECIHTI – Research Centre on Environmental Geography, National Autonomous University of Mexico (CIGA-UNAM), Morelia, Mexico

^b Institute of Economics, Geography, and Demography, Spanish National Research Council (IEGD-CSIC), Madrid, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Alternative food networks
Short food supply chains
Local food systems
Agroecology
China
Brazil
Mexico

ABSTRACT

Alternative food systems (AFSs) encompassing diverse initiatives, networks, and practices that seek to reconfigure food system relationships and operations have received heightened academic attention in the last decades. However, research in the Global South (GS) is more recent, and a systematic synthesis of their functioning, potentials, and limitations is still lacking. Following JBI methodology, this scoping review addresses this gap by mapping and analyzing peer-reviewed literature on AFSs in diverse GS contexts, identifying patterns in the literature and characterizing the dimensions and initiatives examined. The review included empirical and conceptual peer-reviewed studies that described and analyzed key characteristics of AFSs rather than isolated dimensions. Selected sources were identified through a systematic search in Scopus and Web of Science, limited to publications in English, Portuguese, and Spanish from the past decade. A total of 153 sources were initially identified and descriptively analyzed. Of these, 112 documents were thematically analyzed, with the majority focused on China, Brazil, and Mexico. Four main thematic categories were identified - agroecologies, connectivities, engagement & organization, and food qualities - together with cross-cutting categories of alternativeness, hybridization, and scalability. This review contributes to more inclusive and situated knowledge development on AFSs. It also identifies key gaps for future research in the GS, including limited engagement with gender and intersectional (in)justice and the limited attention to other elements of food systems beyond production and consumption.

1. Introduction

For over 30 years, research has documented the emergence, development, and spread of alternative food systems (AFSs),¹ encompassing a plurality of initiatives, networks and spaces that reconfigure the operational and relational aspects of food supply chains (Cleveland et al., 2015; Misleh, 2022). Offering an alternative to the trends of the conventional food system model - commonly associated with the “corporate food regime” that prioritises profit maximisation (McMichael, 2005), AFS efforts are often characterised by their emphasis on social and

environmental objectives (Wald and Hill, 2016). While AFS initiatives are highly diverse, including efforts to develop short food supply chains (SFSs), address food inequality, or promote ecologically responsible practices, they share a common accent on the “resocialisation” and “re-spatialisation” of food production, processing, distribution, and consumption to achieve these goals (Renting et al., 2003; Renting et al., 2012; Treager 2011; Schreiber et al., 2022). Common examples include food cooperatives, community gardens, consumer groups, community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, among others (Misleh, 2022).

* Corresponding author. Antigua Carretera a Pátzcuaro No. 8701, Col. Ex-Hacienda de San José de la Huerta., C.P. 58190. Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico.

E-mail address: earnes@ciga.unam.mx (E. Arnés).

¹ The terms usually referred to initiatives and efforts promoting AFSs include local food initiatives (LFIs), local food systems (LFSs), alternative food networks (AFNs), alternative agri-food networks (AAFN), alternative food initiatives (AFIs), community food systems, and other permutations (Feagan, 2007). Although all these terms come from diverse theoretical and conceptual trajectories, the term AFSs is used in this paper as an umbrella term to encompass all social innovations and practices that use market and non-market strategies to reduce spatial and informational gaps between consumers and producers, integrate nature into food system relations, and establish horizontal and collaborative governance structures (Renting et al., 2012; Schreiber et al., 2022). Although scholars caution against the use of a universal term, arguing that it may obscure the diversity of alternative food practices, spaces, and processes (Feagan, 2007; Tregear, 2011), the term AFSs is employed here for its utility in capturing the common goals and principles underlying these varied initiatives while acknowledging their diverse strategies and trajectories. [In the methodology section we will return to this definition, proposing specific operational characteristics (mentioned by the same authors)].

Given that the motivations and values underpinning AFSs signify a departure from dominant economic and food paradigms, research on AFSs often carries a strong normative dimension. AFSs are frequently portrayed as examples of the “politics of the possible”, showcasing a pathway to develop more just and sustainable communal and economic relations around food (Blay-Palmer et al., 2015). However, this optimistic perspective has been contested by critical scholarship (Carlisle, 2015; Guthman, 2008; Maye and Kirwan, 2010), which argues that AFSs are shaped and constrained by global, national, and local socio-political contexts (Fonte, 2008; Selfa and Qazi, 2005). These constraints often blur the lines between alternative and conventional practices (Dupuis and Goodman, 2005). In particular, some scholars question AFSs’ ability to drive transformative change beyond progressive strategies, as many initiatives remain embedded within market-based and conventional food system structures (Moragues-Faus and Marsden, 2017).

Much of these conceptual developments on AFSs has focused on the Global North (GN), particularly in Western European and North American contexts (Abrahams, 2006; Cerrada-Serra et al., 2018; Freidberg and Goldstein, 2011). While the debate over AFSs’ transformative potential remains unresolved, researchers have increasingly adapted the concept to diverse contexts, including Eastern Europe, China, and Latin America, among others (Bilewicz and Śpiwak, 2019; Goszczyński and Knieć, 2011; Martindale et al., 2018; Si et al., 2015). Significantly, increasing empirical studies in the Global South (GS) reveal that unique socio-cultural characteristics and contextual factors of the GS significantly influence AFSs trajectories and potential, challenging the common values and motivations attached to AFSs (Abrahams, 2006; Bopp, 2020; Freidberg and Goldstein, 2011; Martindale et al., 2018; Warshawsky, 2016).

As research on AFSs in the GS continues to reveal their nuances beyond Western contexts, it becomes essential to examine how these studies contribute to diverse conceptualisations and realities of these systems. Moreover, despite the growing literature on AFSs in the GS, there remains a need for a synthesis and deeper understanding of how these systems operate, particularly from the perception of GS countries (Cerrada-Serra et al., 2018). A preliminary Scopus search on AFSs literature (and related terms) identified 2371 studies, with only 285 (10.5%) authored by researchers based in the GS. This imbalance highlights a significant research gap in AFSs’ knowledge production and frames the focus of this study. To address this gap, this paper presents a scoping review of the peer-reviewed published literature on AFSs in the GS, focusing on the following specific objectives.

1. To map the existing peer-reviewed literature on AFSs in the GS.
2. To characterize and describe the types of AFSs documented according to diverse GS contexts.
3. To analyze the themes and focuses most common in the literature on AFSs in the GS.

To account for the possibility of previous reviews on AFSs in the GS, a preliminary search of Scopus, the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and *JBIE Evidence Synthesis* was also conducted and no current or underway systematic reviews or scoping reviews on the topic were found. One systematic review was identified related to the study of AFSs in the Global South (Čajka and Novotný, 2022). However, the review had a general scope, focusing on alternative economies not exclusively related to food, but where AFSs are prominent.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. First, the methodology of the scoping review is presented, followed by the results, which include both a descriptive and thematic analysis. The paper concludes with the identification of research gaps and final reflections. This scoping review offers a comprehensive overview of the approaches, purposes, and challenges faced by AFSs in the GS, while also identifying key themes that merit further exploration to advance research and support food systems transformation. In doing so, our findings aim to contribute to an inclusive but situated knowledge development on AFSs

and challenge the predominant westernization of concepts and practices surrounding food systems change.

2. Methodology

This study employs a scoping review methodology. Scoping reviews are particularly suited for identifying key concepts, research gaps, and thematic patterns in broad and complex fields (Arksey and O’Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). Unlike systematic reviews, scoping reviews provide an overview of the topic, highlighting areas for future research, and often make use of qualitative and descriptive methods to summarize the evidence. This review follows the methodological framework proposed by Peters et al. (2020), ensuring robustness and alignment with the JBI methodology for scoping reviews (10.11124/JBIES-20-00167). The review was guided by the following research question: *How are alternative food systems in the Global South analyzed, including the dominant conceptual approaches, empirical focuses, and research gaps?*

For the methodological and operational purposes of this study we define AFSs as initiatives, processes, and spaces that include the following characteristics (adapted from Allen, 1999; Allen et al., 2003; Clément, 2016; Eriksen, 2013; Kneafsey et al., 2013; Mares and Alkon, 2011; Renting et al., 2003, 2012).

- Shortening the distance between consumers and producers, whether spatially or informationally.
- Redistributing value along the food chain.
- Employing more sustainable food production and distribution practices.
- Using innovative food commercialization, purchasing, and business models.
- Integrating more horizontal cooperation and governance models among food system actors.

2.1. Search strategy and study selection

Due to the diversity of disciplines studying AFSs, databases were selected based on their multidisciplinary coverage of life sciences, social sciences, and humanities. The databases utilized for the study included Scopus and Web of Science (WoS). The search was conducted on February 29, 2024 and limited to studies conducted in the last 10 years. This defined period of time for source inclusion in the scoping review was selected given the identified increase in the body of literature in the last ten years focused in the GS. For example, an initial search in Scopus showed 64 articles between 1994 and 2004, rising to 172 between 2004 and 2014, and reaching 834 between 2014 and 2024.

The search strategy aimed to locate peer-reviewed published studies. A three-step search strategy was followed. First an initial exploratory search was undertaken in Scopus and WoS to identify relevant articles on the topic. Second, the text words contained in the titles and abstracts of relevant articles, and the index terms (keywords) used to describe the articles were used to develop a full search strategy to be used in both databases. Third, different permutations of the concepts related to AFSs were used as search terms as well as different forms of referring to the GS, including all the countries identified as part of the GS through UNESCO (TWAS n.d.). The different search terms used for AFSs aimed to be as comprehensive as possible and were based on previous research of one of the co-authors (Zerbán and López-García, 2024; Zerbán et al., 2022). The search strategy was limited to abstracts, titles, and keywords and to peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters written in English, Spanish, or Portuguese. This potentially leaves out French-speaking African or Chinese academic communities that publish in their own language from the study. The final search strategy is outlined in Supplementary Material I. The literature search returned a total of 1067 records (see Fig. 1).

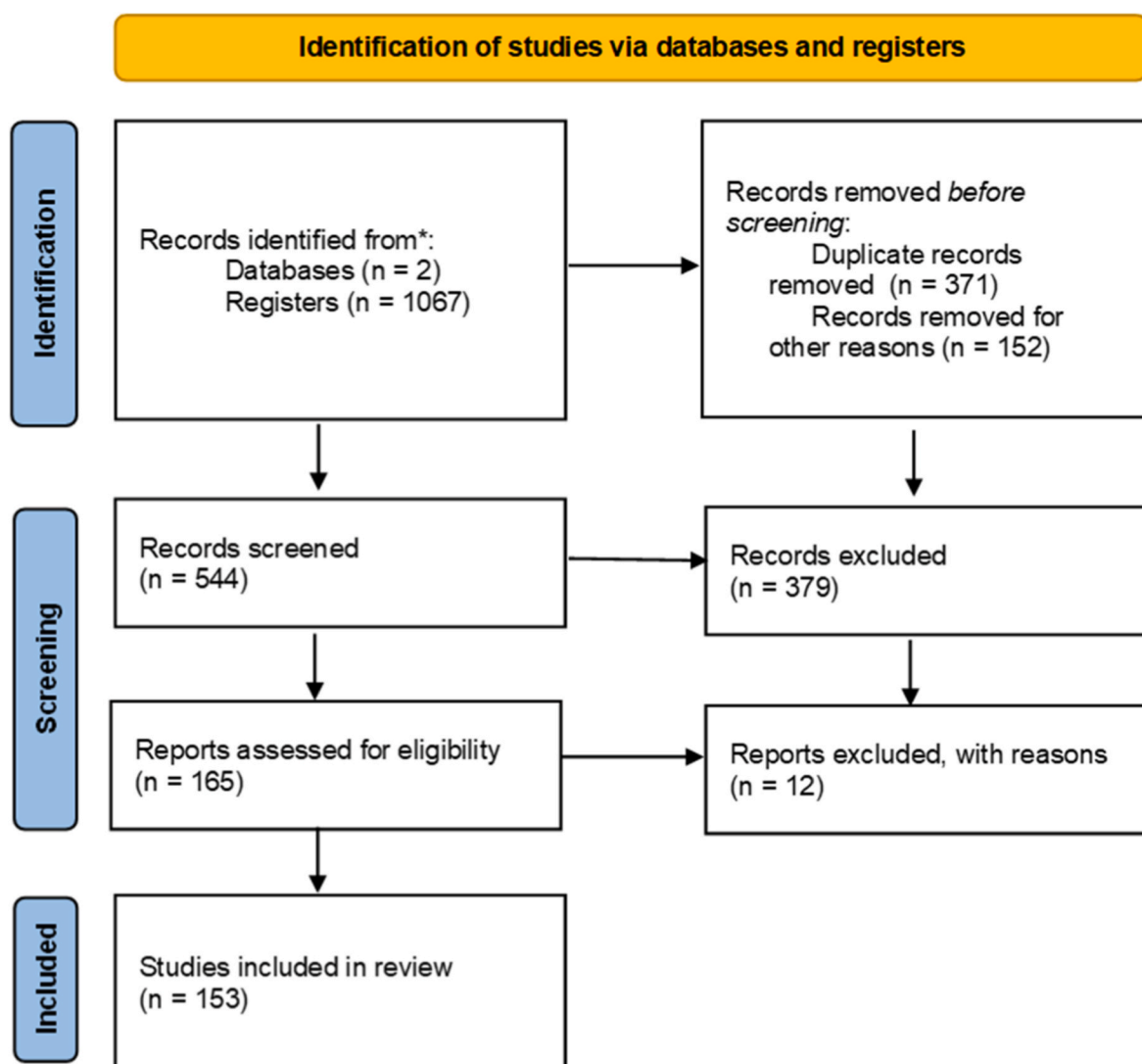


Fig. 1. PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram for study selection and inclusion. Adapted from: Page et al., (2021). For more information, visit: <http://www.prisma-statement.org/>.

Following the search, all identified citations were collated and uploaded into EndNote Online Classic. Of the 1067 records identified, 371 were removed due to duplicate records and 152 were removed based on title and keywords, such as animal nutrition, insect consumption, alternative meat, among others. After a pilot test, titles and abstracts of the 544 resulting records were entered into the Rayyan - Intelligent Systematic Review online software. Screening continued manually and the 544 records were independently examined by the two co-authors for a blind assessment considering the previously agreed inclusion and exclusion criteria. Any disagreements that arose between the reviewers at each stage of the selection process was resolved through discussion.

The review included both empirical and conceptual studies, as long as they explicitly examined AFSs or related concepts. Studies had to describe the operation, challenges, or conceptual framing of AFSs rather than focusing solely on isolated aspects such as consumer preferences, agronomic requirements or nutritional benefits. The review prioritized qualitative studies (e.g., phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, action research, feminist research), as they provided greater nuance on the function and characteristics of AFSs. Studies were excluded if they focused exclusively on the GN, addressed only one dimension of AFSs (such as willingness to buy organic food or yield improvements), or were purely quantitative evaluations of AFS benefits.

Additionally, grey literature, reports, and policy documents were not included due to the scope of the review and focus on peer-reviewed literature. After iterative stages of discussion, 165 records were selected, of which 12 were excluded as the inclusion criteria did not include whole books but book chapters to be able to deal with the specificity of the AFSs analyzed. A total of 153 records were finally included, these records were reviewed in full detail and analyzed further.

2.2. Data extraction and analysis

Data extraction for the 153 papers was conducted using an Excel sheet (Supplementary Material II) to systematically record key details, including authors, article title, source title, publication year, country of focus, first author's affiliation country, language, document type, author keywords, available WoS keywords, research area, and the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) addressed. This structured approach facilitated an initial descriptive mapping that summarized key trends in the literature to outline the distribution and frequency of studies by country, identifying the geographical spread of research on AFSs in the GS. Following this initial mapping, a more in-depth analysis was limited to countries with the highest number of studies: China, Brazil, Mexico, India, Colombia, South Africa, and Argentina. This approach was

adopted to ensure analytical depth and cross-country comparability. The inclusion of countries with only one or two studies would have limited the identification of patterns across countries due to insufficient detail and cases. This reduced the number of papers to 112 sources for the in-depth analysis.

The final 112 documents were first subjected to a descriptive analysis to identify the frequency and types of AFS initiatives in each country. For this, another structured Excel sheet was developed to systematically record the focus of the 112 studies, including the following fields: (I) ID, (II) Authors, (III) Article Title, (IV) Source Title, (V) Publication Year, (VI) Focus country, (VII) Elements of the Food System Considered, (VIII) Type of Initiative Analyzed, (IX) Conceptual Approaches and Frameworks Used, and (X) Values Prioritized to Justify or Promote AFSs (see Supplementary Material III). These fields were selected following an abductive approach based on the review question and objectives to identify patterns in the analyzed literature, including cross-country and country-specific patterns (Kennedy and Thornberg, 2018). Recording of information in the Excel sheet fields, particularly regarding the fields VII, VIII, IX, and X aimed to remain as close as possible to the descriptions and categorisations provided in the studies. Where initiatives were not explicitly categorized, previous systematizations of concepts and initiatives associated with AFSs were used to complement the information reported in the studies, including distinctions between SFSCs and civic food networks (CFNs) based on their differing emphasis on civic engagement and community organization (Clément, 2016; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2024).

This process served to develop a heat map based on the initiatives and practices analyzed per country to identify country-specific characteristics based on the field VIII - Type of Initiative Analyzed. Following this initial categorization, a thematic analysis was performed to group information and identify cross-country patterns in the selected studies (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2014). Cross-country patterns were identified by examining and grouping the conceptual approaches and frameworks used (field IX), together with the value priorities mobilized to justify or promote AFSs (field X), across the 112 analyzed studies. The thematic analysis allowed the identification of four overarching analytical categories across countries - agroecologies, connectivities, engagement & organization, and food qualities - accompanied by the cross-cutting themes of alternativeness, hybridization, and scalability.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive analysis

The publication of articles focused on AFSs in the GS has shown a steady increase over the past 10 years. Between 2014 and 2019, the average number of published articles was 7.5. This figure rose to 22 during 2020–2022 and reached 40 in 2023. The initial 153 identified studies were conducted in 31 GS countries (Fig. 2a). About 54% of these studies focus on three countries: China (34 studies), Brazil (31 studies), and Mexico (18 studies). These countries set the trend in the GS, publishing eight, ten, and four articles respectively in 2023 alone. The next most represented countries are India (9 studies, 6% of the total), Colombia (7, 4.5%), South Africa (7, 4.5%), and Argentina (6, 4%). The remaining 42 studies are distributed across 24 other countries, accounting for 27.5% of the total initial 153 identified studies (Fig. 2b).

3.1.1. Typology of AFSs studied per country

Within the 112 studies selected for the more in-depth analysis, we identified several initiatives analyzed in the context of AFSs, with the typification terminology varying according to the approach adopted or the country in which they are studied. This resulted in the heap map presented in Fig. 3. Considering these nuances, a central part of this scoping review was to explore which types of initiatives the studies on AFSs in the GS analyze to identify their frequency and variability. In

particular, we examine which factors foster the intentionality of AFSs in each country and how this reflects in the typology of AFSs in relation to the contextual characteristics of each case.

CSAs are the most studied initiative of AFSs in China, reflecting the long trajectory of CSAs in East Asia, since the 60s, emerging in Japan, under the concept of “teikei” (partnership in English) (Wahn, 2023). Similar to other countries in the region, the principal characteristic of Chinese CSAs is that they are consumer-driven; that is, their installment emerges from an increased consumer demand for healthy and safe food products. Indeed, the number of CSA initiatives has proliferated due to food safety scandals in the last 20 years (Cody, 2018; Fearnley, 2022; Li et al., 2022). With a more pragmatic and less political approach, CSAs in China propose hybrid models that are less opposed to the conventional food regime in comparison to those promoted in the GN (Martindale et al., 2018). Most Chinese CSAs frame their activities or internal functioning within farmers markets and consumer groups (Si et al., 2015). To a lesser extent, but with a stronger political orientation, there are studies that explore organic farmers cooperatives, civic agriculture groups, and Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) (Fig. 3). These initiatives generally seek more structural changes linked to rural development, agroecology, and sustainability (Si and Scott, 2016; Zhang and Barr, 2019; Zhang and Qi, 2019; Ku and Kan, 2020; Tassin, 2021).

Studies of AFSs in Brazil usually focus on SFSC initiatives that reflect hybrid governance models that integrate state policies and grassroots initiatives. Many evolved with the institutionalization of policies since the 2000s to support family farmers, agroecology, and organic agriculture through SFSCs, influenced by civil society pressure and advocacy groups, such as the Landless Workers' Movement. The AFSs most commonly studied in Brazil are farmers markets, box schemes, and public procurement programs (Fig. 3). Farmers markets are viewed as spaces where producers sell directly to consumers, often with support from local governments or civil society organizations (CSOs) (Schneider et al., 2016; Chaves et al., 2020; Oliveira et al., 2021; Kato et al., 2022; Melo da Silva et al., 2023; Retière and Darly, 2023; Valério, 2023). Public procurement initiatives are usually examined through case studies to examine the implementation of programs such as the Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos (PAA) and the Programa Nacional de Alimentação Escolar (PNAE) (Borsatto et al., 2021; Souza and Fornazier, 2022; Retière and Darly, 2023). These programs were established to create market opportunities for small-scale producers by integrating them into institutional food supply systems, particularly for school meals (Chaves et al., 2020; Retière and Darly, 2023). Box schemes, which involve pre-ordered deliveries of fresh produce, have also gained academic traction, particularly in urban areas, viewed as offering a stable customer base for small farmers (Darolt et al., 2016; de Souza, 2020; Kato et al., 2022; Levidow et al., 2022; Levidow et al., 2023; Rode et al., 2023).

More than half of the studies in Mexico centre their analyses in farmers markets and, more specifically, several focus on markets belonging to the Mexican Network of Tianguis² and Organic Markets - RMTMO - established in 2004 (Nigh and González Cabañas, 2015; Nelson et al., 2016; Bellante, 2017; Escobar-López et al., 2022a; Kaufmann et al., 2023). The RMTMO emerges after a process of reflection-mobilization of organized civil society - led by academics - reclaim local marketing spaces in opposition to the agro-export model of organic products (mainly honey, coffee, and avocado) toward which Mexico had oriented itself after the implementation of NAFTA (Schwentenius, 2015). Several of these market studies address PGS as a central activity to build greater producer-consumer trust and to work toward regional scalability of the tianguis model (Nelson et al., 2016; Bellante, 2017; Kaufmann et al., 2023). Other studies consider academia a central actor in the dynamization of AFNs. On the one hand, some

² It comes from Nahuatl and means “market”. Today, it refers to open-air markets periodically set up on certain city streets.

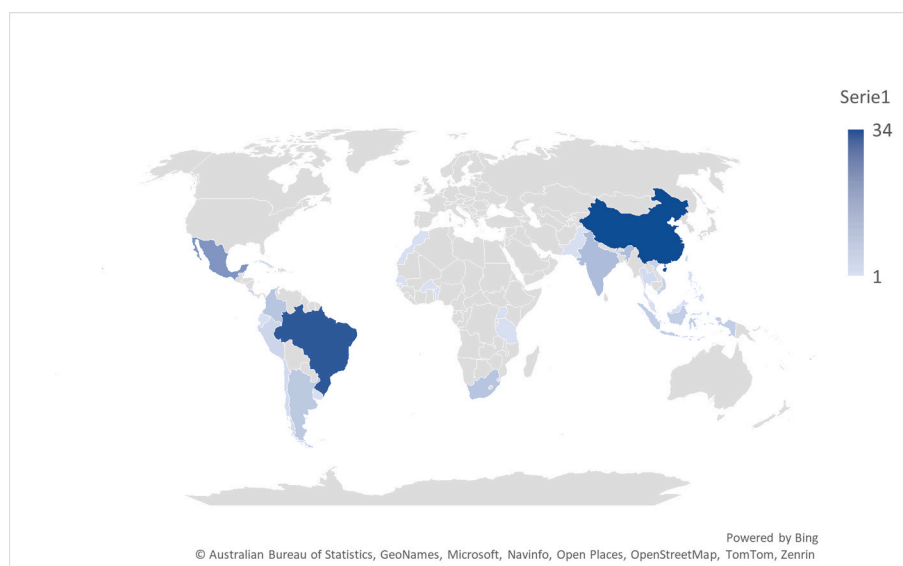


Fig. 2a. Geographical distribution of AFS in the GS studies (N = 153).

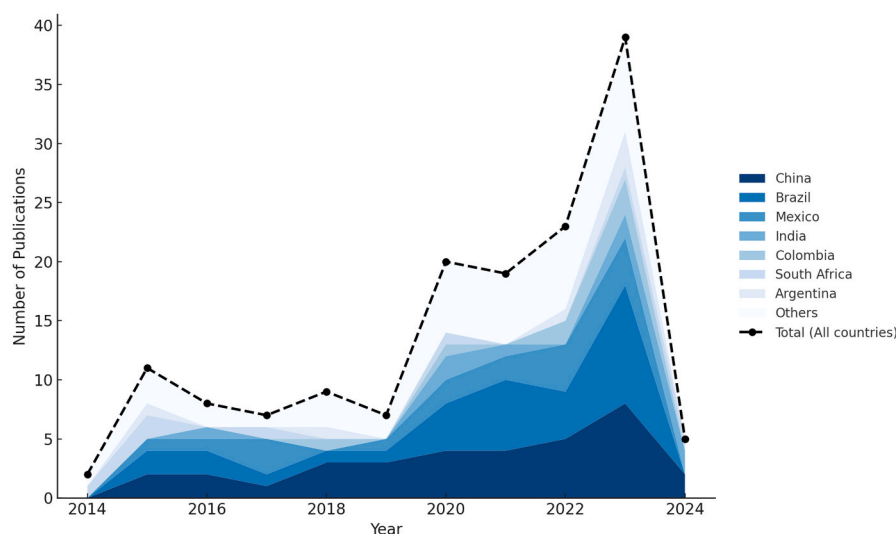


Fig. 2b. Temporal trends in the publication of articles on AFSs in the GS, shown in total and by country. (*) In 2024, only studies published before February 29th are included.

emphasize an institutional perspective through the promotion of public procurement systems aimed at university dining halls and/or urban gardens (Sánchez, 2019; Pasquier Merino, 2022; Pasquier Merino et al., 2022). On the other hand, academics' active participation in AFNs legitimizes academia's message by generating more pragmatic and participatory proposals with greater social commitment, while also avoiding practices associated with academic extractivism (García-Bustamante and Gracia, 2021; Escobar-López et al., 2022a; Bara et al., 2023; Vilalta-Perdomo et al., 2023). Some studies in Mexico highlight heritage elements such as seed fairs or gatherings, traditional agricultural systems (e.g., chinampas or milpas), and heirloom maize as fundamental spaces of resistance for these networks (King, 2020; García-Bustamante and Gracia, 2021; Bara et al., 2023; Guibrunet et al., 2023).

Studies of AFSs in India often focus on market-based initiatives designed to support smallholder farmers within a predominantly traditional, crop-mixed agricultural system (Bisht et al., 2020). This is related to agriculture remaining small-holder based, but with inequalities in

market access highly prevalent. Many articles cite the effects of the Green Revolution on increased cycles of credit dependency and environmental degradation due to extensive use of fertilizers and pesticides, as well as concentration of market power (Touri, 2016; Bopp, 2020; Erler and Dittrich, 2020; Dharmalingam et al., 2021; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024). Moreover, challenges such as rural labor shortages, the view of agriculture as unprofitable among youth, migration to urban areas, and climate change have compounded the sector's difficulties (Rana and Bisht, 2023). In this context, initiatives related to AFSs in which farmers directly sell to consumers or with limited intermediaries are viewed as promising avenues to open markets that drive rural development and enhance the economic sustainability of small-holder farmers (Touri, 2016; Erler and Dittrich, 2020; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024). For example, agri-food or culinary tourism is seen as a relevant avenue to support these goals (Touri, 2016; Bisht et al., 2020; Rana and Bisht, 2023). However, research on AFSs' initiatives is still emergent, with research primarily focusing on the challenges and opportunities of introducing them, with most articles focusing on a variety of SFSCs and

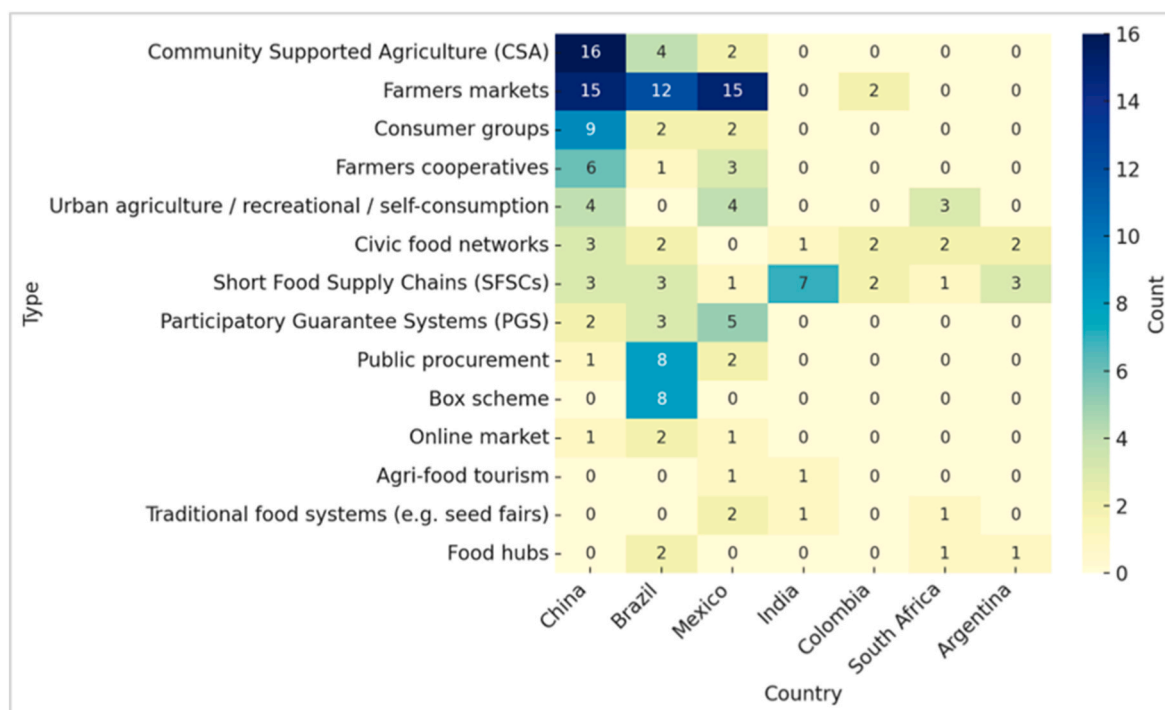


Fig. 3. Heat map showing the frequency of AFN typologies across countries.

not just one initiative (Bisht et al., 2020; Rana and Bisht, 2023; Deka and Goswami, 2024; Panghal et al., 2024).

Similarly, studies on AFSs in Colombia also often highlight the impacts of trade liberalization and the Green Revolution on smallholder farmers, particularly in the 1990s, when the privatization of extension services and export-driven agricultural policies reshaped the sector (Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Maysels et al., 2023). Despite these pressures, small-scale farming has maintained a parallel traditional food system, resisting the push towards a conventional, industrialized model (Maysels et al., 2023). This tension has been particularly evident in protests led by peasant and farmer organizations, including demonstrations against the 2012 Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Colombia and the United States (Maysels et al., 2023). Beyond economic and policy challenges, internal conflict has played a significant role in shaping Colombia's food system, alongside rural-to-urban migration (Rojas-Jiménez et al., 2023). In this context, promoting SFSCs has gained political importance, exemplified in policies such as the 2018 Family and Community Peasant Scheme developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, where efforts align with the 2016 Peace Agreement that prioritized food security as a fundamental pillar (Reina-Usuga et al., 2020; Rojas-Jiménez et al., 2023). Here, SFSCs are seen as a central mechanism to strengthen peasant farming communities and agroecological practices (Romagnoli et al., 2018; Reina-Usuga et al., 2023). In this context, the identified research on AFSs focuses on farmers markets (Romagnoli et al., 2018; Gütschow and Feola, 2022), CFNs, particularly the role of governance and social actors in promoting SFSCs (Reina-Usuga et al., 2020; Rojas-Jiménez et al., 2023), and SFSCs or AFNs in a broader sense as a means to relocalize food systems and contribute to rural development and sustainability (Ramírez and Cadavid-Castro, 2022; Maysels et al., 2023; Reina-Usuga et al., 2023).

Studies on AFSs in South Africa highlight how deeply rooted racialized and class-based structures of exclusion, inherited from the apartheid era, continue to shape the resilience and sustainability of food systems, particularly limiting access to food (Siebert, 2023; Ndhlovu, 2024). Historical land dispossession, coupled with post-democratization policies that failed to significantly alter land ownership patterns, has resulted in strong land privatization, with large-scale commercial

farming still dominated by white landowners, while small-scale farming is mostly practised by Black and coloured communities (Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Ndhlovu, 2024). This legacy continues to influence agriculture policies and practices, where the right to food is legally recognized, but enforcement remains weak, and State programmes tackling food insecurity face challenges in implementation and impact (Warszawsky, 2014; Chitja and Mabaya, 2015; Kesselman, 2015). Since the post-apartheid period, CSOs have played a key role in addressing hunger and advocating for food justice, especially as state decentralization opened space for grassroots action (Warszawsky, 2014). These CSOs evolved from anti-apartheid resistance networks into a diverse landscape of professionalized non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and social movements, each engaging with food insecurity and agricultural policy in different ways (Warszawsky, 2014). Within this context, the identified research on AFSs usually focuses on urban agriculture initiatives, CFNs, and SFSCs as important strategies for poverty alleviation and food security (Haysom, 2017; Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Siebert, 2023), supporting small-scale farmers (Chitja and Mabaya, 2015), and food sovereignty (Ndhlovu, 2024).

Argentina's agro-export orientation, shaped by globalization, agricultural modernization, and trade liberalization, has driven the country towards agricultural specialization - most notably in soybean production - at the expense of family and smallholder farming (Pérez et al., 2018). State support for family farming has been inconsistent, with policies such as the 2015 *Ley 27.118 de Reparación Histórica de la Agricultura Familiar* introduced, later undermined by the closure of the Family Farming Secretariat and the lack of regulatory implementation (Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023). In this context, studies on AFSs in Argentina focus on the logistical aspects of and values circulating in SFSCs (Craviotti and Soleno Wilches, 2015; Frank et al., 2022; Cendón et al., 2023) and food hubs (Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023), as well as CFNs and their role in forming new forms of multi-actor association (Pérez et al., 2018; Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023), particularly under the context of agroecology and food sovereignty. Most articles in Argentina describe AFSs as containing a pragmatic approach but within broader political struggles and engagement (Pérez et al., 2018; Frank et al.,

2022; Cendón et al., 2023; Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023; Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023). This relates to civil society having a key role in facilitating these initiatives, particularly expanding their reach during and after the 2001 economic crisis, when peasant organizations actively promoted the concept of food sovereignty (Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023). Research on SFSCs also highlights a conceptual distinction in the Argentine context, where some articles refer to short commercialization circuits rather than supply chains, emphasising the territorial dimension of these circuits rather than the simple length of the supply chain (Craviotti and Soleno Wilches, 2015; Cendón et al., 2023). This focus on territorial embeddedness aligns with broader regional debates, where short circuits of commercialization are understood as emerging alternatives across Latin America (Craviotti and Soleno Wilches, 2015).

3.2. Thematic analysis

After conducting an abductive analysis that considered, on the one hand, the approaches and themes emphasized by the authors, and on the other, the purpose pursued by the AFSs under study (Supplementary Material III), four thematic categories and three cross-cutting categories were identified (Table 1).

3.2.1. Agroecology(ies)

A recurrent approach within the analyzed literature is adopting an agroecological perspective - both explicitly (Rover et al., 2017; Tassin, 2021; Bezerra et al., 2022; Levidow et al., 2022; Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023) and implicitly - to highlight issues or advancements related to AFSs. Within this overarching framework, several subthemes have

Table 1

Thematic categories and subcategories derived from the conducted thematic analysis.

Thematic category	Subcategory	ID scoped items (according to Supplementary Material III)
Agroecology(ies): Focus on smallholder and small-scale farming and rural development.	Sustainable livelihoods	5, 8, 9, 10, 13, 17, 19, 31, 50, 51, 56, 62, 66, 72, 74, 90, 91, 96, 97, 99.
	Food sovereignty	2, 25, 28, 33, 36, 64, 68, 72, 93, 105, 108
	Rural development	5, 6, 40, 45, 76, 78, 92
	Traditional knowledge and food systems	2, 6, 30, 31, 59, 72, 76, 78, 84, 96, 112
	Resilience	20, 27, 28, 29, 61, 100
Connectivity(ies): Focus on relationships, primarily consumer-producer relations.	Trust	3, 35, 44, 49, 51, 64, 65, 69, 73, 85, 86
	Social and territorial embeddedness	5, 9, 10, 16, 20, 31, 38, 67, 78, 80, 90, 98, 111
	Urban - rural linkages	12, 14, 21, 22, 31, 38, 68, 75, 77, 78, 81, 82, 85, 111
	Technologies	10, 56, 57, 95, 96
	Civic and territorial food networks	10, 21, 48, 77, 85, 86, 103
Engagement and organization: Focus on internal and external forms of (multi-actor) organization	Mediating actors and public sector roles	1, 5, 11, 18, 20, 25, 36, 41, 43, 53, 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 93, 105
	Political engagement	1, 10, 16, 25, 27, 45, 46, 47, 72, 102
	Collective agency and grassroots organization	5, 19, 59, 64, 82, 96, 106
	Perceptions	10, 16, 31, 33, 57, 60, 75, 94
	Food safety	26
Food quality(ies): Focus on the characteristics or value attached to food.	Information	86
	Tradition	2, 5, 19, 22, 76, 96
Alternativeness, Hybridization, and Scalability		7, 10, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 30, 40, 47, 48, 52, 55, 56, 59, 69, 78, 79, 88, 89, 91, 92, 96, 97, 98, 103, 111, 112

been identified which, although closely interconnected, generate distinct discourses.

One of the major concerns in the reviewed studies relates to the *(economic) sustainability of the livelihoods* of producers participating in AFSs. While some studies demonstrate that AFSs offer better prices (referring to traditional varieties and/or premium organic foods), greater control over sales and capacity to generate employment (Craviotti and Soleno Wilches, 2015; Pérez et al., 2018; Sellitto et al., 2018; Bisht et al., 2020; Michel-Villarreal et al., 2020; Camara and Andreatta, 2021; Campos et al., 2021; Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Cendón et al., 2023; de Lima et al., 2023; Valério, 2023; Deka and Goswami, 2024; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024), others question their long-term economic sustainability. The latter show that contract farming models often reinforce power imbalances and that SFSCs may depend on elite urban consumers and external funding (Chitja and Mabaya, 2015; Nigh and González Cabañas, 2015; Si et al., 2015; Qi, 2023). Although several studies in diverse GS countries mention hybrid models³, the Chinese cases are those that predominantly refer to these models as examples of scaling up AFSs (Liu et al., 2019; Tassin, 2021), advocating for the use of machinery, digital technologies, and business infrastructures to evidence successful cases (Martindale, 2021a).

The *food sovereignty* approach is advocated for within studies that address situations of poverty and food insecurity and/or provide solutions based on self-sufficiency and self-protection (mostly in urban contexts), especially in South Africa and China (Warshawsky, 2014; Kesselman, 2015; L. Zhang and Qi, 2019; Siebert, 2023; Jehlička et al., 2024; Ndhlovu, 2024). On the other hand, topics related to land conflicts also emerge, whether concerning farming in informal settlements (Paganini and Lemke, 2020) or demands for the defence of territory and collective access to land (Pérez et al., 2018). Similarly, other cases show the struggle for access to genetic resources through participatory open-source seed networks that challenge intellectual property regimes and treat seeds as a common good (Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023). Other studies document seed exchange fairs, where food sovereignty is the main goal, and economic sustainability a secondary one (Pérez et al., 2018; García-Bustamante and Gracia, 2021; Bara et al., 2023).

In addition, several studies frame agroecology with regards to *rural development* particularly linked to stopping migration to urban areas and maintaining the young rural population in the territory, pointing to the benefits of diversification that combines agrotourism and local food systems (Bisht et al., 2020; Levidow et al., 2021; Rana and Bisht, 2023). Other studies adopt a more socio-territorial perspective, linking SFSCs to ecological care, enhanced ecosystem services, social cohesion, and a strengthened sense of place (Bopp, 2020; Reina-Usuga et al., 2023). Significantly, and taking a more critical stance, a smaller portion of the literature addresses the tension between local development and the potential for scaling AFSs. These studies refer to the 'local trap' (Si and Scott, 2016), cautioning against the reification of relocalisation (Lamine, 2015).

Another crucial characteristic of AFSs in the GS is their link to *traditional agricultural systems*. This scoping review corroborates this statement, as several studies refer to these systems (mostly Indigenous) as custodians of peasant knowledge, incorporating biocultural elements into AFSs (Bopp, 2020; Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Maysels et al., 2023). Traditional agricultural systems encompass the selection of traditional varieties of staple foods (Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024), exchanging native seeds (Reina-Usuga et al., 2023), understanding natural cycles between species, such as "rice-fish-duck" (Zi et al., 2024), cultivate the earth through "chinampas"⁴ (Guibrunet et al., 2023), or transform and produce ancestral foods and beverages (Bara et al., 2023). A part of the literature indicates the relevance of models that combine traditional and

³ Those that combine entrepreneurial and business approaches and tools with more ethical purposes.

⁴ Pre-Hispanic floating terrace systems.

modern innovation (Pérez et al., 2018; Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Rana and Bisht, 2023). Nevertheless, traditional agricultural systems are primarily oriented towards food self-sufficiency, with any surpluses sold (Arnés et al., 2013). In the case of Brazil, agrobiodiversity, as an inherent part of traditional agricultural systems, is identified as being combined with ecological production practices, but mainly oriented for market sales (Rover et al., 2020).

Finally, other works focus on evaluating or assessing the resilience of AFSs in the face of challenging circumstances (García-Bustamante and Gracia, 2021), and the role of public policies in their constitution (González-Azcárate et al., 2023). Several studies highlight the COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst to develop strategies to scale up AFSs distribution channels (Dharmalingam et al., 2021), strengthen internal governance mechanisms (Frank et al., 2022), and improve the logistical efficiency of the supply chain through the use of digital tools (Michel-Villarreal et al., 2021; Vilalta-Perdomo et al., 2023).

3.2.2. Connectivity(ies)

Another common theme in the studies of AFSs, inherent to their principle of resocializing and respatializing food system dynamics, relates to the analysis of relations within them, particularly focusing on consumer-producer relations through notions of connectivity. Addressing the connectivity of AFSs through a relational lens engages with (long-standing) paradigms regarding the construction of *trust* (Pugas et al., 2023; Panghal et al., 2024). Chinese studies mention the notion of “guanxi” as an axiom for creating producer–consumer communities united both cognitively and emotionally (Liu and Ravenscroft, 2020; Li et al., 2022). In South Africa, the notion of “ubuntu” - grounded in solidarity, reciprocity, and the social redistribution of surplus - offers a moral framework that articulates AFSs (Ndhlovu, 2024). At the same time, all articles focused on PGSs frame them as a means to construct trust-based agreements and negotiations between consumers and producers, as well as other food system actors (Sacchi et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2016; Bellante, 2017; Rover et al., 2017; Leung, 2021; Kaufmann et al., 2023).

Another cross-cutting focus is to balance food system relations through the notion of *social embeddedness* (Sellitto et al., 2018; Bisht et al., 2020; Campos et al., 2021). There are varying degrees of depth in framing AFSs through this lens. Some studies express a preference for direct sales (avoiding intermediaries) through farmers markets (Reina-Usuga et al., 2023). Other articles delve into the logics underpinning conventional intermediation and advocate for proximity-based commercial models that do not necessarily eliminate these actors but instead promote relationships that go beyond utilitarian exchange, ensuring fairer prices for producers and greater transparency for consumers (Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Cendón et al., 2023). This notion argues that relationships within AFSs are grounded in a genuine interest in mutual learning, improved communication, knowledge sharing, and empathy (Touri, 2016; Gütschow and Feola, 2022). For example, in analyzing short commercialization circuit from the perspective of wholesale distributors of agroecological and organic products, Craviotti and Demicheli (2023) identify how they are shaped by dense personal networks and trust-based exchanges. Prices are often set by producers in dialogue with wholesalers, rather than imposed from above, aiming to differentiate themselves from conventional supply chains.

Some studies mention different types of embeddedness depending on the scale of action. Krul and Ho (2017) explore the multi-scale interactions and tensions between the relational embeddedness proposed in CSAs and conventional food systems models, as these initiatives are still embedded within these structures. Another study explains the limitations of scaling AFSs through the fragmentation of social, institutional, and territorial embeddedness (Zhong et al., 2022). *Territorial embeddedness* appears recurrently and refers to the degree of articulation, coordination, and collaboration among different types of actors (producers, consumers, intermediaries, public institutions, civil society, and others) within a specific territory to support and manage SFSCs.

Some authors also refer to this as geographical proximity (Oliveira et al., 2021; Cendón et al., 2023; Rode et al., 2023). Oliveira et al. (2021) use the latter term to describe the geographical distribution and physical distance between consumers and producers, in the context of understanding how urban design limits access to direct sales markets through street markets.

Another category to highlight is that which explains the producer–consumer relationship through the lens of rural–urban linkages. For example, in the case of Colombia, consumers and other urban actors, such as NGOs and universities, are identified by some studies as the main drivers of change for AFSs as a means for rural development, given the limited capacity of farmers (Maysels et al., 2023; Reina-Usuga et al., 2020). This analogy is full of nuances, however, with historical particularities in each country (and territory), yet many articles point to a pseudo-colonialist bias: an emerging urban middle class of consumers, while acknowledging their privileged position, approaches the rural with a partial, romanticized, and condescending view, thereby opening themselves to alternative food models (Rover et al., 2017; Erler and Dittrich, 2020; Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Gütschow and Feola, 2022). China presents successful cases (Chen et al., 2022) but also raises questions about the role of neo-rurals.⁵ Although they contribute to rural revitalization and promote sustainable models, their lack of integration with local populations and their focus on niche markets continue to perpetuate the urban–rural divide and postpone the structural transformation of the food system (Krul and Ho, 2017; Cody, 2018; Ding et al., 2018; Zhong et al., 2022).

From a more operational lens, a recurrent theme is the role of *technologies* as tools to facilitate (social or spatial) connectivity between producers and consumers (de Souza 2020). Examples include the use of social media (WhatsApp, WeChat) or e-commerce platforms, which have not only enabled the wider expansion of direct sales (Martindale, 2021a; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024), but also fostered greater trust among actors (Martindale, 2021b) and improved multi-actor coordination within broader networks (Cendón et al., 2023).

3.2.3. Engagement and organization

Engagement and organization were identified as other relevant themes in the analyzed literature, with studies focusing on both internal coordination and broader institutional arrangements shaping AFSs. In particular, studies highlight not only formal state action in supporting or constraining AFS, but also concerning the multiplicity of actors and spaces - civic networks, grassroots organizations, universities, NGOs - engaged in their mobilization and support.

Several studies focus on *civic and territorial food networks* as vehicles for fostering horizontal governance mechanisms through collective coordination, participatory processes, and embedded relationships, particularly in Latin America and China (Sacchi et al., 2015; Rover et al., 2017; Ding et al., 2018; Li, 2022; Cendón et al., 2023; Wahn, 2024). For instance, territorial food networks that connect producers and consumers have been identified as creating spaces for deliberation and collective learning, helping reconfigure power relations and articulations with local authorities in Colombia (Reina-Usuga et al., 2020). In this sense, Cendón et al. (2023) argue that a core dimension of AFSs is promoting territorial governance, including the articulation of public, private, and collective action within a territory. Here, the organization of AFS is framed as negotiated within networks, thus socially embedded, and continually co-constructed through multi-actor networks.

Within this context, several studies highlight *mediating actors and public sector roles* in facilitating organizational processes related to AFSs formation. One of the actors recurrently mentioned in this context is academia. Universities have been highlighted as helping articulate transdisciplinary spaces of dialogue between farmers, researchers, and

⁵ Young people from urban origin and with higher education who relocate to rural or peri-urban settings to establish alternative food initiatives.

other actors, while supporting the development of SFSCs and urban–rural linkages (e.g., through training, market creation, and educational programmes) (Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023; Rojas-Jiménez et al., 2023). Mexican cases reinforce this by highlighting the political mobilization and food education promoted within university settings (Pasquier Merino, 2022; Pasquier Merino et al., 2022). The role of NGOs and international organizations also feature prominently in affecting the organization of AFSs. While some studies highlight their supportive role in reinforcing SFSCs (Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Reina-Usuga et al., 2020, 2023; Ndhlovu, 2024), others raise critical concerns. In particular, the South African literature warns that initiatives led by NGOs can be framed as poverty alleviation, with little attention to deeper structural change (Warschawsky, 2014; Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Siebert, 2023).

The public sector's role in supporting AFSs varies across contexts. While some studies show positive examples of state support, such as food distribution schemes (Dharmalingam et al., 2021), school meal programmes (Liu et al., 2023), or support to public markets (Leglise and Smolski, 2017), others reveal gaps, ambiguity, or marginal involvement. In Colombia and South Africa, many analyzed SFSC initiatives have been developed largely outside state structures, with mixed or limited engagement from public authorities (Kesselman, 2015; Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Reina-Usuga et al., 2023; Siebert, 2023). Nonetheless, the state is often recognized as a key actor whose involvement is essential to scale or stabilize AFS efforts (Bisht et al., 2020; Panghal et al., 2024). In Brazil, multiple studies underscore that a supportive political context aligned with food sovereignty and agroecology perspectives has translated into robust public action for scaling AFS development (Darolt et al., 2016; Amaral et al., 2020). Programs such as public procurement for school meals have linked smallholders to stable markets (e.g. PNAE & PAA) (Chaves et al., 2020; Retière and Darly, 2023), with multi-actor territorial networks helping coordinate action across regions (Lamine et al., 2023; Rode et al., 2023).

In this context, many studies point to AFSs providing a space for *political engagement*, often linked to broader struggles for justice, autonomy, and systemic change, where pressuring governments and influencing public policy to support food systems change is central. This is particularly the case of Brazil and Argentina, with AFSs framed as spaces of resistance and mobilization against industrial food systems and neoliberal policies (Pérez et al., 2018; Amaral et al., 2020; Levidow et al., 2021; Frank et al., 2022; Levidow et al., 2022; Cendón et al., 2023; Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023; Faifman and Paschkes Ronis, 2023; Levidow et al., 2023). In contrast, research from China points to a relative absence of political orientation within AFSs, where consumer–producer relations tend to be shaped by market or safety concerns (Wahn, 2023).

Finally, a strand of the literature highlights how *collective agency and grassroots organization* underpin the development and resilience of AFSs. These dynamics are often rooted in culturally embedded values and local forms of cooperation, such as the notion of ubuntu of South Africa that shapes collective food initiatives and supports community-led transformation in AFSs (Ndhlovu, 2024). Similarly, in Colombia, practices such as “mingas” (communal labour) and bartering reflect indigenous ontologies and contribute to the strength of grassroots networks that resist dominant food system logics (Romagnoli et al., 2018; Maysels et al., 2023). In India, self-help groups and informal knowledge-sharing practices - often supported by digital tools (Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024) - play a key crucial role in promoting agroecological practices and fostering collective learning (Bisht et al., 2020; Deka and Goswami, 2024). Nevertheless, other contexts, particularly China, offer fewer examples of bottom-up organization (for an exception see Zhang and Barr (2019)).

3.2.4. Food quality(ies)

Food quality is also a central area of concern in framing and analyzing AFSs, including studies that focus their analysis on the characteristics or values attributed to food by food system actors. Broadly, it

is described as “a social construct understood through the multiple meanings attributed to it by different social actors, as well as the attributes associated with certain foods” (Appendini and Quijada, 2016). Within this context, several studies apply convention theory to justify the enhanced quality of foods within AFSs based on different valuation systems (Souza and Fornazier, 2022; Melo da Silva et al., 2023); some associated to sensory characteristics (appearance, taste), others to sociocultural dimensions, such as everyday (closeness, familiarity), civic (public health, justice), or normative (standardization, certification) values.

Building on these notions, a strand of studies explore tensions between normative and *perceived* food quality. In some cases, food quality is equated solely with safety and hygiene (Ramírez and Cadavid-Castro, 2022), with several studies highlighting perceived values such as freshness and cleanliness as the main appeal of SFSCs (Martindale, 2021b; Gütschow and Feola, 2022; Jehlička et al., 2024). Indeed, *food safety* is regarded as a central aspect of AFSs in some cases, focused on the hygiene and safety of food, whose normative approach requires measurable and regulated values to prevent intoxications and adulterations. This is particularly the case in China, where the magnitude of food fraud scandals in recent decades has meant that food safety is now a crucial concern in Chinese consumers, disillusioned with the State and seeking in AFSs solutions that can restore trust through top-down mechanisms (Fearnley, 2022). In this context, any information about the food to be consumed is relevant and constitutes both a right and an added value for consumers. Labelling, in addition to providing mandatory nutritional *information*, is an exercise in transparency that educates and transforms behaviours, connecting consumers with the values behind food (Sacchi et al., 2015).

Providing a view of food quality as socially constructed, others argue that AFSs, particularly those based on SFSCs, move away from more industrialized formulas and instead promote processes in which food quality is flexible and dynamic, thus, socially built and negotiated (Cendón et al., 2023; Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023). *Traditional foods*, or those produced using traditional techniques, are often also synonymous with quality in this context. Beyond certifications that recognize these aspects, such as Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) and Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), in GS contexts food traditionalism combines nutrition and resilience, while also reflecting differences in how tradition is understood by young farmers, representatives of AFS initiatives, or researchers who stimulate these systems (Bisht et al., 2020; Erler and Dittrich, 2020; Rana and Bisht, 2023; Deka and Goswami, 2024). Some studies note that these foods are deeply rooted in culture and local gastronomic identity, relying on local resources for their sustenance. SFSCs developed to safeguard traditional foods, such as food festivals, help communities to express their heritage (Bara et al., 2023; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024).

3.2.5. Alternativeness, hybridization and scalability

Certain thematic categories cut across most of the reviewed studies, such as the *scaling* of initiatives, the *hybridization* of models, and their degree of *alternativeness*. In most studies, these concerns are interconnected, following the logic that hybrid models (further removed from the alternative character of AFSs) are necessary to scale up, build strategic alliances, or simply survive (Lamine, 2015; Lundström, 2019; Levidow et al., 2023; Maysels et al., 2023), and, thus, are discussed in conjunction.

Compared to the GN, traditional agricultural systems are recognized as long-standing hybrid models of AFSs in the GS, as they have long resisted absorption into conventional food system models while remaining in constant interaction with them, and at times even operating within their boundaries (Li, 2022; Guibrunet et al., 2023; Maysels et al., 2023; Zi et al., 2024). However, the hybridity of AFSs is discussed in various degrees depending on the context and focus. For example, a strand of the literature highlights hybrid models as those that adopt new technologies both in production (agricultural machinery and precision technologies) and in distribution (improving access through better roads

and using digital technologies to connect with consumers, e.g., WhatsApp, WeChat, etc.). China best exemplifies this hybrid model (Schumilas and Scott, 2016; Ding et al., 2018; P. Liu et al., 2019; Martindale, 2021a; Tassin, 2021) for two reasons; (i) the pursuit of scaling, and (ii) the initiatives are driven by consumers who do not necessarily call for structural changes to the food system. While some works document tensions and even inconsistencies in these models - criticizing their labeling as alternative (Si et al., 2015; Cody, 2018) - others readily seek an operational and profitable functioning similar to that of conventional food systems, overlooking the "local trap" (Si and Scott, 2016; Touri, 2016; Ding et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Li, 2022). These initiatives occupy a position not explicitly confrontational toward the State, maintaining a delicate balance between resistance and collaboration (Schumilas and Scott, 2016; Wahn, 2024).

Other GS studies seek scaling through multi-actor collaboration (Cendón et al., 2023) or through state intervention. The latter is observed mainly in Brazil, through the implementation of public procurement programs (Borsatto et al., 2021; Retière and Darly, 2023), or in India by supporting "mandis"⁶ (Panghal et al., 2024). Studies in other GS countries, such as Colombia, where these favourable circumstances have been inconsistent, identify major obstacles to scaling, linking them to the lack of distribution and storage infrastructure or to limitations in sanitary controls within SFSCs (Reina-Usuga et al., 2023).

Although not always explicitly, hybrid models also appear in several studies, where wholesalers report combining organic, agroecological, and conventional products in order to adapt to seasonality, logistical constraints, and consumer demand (Craviotti and Demicheli, 2023). Even the most value-oriented actors must make concessions when sourcing products that are difficult to obtain agroecologically. Other studies conceive SFSCs as hybrid spaces where local social relations of trust and proximity are partially integrated, but price setting still relies on conventional market mechanisms (Craviotti and Soleno Wilches, 2015). This is also the case for local food entrepreneurship, a key driver in advancing AFSs, but one that depends on how niches interact with the dominant food regime. In the GS context, this is a double-edged sword, since such initiatives offer high variety and local specificity, which often clashes with the high standardization and globalization of food systems due to export-market specialization or tourism expectations (Deka and Goswami, 2024; Panghal et al., 2024; Srivastava and Patnaik, 2024). There is also a significant body of research exploring the relationship between conventional and alternative markets, and the preferences of consumers, producers, or intermediaries within these spaces (Schneider et al., 2016; Lundström, 2019; Escobar-López et al., 2022a; Escobar-López et al., 2022b; Zhong et al., 2022).

4. Limitations and research gaps

As the review shows, there has been growing attention to AFNs in the GS, with numerous studies examining their approaches, purposes, and challenges, particularly after year 2020 and with a dominant focus on China, Brazil and Mexico, as shown in this review. This could be related to the 2021 UN Food System Summit, which helped catalyze the effort of scientific communities and encourage this type of publications (Schneider et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this does not invalidate the transformative potential present in other GS countries, where AFS are being implemented but not documented in academic domains. At the same time, there are still certain areas that would require greater consideration to improve the understanding of their functioning, potentials, and limitations for food systems change in the GS: intersectional (in)justice, the limited attention to other elements of the food system beyond consumption and production, and transcending the alternative-conventional dualism.

First, the review identifies a significant gap in framing the articles from an intersectional (in)justice perspective. This notion recognizes different forms of discrimination -based on class, gender, race, etc. - intersect and reinforce each other, generating complex inequalities among individuals (Rice et al., 2019). Although the studies repeatedly emphasize imbalances between producers and consumers, where class differences are most prominent, other issues remain overlooked, such as gender inequalities or the distribution of labor, beyond some exceptions. Three studies specifically highlight women's agency within AFSs. Ndhlovu (2024) documents home and community gardens constructed as spaces where women transmit knowledge about seeds, medicinal plants, and herbs across generations. King (2020) describes how hand-made tortilla production, a traditionally female occupation, is simultaneously viewed as a symbol of national identity and as a marker of poverty and indigeneity. Zhang (2020), in the context of male urban migration, underscores the role and leadership of women in transforming local food systems. However, other authors argue that AFSs reproduce gender inequities and focus their analysis on providing evidence of this (Bezerra et al., 2022; Qi, 2023). Moreover, only few studies incorporate intersectionality into the analysis (Warszawsky, 2014; Lundström, 2019; Paganini and Lemke, 2020; Qi, 2023), beyond the already mentioned producer-consumer imbalance, which is typically framed from a market or food sovereignty perspective rather than from an intersectional justice lens.

Another gap identified is the underrepresentation of the processing and transformation stage in the reviewed studies. As documented, the complexity of AFNs in the GS is diverse, ranging from simple models that produce fresh food for local consumption to sophisticated multi-actor platforms that articulate intermediate stages between production and consumption. If the goal of AFSs is to advance toward sustainable food systems, it is also necessary to question what kinds of practices and relationships are established in these intermediate stages, particularly in food processing. The absence of this theme can be explained by the dominance of conventional systems in food processing (and, of course, ultra-processing), given the high level of industrialization required to manufacture third- and fourth-range food products in the GS. Although AFSs advocate for a model that does not compete with ultra-processed foods, investment is needed in research and the development of food technologies that can be applied on a small scale and with eco-technologies. Finally, greater understanding of the relationships between wholesalers/retailers and producers within AFSs is needed, since relational approaches have been documented mainly from the vendor-consumer perspective. Similarly, food waste management and street vending are often overlooked in these studies. Recent publications document how both food loss control and street vendors are key players in urban food security and the pursuit of sustainable food transitions (Guibrunet et al., 2024; Vázquez Neyra et al., 2025). However, the latter also challenge food safety standards and highlight the power inequalities perpetuated by informal urban food supply systems, particularly in GS contexts (Nkosi and Tab lesit and 2021; Recchi, 2021).

As emphasized in previous AFSs, although coming from the GN, exploring themes beyond producer-consumer imbalances serves to reveal structural limitations of AFNs, complexities obscured by idealized narratives, and above all, to generate fairer and more contextualized solutions grounded in the lived experiences of those who sustain these systems on a daily basis (Mares, 2017; Turner et al., 2020). Indeed, several of the tensions and characteristics of AFSs identified in this review also relate to those identified in GS-focused studies, such as hybridization, scalability, and alternativeness (Goodman et al., 2012). However, we did identify country specificities regarding the focus, motivations, and challenges of AFSs, similar to studies that have also found country- and region-specific AFSs characteristics in Europe (Bowen and Mutersbaugh, 2014; Lamine et al., 2019). This calls for more attention to country specificities rather than GS-GN divides, particularly to how AFSs are structured and interconnected across stages and actors, including internal tensions and contextual influences. As

⁶ Wholesale markets where producers and artisans sell their products in bulk at fair prices regulated by the government.

argued by [Sonnino et al. \(2019\)](#), a systemic approach, including considering the various stages, actors, and people in the food system that connect production with consumption, is of great importance in building alternative solutions to transform food systems. It enables the identification of pathways and reconfiguration processes that are needed to support these processes (*idem*).

Significantly, this review highlights the similar alternative-conventional dualism in the conceptualization of AFSs found in GN literature, whereby hybrid models are not considered as transformative given their close embeddedness within conventional food system dynamics. Moving beyond this dualism could be another future line of inquiry in the GS, given the blurriness of the alternative-conventional delineation ([Treager 2011](#)). Rather than occupying fixed positions, AFSs can be understood as lying along a continuum shaped by specific circumstances and contextual constraints that condition their capacity to align with or challenge values associated with dominant economic and food paradigms ([Goodman et al., 2012](#)). This view opens up critical questions regarding the evolution of AFSs as they become more embedded within existing food system structures; raising questions about whether, and under what conditions, processes of institutionalization, scaling, or hybridization reinforce dominant dynamics, reconfigure them, or generate new forms of convergence. In particular, it refers to the role of AFSs in processes of structural change: whether their transformative potential lies in coexistence and interaction with conventional models, in partial reconfiguration of prevailing regimes, or only through substitution and displacement.

5. Conclusion

This paper presented a scoping review aimed at synthesizing how AFSs in the GS are analyzed, including the dominant conceptual approaches, empirical foci, and research gaps. In particular, the scoping review focused on mapping the existing peer-reviewed literature on AFSs in the GS, characterizing and describing the types of AFSs documented according to diverse GS contexts, and analyzing the themes and focuses most common in this literature. This was achieved through an initial descriptive analysis of 153 systematically identified sources, which examined the temporal and geographical distribution of research on AFSs in the GS, followed by an in-depth thematic analysis of 112 documents from the most represented countries to identify patterns and trends in the academic literature.

The results highlight that research on AFSs in the GS has grown significantly over the past decade, with China, Brazil, and Mexico accounting for more than half of the contributions. These countries might be influential in framing and conceptualizing AFSs in the GS, though studies from other contexts, such as South Africa, Colombia, Argentina, and India, highlight the diversity of conditions under which AFSs take shape. The thematic analysis identified four core thematic categories - agroecologies, connectivities, engagement & organization, and food qualities - together with three cross-cutting categories - alternativeness, hybridization, and scalability. Across these thematic categories, cultural notions of trust and social organization, together with the embeddedness of AFSs in traditional agricultural systems, shape how they are enacted and sustained. Most AFSs in the GS are defined in the literature as in opposition to the conventional food regime; yet, beyond critique, they are also seen as actively proposing, constructing, and operating across multiple scales. Significantly, they are not only about offering alternatives to conventional systems, but also about sustaining historically grounded practices and relationships. Whether situated in rural, urban, or peri-urban contexts, and involving diverse actors and challenges, these initiatives are identified as consistently mobilizing the alternative as a marker of identity, space, and social relations.

However, hybridization does emerge as both an adaptive strategy and a source of contradiction: while enabling survival, alliances, and expansion, hybrid models are also discussed as potentially diluting the alternative character of AFSs and reproduce elements of conventional

food systems. In particular, together, the analyzed studies suggest that the political and alternative salience of AFSs in the GS varies greatly across contexts and due to country-specific characteristics. This situation is shaped by histories of mobilization, institutional environments, state-society relations, and the extent to which food is understood as a domain for contestation and transformation in socio-cultural contexts with deeply embedded traditions of cooperation and trust. Recognizing this contextual specificity challenges the homogenization of AFS models and underscores the importance of examining how they evolve, adapt, and interact with broader global processes.

These findings highlight the need for caution in transferring the AFS concept - largely shaped by GN traditions and academic debates - into GS countries without recognizing their place-based nature. Overlooking the long-standing traditions and unique characteristics of AFSs across different countries of the GS risks undermining the practices, relationships, and cultural foundations that give them meaning and transformative potential. Accordingly, this review could be further enriched by drawing on grey literature and local reports, where many GS perspectives are documented but remain outside indexed outlets. By focusing solely on peer-reviewed publications, important contributions may have been excluded, particularly given the structural barriers GS scholars face in publishing internationally. This bias also contributes to the geographical imbalance observed, with China, Brazil, and Mexico dominating publications. This pattern reflects differences in academic capacity and research infrastructure rather than the actual distribution of AFSs. AFS-related practices are taking place across a much wider range of GS countries yet are not necessarily documented in academic publications. The framework utilized in this review could serve as a tool to characterize a broader diversity of AFS initiatives across GS countries that remain underrepresented in academic spheres. As seen in this review, such characterization is important for making visible the diversity of AFS realities across contexts, including their country specificities, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, mechanisms, and conditions that contribute to the transformative potential of AFSs. Future research could therefore address these gaps while also advancing work on the areas identified in this review that require further attention: intersectional (in)justice and on systemic analyses of AFSs that extend beyond production and consumption, and transcending the alternative-conventional dualism.

Availability of data and material

Not Applicable.

Funding

Included in the acknowledgments section.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Esperanza Arnés: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Tanya Zerbán:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgements

This article was made possible thanks to the Spain-Mexico Mobility

Grant awarded by RECEMX to the first author.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2026.104111>.

Data availability

We have shared the coding of our data in supplementary material II and III.

References

- Abrahams, Caryn, 2006. *Illegitimate Voices, Peripheral Debates, Valid Alternatives: a Developing World Articulation of Alternative Food Networks*. University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. PhD diss.
- Allen, Patricia, 1999. Reweaving the food security safety net: mediating entitlement and entrepreneurship. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 16, 117–129. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007593210496>.
- Allen, Patricia, FitzSimmons, Margaret, Goodman, Michael, Warner, Keith, 2003. Shifting plates in the agrifood landscape: the tectonics of alternative agrifood initiatives in California. *J. Rural Stud.* 19, 61–75.
- Amaral, Leticia de Souza, de Jesus Santos, Carine, Rozendo, Cimone, Penha, Thales Augusto Medeiros, Araújo, Joaquim Pinheiro de, 2020. The role of short Commercialization chains in the constitution of a sustainable rural development model in the Brazilian semiarid region: the case of the Family Farming Commercialization Center in Rio Grande do Norte State (CECAFES). *Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente* 55. Universidade Federal do Paraná 1, 494–516. <https://doi.org/10.5380/dma.v55i0.74160>.
- Appendini, Kirsten, Quijada, Ma Guadalupe, 2016. Consumption strategies in Mexican rural households: pursuing food security with quality. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 33, 439–454. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9614-y>.
- Arksey, Hilary, O'Malley, Lisa, 2005. Scoping studies: towards a meth-odological framework. *Int. J. Soc. Res. Methodol.* 8, 19–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616>.
- Arnés, Esperanza, Antonio, Jesús, Val, Ek del, Astier, Marta, 2013. Sustainability and climate variability in low-input peasant maize systems in the central Mexican highlands. *Agric. Ecosyst. Environ.* 181, 195–205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2013.09.022>.
- Bara, Claudia Rosina, González-Santos, Rosalinda, Leticia Colmenero Morales, Silvia, Hernández-Sandoval, Luis, Nicol Hernández-Puente, Karla, 2023. Sistemas locales de producción y redes alimentarias alternativas en Amealco de Bonfil, Querétaro, México. *Debates en Sociología* 57, 244–272. <https://doi.org/10.18800/debatesensociologia.202302.010>.
- Bellante, Laurel, 2017. Building the local food movement in Chiapas, Mexico: rationales, benefits, and limitations. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 34, 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-016-9700-9>.
- Bezerra, Antonia Geane Costa, Soler Montiel, Marta, Zarzar, Andrea Lorena Butto, Rocas, Irene García, 2022. Gender, agroecology and local markets at São José de Mipibu in Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 46, 604–625. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2021.2025193>.
- Bilewicz, Aleksandra, Śpiwak, Ruta, 2019. Beyond the “northern” and “southern” divide: food and space in Polish consumer cooperatives. *East Eur. Polit. Soc.* 33, 579–602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325418806046>.
- Bisht, Ishwari Singh, Rana, Jai Chand, Ahlawat, Sudhir Pal, 2020. The future of smallholder farming in India: some sustainability considerations. *Sustainability* 12, 3751. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12093751>.
- Blay-Palmer, Alison, Renting, Henk, Dubbeling, Marielle, 2015. *City Region Food Systems: Literature Review. Understanding the City Region Food System (CRFS: Planning for a More Food Secure and Resilient City*, vol. 16. Carasso Foundation.
- Bopp, Judith, 2020. Local notions of alternative practices: organic food movements in Bangkok, Thailand and Chennai, India. *Sustainability* 12, 1952. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12051952>.
- Borsatto, Ricardo Serra, de Camargo Macedo, André, Santos, Leandro de Lima, Wolney, Felipe Antunes Junior, Esquerdo, Vanilde Ferreira Souza, 2021. Food procurement as an instrument to promote local food systems: exploring a Brazilian experience. *Int. J. Food Syst. Dynam.* 12, 177–191. <https://doi.org/10.18461/ijfsd.v12i2.83>.
- Bowen, Sarah, Muttersbaugh, Tad, 2014. Local or localized? Exploring the contributions of Franco-Mediterranean agrifood theory to alternative food research. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 31, 201–213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-013-9461-7>.
- Camara, Simone Bueno, Andreatta, Tanice, 2021. Socioeconomic reproduction of farmers from the extreme north of Rio Grande do Sul – BR inserted in short food supply Chains (SFSCs). *Rev. Bras. Gestão Desenvolv. Reg.* 17, 33–47.
- Campos, Amanda Dos Santos Negreti, Satolo, Eduardo Guilherme, Ayleen Bustos Mac-Lean, Priscilla, Júnior, Sérgio Silva Braga, 2021. Economic sustainability analysis of the specialty coffee farmers in Garça/SP. *Coffee Science* 16. <https://doi.org/10.25186/v16i1.1993>.
- Carlisle, Liz, 2015. Audits and agrarianism: the moral economy of an alternative food network. *Elementa* 3, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.12952/journal.elementa.000066>.
- Cendón, Maria Laura, Bruno, Mariana Paola, Victoria Lacaze, María, Molpeceres, María Celeste, Laura Zulaica, María, 2023. La conceptualización de los canales cortos de comercialización. *Debates en Sociología* 57, 273–296. <https://doi.org/10.18800/debatesensociologia.202302.011>.
- Cerrada-Serra, Pedro, Moragues-Faus, Ana, Tjitske, Anna Zwart, Barbora, Adlerova, Ortiz-Miranda, Dionisio, Avermaete, Tessa, 2018. Exploring the contribution of alternative food networks to food security. A comparative analysis. *Food Secur.* 10, 1371–1388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-018-0860-x>.
- Chaves, Viviany Moura, Pinheiro, Liana Galvão Bacurau, Neves, Renata Alexandra Moreira das, de Araújo, Maria Arlete Duarte, Barbosa da Silva, Joana, Bezerra, Paulo Eneas Rolim, Jacob, Michelle Cristine Medeiros, 2020. Challenges to balance food demand and supply: analysis of PNAE execution in one semiarid region of Brazil. *Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente* 55. Universidade Federal do Paraná 1, 470–493. <https://doi.org/10.5380/dma.v55i0.73174>.
- Chen, Cheng, Yang, Jin, Gao, Jinlong, Wen, Chen, 2022. An observation over the rural-urban re-connecting process based on the alternative food network (AFN) in China—from the perspective of ‘social capital’. *Habitat Int.* 130. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.habitatint.2022.102708>.
- Chitja, Joyce M., Mabaya, Edward, 2015. Institutional innovations linking small-scale farmers to produce markets in South Africa. In: Christy, Ralph D., da Silva, Carlos A., Mhlanga, Nomathemba, Mabaya, Edward, Tihanyi, Krisztina (Eds.), *Innovative Institutions, Public Policies and Private Strategies for Agro-Enterprise Development*, first ed. FAO and Market Matters, Rome, Italy, pp. 1–23.
- Cleveland, David A., Allison, Carruth, Daniella, Niki Mazaroli, 2015. Operationalizing local food: goals, actions, and indicators for alternative food systems. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 32, 281–297. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9556-9>.
- Clément, Chantal, 2016. *The New Governance of Sustainable Food Systems: Shared Insights from Four Rural Communities in Canada and the EU*. Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. PhD diss.
- Cody, Sacha, 2018. Borrowing from the rural to help the urban: organic farming exemplars in post-socialist China. *Asia Pac. J. Anthropol.* 19, 72–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2017.1394362>.
- Craviotti, Clara, Demicheli, Juan C., 2023. Alternative food circuits: practices and discourses in the wholesale sourcing of agroecological and organic products. *Mundo Agrar.* 24. <https://doi.org/10.24215/15155994e201>. Universidad Nacional de La Plata.
- Craviotti, Clara, Soleno Wilches, Ronald, 2015. Circuitos cortos de comercialización agroalimentaria: un acercamiento desde la agricultura familiar diversificada en Argentina. *Mundo Agrar.* 16.
- Darolt, M.R., Lamine, C., Brandenburg, A., Faggion Alencar, M.D., Abreu, L.S., 2016. Alternative food networks and new producer-consumer relations in France and in Brazil. *Ambiente Sociedade* 19, 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1809-4422ASOC121132V1922016>.
- de Lima, Felipe Alexandre, Mülling Neutzling, Daiane, Seuring, Stefan, Kumar, Vikas, Bonzanini Bossle, Marília, 2023. Analyzing the implications of organic standardization and certification in alternative food networks: the capability approach. *Bus. Ethics Environ. Responsib.* 32, 1547–1562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/beer.12561>.
- de Souza, Ronaldo Tavares, 2020. Box-scheme as alternative food network—the economic integration between consumers and producers. *Agricultural and Food Economics* 8, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40100-020-00162-4>.
- Deka, Nabajyoti, Goswami, Kishor, 2024. Analyzing alternative food networks in highly globalised and standardised agrifood systems to attain sustainability for small-scale growers: inferences from tea sector. *Local Environ.* 29, 317–338. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2024.2306599>.
- Dharmalingam, Balakrishnan, Giri Nandagopal, M.S., Thulasiraman, Venkatesh, Kothakota, Anjneyulu, Rajkumar, 2021. Short food supply chains to resolve food scarcity during COVID-19 pandemic—An Indian model. In: Cohen, Marc J. (Ed.), *Advances in Food Security and Sustainability*, first ed. Elsevier, Washington D.C., pp. 35–63.
- Ding, Dang, Liu, Pingyang, Ravenscroft, Neil, 2018. The new urban agricultural geography of Shanghai. *Geoforum* 90, 74–83. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.02.010>.
- DuPuis, E. Melanie, Goodman, David, 2005. Should we go “home” to eat?: toward a reflexive politics of localism. *J. Rural Stud.* 21, 359–371. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2005.05.011>.
- Eriksen, Sfanía Normann, 2013. Defining local food: constructing a new taxonomy – three domains of proximity. *Acta Agric. Scand. Sect. B Soil Plant Sci* 63, 47–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09064710.2013.789123>.
- Erlar, Mirka, Dittrich, Christoph, 2020. Middle class, tradition and the desi-realm-discourses of alternative food networks in Bengaluru, India. *Sustainability* 12, 2741. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12072741>.
- Escobar-López, Sttefanie Yenitza, Espinoza-Ortega, Angélica, Moctezuma-Pérez, Sergio, Chávez-Mejía, Cristina, 2022b. Exploring the “alternative” in the Alternative Markets of central Mexico. *ITEA Información Técnica Económica Agraria* 118, 493–510. <https://doi.org/10.12706/itea.2021.038>.
- Escobar-López, Sttefanie Yenitza, Espinoza-Ortega, Angélica, Moctezuma-Pérez, Sergio, Chávez-Mejía, Cristina, Martínez-García, Carlos G., 2022a. Consumers’ perception of different types of food markets in Mexico. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* 46, 147–160. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12650>.
- Faifman, Judith, Paschkes Ronis, Matías, 2023. Despliegue de redes alternativas de alimentación. Los casos de la Red Calisas y la iniciativa Bioleft en Argentina. *Papeles Trab.* 16, 118–133.
- Fearnley, Lyle, 2022. Fake eggs: from counter-qualification to popular certification in China’s food safety crisis. *BioSocieties* 17, 253–275. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41292-020-00211-7>.

- Fonte, Maria, 2008. Knowledge, food and place. A way of producing, a way of knowing. *Sociol. Rural.* 48, 200–222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9523.2008.00462.x>.
- Frank, Markus, Kaufmann, Brigitte, Ejarque, Mercedes, Lamaison, María Guadalupe, Nessi, María Virginia, Amoroso, Mariano Martin, 2022. Changing conditions for local food actors to operate towards agroecology during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2022.866004>.
- Freidberg, Susanne, Goldstein, Lissa, 2011. Alternative food in the global south: reflections on a direct marketing initiative in Kenya. *J. Rural Stud.* 27, 24–34. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2010.07.003>.
- García-Bustamante, Rocío, Gracia, Amalia, 2021. Construyendo resiliencia alimentaria local. Experiencias de circuitos cortos en el centro y sureste de México. *Agricultura, Sociedad y Desarrollo* 18, 391–412.
- González-Azcárate, Mario, Lara Silva, Vivian, Cruz-Maceín, José Luis, López-García, Daniel, Bardají, Isabel, 2023. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) as resilient socio-economic structures: the role of collaboration and public policies in Brazil and Spain. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 47, 1237–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2023.2230171>.
- Goodman, David, Melanie DuPuis, E., Goodman, Michael K., 2012. *Alternative Food Networks: Knowledge, Practice, and Politics*, first ed. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203804520>.
- Goszczyński, Wojciech, Knieć, Wojciech, 2011. Strengthening alternative agro-food networks in the Eastern European countryside. *East. Eur. Countrys.* 17, 5–20. <https://doi.org/10.2478/v10130-011-0001-4>.
- Gütschow, Malin, Feola, Giuseppe, 2022. Laying the foundations of a more conscious society? How vendors, consumers and organizers socially construct farmers' markets in Bogotá, Colombia. *Revista Colombiana de Ciencias Sociales* 13, 455–476. <https://doi.org/10.21501/22161201.3726>.
- Guibrunet, Louise, Ortega-Avila, Ana Gabriela, Valerino-Perea, Selene, Correa Campos, Jose Manuel Correa, ozos Espinosa, Valeria Izel, 2024. Street vendors as actors of a sustainable food system—The case of Mexico City. *Geo: Geography and Environment* 0, e00152. <https://doi.org/10.1002/geo2.152>.
- Guibrunet, Louise, Rubio, Maya, Abreu, Ileana Nuri Flores, 2023. Reclaiming traditional food systems in alternative food networks. Insights from Mexico city peri-urban agriculture. *Local Environ.* 28, 1153–1172. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2023.2194618>.
- Guthman, Julie, 2008. Neoliberalism and the making of food politics in California. *Geoforum* 39, 1171–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2006.09.002>.
- Haysom, Gareth, 2017. *Alternative Food Networks and Food Insecurity in South Africa*, Working Paper 33. Food and Nutrition Security in Southern African Cities. PLAAS, UWC and Centre of Excellence on Food Security, Cape Town. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315226651>.
- Hsieh, Hsiu-Fang, Shannon, Sarah E., 2005. Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qual. Health Res.* 15, 1277–1288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687>.
- Jehlička, Petr, Ma, Huidi, Kostelecký, Tomáš, Smith, Joe, 2024. Chinese food self-provisioning: key sustainability policy lessons hidden in plain sight. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 41, 647–659. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10506-7>.
- Kato, Karina Yoshie Martins, Delgado, Nelson Giordano, Osvaldo Romano, Jorge, 2022. Territorial approach and rural development challenges: governance, State and territorial markets. *Sustainability* 14, 7105. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14127105>.
- Kaufmann, Sonja, Hruschka, Nikolaus, Vildozo, Luis, Vogl, Christian R., 2023. *Alternative Food Networks in Latin America—Exploring PGS (Participatory Guarantee Systems) markets and their consumers: a cross-country comparison*. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 40, 193–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10347-w>.
- Kennedy, Brianna L., Thornberg, Robert, 2018. Deduction, induction, and abduction. In: Flick, U. (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*. SAGE Publications, Ltd, pp. 49–64. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526416070>.
- Kesselman, Brittany, 2015. The contribution of community food gardens to food sovereignty in Johannesburg, South Africa: a look at localisation and democratisation. In: *Envisioning a Future Without Food Waste and Food Poverty: Societal Challenges*, Ed. Leire Escajedo San-Epifanio and Mertxe De Renobales Scheiffer, first ed. Wageningen Academic, Leiden, The Netherlands, pp. 323–329. <https://doi.org/10.3920/978-90-8686-820-9>.
- King, Hilary B., 2020. Whose work is real work? A triple labor framework for sustainable development initiatives. *Economic Anthropology* 7, 215–227. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sea2.12174>.
- Kneafsey, Moya, Venn, Laura, Ulrich, Schmutz, Balázs, Bálint, Trenchard, Liz, Eyden-Wood, Trish, Bos, Elizabeth, Sutton, Gemma, Blackett, Matthew, 2013. *Short Food Supply Chains and Local Food Systems in the EU. A State of Play of their Socio-Economic Characteristics*, vol.123. JRC Scientific and Policy Reports. <https://doi.org/10.2791/88784>. August 2014.
- Krul, Kees, Ho, Peter, 2017. Alternative approaches to food: community supported agriculture in urban China. *Sustainability* 9, 844. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9050844>.
- Ku, Hok Bun, Kan, Karita, 2020. Social work and sustainable rural development: the practice of social economy in China. *Int. J. Soc. Welfare* 29, 346–355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsw.12422>.
- Lamine, Claire, 2015. Sustainability and resilience in agrifood systems: reconnecting agriculture, food and the environment. *Sociol. Rural.* 55, 41–61. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12061>.
- Lamine, Claire, Garçon, Lucile, Brunori, Gianluca, 2019. Territorial agrifood systems: a Franco-Italian contribution to the debates over alternative food networks in rural areas. *J. Rural Stud.* 68, 159–170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.11.007>.
- Lamine, Claire, Tusciano, Martina, Feyerisen, Marlene, Castro, Terena Peres, Bui, Sibylle, 2023. Articulating sustainable transitions, food justice and food democracy: insights from three social experiments in France, Belgium and Brazil. *Sociol. Rural.* 64, 41–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soru.12460>.
- Leglise, Mario Del Roble Pensado, Smolski, Andrew, 2017. An eco-egalitarian solution to the capitalist consumer paradox: integrating short food chains and public market systems. *Agriculture* 7, 76. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture7090076>.
- Leung, Daren Shi-Chi, 2021. Convivial agriculture: evolving food and farming activism in south China. *China Perspect.* 2, 29–38.
- Levidow, Les, Davis, Sansolo, Mónica, Schiavinatto, 2023. Territorialising local food systems for an agroecological transition in Latin America. *Land* 12, 1577. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12081577>.
- Levidow, Les, Davis, Sansolo, Schiavinatto, Monica, 2021. Agroecological innovation constructing socionatural order for social transformation: two case studies in Brazil. *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society* 4. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25729861.2020.1843318>.
- Levidow, Les, Davis, Sansolo, Schiavinatto, Monica, 2022. EcoSol-agroecology networks respond to the Covid-19 crisis: building an economy of proximity in Brazil's Baixada Santista region. *J. Peasant Stud.* 49, 1409–1445. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2022.2096447>.
- Li, Xueshi, 2022. The “Real” organic food in China: the tradition-modern divide and the role of boundary work. *Int. J. Sociol. Agric. Food* 28, 43–57. <https://doi.org/10.48416/ijfsaf.v28i1.71>.
- Li, Yanyan, Si, Zhenzhong, Miao, Yuxin, Zhou, Li, 2022. How does the concept of guanxi contribute to community building in alternative food networks? Six case studies from China. *Behav. Sci.* 12, 432. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12110432>.
- Liu, Pingyang, Ravenscroft, Neil, Ding, Dan, Li, Dongxuan, 2019. From pioneering to organised business: the development of ecological farming in China. *Local Environ.* 24, 539–553. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2019.1597032>.
- Liu, Xinghua, Liu, Chengfang, Bi, Jieying, 2023. Shortening food supply chain in home-grown school feeding: experiences and lessons from south central China. *Int. Food Agribus. Manag. Rev.* 26, 711–728. <https://doi.org/10.22434/ifamr2022.0154>.
- Liu, Pingyang, Ravenscroft, Neil, 2020. Shortening the supply chain for local organic food in Chinese cities. In: Aktas, Emel, Bourlakis, Michael (Eds.), *Food Supply Chains in Cities: Modern Tools for Circularity and Sustainability*, first ed. Springer International Publishing, pp. 171–200. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-34065-0>.
- Lundström, Markus, 2019. “We do this because the market demands it”: alternative meat production and the speciesist logic. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 36, 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-018-09902-1>.
- Mares, Teresa Marie, 2017. Navigating gendered labor and local food: a tale of working mothers in Vermont. *Food Foodw.* 25, 177–192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710.2017.1343064>.
- Mares, Teresa Marie, Alkon, Allison Hope, 2011. Mapping the food movement: addressing inequality and neoliberalism. *Environment and Society* 2, 68–86. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2011.020105>.
- Martindale, Leigh, Matacena, Raffaele, Beacham, Jonathan, 2018. Varieties of alterity: alternative food networks in the UK, Italy and China. *Sociol. Urbana Rurale* 27–41. <https://doi.org/10.3280/SUR2018-SU115003>.
- Martindale, Leigh, 2021a. From land consolidation and food safety to Taobao villages and alternative food networks: four components of China's dynamic agri-rural innovation system. *J. Rural Stud.* 82, 404–416. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.01.012>.
- Martindale, Leigh, 2021b. ‘I will know it when I taste it’: trust, food materialities and social media in Chinese alternative food networks. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 38, 365–380. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10155-0>.
- Maye, Damian, Kirwan, James, 2010. Alternative food networks, sociology of agriculture and food entry for sociopedia. *Isa* 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/205684601051>.
- Mayring, Philipp, 2014. Qualitative content analysis: theoretical foundation and procedures. In: Binkner-Ahsbahs, A., Knipping, C., Presmeg, N. (Eds.), *Approaches to Qualitative Research in Mathematics Education, Advances in Mathematics Education*. Springer, Dordrecht, pp. 365–380. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9181-6_13.
- Maysels, Rachael, Figueroa Casas, Apolinar, Sarmiento, Juan Diego Otero, Meneses, Shiomara Mileydi Zúñiga, 2023. Conceptualization of alternative food networks in Latin America: a case study of a local food system in Southwestern Colombia. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1216116>.
- McMichael, Philipp, 2005. Global development and the corporate food regime. *Res. Rural Sociol. Dev.* 11, 269–303. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1057-1922\(05\)11010-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1057-1922(05)11010-5).
- Melo da Silva, Joelma, Delgrossi, Mauro Eduardo, Pantoja, Maria Júlia, 2023. Food quality perceptions and agreements: case of local purchases from family farmers for school feeding program in the federal district of Brazil. *J. Rural Stud.* 101. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103069>.
- Michel-Villarreal, Rosario, Vilalta-Perdomo, Eliseo, Hingley, Martin, Canavari, Mauricio, 2024. Rethinking alternative food networks: unpacking key attributes and overlapping concepts. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 49 (3), 415–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2024.2420831>.
- Michel-Villarreal, Rosario, Vilalta-Perdomo, Eliseo Luis, Canavari, Mauricio, Hingley, Martin, 2021. Resilience and digitalization in short food supply chains: a case study approach. *Sustainability* 13, 5913. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13115913>.
- Michel-Villarreal, Rosario, Vilalta-Perdomo, Eliseo Luis, Hingley, Martin, 2020. Exploring producers' motivations and challenges within a farmers' market. *Br. Food J.* 122, 2089–2103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-09-2019-0731>.
- Misleh, Denise, 2022. Moving beyond the impasse in geographies of ‘alternative’ food networks. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* 46, 1028–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03091325221095835>.

- Moragues-Faus, Ana, Marsden, Terry, 2017. The political ecology of food: carving 'spaces of possibility' in a new research agenda. *J. Rural Stud.* 55, 275–288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.08.016>.
- Ndhlovu, Tiding P., 2024. Food (in)security, the moral economy, and Ubuntu in South Africa: a Southern perspective. *Rev. Int. Polit. Econ.* 31, 199–223. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2022.2161110>.
- Nelson, Erin, Tovar, Laura Gómez, Gueguen, Elodie, Humphries, Sally, Landman, Karen, Rindermann, Rita Schwentesius, 2016. Participatory guarantee systems and the re-imagining of Mexico's organic sector. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 33, 373–388. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9615-x>.
- Nigh, Ronald, González Cabañas, Alma Amalia, 2015. Reflexive consumer markets as opportunities for new peasant farmers in Mexico and France: constructing food sovereignty through alternative food networks. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems* 39, 317–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21683565.2014.973545>.
- Nkosi, Nelly Virginia, Tabit, Frederick Tawi, 2021. The food safety knowledge of street food vendors and the sanitary conditions of their street food vending environment in the Zululand District, South Africa. *Heliyon* 7, e07640. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07640>.
- Oliveira, Isabela Kopperschmidt de, Kelli de Oliveira, Leise, Lisboa, Maria Rosa Amorim Faria, Caroline Nunes Madalon, Ellen, Freitas, Luiza Fleury de, Filho, Augusto Cezar Peres, 2021. The geographical distance between producers and consumers of the Organic Street markets: the case of belo Horizonte, Brazil. *Logistics* 5, 30. <https://doi.org/10.3390/logistics5020030>.
- Paganini, Nicole, Lemke, Stefanie, 2020. "There is food we deserve, and there is food we do not deserve" food injustice, place and power in urban agriculture in cape town and Maputo. *Local Environ.* 25, 1000–1020. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2020.1853081>.
- Page, Matthew J., McKenzie, Joanne E., Bossuyt, Patrick M., Boutron, Isabelle, Hoffmann, Tammy C., Mulrow, Cynthia D., Shamseer, Larissa, Tetzlaff, Jennifer M., Akl, Elie A., Brennan, Sue E., Chou, Roger, Glanville, Julie, Grimshaw, Jeremy M., Hróbjartsson, Asbjørn, Lalu, Manoj M., Li, Tianjing, Loder, Elizabeth W., Mayo-Wilson, Evan, McDonald, Steve, McGuinness, Luke A., Stewart, Lesley A., et al., 2021. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>.
- Panghal, Anupama, Sindhu, Shilpa, Sarao, Jessica, Dahiya, Shweta, 2024. Local food entrepreneurship in rural India: modelling the challenges. *Int. J. Rural Manag.* 20, 65–84. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09730052231151796>.
- Pasquier Merino, Ayari Genevieve, 2022. Sustainable food, consensus, and debates: a study on university campuses in Mexico City. *Int. J. Sustain. High Educ.* 23, 337–353. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-03-2022-0096>.
- Pasquier Merino, Ayari Genevieve, Torres Salcido, Gerardo, Monachon, David Sébastien, Hernández, Jessica Geraldine Villatoro, 2022. Alternative food networks, social capital, and public Policy in Mexico City. *Sustainability* 14, 6278. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142316278>.
- Pérez, Daiana, Seplovich, Julieta, Gusman, Natalia, Vidal, Violeta, 2018. Creating food alternatives in four Argentinean provinces. *Rev. Colomb. Sociol.* 41, 21–40. <https://doi.org/10.15446/rcs.v41n2.70260>.
- Pugas, Adevan da Silva, José Rover, Oscar, Martinelli, Suellen Secchi, Teodolito, Francele Contarini, 2023. A trajectory of social innovations for the direct purchase of organic food by food services: a case study in Florianópolis, Brazil. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.1102891>.
- Qi, Miaomiao, 2023. Beyond social embeddedness: probing the power relations of alternative food networks in China. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 41, 701–713. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10510-x>.
- Ramírez, Briana Davahiva Gómez, Cadavid-Castro, Martha Alicia, 2022. Quality and safety of foods in alternative food networks: case studies in Medellín, Colombia. *Acta Agronómica* 71, 349–356. <https://doi.org/10.15446/acag.v71n4.108251>.
- Rana, Jai Chand, Bisht, Ishwari Singh, 2023. Reviving Smallholder Hill farming by involving rural youth in food System transformation and promoting community-based Agri-Ecotourism: a case of Uttarakhand state in north-western India. *Sustainability* 15, 8816. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15118816>.
- Recchi, Sara, 2021. Informal street vending: a comparative literature review. *Int. J. Sociol. Soc. Pol.* 41 (7/8), 805–825. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-07-2020-0285>.
- Reina-Usuga, Liliana, Haro-Giménez, Tomás de, Parra-López, Carlos, 2020. Food governance in territorial short food supply Chains: different narratives and strategies from Colombia and Spain. *J. Rural Stud.* 75, 237–247. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.02.005>.
- Reina-Usuga, Liliana, Parra-López, Carlos, Haro-Giménez, Tomás de, Carmona-Torres, Carmen, 2023. Sustainability assessment of territorial short food supply chains versus large-scale food distribution: the case of Colombia and Spain. *Land Use Policy* 126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.landusepol.2022.106529>.
- Renting, Henk, Marsden, Terry K., Banks, Jo, 2003. Understanding alternative food networks: exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development. *Environ. Plan. A Econ. Space* 35, 393–411. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3510>.
- Renting, Henk, Schermer, Markus, Rossi, Adanella, 2012. Building food democracy: exploring civic food networks and newly emerging forms of food citizenship. *Int. J. Sociol. Agric. Food* 19, 289–307.
- Retière, Morgane, Darly, Ségolène, 2023. School food policies and the transition of urban food systems in Brazil and France: insights from São Paulo and Greater paris region case studies. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2023.984207>.
- Rice, Carla, Harrison, Elisabeth, Friedman, May, 2019. Doing justice to intersectionality in research. *Cult. Stud. - Crit. Methodol.* 19, 409–420. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708619829779>.
- Rode, Edimar Luiz, Rover, Oscar José, Desconsi, Cristiano, 2023. Agroecology and direct sale of organic food: a study of two marketing experiences in Santa Catarina, Brazil. *Desenvolv. Meio Ambiente* 62, 29–46. <https://doi.org/10.5380/dma.v62i0.81710>.
- Rojas-Jiménez, Heraldo, Héctor, Herrera-Chiquillo, Fernando, Guzmán-Aguilera, Patricia, Rodríguez-Muñoz, Flavio, Triana-Vega, Angélica, Pinzón-Camargo, Mario, Beltrán-Vargas, Diana, 2023. Governance and Articulation from the Externado de Colombia University with Its Environment: a Look from the Multifunctional and Territorialized Agri-Food Systems. *Land* 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land12010065>.
- Romagnoli, Federica, Molina, Juan, Parrado, Álvaro, 2018. How to improve smallholder market access: evaluation of mercados campesinos in Colombia. *Agron. Colomb.* 36, 79–87. <https://doi.org/10.15446/agron.colomb.v36n1.67970>.
- Rover, Oscar José, Corrado de Gennaro, Bernardo, Roselli, Luigi, 2017. Social innovation and sustainable rural development: the case of a Brazilian agroecology network. *Sustainability* 9, 3. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9010003>.
- Rover, Oscar José, Pugas, Adevan da Silva, De Gennaro, Bernardo Corrado, Vittori, Francesco, Roselli, Luigi, 2020. Conventionalization of organic agriculture: a multiple case study analysis in Brazil and Italy. *Sustainability* 12, 6580. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12166580>.
- Sacchi, Giovanna, Caputo, Vincenzina, Nayga, Rodolfo M., 2015. Alternative labeling programs and purchasing behavior toward organic foods: the case of the participatory guarantee systems in Brazil. *Sustainability* 7, 7397–7416. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su7067397>.
- Schneider, Kate R., Fanzo, Jessica, Haddad, Lawrence, Herrero, Mario, Moncayo, Jose Rosero, Herforth, Anna, Remans, Roseline, Guarín, Alejandro, Resnick, Danielle, Covic, Namukolo, Béné, Christophe, Cattaneo, Andrea, Aburto, Nancy, Ambikapathi, Ramya, Aytekin, Destan, Simon, Barquera, Battersby, Jane, Beal, Ty, Molina, Paulina Bizzoto, Cafiero, Carlo, Wiebe, Keith, 2023. The state of food systems worldwide in the countdown to 2030. *Nat. Food* 4, 1090–1110. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-023-00885-9>.
- Schneider, Sergio, Salvate, Natália, Abel, Cassol, 2016. Nested markets, food networks, and new pathways for rural development in Brazil. *Agriculture* 6, 61. <https://doi.org/10.3390/agriculture6040061>.
- Schreiber, Kerstin, Soubry, Bernard, Dove-McFalls, Carley, MacDonald, Graham K., 2022. Untangling the role of social relationships for overcoming challenges in local food systems: a case study of farmers in Québec, Canada. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 40, 141–156. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-022-10343-0>.
- Schumilas, Theresa, Scott, Steffanie, 2016. Beyond 'voting with your chopsticks': community organising for safe food in China. *Asia Pac. Viewp.* 57, 301–312. <https://doi.org/10.1111/apv.12127>.
- Schwentesius, Rita, 2015. La Red Mexicana de Tianguis y Mercados Orgánicos – renovando sistemas de abasto de bienes de primera necesidad para pequeños productores y muchos consumidores. *Rev. Cien. Salud.* 24, 100–114.
- Selfa, Theresa, Qazi, Joan, 2005. Place, taste, or face-to-face? Understanding producer-consumer networks in "local" food systems in Washington state. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 22, 451–464. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-005-3401-0>.
- Sellitto, Miguel Afonso, Vial, Luis Antonio Machado, Viegas, Cláudia Viviane, 2018. Critical success factors in short food supply chains: case studies with milk and dairy producers from Italy and Brazil. *J. Clean. Prod.* 170, 1361–1368. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.09.235>.
- Si, Zhenzhong, Schumilas, Theresa, Scott, Steffanie, 2015. Characterizing alternative food networks in China. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 32, 299–313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-014-9530-6>.
- Si, Zhenzhong, Scott, Steffanie, 2016. The convergence of alternative food networks within "rural development" initiatives: the case of the new rural reconstruction movement in China. *Local Environ.* 21, 1082–1099. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2015.1067190>.
- Siebert, Anne, 2023. In: Morrow, Oona, Veen, Esther, Wahlen, Stefan (Eds.), *Spaces of Hope and Realities Beyond the Fence. Experiences of Urban Food Providers in South Africa. In Community Food Initiatives: a Critical Reporative Approach*, first ed. Routledge, London, pp. 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003195085-5>.
- Sánchez, Héctor Ávila, 2019. Urban and peri-urban agriculture. Territorial rearrangement and potential of urban food systems. *Invest. Geográficas* 98. <https://doi.org/10.14350/ig.59785>.
- Sonnino, Roberta, Tegoni, Cinzia L.S., Cunto, Anja De, 2019. The challenge of systemic food change: insights from cities. *Cities* 85, 110–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.08.008>.
- Souza, Amanda, Fornazier, Armando, 2022. Case study of the school feeding program in Distrito Federal, Brazil: building quality in short food supply chains. *Sustainability* 14, 192. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141610192>.
- Srivastava, Yashi, Patnaik, Archana, 2024. Reviving shekhawati food and local food system through commoning: a case from nawalgarh, India. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 41, 1147–1159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-024-10545-8>.
- Tassin, Jean, 2021. Back to the land "Peasant-entrepreneurs": the new actors of Chinese peasant agroecology. *China Perspect.* 2, 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.4000/chinaperspectives.11648>.
- Touri, Maria, 2016. Development communication in alternative food networks: empowering Indian farmers through global market relations. *J. Int. Commun.* 22, 209–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2016.1175366>.
- Tregear, Angela, 2011. Progressing knowledge in alternative and local food networks: critical reflections and a research agenda. *J. Rural Stud.* 27, 419–430. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2011.06.003>.
- Turner, Katherine L., Julián Idrobo, C., Desmarais, Annette Aurelie, Peredo, Ana María, 2020. Food sovereignty, gender and everyday practice: the role of Afro-Colombian women in sustaining localised food systems. *J. Peasant Stud.* 49, 402–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2020.1786812>.

- Valério, Valmir José De Oliveira, 2023. Active production of the scale and food sovereignty: the case of the street market in the municipality of pacaembu, São Paulo state, Brazil (2017-2019). *Bol. Goiano Geogr.* 43. <https://doi.org/10.5216/bgg.v43i01.66393>.
- Vilalta-Perdomo, Eliseo, Salinas-Navarro, David E., Michel-Villarreal, Rosario, Bustamante, Rocío García, 2023. Digitalization of the logistics process in short food supply Chains. An online viable system model application during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Syst. Pract. Action Res.* 36, 509–534. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11213-022-09619-7>.
- Vásquez Neyra, Jessika Milagros, Cequea, Mirza Marvel, Schmitt, Valentina Gomes Haensel, 2025. Current practices and key challenges associated with the adoption of resilient, circular, and sustainable food supply chain for smallholder farmers to mitigate food loss. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 9, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2025.1484933>.
- Wahn, I. Liang, 2023. The moralities of consumption and interactions among consumer cooperatives in east Asia. *J. Rural Stud.* 100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2023.103018>.
- Wahn, I. Liang, 2024. Civic food networks and agrifood forums: a social infrastructure for civic engagement. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 41, 1069–1083. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-023-10536-1>.
- Wald, Navé, Hill, Douglas P., 2016. ‘Rescaling’ alternative food systems: from food security to food sovereignty. *Agric Hum Values* 33, 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-015-9623-x>.
- Warshawsky, Daniel Novik, 2014. Civil society and urban food insecurity: analyzing the roles of local food organizations in Johannesburg. *Urban Geogr.* 35, 109–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2013.860753>.
- Warshawsky, Daniel Novik, 2016. Civil society and the governance of urban food systems in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Geogr. Compass* 10, 293–306. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12273>.
- Zerbán, Tanya, Adams, Mags, Dooris, Mark, Pool, Ursula, 2022. The role of local authorities in shaping local food systems. *Sustainability* 14, 2004. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912004>.
- Zerbán, Tanya, López-García, Daniel, 2024. Navigating agroecological urbanism: examining linkages and interdependencies within alternative food networks. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2024.1375128>.
- Zhang, Li, 2020. From left behind to leader: gender, agency, and food sovereignty in China. *Agric. Hum. Val.* 37, 1111–1123. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-020-10114-9>.
- Zhang, Joy Y., Barr, Michael, 2019. The transformative power of commoning and alternative food networks. *Environ. Polit.* 28, 771–789. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2018.1513210>.
- Zhang, Li, Qi, Gubo, 2019. Bottom-up self-protection responses to China's food safety crisis. *Can. J. Dev. Stud.* 40, 113–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2018.1504282>.
- Zhong, Shuru, Hughes, Alex, Crang, Mike, Zeng, Guojun, Hocknell, Suzanne, 2022. Fragmentary embeddedness: challenges for alternative food networks in Guangzhou, China. *J. Rural Stud.* 95, 382–390. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2022.09.008>.
- Zi, Chengxiang, Winterbottom, Daniel, Liu, Juanjuan, 2024. Strategies for building edible green infrastructure in traditional villages and insights into bio-districts: a case study of Dong villages in Huanggang, China. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 8. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2024.1305094>.