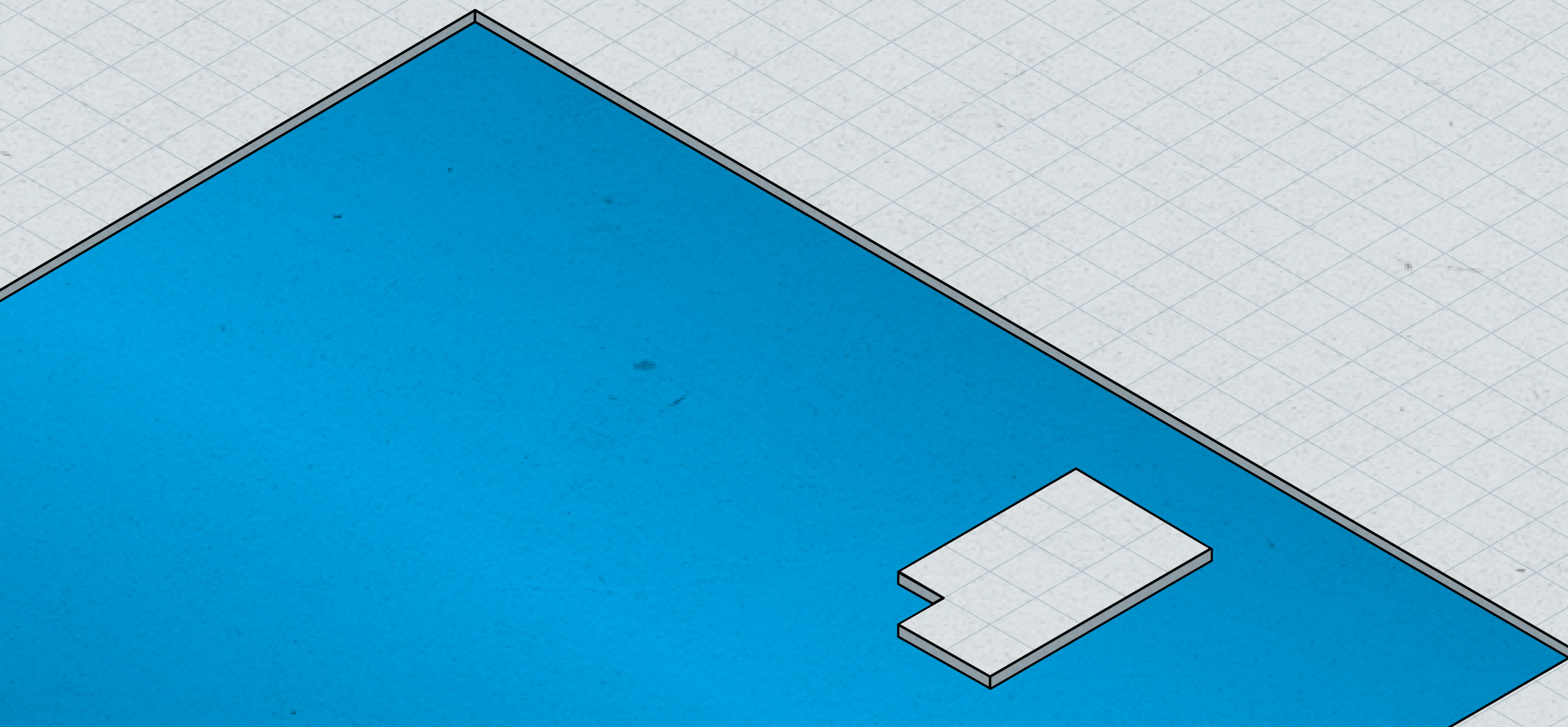


COMMUNITY IMPACT IN LEARNING MOBILITY PROJECTS A PRACTICAL GUIDE



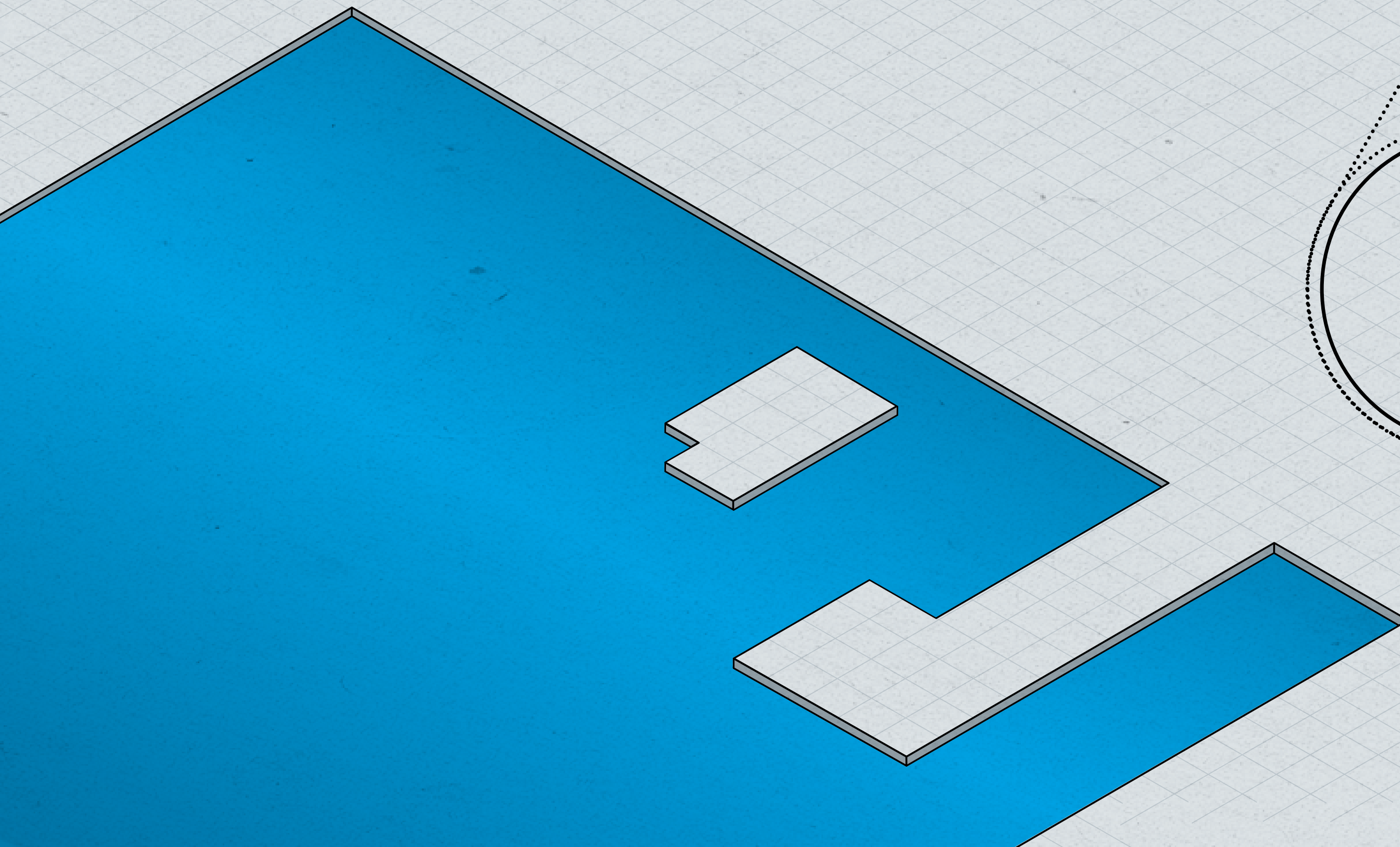
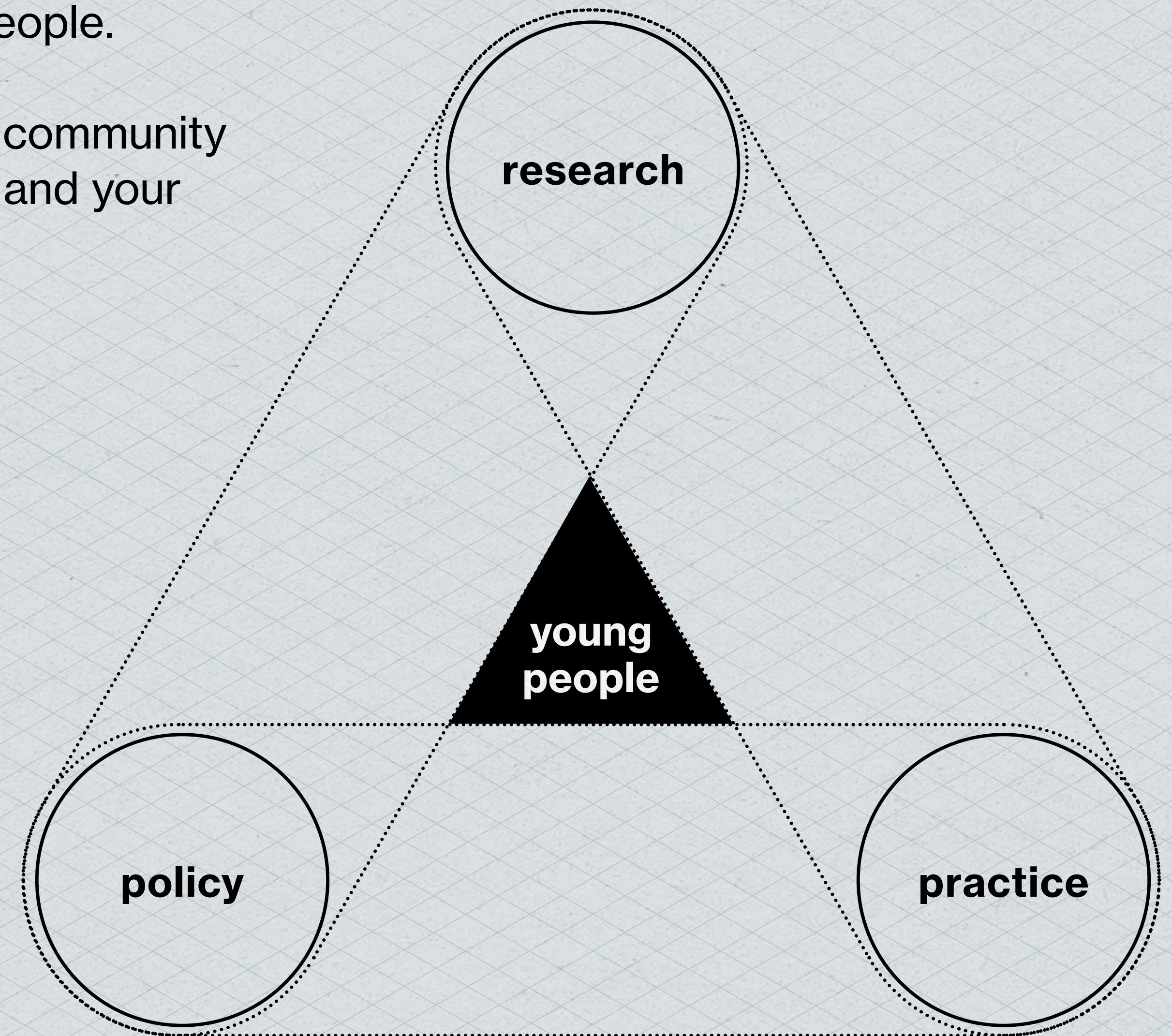
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The European Solidarity Corps balances personal and professional competence development with community impact.

The European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre is a member of the European Platform for Learning Mobility (EPLM), connecting research, practice and policy to the needs of young people.

What follows is a translation of recent research about community impact. We hope it gives some practical ideas for you and your projects with and for young people.



**this guide can
help when you are:**

creating your projects

applying for funding

analysing your project

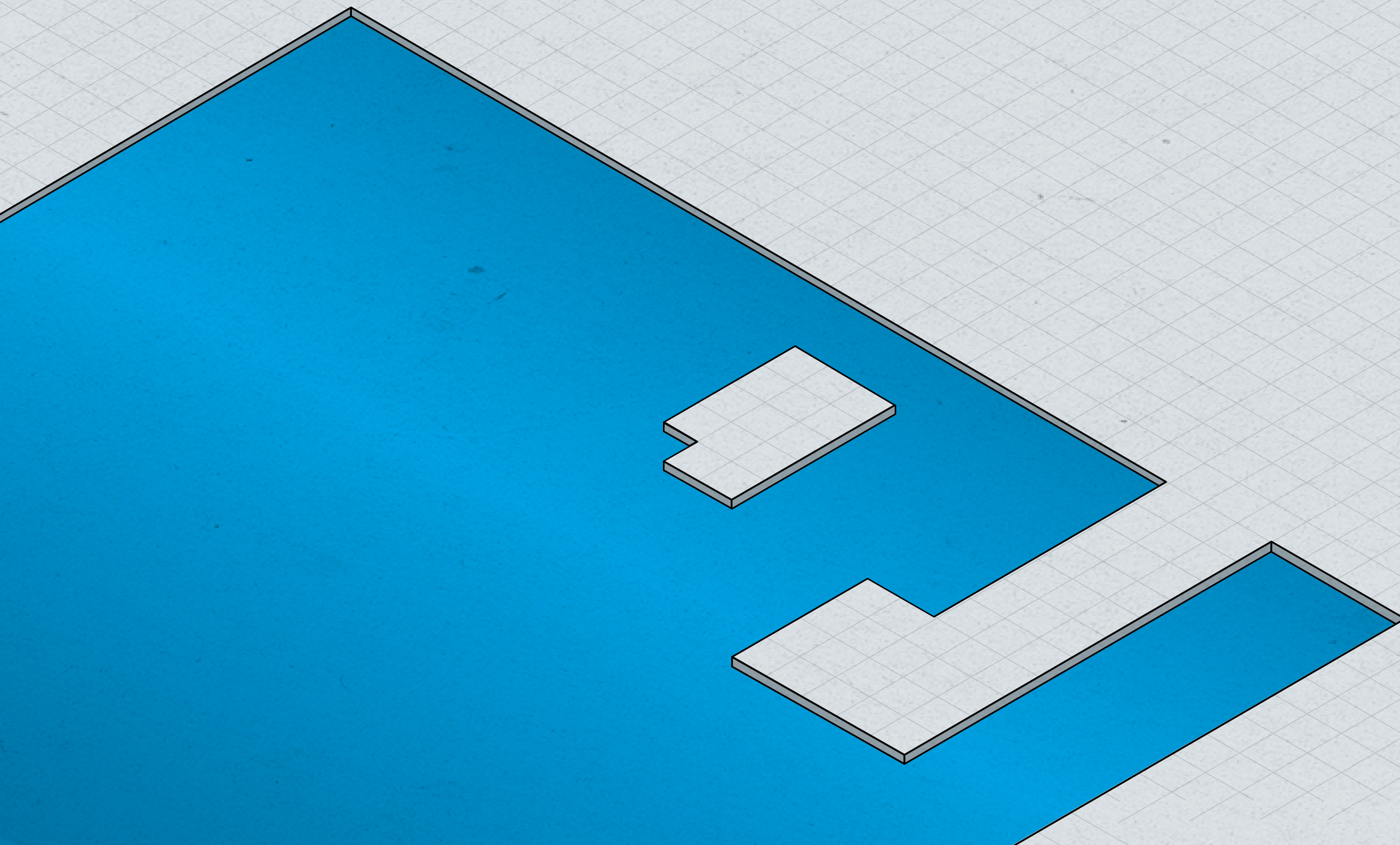
adjusting your project

Why is Community Impact important?

With effective assessment tools, we can understand how learning mobilities impact communities. Then we can recognise the good work that is done. We can change and improve existing (and future) learning mobility projects. We can adapt programmes to have more impact.

Why are we talking about it now?

The added angle of community impact, as part of the European Solidarity Corps, is a new thing for many organisations. We want to give a framework to help people understand it. Even with restricted movements, community impact can still be found at a very local level or online. 'Community' is becoming the frame that many projects and activities are linked to.



**1.
What does community
actually mean?**

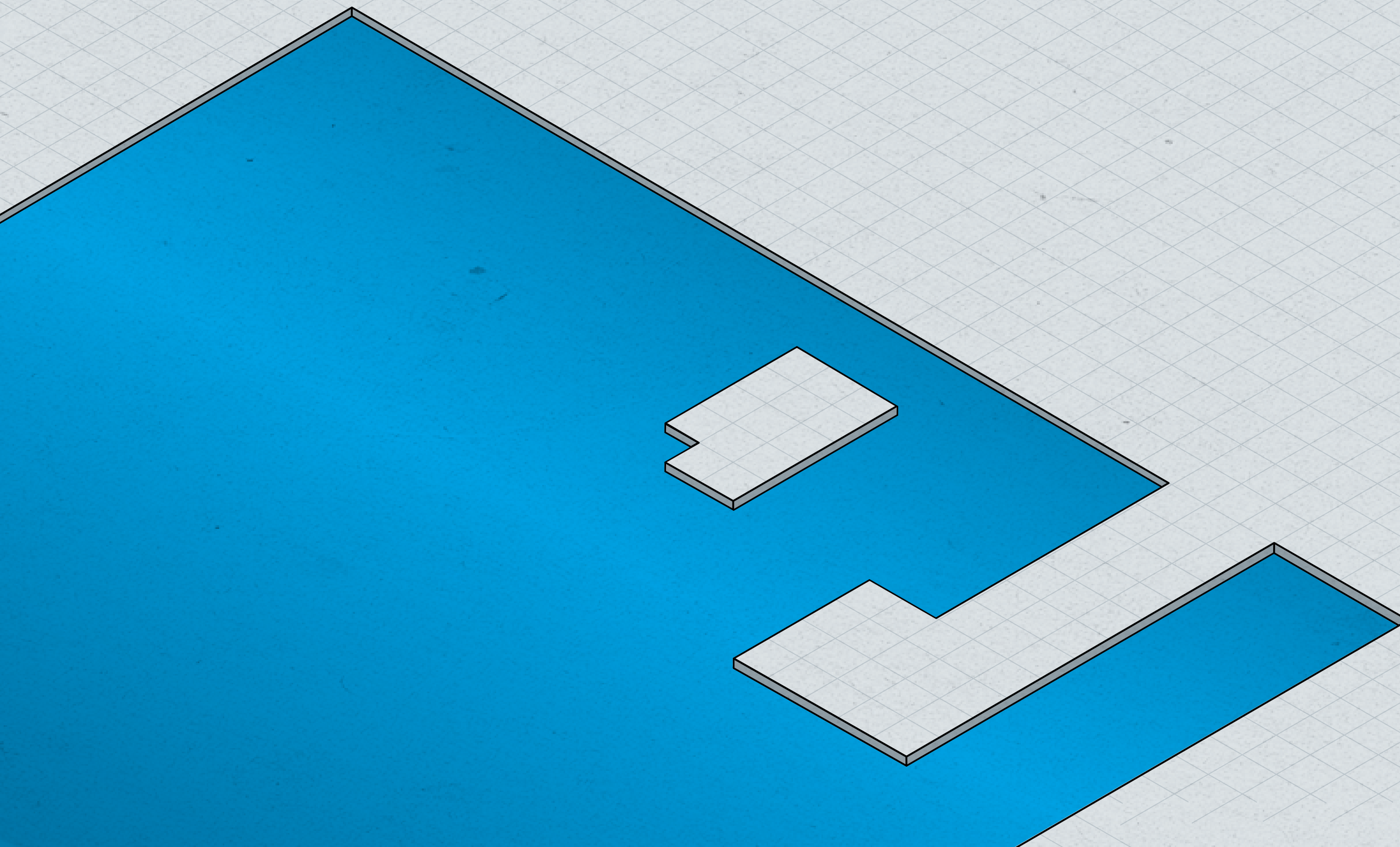
**2.
What is impact?**

**3.
How do we experience
community impact?**

**4.
Why do we need to
know about impact**

**5.
Impact in Solidarity
Corps projects**

**6.
Good practices in
learning mobility for
more and stronger
community impact**



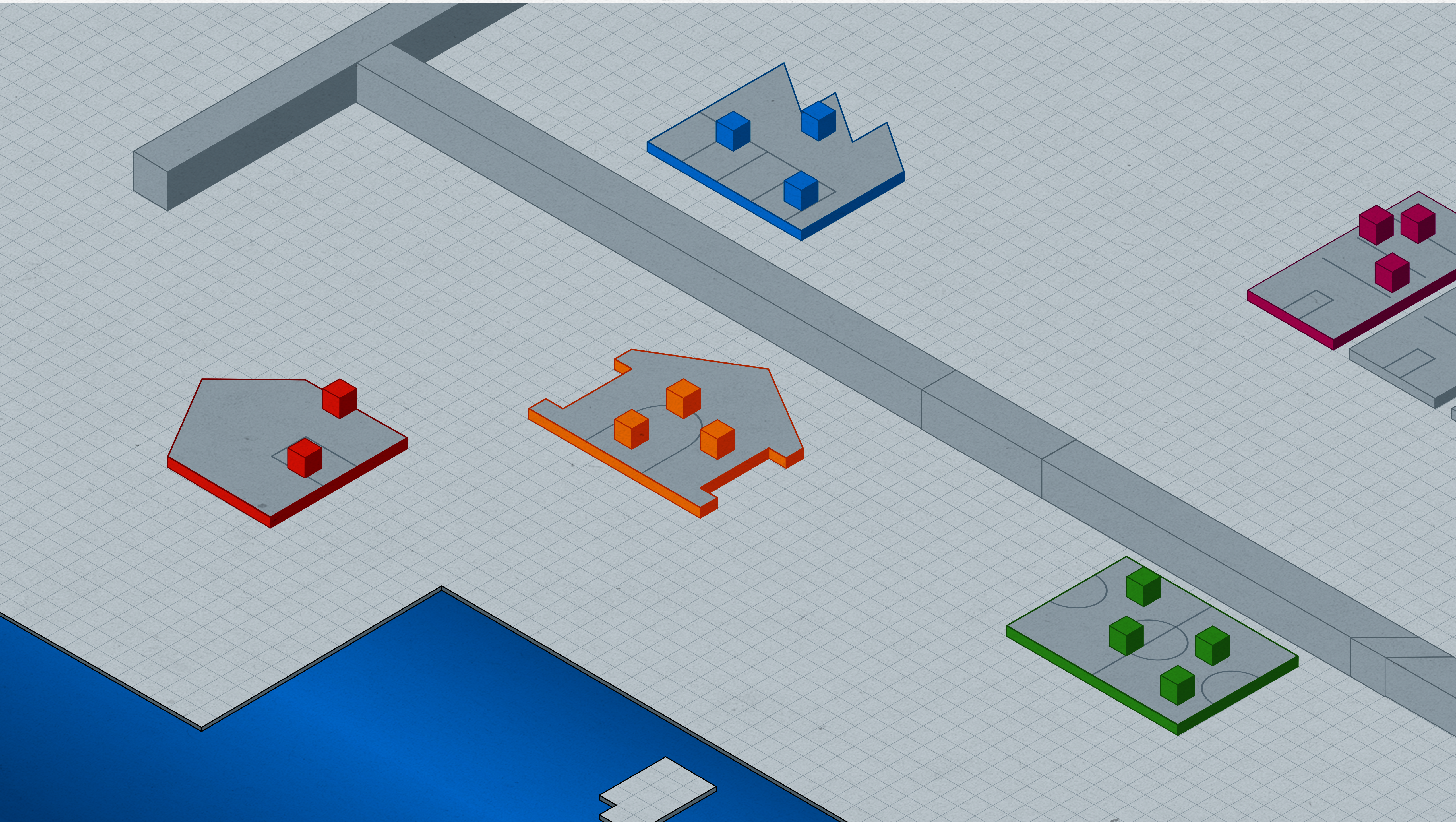
1.

**WHAT DOES COMMUNITY
ACTUALLY MEAN?**

In a community we find...

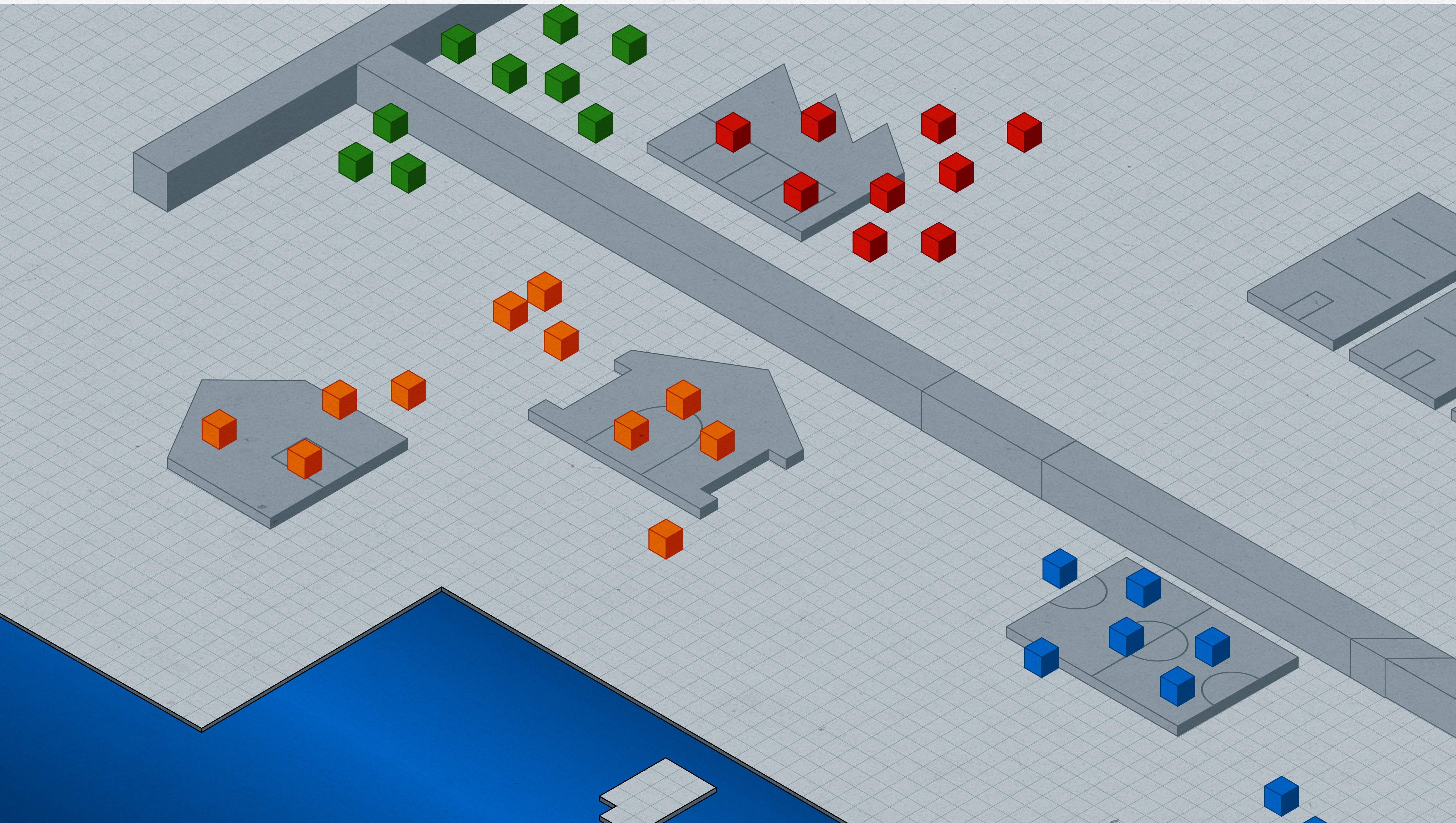
Social groups which consist of two or more people who regularly interact, share mutual expectations and some aspects of identity.

Organisations which are groups of people that share agreed objectives/goals together.

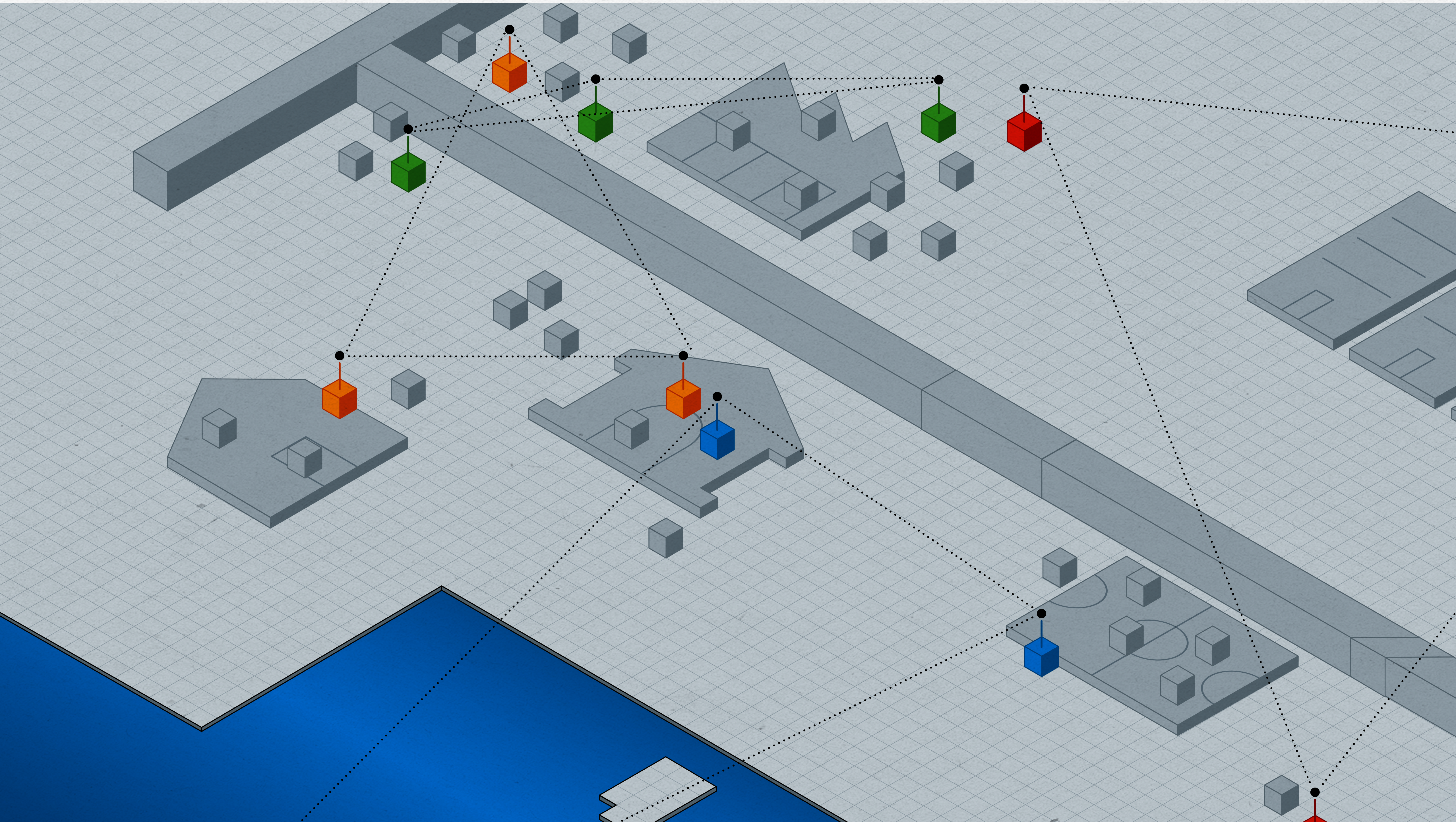


But then what is a community?

A community is broader and includes a sense of belonging. It requires an attitude of responsibility that connects and brings people together. In simple terms, it's about having empathy and being there for others. Communities were always seen as a local neighbourhood, a village, a city – **connected and limited by geography**. But they can also be a region, a country, or even a group of countries.



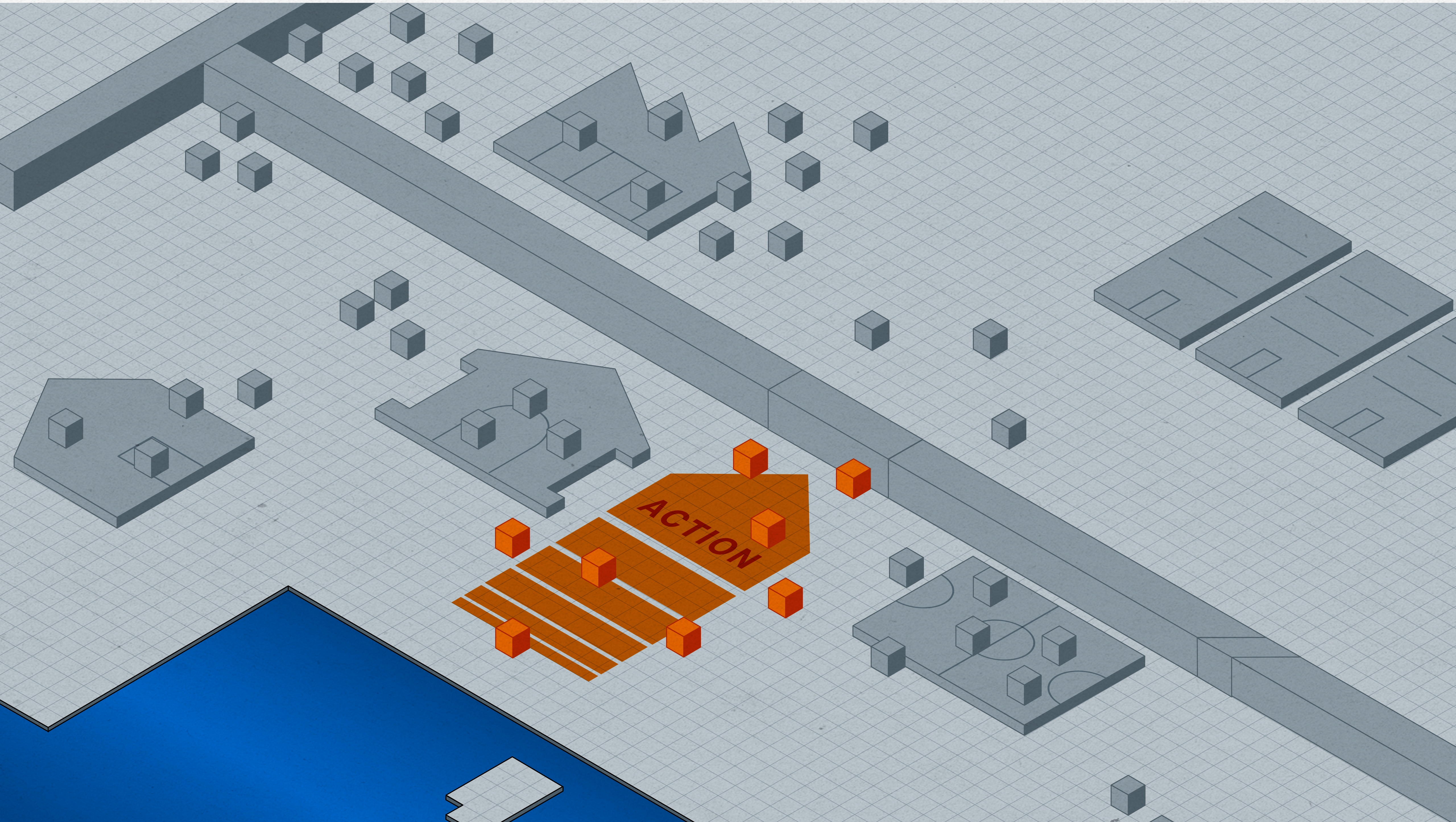
Communities can also be defined by other things, not just geography.
These communities are connected through shared ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation...
And you can also have **online or blended communities**, if the interaction around a common interest is totally or partially assisted by technology, under common principles.



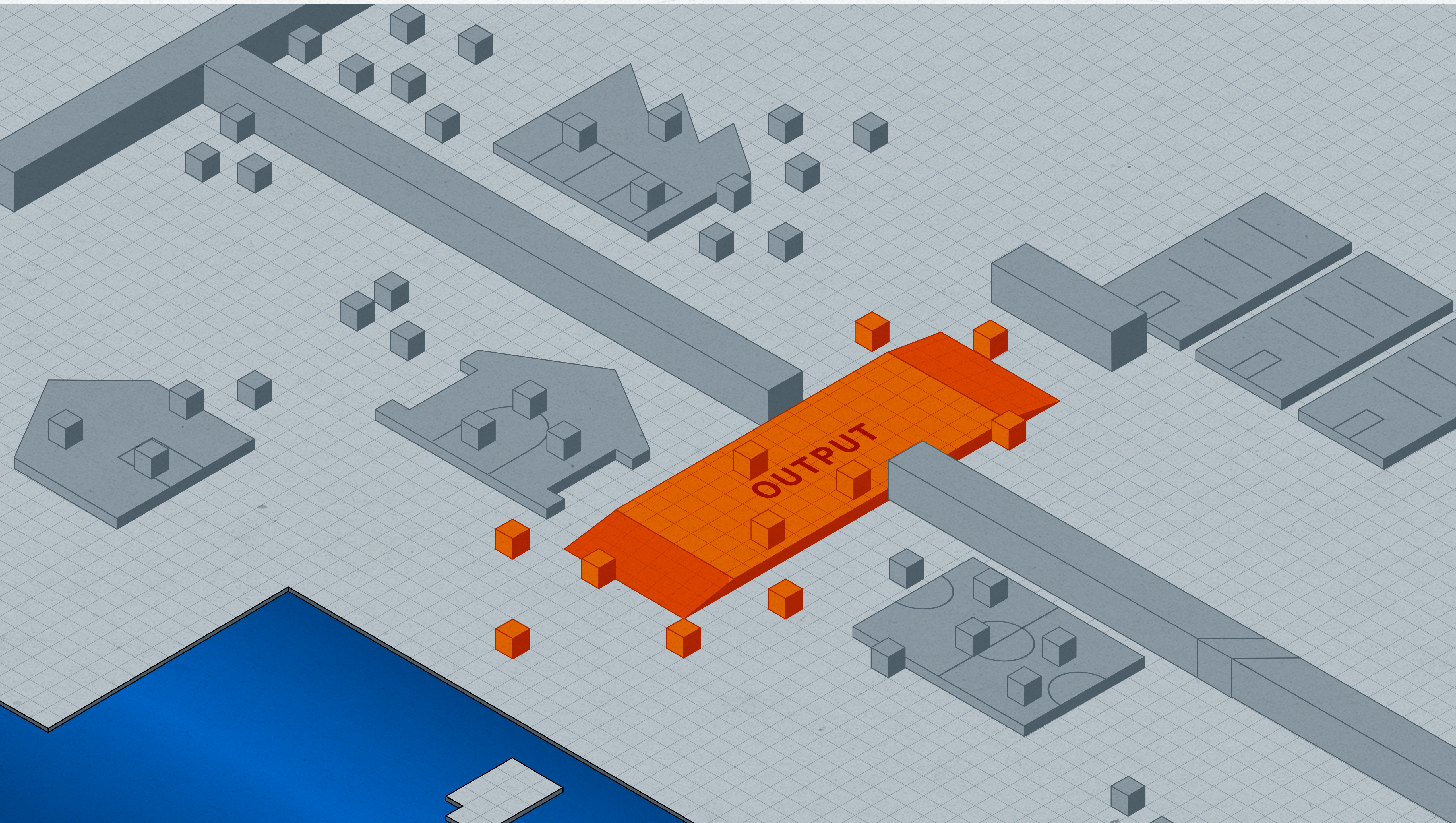
2.

WHAT IS IMPACT?

Taking **action** generates an output.

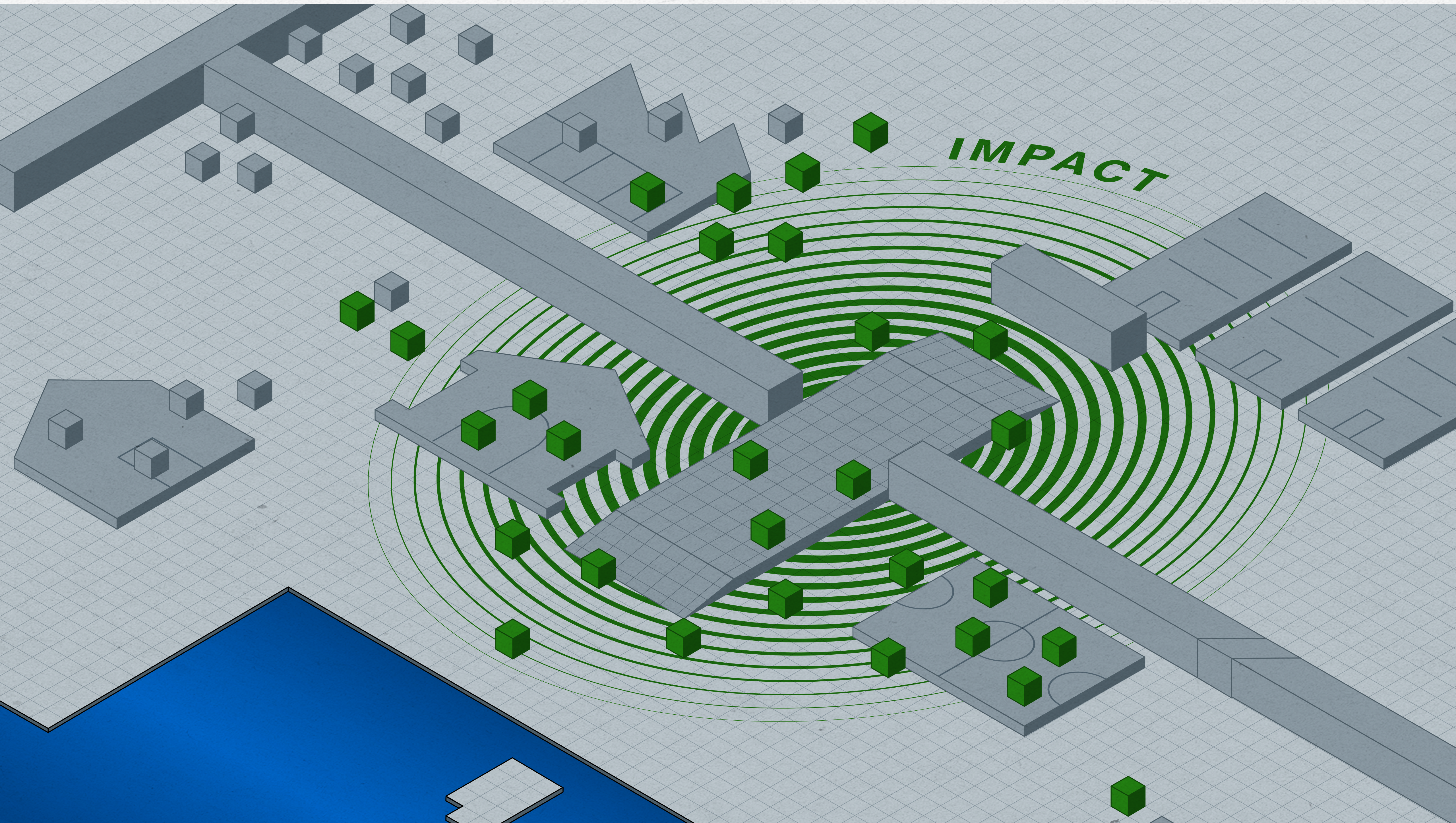


An **output** is a result which was intended and achieved by the project, but it is different from impact.

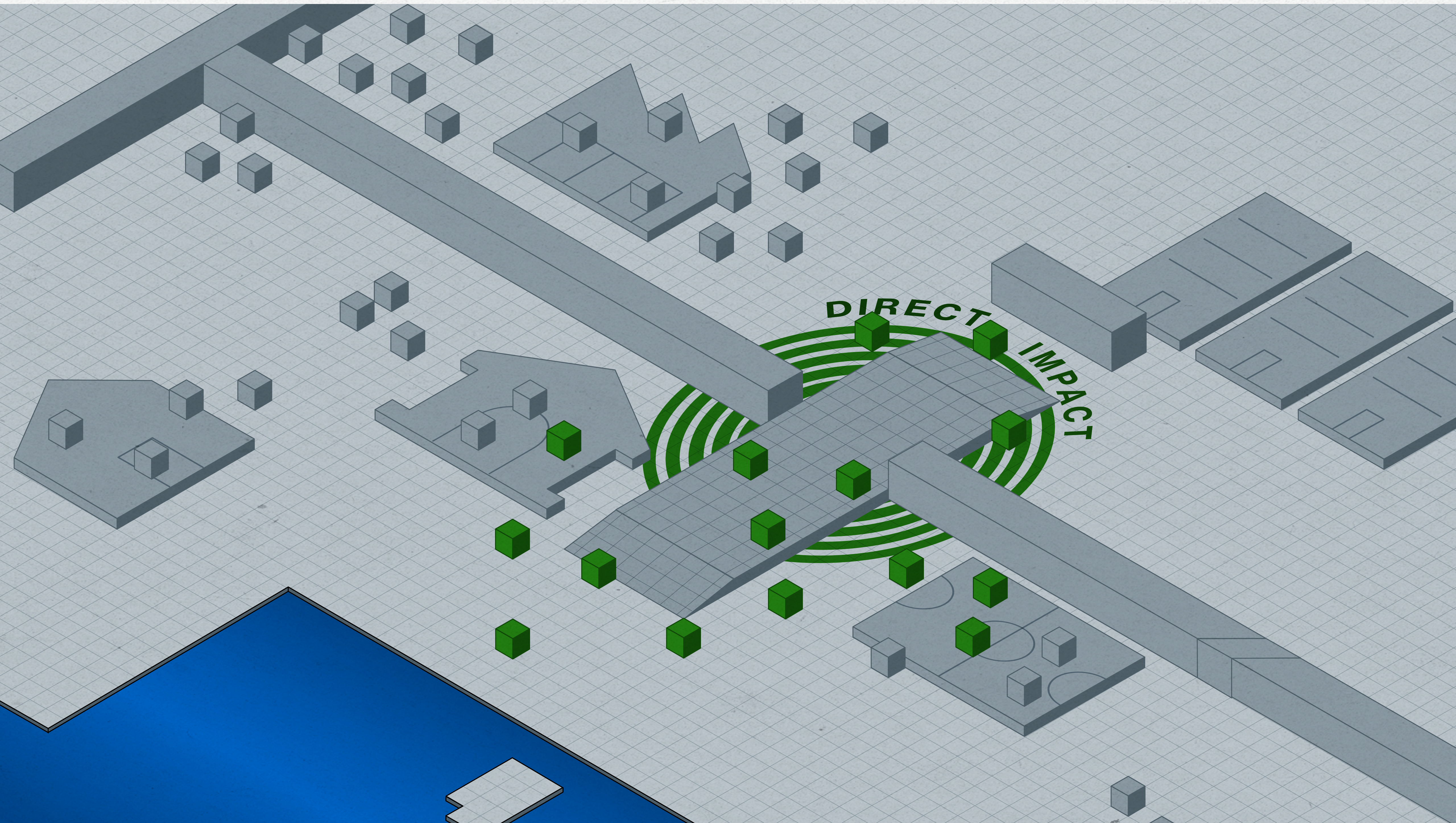


Impact is the effect which the outputs have on individuals, organisations, systems, policies or the community.
Impact can have lots of dimensions.

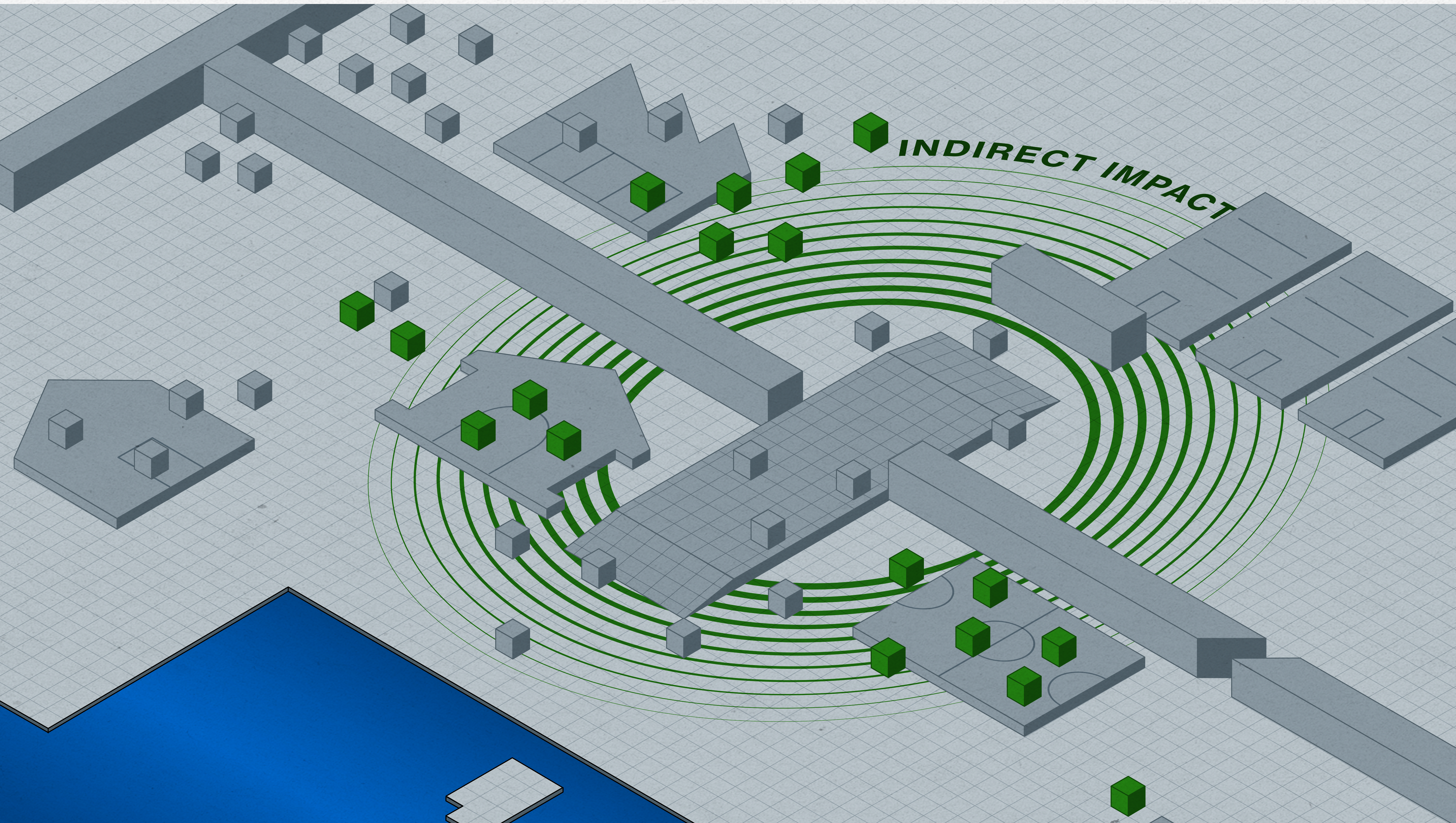
All these types of impact are important to consider for your learning mobility projects.



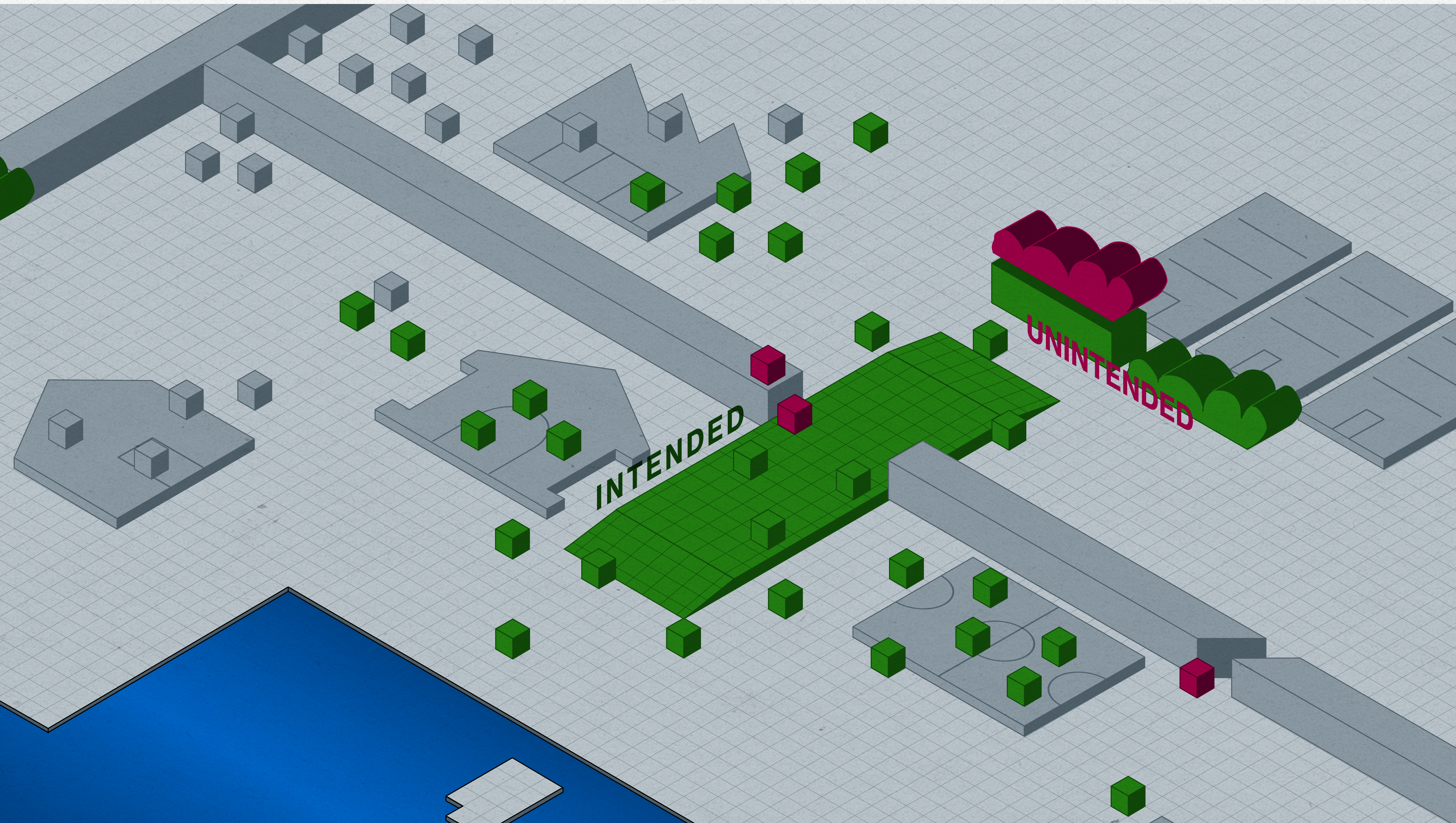
Direct impact happens through action and interaction with the members of the community



Indirect impact happens to members of the community, who did not take part in building the community space, yet were affected by the new space or the activities done there.



Intended impact is often defined in the objectives of the project (“we aim to change X, Y, Z”).
Unintended impact can also happen and should be captured by your monitoring.
This can also happen later, when the project is finished (like a garden being planted, because your project helped make a community space as an output).



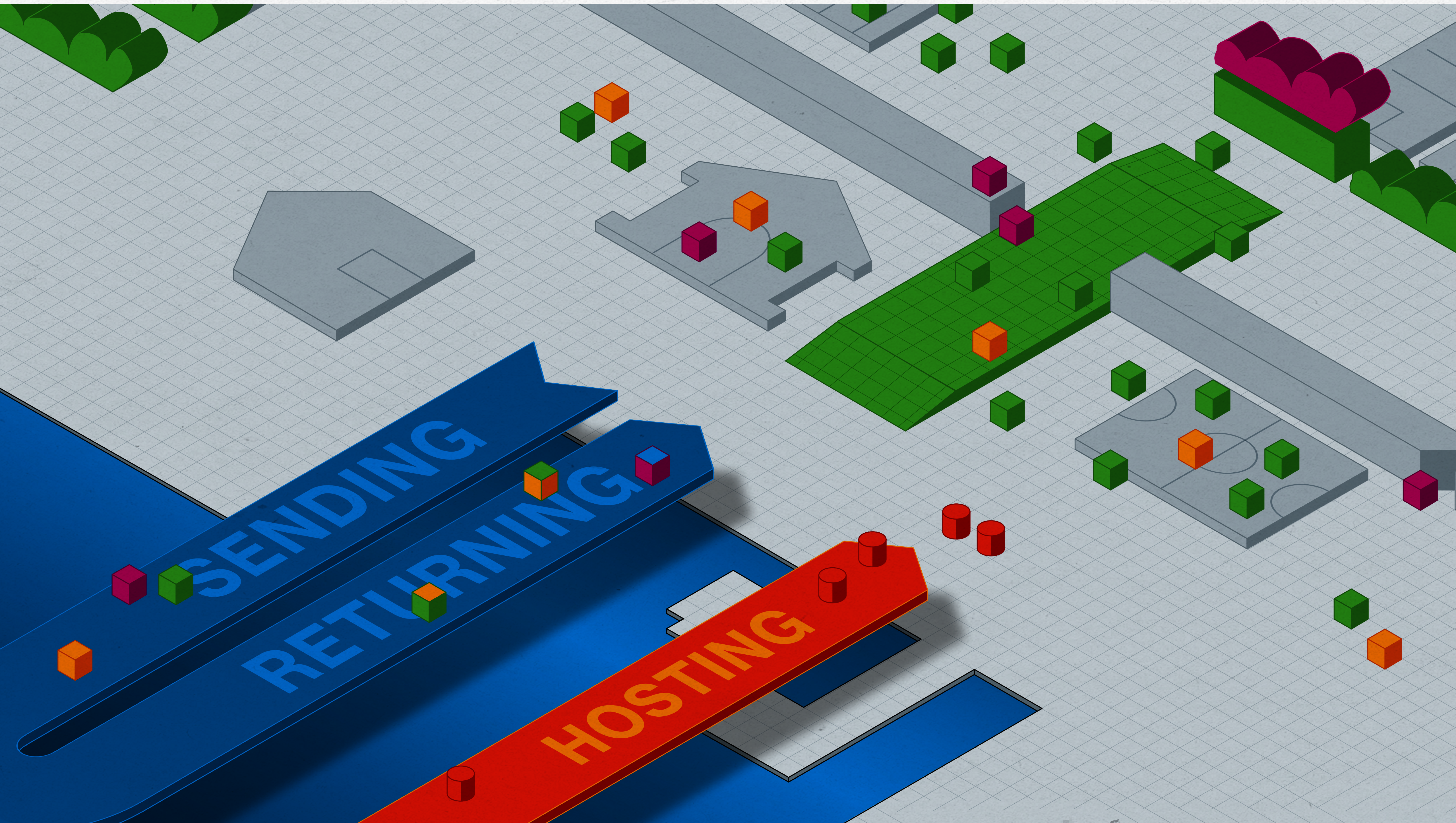
Intended and unintended impact can be both **positive** and **negative**. The host community feeling 'taken over' by the increased numbers of international activities and people, or a brain drain phenomenon from the sending community, are unintended negative effects.



3.

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY IMPACT

Community impact might be experienced differently, depending if the community is **hosting** new members, is **sending** members away or if a person **comes back** after the mobility more experienced and more skilled.



There are different **levels** at which impact can be felt.

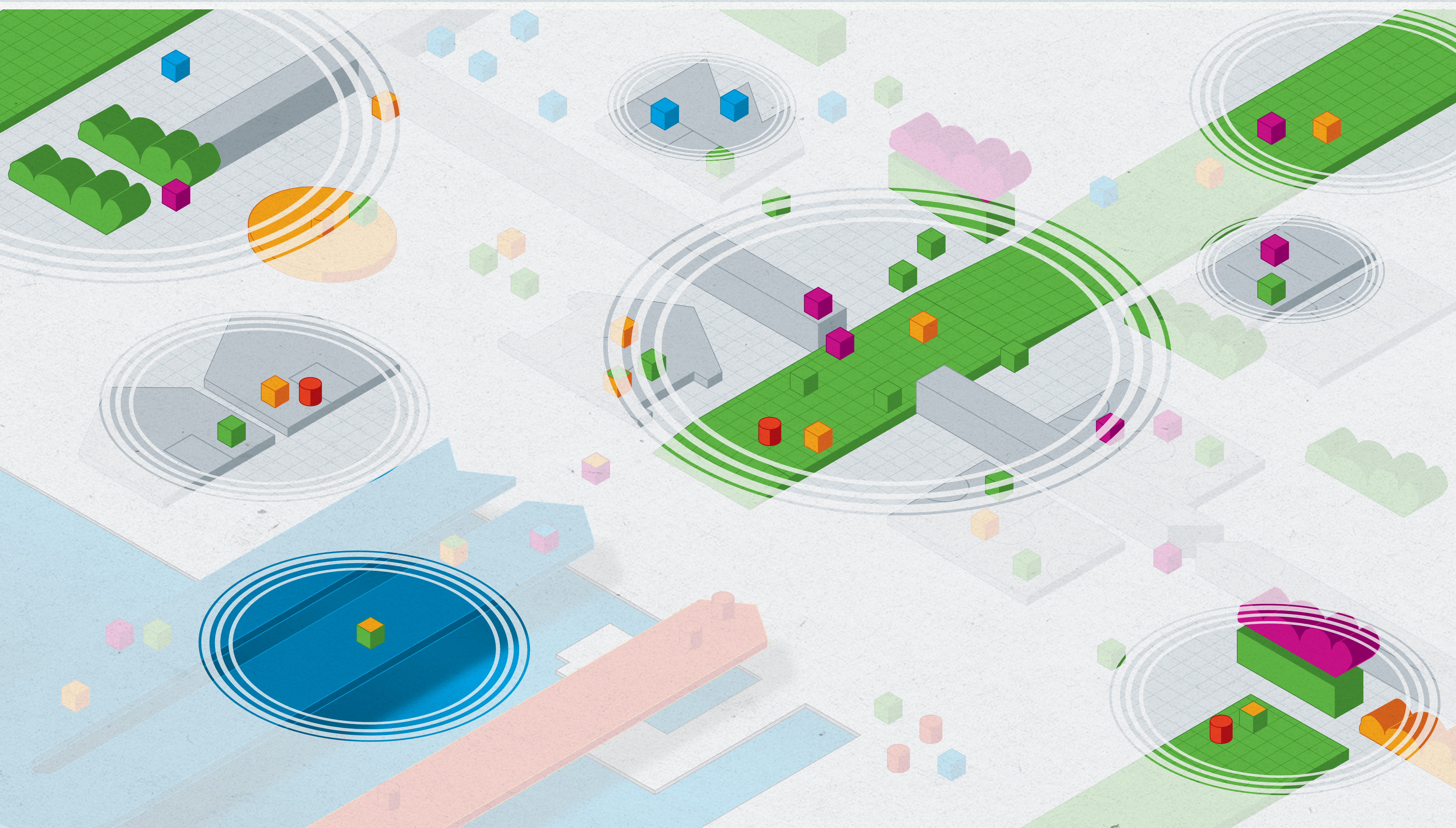
Micro-level impact focuses on the project itself – the participants of the project, young people in NGOs, the local community and partner organisations directly linked to the project.



Meso-level impact targets the community more widely – youth workers, mentors, multipliers, other organisations active in the youth sector, other stakeholders.



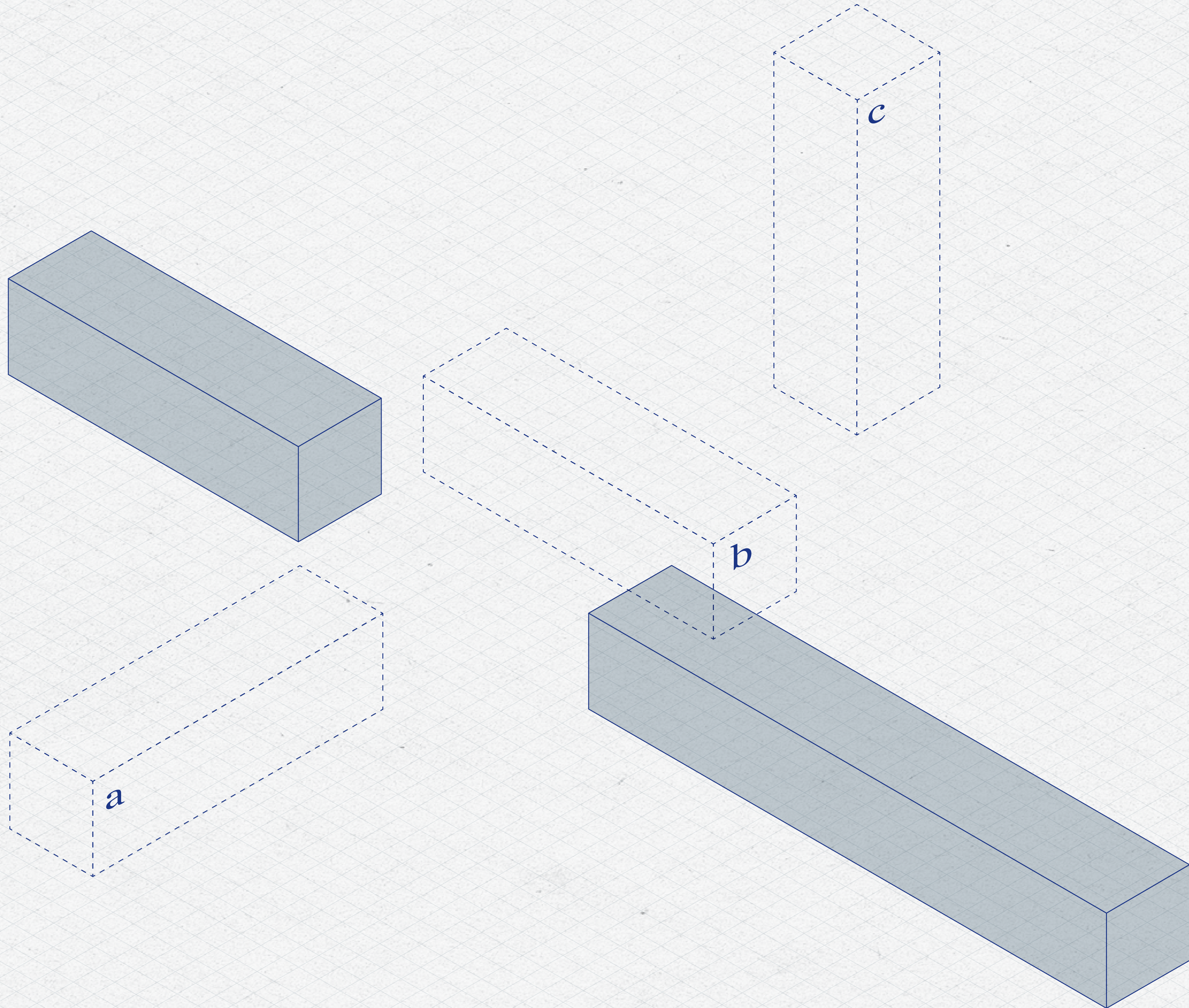
Macro-level impact is about feeding policy developments – at regional, national or European level, or at the level of the European programme, rather than at individual project level.



4.

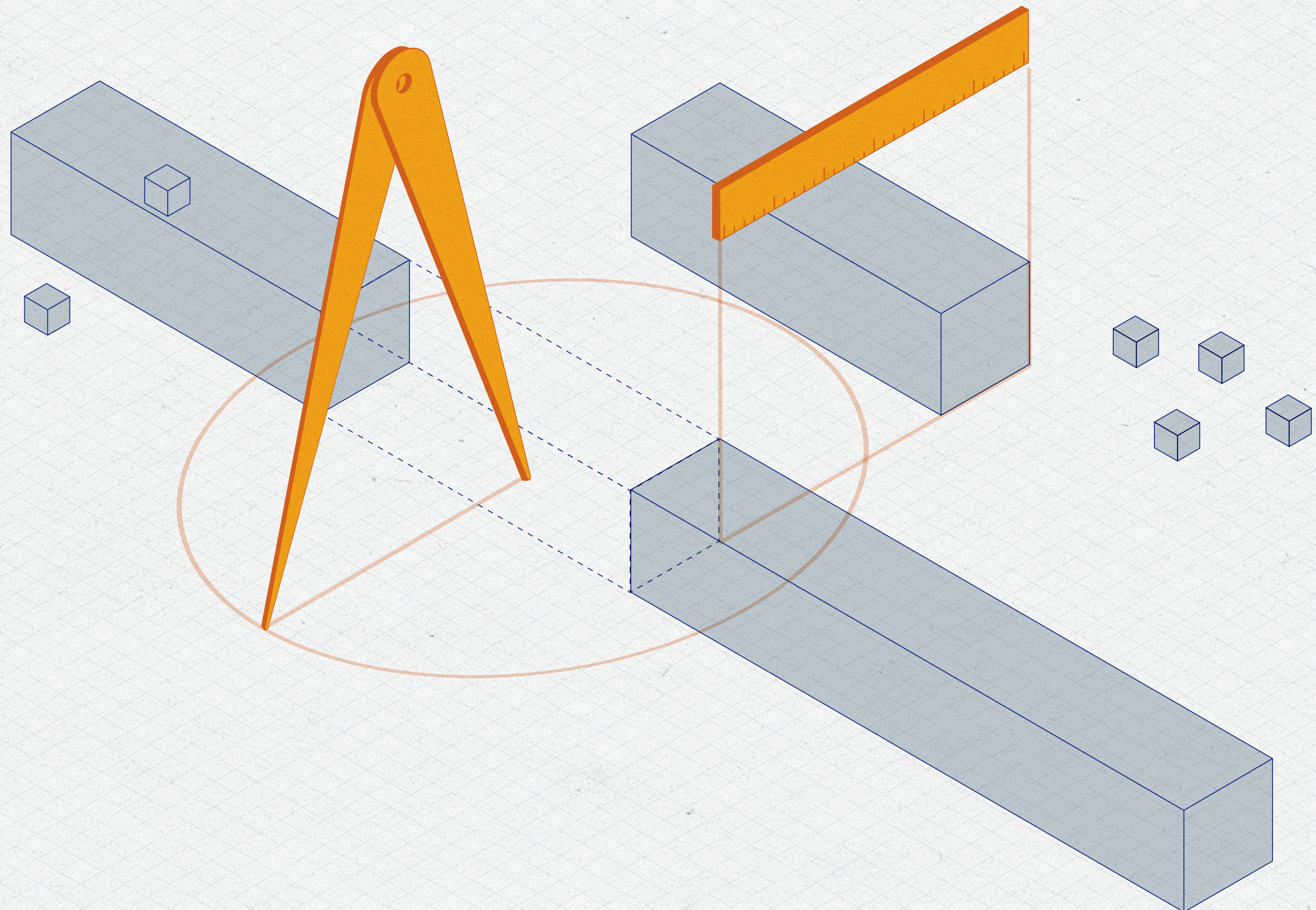
**HOW TO KNOW IF
THE IMPACT IS THERE?
AND WHEN/HOW
TO MEASURE IT**

**Decide what kind of change you want
to see after your learning mobility project.**



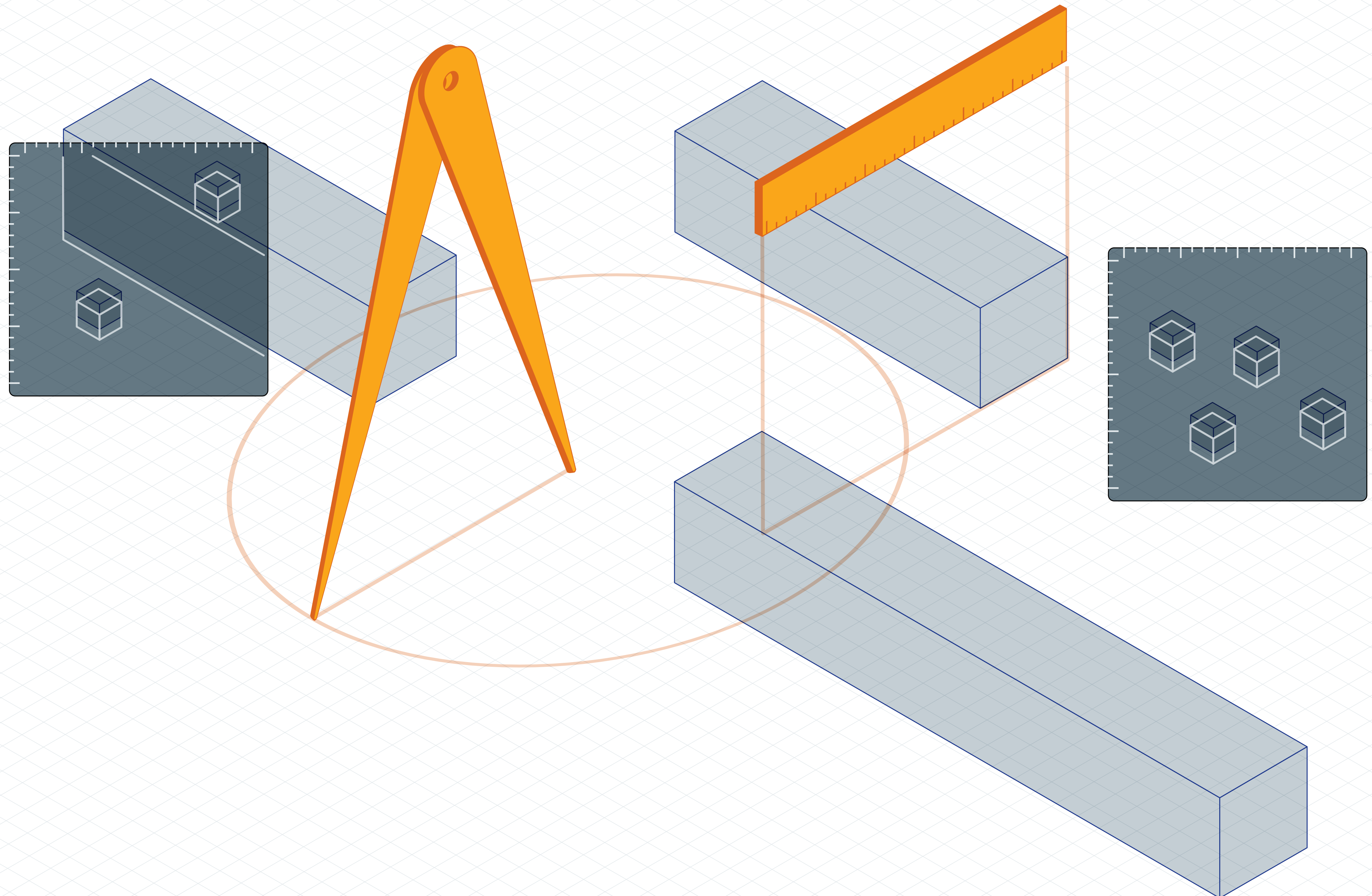
**Consider what is the best tool to measure the change:
questionnaire, interview, focus group, observation
of certain processes in the community...**

**! Use the same tool
before the project,
during the project
and after the project.**

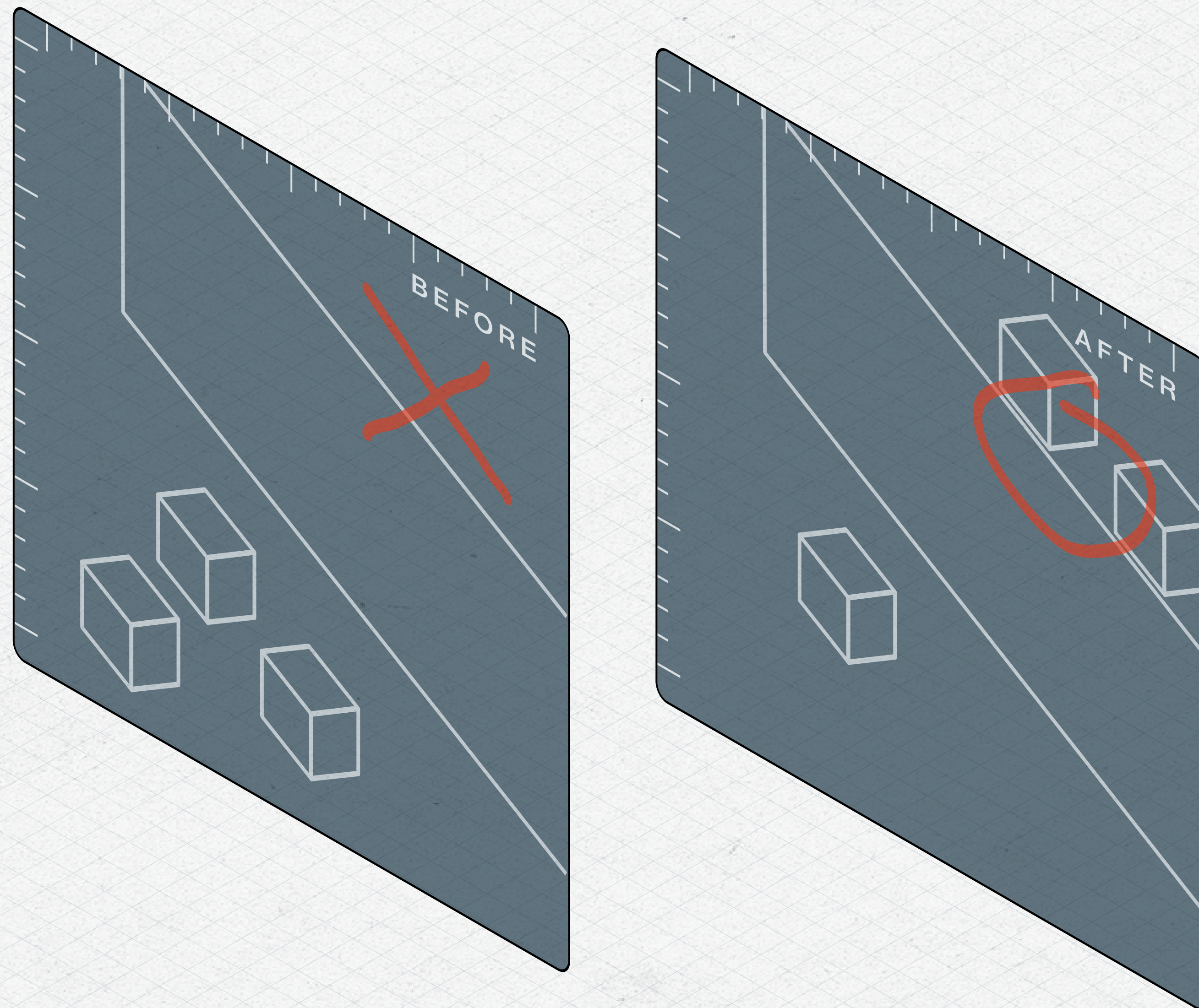


**To see how the change is happening,
include observation of the community
in your project's monitoring strategy.**

**You can do it by using descriptions
of what is happening in the community.**



**The change that you will see in the answers
before the project and after the project
(or notes from the observation),
will show the impact that your project had.**



The difficult part is...

assessing if the change that happened in the community is connected exclusively to your Learning Mobility project or if it was influenced by other experiences that the community had.

What to do?

Have a benchmark starting point.

Be precise in describing the change and the scale of it.

Look at the difference between before the learning mobility and after it – this shows the impact.

Look into what else was happening in the community while you were implementing the project.

Don't take credit for all the impact if your project has only contributed to some level of change in the community. Contributing is very important too – so feel free to mention it!

5.

IMPACT IN EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS PROJECTS

**Now we understand what is community, and what is impact,
some thinking around community impact and examples of how
it can look like in European Solidarity Corps Projects.**

Possible effects from all types/formats of Solidarity Corps projects

System change	Changing the cause, not just helping with the effect (eg. changing the local policy about garbage recycling, not just picking up litter)		
	Procedures/ processes	Adjustment of logic or more inclusion of others in the procedures etc	
	Community cohesion (eg. increase in feeling of safety)		
	Services provided (eg. more volunteer coordinators)		
	Social justice	Equalising disadvantages	
	Increased participation of young people	Voice – engage with policy makers to make a change	
		Action – create change themselves	
	Increased resources for identified problem (eg. more youth workers and time given to a particular topic)		
Awareness raised	On a specific issue or a need in the community (eg. bringing to the surface a sub-culture that has been hidden (eg. LGBTQ+))		
Physical change	Infrastructure	Buildings (eg. better youth club)	
		Facilities (eg. playthings for children)	
	Environmental improvements	Cleaner	
		Protected	
		Painted	
	Health & well-being	Physical, mental, social, spiritual	
Social capital increased	Connections within community and with others	Trust	Mutual benefit
	Bonding (within the group) or bridging (to another group)		

Possible effects from all types/formats of Solidarity Corps projects

Competence development for participants (output of the project)

Change in themselves

The change they make because they have changed (what they go on to do afterwards)

Increased involvement in education, employment, training, etc

Involvement in further activities, volunteering, projects, etc

Knowledge, skills, attitudes and values

Effects on others in the community

Participant’s connections

Family / Parents

Friends, School, other contacts

Staff at applicant organisation

Those involved in project

Those not directly involved

Those directly involved or impacted by the project

Other NGOs involved in project

Target audience of project events/activities

Suppliers / venues used by the project

Those directly and indirectly affected by results of the project

Those that use/are affected by the outcome

Those that are aware of the project (eg. see a street party etc)

**Quality
elements:
community
impact
should...**

**Connect to the values
of youth work,
or the European values**

**Connected to the 4 cornerstones
of the 4Thought Research
of the European Solidarity Corps
Resource Centre**

**Inclusion,
Human Rights,
Active Citizenship,
Empathy**

**Connected to the 7 supporting
concepts of the 4Thought Research:
Support, Equal Opportunities,
Active Participation, Responsibility,
Social Justice, Volunteering,
Strengthening communities**

**Be sure to include young people
with fewer opportunities**

**Have a bonding effect (improving
something within the same
community group) and/or a
bridging effect (connecting
different community groups)**

Be measured

For both intended and non-intended consequences

**Be considered at what level it is?
Local, regional, national,
European, global?**

**All projects in the
European Solidarity Corps
can have impact at these
levels, or more than one
level at a time**

Be sustainable and long-term

**With a wider impact (eg. environment which affects many
people) or longer impact (eg. on future generations)**

**Connect to the values of youth
work, or the European values**

Community impact for different project types in European Solidarity Corps

Solidarity projects	Raise profile of applicant group on local/regional leve		
	The Solidarity Project output	Has positive communal effect	
		Increased commitment, participation and active citizenship of young people involved	European values and resources brought to local level
			Channeling of values and behavious into a positive direction
			Reduction of any potential anti-social behaviour
	Expand role, ethos and recognition of volunteering for a cause, or to change something		
	Improve cross-sectorial & relationships (eg. intergenerational connections)	Build social capital on local/regional leve	
		Wider eco-system of youth and community work	
	Reinforce communities of interest	Shared values or common objectives	
		Incresed community cohesion and social mixing of the diverse identities	
	Solidarity traineeships and job projects	Increased resource	Sustainability
			More able to support civil society/ youth sector
Team volunteering	Supports the organisation/employer		
	Increases sustainability - provides longer-term effect for the benefit the organisation provides to the community		
	Support a skills shortage		
	Build social capital on local/national/ international level		
	Project option that can provide continuation after other (volunteering) funds are used	Long-term funding model	Sustainability
	Focus on team skills, specially for less privileged young people		
	Creating a ‘community’ within the team itself (within the group)		

Community impact for different project types in European Solidarity Corps

In-country volunteering

Participation in projects that impact the community

Integration

Those with fewer opportunities

Increase social cohesion

European values at local level

More different people with involvement in (and recognition of) volunteering

International volunteering

Benefit from interculturality

Languages

Alternative perspectives

Resulting from different education / cultural / value systems

Reflect on views and impressions

Highlight strengths and weaknesses

Share practice between communities

Hosting someone from a different country demands understanding and adaptation

Intercultural competence

Build social capital on local, regional, national and international level

Increase sustainability of organisations, and services/support they can give community

More than one community to be impacted - think long term community impact (before, during and after the project)

Hosting community

Sending/Returnee/home community

Online communities

Returnees have impact on home/ sending community too

Global perspectives

Raised awareness on development work and how it's needed in other places

Possibility to shape attitudes and change mindsets

Combine co-funding opportunities between partners

Profit from shared resources/ alternative funding sources

National or bilateral funding that's not available for all countries

6.

GOOD PRACTICES ON LEARNING MOBILITY FOR MORE AND STRONGER COMMUNITY IMPACT

For more practical tips when organising learning mobility projects, check out www.qualitymobility.app

How to increase community impact?

- + Build quality connection to others**
- + Balance the competence in the project team**
- + Prepare participants**
- + Cooperate with other sectors**
- + Work on inclusion**
- + Evaluation**
- + Promote common achievements**
- + Respect the community**
- + Reintegration**
- + Sending community**

What can you do practically?

- + Do your project activities in/with the community**
- + Do activities with others outside the learning programme**
- + Multiplier events**

Who else can you include from the community?

- + Different people on different levels**
- + Other Solidarity Corps potential applicants**
- + Support local organisations/social enterprises and businesses**

How to increase community impact?

+ Build quality connection to others

Involve host communities in your project implementation and facilitate **mutual learning** between participants and locals. This can be achieved by **supporting the initiatives** of other local groups and organisations and by increasing your **social capital**: new connections, networks and resources. Make use of the **public spaces** available and widen your reach by engaging local (young) people in some **programme activities**, always ensuring a **balance** between participants and locals. Be mindful of the **uniqueness** of hosting your project in that specific community and reflect and debrief with young people on how to **transfer** lessons learned into their own personal context when back home in their sending community.

For local Solidarity Projects, the young people are part of the community where the project happens - but can still reach out wider to others as part of the project, and afterwards.

+ Balance the competence in the project team

+ Prepare participants

+ Cooperate with other sectors

+ Work on inclusion

+ Evaluation

+ Promote common achievements

+ Respect the community

+ Reintegration

+ Sending community

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**

Make sure the staff member is ready and competent enough to **guide and mentor young people** to get involved in the project, fostering their **readiness to interact locally**.

A good approach is to **empower young people's emotional and social competences** (self-esteem, resilience,...). Other useful tips: the staff should have a good level of **knowledge about** the local area/issues/needs/people and appropriate access to it; they should have resources to incorporate these needs into a programme; make sure that you have the right (balance of) **competence and resources** in the staff team; also, make sure to have a diverse team composition taking gender, inclusion aspects, age, etc into consideration.

- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**

Start from the clear motivation and expectations of young people and recognise their ideas and views regarding the interactions with the local community. Prepare the group for the interactions: what to do or not to do, intercultural preparation, how to deal with local resources, surroundings, etc.

- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**

First, **brainstorm** all the contacts who could be interested or affected by your project.

You can then **reach out to other organisations** to inform about the project and invite them to be connected to it. Your project will have more community impact if you **work together** with these other actors. Think: who can contribute through common action as part of your project? How can you find a **win-win** for this interaction, so both sides gain from being connected? Think about: **exchanging good practices** with each other, understanding what **social change means** for them, sharing the **needs assessment** of targeted groups and involving them at all times in your project's milestones (briefing, preparing, planning, implementing, follow-up and in the main decision-making processes). Create social media groups (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) not only for the participants in the learning mobility but including other stakeholders as well. Think how to build **meaningful relationships** with people that have a specific role in the project – don't take their contribution for granted as a one-off. This will help build a more sustainable **social capital** for you and your organisation. Do intercultural and language preparation for everyone that might need it.

- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**

Include more young people who do not usually participate in learning mobility projects.

Reach wider into the community to find them. Have someone directly activating and supporting the young people with fewer opportunities, with a problem-solving attitude to make sure that all who want to can participate. Have a way to collect everyone's **needs**, and enough resources to provide for those; make sure **equality is a value** throughout the project.

- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**

You need to assess **how and if impact is there**. We showed you some ways to measure this in this Practical Guide. You could include the participants, organisations, contributing partners and locals in the process of reflecting on the impact of the learning mobility on them and their community. This is called **participatory research**. Consider also **longer term** evaluation (more than a couple of weeks after the event), so remember to collect people's contact data (but be careful of GDPR)! Evaluation isn't something to think about after a project – it should be planned from the **beginning as an integral part**.

- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**

It is important to promote (and celebrate!) the **synergies and common achievements** that you create with the local community. Why not organise **public presentations** of experiences/ results or results through a **round table or forum** and to **involve experts** on the topic, or **share the results or final product** of your project with them?

- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + Build quality connection to others
- + Balance the competence in the project team
- + Prepare participants
- + Cooperate with other sectors
- + Work on inclusion
- + Evaluation
- + Promote common achievements
- + Respect the community

It is important that your project is not a **'bubble'** and that you fully respect the community.

It is difficult to ensure positive community impact otherwise. You need to: understand the **community concerns and priorities** and support **collective** community decision-making processes; build on the existing traditional social practices of community cooperation (**don't impose solutions**); use a community-based approach, allowing the community to **express its needs and agency** regarding their own empowerment. The key is to be mindful, creative and humble and keep to the **Do No Harm** principle (i.e. not to exacerbate discrimination, stigmatisation or abuse of any kind).

- + Reintegration
- + Sending community

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**

(Positive) community impact in the host community where the project takes place is wonderful, but you can also expand it to reflect on participants and on the community they come from (sending community), and that is why community impact has so much potential. When someone returns home from a mobility project, plan with them how they will multiply their learning and what ideas they have for further change?

On an organisational level there can be learning and change too - how will the experience, new opportunities and lessons learned affect the daily offers and activities of both the hosting and sending organisations?

- + **Sending community**

How to increase community impact?

- + **Build quality connection to others**
- + **Balance the competence in the project team**
- + **Prepare participants**
- + **Cooperate with other sectors**
- + **Work on inclusion**
- + **Evaluation**
- + **Promote common achievements**
- + **Respect the community**
- + **Reintegration**
- + **Sending community**

The sending community has assets and strengths that should be identified and mobilised before, during and after the learning mobility project. The project can increase the sending organisation's capacity and resources too, and affect future decisions and actions it takes. This will also allow you to improve its openness and resilience, through lessons learned. Very important! Remember that there are no "size fits all" solutions, your community has its own identity, priorities, resources. Bring the added value of different communities together, but remember to be flexible and open to be able to maximise positive impact.

What can you do practically?

- + **Do your project activities in/with the community**
- + **Do activities with others outside the learning programme**
- + **Multiplier events**

What can you do practically?

- + **Do your project activities in/with the community**

To have a positive impact on the community, think how to fully embrace it and engage with it. Some **practical ideas** that you can pick up on are: treasure hunts, city tours, charity work, interviews with locals, street art and other artistic initiatives, flash mobs, local wildlife conservation activities, sports events, cooking parties, street feasts, NGO markets or festivals, visits to young entrepreneurs, welcome parties with locals, local experts/associations on different topics in some projects activities, workshops in schools, local video or TV, etc... (the sky's the limit!)

- + **Do activities with others outside the learning programme**

- + **Multiplier events**

What can you do practically?

- + **Do your project activities in/with the community**
- + **Do activities with others outside the learning programme**

Programme activities are important, yes, but non-programme activities are also a good way to maximise community impact. Consider organising **homestays** for participants, **meetings with host families**, meetings for the wider family and friends of the host participants, an intergenerational **lunch or dinner with locals** in a social café or bar. Also, **public (street) parties** are great initiatives.

- + **Multiplier events**

What can you do practically?

- + **Do your project activities in/with the community**
- + **Do activities with others outside the learning programme**
- + **Multiplier events**

Not everyone that can benefit from the impact of your project can effectively participate (eg. time, scope, geographical, financial constraints). Prioritise organising multiplier events that will reach a **wider audience**. Some **ideas that you can elaborate from** are: to invite friends, family, neighbours, politicians, journalists, experts, school teachers, religious leaders, other NGOs.. to organise a longer time exhibitions of your project in community venues (library, town hall, community centres, local notice board, ...)

Who else can you include from the community?

+ **Different people on different levels**

No learning mobility project is an island so think how to connect on different levels with others. Consider inviting **local politicians and stakeholders** to the project and suggest that they welcome your group in the Town Hall. Be careful not to encourage tokenism though – they should be involved before, during and after the project in a specific way or role. Other ideas are to invite **potential employers** to the final evaluation to see the skills learned by the group or to join other organisations with a similar mandate to yours but with different audiences, to widen your reach. Connecting with other organisations can also result in **skills swaps**, so you can both benefit from different sets of expertise. Libraries, museums, schools and other NGOs are excellent partners which can support you to transmit project outcomes to the broader community (family, friends, teachers, etc...). Think about the participants and their **circles of contact** – school, friends, hobbies etc. Maybe there are connections that can be made there?

Local participants that **participated in previous** or different projects surely have a lot to share, why not engage them in your current project?

Maximising positive impact is the goal - prioritise positive communication with different people with different backgrounds and mentalities to give better integration into the host environment, and help local people benefit from the intercultural learning experience.

And for some long-term impact? Leave something behind that will remind the community of your project/initiative - a memorial plaque? A tree planted? Artwork in a public space?

+ **Other Solidarity Corps potential applicants**

+ **Support local organisations/social enterprises and businesses**

Who else can you include from the community?

- + **Different people on different levels**
- + **Other Solidarity Corps potential applicants**

Useful tip! Why not connect to organisations who could also be applicants to European Solidarity Corps, to work together as part of the same bigger community linking not only locally, but potentially connecting them to others internationally too, such as: Informal groups of young people, church, mosque, chapel, synagogue, sports groups, school, scouts, voluntary organisations, language school, travel agency, health systems (for young people who need extra support before or after the learning mobility), library, museums, peer groups in general... It can also be organisations working with the municipality, university, online community, etc.

- + **Support local organisations/social enterprises and businesses**

Who else can you include from the community?

- + **Different people on different levels**
- + **Other Solidarity Corps potential applicants**
- + **Support local organisations/social enterprises and businesses**

An easy way to ensure support for key players in your community are to **consciously choose local organisations/social enterprises** for food, transport, materials, venues, services; to eat at small local restaurants or cafes; to use your grant to rent a venue that supports social/educational work in the community (university, association, social enterprise or innovation hub, youth lab, etc...) and natural, cultural and sports centres for some programme activities.

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