DIY² Lab – Summary Report

Experimenting in and with wonder.me

IJAB

On 11 March 2021, IJAB launched its new project DIY² Lab: Do-it-Yourself in Digital International Youth Work for experts, project managers and team leaders who want to explore the possibilities afforded by digital international youth work. The DIY² Labs are an opportunity for experts and team leaders to try out digital tools and methods and discuss practical as well as more fundamental issues associated with digital international youth work in the group. The events were all held on Zoom.

On 25 March 2021, participants met to try out the interactive platform Wonder (www.wonder.me). The event began on Zoom, with the entire group then moving to Wonder. They used a variety of methods to learn about its functions and the system overall, to play around with the tool, and to discuss the benefits and limitations of Wonder.

DIY² Lab

From January 2022, further DIY² Labs will take place monthly, one month in English, the next in German.

10 January 2022 (English)
10 February 2022 (German)
20 March 2022 (English)
7 April 2022 (German)

What is wonder.me?

Wonder is a communication tool that provides a two-dimensional space (visually, too) in which people, or rather their avatars, can move towards each other to form a virtual/visual group known as a Circle. It offers a video and audio function, and each Circle has its own chat. The two-dimensional nature of the platform means participants can see where the others are and can join a Circle by moving their avatar to that Circle. As soon as a participant has joined a Circle, their video and audio functions are activated. Each Circle can accommodate up to 15 avatars. They can also be switched to private at any time, after which no additional avatars can join. Participants can leave one Circle and join another one at any time.

Inside an event space, the hosts can set up theme-specific visual rooms, such as a café for the breaks or a range of BarCamp sessions. Using Wonder's broadcasting function, individual participants (here: hosts) can talk to all other participants via video and audio. During the broadcast, all Circles are halted automatically, so all participants only see and hear the broadcasting persons (up to six at a time). This way, presentations or panel discussions can be moderated. Wonder also has a screensharing function.

The link to the event room is valid for everyone. If you would like to take a look at the room, please click here: https://www.wonder.me/r?id=2c286851-9167-44fc-b42e-76ef394f8f07 (image: Ulrike Werner). To test all functions, it is advised to create your own Wonder room so you have your own host password. Test the room with another person or even in a group so you can activate the Circle function.
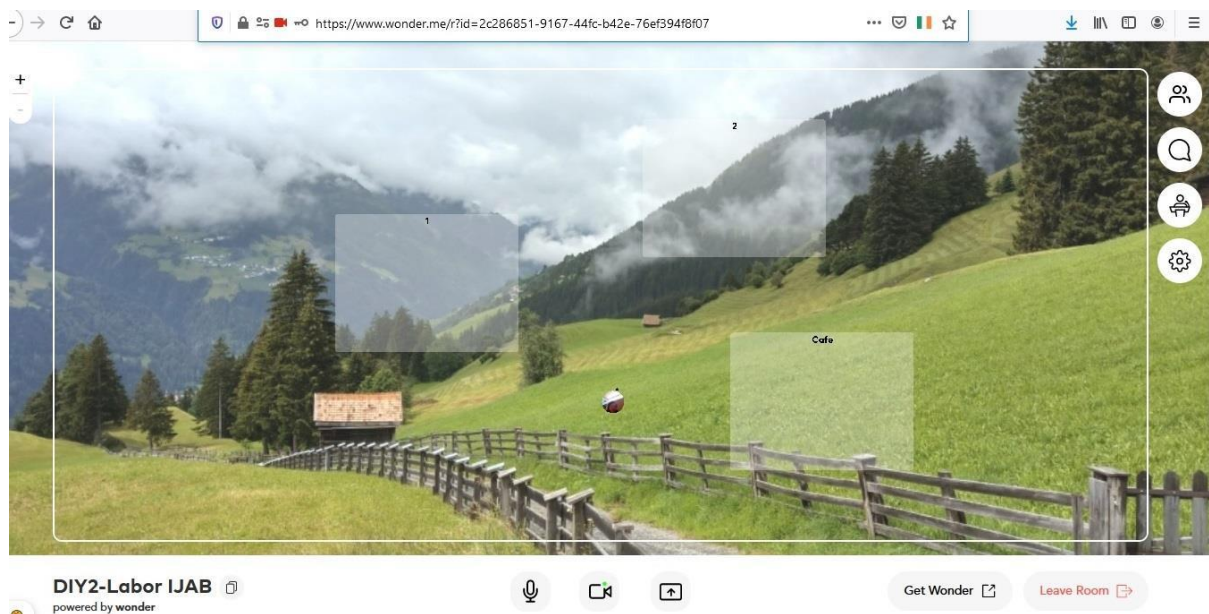
Source: Ulrike Werner

Programme

Check-in activity on Zoom

The facilitators ask the participants to take a moment to look at the other participants' thumbnails (camera images). They are then asked to select two other participants to whom they send a friendly message via private chat, such as "You have a cool background!" or "Nice to see you here!". The check-in exercise is a good way for participants to get an impression of the overall group and say hi to each other before they move to the yet unfamiliar Wonder platform, where they will initially be separated.

What happened in Wonder

Arrival in Wonder, familiarisation, getting friendly with the functions

Getting to know the group via a sociogram

Aim: Getting to know each other and becoming familiar with the subject matter; practicing moving around the room

The facilitator activates the broadcasting function and explains that for this method, the room view must be activated so they can see the room and the people in it during the broadcast. The participants position themselves (or rather, their avatars) in the room depending on their answers to the subsequent questions. To prepare, the facilitator explains the structure/labelling of the sociogram, e.g., "very good" at top left and "not so good" at bottom right (or similar).

Questions asked during the DIY² Lab:
(in response to questions b) and c), the participants were asked to line up their avatars along the path shown in the image; a similar image can be chosen and the instruction adapted)

   a)   Imagine a map of Germany and position yourselves along the path wherever you are now.
   b)   What is your energy level right now? (100-0)
   c)   How much experience do you have with Wonder? (a lot – none)
   d)   Spring is coming! How much gardening have you been doing in recent weeks? (a lot – none)

Group speed-dating

Aim: Getting to know each other, chatting, forming Circles and setting them to private

Participants are asked to form Circles of four each, set their Circles to private and chat for three minutes. Via the broadcasting function, each round is concluded after three minutes. Participants then form a new Circle (three rounds in total).

The Ambassador

Aim: Practicing Wonder's visual room functions, encouraging a positive group dynamic, involving all participants, learning about the background function

The game "The Ambassador", which originates in Language Animation, was played via Zoom in bilingual form at the first DIY² Lab event on 11 March 2021. The idea is to "mime" words. For Wonder, the game was adapted for monolingual use and a new background image created (see image below). Participants are asked to move towards one of the coloured dots to form groups of up to five participants. At the centre of the dots is a Circle known as the Source, whose members are the facilitators. To begin the game, each Circle selects a player (the Ambassador) to go to the Source to collect the first word. The Ambassadors then return to their own Circle and mime the word to the other members. The first person in the Circle to guess the word is then made Ambassador and goes to the Source to get the next word. Five words in total have to be guessed (at this event, all words were leisure-related terms). As soon as all words have been guessed, the last person in each Circle approaches the Source and tells the facilitators that they are finished. The fastest (winning) group is announced via the broadcasting function.

It is a challenge for the facilitators to give each Ambassador their next word without the other Ambassadors listening in before it's their turn. It is hence recommended that the Ambassadors come to the Source one by one, and that the word is shared with each of them individually via private chat.
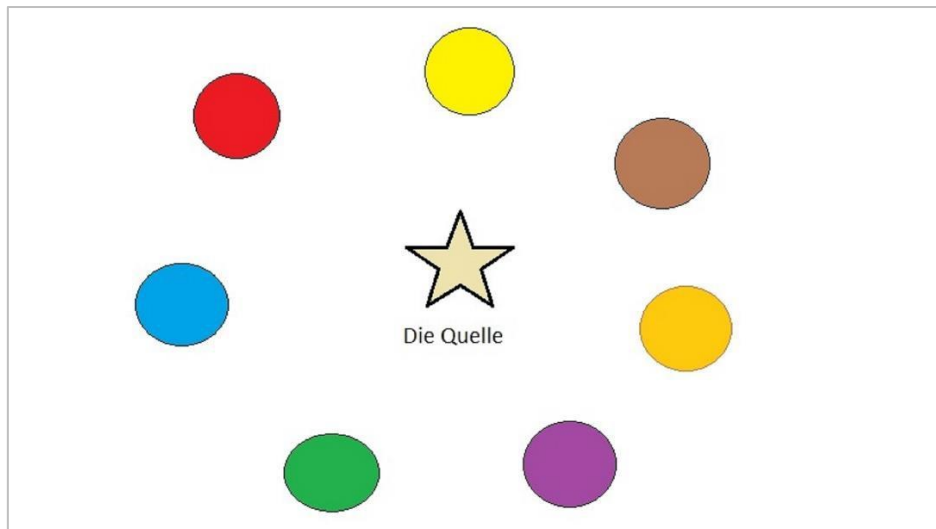
Background image for "The Ambassador" (Source: Natali Petala-Weber)

Outcome of the discussion

Settings, suitable methods

- Many participants had already used Wonder in informal contexts.
- Wonder is a good option for setting up spaces or areas that offer visual guidance: a café for informal chats, theme-specific "tables" etc.
- This makes Wonder ideal for formats such as World Cafés or online BarCamps. It is also suitable for self-directed activities with one or several partners.
- Paths or streets can be used to arrange participants in a row, or for conducting polls. Images of one's own city or region can be used to introduce these to the group, where appropriate.
- Wonder is suitable for playing a variety of games such as Chinese Whispers or Bingo.

Limitations of Wonder

- Some participants experienced problems with the audio or video function. Some had problems from the very beginning; some issues emerged later in the session. It can help to leave the Wonder room and come back in, which reactivates the functions.
- Although Wonder can accommodate up to 1,500 participants, it is evident that the larger the group, the more difficult to navigate a two-dimensional space and to find a Circle. Often the position of the avatars is not accurately calibrated, so that avatars may appear to be close to a Circle but the audio function is still not activated.
- Wonder is currently only available in English.
- Wonder is currently not compatible with mobile devices (tablets, smartphones).
- The limitation on Circle size (15) can be an issue depend on the method being used. A participant was ejected from a Circle of 15 once the 16th person attempted to join it. This suggests that the system still requires some fine-tuning.
- Setting a Circle to private means that if a participant leaves the Circle, they cannot choose to return unless the Circle is reopened.
- The broadcasting function was blocked by some participants' firewalls.
- The broadcasting function allows for the focus to be directed at one or several speakers, making it ideal for lectures, presentations and panel discussions. However, in non-formal settings this may be irritating because all participants' conversations are interrupted while a broadcast is in progress. With the exception of the chat, participants are no longer able to communicate until the broadcast is over.
- During a broadcast, the broadcasting persons are unable to see the facial expressions, body language or verbal reactions of the other participations (unlike they can in Zoom, for instance). Feedback can only be given via chat. The facilitators, too, will find it challenging to interact during a broadcast.

- Spaces/areas are marked in white or are transparent, so participants may have trouble recognising them.
- Using Zoom and Wonder at the same time can be problematic if users' devices do not have sufficient computing power. Despite repeated reminders, participants may forget to mute their microphones in Zoom while they are in Wonder, leading to audio feedback in Zoom. In practical terms, participants in a Wonder Circle may hear voices from people in Zoom who are not in the same Circle. During the DIY^2 Lab event, this problem kept happening even though the facilitators repeatedly muted the microphones of the participants in question.
- Data privacy: Wonder.me's current privacy policy is available here: www.wonder.me/privacy-policy
- Wonder is developed by Yotribe GmbH, Kommandantenstraße 77, 10117 Berlin, Germany. The type of data processed by Wonder depends on the information that participants provide as they enter a Wonder room. If users do not accept all cookies when they enter, they cannot access the full range of Wonder functions.

Digital Tools

Zoom (Videokonferenz-Tool): https://zoom.us
Typeform (evaluation tool): https://www.typeform.com/
Wonder (communication platform): www.wonder.me

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