

Wasting Trajectories and Generative Ecologies: Leone Contini's *Foreign Farmers*

Tommaso Gonzo

Goldsmiths, University of London, UK

Giovanni Lorenzi

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia

Abstract In this essay, we analyse Leone Contini's work *Foreign Farmers* which was created for Manifesta 12 and installed in the Botanical Garden of Palermo, Italy. It consisted of a vegetable garden comprising different plant species not native to Italy, whose seeds were gifted to the artist by migrant gardeners based in different parts of Italy. Contini's work addresses the disconnection between human communities and the land as a result of displacement. In this text, we analyse Contini's piece through the lenses of decolonial ecology and the notion of Wasteocene. We consider this installation as a framework to propose a reflection on how unexpected generative ecologies sparked by adaptation are the result of migration in the midst of anthropogenic global warming. By subverting the extractive logic of colonialism, the work questions dominant narratives and power structures that shape society. Furthermore, by extending Sharpe's metaphor to contemporary migrations in the Mediterranean and the shipment of toxic waste in former colonies, we want to propose an observation of how migrants are subject to 'the wake' of colonial violence. The routes once travelled by colonial vessels directed towards the shores of Africa are now the itineraries of the 'barconi' floating adrift in the sea, trying to reach the coasts of Southern Europe.

Keywords Contemporary art. Migration. Ecology. Colonialism. Mediterranean Sea.

Summary 1 The Garden at the Border. – 2 Botany, Displacement, and Colonialism. – 3 Cultivating Adaptation.

1 The Garden at the Border

Lampedusa is getting closer, they are now 800 meters from the coast. 800 meters from the small Isola dei Conigli, separated from Lampedusa by a short stretch of sea. A shiver runs through the entire fishing boat. Italy is there, Europe is there, within reach. They think they will soon be welcomed, and so they decide to change clothes. They put aside the rags they

have worn so far and dress well, with the best clothes they have carefully kept during all the months of travel, to celebrate their arrival in Italy. They throw their cell phones into the sea because the captain ordered them to, and they proudly await their arrival in Europe. (Leogrande 2015, 44)

With these words, Alessandro Leogrande¹ describes the moments preceding the shipwreck of 3 October 2013, in his book *La Frontiera (The Border)*. On this occasion, 368 migrants died attempting to reach Lampedusa, an island located on the southern periphery of the European Union but lying on the African Plate, off the coast of Sicily, Italy. As highlighted by Leogrande, this event not only represents one of the largest disasters ever occurred in the Mediterranean Sea in the history of modern migrations, but it is also closely linked to Italy's colonial past, as the majority of the victims, 360 individuals, fled from Eritrea, a former Italian colony, while the remaining eight were Ethiopian.

For years, migration from the Horn of Africa has been the result of the geopolitical instability of the region. This phenomenon involved all the former Italian colonies and may be partially explained as a consequence of the legacy of European and Italian colonial violence. As pointed out by Leogrande (2015), while such violence still reverberates in parts of Africa, the histories of Italian colonialism are often overlooked or deliberately ignored in mainstream cultural and political narratives. Over the last decades, the political discourse has encouraged the racial and exclusionary narratives of "invasion" (Castelli Gattinara 2017) and "ethnic replacement",² polarising the debate on movement through borders and nations.

In 2018, five years after the Lampedusa shipwreck, on a hot Sicilian summer day, the wind blows through the leaves of a shady tunnel of pumpkins and squashes. A lush and abundant garden in a land of migration where multiple peoples have established themselves throughout the centuries, and where diverse cultures have found fertile ground to settle. Those gourds, hanging from a bower, are the products of a displaced garden that bears witness to long journeys. That ensemble of non-human entities was *Foreign Farmers*, the installation by Italian artist Leone Contini that was displayed in a corner of the Botanical Garden in the city of Palermo, Italy, as part of the European Nomadic Biennial Manifesta 12 [fig. 1].

Manifesta is a nomadic platform founded in the 1990s in response to geopolitical changes in Europe, traveling to different European cities for each

The Authors would like to thank Leone Contini for granting permission to use his photographs in this essay.

1 Alessandro Leogrande (1977-2017) was an Italian writer and journalist. His books and reportages told histories of migrations, environmental and labour struggles, and authoritarian regimes. In *La Frontiera*, he provided a glimpse of the migratory flows to Italy over the 2013-15 period through a compelling non-fiction literary reportage. By doing so, he examines encounters along present-day migration routes and combines personal reflections with historical and social depictions of contemporary European immigration and Italy's colonial history. The narrative centres around the island of Lampedusa as a crucial location for examining the Eritrean diaspora and investigating the porosity of borders.

2 At the time of writing, April 2023, it is worth mentioning that Francesco Lollobrigida, the Italian Minister of Agriculture and member of the far-right political party Fratelli D'Italia, made significant use of the expression "ethnic replacement" (Kaval 2023). This particular phrase is a widely recognised conspiracy theory that is often employed by extremist groups on the far-right and is associated with racist ideologies.



Figure 1 Leone Contini, *Foreign Farmers*. 2018. Manifesta 12, Palermo. Photograph by Can Aksan. © Leone Contini

edition. Its goal is to foster connections between different cultural and artistic environments, contemporary art, theory, and politics in the context of a changing European society. Its curatorial practices, education, and mediation are characterised by an experimental and provocative tendency to create a dialogue between society and art.³ The 2018 edition of the biennial, curated by Ippolito Pestellini Laparelli, Mirjam Varadinis, Andrés Jaque, and Bregtje van der Haak, was titled *The Planetary Garden. Cultivating Coexistence*. The exhibition's title was inspired by French botanist Gilles Clément, who described the world as a 'planetary garden' with humans as its gardeners; the curatorial concept of the exhibition proposed gardens as places where "diverse forms of life mix and adapt to co-exist" (Haak et al. 2018, 16), reconfiguring gardens as cross-pollination sites and as experiments in cohabitation. The selection of the works in the biennial stressed particularly the fact that managing a globalised world regulated by complex dynamics requires the recognition of the co-dependency of the species and a shared responsibility towards social and environmental factors. The venue in which *Foreign Farmers* was installed, the Botanical Garden of Palermo, has seen the importation of diverse species of plants from many different parts of the world during colonial ventures (Mazza 2018). The 'Orto Botanico' displayed works by six artists; some of the pieces were installed in the greenhouses and others were blended in the foliage and the plant specimens.

The garden created by Contini consisted of a combination of 50 different plant species not native to Sicily or Italy. Most of them had been initially cultivated by migrants who settled in various parts of the Italian peninsula and gifted their seeds to Contini for his research. The background and creative process of this work is exquisitely collaborative: from Chinese farmers in Tuscany to a Senegalese garden near Venice, the artist visited various 'displaced gardeners' who are cultivating these foreign varieties of vegetables for their own consumption (Mazza 2018). Furthermore, Contini counted on the help of artists-gardeners for the realisation of his work,

³ See <https://manifesta.org/biennials/about-the-biennial/>.

namely Ibra Niang, Fratelli Biondi, Nazrul Islam, Mr. Hu, Juan (boy) Rumbaoa, Chhote Sher Shah, and J. Lin (Mazza 2018) [fig. 2].

Thanks to artist residencies and fieldwork, Contini situates his practice and research within a specific social context (Marano 2017). His collective and community-based practice takes the form of cultural activism by studying intercultural conflict, migration, diaspora, power dynamics, and the ways in which these influence the botanical landscape, through lectures-performances, community events, videos, and drawings (Contini, Federici 2021). Throughout his practice, and thanks to his background in philosophy and cultural anthropology, Contini has investigated the subject of contemporary migration to Italy, tracing its roots back to Italian colonialism and imperialism. During the course of his anthropological studies and his research on postcolonial themes, he learned from his grandmother about his family's involvement in the colonial history of Libya through the experiences of his great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother. He sought to gain insight into how his family positioned themselves within the context of the Italian occupation of Libya, learning that his very existence was linked to this dark period in history (Contini, Federici 2021). The artist's interest in Italian colonial history led him to the creation of a workshop titled *Ghost Museum*, held at Nuova Accademia di Belle Arti in Milan in 2021. The workshop explored the dismembered collection of the former Museo Coloniale, a fascist institution that was closed in 1971, and its collection was scattered in various museums and institutions in Rome. With this project, he aimed to question the meanings, implications, and violence of ethnographic collections and the 'collective amnesia' of Italian colonialism and held a collaborative class on the topic (Contini, Federici 2021).

Through fieldwork and deep engagement with the territory, he aims at building long-lasting fruitful connections (Contini, Federici 2021), like in the case of his garden for Manifesta in Sicily, an island he has a family tie with, as his grandmother was from Agrigento (Contini 2017). Contini's installation perfectly embodies the syncretic paradigm that characterises the city of Palermo and this edge of the European continent. Due to its location in the Mediterranean Sea, Sicily has been and continues to be a centre of migratory flows and a cultural melting pot. Over the centuries, it has been occupied by various European civilisations, including the Ancient Greeks, Arabs, and Normans, and maintained long-standing connections with Northern Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean for over 2,000 years (Orlando 2018). These connections persist to this day, as evidenced by recent migrations from Africa and Asia that have been driven by numerous conflicts, such as the Arab Spring, as well as the worsening effects of anthropogenic global warming.

Our research methodology for the following essay considers *Foreign Farmers* as fertile ground to explore ideas around its topics which travel beyond the borders of Contini's garden, navigating onto critical theory, ecology, decolonial thought and environmental justice. We do not intend to outline here a comprehensive critique or review of *Foreign Farmers* or Contini's practice; nevertheless, we are interested in cherishing and pursuing its inspiring potential. Through the lenses of decolonial ecology (Ferdinand 2022) and the notion of Wasteocene (Armiero 2021), we consider Contini's installation as a framework to propose a reflection on how unexpected generative ecologies sparked by adaptation are the result of migration in the midst of anthropogenic global warming. Within the current geopolitical,



Figure 2 Leone Contini, *Germinability*. 2018. Manifesta 12, Palermo. © Leone Contini

historical, and socio-ecological turmoil, we agree that “[t]his is not simply about acknowledging the ‘others’, their histories and cultures; it is rather to register the limits of our own apparatuses of knowledge” (Chambers, Cariello 2020, 143). Thus, in this text, we respond to Chambers and Cariello’s call to reorient the discussion on the Mediterranean by exploring different approaches beyond the established framework of academic critique.

Both Sicily and the wider Mediterranean region are anticipated to be greatly impacted by human-driven climate change. In this geographical context, it is estimated that up to 40% of winter precipitation has the potential to be lost (Tuel, Eltahir 2020), while the average regional land temperature is projected to increase 20% more than the global mean temperature (Cramer et al. 2020). In such a context characterised by rapid environmental transformations, due to the presence of a diverse range of species and a high concentration of human populations, the Mediterranean region offers a distinctive prospect to explore the mechanisms of adaptation (Aurelle et al. 2022). By bringing together migrants and seeds from different parts of the world, *Foreign Farmers* bears witness to the enduring legacy of the many cultural and ecological influences on the region and present to the migrations accelerated by anthropogenic climate disruption.

By hosting part of the European continental border in which necropolitical violence has become the norm (Mbembe 2003), Sicily represents a vantage point to reflect and challenge the euro-centred narrative of the Mediterranean. As suggested by Chambers and Cariello (2020), reopening the ‘Mediterranean archive’, intended as the ensemble of multiple stories and characters, translates into registering “the limits of our own apparatuses of knowledge” (143) that are not only defined by the political European discourse but are also restricted by academic and disciplinary boundaries. Addressing such a perspectival shift implies questioning and looking for new languages to interact with the complex Mediterranean framework.

In this essay, we explore and challenge human-centred ontologies, following Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing's (2015) lesson to engage in imaginative thinking, a holistic approach that considers multispecies assemblages⁴ in exposing capitalist-driven destruction, alongside Chambers and Cariello's invitation to value interdisciplinarity, applying it to the Mediterranean question. We intend to do so by highlighting the inception of new, unexpected ecologies that are also driven by the current social and environmental crisis, while recognising art as a tool to problematise the Mediterranean space to foster new interpretations and narrative trajectories (Chambers, Cariello 2020). We propose considering migrant's adaptation practices as a source of inspiration to think and develop new forms of ecological reparation. When arriving in a new land, migrants are forced to embrace passivity in the face of the sovereignty of the border, and in the eyes of European and Western society become a "wasted human", relegated to the most neglected corners of society (Armiero 2021). Thus, it is worth noticing that Contini is aware of the fact that people who migrate are often stripped of any form of agency (Contini 2016). The migrant as a wasted entity follows the theoretical framework outlined by Marco Armiero, who aptly describes the contemporary epoch as the age of waste, namely the "Wastocene" (2021). In this essay, we propose that Contini's garden acts as a catalyst for the migrants' agency, in which every gardener-migrant "returns to being a self-determining subject" (Contini 2016, 222). Considering migrants' bodies as "wasted bodies" serves as an initial step to bring them back from the dehumanising dimension and acknowledge the vitality and agency they are deprived of. It is also valuable in highlighting the context of necroviolence in which people who migrate are trapped, not only in proximity to the border but also once this boundary has been crossed. Indeed, to use the words of Lowenhaupt Tsing:

[e]veryone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option. One value of keeping precarity in mind is that it makes us remember that changing with circumstances is the stuff of survival. (Lowenhaupt Tsing 2015, 27)

2 Botany, Displacement, and Colonialism

As mentioned earlier, the Botanical Garden of Palermo was originally conceived as a testing environment to acclimate plants imported from every corner of the planet (Mazza 2018). Gray and Sheikh (2021) note that botanical gardens represented a key instrument for colonial enterprises and served various empires as a laboratory to test plants and select which ones had the desired qualities, such as being high-yield or resistant to diseases, and had characteristics that were suitable for being commercialised. Botanists like William Jackson Hooker, the director of Kew Gardens in England between 1841 and 1865, would organise expeditions across the globe to collect plant specimens, which would then be studied by botanists in England (Gray, Sheikh 2021). The movement and transfer of plants happened

⁴ As suggested by Lowenhaupt Tsing (2015), the notion of 'assemblage' emphasises the interconnection of political, economic, and socio-ecological forces converging to influence various life forms.

alongside the transportation of people. The newly created hybrids were then shipped to the colonies where they were destined to be employed in mono-culture plantations, exploiting local people as a workforce or importing enslaved people from Africa (Gray, Sheikh 2021). Moreover, the study of the specimens involved their extraction and appropriation. This was achieved through the replacement of the specimens' names with a Classical Latin name, thereby suppressing the indigenous term used to designate a particular species. Consequently, the species' significance within the cosmologies and ecologies was lost (Gray, Sheikh 2021).

On the occasion of Manifesta 12, Contini transformed the colonial section of the Botanical Garden of Palermo, a space that once was a tenet of the exploitative colonial apparatus, into a space of hybridity by gathering and planting non-native plants from various countries, introduced to Italy by migrant communities. The squash *cucuzza*, the local name of the species *Lagenaria longissima* (Contini 2017), shared the space with Bengali, Sri Lankan, Philippine, Turkish, and Chinese gourds⁵ (Haak et al. 2018). By mixing these different non-human entities together, the artist created a diverse multispecies garden that reflects the cultural exchange and blending that occurs between different human communities. Using the vernacular names⁶ of the plants instead of the official Latin denomination, Contini refuses taxonomisation and appropriation, and with it, the history of classification that characterised the colonial apparatus of biology, in particular by botany.

In the context of migrations and displacement in the Mediterranean investigated by Contini's work, the forced relocation and removal of non-human entities constituted a fundamental component of Italian domination in North and East Africa and a prominent aspect of the colonial project. In particular, during the fascist period, the colonial venture sought to compel the acclimatisation of various species to the African environment. Horses, sheep, and cattle were transplanted into the Libyan landscape from Italy, while local insects, like flies and worms, and microorganisms, like parasites, impacted both the human and non-human populations (Armiero, Bisillo, Hardenberg 2022).

Following these trajectories, pitted against the direction of Contini's generative routes, the Italian criminal network, which across the 1980s and 1990s was labelled as *Navi dei veleni* ("Toxic Ships"), illegally transported toxic waste from Italy to Africa, Asia, and South and Central America (Braga 2018). The transportation and the discharge of large amounts of litter, containing harmful materials, is a common practice worldwide, demonstrating the tendency to establish regimes of violence and exploitation across and within the borders by neoliberal economies (Armiero 2021). Such criminal processes often rely on the same past colonial routes that have contributed to the ongoing geopolitical instability. In light of this continuum, Armiero's definition of "Wastocene" highlights the presence of wasted human and non-human bodies marking the current epoch of social and ecological turmoil.

⁵ To use Contini's words, "[e]ach plant embodied a different degree of adaptation to a new environment, which was meanwhile undergoing a process of mutation: some seeds that I planted in the botanic garden of Palermo had arrived in Tuscany in 2005 from the rural areas near Wenzhou; a Senegalese hibiscus had been growing near Venice for 5 years, while bottle gourds from Bangladesh had already made Sicily their home, interweaving their vines with the local *cucuzza*, landed from Africa a long time ago" (Regine, Contini 2020).

⁶ The vernacular names were reported in the captions of the installation in Manifesta.

By adding another interpretation to the critical debate regarding anthropogenic global warming, such a term aims to emphasise the social, ecological, and economic dynamics based on wasting relationships which produce “wasted human and non-human beings, then wasted places, and wasted stories” (Armiero 2021, 2). According to Armiero, fuelled by the global north’s social and neoliberal economic model, waste has become a defining trait of our cultural and geological time and is intended as an “ontological quality and not the product of unjust socio-ecological relationships” (21). Such a paradigm is established through habitual practices that involve particular strategies such as the concealment and normalisation of unjust actions, as well as the dismissal of “any kind of knowledge and experience, which may prove that other points of view existed” (21). Thus, the colonial project is located in this complex terrain, at the core of any wasting relationship. On the dynamics that tie colonialism to waste and pollution, Max Liboiron (2021) also has pointed out that “pollution is not a manifestation or side effect of colonialism but is rather an enactment of ongoing colonial relations to Land” (6).

Thus, pollution is integral to the colonial process by shaping the landscape and altering ecologies. Indeed, the colonial apparatus relied on a logic of domination and control of the land, resulting in the violent extraction of natural resources and the imposition of Western scientific paradigms on Indigenous knowledge (Ferdinand 2022). On the effect on the landscape and ecologies and following the critical debate regarding the Anthropocene, Malcolm Ferdinand (2022) has studied these relations and coined the term ‘Negrocene’, emphasising the intersectionality between race and ecology, and the ways in which race has been used to justify and perpetuate environmental injustices. The term Anthropocene is deemed by Ferdinand to be inadequate as it overlooks the implication of colonial slavery, thus lacking a specificity that is essential to explain Earth’s geological status in relation to humanity. For Ferdinand, the word ‘Negro’ designates

those whose social survival is marked by an exclusion from the world and who are reduced to their ‘value’ as energy. The Negro is White, the Negro is Red, the Negro is Yellow, the Negro is Brown, the Negro is Black. The Negro is young, the Negro is old, the Negro is a woman, the Negro is a man. The Negro is poor, the Negro is a worker, the Negro is a prisoner. The Negro is brown-forest, the Negro is green-plant, the Negro is blue-ocean, the Negro is red-earth, the Negro is gray-whale, the Negro is black-fossil. (Ferdinand 2022, 60)

Such critical intervention in the field of postcolonial and environmental thought developed by Ferdinand challenges the dominant narrative of the Anthropocene in relation to colonialism’s impact on Caribbean ecosystems and reveals the ways in which colonialism, slavery, and racism have shaped the current global social, political, ecological, and geological conditions. By bringing attention to the experiences and perspectives of Black and Indigenous peoples, the Negrocene seeks to decolonise the discourse on the Anthropocene, highlighting how the colonial project relied on a logic of domination and control of the land, resulting in the violent extraction of natural resources and the imposition of Western scientific paradigms on Indigenous knowledge (Ferdinand 2022).

By shining a light on the correlation of ecology, migration, and colonialism, Contini’s project encourages us to reflect on how the present is shaped

by the past, his work shows how the agency of wasted entities appears intertwined in a transtemporal dimension. In this sense, Contini's work can be analysed through Christina Sharpe's powerful analogy, introduced in her book *In the Wake. On Blackness and Being*. Sharpe (2016) reflects on the Atlantic slave trade by comparing the wake of slave ships crossing oceans to the ongoing wake-legacy of violence and racism experienced by Black people. This wake, whose origin can be traced back to the violence of colonialism, represents a metaphor, as the lives of Black people are continually subjected to the reverberations of historical injustices and ongoing systemic oppression: "[T]o be in the wake is to occupy and to be occupied by the continuous and changing present of slavery's as yet unresolved unfolding" (Sharpe 2016, 13-14).

Sharpe's metaphor in this way challenges a linear conception of time, highlighting the persistence of trauma and its enduring impact on the present. The traumatic events of the past are thus not confined to a specific moment in time, but instead continue to reverberate in the present and future, causing a wake of suffering that affects generations. It is a reminder that the struggles for racial justice and equality are ongoing, emphasising the importance of acknowledging, confronting, and transforming this legacy. In the context of current migrations in the Mediterranean, the *barconi* (Italian term to describe the makeshift boats migrants cross the Mediterranean with) travel in the opposite direction of the ships that sailed to colonise the shores of Africa, remarking and retracing the 'wake' of colonial violence. Sharpe's analogy highlights the enduring impact of colonialism and slavery on the lives and experiences of Black people, which can be expanded to the context of the Mediterranean and the condition of migrants. By drawing attention to the cyclic nature of trauma, Sharpe's argument serves as a reminder of the ongoing impact of historical injustices and the urgent need for collective action toward justice and equality. It also underlines the importance of understanding the complex interplay between past and present, and the ways in which the legacies of colonialism continue to shape our world today.

Therefore, the migrant's garden created by Contini subverts the extractive logic of the colonial approach to land and questions the dominant narratives and power structures that shape our society imagining new ways of being and relating to each other and to the planet. This invitation is also a request to embrace the complexity of the anthropogenic climate crisis. Despite being spatially displaced, the migrants' heritages offer new paradigms of ecological and justice reparation. In Contini's work, seeds become evidence of the porosity of borders, which for Franco Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2012) are critical components of cognitive processes:

since they allow both the establishment of taxonomies and conceptual hierarchies that structure the movement of thought. In so far as it serves at once to make divisions and establish connections, the border is an epistemological device, which is at work whenever a distinction between subject and object is established. (65)

By penetrating porous borders, migrants bring part of their biocultural heritage to a new land. From Vulgar Latin *hortus gardinus*, traditionally gardens are enclosures and their very essence is in fact defined by their borders. Thus their existence is based on a logic of exclusion: what is within the

enclosure is the garden and what is outside is not. *Foreign Farmers* makes us reconsider the definition of a garden, promoting openness and porosity over closure. Contini's garden has opened its borders, creating a space of multispecies hospitality.

3 Cultivating Adaptation

As previously anticipated, in this essay we considered the 'Mediterranean archive' as a reference point to explore the colonial and multispecies trajectories that are investigated by Contini's work (Chambers, Cariello 2020). By adopting the biocultural heritage of migrants, the artist emphasises the Mediterranean Sea as an environment of convergence of a variety of interconnected challenges and as a point of reference for multiple naturecultures. Following this exegesis, *Foreign Farmers* represents a tribute to the enduring legacy of diverse cultural and ecological influences on the region, and to the continuing importance of cultural exchange and dialogue in the midst of anthropogenic global warming. In such uncertain scenery, Contini's work stretches new and different naturecultural paradigms. Within the dilemmas of our current times, Contini's work relies on multicultural adaptability to show its ensemble of hybrid histories in which new unexpected ecologies are the results of multiple human and non-human trajectories.

Furthermore, in his examination of the concept of ecumene, Ferdinand (2022) elucidates how colonialism is responsible for the disruption of the specific set of relations between human communities and the non-human world. The transatlantic slave trade caused an 'ecumenal rupture', the ecumene being the complex relation between land, humans and non-humans. Through the displacement of people, a geographical and ontological rupture of humanity's relationship with Earth took place, causing the disappearance of the sacralisation of the land, and the practice of seeing the land as sacred and imbued with spiritual significance (Ferdinand 2022). In other words, *Foreign Farmers* encapsulates Ferdinand's analysis of the concept of ecumene, as the vegetable garden represents a form of 'ecumenic reparation' by seeking to reconnect the people with the land, a new land they have been transplanted to. The renewed ecumene of the 'uprooted' garden offers the possibility of unexperienced cosmologies. Through the act of planting and cultivating a garden, individuals can reconnect with the Earth and experience a sense of belonging and interconnectedness with nature and finally begin to mend the 'ecumenal rupture'. The outcome of migrations is also present in the ecology of the territories involved in the displacement; while the climate is changing, the biosphere needs to adapt to it. Italy's biodiversity symbiotically evolves with the newly imported species, in an ecological wake that originated from the simultaneous mobility of humans and non-humans. According to Contini:

To locally reproduce a vegetable which comes from another micro-clime implies its adaptation/transformation, therefore implies the "creation" of biodiversity. While the existing seed banks aim to protect the biodiversity created in the past, the Living Archive is mainly projected into the future. (Contini n.d.)

This project can be seen as an attempt to address the disconnection between the migrants and the land that has resulted from their displacement. In

addition, by collecting and re-evaluating the experiences and stories of migrants, the work redeems the figure of the migrant as a wasted entity, symbolically restoring their agency. By involving foreign settlers in the design and planting process, the artist acknowledges their contribution and expertise, creating an inclusive space. At the same time, by tracing the importation of seeds and the movements of people that transport them, the artwork reveals the complex histories and legacies of colonialism that continue to impact our world today. While investigating unforeseen farming practices, *Foreign Farmers* breaks the capitalistic “way of organizing nature” (Moore 2016, 6) that is embedded in Western social and economic colonial relations. It does so to offer new strategies and provide a multispecies space for both human and non-human participants. Instead of introducing new practices, Contini’s installation illuminates an existing subterranean reality, unveiling it to a wider audience providing the exposure these multispecies assemblages deserve. In this sense, *Foreign Farmers* mirrors a current phenomenon concerning the potential and possibilities created by migrations that are hindered by necropolitical violence carried out by institutions and surveillance apparatuses, fuelled by racist and conservative inclinations, thus advocating for a discriminatory policy of exclusion. The experimental garden extends beyond its depiction of the contemporary collaboration of human and non-human in the current geopolitical landscape by propagating itself into the future, as the plants produce seeds which will give rise to new plants and hybrids, along with their human companions whose culture will adapt and hybridise accordingly. In other words, this garden establishes new non-human collective representations, and by transforming the necropolitical violence of the European borders, it foregrounds the practices of neglected communities to propose new thriving ecologies.

Bibliography

- Armiero, M. (2021). *Wasteocene. Stories from the Global Dump*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Armiero, M., Biasillo, R., Hardenberg, W.G. (2022). *La natura del duce. Una storia ambientale del fascismo*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Aurrelle, D. et al. (2022). “Biodiversity, Climate Change, and Adaptation in the Mediterranean”. *Ecosphere*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.3915>.
- Braga, C. (2018). *Senato della Repubblica – Documento XXIII n. 51 – XVII Legislatura*. <https://www.senato.it/leg/17/BGT/Schede/docnonleg/35841.htm>.
- Castelli Gattinara, P. (2017). “Mobilizing Against ‘The Invasion’. Far Right Protest and the ‘Refugee Crisis’ in Italy”. *Mondi Migranti*, 3, 75-95. <https://doi.org/10.3280/MM2017-003004>.
- Chambers, I.; Cariello, M. (2020). “The Mediterranean Question. Thinking with the Diver”. *Journal of Mediterranean Knowledge*, 5(1), 141-9.
- Contini, L. (2016). “Una foresta di baobab”. *Cambio. Rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali*, 6(11), 221-30. <https://doi.org/10.13128/cambio-18805>.
- Contini, L. (2017). “Cucuzza delle diaspore”. *A&A. Sconfinamenti tra antropologia e arte contemporanea*. Pisa: Pacini Editore.
- Contini, L. (s.d.). “Leone Contini. Bank of the Migrating Germoplams”. <https://www.utopianart.com/en/leone-contini>.
- Contini, L.; Federici M. (2021). “The Ghosts of Italian Colonialism”. *NERO Editions*. <https://www.neroeditions.com/the-ghosts-of-italian-colonialism/>.
- Cramer, W. et al. (2020). “MedECC 2020 Summary for Policymakers. Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin – Current Situation and Risks

- for the Future. First Mediterranean Assessment Report". *Zenodo*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5513887>.
- Ferdinand, M. (2022). *Decolonial Ecology. Thinking from the Caribbean World*. Hoboken (NJ): John Wiley and Sons.
- Gray, R.; Sheikh, S. (2021). "The Coloniality of Planting. Legacies of Racism and Slavery in the Practice of Botany". *Architectural Review*. <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/the-coloniality-of-planting>.
- Haak, B. van der et al. (2018). "The Planetary Garden. Cultivating Coexistence". Mazza, L. (ed.), *Manifesta 12 Planetary Garden Guidebook*. Milano: Editoriale Domus.
- Kaval, A. (2023). "Italian Minister Sparks Outrage by Speaking of 'Ethnic Replacement'". *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/europe/article/2023/04/20/italian-minister-sparks-outrage-by-speaking-of-ethnic-replacement_6023659_143.html.
- Leogrande, A. (2015). *La frontiera*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Liboiron, M. (2021). *Pollution Is Colonialism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lowenhaupt Tsing, A. (2015). *The Mushroom at the End of the World. On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press.
- Marano, F. (2017). "Espandere l'antropologia. Arte e etnografia nella pratica artistica di Leone Contini". Carniani, M.; Putti, R. (eds), *A&A. Sconfinamenti tra antropologia e arte contemporanea*. Pisa: Pacini Editore, 89-104.
- Mazza, L. (ed.) (2018). *Manifesta 12 Planetary Garden Guidebook*. Milano: Editoriale Domus.
- Mbembe, A. (2003). "Necropolitics". *Public Culture*, 15(1), 11-40. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>.
- Mezzadra, S.; Neilson, B. (2012). "Between Inclusion and Exclusion. On the Topology of Global Space and Borders". *Theory, Culture & Society*, 29(4-5), 58-75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412443569>.
- Moore, J.W. (2016). *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland (CA): PM Press.
- Orlando, L. (2018). "The City of Palermo and Manifesta 12. A Shared Project". *Manifesta 12 Planetary Garden Guidebook*. Milano: Editoriale Domus.
- Regine; Contini, L. (2020). "Future Farming. How Migrants Can Help Italian Cuisine Adjust to Climate Disruptions". *We Make Money Not Art*. <https://we-make-money-not-art.com/future-farming-how-migrants-can-help-italian-cuisine-adjust-to-climate-disruptions/>.
- Sharpe, C. (2016). *In the Wake. On Blackness and Being*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Tuel, A.; Eltahir, E.A.B. (2020). "Why is the Mediterranean a Climate Change Hot Spot?". *Journal of Climate*, 33(14), 5829-43. <https://doi.org/10.1175/JCLI-D-19-0910.1>.