

Is it worth it?

Possibilities of **Virtual Gathering Platforms**
Within Teaching and Learning Settings

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Agenda

- Introduction
- Platforms
- Objectives
- Methodology; Template Starter-kits
- Teacher Experiences & Examples
- Student Experiences
- Call for Participation

Introduction

Who we are



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Context

- **Bauhaus-Universität Weimar:** 4123 Students, 27% Internationals, 4 Faculties (Architecture & Urbanism, Civil Engineering, Art & Design, Media) ¹
- **Pandemic panic:** Spontaneous adaptations to hybrid and digital formats
- **Interested in:** Exploring further digital possibilities to rebuild the core of the classroom in engaging, fun and conducive ways

Virtual Gathering Platforms

What are they?

- Platforms for **Social Virtual Worlds** inspired by the **Metaverse** and **CRPG** (Computer Role-Paying Games)²
- Described as a **virtual Workplace** for **Collaboration** and Community building
- **Spatial video conference** features for **spontaneous interaction**
- **Customisable** and other applications can be **linked** (video, audio, websites, documents etc can be shared)

Objectives

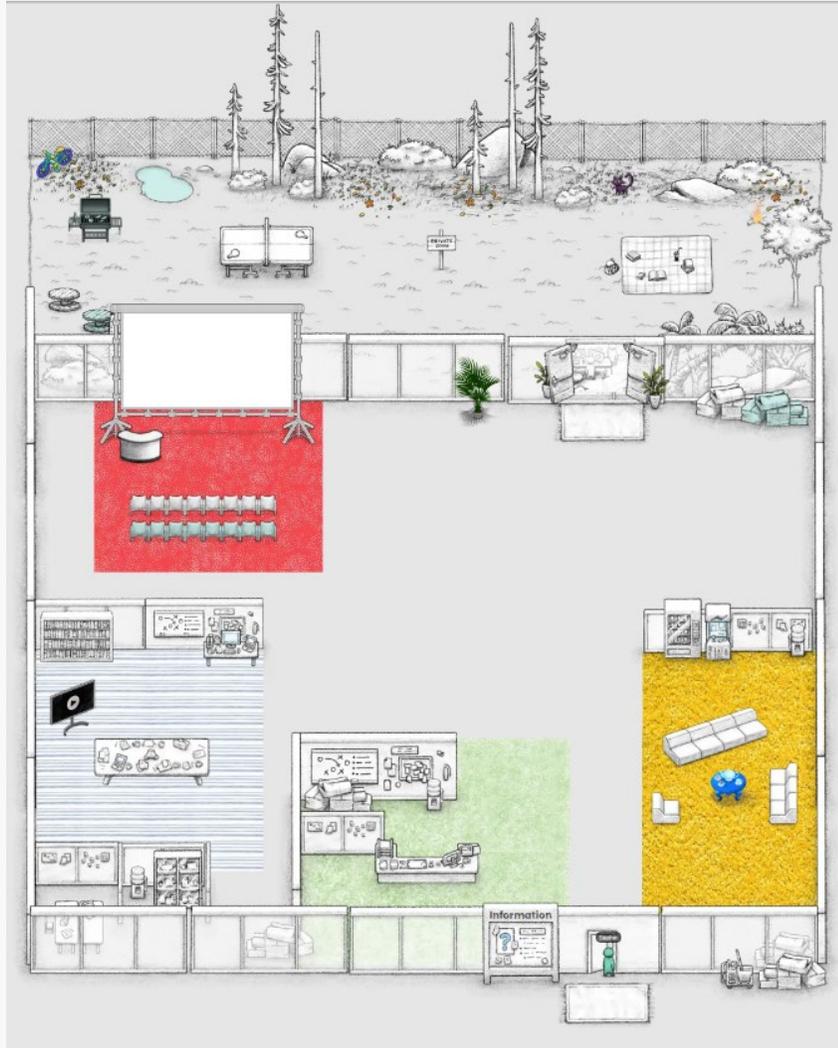
- identify the types of **technical and didactical support** necessary
- design templates that **minimise the time** required
- recognise what **features** should be included for **academic settings**
- investigate how the support given affects **attitudes³** to using these platforms in teaching
- notice factors that affect the use of these platforms in teaching and learning scenarios to **further develop**

Methodology

- **Software** chosen



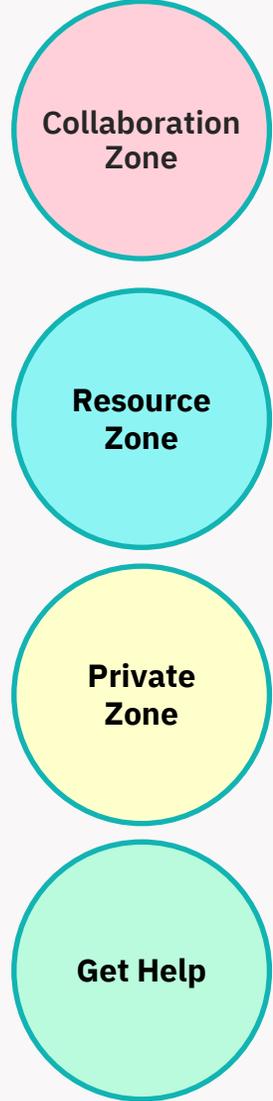
- Shared the self-learning **starter kit templates**
- Offered **1:1 onboarding sessions** (distributed scaffolding)⁴ to edit the template to a specific scenario
- **Observed** the adapted template being used and **surveyed the students** immediately afterwards
- Conducted a **post-observation 30-minute interview** with the participant.



Starterkit Template Topia



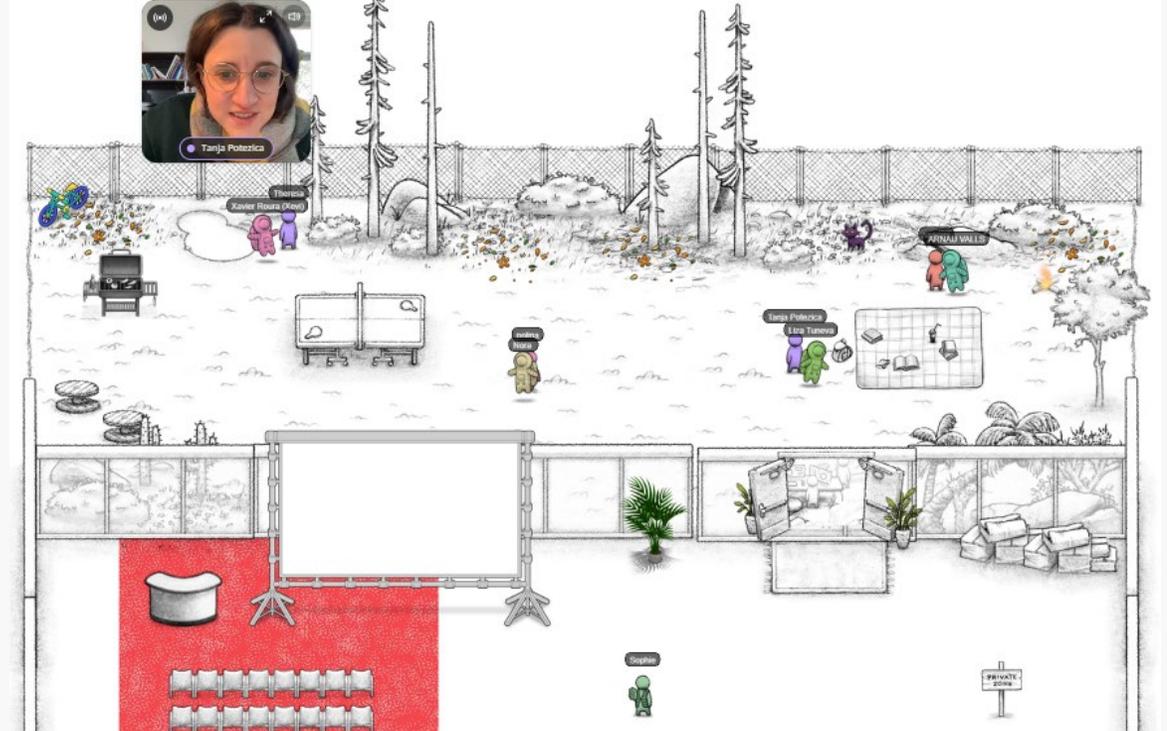
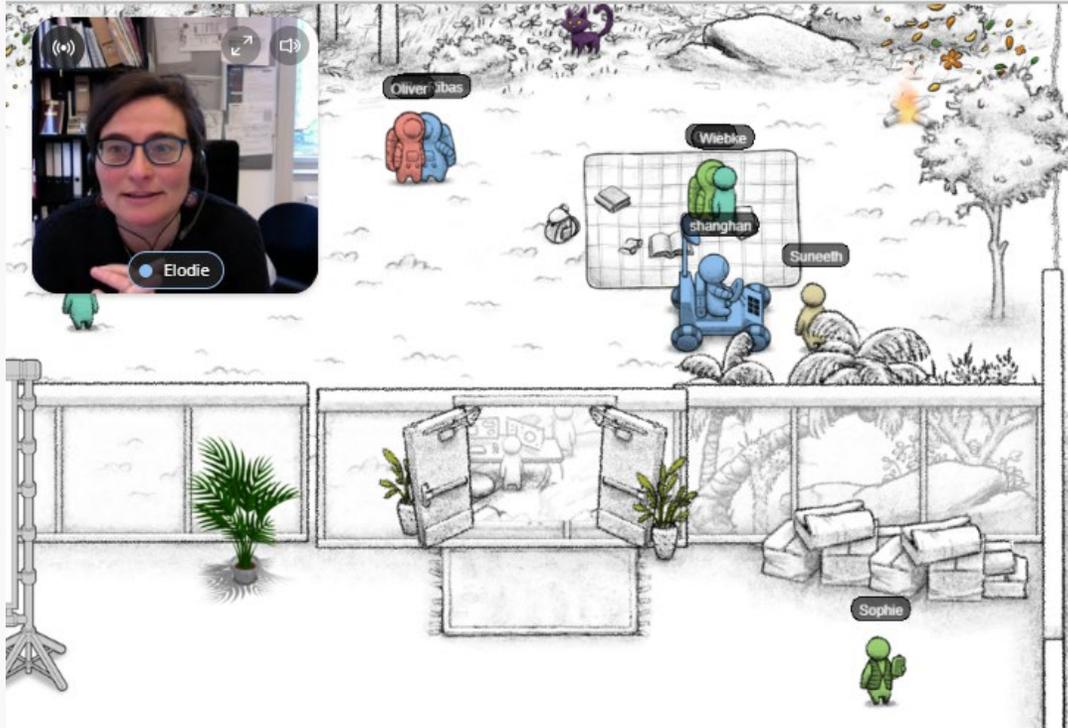
Starterkit Template WorkAdventure



Teacher Experiences

- **Disciplines:** European Urban Studies, Urban Planning and Design, Media Research and Political Communication
- **Why Topia:** Easy to start with, free shared assets, ready-made interactive objects
- **Why WorkAdventure:** Self-hosting, data secure, easy embedding, open source, no login
- **10-15** user capacity
- **Possible Scenarios:** Meetings and conferences, Resource sharing, Collaborative group work, explorative learning (escape rooms), icebreaker activities

Elodie Vittu and Tanja Potezica using Topia

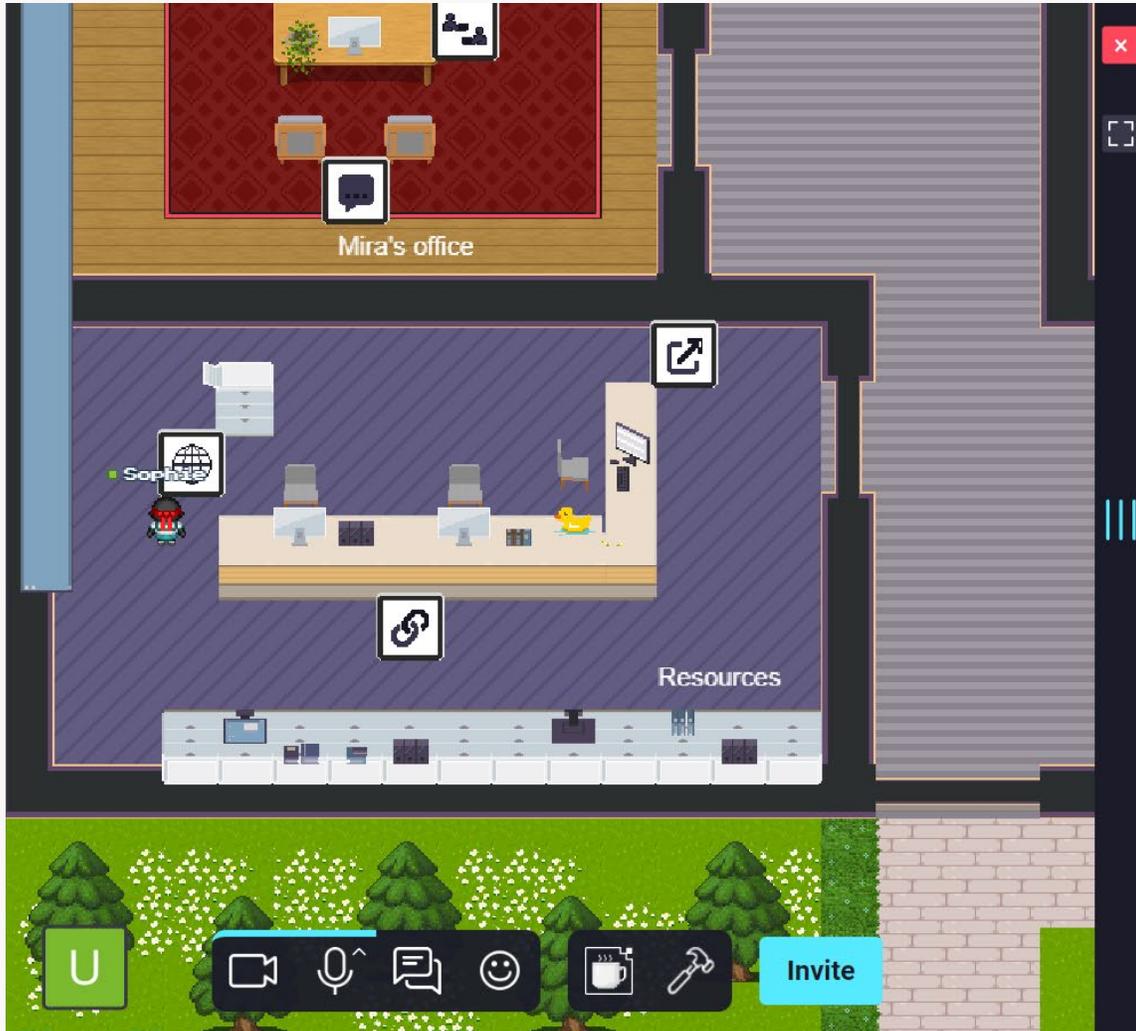


European
Urban
Studies

Speed
dating
activity

Prep Time
1-3 hours

Martina Jakobi and Mira Rochyadi-Reetz using WorkAdventure



The event poster features the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar logo at the top right. The main title is "24h International UrbanDesignHackathon". Below the title, a descriptive text reads: "A blended urban design workshop for international students from European schools of architecture." The background of the poster is a stylized architectural map with colorful lines. At the bottom, three teal circles are connected by lines, containing the following text: "Media Research and Political Communication", "Online Classroom", and "Prep Time 5-10 hours".

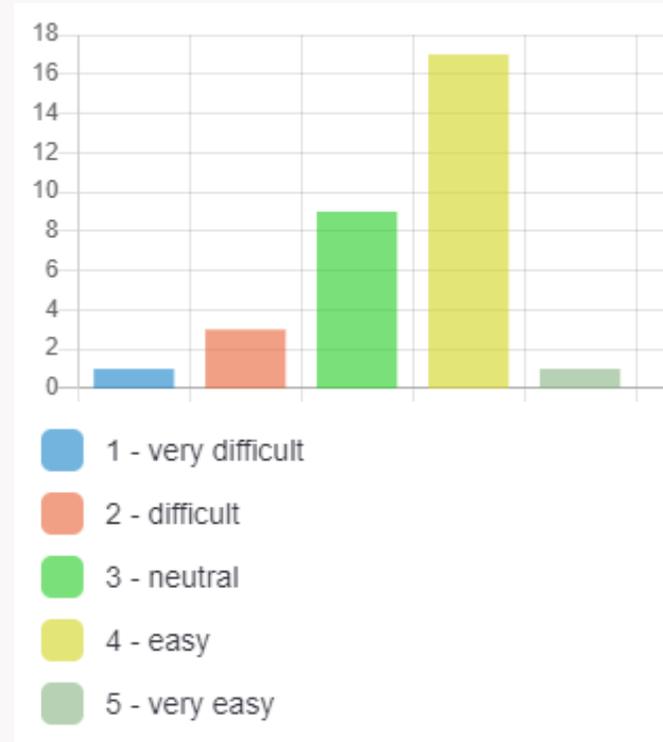
Student Experiences

What is your previous experience with virtual gathering platforms?



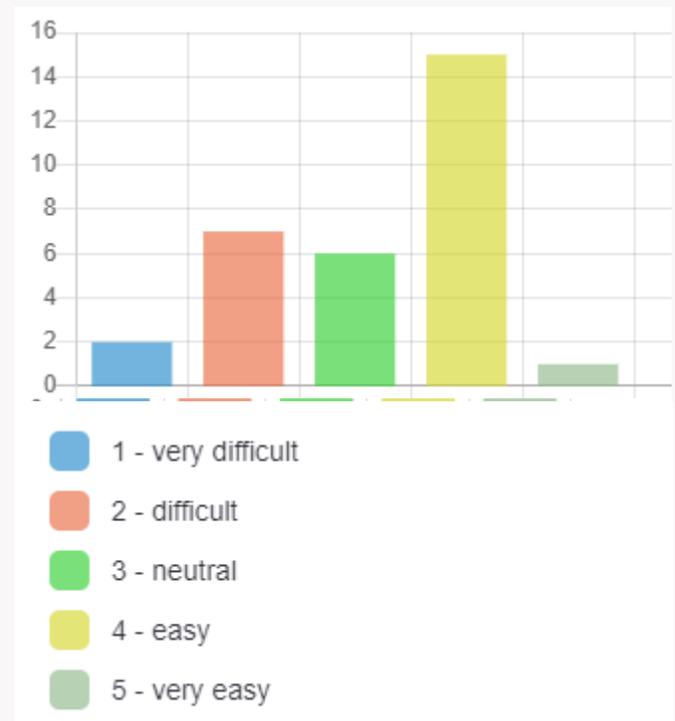
Student Experiences

How easy was it to navigate around the platform?



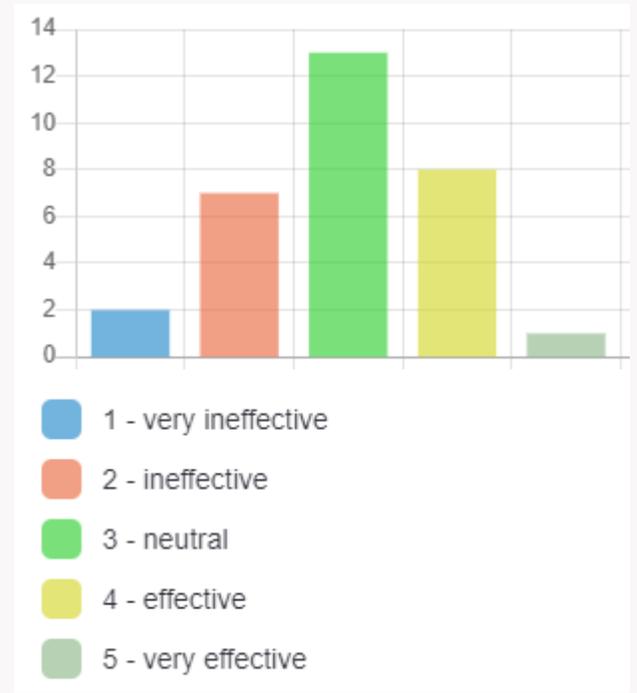
Student Experiences

How easy was it to communicate with the other participants?



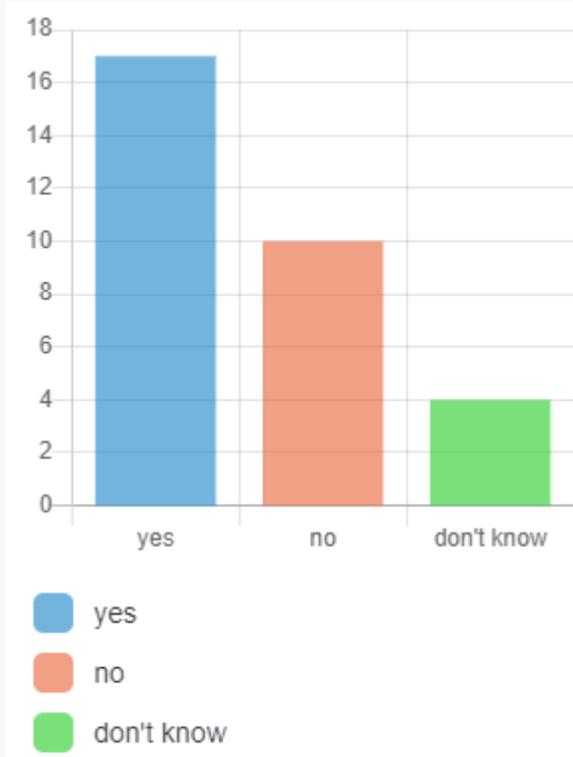
Student Experiences

How effective was the platform in supporting collaboration?



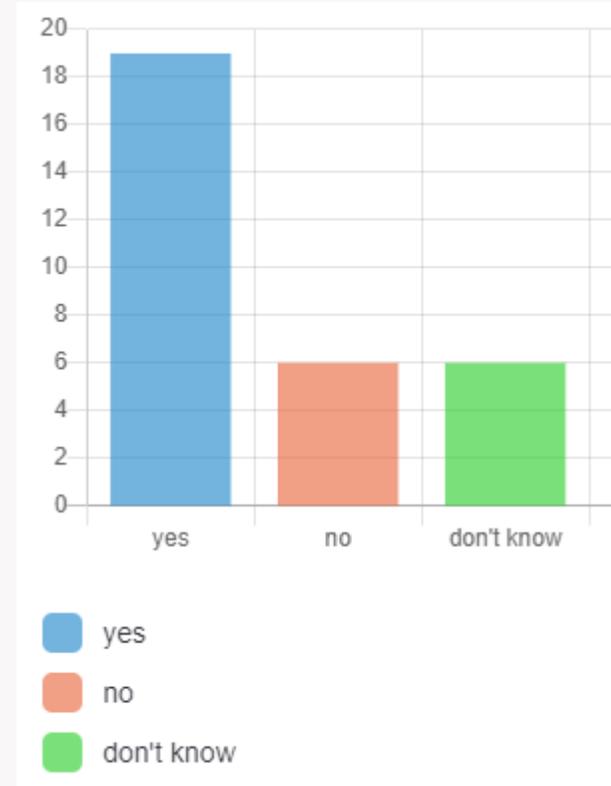
Student Experiences

Did you feel more motivated using the platform?



Student Experiences

Would you like to use virtual gathering platforms in future?



Student Experiences

Sometimes the proximity between people made the conversations to mix

I did not happen to me, but people experienced difficulties with audio

It needed a bit of time to get used to

I had quite a few problems with loading the platform, it was buffering constantly

connection issues

glitchy

People joining within a discussion is quite interrupting

Student Experiences

Having all the sources in one platform and teammates to talk to is useful while working on something

Navigating like in a videogame was very interesting, and brought the team closer to each other

Having different shared spaces in one "room" is really promising for group work

It was nice and playful to walk around and talk to people

It acts as a one-step storage place for all the work material

Real life simulation helps overcome the long-distance barrier

It was a lot of fun

Key Takeaways

- Average time investment **4-5 hours**
- **Students** reacted very positively
- Providing an **ongoing** level of **support**
- **Licencing** and **data security** limitations
- **Working together** to share and collaborate
- an **inspiration** to what is possible

So, is it really
worth it?

Invitation to take part in our case study in WiSe 23

Your participation would involve the following:

1. Introduction to the templates
2. Onboarding Session
3. Observation
4. A post-observation survey and interview

Join us on this innovative journey!

- Contribute to the knowledge transfer of digital tools within academia
- Learn new skills
- Transform the ways we can teach and learn

Thank you

We invite you for questions and a discussion

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Template Links

WorkAdventure

https://play.workadventu.re/_/kv2dy2o6n6/sophierfoster.github.io/003V3/map.json

Topia

<https://topia.io/raum003-demo-1in7ga981>

References

- [1] *Bauhaus Universität Weimar: About the University*. Bauhaus Universität Weimar website, 2022. [Online] Available from: <https://www.uni-weimar.de/en/university/structure/central-university-facilities/university-communications/media-service/about-the-university/> [Accessed November 30 2022]
- [2] *More Space for Light: The Future Of Now – The Metaverse and the Rise of the Cofluencer, with Topia*. Youtube website, 2021. [Online] Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qVP-WmavQKs> [Accessed December 1 2022].
- [3] McDonald T. Siegall, M. *The effects of technological self-efficacy and job focus on job performance, attitudes, and withdrawal behaviors*. *The Journal of Psychology*, 126, 465-475, (1992)
- [4] Puntambekar, Sadhana; Hubscher, Roland. *Tools for Scaffolding Students in a Complex Learning Environment: What Have We Gained and What Have We Missed?*. *Educational Psychologist*. Informa UK Limited. 40 (1): 1–12, (2005)