

### Press release

#### **SOMO launches *The Counter* – a global help desk for activists challenging corporate power**

*The Counter* – a major new initiative from the Amsterdam-based Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO) – will offer expertise on corporate structures and finances to social justice organisations around the world. This new help desk is made possible thanks to a grant from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery. As a *pro bono* service, *The Counter* will provide data, analysis and evidence to activists working to protect human rights, pre-empt environmental and climate collapse, and reclaim public spaces from corporations.

With *The Counter*, SOMO seeks to level the playing field where communities are frequently pitted against the financial might of corporate giants. Through tailored, free support, *The Counter* will give community activists and their allies access to the kind of information and technical training that is usually only available to large companies with deep pockets. The Counter will help people to hold companies and their owners to account and stop abuse.

SOMO's corporate research team investigates companies – big, small, public, private, shell or letterbox – for non-profits and public interest journalists. They “follow the money” to expose opaque corporate and capital structures, dodgy shell companies in tax havens, hidden profits, secret owners and influential investors. For decades this small team has supported civil society partners with corporate research, including financial and technical data, and digests of company reports.

Thanks to the generous support of the Dutch National Postcode Lottery, SOMO can now expand this small team and set up *The Counter*.

*“With the launch of The Counter, SOMO is scaling up its pro bono investigative service and providing a ‘help desk’ that civil society groups anywhere in the world can use,”* says Audrey Gaughran, Executive Director. *“We want The Counter to be a one-stop-shop where environmental, human rights, and social justice activists can go for advice and to access vital company information, data, evidence and analysis when they’re up against a corporate giant causing societal or environmental harm.”*

*“We are delighted that the Postcode Lottery saw the huge potential of this initiative to help so many communities around the world in their struggle for justice. Their investment is a game changer for our work”,* said Gaughran.

Over the last decade, requests from civil society organisations for SOMO's corporate research support and company information have increased exponentially. This has been precipitated by the spread of multinational subsidiaries across the world in a bid to dodge regulation and tax, lower costs, and expand into new markets. This largely unregulated, corporate expansion has led to environmental catastrophes, abuses of workers'

rights, the deliberate obfuscation of supply chains, and widespread corporate impunity – prompting demands for justice.

*“The Counter will allow SOMO to meet this increased demand and to support even more communities, public interest groups and allied lawyers and journalists globally,”* said Roberta Cowan, who leads corporate research at SOMO. *“It will not only provide vital data, it will help activists, communities, lawyers and journalists to use data where it will be most effective, including in public campaigns, with regulators, in courtrooms, and in the media.”*

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### **Background**

SOMO has been awarded €1 million from the Dutch National Postcode Lottery to set up *The Counter*. Over the coming months we will be hiring additional staff and developing the systems necessary to deliver an initiative of this scale. This will include a series of introductory webinars during 2023. To stay connected as we roll out *The Counter*, sign up [here](#) to receive regular updates.

### **About SOMO**

SOMO is an independent, non-profit research and network organisation working on social, ecological and economic issues related to sustainable development. Since 1973, SOMO investigates multinational corporations and the consequences of their activities for people and the environment around the world.

[www.somo.nl](http://www.somo.nl)

### **About the Dutch Postcode Lottery – together we make a difference**

The ‘Nationale Postcode Loterij’ (Postcode Lottery) was founded in 1989 to support charities that work towards a fair, healthy and green world. The lottery raises funds for its charities and communicates about their work.

At the Postcode Lottery, your postcode is the basis of your lottery number. As a result, you win together with your neighbours. There are now 3 million players in the lottery, who have a chance to win hundreds of thousands of prizes every month and support 148 charities with at least 40 percent of the lottery ticket prize. Since the start of the Postcode Lottery, more than 7.3 billion euros have been donated to people and planet. SOMO and many other organizations receive support every year.

The Postcode Lottery and the Friends Lottery form the National Charity Lotteries Holding. As a Dutch tradition, these lotteries are included in the Inventory Intangible Heritage (UNESCO) list. The Postcode Lottery format is also active in Great Britain, Sweden, Germany and Norway. The Charity Lotteries together with the lotteries in these countries are one of the largest private donors to charities in the world.

[www.postcodeloterij.nl](http://www.postcodeloterij.nl)

### **Note for the editor (not for publication)**



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The Counter

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