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CONCEPT NOTE

# Building peace with an onion

## *VR-Simulation: Transforming conflicts between refugees and host-communities*

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## 1 Summary

The VR-Simulation tackles global migration-related conflicts, a pressing issue affecting 108.4 million displaced individuals globally. Specifically addressing refugee-host community conflicts, it employs peacebuilding tools to unveil underlying interests and needs, pivotal for sustainable conflict resolutions.

Its unique digital scalability via app stores and AI-driven language translation ensures global accessibility, transcending language barriers. This global relevance attracts a broad user base seeking conflict resolution skills, distinguishing it from traditional training modules.

Compared to conventional methods, VR-Simulations offer experiential learning through immersive scenarios, fostering a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics. Its scalability and real-world scenario simulations provide practical insights, empowering users with confidence in conflict resolution approaches.

The learning goals aim to enhance understanding of conflict dynamics, promote peacebuilding using the PIN method, and foster personal growth through reflection and application in diverse roles. Its potential impact lies in equipping conflict managers and volunteers with crucial conflict resolution skills, fostering inclusive strategies, and driving tangible actions for positive community change.

In conclusion, this innovative VR-Simulation presents a robust solution to address migration-related conflicts worldwide. Its digital nature, coupled with immersive capabilities, positions it as a pivotal tool for transformative conflict resolution, offering a scalable, impactful, and inclusive approach globally.

## 2 Context

Global migration movements pose a major challenge in many places. According to the latest Global Trends Report from the UNHCR, 108.4 million people worldwide were displaced at the end of 2022<sup>1</sup>.

Many of them need Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), especially those who have had to flee due to war, displacement or natural disasters. At the same time, in their host communities, refugees are often confronted with bureaucratic hurdles, language barriers and prejudices that make it difficult for them to participate in society. Many host communities are overwhelmed in receiving refugees, particularly in the fields of accommodation and integration into the labour markets and participation in social life.

Conflicts over housing and accommodation between refugees and host communities are unfortunately prevalent in many regions globally. Limited resources, cultural differences, and competing needs often create tensions in these situations. By

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<sup>1</sup> Source (05/12/2023): <https://www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/informieren/fluechtlingzahlen>

addressing this scenario in a virtual reality simulation, you're highlighting a significant real-world challenge that many communities face.

These conflicts can best be dealt with by the conflict parties themselves. However, it is important that they get to know each other's interests and needs. A classic method of conflict management, the onion model (aka PIN method), is suitable for finding these out. This method can be used to uncover positions, interests and needs and thus find more sustainable conflict solutions or even develop win-win situations.

In many places, there are not enough professional conflict managers or mediators available to intervene in a conciliatory manner. It is often volunteers who quickly feel overwhelmed. The VR simulation is intended to help them deal constructively with conflicts at a local level.

By creating a VR-Simulation, the PIN method is to be communicated to mediators, multipliers or even those affected. This creates a greater awareness of interests and needs, which leads to more peaceful conflict resolution and makes it more sustainable.

### 3 Objectives

#### 3.1 Impact

Addressing global migration challenges, the VR-Simulation aims to foster peaceful resolutions between host communities and refugees. By employing the PIN method, conflicts rooted in housing and accommodation issues are approached with greater understanding and empathy. The ultimate goal is to diffuse tensions prevalent in many regions globally and enable mutually beneficial solutions.

#### 3.2 Outcome

The VR-Simulation, through experiential learning, elucidates the differentiation between Positions, Interests, and Needs (PIN), fostering a shift from rigid positions towards understanding and accommodating underlying interests and needs. This shift creates spaces for innovative solutions, contributing to more peaceful and sustainable resolutions of local conflicts between host communities and refugees.

#### 3.3 Output:

The development of a VR-Simulation focusing on teaching the PIN method facilitates more constructive and peaceful local conflict management. This innovative tool aims to increase the number of individuals adept in utilizing the PIN method, especially among conflict managers and volunteers in host communities. The easily scalable nature of the simulation, requiring only VR glasses and internet access, ensures widespread accessibility and potential for extensive use in conflict resolution.

This comprehensive approach leveraging VR technology and conflict resolution methodologies holds the potential to revolutionize how conflicts between host

communities and refugees are approached, ensuring more empathetic, informed, and sustainable solutions globally.

#### 4 The Onion-Model (Position – Interests – Needs)

The Onion model is a classic tool used in conflict analysis and resolution.

It is based upon the idea that the layers of a conflict are much like that of an onion: there are many dynamics to be considered, but only those on the surface are visible, until we start to peel off the layers to see what lies at the core. It allows a better understanding of the conflicting parties' positions and their real interests and needs. It helps us to distinguish between what the different parties say they want, and what they really want and need.

The outer layer of the onion represents the positions we allow everyone to see and hear (what we say we want). Underlying these are our interests (what we want), which represent what we wish to achieve in a conflict situation. At the core of the onion are our needs (what we must have), which must be fulfilled in order for the conflicting parties to be truly satisfied with the outcome. While interests can often be negotiated, needs are non-negotiable.

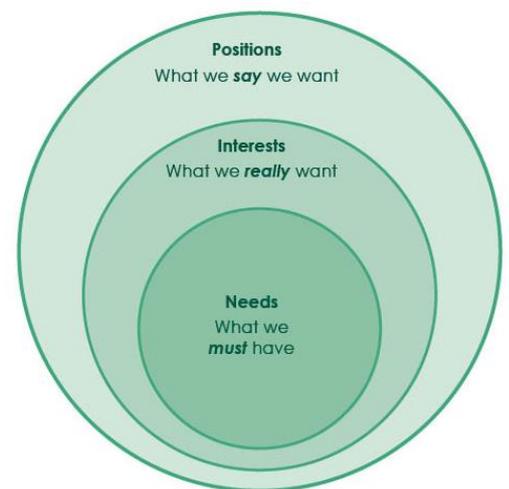
Although it may be difficult to set other dynamics aside, it is critical that conflicting parties understand their own and each other's core needs, so that constructive and satisfying outcomes can be achieved.

The theory of Positions, Interests and Needs is based on the idea that there are a few basic universal needs. On the basis of these needs people pursue certain interests and create positions that they believe will satisfy their interests and needs.

##### 4.1 Position

A position is the stance taken on an issue by a conflict party, based on underlying interests rooted in core issues defined as needs. Positions are located in the realm of communication and interaction as they are the articulation by the conflict parties of the often complex factors that make up a conflict.

Defending a position leads to people asserting certainty about causes, consequences and facts, often more certainty than is justified by the current state of knowledge and analysis. It encourages people to dispute the facts put forward by others, and to question their motives. People defending a position often build such an edifice of certainty around themselves that it is very hard for them to move away from their initial position, even if they want to.



## 4.2 Interests

In the context of the PIN method, interests are intrinsically linked to the fundamental needs of conflicting parties. While positions represent the visible and asserted stances, interests dig deeper, reflecting the underlying motivations, desires, and objectives that drive these positions. They act as a bridge between surface-level positions and core needs.

Interests essentially embody what conflicting parties aim to achieve, aligning with their fundamental needs. Unlike positions, which may be rigid and appear incompatible, interests offer a more flexible ground for negotiation and potential compromise. They provide a space where conflicting parties can seek commonality, identify shared objectives, and explore potential solutions that address the core needs of all involved.

Recognizing and understanding these interests is crucial in conflict resolution as they pave the way for meaningful dialogue. By acknowledging and addressing these underlying motivations, parties can move beyond mere assertions of positions and work towards solutions that cater to their shared and individual needs. This acknowledgment facilitates the exploration of alternative pathways and compromises that honor the needs of all parties involved, fostering a more constructive and sustainable resolution to the conflict.

## 4.3 Needs

Needs are the goals pursued by an individual or a group in order to survive. They can have an objective nature if the lack of provision of these needs results in a physical threat to survival (basic needs). They can also be subjective (perceived needs) when they are not a direct factor in survival. Positions on the other hand are the expression of the aim or goal of a conflict party. Positions are always subjective. Needs and positions can be the same thing in two situations:

- › With perceived needs – where the conflict party cannot separate their personal perception of a need from the reality of the situation
- › When the conflict party expresses their need clearly within their position.

It can become difficult in a situation of conflict transformation if the needs of the conflicting parties are on different levels, as this can affect the power relations within a conflict. Also, we must remember that identification of needs in conflict analysis is an interpretation by the analyst, who is making a judgement about the positions the basic needs of the conflicting parties are.

## 5 Target Group(s)

Therefore, different target groups can be reached and addressed with the innovative method. In this concept note, we will limit ourselves to the following; in principle, other target groups are conceivable.

The scope is easily scalable. Users only need the appropriate hardware (VR glasses, such as Oculus, etc.) and one-time internet access.

### 5.1 Conflict Managers

Professional conflict managers, such as mediators, school social workers, youth welfare offices, etc. This group can benefit significantly from the VR simulation, gaining deeper insights into refugee–host community conflicts and the application of conflict resolution methods like the PIN model.

The VR simulation increases their understanding of conflict situations between host communities and refugees. Using the realistic scenario, which relates to the widespread conflict over the accommodation of refugees, the VR simulation has a clear practical relevance and can be used to deepen the conflict analysis and thus be able to try out new creative approaches, finding alternative solutions for reality.

In any case, the target group is sensitized to the interests and needs of the conflict parties. This target group could be even further diversified by including community leaders, social workers, or even individuals engaged in community–building initiatives.

### 5.2 Volunteers of host-communities

A large part of the support for refugees is often provided by volunteers in the host community. However, after several months they are often exhausted, tired, and overwhelmed with dealing with conflicts.

The VR simulation offers an innovative approach to the PIN method, which enables more peaceful conflict resolution between host communities and refugees.

The target group is reached via various workshop formats and, in the long term, via the corresponding app stores.

### 5.3 Languages

Using VRS offers immersive learning, overcoming language barriers. AI-driven translation ensures real-time understanding, enabling participants from various linguistic backgrounds to engage actively. This method promotes inclusive learning experiences, enhancing comprehension and participation, fostering cross-cultural dialogue, and allowing seamless, multilingual interaction among participants, amplifying the simulation's impact across diverse audiences.

### 5.4 Scalability

The VR-Simulation's digital nature revolutionizes outreach by transcending geographical confines. Its availability on app stores, minimal hardware needs, and AI-fuelled language translation dismantle language barriers, enabling a global audience. Addressing a globally relevant conflict scenario drives immense demand, creating a broad user base seeking conflict resolution skills. This digital scalability empowers easy replication, making it readily adaptable to diverse contexts worldwide.

## 6 VR-Simulation

### 6.1 Rational

We decided in favor of VRS as a method because of its many advantages.

We believe that the immersive experience of a VR simulation is ideal for better understanding the interests and needs of the conflict parties and incorporating them into the conflict resolution process. By immersing oneself in the realistic simulation, interests and needs can be made particularly tangible.

The interactive approach of the VRS allows users to test their knowledge and develop their own ideas for conflict resolution and try them out in the VR simulation. This allows alternative solutions to be found and the application to be tested in reality.

In addition, knowledge can be imparted more sustainably through experience-based learning than in conventional workshop formats and users gain more confidence and conviction to actively contribute to peaceful conflict resolution themselves.

The scalability and potential outreach are very high. On the one hand, a globally pressing issue is being addressed in the VRS, where there is a high demand for support in conflict transformation. Secondly, language barriers can be easily overcome using AI-supported translation programs.

### 6.2 Learning Goals

Here you find an overview of the actual learning goals we want the user to achieve throughout the VRS.

#### 6.2.1 Understanding Conflict Dynamics

Develop participants' ability to discern and analyze the primary factors contributing to conflicts between host communities and refugees, fostering a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics and enabling evaluation of conflict escalation or de-escalation, identifying pivotal moments that trigger shifts for more informed conflict resolution approaches.

Outcome: Encourage participants to challenge and reevaluate preconceived notions or biases about conflicts, promoting a more open and unbiased approach to conflict analysis.

#### 6.2.2 Application of Peacebuilding Tools: PIN Method

Equip participants with the skills to differentiate between positions, interests, and needs within conflicts, enabling more effective conflict resolution strategies and empowering interpretation and leverage of interests and needs to explore potential resolutions or compromises within conflict scenarios, fostering creative problem-solving.

Outcome: Enable participants to envisage practical applications of the PIN method in real-life conflict situations involving host communities and refugees, facilitating its implementation in diverse contexts.

#### 6.2.3 Personal Growth & Reflection

Stimulate personal growth by prompting self-reflection and extraction of insights, encouraging participants to apply learnings to their professional or voluntary roles and fostering exploration of alternative conflict resolution approaches or strategies during the simulation, inspiring innovative thinking and adaptable problem-solving skills.

Outcome: Encourage participants to translate insights derived from the simulation into actionable steps or initiatives within their communities or organizations, driving real-world impact and positive change.

### 6.3 Situation

That situation is what the user of the VRS is actually going to see and experience. In this situation he will be able to interact with the avatars. As a mediator within the VR simulation, the user's role is to navigate the complexities of these housing conflicts, fostering understanding, and working towards sustainable solutions that address the needs and interests of both the host community and the refugee population in Firo.

The user will interact by asking questions to one of the two avatars.

### 6.4 Protagonists (Avatars)

#### 6.4.1 Refugee-Representative

A resilient advocate in the municipality's refugee community, champions equitable housing, cultural integration, and safety. As spokesperson, she voices refugees' needs for secure housing, education, employment, healthcare, and family support. Her vision emphasizes harmony and inclusion. She mediates between communities, promoting empathy, inclusive policies, and non-violent conflict resolution, fostering understanding and bridging cultural divides for a unified municipality.

#### 6.4.2 Host Community

The mayor, deeply connected to his municipality, prioritizes community stability and comfort over significant changes, especially concerning refugee integration. Cautious and conservative, he prefers gradual alterations and advocates for limited refugee housing initiatives to avoid unsettling the electorate. His focus is on preserving the current community structure and addressing concerns of administrative strain while exploring relocation as a potential solution. The mayor engages cautiously, prioritizing community sentiments and advocating slow, controlled changes to mitigate tensions arising from the housing conflict.

## 6.5 Evaluation

### 6.5.1 Understanding Conflict Dynamics:

- › What were the primary factors contributing to the conflict between the host community and refugees as portrayed in the simulation?
- › How did the conflict escalate or de-escalate during the simulation? What pivotal moments influenced these shifts?
- › Did the simulation challenge any preconceived notions or biases you might have had about the conflict?

### 6.5.2 Application of peacebuilding-tools: PIN Method

- › What did you learn about the positions, interests, and needs of the protagonist (avatars) in conflict?
- › How did the understanding of interests and needs contribute to identifying potential resolutions or compromises within the conflict scenario?
- › How can the PIN method be practically applied in real-life scenarios involving conflicts between host communities and refugees?

### 6.5.3 Personal Growth & Reflection

- › What personal insights or lessons did you take away from the simulation experience?
- › How do you envision applying the learnings from this simulation in your professional or voluntary roles?
- › What alternative approaches or strategies for conflict resolution did you explore or discover during the simulation?
- › How can the insights gained from this simulation be translated into actionable steps or initiatives within your community or organization?

## 7 Implementation Formats

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Official Website	
CRISP – Infopaper	

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