Exploring *outcomes* and *impacts* of **youth participation:** Concepts, Methods, Questions

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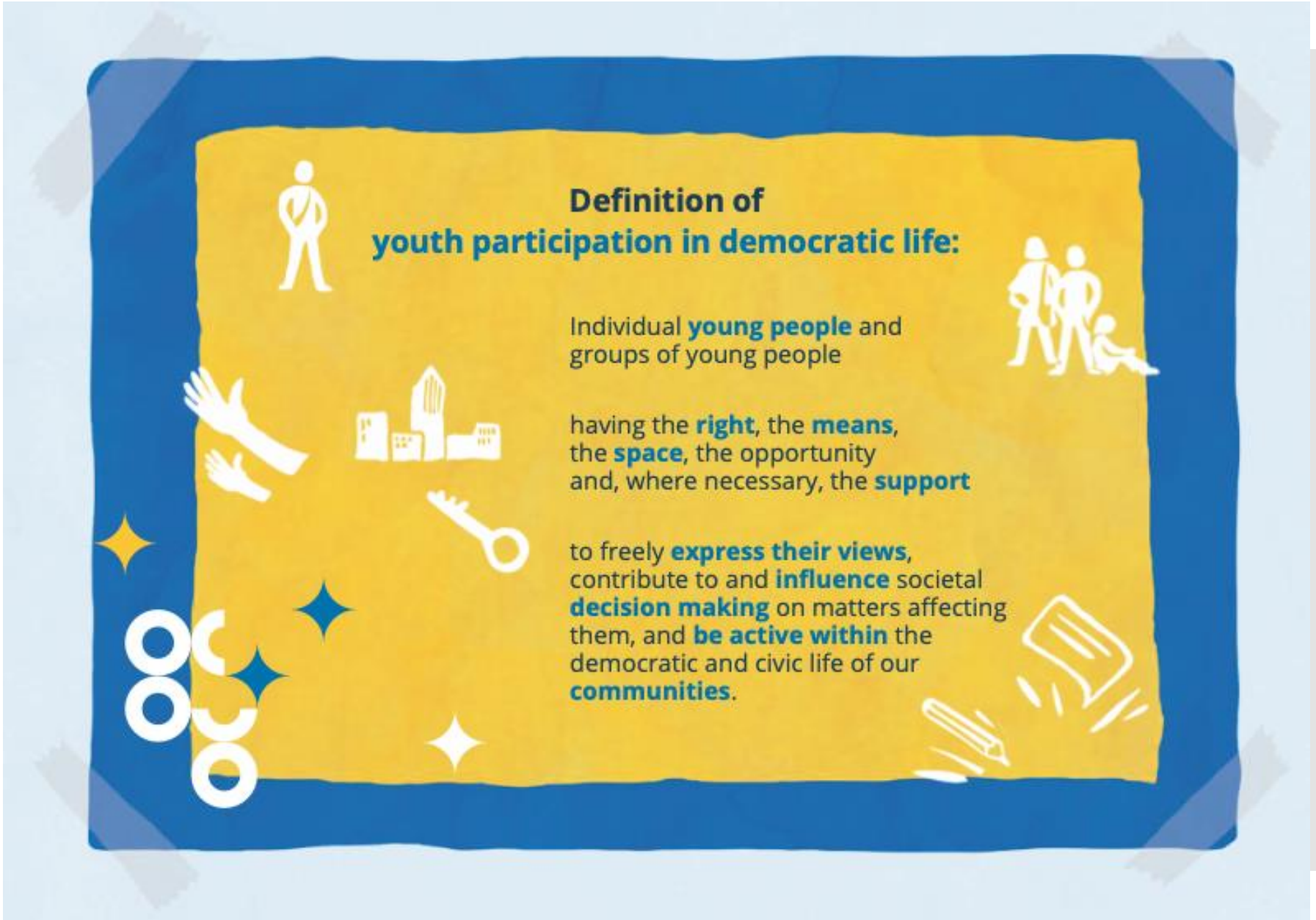
Participation is

- In everyday parlance: to take part in something
  - *"I participate in a football game", "I participate in class"*
- A civil, political & human right: **to have an influence on the decisions that affect you**
  - *"Nothing about us, without us"*

Erasmus+ & SALTO PI Youth Participation Strategy (2020)



Clockwise from top: Photo by FORTYTWO, Robert Koorenny, Christina @ wocintechchat.com, Tania Malréchauffé, Henri Lajarrige Lombard on Unsplash

Rationales for supporting youth participation

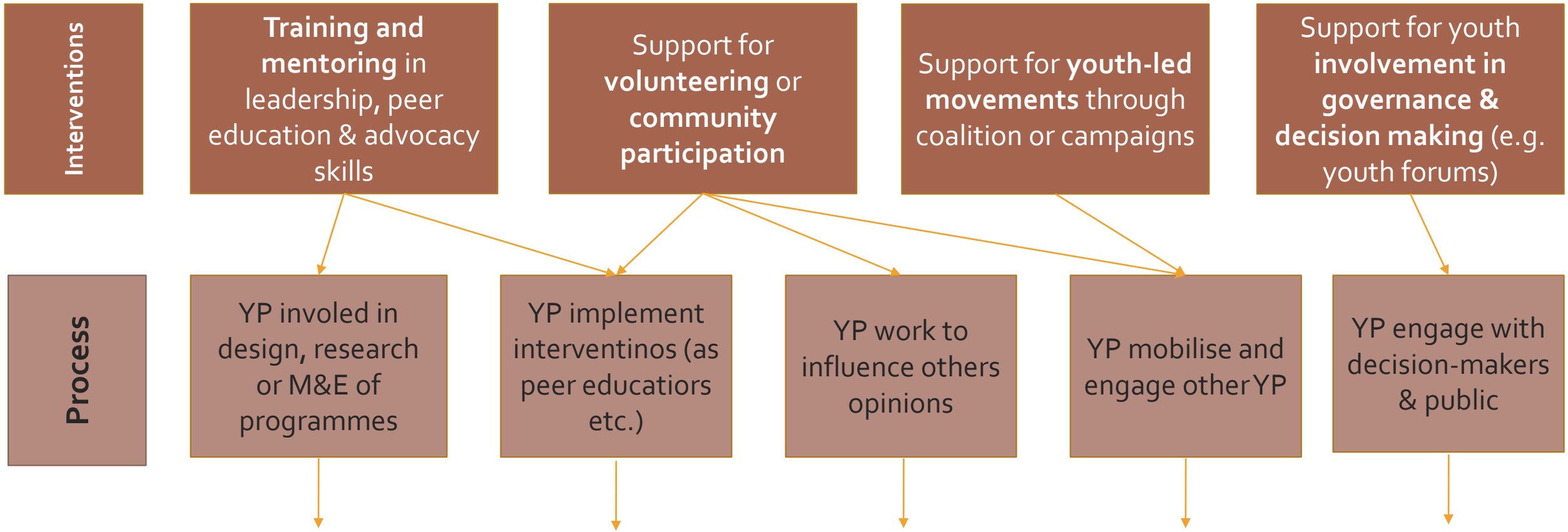
- It's a **human right**
- It can **empower** young people & help them challenge discrimination, violence or injustice
- It can make programmes and policies **more efficient** and relevant to youth
- It can encourage postive youth **development** through learning new skills and competencies
- It can make our democracies **more accountable** and promote good governance

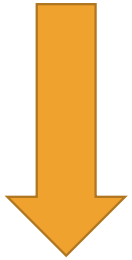
Many rationales rely on assumptions about *how change happens*

- **Theory of change:** A specific and measurable description of a social change

Young people as agents and advocates (*adapted*, ODI, 2016)

Problem statement: Opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making are often **limited, tokenistic**, or **non-existent**. This prevents young people fulfilling their potential, limits programme effectiveness, and leads to public policies that inadquately address youth needs.





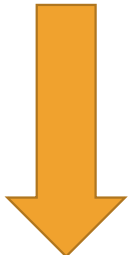
Outcomes

Young people have leadership capital to work at local, national, and international levels

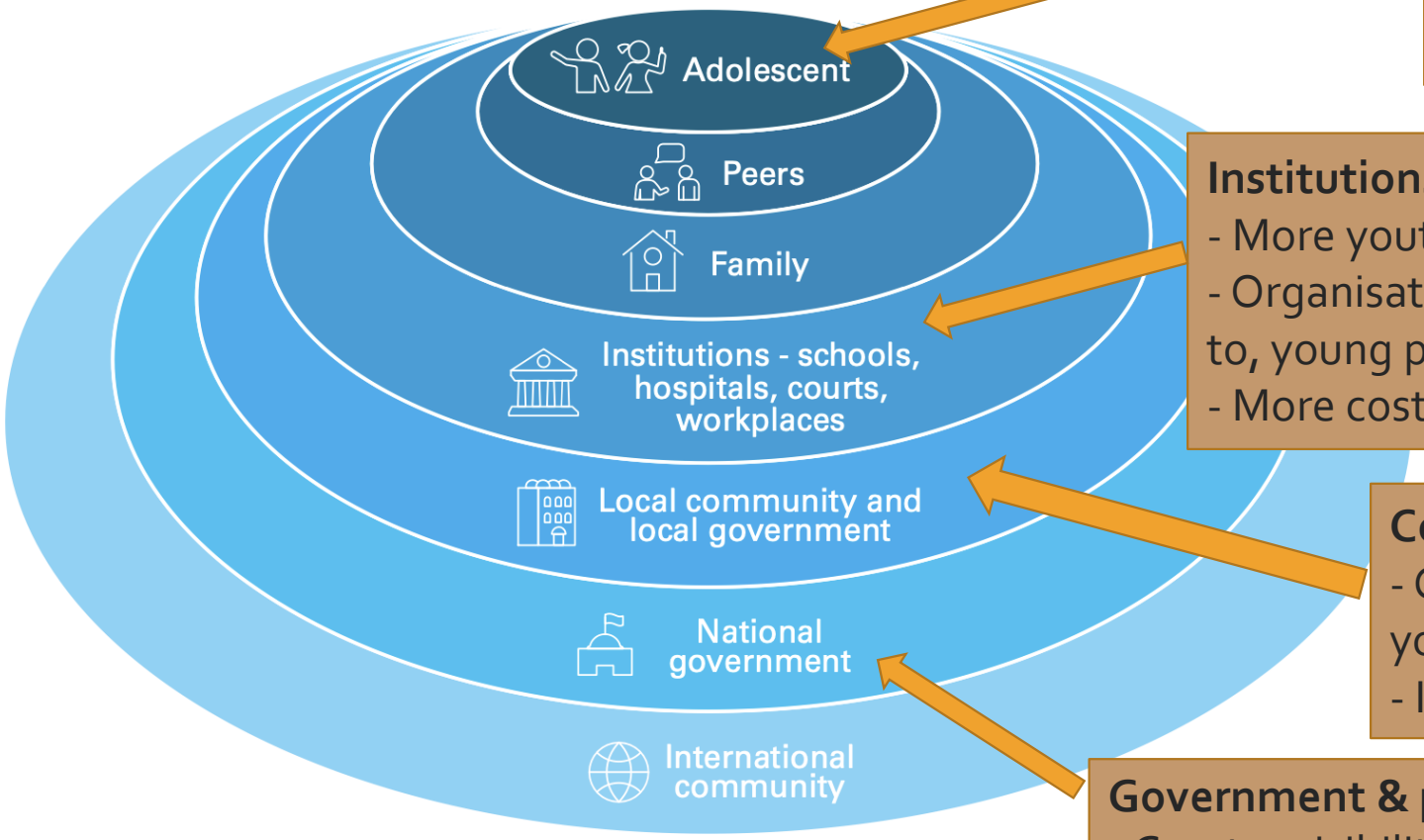
Young people are civically engaged and active in their communities

Young people positively change decision-making processes through youth-led initiatives

Reform enables young people to participate in formal policy and governance structures



Outcomes

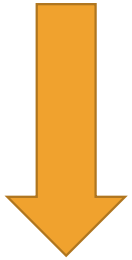


Personal :
- Increased knowledge, self-confidence, resilience
- Communication, life skills, technical skills
- Changes in attitudes & behaviour
- Reduced sense of marginalisation
- Stronger family & social ties

Institutions:
- More youth-sensitive interventions & programmes
- Organisations better able to respond to, and more sensitive to, young people's perspectives
- More cost-effective & sustainable interventions

Community:
- Changes in knowledge, attitudes and norms among young people, wider community & decision makers
- Increased acceptance of YP voice & participation

Government & policy:
- Greater visibility of young people's concerns in public sphere
- Greater accountability of service
- Greater involvement of youth in governance
- Changes in attitudes & norms of decision-makers
- Youth-sensitive policy & supportive budgets

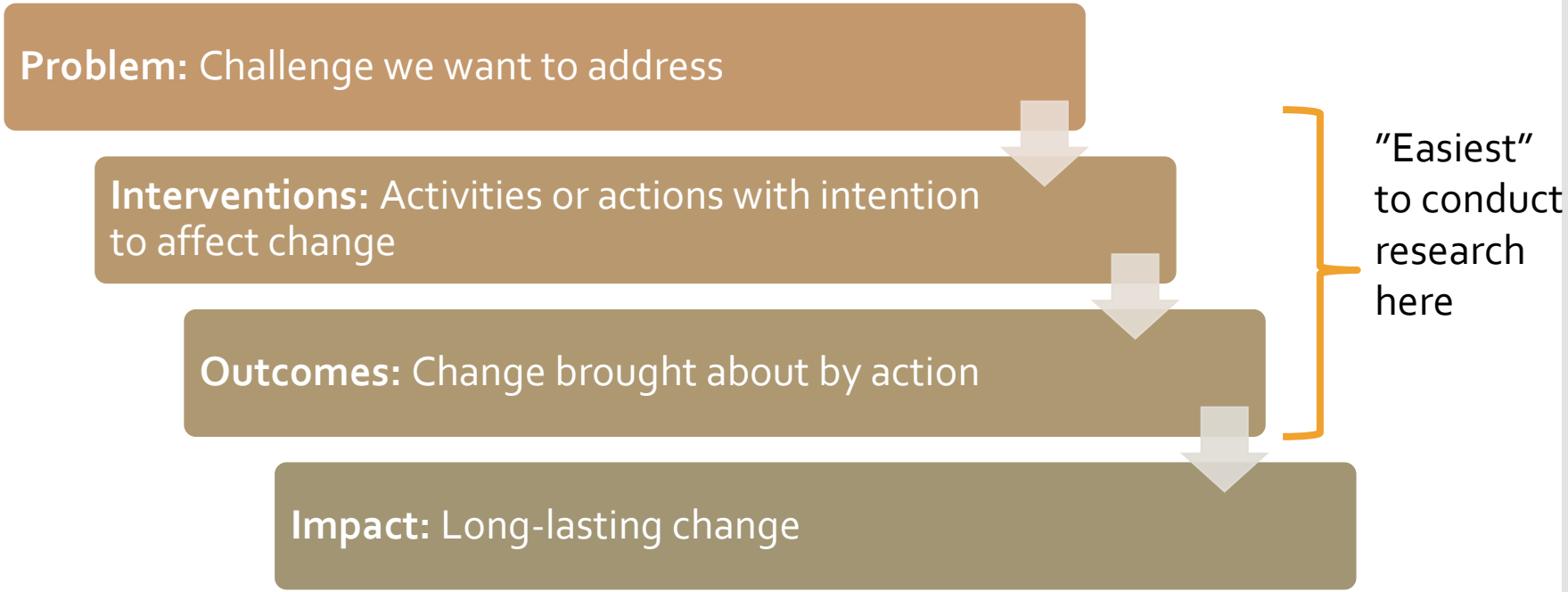


Impact

Empowerment, voice and participation of young people that contributes to better development outcomes with no one left behind such as:

- Reduced discrimination and greater equality
- Problem-focused responsive governance
- Improved health & education outomces
- Greater social cohesion, stability and security

Where to research



Challenges to impact research (and participation)

- Measurement
  - Difficult to isolate "cause" and "effect" (correlation vs causation; contribution vs attribution)
  - Transferrability
  - Challenging to capture concepts such as "empowerment", "accountability", "value change"
- Conceptual:
  - Is multi-dimensional, traditional/alternative forms, formal/informal
  - Participation is both a PROCESS and an OUTCOME, a MEANS and an END
- Participation as a RIGHT and a goal in and of itself (may be neglible if impact can be measured)

Example research I

- **RAY (2018) Study on Long-term Effects of Erasmus+/Youth in Action on Participation and Citizenship (RAY LTE) (2018)**
  - **Research question/Hypothesis:** How does E+/YiA contribute to the development of citizenship competence and the ability to participate as active citizens?
  - **Intervention:** E+/YiA programmes
  - **Outcomes:** Citizenship competence, active citizen abilities
  - **Method:** Surveys and interviews on knowledge, skills, attitudes, values
  - **Target:** Youth participants & project leaders / team members

Example research II

- **Bau (2015) Building peace through social change communication: participatory video in conflict-affected communities**
  - **Research question / hypothesis:** What impact can communications for social change have in post-conflict settings?
  - **Intervention:** Participatory video project in Rift Valley of Kenya after 2007-2008 post-election crisis
  - **Outcome:** Change in individuals towards the opposing community; Change in relationships with victims and perpetrators
  - **Method:** Semi-structured interviews
  - **Target:** Youth participants in project (secondary: others in the community)

Example research III

- **Crowley (2015) Is Anyone Listening? The Impact of Children's Participation on Public Policy**
  - **Research question / Hypothesis:** Are youth councils and youth forums effective in having children's voices heard and acted upon by policy-makers?
  - **Intervention:** Youth Forum in Wales, UK & Neighbourhood Children's Parliament in Tamil Nadu, India
  - **Outcome:** Degree of: impact on services, policies and institutions; Impact on social and power relations; Impact on children's well-being personal development
  - **Method:** Interviews and focus groups ; desk review to establish case studies
  - **Target:** Participating children + support workers, senior managers and governors, policies (documents)

Example research Iv

- **Local Government Association (2022) Engaging young people in policy making (case studies)**
  - **Research question:** In what ways did the participation of young people have an influence on a specific policy?
  - **Intervention:** Various (youth councils / advisory councils, peer engagement researchers, youth voice post boxes) in the UK at local level
  - **Outcome:** More tailored policies; New policy ideas
  - **Method:** Semi-structured interviews
  - **Targets:** Local government and municipal workers

To discover potential areas for research, ask yourself: What is the **theory of change**?

Worksheet: WHAT?

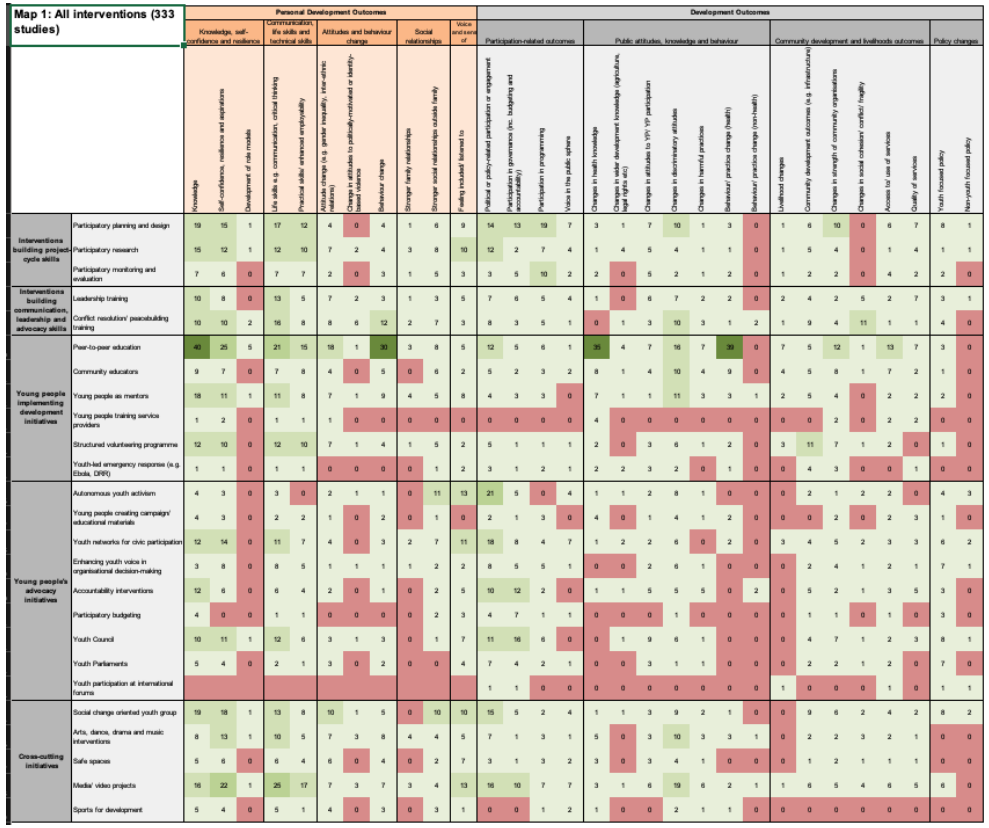
- Which Erasmus+ **INTERVENTION** (project/programme/initiative) do you want to focus on?
- What are the anticipated **OUTCOMES** and **IMPACT**?

Worksheet: HOW?

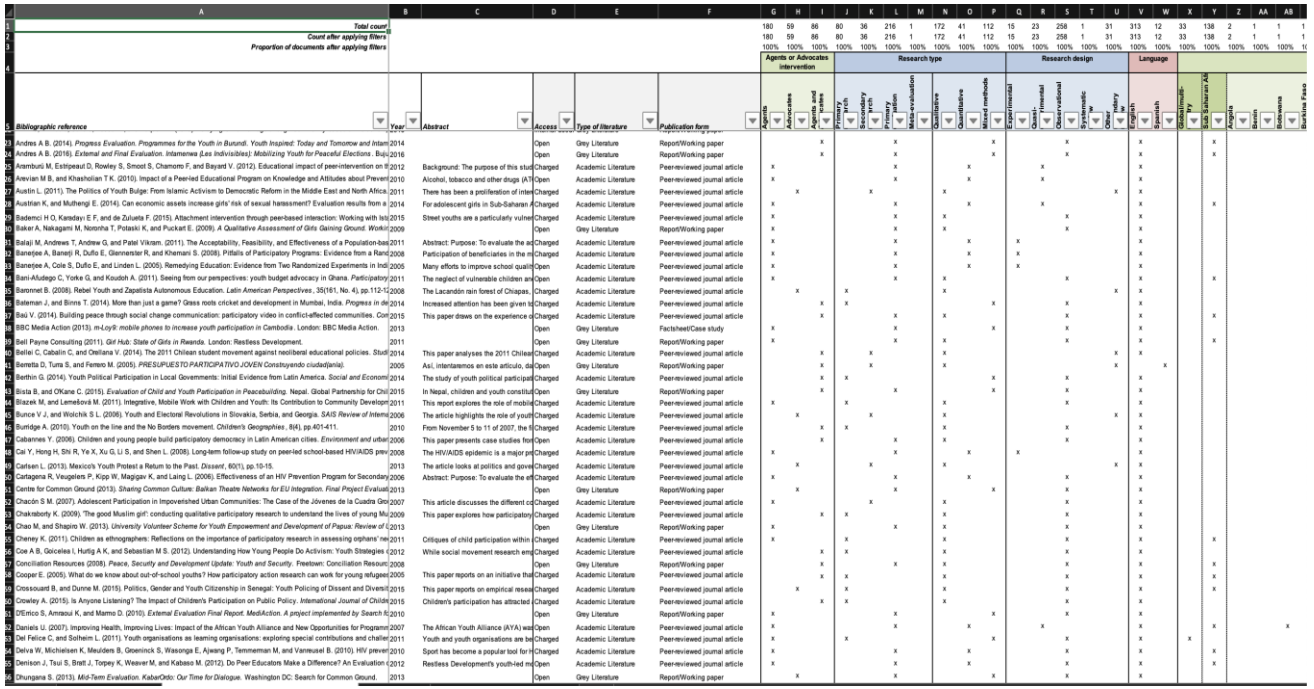
- And for **WHOM** or **ON WHAT** should this impact occur?
  - The **young people** participating?
  - For their **communities**?
  - For the **institutions** they participate in?
  - For **government policy**?
  - **Etc.**
- How will you ***measure*** this? (research design)

Outcomes

Interventions



Worksheet: ANY EXAMPLES?



ODI (2016) Young people as agents and advocates of development: Evidence gap map report

https://odi.org/en/publications/young-people-as-agents-and-advocates-of-development/

TABLE NUMBER: PRIORITY NAME:		HOW? *How can we get this information and from whom?*	ANY EXAMPLES? *Has anyone studied this area/topic yet? Where can we find the results of such research and analysis?*
WHAT? *Which research areas/topics should be studied within this horizontal priority?*	INTERVENTION + OUTCOMES / IMPACT	METHOD ON WHOM / WHAT: Young people Communities Institutions Policy …etc?	BRAINSTORM: What research have you heard of / read lately? E.g. ODI Evidence Gap Map