**Audio transcript of excerpt from “Europe is a garden”: the border and ecological crisis with Hussein Mitha**

**Recorded November 2022**

**Hussein Mitha:** But I think it's worth reiterating that a garden, generally, is private, enclosed land and, you know, it embodies certain contradictions. Gardens are spaces for leisure, but they also involve lots of work, so there’s questions about who does the work and who has the leisure time within garden spaces? Also, just thinking about what makes a garden a garden? Is it the fact that it's got a border itself that makes it garden? And thinking about how, maybe we can not see gardens as just neutral or beautiful, but perhaps there's something quite sinister about gardening as a whole. I mean, before you know, 400 years ago, in Britain, you wouldn't have had gardens, you would have had commons. Those commons have all been taken by the ruling class. And what we're left with are pockets of individual kind of garden space.

**Emma Lewis-Jones:** But increasingly now, it seems the garden is also not very useful space like that. We're not encouraged to grow vegetables anymore, that these kinds of blank green status symbols that show ‘I own this space’, and it's kind of useless, I mean, apart from leisure, but we don't utilise that ground.

**Hussein Mitha:** No. And I think yeah, I think I saw an article the other day about American’s obsession with lawns and I mean, it's worth saying that lawns have absolutely no ecological benefits, they require loads of watering. You know, if everyone, I think one of the bits of research that I did as part of my residency showed that if everyone turned their lawn gardens into wildflower meadows in the UK, it would lead to like the biggest resurgence of biodiversity, I mean, that we could possibly hope for. So yeah, I mean, and that actually leads me to this pamphlet that I wrote as part of my residency, which is called *Abolish Golf* which I'll just read out quite quickly because it relates to what you're saying. “The land taken up by golf courses in the UK comprises 2% of the entire surface of the land. By comparison, the total space taken up by housing is 1%. Golf courses are a nightmare for the environment requiring lots of energy to maintain and taking up space which could be returned to forest or bog or wildflower meadow, sequestering carbon, and providing habitats for insects, flora and fauna. Golf courses represent a bourgeois control of the land. The dream of pacified kitsch form of nature, a nature tamed and subservient to their whims and follies, cropped manicured lawns from miles, on which the ruling class can parade around, with their ridiculous clothes, and brain-dead musings, making labourers run around after them carrying their bags. Two thirds of the land in the UK as a whole is owned by 0.36 of the population. In Scotland, we face a biodiversity crisis and land relations remain the most unequal in the whole of Europe, with the smallest percentage of people owning the largest amounts of land. The feudalistic remnants of Scottish society run deep and strong and unchallenged. But this feudalistic relationship to the land is not natural, even though it presents itself as such, these relations have got to be broken if we're going to save the land.”

**Hussein Mitha:** And Ruth Wilson Gilmore, the African American abolitionist, looks at this moment in England as well and she shows how racial capitalism develops in tandem with the enclosure that that it lays the ground for racialization... this kind of enclosure of land, which again, you know, that Josep Borrell guy was reiterating a very well-worn trope of how enclosure, how borders racialize. And then one of the things I think I find really revolting about capitalism really is the way that it treats things as inevitable. It treats that, oh, well, if these people are affected by floods it's inevitable that they'll face, destitution, poverty and death, you know. It's inevitable that some people will be sacrificed. Capitalism seems to operate on the basis that some people can be sacrificed, you know. The border is a sacrificial object, really, if you fall on one side of the border, you're sacrificed, and if you fall on the other side of the border, you're saved. And I think we're so used to embedded inequality, that we hardly even bat an eyelid sometimes with how inevitable these things really seem.