

NOTES FROM AMARANTH LAND (VIII)

Julia Mensch, Bolívar, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 2025



Colorado, *amaranthus palmeri*, Berlin Kreuzberg, Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Weeds and the two poplar trees in front of my family's house were my main connection to the vegetal world in my childhood. I am a city dweller. I grew up surrounded by concrete in a working-class, formerly industrial neighborhood called Avellaneda. Since I was a child, I have been drawn to the plants that sprouted up in the cracks of streets and sidewalks known as weeds, spreading in any direction they could, without the care or attention of the city's inhabitants. To me, their presence seemed natural, demanding attention and fighting for a place amid the concrete. Some of my neighbors in Avellaneda would try to remove them neatly from the sidewalks, but, as Amaranth does in GM crop fields, they keep growing back.

Back in Bolívar again. I return to the same GM monoculture field I have visited before and will likely visit again. This first and now last field visited, at the beginning and end of this research, is not just any field; it belongs to a dear friend who inherited these lands from her mother and now rents them to a GM soybean producer. My friend is one of the “in-between” actors that Amalia Leguizamón describes in her book.¹ My friend lives partly on the rent from this field, though she is fully aware of the model’s environmental and health consequences, and even buys organic within her means. She is an artist, and the income from exporting the commodity allows her to continue her artistic work and support her family. Laura has a son, whom I feel is almost like a second child of mine, since we shared the early years of motherhood. Along with him and my daughter, Lina, I planted the first amaranth seeds as part of this project, when they were still living in Berlin. Today, they are back in Argentina, with the country on the brink of economic collapse, and while most of my middle-class friends there struggle to make ends meet, I sometimes feel glad they have this field. Might I, too, then, be one of those “in-between” actors?

¹ Amalia Leguizamón, *Seeds of Power: Environmental Injustice and Genetically Modified Soybeans in Argentina* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 6.