



European
City of Science
Leiden2022



THE LEIDEN2022 MODEL FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT WITH SCIENCE

A NEW, SCALABLE, CO-CREATION METHOD TO SPARK PLAYFUL INTERACTIONS
BETWEEN SCIENTISTS AND CITIZENS, AIMED AT CONNECTING SCIENCE WITH SOCIETY

Leiden2022 is the very first European City of Science to present a year-long festival aimed at connecting science with society. In doing so, we kickstarted a new European tradition. We also created an advanced, practice-based model for Public Engagement with Science: open-minded, bottom-up, and with a playful 'just do it' mentality.

Our assumption

For centuries, science has been able to operate in relative isolation from society. As this is no longer the case, and citizens demand transparency and equality, academic institutions are challenged to re-invent themselves vis-a-vis the public domain and seek new ways to collaborate and interact with society. We believe science and society must develop relationships based on trust and mutual curiosity, leading the way to impactful and sustainable solutions for today's big challenges.

Our hypothesis

Instead of merely focusing on high-profile events that sustain academic traditions, we invented and tested a new generic model for building sustainable relationships between citizens and scientists. We did so because we believe profound citizen engagement is necessary to strengthen the bond between science and society.

Our experiment

We chose to go local. For 365 days, we carried out continuous field tests in the city and region of Leiden. Through playful experimentation, we created the conditions for citizen-led, bottom-up, co-created programs. With the goal of deepening trust, we developed new, open, and inspiring relationships between scientists and citizens based on mutual curiosity. We didn't stay local. We also pushed national agendas on Public Engagement with Science and developed exciting new concepts on a European scale, such as the EU TalentOn. Our actions covered the whole spectrum of human knowledge, including arts and culture, craft, and expertise. We tried to push boundaries and do things differently. We have learned a lot, and we would like to share these findings with you by presenting the Leiden2022 PLAY RULES.



PLAY RULE 1: BE CURIOUS

Every new sustainable connection starts with curiosity. We encouraged everyone to think outside the box, and exchange perspectives. Scientists were challenged to step out of their studies, labs and lecture rooms, in order to start dialogues with people in their everyday surroundings, based on topics of mutual interest. We invited citizens to explore their curiosity in interaction with scientists, and vice-versa. We enabled people to take a leap and pursue something new and unexpected. All participants were continuously invited to open their minds and their senses. Leiden2022 thus created a creative program which sparked curiosity and allowed everyone to be student and teacher at the same time.

PLAY RULE 2: BE GENEROUS

To make bottom-up inclusivity work, we cherished generosity and created conditions for others to flourish. To make sure everyone could participate, we performed continuous bias checks and continuously reached beyond our own existing networks. Of course, this all starts with empathising with the participant's perspective. The next step is to make encounters between scientists and citizens valuable and inspiring on both sides. The third step is to unleash the exciting, vibrant potential of conversation and interaction. By adopting this approach, we followed the pathway from mere awareness to passive engagement, towards real, interactive participation.

PLAY RULE 3: BE MESSY

Where establishing new relationships was the goal, letting go of control and building on trust proved to be key. We made a bold move into terra incognita: no risk, no reward. We embraced a 'just do it!' mentality and allowed spontaneous, original ideas to win from traditional formats, every step along the way. In doing so, we applied the Golden Rules of brainstorming to the scale of a city: defer judgement, encourage wild ideas, build on the ideas of others, be visual and go for quantity. This has proven to be very inspiring and resourceful. Because, in the end, the messy stuff wins!

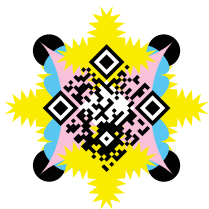
OUR MESSAGE

Following up on our experiments, we have seen that community-based participation can provide a significant step forward towards building sustainable relationships between scientists and citizens. As such, the Leiden2022 Model sets the stage for meaningful interaction between scientists and citizens, in which bottom-up participation is the rule instead of the exception. Because, if we want society to put their trust in science, we also need scientists to put their trust in citizens. And if we aim to develop resilient, sustainable relationships between science and society, society itself must be an inseparable and significant part of science.



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