

COMPOST

Policy plan 2022-2025

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Compost

It is March 16th 2021 when Akwasi -Dutch rapper, actor and poet- reaches for his phone as it starts to buzz. His inbox is flooded with messages of strangers throwing in racial slurs and friends asking what he did this time. It does not take him long to realize that he is a trending topic. Here we go again, he thinks to himself. "If you get 1 euro for every time you are trending, you would never have to work again", a friend jokes. A lacking desire to quit translates into a new idea: what if shots on one individual can turn into opportunities for all?

Intuitively Akwasi turned to his Instagram and shared his thoughts with his followers. Inspired by their support a new fund was born: *let's turn this pile of shit into a pile of Compost.*

In the months that followed, brainstorm and feedback sessions have been organized. From passionate creatives and caring community builders who shared their frustrations on how they have been facing inequality to confused and concerned policy officers who have been noticing how rising tensions within the sector are jeopardizing the sector's value for society as a whole; it became clear there lies an opportunity for Compost to fill a gap by starting from scratch -bottom up- following the needs and dreams of the creatives that add the real value to the sector instead of the analysis and anticipation from those who are meant to simply facilitate.

Without claiming we will save the world and dissolve every form of injustice; Compost aims to lay down fertile grounds for new opportunities to grow. It is not a fight for change but an investment in the future through creativity, compassion, courage, care, hope, joy and resilience. Skills and values that are expected from those who have been facing structural inequalities and injustices, but are often taken for granted and rarely rewarded. Skills and values nurtured by art, culture and "living together", but are under pressure by current trends and clauses in current policies and its endless paperwork. Skills and values that bring us further as individuals and a society as a whole, which are crucial to train the next generation. With eyes on climate change, rising political tensions and a policy culture in which big budgets are spent on short term solutions, the next generations will be in need of these skills and values more and more.

Compost is culture and creativity

In looking where to plant this fund, we turned to culture as its breeding soil. Though unequal opportunities are embedded throughout the Netherlands and across the globe, Compost takes shape through the input of creatives everywhere. While there are many urgent issues on the agenda -from growing wealth gap to state and police violence to climate change- we all somehow believe that arts and culture can play a crucial role in working towards a more fair and sustainable future.

Culture can spark understanding, compassion, creativity, inspiration, hope and joy. It can amplify the beauty of our societies, while providing comfort when these same societies show their gloomier side. Culture can make people feel that they matter and belong. Also, we believe that people who feel like they matter and belong would not develop the need to attack a stranger and welcome them instead.

Yet, in practicing our idealistic beliefs professionally, we experienced the cultural sector also as driven by profit and bureaucratic regulations. We recognized how the potential of our creative and artistic vision got blocked along the way due to unequal opportunities, structural and institutional racism, and other forms of discrimination. Sometimes because we faced discrimination in subtle or aggressive ways, sometimes because we watered down our bold visions in anticipation of it.

Because rules and regulations -even the ones supposed to support a diverse and inclusive sector- kept blocking our own creative processes, many of us recognized and internalized a range of frustrations. Though we believe culture should not be about material but about immaterial value, the luxury not to care about money is reserved for a very lucky few. As result, the pressure to succeed often fueled feelings and behaviors that lead people to see each other as competitor rather than a potential collaborator who actually “does understand”.

Compost is calm and critical, caring and cheeky

Though the founding process of Compost brought us an extensive list of all we think is wrong, we also felt it may not be unwillingness but ignorance that is standing in the way of structural change. After all, concerns about the sector are not just felt by creatives, but also expressed within official reports such as the *Basisinfrastructuur 2021-2024 (BIS)* developed by the Dutch Council for Culture. While there seems to be a growing awareness of several issues at play, each of these issues are responded to by new clauses, codes or regulations. Yet the root of the issue is rarely tackled.

For many creatives, their creative and artistic process are rarely considered a “job” and rather a journey in which the personal, political and professional is massively intertwined and can get messy. Daring to be different or proposing the unexpected often entails a level of emotional labor and undertaking certain risks. These creative risks are where culture has its innovative potential. Yet, in the current situation risks often need to be justified instead of being encouraged through trust, care and resources.

We believe the biggest risk a creative will take is the bet they place on themselves when they decide to turn their practice into profession -especially when they have little to no safety net in place. Therefore, providing this safety net and some encouragement is the starting point of Compost’s way of nurturing a new cultural ecosystem. In doing so, Compost also collaborates with those who paved the way so that the work already done can be amplified and celebrated -not wasted.

The calm, critical, caring and cheeky attitude we take to encourage creatives in their journey is one we also take up in positioning ourselves within a sector, society and time that feels tense for many. Starting with the Netherlands, we aim to pave way for an infrastructure that spreads throughout the globe. And we don’t see a reason not to, as our international friends are watching over us -ready to join the team.

Compost provides and nurtures a global ecosystem that makes creatives from a range of disciplines, career phases and approaches to their work feel at home. In addition, we are straightforward and transparent on our policy-choices which allows our following to learn from. In turn, the input from our network and following will influence our strategic choices, generating trust-based circular change. We are determined to show that power does indeed lay with the people and fair, sustainable, peaceful futures can be possible. Hopefully, it will also spark inspiration that can tackle inequalities in other fields and sectors too. An outcome we will not be able to guarantee, force nor control yet a possibility we promise to nurture.

Compost is community care for creatives

Compost functions like a mixtape; we took our favorite bits of classic institutions like funds, education- and research centers, and cultural institutions and mixed those with modern ones like social media platforms and commercial brands. Taking inspiration from community centers and family dinners.

We start with facilitating 25 creatives who will be scouted through 5 community-driven collectives based across the Netherlands, and this amount will be scaled up to 50 in 2023. We provide the creative grantees with a care package that can be implemented over the course of a few months, without it being a full-time commitment.

This care package consists of the following elements:

- financial relief of 1.000eu
- carefully curated connection to a community of peers
- carefully curated connections to creatives and community builders
- optional connections to thematic expertise and production consultancy
- professional guidance from staff (focused on self-reflection, project management and strategic choices).

By providing financial space for the 25 (later 50) grantees in combination with connections to creatives, community builders and experts in a variety of fields (from cultural theory to sustainable production methods and from health to finances), Compost creates a platform to communicate with and to the world. And while financial support and guaranteed curation of these connections are exclusive for the grantees, the effect will be communal, as all members of Compost's overarching creative community are also free to reach out for connections and advise. With staff ready to help, consultancy hours that are not booked by grantees will become consultancy hours for Compost's overarching community. And any remaining hours will become online walk-in hours for creatives and community builders outside Compost's network.

With priority for its own community, Compost keeps its door open for those we do not know. Alliances will be formed, and through Compost's social media individual and collaborative work can be showcased. Knowledge and care can be provided individually while allowing a global network of creatives, community builders and experts to grow organically.

Compost is turning shaky sentiments into solid ecosystems

From households to governmental bodies, money comes and money goes and it is in these streams of resources that power flows. From the belief that Compost is an organization by and for the people, the question of finances has been a crucial one in safeguarding its integrity.

While the conditions on which money can be invested are developed in close collaboration with the overarching communities and grantees are being selected by community-driven creative collectives instead of staff members, we also needed to find a way to secure our own funding in a manner that allows us to be this trust-based and openminded in our funding. Therefore, we focus our fundraising on those who “get it” -those who turned headwind into tailwind, succeeded and want to give back or invest- and those who cannot close their eyes on the future: young people and (grand)parents.

In our aim to create an organization that is financially healthy and has room to grow, we generate income through the three following ways:

1. Compost’s Trending Swear Jar

In securing the basic costs of our organization, we stuck with Akwasi’s initial vision: every time he goes trending on social media, a call to donate will be promoted -no membership, no commitment. This way, the Trending Swear Jar becomes a lightning rod through which the (hyper)focus on inequality and injustice can be redirected into ideas for the future. In his ambassadorship, Akwasi is being joined by fellow public figures who recognize the ways in which gaining platform and visibility often lead to an inbox with hate.

2. Compost in Motion

Where the Trending Swear Jar responds online, Compost in Motion manifests itself offline. This way we integrate more predictable streams of funding while staying connected to the offline world and nurture community outside the digital realm. Through fundraising activities that center individual health (f.e. through sport, food) and community care (engaging children and the elderly), ambassadors can mobilize friends, family and fans to be part of a bigger movement while contributing to a social cause close to their heart.

3. Compost’s Flower Market

Where the previous streams of income secure our basics needs and develop more funding opportunities for our network, we acknowledge that many creatives within our network wish to stay clear from subsidies altogether and rather focus on commercial routes to establish autonomy. In understanding and honoring that wish and making this route more accessible and stress-free for grantees and our network, we will develop a market-based platform from 2025 onwards. Through this platform, creatives can tap into Compost’s global reach to put their work for sale while sustaining Compost’s work through a humble percentage of their sales.

Compost is a new type of institution

As stated in its Articles of Association, the board of Stichting Compost consists of at least three persons. Board members receive no remuneration for the work they do for Compost. The director is responsible, within the organization, for general policy development and implementation, external representation, public relations policy, managing the office and staff. In its way of working, Compost complies with Fair Practice Code and Governance Code.

Compost's operational office runs on five pillars: community, message, money, knowledge and action -with each pillar having their own responsibility and values to harbor. The director oversees all pillars. With selection being outsourced to the community, guidance and care for the grantees is prioritized and embedded in the blueprint of the organization by a simple rule: those leading each pillar are also the main contact person for a selection of the grantees. No matter the growth of each pillar in workload or staff members, the persons holding a seat at the strategic table are those who are the closest to those who are about to take a bet on themselves.

Compost's 5 pillars are:

- Community: though reaching across the globe across different communities and disciplines gives an idealistic feel to Compost, reality is often more complicated. Differences within and between networks are sensitive matters that requires care, mediation and invitation.
- Message: Compost is multilayered and diverse, which makes it a challenge to represent all these layers and communities in one message while appealing to a wide audience. This complex message needs to be communicated unambiguously.
- Money: to support in ways that nurture the autonomy of our network, we have to remain autonomous as an organization. While we rely on 'the people' in our funding, we also do not want to waste the financial opportunities that can help us grow.
- Knowledge: Compost's strategy is built upon the knowledge of our community and will grow following the same attentiveness to lived experiences. At the same time, it also relies on local and global developments in culture and politics.
- Action: While a big part of Compost's work entails providing and/or catering inspiration, care and knowledge individually, the collective actions through which Compost can be experienced -from network gatherings to community fundraisers- need to be produced logistically.

Compost is about money

The activities of Compost are governed under a foundation, Stichting Compost voor Cultuurfonds, established in Amsterdam on 12 April 2022. Dutch tax number RSIN is 863867005. The articles of association are in line with most recent WBTR law and ANBI requirements. The Board of the foundation receives no remuneration for its supervision.

Budget

It is the intention to go live with the activities in the second half of 2022, starting with 25 creatives. In 2023 the aim is to reach 50 creatives as part of the Compost program.

Selection will be done both through active scouting by 5 collectives and an open call, where candidates will be selected by 10 jury members. Both the collectives and the jury will receive a fee. Once selected, the creatives will receive a care package, containing of a financial relief, carefully curated connections to a community of peers and a global network of creatives and community builders and optional connections to thematic (academic) and production consultancy. With professional guidance from the Compost staff members, these creatives will be trained to integrate these elements of care into their everyday life and will be guided to lay a solid ground from which they can nurture their authenticity while working towards autonomy.

While guidance from creatives and community builders, just as a welcome and closing dinner among the creatives, is informal in tone, they are key in engaging and nurturing Compost's community. Through these informal settings, we lay the grounds for meaningful bonds -collaborations and friendships- can be laid organically. It is from these bonds that a new ecosystem that actually centers the creative sources can grow.

The organization of Compost will be managed by one Director, assisted by a flexible team of 4 people. Office expenses will consist of rent and admin expenses. Finally, an amount in the first 2 years is reserves to create the brand of Compost and generate the momentum from which Compost can stay.

		2022	2023
Number of collectives		5	5
Number of creatives		25	50
Selection - scouting	<i>Fee for collectives</i>	€ 5.000	€ 5.000
Selection - open call	<i>Fee for jury</i>	€ -	€ 10.000
Selection fees		€ 5.000	€ 15.000
Care package	<i>Financial relief</i>	€ 25.000	€ 50.000
Care package	<i>Advisory workshops</i>	€ 5.250	€ 10.500
Care package	<i>Peer to peer evaluation</i>	€ 5.750	€ 11.500
Care package		€ 36.000	€ 72.000
Organisation	<i>management & support</i>	€ 73.600	€ 155.700
Organisation	<i>office expenses</i>	€ 16.400	€ 39.300
Organisation	<i>comms, website, etc</i>	€ 19.000	€ 18.000
Organisation		€ 109.000	€ 213.000

Funding

In line with our objectives, it is our intention to cover the costs by individual donations (via Trending Swear Jar) and community-based fundraising (Compost in Motion). From 2025 onwards we aim to generate income through the creation of the Compost flower market, through which the creatives within the network will contribute to keeping Compost an autonomous foundation while generating an income on their own. In addition, we aim to design and sell merchandise.

	2022	2023
Total costs		
Selection fees	€ 5.000	€ 15.000
Care package	€ 36.000	€ 72.000
Organisation	€ 109.000	€ 213.000
Sub total	€ 150.000	€ 300.000
<i>21% VAT on above</i>	<i>€ 31.500</i>	<i>€ 63.000</i>
Total costs	€ 181.500	€ 363.000
Total funding		
Start-up donations	€ 100.000	€ -
Trending swear jar	€ 150.000	€ 150.000
Community based fundraising	€ -	€ 150.000
Market place	€ -	€ -
Merchandise (margin)	€ -	€ 50.000
Corporate sponsors	€ -	€ -
Total funding	€ 250.000	€ 350.000