



In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Sara Aly El-Sayed

will defend her dissertation

**The Good Food Journey: Investigating the Wisdom of
Regenerative Food Systems in Arid Regions**

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

4:00pm MST

<https://asu.zoom.us/j/89848688934>

Password: 824561

Faculty, students, and the public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Scott Cloutier, Co-Chair

Dr. Christy Spackman, Co-Chair

Dr. Dayna Baumeister, Member

Dr. Joni Adamson, Member

Abstract

Good food, or food that is good for people and planet, demands a different worldview and approach than that offered by the current industrial food system. As an ecofeminist scholar that values reciprocity, justice, and integrating diverse approaches, I investigated varying good food perspectives to addressing climatic changes and desertification by integrating scientific evidence and practical experience. Through exploration of innovative, traditional, and indigenous solutions-

oriented and small-scale food systems in arid regions of the Southwest, USA, I found that many of these solutions move beyond sustainability into regenerative food systems. In this dissertation, I first developed a theoretical framework that weaves Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) with Biomimicry to define and characterize regenerative food systems in arid regions. Second, I explored traditional fermentation as a regenerative food practice and described the microbiopolitical entanglements between regulations, producers, and consumers. I then suggest a path forward for an inclusive governance structure inspired by fermentation. Lastly, I interrogate food system sustainability's interdisciplinarity and normativity through an analytical autoethnography, exploring my path toward regenerative practices. I argue that, by including different knowledge systems and arts-based methods explored through my own life and in producing a podcast, we can expand sustainability to be more inclusive, cooperative, reflective, and decolonial. In sum, my work showcases how small-scale producers in arid regions produce good food through regenerative practices at a systems level, at a regulatory level, and an individual level.