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An informative game on conflicts and conflict resolution

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Introduction

'*I (am) like you!*' is a game that came about after a study trip by some instructors from JeugdDienst (Youth Services) Don Bosco vzw to a European metropolis and focuses on conflict management and resolution. Our multicultural society sometimes leads to conflicts between groups - conflicts that originate and are maintained by people who pay more attention to what distinguishes groups from each other, rather than the similarities between them.

When the term multicultural is used, it signifies a multitude of cultures. Cultures are not only groups that unite because of ethnicity or geographical origin - young people (of the same or different ethnic origin) form different cultures based on musical preferences, sports clubs or their socio-economic background. They distinguish themselves by dressing differently, finding other symbols important or even by using another language (jargon/slang).

These characteristics can be more small-scale though. The situation, which is the starting point for this game, is the conflict between two rival neighbourhoods in a European metropolis. This is based on a real situation, whereby two groups of young people distinguish themselves from each other by the side of the main street on which they live - whether your house is on this or that side of the main street determines the group you belong to. Based on elements such as group or peer pressure, tradition, action and reaction, a spiral of gang fights and confrontations in revenge ensues. The first part of the game targets these elements. By being assigned to one of the two rival gangs, the players experience how these elements play a role in a conflict and how they reinforce each other. Our starting point is a kind of experiential learning, whereby young people experience in real life how you can be sucked into the spiral of a conflict.

The second part of the game (focussing on conflict resolution) is based on the same principles. Using a real situation, the players are acquainted through their own experiences with the mechanisms of conflict resolution and try to break through the conflict spiral. In the real situation two youth workers are now working in the above-mentioned neighbourhoods. They sought and gained the trust of these young people and instigated dialogue and joint activities. They give young people the responsibility of organising certain things together and try to stress the similarities between the groups (and the various individuals in these groups) instead of the differences. The youth workers are mainly 'present' in the neighbourhoods and make themselves available in a very informal manner for the young people in the different 'hoods. These mechanisms (continuous dialogue, joint action, stressing similarities instead of differences, the presence of 'mediators'...) are features of the game.

A third part of the game is the post-mortem. In the post-mortem the players will examine the way they behaved during the game by answering targeted questions. The idea is that they use their own experiences (during and outside the game) to get to know some important mechanisms of conflict and conflict resolution and learn to work with them.

The game is a not a classic role play, in the sense that the players are not assigned a certain role (except for the leader figure, who is indicated at the beginning of the game). The players are split into groups and we will trust the mechanisms that fuel the forming of groups in order to achieve some differentiation in the groups (triggers and followers). The idea is to achieve the most natural situation possible, whereby experiential learning is maximised for each of the players. The game leader and the youth workers have an important responsibility in doing this, without being asked to force matters. It is important to have a good overview of how the game develops and to 'intervene' at the right moments in the game. All this will become clearer in this scenario. We would like to state here that it is important that you read the whole scenario before starting with the game.

Good luck with playing the game.



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Trainer's manual



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Objectives

Main objective 1:

Getting acquainted with the underlying mechanisms of conflicts (the various parties, the causes of conflict, the contextual elements such as peer pressure, the development of conflict, the previous history, tradition...)

Sub objectives:

- Being able to recognise and name the above-mentioned mechanisms.
- Being able to project the above-mentioned mechanisms on the individual situation, on conflicts in which one is or was involved.
- Being able to take an individual position in regard to conflict.

Main objective 2:

Discover mechanisms for conflict resolution (regular dialogue, attention to similarities instead of differences, determining key figures in the conflict, the continuous support of 'peace workers' by means of a relationship of trust and informal contact...)

Sub objectives:

- Being able to name the mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- Being able to project the mechanisms for conflict resolution on the individual situation, on conflicts in which one is or was involved.
- Being able to recognise and name the behaviour of others in a conflict.
- Being able to recognise and name one's own behaviour in a conflict.



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The game itself

Number of trainers: 3*

** One trainer will lead the whole game. He or she will be in charge of timing and will ensure that the game is steered in the right direction. This is also the person who will move between both groups in order to pass on information to the youth workers if needed. The other trainers will each be in charge of a group (neighbourhood). They will act as youth workers – conflict mediators.*

Number of players: 16-30

Duration: 2 – 2.5 hours

Age: Age 16 and up

Place: At least two distinct rooms, spaces.

Game materials:

To print out:

- Scenario for the trainers
- 2 maps (A3 format)
- 3 fact sheets with the game proceedings for the trainers
- 2 role fact sheets for the gang leaders

Other:

- Game and sports materials (individually determined, whatever is on hand)
- An even number of 'objects' (see ball or tyre war)
- Drawing and / or handiwork materials (slogan and logo)
- Board and chalk or felt-tips or flipchart and felt-tips (post-mortem)
- Paper and pen for the trainers



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Game proceeding

PHASE 1: The conflict

1a. General introduction

The game leader will first divide the large group in two equal groups. These two groups will be the two gangs of the two neighbourhoods. One group is named *The Scorpions*, the other group *The Sharks*. Ensure that both groups can be clearly distinguished before starting with the general introduction. Give each group a map and start with the following introduction:

“What you see here is part of a map of an important and large European city. The map consists of two neighbourhoods, which are divided by the main street. For years the young people have assembled in their neighbourhoods in two clubs: The Scorpions and The Sharks. The rivalry between both ‘hoods is huge and no encounter goes by without a fight. You don’t ‘become’ a Scorpion or a Shark – you become one when you are born (on either side of the main street). You are The Sharks and you are The Scorpions. In order to give yourselves a strong identity as a group, you have decided to make up a slogan and a logo. Later each gang will go to their own clubhouse to develop both the slogan and the logo.”

(During the explanation both clubhouses are indicated on the map.)

It is important that you stress that this conflict has been going on for years. Ensure that both groups understand that this is not a simple row, but a conflict that is deeply rooted in either group.

1b. Developing a slogan and a logo

After the general introduction both groups will go to their indicated room or space. These will become the spaces where each of the groups will convene repeatedly. Ensure that each group has a map with them and that the material for developing a logo and slogan is available. Make sure that each group knows what is expected (think of a slogan and logo for your group within ten minutes).

While both groups are working the game leader will indicate a ‘gang leader’ in each group. Don’t choose the gang leader at random; it is essential that this person has some leadership qualities. The gang leader will get following instructions (use the cards that were supplied with the game to this end).

*“You are the gang leader. The hate for the other group is in your blood. The conflict between the two neighbourhoods is a conflict that has been going on for years and that has been passed on from generation to generation. It is also very important that you pass this on to the group: **this is not some silly quarrel, but a real rivalry, which has grown and become stronger over the years. You must lead the group in its hatred towards the rival neighbourhood.**”*

(You can use the slogan you thought of to stir up the group. Every time you think that the other gang can hear you, chant your slogan).

After the gang leader has received these instructions, he or she will return to the group to continue working on the slogan and logo.



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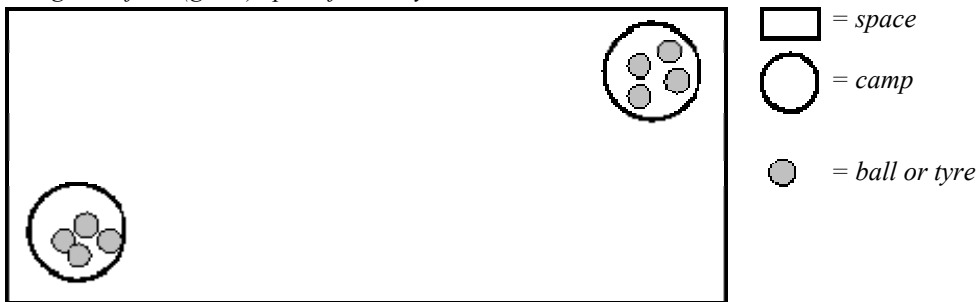
1c. Tyre or ball war

After ten minutes both groups are brought back together on 'neutral' ground (i.e. neither of the gang zones). Each group is assigned a clearly marked out space (a 'camp') and each camp should contain a number of objects (e.g. car tyres or balls) and the group logo. It is important that each 'camp' contains the same number of objects at the beginning of the game.

When the game leader gives the starting signal both groups will call out their slogan and the 'war' can start. After calling out their slogan both groups must try to retrieve as many objects as possible for their own camp. They can do this by 'stealing' the objects of the other group and by protecting their own.

This war will not last any longer than 5 minutes. After the stopping signal, each group should return to their own space with the objects they collected.

Diagram of the (game) space for the tyre and ball war:



1d. Planning and executing an 'action'

When both groups are back in their own space, the game leader will visit both groups asking them to plan an 'action'. He will ask them to think of something that they can do to play a trick on the rival hood. They need to start with the assumption that this is a real situation. Anything present on the map could be a possible target of the action. They will not really execute their action, but must put down on paper what their action consists of (e.g. graffiti on the supermarket walls, mixing painting products in the hairdresser's shampoo, burning down the club house of the other gang). When they have thought of an action and written it down, one of the gang members will 'present' the other group with the paper. Afterwards that person will return to his own group for the next phase. The group will have a maximum of 10 minutes for thinking of, writing down and delivering their action.

Tip: If the nature of the action and the space allows for the implementation of the action, we would advise that both groups can execute their actions.

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Phase 2a. Entrance of youth worker

Immediately after the group has executed the action, the youth worker will meet with the group. He will state that he has been monitoring the events in the city for quite some time now and that he has seen how both groups have ended up in a spiral of revenge and counter-revenge. Together with a colleague youth worker, the city has assigned him to see if there is a possibility of reducing or even stopping the violence.

First and foremost there should be a discussion of the events (the youth worker can use his observations of the first phase, see 'role of youth worker' infra). **This is not a post-mortem discussion. The youth worker will approach all participants as members of a gang and address them as such. The youth worker himself will remain in his role of youth worker until the post-mortem.**

After this (short) discussion the youth worker will try to encourage the group to think of an activity which will involve the other group. The only condition is that no violence should be involved. It could be a competitive activity, where both groups meet each other e.g. at a sports event. In consultation with the youth worker the group thinks of such an activity. The group will have ten minutes for this whole part of the game.

Phase 2b. First joint activity

In this phase *The Sharks* will invite *The Scorpions* for their activity. The third trainer will inform the youth worker with *The Scorpions*, who will escort his hood to the place that was agreed upon (the space where the activity will be organised).

Before leaving for the space, the youth worker will check whether the group agrees upon the conditions of the activity (the space, the nature of the groups...). The idea is that they arrive at **an agreement** (some kind of compromise). The youth worker needs to listen to his or her group and take into account their wishes and concerns. Consultation between the youth workers (5 minutes).

The youth workers will make sure that the activity will run smoothly. In case of incidents, the activity must be stopped immediately by the youth workers and both groups returned to their camp. The activity may last a maximum of 15 minutes (it might be less in the event of an incident).

Phase 2c. (10 min)

In this phase the finished activity is discussed. If there was an incident, it should be discussed first. The idea is that all participants will be asked for a quick overview of their observations during the activity, after which the youth workers will share their own observations. It is interesting to emphasise the way in which participants treated each other. Some questions or guidelines:

- Do you see anyone in the other group that you could imagine being friends with?
- Maybe it's better to ignore the people in the other group that you don't like and to concentrate on those that you do like.
- Do you see any similarities between your group and the other group?

(The youth workers can assist in giving examples from the situation.)

The discussion ends with an invitation by *The Scorpions* to *The Sharks* (in the same manner as described in phase 2b). Duration: maximum 10 minutes



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Phase 2b (15 minutes)

The same as for phase 2b, only the roles are reversed.

Phase 2d (1 to 20 minutes)

If necessary the youth worker will repeat the learnings of phase 2c in his group. This must not take too much time (about 5 minutes). Afterwards both groups will meet to organise a joint activity, guided by both youth workers. We thought of organising a party. A number of important matters should be discussed (place, cover fee, what refreshments, starting time, poster... and mainly: who will be in charge of what?). It is very important that the youth workers moderate the conversation and that both groups listen to each other in order to arrive at joint solutions. Try to let everyone have their say (if needed by addressing people to answer a certain question).

After a consultation of 10 minutes the game is ended and the post-mortem discussion starts.



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PHASE 3: Post-mortem discussion

The post-mortem will be with the whole group. The underlying idea of this discussion is to come out with the learnings as a result of each and everyone's experience in the game and to link this to one's own environment. The trainers will lead the discussion and will try to explain certain mechanisms, without being too theoretical or didactical. Some mechanisms will be summed up in the objectives.

The post-mortem discussion is the most important part of the game!! This is where learning takes place. There are 6 phases in this discussion, they are not clearly defined and can therefore merge, but they can be used to direct the discussion. We will not be using these guidelines in a directive way a lot depends on the group. It's important to remember that the individuals in the group are part of the learning process.

For the trainers the six phases and the objectives of the game can be used to guide the discussion to a certain degree.

The six phases of the discussion:

How do you feel after playing this game?

The underlying idea of this phase is that people can 'let off steam'. That is why it is important that this is done immediately after playing the game. It is therefore better not to take a break between the end of the game and the discussion. It is however important to indicate that the discussion will start now and that the participants need not remain in their role any longer. During the discussion they are participants in an informative game and are no longer members of *The Scorpions* and *The Sharks*. Because the whole group is in the same space for the last phase of the game, the discussion can start immediately in that same space.

Participants should be encouraged to talk about the game, without judging it. Ask the others to listen actively and to let people finish what they are saying.

This phase should not take very long. The main objective is that participants can let off steam.

Examples of questions:

- How do you feel now?
- How did you experience the game?

What has happened during the game?

Let the participants describe what happened during the game. Try to collect as much information as possible from different participants. This will make participants understand that they cannot observe everything that goes on during such a game and that observations can vary.

Try to discuss as many different events as possible. Both the youth workers and the third trainer can take notes during the game, which they can bring up during the discussion.

Examples of questions:

- Describe a (certain) event in the game.
- How did you feel?
- Have these feelings changed during the game?
- *The Scorpions* reacted in this manner on this event, but how did *The Sharks* react?



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What has stuck in your mind?

Try to find out the important underlying ‘theories’ of the game together with the participants. Try to arrive at a certain code of behaviour. You can also state a fact and ask the participants to demonstrate or reject this fact based on experiences during the game. It is important that the starting point for the discussion is the game and events during the game.

Examples of questions:

- What has stuck in your mind?
- What have you learned from it?
- Does a conflict reinforce itself? If so, how?
- Were you influenced by peer pressure during the game?
- Which strategies did the youth worker use?

How does this game relate to reality?

Ask the participants to compare the game to real conflict situations. The idea is to find similarities between the game and reality, the idea is not to discuss the whole game. We are only looking for elements, feelings, mechanisms etc. in the game that can also be found in real life. **This game is only a simulation. There will always be aspects that aren't quite right. Make sure that the discussion does not become an enumeration of all the aspects of this game that do not correspond to reality.**

You can also ask the participants to compare this situation to a conflict in which they themselves are or were involved.

Examples of questions:

- Which elements of the game also occur in daily life for to you?
- Do you recognise certain reactions or feelings in conflicts that you have been involved in yourself?
- Do you think that the strategies used by the youth workers would work in real situations?

What if...?

Let the players think about how the game would have evolved if other events had happened. The observations of the game trainers are important for these questions!

Examples of questions:

- What would have happened if X occurred instead of Y?

What follows next... ?

In this phase the players are asked to think of what they will do after having played this game. Ask them if they think differently about certain matters and whether they plan to adapt their actions after having played this game. Certain propositions in phase three of the discussion can be used as a starting point or an addendum for this discussion.

Examples of questions:

- How do you view conflicts in your own environment after having played this game?
- Do you think that you will behave differently in the future after playing this game?
- What impressions or thoughts will you take home after this game?



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Try to give an overview of the most significant matters at the end of the discussion.

There is no harm in dividing the roles of the different trainers during the discussion. One trainer can be the moderator of the discussion, another can note down the most important conclusions on a board or flipchart (which visualises the conversation for all participants) and a third person can take notes in function of the overview at the end of the discussion.

Source for post mortem discussion:

Centrum voor informatieve spelen, e.a. (1996). *Intercultureel spelenboek*. Leuven, C.I.S.



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Instructions for the role of the youth worker

The role of the youth worker is very important in this game. It is therefore important that as a youth worker you try and stand between the gang members and gain their trust. You can only achieve this by addressing the gang members individually, by showing that you understand them, by actively listening to their stories:

- During the first part of the game it is essential that you observe well. Keep an eye on the group with which you will be working during the second part of the game as a youth worker. If the participants get the impression that you know them already and that they are not strangers to you, they will consider you less of a stranger themselves. **Do not see yourself as part of the group during the first phase of the game.**
- **During the second part of the game you will be part of the group.** This does not mean that you should incite feelings of hate - on the contrary. You should however try to understand the gang members, which is why you need to take into account their worries or complaints. If they are not comfortable with an activity in the rival hood's space, then ask the other youth worker to organise the activity on neutral ground, rather than trying to convince your group that they should go to the other group's space.
- The final objective of your task as a youth worker is to allow both 'hoods to grow closer to one another, to alert the individuals in the group to the similarities between the groups and the individuals that belong to these groups. Dialogue is an important instrument for this to happen.

As a youth worker you cannot expect that all hatred will disappear from one moment to the next - this is a long-term process, which cannot be imitated during the short duration of this simulation. The role of the youth worker also involves a lot of experiential learning and it is therefore important to discuss the position of the youth worker at the end of the game. What worked and what did not? Did you experience certain frustrations and were there successes?

It is impossible to give clearly defined guidelines for the role of the youth worker because these simply do not exist. There is no recipe book for dealing with conflicts and with people that are involved in a conflict. We can give some tips, without pretending that the application of these tips will lead to a 100% success rate:

- First and foremost try to listen actively to people. Try to understand what motivates their behaviour, what they worry about, what they fear... once you know this, it will be easier to anticipate situations that may arise.
- Try to build a relationship of trust and try not to violate that trust. If you say or promise something, be sure to do it.
- If you choose to question certain behaviour, indicate an alternative. Don't only indicate what is wrong, but give an alternative. Make sure that the alternative behaviour is feasible for the person in question (e.g. if two persons have a hard time dealing with each other, then ask the person in your group to ignore that person next time instead of seeking him out and entering into a confrontation. This is feasible alternative behaviour - don't ask them to become best friends or like the person in question).
- Be sincere and try to see things from their position. Looking at things from their point of view might give you an easier time understanding matters and seeing alternatives.
- Don't judge too quickly, but judge the situation (objectively).

These are some tips that might make your role as a youth worker somewhat easier. Again, there is no success rate involved with these tips, the actual learning process takes place during the discussion – even for the youth workers.



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Game materials



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Fact sheet game proceedings

General remark: The time indications are based on a lot of experience in playing this game, but they are not fixed. It is important to respect the particular dynamics of each game.

<u>Time</u>	<u>Trainer 1</u> <u>(The Sharks)</u>	<u>Trainer 2</u> <u>(The Scorpions)</u>	<u>Trainer 3</u>
0 - 10 min.	Observe	Observe	General introduction and division into groups
10 - 20 min.	(group: slogan and logo)	(group: slogan and logo)	Watch the time and select gang leaders
20 - 30 min.	Observe	Observe	Explain and lead <i>tyre or ball war</i>
30 - 40 min.	(group: plan and execute an action)	(group: plan and execute an action)	Explain 'action' and watch the time
40 - 50 min.	Enter as youth worker, discuss the situation and think about a peaceful activity	Enter as youth worker, discuss the situation and think about a peaceful activity	Watch the time and gather the materials for the chosen activities
	Invitation activity Sharks	Invitation activity Sharks	Invite Scorpions for Sharks' activity
50 - 55 min.	Possibility to discuss with colleague youth worker	Possibility to discuss with colleague youth worker	
55 - 70 min.	Performance of the activity of the Sharks <i>(observe in function of the next phase)</i>	Performance of the activity of the Sharks <i>(observe in function of the next phase)</i>	Watch the time - stop the activity in case of an incident
70 - 80 min.	Discuss the activity (own observation and general tips)	Discuss the activity (own observation and general tips)	Watch time
	Invitation activity Scorpions	Invitation activity Scorpions	Invite the Sharks for the activity of the Scorpions
80 - 85 min.	Possibility to discuss with colleague youth worker	Possibility to discuss with colleague youth worker	
85 - 95 min.	Performance of the activity of the Scorpions <i>(observe in function of the next phase)</i>	Performance of the activity of the Scorpions <i>(observe in function of the next phase)</i>	Watch the time - stop the activity in case of an incident
95 - 120 min.	Discuss activity + start negotiations between Scorpions and Sharks for the organisation of a joint activity	Discuss activity + start negotiations between Sharks and Scorpions for the organisation of a joint activity	Watch the time
120 - ?? min.	Post-mortem discussion	Post-mortem discussion	Post-mortem discussion



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You must lead the group in its hatred towards the rival neighbourhood.

(You can use the slogan you thought of to stir up the group. Every time you think that the other gang can hear you, chant your slogan)."



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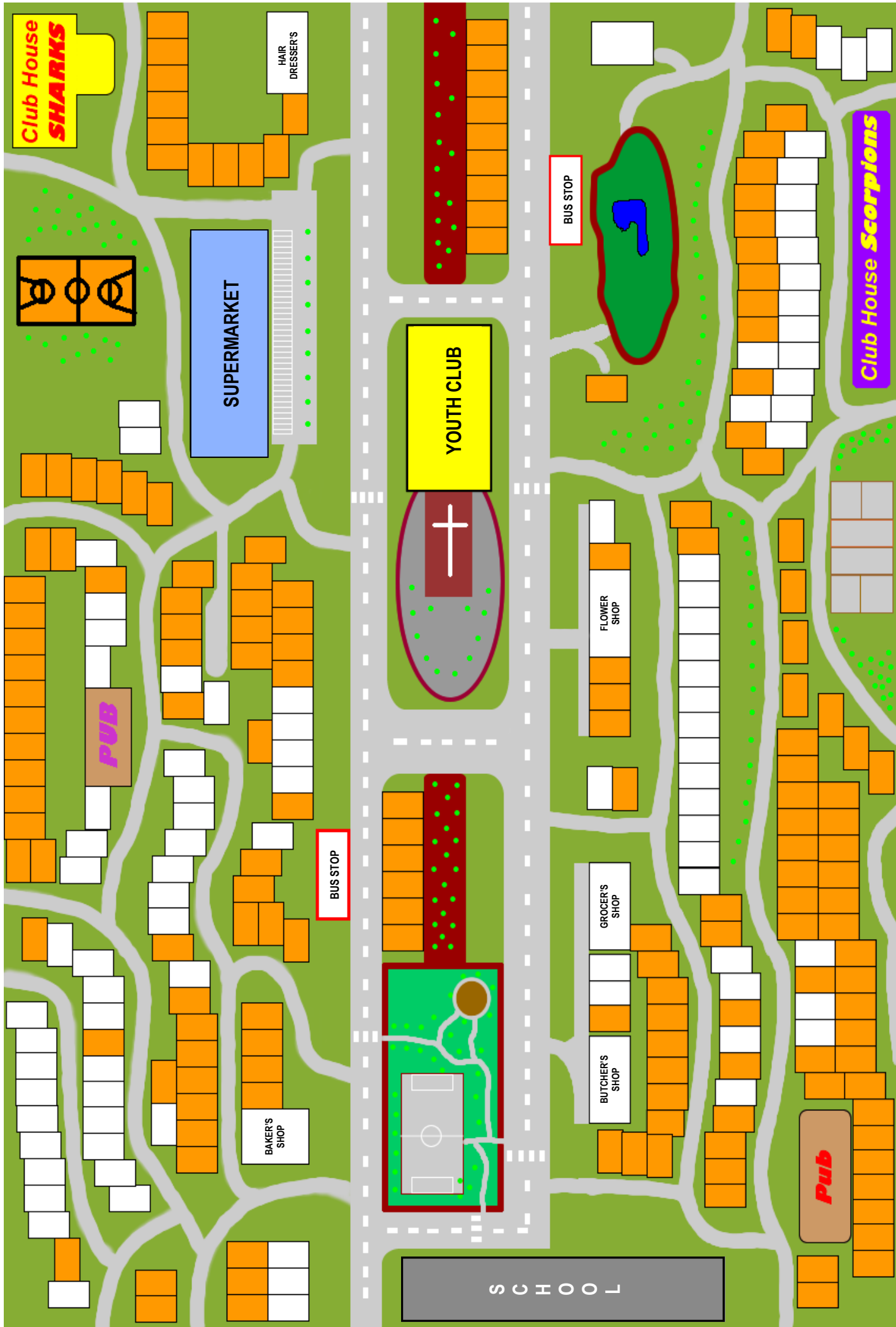
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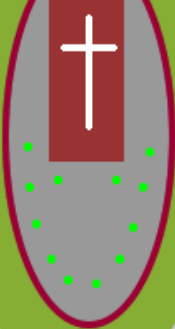
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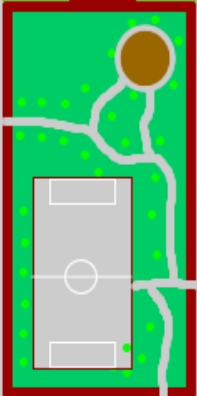
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Club House **Scorpions**

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