

Pop Up Science

**Transforming
empty shops into
creative spaces
for science
engagement**

**A Practical Guide
by Ellen Dowell**

Pop Up Science
By Ellen Dowell
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CASE STUDY: KNOWLEDGE°ROOM (WISSENS°RAUM)

Written by Heidrun Schulze and Barbara Streicher

Quick Facts

Produced by: ScienceCenter-Netzwerk

Location: Vienna, Austria

Dates: Eight pop up shops have been produced since 2013, each for 2-3 months

Opening hours: 2.5 days per week, usually Thursday 15:00 – 19:00 and
Friday/Saturday 10:00 – 18:00

Budget: Approx. €50,000 per knowledge°room

Funders: City of Vienna, private sponsors

Shop facilitators: 2 per half-day shift

Visitors: Approximately 800-1500 per location (10,000 visits in total for eight locations)



Children disassemble computers in a workshop led by students of computer sciences

The knowledge°rooms were conceived as easily accessible and inclusive places for interactive science engagement, reaching audiences who would not usually visit museums and science centres. Visitors were encouraged to be curious and to actively participate in science activities, leading to increased confidence in science learning.

Our vision of the 'knowledge°room' was to create a space which would be open to everyone, located in a local socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhood, in an empty shop with no entrance fees, and with plenty of activities exploring science. We wanted to provide people with the opportunity to freely engage with science in an open and encouraging atmosphere and meet others from their neighborhood, promoting dialogue between different social groups. Explainers, mainly students of various backgrounds, were trained to facilitate activities for a diverse audience regarding age, gender, language, and educational background and to encourage visitors to get involved. In the first knowledge°room we started with 'classic' exhibits, experiments and discussion games, but the programme has continuously expanded over the subsequent eight knowledge°rooms. Now we also have a tinkering zone and workshops on cultural and social topics, such as music, writing and languages. The project is a constant learning experience for us. Each location is different, not only the room itself, but the neighborhood, the audiences, the network of local organisations and the activities. We try to change the ways that we facilitate activities and motivate our audiences in order to gain new insights into the relationship between interactive science communication, informal learning and the empowerment of disadvantaged groups.

Knowledge°room Top Tips

- Make contact with local organisations and initiatives in advance to make your project known and reach target groups
- Create an open, friendly and respectful atmosphere, where visitors enjoy spending time and where they can engage with science through their interests and at their own pace
- Build a diverse team of facilitators and train them in intercultural communication

More information about knowledge°room:
www.science-center-net.at