

Deliverable D1.3

Anti-Racism Statement

May 2026

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ASSEMBLE: Anti-Oppressive practice beyond performative gestures

ASSEMBLE brings together subject matters we are galvanized by - the climate emergency and ecological decline; migration and displacement; conflict, resistance and survival; memory and cultural identity. A representation of a hugely complex set of realities in which as individuals we hold diverse and differing positionalities and lived experiences. These realities are rooted in and are consequences of oppression, extraction and violence that play out structurally and relationally across our day-to-day existence.

Holding this self-awareness and aiming to ensure our shared practice is anti-oppressive, we set off on this programme to ensure we maintain the utmost respect, care and sensitivity towards one another. We will be conscious that our conduct is not inflammatory, discriminatory nor harmful. We hope to have the ability to confront our individual bias and conduct which may inadvertently censor or inhibit conversations we really need to be having, naming the things we really need to be naming and preventing difficult ideas to rise up for us to sit with. We aspire towards purposeful disruption, not dominant perspectives taking space by emotionally offloading.

This is a fine relational balance where perspectives will shift across the people, places and spaces we occupy, visit and encounter. As individuals we will gravitate towards one another based on the proximity of our working relationships, like-mindedness, shared values, tastes, politics, and many other things. Maybe our connections will be something far more instinctive between one another, beyond words or rationale.

Moving towards an openness of criticality that is meaningful, purposeful, nurturing and safe will take time and trust.

But is this enough? In recent times, anti-oppressive practice and sentiments are expressed but do they genuinely transcend beyond a performative statement of intent?

The truth is more often than not such intentions sit in silence, rarely moving beyond sentiment into action and a meaningful demonstration of change.

The oppressive structures we work within have to be named and challenged for transformative work to happen. The shared international language of ASSEMBLE, English, is an enduring colonial legacy

of structural oppression, loss, power and privilege that we are *upholding* here for purposes of shared communication. We do not ignore the fact that people's backgrounds and use of the English language can vary greatly, be it their first language, a language acquired at prestigious institutions, or self-taught for example. This is a particularly relevant issue in the cultural field in which we operate, and one that can effectively function as a tool for exclusion or for legitimising privilege.

Already we are facing the hard global reality of mobility injustices imbued with the invasive requirements of personal data, laborious administrative tasks and political hostility. The playing field is never equal. Equity always needs to be fought for and redressed.

Through ASSEMBLE, we commit to deepening our collective understanding of how oppression shows up from a multiplicity of lived experience and practice. We have to hold ourselves accountable in practice and that means moving beyond self-awareness if we are to:

- cultivate and celebrate unique experiences;
- hold ourselves as a supportive collective focused on interpersonal communication;
- develop clear mechanisms for issues to be brought up safely and in confidence with one of a small number of representatives, enabling choice and agency for individuals to disclose matters of concern; and,
- enact cultural rights as a part of wider cultural movements pushing against the global roll back of our human rights.

It is in this spirit that we share this statement of intention as *a living and breathing* process where we will develop principles as the programme progresses with all its possibilities and limitations, within the precious time we have.

We look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Acknowledgments: sources referenced for the evolving development of the anti-oppressive practice of ASSEMBLE

CDCD Ethical Framework: Ethical Statements for Arts-Led Decolonising Practice in Heritage Contexts, Ethics Advisory Group (Contested Desires: Constructive Dialogues)

Sister Shack CIC

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