

## SEED AS IDEA

Aeron Bergman, Alejandra Salinas and Margaret Keller



A metaphor for an idea is a seed. For example, in pedagogy it is said that seeds are planted in the mind of a child. However, in capitalism, seeds became a reverse metaphor: a seed is an idea. That is, seeds in capitalism are objects of control, speculation, manipulation, and ownership. Seeds exist as objects in an ideology. The history of culture is the history of agriculture: seeds have always been part of the human story. We have cultivated, grown, developed, selected, shared, and distributed seeds. Knowledge of agricultural production is a core aspect of human civilization, since long before recorded history. In a relatively short period of time, (arguably since *Diamond v. Chakrabarty*, 447 U.S. 303 (1980)), seeds have been removed from this long history of shared human commons, and are now firmly in the control of private, corporate ownership. The seeds of capitalism contaminate all fields of human existence, like patented GMO seeds contaminate neighboring fields.

What is a seed library? Ideally, a seed library distributes seeds which are then returned by the borrower at harvest. The problem is that many growers are inexperienced with successfully developing viable seeds to return and therefore this asks too much from borrowers. Therefore, most seed libraries in operation do not

require borrowers to return their saved seeds. Our seed library likewise does not require that seeds are returned: it is more important for a seed library to distribute seeds and information about growing them, than to receive them. In advanced seed libraries, education programs are developed to ensure that gardeners are able to successfully harvest seeds for return. Meanwhile, many seed libraries are content to simply distribute seeds and information for free.

The seed library distributes culturally significant, non-patented seeds for selected species of plants. The species are selected for their symbolic, historical, and cultural value. In the face of ongoing threats by corporate monocropping against the diversity of life, distributing seeds and disseminating the knowledge of how to grow them, and their cultural history is a concrete statement of opposition to a form of life that has become unquestionable. Distributing specific seeds is a small act of opposition that is simultaneously an affirmation of life.

The seeds are packaged within envelopes holding brief information about their planting, and a poetic suggestion about why it is important to do so. The first seed we are distributing is Golden Amaranth, a species native to Guatemala that adapts very well across the Americas. We have sourced the amaranth seeds from El Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura (Instituto Mesoamericano de Permacultura – IMAP). As part of the library, we propose a series of talks and education by experts and artists/poets to build public awareness of the “how” as well as the “why” growing a diversity of seeds is important. As the project develops, we will add seeds to distribute, and organize more talks/education with experts/historians/agriculturists/artists/poets who develop awareness around specific plants and their cultural/historical/symbolic importance, and role of opposition to corporate monocrops. IMAP will hold a discussion about its work to grow and share native amaranth. The center researches and disseminates the history, nutritional properties, how to grow it, and how to cook it, thus, we are furthering their mission. Potential programming can include talks, classes, workshops, poetry reading, meals, etc