European Commission

ENGAGING WITH FOOD, PEOPLE AND PLACES

A toolkit

Illustrations: La Bande Destinée www.labandedestinee.com.

ENGAGING WITH FOOD, PEOPLE AND PLACES

A toolkit

This book belongs to

Acknowledgement

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This toolkit is designed to build upon a research project led by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) called 'Making *Eat* Together', which engaged several schools in 3 EU countries. The project focused on the school meal experience beyond nutrition. This toolkit takes the form of an illustrated book that provides rationales, tools and tips to foster dialogues in schools about food but it is easily adaptable to other subjects and situations. Today food in our canteens, tomorrow school futures or mobility options in our neighbourhoods. The toolkit includes a set of activities to help triggering conversations about topics we may care and we may want to do something about, as citizens. The toolkit is not exhaustive; so, we suggest you approach it as a living guide to which you can contribute by revising and adjusting it or by creating new activities and tools. Our website makes the digital version of the toolkit publicly available and can host your contributions ([1]).

The toolkit is organised into three parts: **Making sense, Making space and Remaking**, each of which reflects the different phases of the research process this book builds upon, and more generally, those of a participatory process. Indeed, we propose framing citizen engagement as a journey of awareness-raising, collective reflection, debate and democratic societal change.

The activities suggested here, often proposing the use of everyday objects to tell stories and imagine change at the community level, might seem out of tune with the grandeur and solemnity of such powerful concepts as democracy, citizenship and public participation. These words and the ideals attached to them are often accompanied by a similarly solemn aesthetic, captured more by the magnificent fresco of Raffaello's *School of Athens*

([1]) Check here: https://cop-demos.jrc.ec.europa.eu

than by a splendidly messy classroom with colourful posters and loud sounds. In other words, democracy is often visualised through iconic images such as ballot boxes, parliaments, political debates, street protests and strikes. These are indeed fundamental expressions of democracy as a political regime within which that decisions are made, and as a political space for citizens to voice their concerns.

Yet, democracy is also a collective experience and, if you will, a disposition silently practised in hallways, classrooms, streets, shops, markets, houses, trams and gardens. All kinds of spaces and everyday practices are necessary for democracy to exist – on a daily basis, not just during elections.

But now, enough with the talking. We hope you'll enjoy engaging with this toolkit as much as we enjoyed crafting it.

A different story to tell
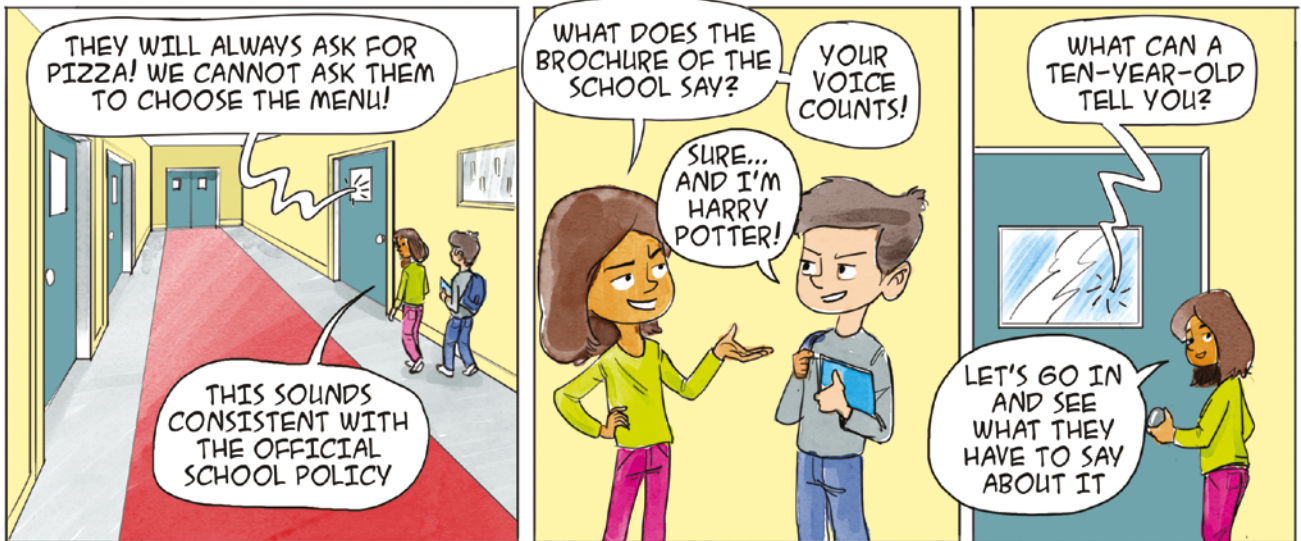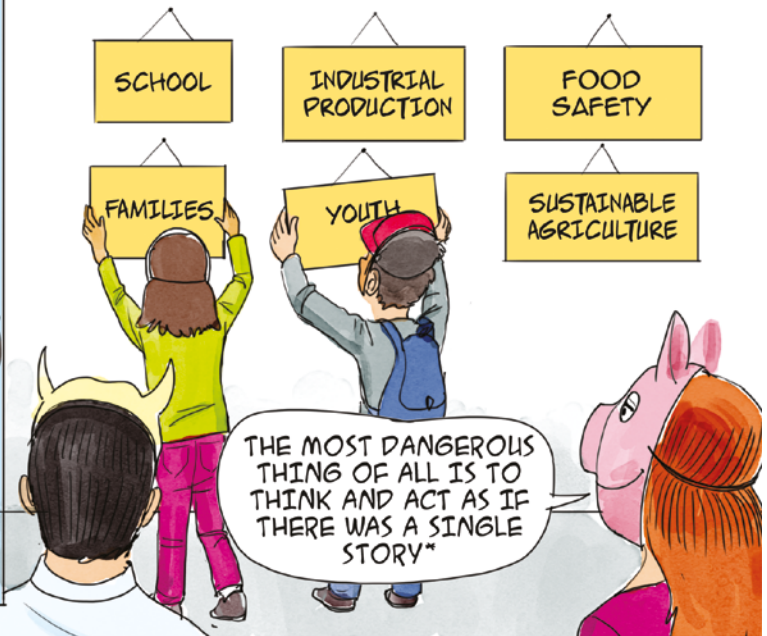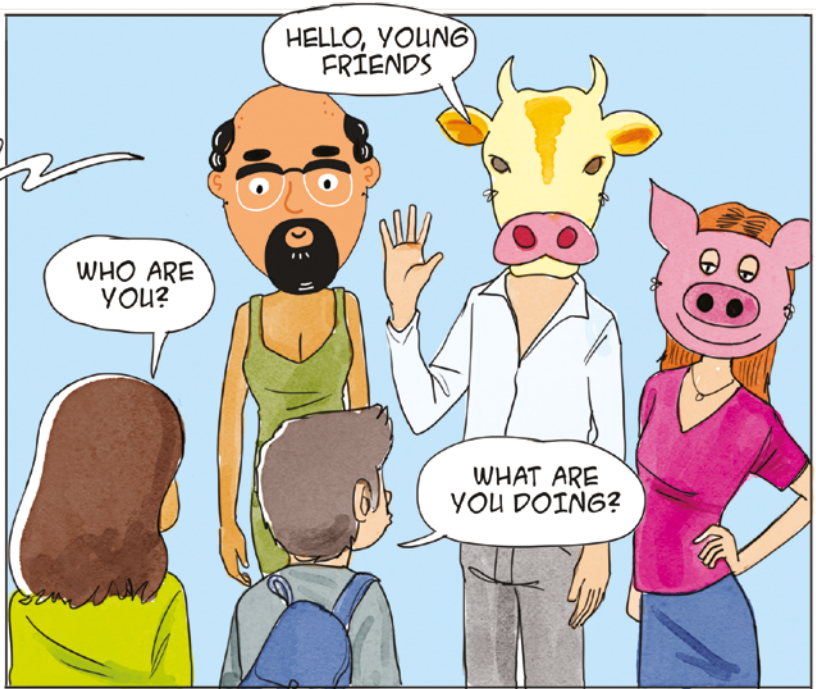
INSPIRED BY THE "DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY"
BY CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE

BACKGROUND STORIES

In the following sections, we will provide some conceptual context to the toolkit to situate the set of activities we propose with respect to public participation and democratic life at large. Indeed, you may be wondering what a toolkit like this one has to do with democracy!

We will also introduce the research process leading to this toolkit, explaining the participatory methodologies deployed, while proposing new activities that you may be testing in your school, garden or organisation with your schoolmates, friends or colleagues. A final section will follow, dedicated to giving you some more practical information on how to use this toolkit.

N.B. on these first pages, we will not go deeper on some concepts, whenever relevant, we provide a hyperlink to go deeper on the issues ([2]). Check for READ MORE

Why this toolkit?

There is no shortage of toolkits and books aiming to unleash our creative potential. So why should the European Commission bother developing another one?

First of all, creativity, invention and imagination are not just nice additions to (standardised) institutional practices for scientific production or for policymaking. They are integral components of what participatory designers call 'hands-on democracy in action' (de la Peña *et al.*, 2017) and key ingredients in 'collective learning for public choice' (Forester, 2018). In other words, creativity, invention and imagination enhance conviviality, meaning our capacity to live together as a species with other species. They are

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[2]   We called these few decades ago, 'progressive disclosure of information'.

also particularly important if we want citizens to engage with science and policy in a meaningful way.

This toolkit is developed under the Competence Centre on Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (CC-DEMOS) (³) of the European Commission which focuses on citizen engagement and deliberative practices in science and policymaking. Part of this Centre's work consists of making the case for greater public participation in the ways European institutions design policies and decide. When the issues involved are complex and characterised by different types of uncertainty, engaging citizens in the policymaking process may enhance the overall quality of policy outcomes (this was suggested by Funtowicz and Ravetz in 1993, when they proposed *post-normal science* as a problem-solving strategy).

What is post-normal science?

In the early 1990s, Funtowicz and Ravetz (1993) called for **'a new epistemology of science'** that is capable of dealing with uncertainties and makes use of different legitimate perspectives and ways of knowing to address contemporary problems (typically described as uncertain, high stakes, value laden and urgent). They claimed that it would be difficult for science alone to come up with coping strategies in the face of environmental challenges, a concern that led them to a call for social and epistemic diversification. Hence, in their proposal, the engagement of what they designated as the 'extended peer community' with their 'extended facts' is a key move to ensure fit for purpose policy when science is also relevant.

(³) Check here: https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about-competence-centre-participatory-deliberative-democracy_en

Public policies work better when citizens are engaged in their making and when the knowledge that supports them comes from a variety of domains of expertise – both scientific and non-scientific. More than that, together with many others (e.g. Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Burgess *et al.*, 2021; Chilvers, 2021), we argue that the current social and environmental challenges, from climate neutrality to vaccine rollout, cannot be addressed without a meaningful engagement of society. By meaningful engagement, we mean a purposeful invitation to citizens to use their knowledge, their values and the things they care about to contribute to resolving the many societal challenges we face today.

Public life, citizen engagement and democracy: some basics

Participating and engaging, mean, among other things, taking part in something. Picture a table: the space in between seats keeps those sitting at that very table together but also apart. As Hannah Arendt wrote back in 1958, the world does a similar thing: it 'relates and separates men at the same time'. There are many ways in which citizens can take part in public life.

They can join a protest, have a role in a community centre, plant a community garden, participate in a citizens' assembly or set up dialogues on an issue they care about. Public engagement modalities are varied, as arenas of civic engagement and deliberation are diverse: they include purposeful set institutional settings (e.g. citizens' assemblies) to everyday spaces. We can talk about an ecology of engagement modalities of citizens (Chilvers and Kearnes, 2016).

In most cases, what qualifies such activities and actions as participatory is that they are **collective processes with transformative aims**. Indeed, participatory processes have in themselves a transformative seed. They can potentially make groups turn into communities and transform private stances into public spaces. In all participatory process, publics are in the making (Chilvers and Kearnes, 2020, p. 355). This implies that we may not know in advance who the 'we' in a participatory process are – and that is okay.

Citizen engagement

There are several definitions of citizen engagment (CE), but the definition of CE we work with is the following: citizen engagement is not just about exploring opinions and interests, or eliciting knowledge and values, 'but about openly discussing matters of 'concern' and controversy' (Chilvers and Kearnes, 2016). Furthermore, this definition recognises that there is not a single public with coherent and static views that can be 'surveyed' but that such views can only emerge through co-creation and deliberation (see Guimarães Pereira and Völker, 2020). In addition, the engagement of citizens should aim at mobilising their knowledge, imaginations, affections and values to improve the quality of policymaking or science, at all relevant stages of the policy cycle and research process.

Participatory actions, through which citizens are engaged in different stages of decision-making processes, aim to influence them. Politics is inherently part of citizen engagement practices – whether we want decision-makers to choose differently or matters to be governed in a more open, participatory and democratic fashion.

However, that is not all public participation is about. It also relates to the more elusive concept of **public life**. We all participate in public life in different ways, on a daily basis, as we all contribute to society. Everyday democracy and participation are key to ensuring current democracies to thrive, and for new arenas of democratic action to emerge (see Crawford, 2011, p. 350).

Dialogue is an essential dimension of democratic practice. But, the capacity to initiate or maintain a dialogue is not to be taken for granted. Rather the practices of dialogue are capacities to be strengthened and nurtured.

This toolkit is about conversations and creative ways to foster and nurture dialogue in situations where a single lens of analysis is insufficient to deal with the complexity of the issues of concern. Our suggestions are based on our own research experiences and practices at the interface of science, society and policy. They are also inspired by the work of others, working in different fields and from different walks of life, including designers, researchers in science and technology studies and urban planning, participatory action research practitioners and deliberative democracy theorists, activists and social movements, artists and writers (e.g. Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Sandercock, 2003; Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Smith, 2008 and 2017; Sandercock and Attili, 2010; Young, 2011; Forester, 2018; Rodari, 2021).

One last note. The toolkit does not have a didactic purpose, nor does it aim to establish good citizenship and 'civic virtues'. However, we are reminded of Sir Ken Robinson's 2015 book 'Creative Schools' and we would like to think that this toolkit contributes to a much needed 'volume' perhaps titled 'civic engaging schools'. Public life, everyday democracy and the practice of active citizenship, start in school.

READ MORE
on Public participation and citizen engagement.

Hence, the toolkit does embrace a normative stand: that dialogue is essential for democratic life. As an entitlement to contribute to society, dialogue is a condition and a situation that allows us to make sense of others and of ourselves – with each other. In the context of public life, dialogue allows for the articulation of similarities and differences with respect to an issue, to generate novel meanings, understandings and values, as well as, to give rise to new courses of action (Duffield Hamilton and Wills-Toker, 2007).

Citizens

In this toolkit, we do not use the term 'citizen' with reference to formal citizenship or specific rights. For the purposes of this toolkit, citizens are those who inhabit the city (no matter how small), affect or are affected by an issue and have concerns to voice (Holson and Appadurai, 1996; Lefebvre, 1996; Iveson, 2013) or ideas to share.

Two words on co-production

Change is by definition co-produced – as are knowledge, representations of the world and courses of action (Jasanoff, 2004, pp. 2-3). Rather than being the result of solitary interventions or changes in behaviour attributable to particular entities or individuals, change is the result of the practices of many; of teamwork, sharing and learning with others; of meaningful everyday conversations that, as chaotic and trivial as they may look are the grain of everyday democracy (Lefebvre, 1991; Crawford, 1999 and 2005).

The research process behind the book

This toolkit is an integral part of a research project about dialogues on food in schools: 'Making *Eat* Together', which aimed to identify principles beyond nutrition and health-related aspects to inform procurement criteria to purchase food/meals for school canteens. The project envisaged two phases of engagement with different actors:

★ stakeholders, i.e. caterers, cooks, school directors, civil servants and institutions in charge of food procurement for schools, e.g. municipalities;

★ pupils, families, teachers and those responsible for school meals at school.

From a methodological point of view, qualitative methods were employed (i.e. in-depth interviews, focus groups and ethnographic observation). Such methods are usually applied in social sciences and humanities to better understand a social phenomenon by paying attention to the cultural and social dynamics in context. What makes them relevant in this situation is that they were applied both to give a rich qualitative account of an issue and to generate new knowledge with those concerned by the issue. The research process was transdisciplinary in nature, as it sought to produce new knowledge with the participants, firstly by tapping into their knowledge, experiences, concerns, and values. As scholar D. Haraway (1988) would put it, the role of the researchers was not limited to learning about a social phenomenon by gathering relevant data as if the world was out there to be studied, but to engage with that world to ultimately recommend transformative actions co-created with others.

READ MORE *on* 'Making *Eat* Together' *research process.*

Who is this book for?

In very general terms, this toolkit addresses those who are simultaneously affected by an issue, and willing to work collaboratively with others to formulate and eventually to address that issue.

Young people are knowledge-holders

A first disposition to use this toolkit is to acknowledge that rather than seeing young people as passive receivers of notions and instructions, we suggest tapping into their knowledge, particularly if their matters of concern and care are at play. This new perspective will foster young people's understanding and experience of democratic participation at an early stage of their life while providing space for novel, creative and unexpected solutions to emerge.

More specifically, this toolkit is designed for pupils, but not only for pupils. It is designed for teachers, yet not just for them. It also addresses civil servants, health professionals, cooks and caterers, and addresses anyone with a stake in these or other issues, places or situations. Hence, the publics of this toolkit are intended to be wide and diverse, reflecting the diversity of perspectives that all issues and situations come with.

Children and youngsters are of course central in the design and implementation of the school meal – and the activities we propose here are crafted with young people in mind, thus having a pivotal role in the engagement process. The school meal is for them to eat and not by chance, the research project involved pupils aged between 9 and 13 years old.

Do not confuse diversity with general

There is no such thing as a 'general' public.

Diversity should not be misrepresented by the term 'general public' that is so often used. The public is far from being general: it is situated and specific depending on whom such issues affect.

Let's take an example. If you think of the school meal, pupils and possibly teachers eat the food served in the canteen by appointed personnel. Cooks prepare the food, by transforming the supplies provided by caterers according to a menu defined by public institutions and health authorities – with some variance depending on the rules and model of canteen in place. The meal is served in a canteen located in a school managed by a school director, who has to guarantee certain standards of safety and hygiene. Each pupil comes from a family that has its own eating habits. This begs the questions: who is concerned by the school meal? Who is the public?

From our perspective, the engagement of young people goes much further than eliciting their opinions and preferences through surveys. The concepts of empowerment, emancipation and liberation inspire the making of this toolkit and they are key qualifying aspects of citizens' participation (Arnstein, 1969). The active participation of young people is not different or special in this sense: for a society based on truly democratic ideals (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1970; Shyman, 2010), children ought to be legitimised as makers of the community, rather than receptacles to be filled or pawns to be moved by adults. They have voices, knowledge and experience that can contribute to addressing issues that affect them and others. Each activity is thus thought out to allow for any knowledge, experience and ideas to emerge and to be voiced directly by those concerned – including children and youngsters.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The toolkit builds upon a research project 'Making *Eat* Together' dedicated to the school meal, thus the activities we propose build around this specific topic. However, as we have mentioned, this book is a collection of tools that is applicable to different issues, places and contexts -such as, the school meal, the future of schools, the use of digital technology and many other complex and contested issues. With some adaptation, the activities proposed here may be used in other contexts. You are free to use this book as you like and see fit. Indeed, this toolkit is designed to be *used* – literally – and to be *of use.*

As anticipated, the core part of the toolkit is constituted by a set of activities organised into three parts: **Making sense, Making space and Remaking.**

Making sense presents tools to break the ice among participants. The exercises we propose will help participants get to know each other and understand what brings them together, to discuss what concerns them as individuals and as members of a group in a reflexive and self-reflexive way. In a nutshell, this part provides tools to answer some 'whys' and to create a common ground to work meaningfully together.

Once we have broken the ice, we have made space for new situations to emerge. **Making space** presents activities that facilitate precisely this process of emergence by focusing on spaces of different kinds.

Space

Let's take a moment to think about what we mean by 'space'. Your body occupies a space (this becomes clear when we bump into each other), buildings structure the space we live in (we cannot walk through walls), materials of different kinds inhabit our life, and we attach meanings to them, or we mind them in particular ways. Sometimes space matters because of its absence, for example we do not really 'see' the food chain that brings tomatoes to our plates, yet this is a very important spatial infrastructure that supports our eating practices. Beyond physical materiality, space can also be thought about in more abstract and symbolic terms. We need space to think, to heal, to talk and to invent. In other words, we use the word 'space' to describe processes that are indeed material – but in an unusual way, even when 'things' might not be implied, we are affected by such experiences (Forman, 2020; Anderson, 2009).

The toolkit encourages users to pay attention to materiality, in all its different forms – a kitchen, a classroom, a supermarket, a factory, a field we cannot see, a fish, a meal, a mindset, signs, texts, affects – to better understand what food is, geographically and spatially, materially and symbolically.

Once we have made enough space by collecting and sharing individual and collective stories about an issue and once we have explored their geographies and engaged with materials of different kinds, we are ready to remake.

Remaking could turn out to be the most challenging part of the journey. However, citizen engagement is not just about having nice conversations: spaces for reflection go hand in hand with co-creating new ways to address matters we care about. So, what to do?, what can be changed?

Finally, you can follow the order of the exercises we propose or jump from one part to the other and make up a sequence of activities that will help you reach a given outcome, depending on your needs. To familiarise yourself with the toolkit, you could also simply experiment (piloting is highly recommended, if not mandatory!). Open the book, pick an activity at random and see where it leads you.

As there is no right order to follow, to ease the use of the book, we suggest you start by reflecting on the purpose of the conversation you would like to kick off.

WHY?

We suggest a series of questions that might facilitate the **choice of activity** that you and your partners have to make. Is the aim to break the ice among participants or start a conversation about a topic? Do the participants know each other or are they being brought together for the first time? Is the ambition to set up a structured space for dialoguing about an issue or among a group of people? Is the goal of the exercise to co-produce some practical ideas for taking actions?
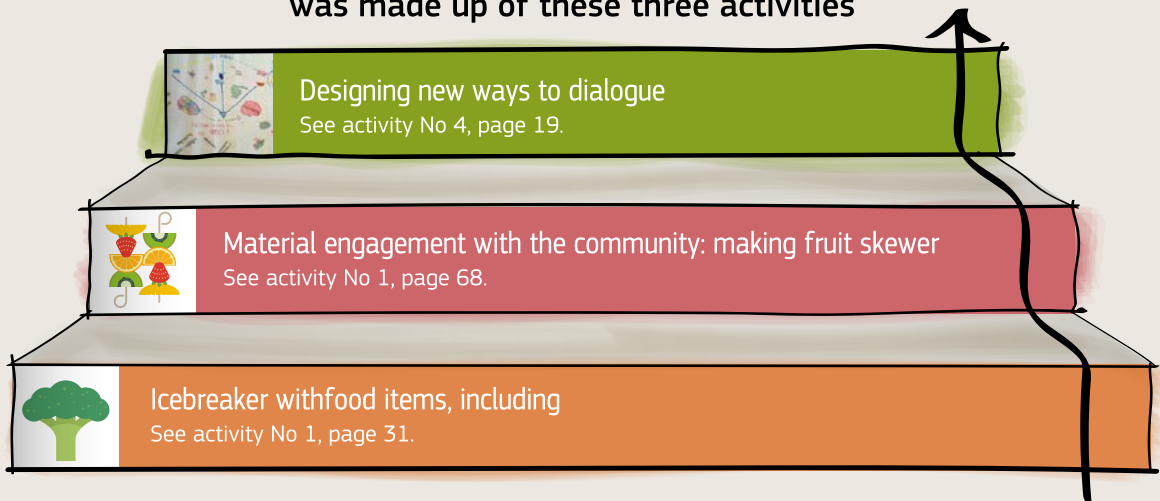
WHAT?

One way to use this toolkit is to think about each exercise as a building block that, combined with others, leads us from raising awareness to co-producing change. To this end, we suggest you pick one exercise from each part and design a process that looks like the 'stairway' below, made up of steps that give a sense of progressive development characterising the project.

HOW?

For example, the engagement process in our research project 'Making *Eat* Together' was made up of these three activities

Designing new ways to dialogue
See activity No 4, page 19.

Material engagement with the community: making fruit skewer
See activity No 1, page 68.

Icebreaker withfood items, including
See activity No 1, page 31.

Importantly, you need to think upfront about the ways in which the outcomes will be used. The participants in the activities need to know upfront how their views, opinions, knowledge will be used. This is a cornerstone of any type of citizen engagement process. Whether this is to inform the European Commission or the headmaster of the school, the participants will need to know what you are up to. So, how will the outcomes be used?

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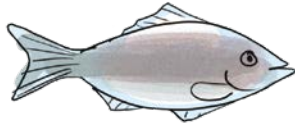...
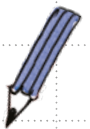
And by the way, **RECORD & HARVEST**. If you intend to further analyse the results of the activities then they need to be recorded, and in any case, the design of the process needs to include tools for harvesting – see next section.

Design your process

Materials: what do you need to start?

We suggest you engage with this toolkit as much as you like. There are blank pages to doodle, scribble, or write on and some other spaces to inspire your activities. However, you may need additional materials to carry out the activities. Here are some suggestions.

Pencils, pens and markers to draw and sketch what you feel like, as you like.

White paper and posters: Space to express is needed!

A notebook to write down thoughts as they come.

Sticky notes to place notes around the room.

Others. You may want to expand. For example, you might want to use a camera, a microphone, maps, digital tools …

Rules

Practice curiosity. Encourage asking a lot of questions (especially the ones that are normally on the tip of your tongue).

Wear comfortable shoes. Engagement requires movement.

Work with others. Doing things together is mandatory!

Use all your senses and body to explore. Sight, taste, touch, smell and hearing are all ways of knowing!
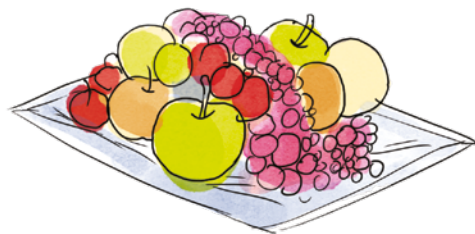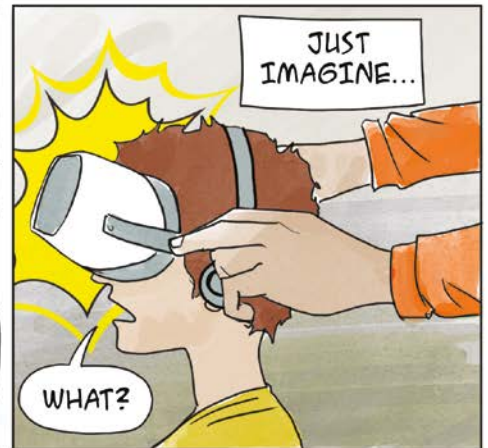
MAKING SENSE

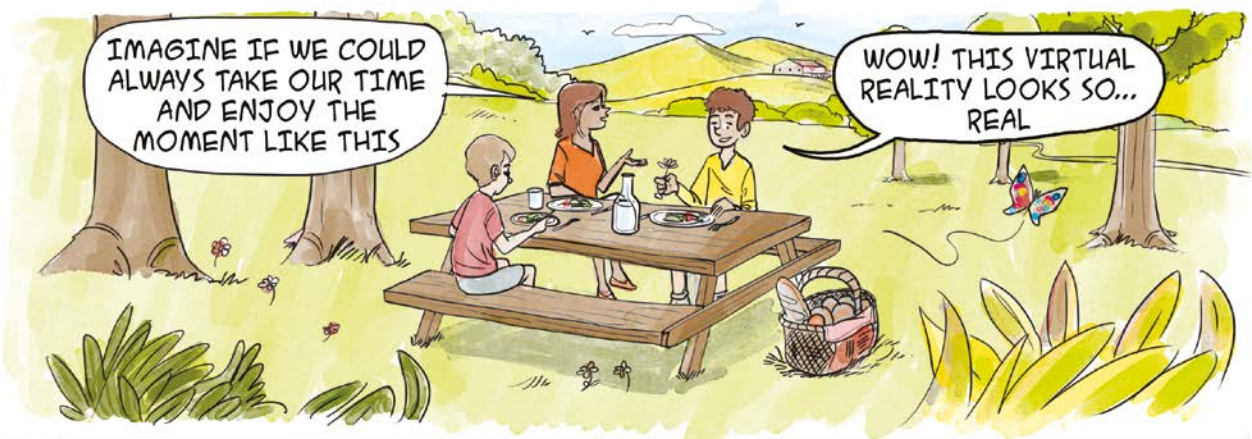# Engage 1 — Making sense

1. Icebreaker no 1

Goal

To break the ice by engaging with objects central to the topic of the conversation.

Steps

★ Select foods that, in your view, exemplify the issue. For example, broccoli, chips, fish, apples, grapes, sugar, beans and salad.

★ Display the foods, sit together around them and observe the items displayed (5 minutes).

★ Form pairs, ideally mixing young people and adults, with each focusing on one or two food items. Ask them to discuss with their partner the following questions (10 minutes).

    1 What meanings or feelings do you associate with it?

    2 How do you like to eat it?

★ Ask participants to report to the whole group the key aspects of their discussion.

★ Try to interpret the findings. Ask participants to think of some general categories to group them. You can suggest using sticky notes on a poster (10 minutes).

PRACTICALITIES

▸▸ **Format.** This exercise should be a group activity with about 10–15 participants, including students, teachers, families, caterers, cooks and/ or any other meaningful actor involved in the food chain. The format can be easily adapted based on the subject of the conversation, and it can be transposed to an online format. For example, pairs can be decided upon beforehand, and each pair can be assigned a food item.

▸▸ **Duration.** Approximately 30–40 minutes.

▸▸ **Materials.** Food items.
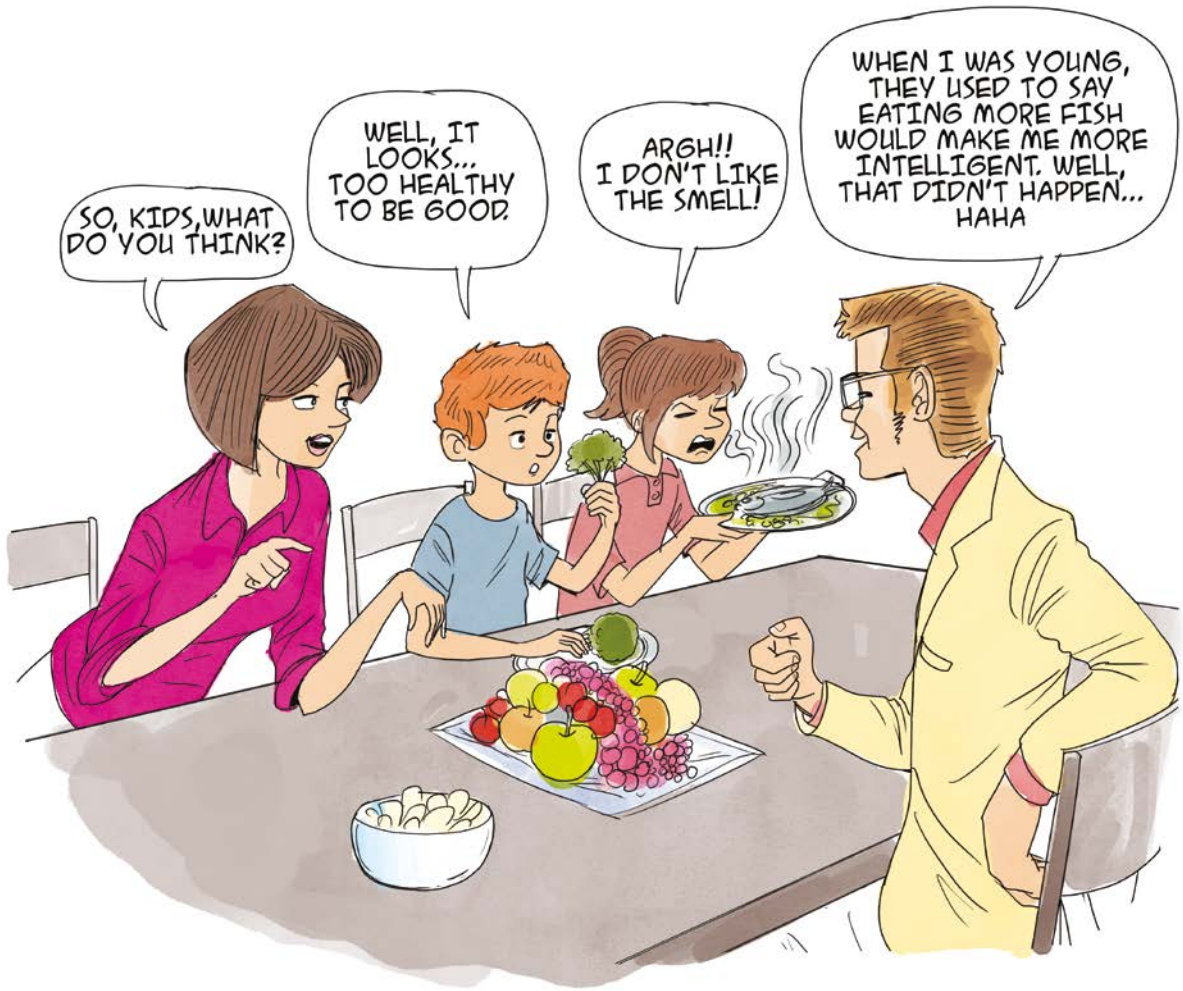
2. Icebreaker no 2

Goal

To break the ice by reassuring participants that all meanings and understandings of daily food practices are equally accounted for.

Steps

★ Invite participants to take a picture before the engagement activity or draw a sketch of their weekly groceries and share it with others. It can be one food item or many items.

Space to draw.

★ Engage participants with the following questions.

1 How would you describe your weekly groceries? Use up to three words.

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

2 Can you explain why have you chosen these food items?

★ Ask participants to pick a food item among the ones that make up their weekly groceries and try to have them answer these questions.

1 What comes to mind? Use up to three words.

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

2 How would you like to eat it? Can you think of a recipe or share the way you normally eat it?

★ Encourage the reflection on what the picture does not show about their actual food habits. For example, have they deliberately removed one or more items from the picture? If so, why?

3. Who's who in the picture?

Goal

To identify the different actors involved in and perspectives implied by an issue. The exercise helps participants to engage with 'who's who' and identify meaningful players that might be missing in the picture yet should be included in the conversation.

Steps

★ Invite participants to answer the following questions.

1 Can you spot who's who? Encourage them to draw on the illustration itself to identify the players.

- Teacher(s)
- School director
- Health professionals
- Food worker(s)
- Parents and family
- Students
- Other living beings
- Cook(s)
- Canteen personnel
- Public servant(s)

2 Who is missing in the group picture?
To answer this question, suggest they think about who should sit at the table for a more inclusive conversation to happen.

3 Who do you identify with, if anyone? Why?

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise can be an individual or a group activity. It can take place online and it can be easily adapted based on the subject.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 20 minutes.

▶▶ **Others.** The illustration this exercise refers to is a representation of one 'school food community'. However, this is just one illustration among many others, and you may want to represent your school food community in your own way. Also, each issue has its own community, and you should picture it, for example, by sketching a drawing (you can use the blank pages below) or by making a collage of magazine pictures, etc.

4. Icebreaker No 3

Goal

To break the ice by connecting the topic of conversation to subjective and collective representations.
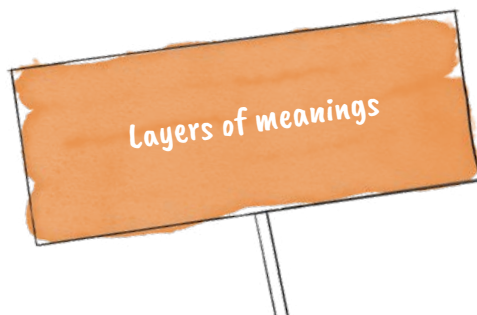
Steps

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Choose one object that, in their view, exemplifies 'food in school' (or your topic of discussion). It can be anything!

★ Describe the object, explaining what it represents to them.

★ Write down some associations (invite them to not overthink!): what does the object make them think of (e.g. good value, pleasure, good times with friends)?

★ Discuss different associations.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise should be a group activity. It can take place online too.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 20–30 minutes.

▶▶ **Others.** This kind of exercise requires some organisation, namely that participants be asked to select their objects beforehand. If the conversation happens in a physical space, they can bring the objects with them. This allows for some hands-on conversation to happen. Participants can also exchange objects, explore alternative understandings and see what the object means to the other members of the group. If the conversation happens online, objects can be shown in front of the camera and participants can describe their feelings while holding them. Alternatively, a picture of the object can be shared. The activity can be easily adapted to address other topics. It might prove particularly useful to start a conversation about more abstract and general concepts such as artificial intelligence, sustainable mobility, human rights or migration.

Layers of meanings

5. What is food in schools?

Goal

To encourage conversations about food in schools by exploring the underlying narrative(s).

Steps

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Answer the following questions.

> **1** Do you talk about food in schools?

> **2** How do you talk about it?

> **3** Do the people around you talk in the same way that you do about food?

★ Write down keywords that are widely used, implied (e.g. fun, tasty, healthy), controversial (e.g. junk food), or even silenced (e.g. fat), in the discourses they are exposed to.

★ Create a visual representation of the conversation.

Ask participants to tell you the words they have written down and create a word cloud or similar representation that characterises the way participants and others talk about food. For example, place together words you see that are connected, put them into categories (e.g. 'fun moments' or 'healthy food'). By visually representing the narrative, show to what extent each word is mentioned in the discussion, as well as who has a greater say and influence in shaping the conversation (e.g. best friends, the school director, an association or something more abstract and difficult to name).

Drawing of a cloud
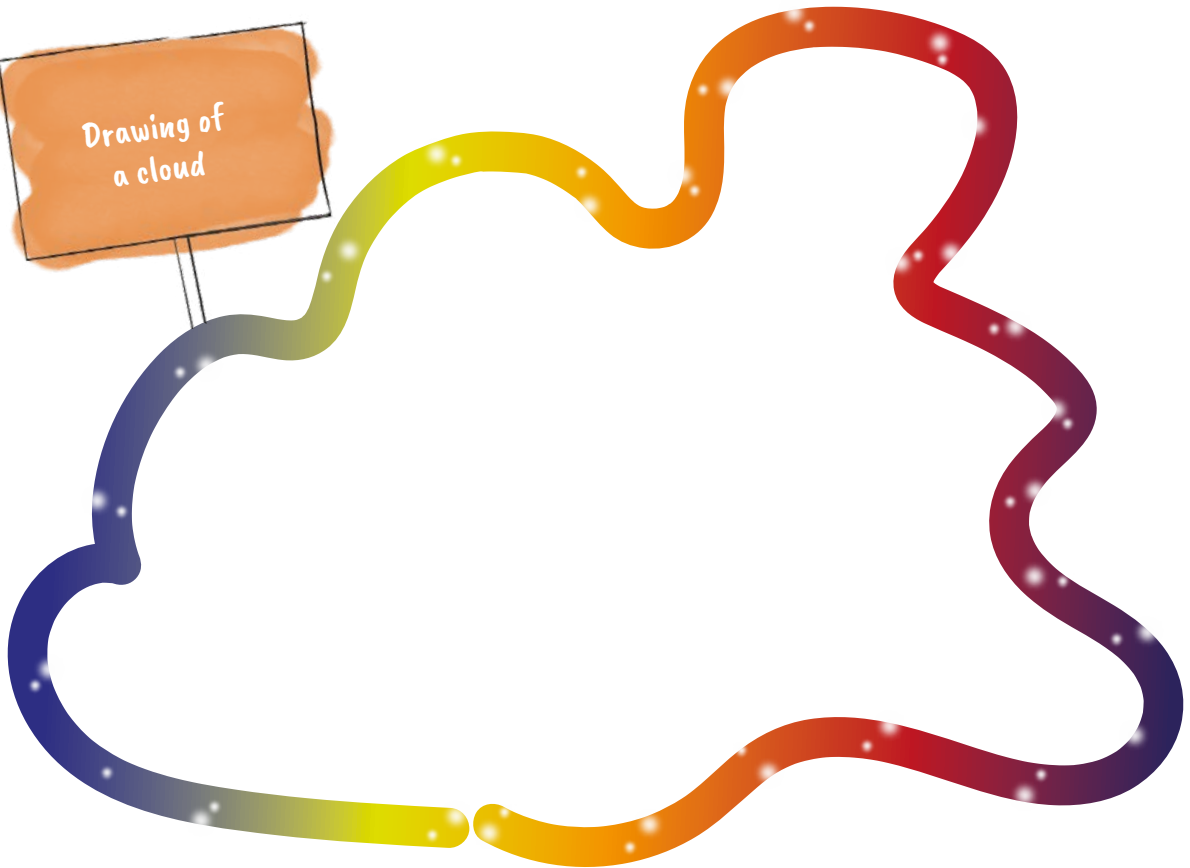
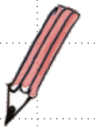Use the strips and glue them into the cloud.

★ Discuss

Talk about the representations together. Has anything emerged that would be interesting to discuss further or that is problematic and requires some follow-up actions? What do you think is the best way to proceed? Who would you talk to?

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise could be an individual or a group activity. It could also take place online.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 50-60 minutes.

▶▶ **Others.** If the conversation happens online, you can use digital tools to build a cloud of words about a topic. Alternatively, you can use a board or a poster.

6. What does this food do to my body?

Goal

To encourage thinking about who we trust and what kind of knowledge we apply when we make our daily life choices ([4]).

Steps

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Pick a food item of their choice. This could be a banana, a yogurt, a handful of rice, some nuts or a few meatballs. Any food could do, really, but it is better if they choose something they enjoy.

★ Make a three-word sentence with the item they chose ([5]): using three words, answer the question **what does this food do to my body?**

Other thoughts?

★ Answer and debate the following questions in a small group.

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

([4]) A little explanatory note might help. If you think about it, we do trust someone – whether it is a friend, an institution or even ourselves – every time we make an everyday choice like shopping for groceries, taking a bus or even getting vaccinated.

([5]) Alternatively, participants could be asked to draw the food item of their choice

1 You have claimed that this food does something to your body: how do you know? Where have you heard/read it? List the sources of trust that led to the choice of words. For example, my mother; the European Food Safety Authority; the nutritional label; food media (e.g. a cooking programme); my gut; a nutritionist, life experience.

2 What kind of knowledge are you using when you make your choice? Elaborate on the kind(s) of knowledge that provide grounds for your choices. For example, is it scientific knowledge (what is called 'science')? Everyday knowledge (e.g. you cook that broccoli in a way that makes it enjoyable)? Tradition? Have you talked about it with your friends? Is it a little bit of all of these things?

★ Collect these stories of knowledge diversity and find a way to represent them. For example, participants can make a collage with images or words by choosing some background paper making use of old newspapers brought from or found at home and gluing those shapes to the paper.

PRACTICALITIES

▸▸ **Format.** This exercise should preferably be carried out in small groups followed by a final discussion in the main group. With some adaptation, it could also take place online.

▸▸ **Duration.** Part of the exercise could be done within 90 minutes, yet it would be best to organise this activity across different sessions, to be held across various days to give room for collecting emergent stories about food.
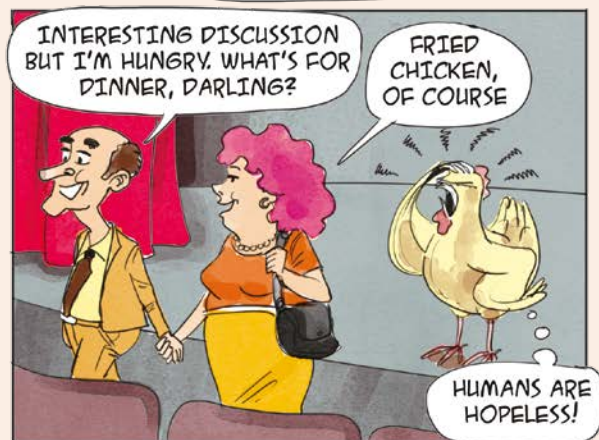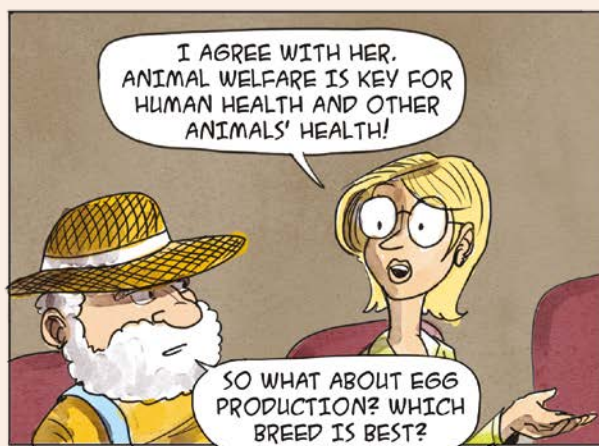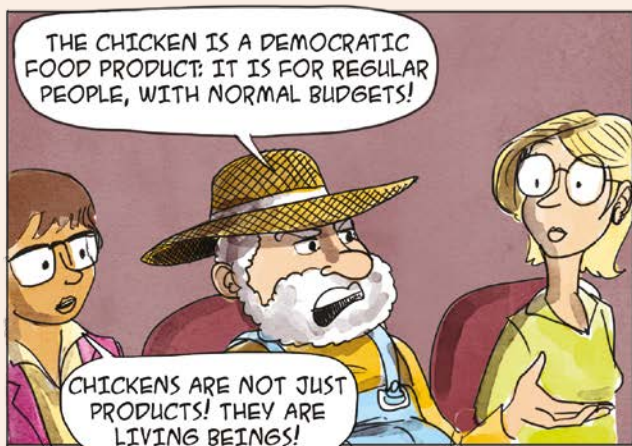
▸▸ **Materials.** Old magazines.

AN EXAMPLE FROM OUR WORK: WHAT IS A CHICKEN?

Material deliberation and theatre: convivial formats of citizen engagement

'What is a chicken?' We asked this question during the icebreaker of the Second Citizen Engagement Festival held in Brussels on 9–10 December 2019. This question, as simple and dull as it may sound, touches upon many important issues: trust in public institutions, the role of expert knowledge in a society like ours and the existence of public controversies of different kinds – serious matters for all those interested in policymaking.

The icebreaker took the form of a non-professional artistic performance that allowed us to create shared ground with the public and to artistically perform meanings of public participation. We wrote scripts that we performed, we engaged with materials by displaying parts of the chicken and we involved the public present at the opening through art, objects and words. The design and implementation of the icebreaker consisted of four parts.

1. Interviewing

In order to draft the scripts to be performed by amateur actors, we interviewed a number of stakeholders: one butcher, two farmers, one cook and one veterinarian. Each of them was deeply yet differently affected by the question 'what is a chicken?'

The butcher sells meat and poultry in retail, and his business implies making choices on the kind of products for sale. The cook transforms the raw chicken into edible food for customers, and brings to the conversation his sensory experience about food, including taste and aesthetics. The farmer raises chickens, complying with rules and procedures including food safety, hygiene and animal welfare. The vet, working for the local health authority, specialises in the treatment and care of poultry and guarantees that animal welfare, hygiene and food safety standards are respected (see activity number 7 on page 58).

Fun facts

As you may know, poultry farming is a form of animal husbandry of birds such as chickens, ducks, turkeys and geese. It happens primarily for meat production or egg-laying, and depending on the farming practice, the production process is more or less intensive. For our purposes, we interviewed two farmers involved in in chicken farming. The first farmer specialised in intensive production of broilers, that is chickens raised for meat production. The second farmer raised chickens of a local breed for his own domestic consumption, while managing a relatively small egg incubator. His interest in chickens could be associated with the practice, still to be found mainly in rural areas around Europe, of having small livestock for livelihood and as a distinctive cultural tradition.

The stakeholders we approached, even if not representative of the whole poultry sector, returned some diversity of views and positions over the same topic. The list of interviewees can be extended depending on one's own interest. You may want to focus on the commercialisation of chickens, thus approaching more than one butcher for your project. You could also add the view of the dining companion.

We asked our interviewees very simple questions. We aimed to grasp key aspects, both symbolic and material, characterising the 'daily experience of the chicken' by each character involved.

Want to know more?
https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/animals-and-animal-products/animal-products/poultry_en.

7. Do-it-yourself: interviewing a dining companion

Steps

★ Form pairs. Decide who is the interviewee and who is the interviewer.

★ If you are the interviewer, write down the five or more questions you would like to ask. Use the blank pages available at the end of this section to draft the interview. If you are the interviewee, you can start thinking about your relationship with chicken, either as an animal or as a meat product that is part of your dietary habits (if it is). Keep track of your thoughts by writing them down.

★ Get ready for the interview: take notes or record the answers. Always remember to clarify the uses of the interview and/or recording through a consent form.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise should preferably be carried out in small groups followed by a final discussion in the main group. The interview can be conducted online.

▶▶ **Duration.** Interviews require some preparation. If the interview itself may last around 20–30 minutes, depending on the number of questions you choose to ask, it would be best to organise this activity in two parts: the former dedicated to the drafting of questions and the latter to interviewing your companion.

▶▶ **Others.** A form of coaching on how to do an interview is likely to be needed. To start, you can check the boxes we have prepared with some basic concepts about this social science methodology (p. 140).

2. Drafting the scripts

Our interviewees gave us many valuable insights and we transformed their perspectives into short theatre scripts. The scripts are not fictions: we took the answers given by the interviewees and adapted them so that they would be suitable for a theatrical performance. Each script is associated with a character and some objects that characterise the profession (e.g. a knife for the cook). Have a look at our scripts in the Appendix: you can perform them, or perhaps write your own script based on the interview with the dining companion you just did.

3. Preparing for the performance

You can't do a play about chickens without engaging with the chicken in some form. As chickens are animals mostly raised for human consumption, we worked with the idea of the chicken as food-to-be. In the spirit of material deliberation, we chose four specific parts of the animal that are either more commonly consumed (chicken breast or eggs) or often discarded for several reasons (chicken feet and bones or skin).

As you know by now, we encourage readers to engage with objects and materials as a way to break the ice by gathering meanings about a topic in a spontaneous and playful way. It is clear that the chicken is not just a chicken. Beyond breasts, bones, skin and eggs, one can easily spot complex matters such as food systems, economies, cultural habits, use of natural resources, landscapes, stories of poverty, richness and democracy and understandings by humans of other non-human beings. In a way, an object reflects world views: it is as varied as the eyes that look at it.

8. Do-it-yourself: think about a matter you would like to talk about with others by engaging with an object

Steps

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Think of a matter they care for or that concerns them.

★ Picture an object that, in their view, exemplifies that matter and that people can relate to. The less sophisticated and more common it is, the more likely it is to trigger a discussion with others.

★ Approach this object as if it was a cake with different layers. Depending on the object, participants might be able to break it down into different parts.

★ Showcase the object or the different parts that compose it and discuss what kind of thoughts, meanings or feelings are associated with it.

★ Discuss what they have learnt and go over the key highlights of this exercise.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This can be a group exercise – preferably carried out in small groups – or an individual activity. With some adaptation, it can take place online.

▶▶ **Duration.** It would be best to organise this activity in two parts: the former dedicated to the choice of the object and the latter to the actual engagement with it. The engagement phase should last on average 20 minutes.

4. Doing it

After drafting the theatre scripts and finding the object, we wrote a detailed outline of the performance (what will happen first, who will perform the play and how will we gather the views of participants?) We also wrote an introduction to the icebreaker. You can do the same for your own performance or take inspiration from ours: read below!

Welcome to the Ice-breaker

Good morning and welcome to the icebreaker!

Over the next 30 minutes or so, we are going to perform a controversy. The controversy that will be performed is going to be about the question 'what is a chicken?'

The chicken is a carrier of meanings. How so? Think about it. Expert and non-expert knowledge, environmental and ethical concerns, meat production and consumption, agricultural policies, taste and pleasure, tradition and cultures. These things are all related to this animal in different ways.

'What is a chicken?' is a banal yet powerful question which leads us straight to one of the crucial issues of policymaking. How is knowledge produced? Who is chosen to speak? Who shall be engaged? Who is the citizen?

Food can help us to understand many things. How do you know what you know about the food you choose, eat and produce? How are you able to say 'this is tasty, this is horrible, this is healthy, and this is

unhealthy'? Has somebody told you so? Maybe somebody you trust? Or is it more about the way you feel?

But that's enough talking. Let's get to the icebreaking.

Part one

Behind me are four stools, each displaying a different part of the chicken: we have the chicken breast, eggs, feet and bones.

You have been given a set of four cards. Each colour – blue, red, green and yellow – corresponds to one of these food items. Blue corresponds to bones, red to eggs; yellow to chicken breasts and green to chicken legs.

Please pick one of these cards, and take note of the first thing that comes to mind.

Part two

You have made your choice, and now we want to know why you made it. What meanings or feelings explain it? Who wants to start?

NB: This part is dedicated to a collective discussion with the presenter facilitating the process.

Part three

Now that we have heard from you, we are going to listen to the expert.

I would like to invite on stage our experts: the vet, the farmer, the butcher and the cook.

NB: Each actor performs the script.

Part four

Now that you have listened to our experts, pick one of the role-players using the cards. Blue corresponds to the vet, red to the farmer, yellow to the butcher and green to the cook. Tell us who you see as a trustworthy source of knowledge.

You have made your choice, and now we want to know why you made it. Why do you trust this expert more than the others?

NB: This part is dedicated to a collective discussion with the presenter facilitating the process.

Part five

Closing remarks: what have we learnt?

You can see how the icebreaker went [here] (6) (have a look at the section of the video from minutes 10:29 to 11:08).

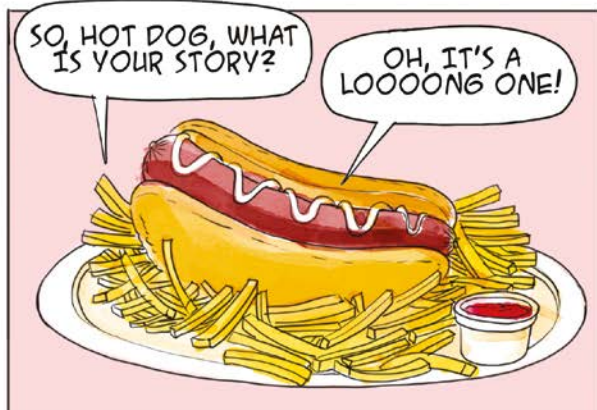You can find all the scripts in the [Appendix]!

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(6) https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/citizen-engagement-festival-december-9th-2019

MAKING SPACE

Engage 2 — Making space

1. Making meaning about food together

Goal

To raise awareness and map meanings values and understandings, that are associated with eating within and beyond the school setting. To understand different decisions, regulations and practices through food preparation.

Steps

★ Prepare the ingredients to make fruit skewers: for about 15 participants, you will need approximately 3kg of fruits, sliced and ready to be assembled.

★ To start the conversation, ask participants to answer the following questions.

1 Have you ever cooked?

2 Do you like to cook?

3 What do you think about when you prepare, touch and transform food?

We suggest you tailor your questions to the people participating in the activity.

Students. Do you ever ask for any specific food items? Do you ever think about what is behind the choices your families or schools make about the food prepared for you?

Families. Do you ask your children what they would like to eat? How do you choose what to eat as a family? Do you have any preferred products or use any criteria when you shop?

Everyone else. Do you consider how your choices affect the environment or the territory you live in? If so, how does this affect your choices?

Cooks and caterers (and other actors, if present). Are there any specific difficulties you encounter while planning and preparing menus?
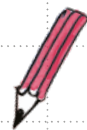
PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise should be a group activity. With some adaptation, it can take place online, with each participant preparing their own fruit skewer.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 45 minutes.

▶▶ **Materials.** Fruit, skewers.

▶▶ **Others.** Not all canteens are equipped for cooking hot meals, but simple cold unprocessed food preparations work well for this exercise.

PUTTING YOUR FEET
INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S SHOES

2. Picture a space of your own

This activity is inspired by technique 1.4 'Environmental autobiography adaptations' in Peña *et al.* (2017).

Goal

To design a space you would enjoy eating in, by working with your ideas.

Steps

Ask participants to do the following.

★ Close their eyes and take a deep breath and let their mind wander.

★ Picture a pleasant place and notice the details. What does it look like? How big is it? Are there windows to look out of? Is it in the open air? Who is there? Are there people or other living beings around? How does it feel? Is this place imaginary or real?

★ Open their eyes and draw what they have imagined.
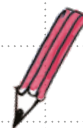
★ Think about what makes it special.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise could be an individual or a group activity. With some adaptation, it could take place online.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 45 minutes. The question on what makes the space special could be discussed in the main group.
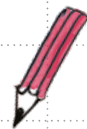
THE SCHOOL MEAL EXPERIENCE

3. Spatial analysis and imagination

Goal

To encourage analytical observation of the canteen to possibly transform the space.

Steps

Ask participants to do the following.

1 Think about where they eat at school.

2 Note down their first thoughts and feelings about it. They can write, draw or experiment with other creative means of expressing their thoughts and feelings. They can even record the sound of the canteen should they wish, or act out the experience as if they were on stage!

3 Discuss the representation(s) together. Guiding questions can include: is anything interesting emerging? Are they similar? Are they different? Is there anything you would agree requires some change? What is it about?

4 Look more closely at the different elements of the space. For example, the food, the acoustics, the light, the time available to eat, the people you eat with, the furniture and, more generally, the organisation of the space. Ask participants to mention whatever is important to them.

PRACTICALITIES

▸▸ **Format.** This exercise should be done in group with each participant bringing in their personal representation of the space and discussing it with others. With some adaptation, it could take place online, provided that the activity is organised across two or three sessions.

▸▸ **Duration.** Approximately 90 minutes.

4. Mapping the canteen

This activity is inspired by a participatory design activity described in Hester (2005).

Goal

To stimulate a more engaged way of looking at the built space and the environment more generally by means of mapping.

Steps

Ask the participants to do the following.

★ Draw a map of the canteen giving a sense of the size of the various elements (in other words, this map has to be realistic). If available, suggest they compare their drawings to the official layout, paying attention to differences.

★ Sketch an emotional map with descriptions of the kinds of emotions they have experienced there. Examples could include fun moments (e.g. 'when we had a longer break'), sad ones (e.g. 'when we were assigned a new place to sit'), love-related (e.g. 'when my friends fell in love') and annoying ones (you add this one).

★ Compare the realistic and emotional maps that they have individually created. The discussion can be organised in small groups and be dedicated to analysing differences and similarities.

★ Collectively make a new map, using their imagination and having in mind the following question: how can the space be made more enjoyable? As a follow-up, they can identify precise ways to change the space where they eat.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise needs to be done in a group with each participant bringing in their personal representation of the space and later discussing it with others. With some adaptation, it could take place online.

▶▶ **Duration.** This activity might take several hours of work. It should be organised across different sessions. Depending on the participants, steps 1 and 2 might require a different amount of time. Steps 3 and 4 can occur during the same session.
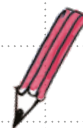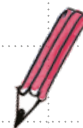
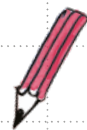▶▶ **Materials.** Maps.

Map 1

Map 2

Map 3

5. Follow 'the thing'

'Follow the thing' is a methodological approach made popular in the field of human geography and consumer ethics by Ian Cook's famous 'Follow the thing: Papaya' (Cook *et al.*, 2004). As a qualitative multi-sited study, it builds upon the work of the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1986) who claimed that objects have a social life as relationships, connections and geographies are shaped around them ([7]).

Goal

To understand the story/journey behind each food item, from the 'field' to your plate.

Premise

Remind the participants that food does not fall from the sky. The story behind what you have on your plate is rather complicated. Likely, it involves many people and places, perhaps even from around the world. To think through such a story, it is useful to consider the food chain. The food chain represents the journey – often invisible – through the phases of production, processing, distribution, consumption and post-consumption.

Steps

Ask the participants to do the following.

★ Pick a food item of their choice. It could be anything.

★ Write down some questions they might have about it. Consider the following.

- Where does 'the thing' come from ([8])?

- How is it grown/produced?

- Who takes care of its production, transformation and distribution?

([7]) For those interested, other resources include: http://www.followthethings.com; Cook *et al.* (2017) and Freidberg (2010).

([8]) The level of complexity of the exercise could vary. The first question we suggest addressing – 'where does this food come from?' – could be answered with respect to the school's actual food provision process. In the case of public procurement, a starting point could be to look at the contract that regulates the service and interview the catering company.

- Why do we eat it?

- What kind of waste is generated and when?

- Any other questions they might have (e.g. related to culture, taste or trends) employment conditions of workers.

★ Decide how they would like to answer these questions. They can choose whether they would like to conduct desk research and/or find some answers by interviewing some players in the food chain.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise could be done individually or in small groups. With some adaptation, it could take place online.

▶▶ **Duration.** The activity might take several hours of work. We suggest that four to five sessions be dedicated to it. If done in small groups, each group could take one of the phases characterising the food chain, provided that each group's participants agree on the food item.
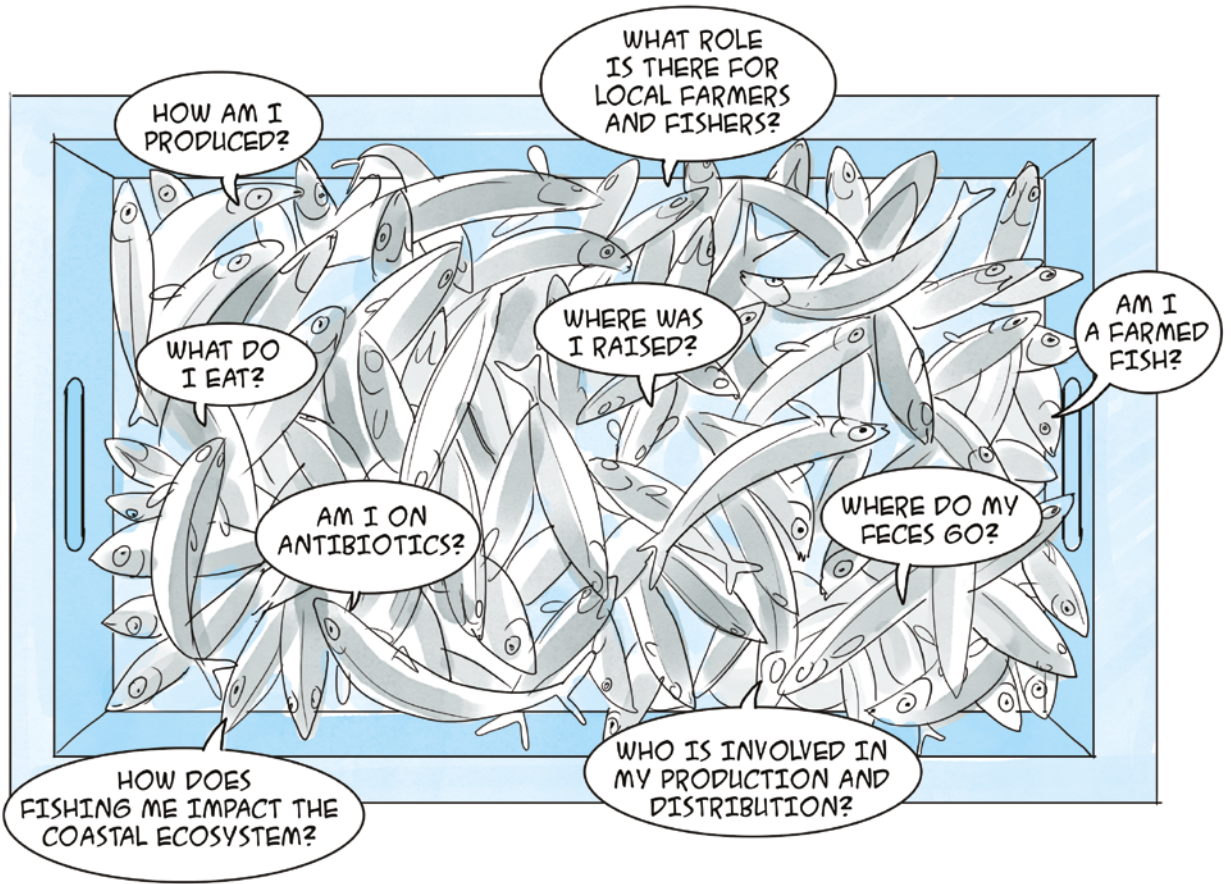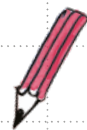
6. Discarding waste

This activity is inspired by Evans *et al.* (2013).

Goal

To encourage looking into waste as a social phenomenon.

Steps

Before you begin, prepare the following items: a banana peel, an empty yoghurt container, an unripe apple, the fatty part of a slice of ham. You can add other items, also by means of drawings, or adapt the choice to the context.

Ask participants to do the following.

★ Answer the following questions.

1 What is food waste in your view?

2 How does food sometimes become waste?

★ Form pairs, ideally mixing young people and adults, with each pair focusing on one of the food items you have prepared.
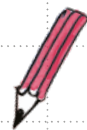
★ Discuss the following questions in pairs.

1 If there is waste, how does it depend on me and to what extent does it depend on others?

2 Which elements affect these dependencies?

★ Report to the whole group the key aspects of the discussion.

PRACTICALITIES

▸▸ **Format.** This exercise should be a group activity with each participant bringing in their personal representation of waste and later discussing it with others. With some adaptation, it could take place online.

▸▸ **Duration.** Approximately 45 minutes.

▸▸ **Others.** Different types of moderation are needed, including expert moderation about the different phases of the food chain and on the various causes of food loss and waste.
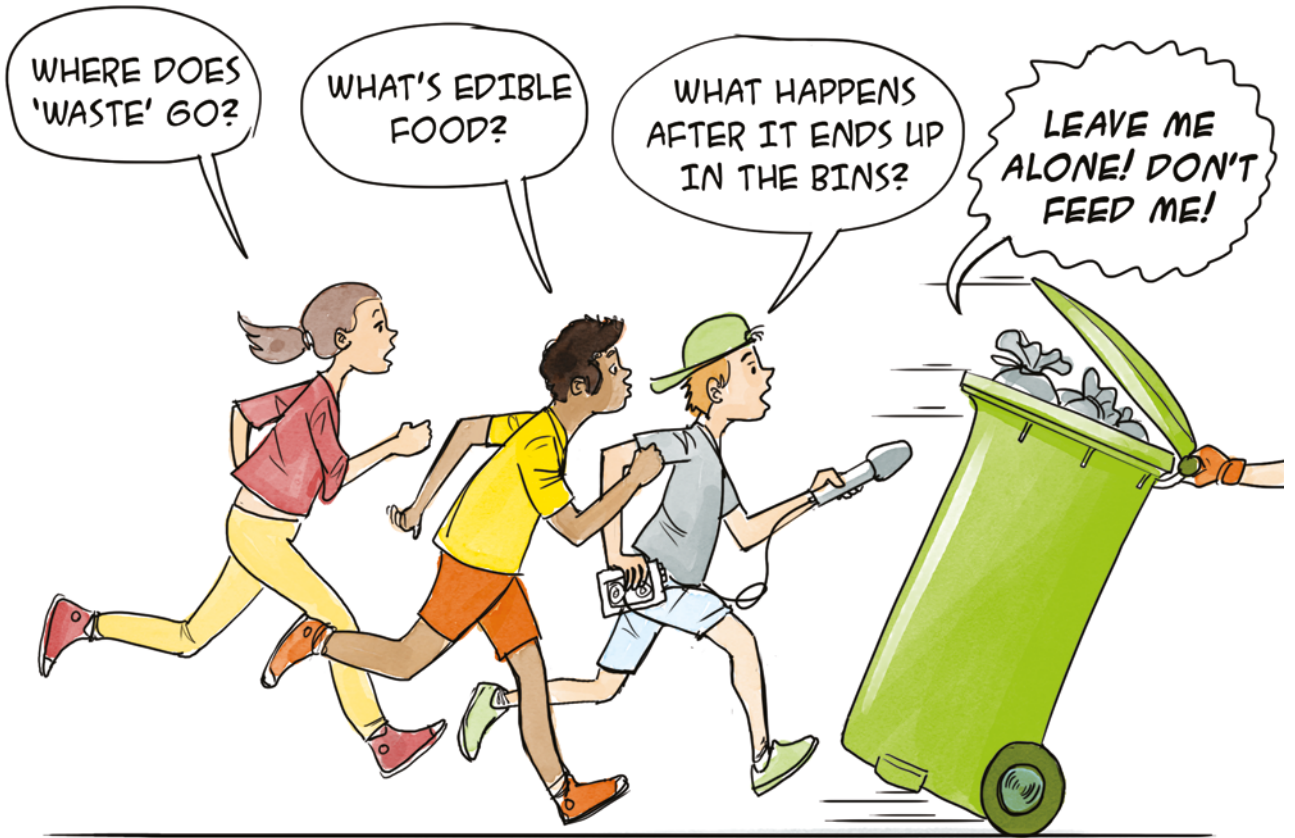
7. Map of the food environment

Goal

To raise awareness about the food environment around us and how food habits are co-produced in different settings (e.g. home, canteen, grocery shop) by actively observing and engaging with the environment itself.

Premise

The canteen and the school setting are embedded within a broader social, spatial, environmental and economic context that matters a great deal in everyday life. To use a fancy term, the 'foodscape' characterising our life is made up of all the 'places and spaces where acquire food, prepare food, talk about food, or generally gather some sort of meaning from food' (Mackendrick, 2014). This means that the canteen and the school are just two of the many places and spaces that have some kind of influence over what we eat.

Part 1

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Choose a neighbourhood. They can choose the one where the school is located or where they live (or both if they really like this exercise and would like to make a comparison).

★ Walk around the neighbourhood and take pictures of the food business activities they identify as such: for example, grocery shops (belonging to the retail sector) as well as, if present, places of production, transformation or distribution of food ([9]).

★ Place each picture on a print-out of a large-scale map ([10]) – to make it more realistic, participants can place on the map different materials (e.g. leaves for green spaces, stones for parking lots, toy bricks to represent unusual places or wool to trace itineraries).

★ Make their own legend.

★ Analyse what kind of shops are in the neighbourhood (e.g. bakery, butcher's, mini-market, open-air street food vendor). What is the local food offer? How does the foodscape look (e.g. vibrant, deserted, few choices, very specialised, etc.)?

([9]) Retail or consumption spaces are easier to visually identify than manufacturing activities or distribution hubs (e.g. wholesale food markets). Investigating the latter will most likely require additional research about the local food sector and collection of secondary data about food business activities.

([10]) If you can print, you could choose different types of maps (e.g. street view). If you can't print, you can draw it on a large sheet of paper.

DISCOVERING THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

SEA
BUTCHER
Food BANK
FARM FIELDS
FOOD MARKET
FISH SHOP
BAKERY
FISH FARM
GROCERY STORE
SLAUGHTERHOUSE
MILLING INDUSTRY
WHOLESALE FOOD DISTRIBUTORS

Part 2

This part is complementary to part 1. It could be integrated into the map-making exercise or done separately.

Invite participants to do the following.

★ Complement the visual information they have gathered, choosing one or two vendors (or representatives of the food business activity) mapped and, if possible, asking their permission to do a brief interview. The participant may consider the following questions: where does the food you sell come from? Who are your regular customers? What kind of food do you sell? Are these products locally produced? Are they organic? Are they suitable for special diets? What is your pricing policy (e.g. discount prices)? What do you do with food that is about to go off?

NB: If there are very few shops in the neighbourhood, rather than interviewing vendors or others, the participants could stop one or two people on the street and ask them where they buy their food.

PRACTICALITIES

▸▸ **Format.** This exercise could be done individually or in groups. With some adaptation, some parts of it could take place online with the support of digital mapping tools. A printed large-scale map is necessary or, if online, it needs to be made available as background material.

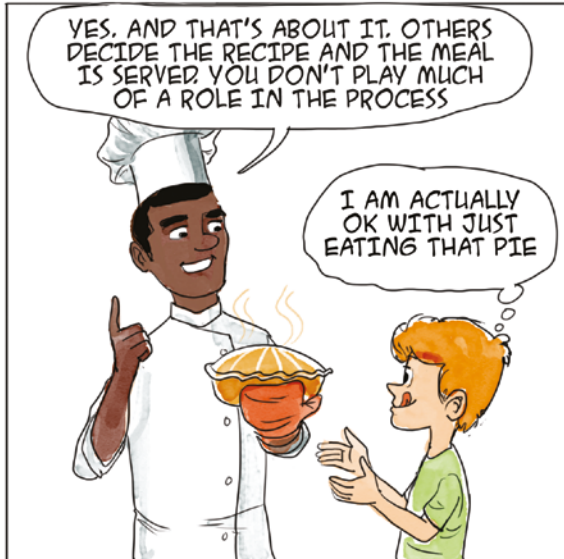▸▸ **Duration.** The activity might take several hours; we suggest at least five sessions lasting approximately 90 minutes each.
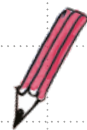
REMAKING

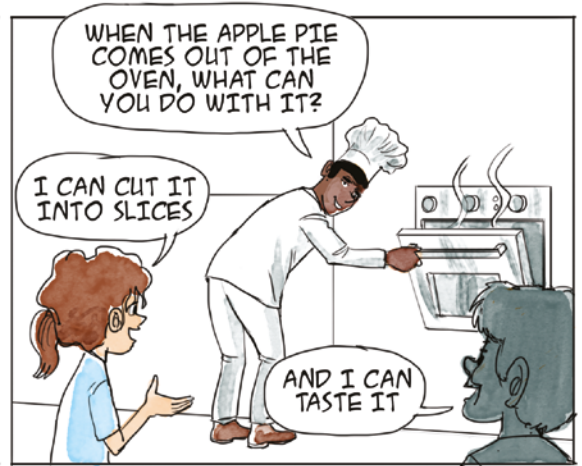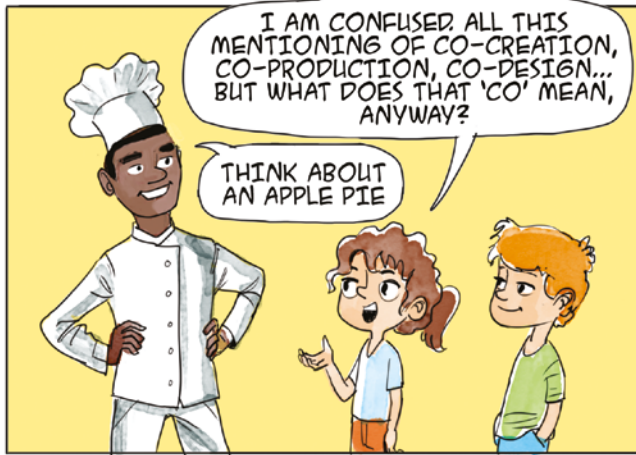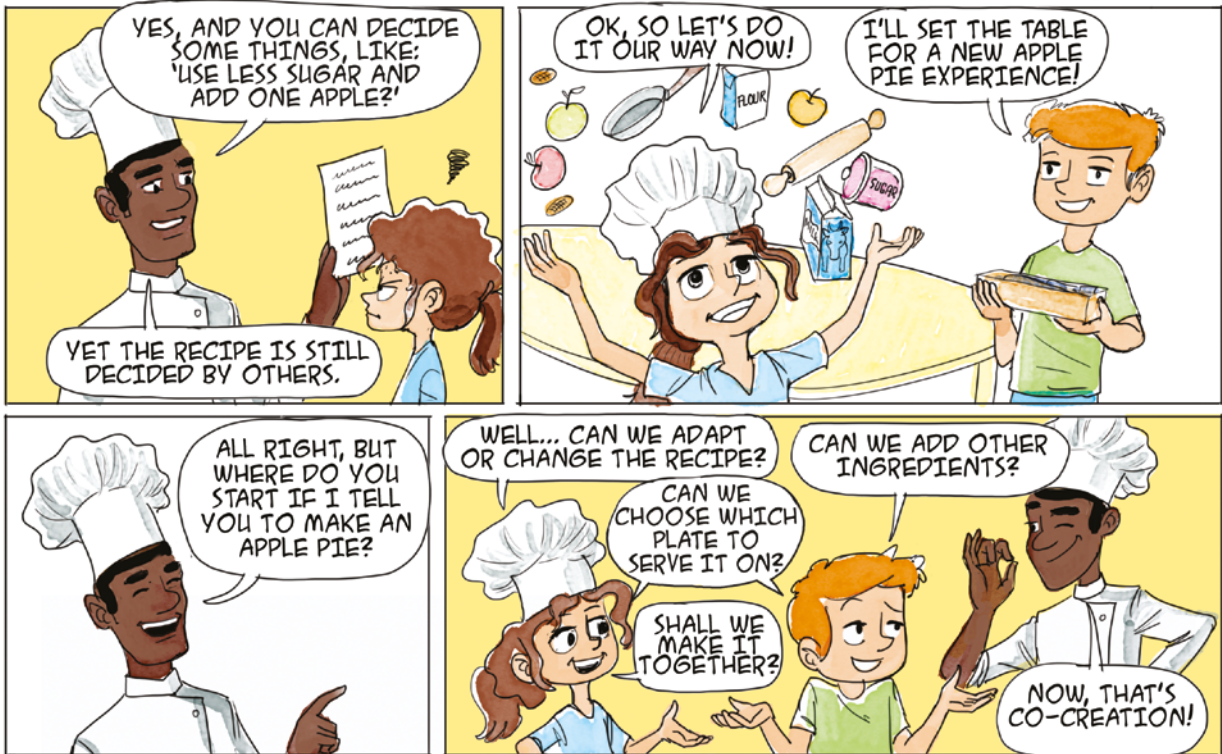# Engage 3 — Remaking

1. Hand-made pack of cards for storytelling: what is the school meal and what could it look like?

Goal

To engage participants in creating a more inclusive narrative about the topic in question.

Steps

Part 1 (20 minutes)

★ Each participant is asked to create three cards (tip: you could use ready-made cards) with drawings, collage, or one word representing one aspect they care or are concerned about. Each card could represent a different element or dimension of what matters to them.

★ Each participant retains one card of their choice. All the other cards are assembled into a newly made pack. They are now ready to tell their story.

Part 2 (30 minutes)

★ Randomly distribute two cards and ask each participant to comment on them: do they understand what issues are represented? Can they relate to these matters?

★ Form small groups and continue the conversation: group the cards you all have (3 x number of participants) according to some categories of your choice such as taste, pleasure, health, environment and viability. Really, any categories would do, even 'just because' or 'we can't do without it'.

- ★ Ask participants to:
  - ● create a common story about the school meal that they can later pitch ([11]);
  - ● think about what, if anything, is missing in their story.

Part 3 (30 minutes)

- ★ Each small group shares their story with the main group. Afterwards, some questions could be addressed collectively: are the stories similar in form and/or content? Can the stories be characterised in any way? Do the participants feel their issues are represented in the stories? Can a more general narrative be built from each story?
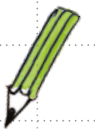
Part 4 (20 minutes)

- ★ Conclusive reflection: does this exercise allow for anything new to emerge compared to the ways the issue has been previously narrated or represented? If so, what kind of follow up actions, if any, could be undertaken?

PRACTICALITIES

- ▶▶ **Format.** This should be a group activity with each participant bringing in their personal representation of the school meal and later discussing it with others, in small groups and in the main group. It can also take place online.

- ▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes.

- ▶▶ **Duration.** Pens, scissors and paper (if you are not using the page below).

([11]) What is a pitch? It is a very short and concise presentation that generally lasts few minutes – as long as an elevator pitch.

2. Re-imagine your lunch break

Goal

To enhance a sense of ownership and co-responsibility for transformative change by stimulating imagination.

Steps

★ Participants are divided into small groups. Each participant is asked to bring in their own perspective to the conversation.

★ Ask participants to do the following.

1 Imagine that they are in charge of deciding what and how they should eat. Encourage them to draw their dish and design their lunch break ([12]).

2 Discuss why and how they would like to have their meal – for how long, with whom, where – justifying their choices. What is important is that they value and share what they already know about what works better for them, from their perspective.

3 Consider the following questions to build their arguments: why do you think it is a good idea to eat this meal? If you know, what kind of ingredients would you use and why? Where would you eat and how much time would you dedicate to eating for it to be pleasant? Who would you like to eat with?

4 Make a collective proposal, as a group, of a lunch break based on individual contributions.

★ The participants then return to the main group where each smaller group shares their ideas.

([12]) Each group can choose whether each participant makes their contribution individually or imagining a new lunch break is a group activity from the start, with individual contributions integrated in the making.

- ★ Discuss the following questions. Are the ideas presented feasible? Can they be implemented, at least partially, and how? Can some aspects of the existing lunch break be improved or changed by these proposals?

- ★ What can be done to make that envisaged change happen? Based on the conversation, identify what can be changed as well as what is the most urgent item to address in their view.
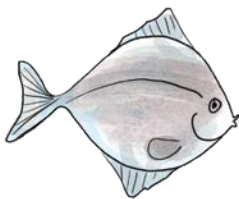
▶▶ **Format.** This should be a group activity, with each participant bringing in their personal ideas about the lunch break and later discussing them with others, in small groups and in the main group. This activity can also take place online with some adaptation.

▶▶ **Duration.** The activity might take several hours of work. It entails both co-design (drafting ideas and proposals) and co-creation (planning in order to move ideas forward and implement them). This exercise should be planned across three sessions or more, with at least one session of 90 minutes each, dedicated to co-design and two (or more) dedicated to co-creation.
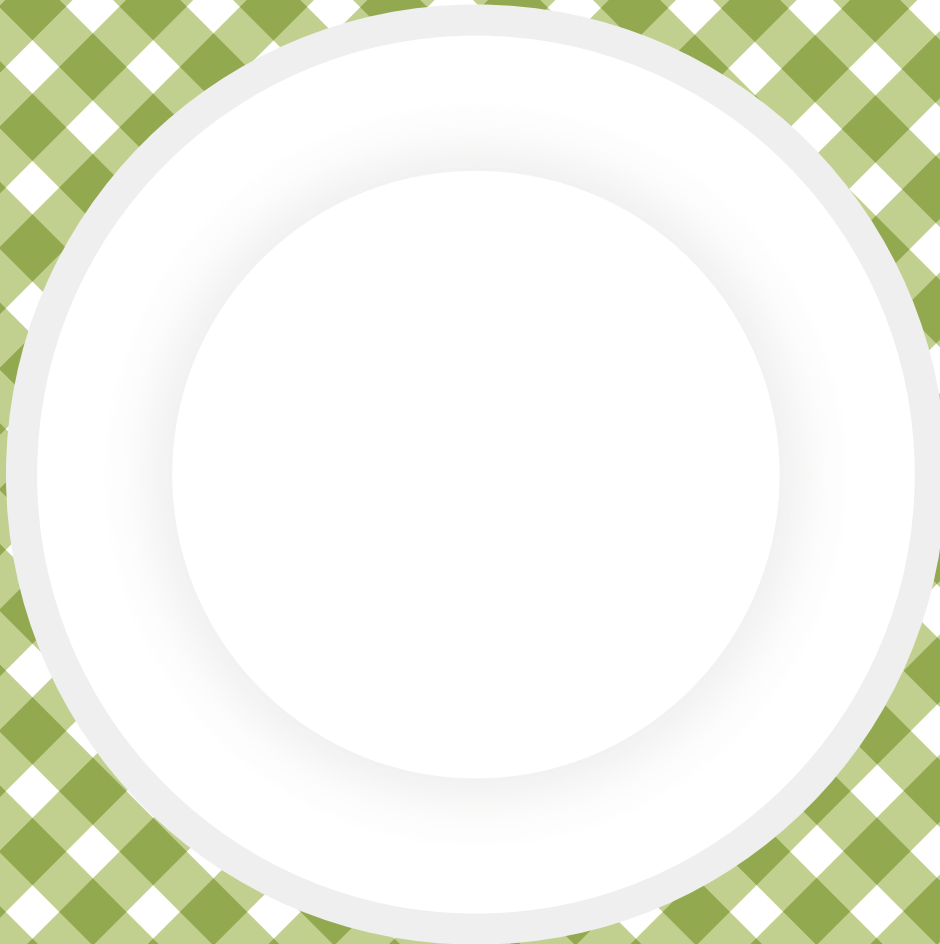
3. Organise a convivial moment – also known as a party

Goal

To practice conviviality as a key element of participation by planning a simple yet pleasant activity.

Steps

★ Prepare the ingredients to make bread with tomatoes: for about 15 participants, you will need approximately 1 kg of tomatoes, sliced and ready to be mixed with some oil and a little bit of salt. Use a large salad bowl to assemble the ingredients. Make sure you have a couple of slices of bread per person.

★ While the bread with tomatoes is being made, the facilitator kicks off the conversation: what ingredients make a good party in your view?

★ Ask all participants to discuss the following questions.

1 Who would you like to invite and what is the purpose, if any, of the party?

2 What would you like to eat?

3 Should there be music or games to play?

4 Where would you like the party to take place?

★ If you have not already done so, have a little break to enjoy the bread and tomatoes!

★ Next steps: who will take care of what? When will the party take place?

You can also decide that a convivial moment is an integral part of a more formal regular dialogue (e.g. a weekly assembly).

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This should be a group activity. The brainstorming phases of the exercise can take place online. If each participant does its own bread with tomatos, the party might also happen online.

▶▶ **Duration.** As long as you wish.

▶▶ **Others.** Facilitation is recommended in the first phase (preparing the food and kicking off the conversation). Self-organisation should be encouraged in the following phases.
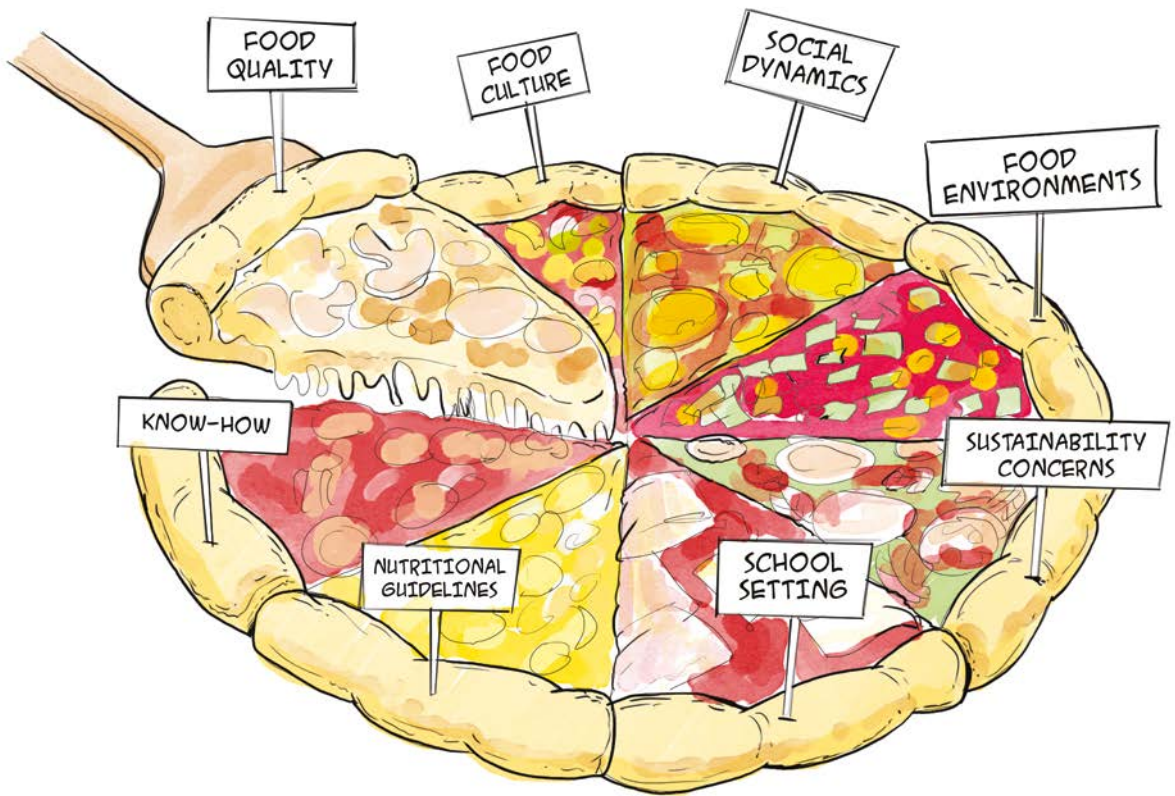
4. How can we dialogue with each other?

Goal

To imagine ways to enhance dialogue by making collective proposals on how to maintain and nurture conversations about collective matters.

Steps

★ Prepare large sheets of paper and markers. You may want to pile up some old magazines: they might come in handy when looking for images.

★ Form small groups, each equipped with some of the materials mentioned above.

★ Each group should address the following questions.

1 How can you activate the dialogue within the community?

2 How do you imagine an action about food in schools could look like?

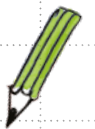**3** What do adults think? How do they want to be involved? Who should be promoting such an initiative?

★ Return to the main group with each smaller group sharing their ideas.

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise should be a group activity. With some adaptation, it can be held online.

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately 45 minutes.

▶▶ **Others.** Old magazines, scissors and glue.

5. Design your own activity

Goal

To engage participants on greater ownership over engagement processes, by designing an activity that works for them and better fits their context.

Steps

★ Write down your own activity with this question in mind: how do you want to engage and/or be engaged?

PRACTICALITIES

▶▶ **Format.** This exercise should be…

▶▶ **Duration.** Approximately…

▶▶ **Materials.**

▶▶ **Others.**

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY.
LET'S CHANGE THE PERSPECTIVE.

READ MORE SECTION

POST SCRIPTUM FROM THE YEARS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

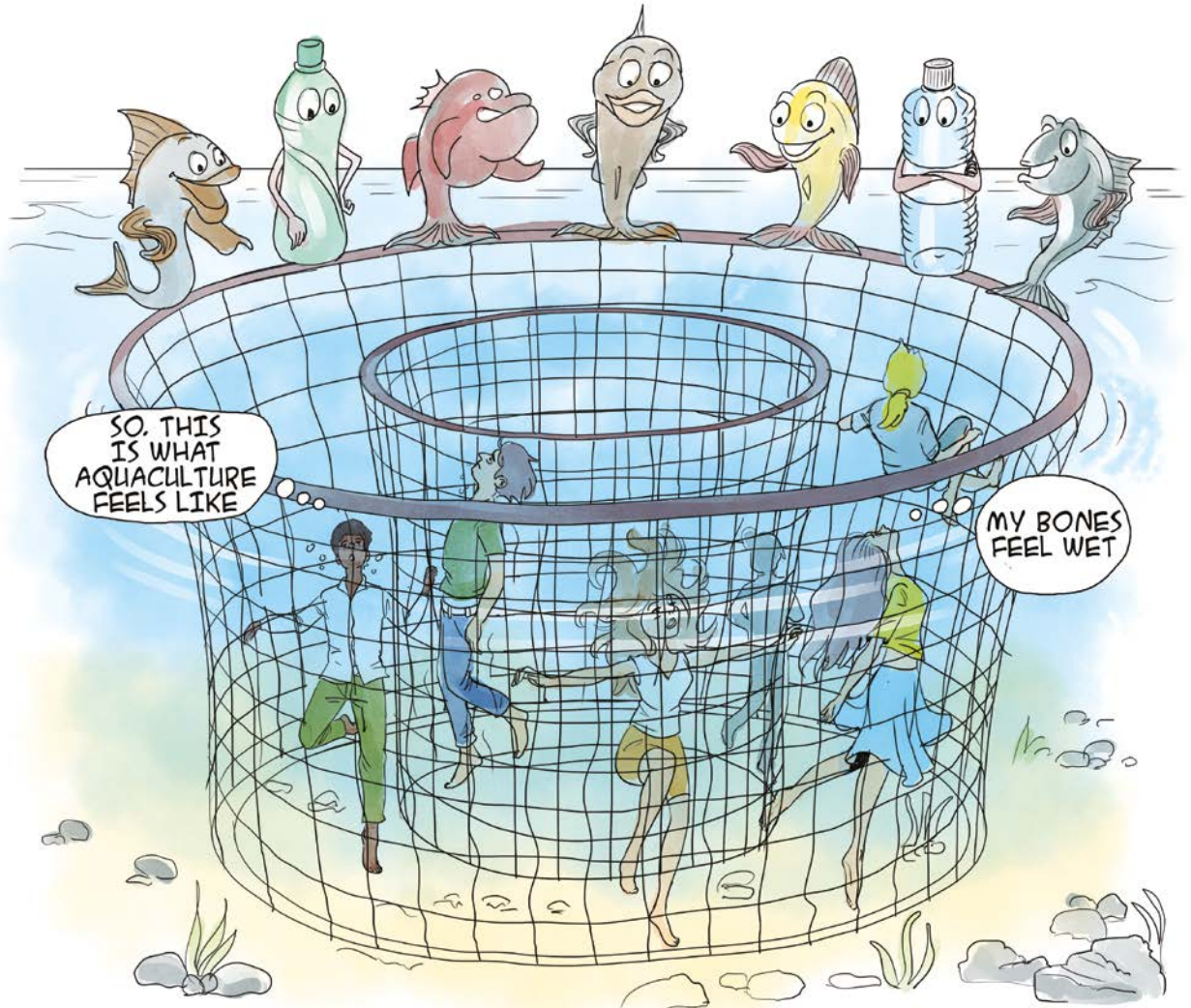This toolkit was designed during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020–2021, the pace and shape of our private and social lives rapidly changed following the evolution of the norms and rules set to govern the health emergency. This called for major resilience from all of us – with all the different challenges that staying at home implies, depending on one's own personal, social and economic situation.

Public life as we knew it quickly became a distant memory. No gatherings. No touching. Limited exchanges – even of objects, as they might act as vectors of contagion. The new reality we have been facing since March 2020 to varying degrees looks rather different from the messy and colourful classroom that we mentioned in the introduction to this toolkit. The messy room, representing an everyday space of democracy – where being with others and dialoguing is something that is learnt and practised on a daily basis – has been affected by partial or full closure for long periods of time. With differences between and within countries, schools, youth education and social contact have been largely affected by the governance of the pandemic. With schools closed and children at home, distance learning was the new normal.

With all of this going on, drafting a toolkit focused on engaging citizens and specifically children and young people, children and young people, seemed to be out of touch with the new reality. With the new situation being more marked by a sense of urgency and emergency ('we have to act and act fast'), such a project seemed almost inappropriate. With restraints to personal freedoms, all sorts of activities 'beyond necessity' have been limited in order to reduce the risk of contagion. Yet, who should define what a 'necessity' is?

In March 2020, we started a reflection within our research group that pivoted around some of the following questions: what is the place of citizen engagement in times like this? Is there any room to organise participatory processes? In which new forms? What are we left with, in terms of public participation, if public life is suspended in public spaces?

There is no easy or one-size-fits-all answer to these questions, and there is little doubt that civic life has been put under significant strain since March 2020, with consequences for our democracies at all levels – political, social and economic. However, notwithstanding challenges and constraints, we have also witnessed the emergence of many experimental and innovative forms of public participation, whether grassroots or led by institutions (see Bravo and Tieben, 2020). In this sense, public life has happened anyway, with all of us finding ways to advance our claims, making space for new forms of conviviality and solidarity. In this spirit of creative hope, and following the conviction that democracy is something *to be practiced daily and creatively*, we have crafted this toolkit. While waiting for classrooms, squares, sidewalks and all kinds of spaces to be inhabited by real human bodies again, less fearful of contagion and desiring new encounters, we set ourselves the task to open space for dialogue and critical reflection.
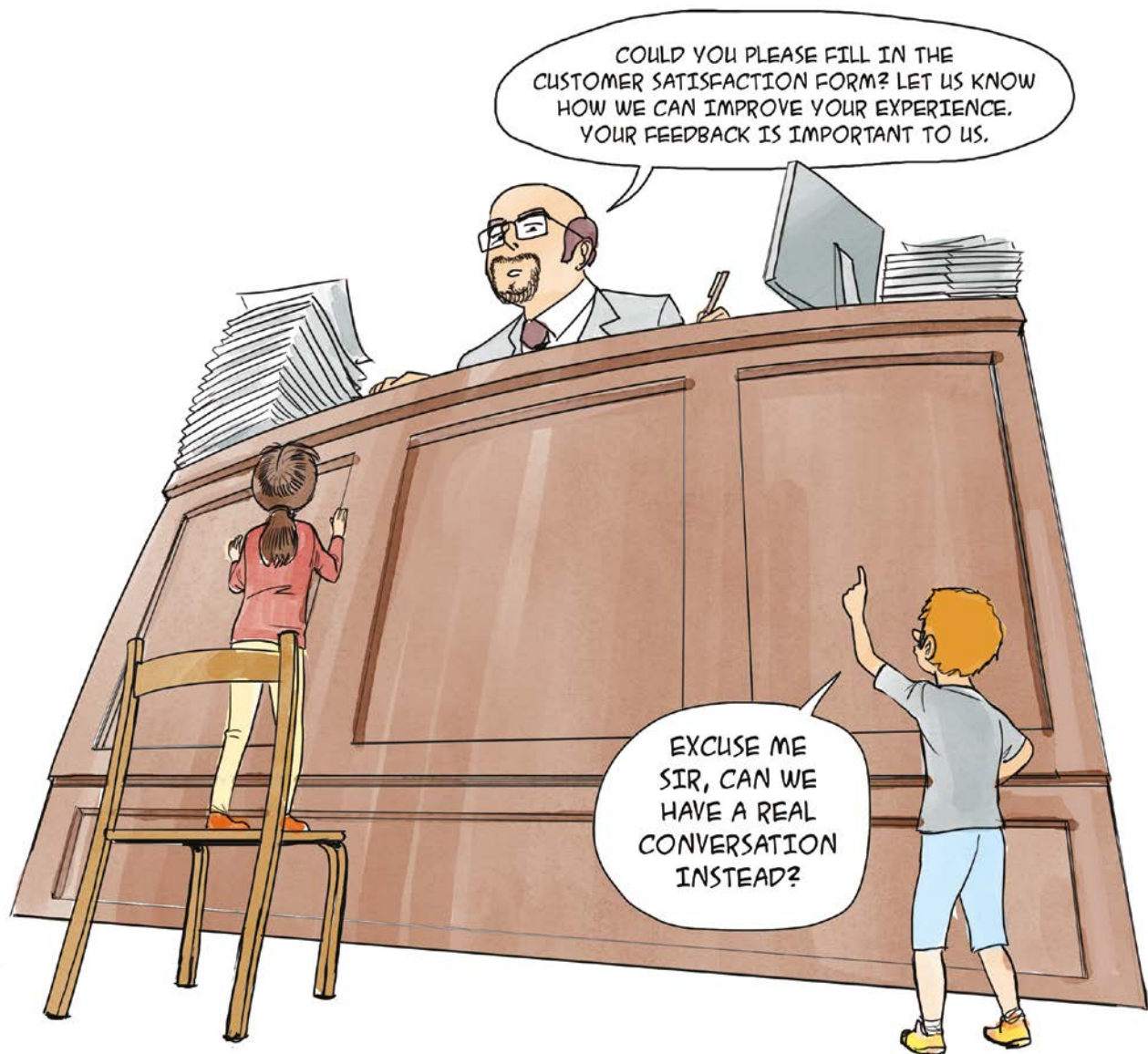
Resisting the banalization: citizen engagement as a space for dialogue and invention.

Read more about public participation and citizen engagement

Sherry Arnstein famously wrote back in 1969: 'The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.'

Arnstein (1969), critically reviewed the models of public participation in policymaking and planning, her work being highly influential in the fields of public policy, community building and planning. With reference to different rungs of participation, she argued for an understanding of public participation rooted in the capacity of citizens to determine plans, processes and outcomes – or in other words, to have power. In her account, citizens' empowerment distinguishes public participation from other forms of tokenistic interaction between institutions and citizens (e.g. consultation). Participatory processes in which power is not redistributed – at least, in certain forms, with institutions unwilling to give up some degree of control and to partner with citizens – risk being tokenistic or non-participative at all (despite their name).

Inspired by Arnstein's famous ladder, Roger Hart introduced his 'Ladder of Children's Participation' (1992). Similarly to Arnstein's ladder, Hart aimed to start a critical reflection on different forms of children's and young people's participation – from 'decorative' roles that young people hold in initiatives designed by adults (e.g. parades), to partnering with adults on equal grounds. The conceptual starting point of Hart's reflection is simple: young people do have something to say and have skills that are continuously and spontaneously put to work in the multiple projects they are involved in – with or without adults. In other words, children and young people are knowledgeable beings, and prove this on a daily basis.

The illustration on the next page pictures a stereotypical representation of the relationship between young people and adults within a school setting. Children and young people disliking vegetables and wanting *junk* food instead, while adults disapprove of their dislikes.

As explained in the introduction, such idea is persistent and dominant. With few exceptions, children and young people are often not taken seriously as interlocutors and participants in politics in their own right.

Mobilising all relevant knowledge is a key central claim for proponents of greater citizen engagement in science and policymaking. To address the relevant issues, all kinds of knowledges are needed, not just scientific knowledge. These include tacit, local, situated, affective, experiential, indigenous knowledges. Knowledge, thus, does not pertain to the strict domain of experts (Rydin, 2007, p. 54). Knowledges are multiple as multiple are the ways of knowing and seeing the world.

As human beings, we are all holders of complex knowledge that we make use of in everyday life – and that is, conversely, of value to making sense of the world and to shaping decisions about it. This is valid for young people and to any other citizen.

Finally, the origin of interest in public participation is not only about inclusive and quality governance. Rather, it is **a condition for the exercise of civic virtues**. In this spirit, public participation is as much about making sense as it is about problem-solving; as much about influencing the decision-making process as it is about participating in democratic processes. These different kinds of public participation are not unrelated; quite the opposite. The capacity to dialogue with others about the conditions that bind us together – in a classroom, in a street, in a parliament – allows to address political, social and environmental issues that matter, mobilising all relevant knowledge and perspectives.
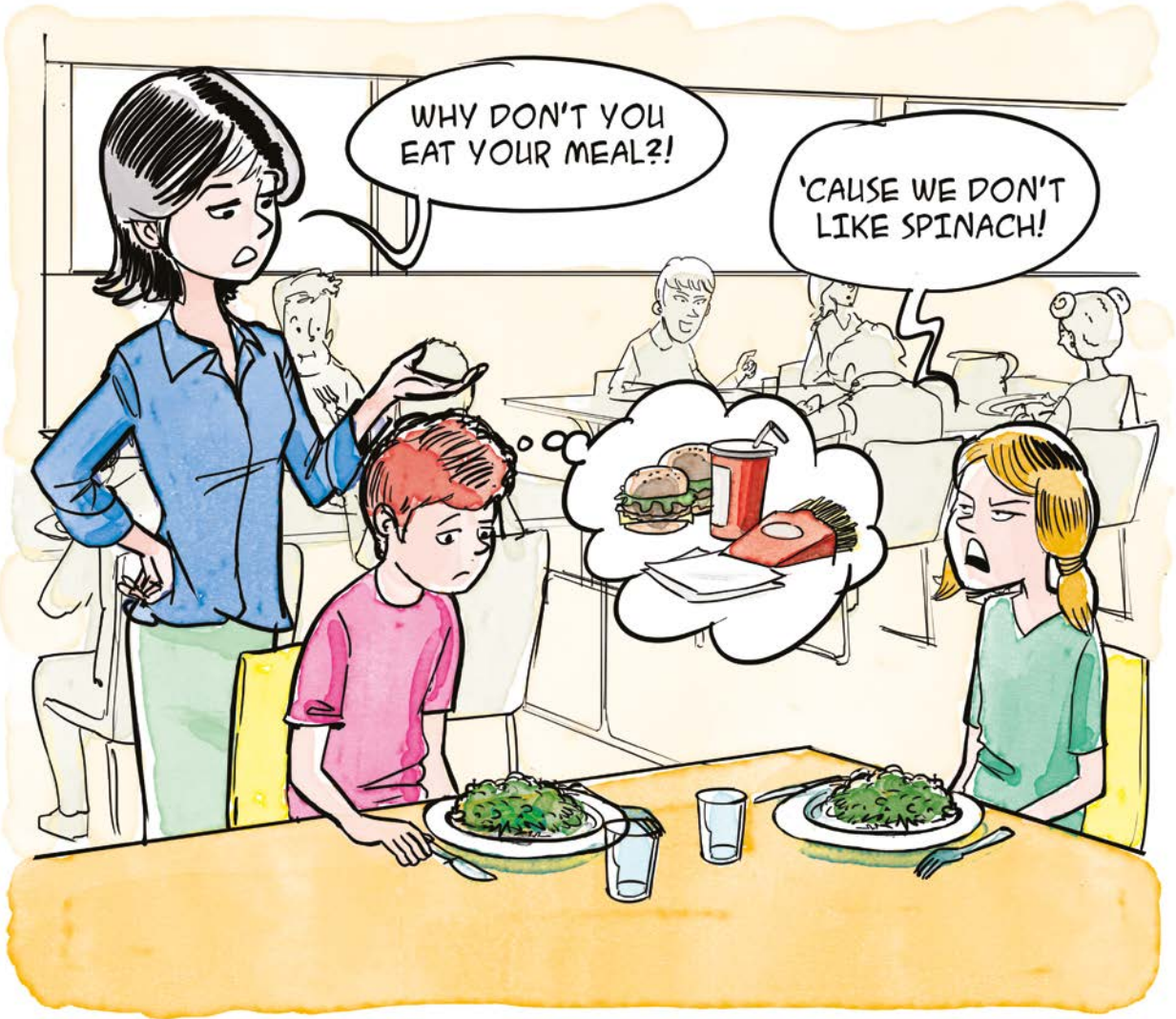
Read more about the research project behind this toolkit

The research process started by acknowledging our role, as knowledgeable subjects, in the production of knowledge and we wanted this production to be extended to all those concerned. Through our research, we aimed to co-create knowledge to inform the design and implementation of policies.

We started from a policy matter eloquently framed by Derqui *et al.* (2018) as follows: 'a perfectly designed nutritionally valid menu is useless if left on the plate'. Increasing evidence from multiple sources pointed to a great array of challenges in the implementation of the school meal and affecting its various phases, from the provision to the consumption of the food. Despite a general narrative of the school meal as an educational activity of paramount importance for pupils (and society), disputes over values emerged among the parties involved. Words such as healthy, unhealthy, good, bad, right, wrong, tasty, yummy, sustainable and organic, far from being fixed terms with a shared meaning, appeared contested and had different meanings depending on the context.

In other words, the school meal looked like a fine 'kettle of fish', often unproblematically reduced to the kind of food being served.
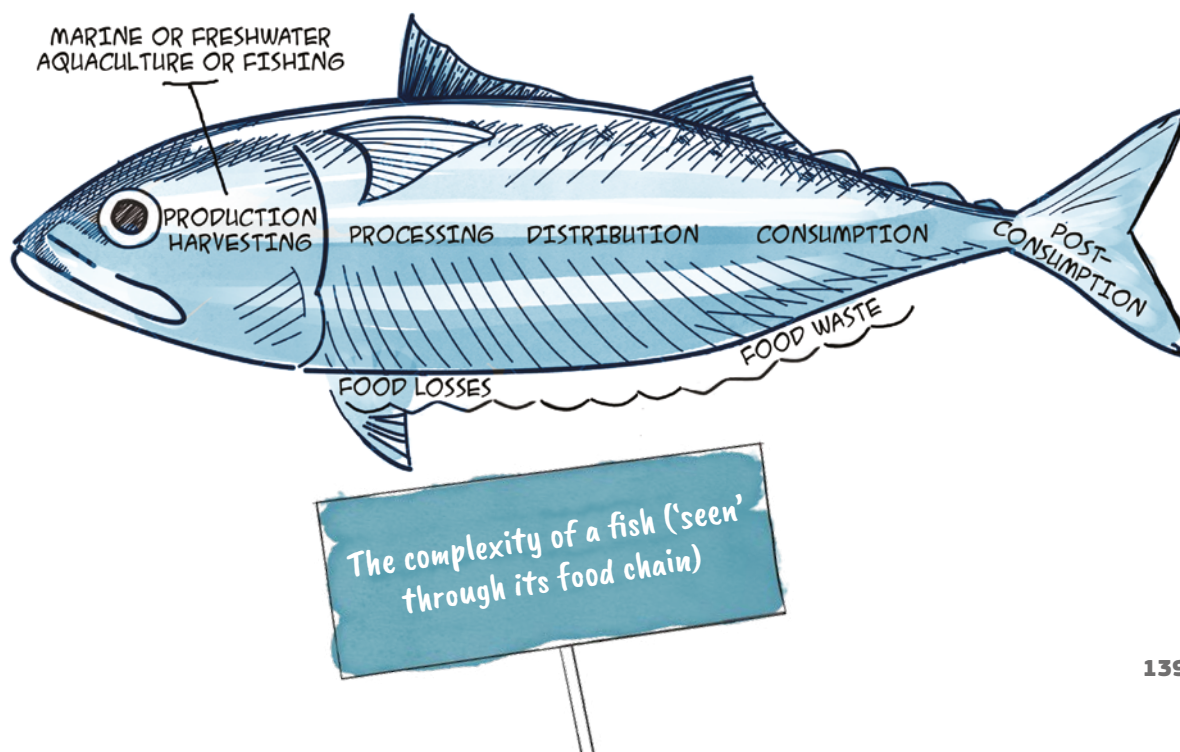
Despite its absolute relevance, the fact that a meal is balanced, from a nutritional point of view, is not enough for it to be eaten and enjoyed. So what can we do? What can policy institutions learn from this landscape of evidence?

As we looked for meaningful knowledge to explore the issue, we listened to what all the interested actors had to say, collectively engaging them in knowledge sharing (what is going on and why?) and co-production (what should and can be done?) (Campbell, 2016, p. 15).

Qualitative data were collected between spring 2017 and winter 2020 in three EU countries (Germany, Italy and Portugal), which involved seven primary or secondary schools and different actors experiencing the school meal from a variety of perspectives: from students to cooks, from caterers to local policymakers. The schools selected included: Angera, Bari, Ispra, Varese, Turin and Milan in Italy, Herdecke in Germany and Óbidos in Portugal.

From a geographical point of view, the choice of places reflected the aim of accounting for heterogeneous contexts: from densely urbanised spaces (medium to large cities) to towns and villages, from southern European countries to southern areas within EU countries. Heterogeneity here corresponded to a variety of geographical scales, food cultures and territorial development trajectories, to mention the most relevant aspects orienting our choice. Evidently, the work would need to be extended to other parts of the EU.

In the boxes below we describe the methods we have used in our research.

MARINE OR FRESHWATER AQUACULTURE OR FISHING

PRODUCTION HARVESTING   PROCESSING   DISTRIBUTION   CONSUMPTION   POST-CONSUMPTION

FOOD WASTE

FOOD LOSSES

The complexity of a fish ('seen' through its food chain)

Interview

Method 1: interviewing.

The interview is a social research method by means of which an interviewer asks one or more interviewee(s) questions. The interview helps the researcher to understand in-depth meanings, experiences and contexts. The format of the interview can vary. It can be highly structured, with a pre-defined set of questions in a certain order (just like a questionnaire); semi-structured, with some questions being pre-defined and others being crafted during the interview, or unstructured, with no pre-determined questions to be asked. For this toolkit, you can experiment with all three kinds of interviews, but we suggest you start with a semi-structured format: write down some questions you would like to ask and then follow the flow of the conversation.

If it is your first time experimenting with an interview, bear in mind these ethical rules.

1 Inform the interviewee(s) of the purpose of the interview and the usage of the insights collected. Prepare an informed consent form for them to sign.

2 Clarify whether the interview or extracts of it will be published and whether the interviewees will be made anonymous and unidentifiable.

3 Ask the interviewee(s) if they have any questions. The interviewee will need to agree to your intentions.

In research, there are many ethical and other issues (including practicalities) to account for. We suggest you read Crang and Cook (2007, pp. 60–89) to gain more insights about this method.

Co-creation

Method 2: group activity [e.g. focus group]

This is about group activities. Here we focus on a well-known method from social research called focus group. A focus group is a form of group interview that allows a topic to be explored in a collective way. Focus groups are useful for exploring how people work out their thoughts and feelings about certain matters in social contexts, that is to say with others and/or in certain places. This methodology creates room for

contradictory views, values, expectations, resistances and problematics to emerge (Crang and Cook, 2007) and provides room for co-creating more inclusive narratives and solutions. For the research project that informs this toolkit, we designed and conducted several focus groups to this end. Indeed, focus groups constitute the methodological backbone of our engagement process, complemented by interviews and spatial observations. As described in the section 'How to use this book' (pp. 18-22), you can replicate the format by setting up a process made up of activities No. 1 (pag. 31), No. 1 (pag. 70) and No. 4 (p. 123).

When organising one or more activities with groups, keep in mind the following.

1 Who should be part of the group and why? List who would you like to invite and why, clarifying practical arrangements such as how you will be sending out the invitation. For the research project that informed this toolkit, we asked the school management for authorisation to conduct the groups and for their collaboration, particularly that of teachers to help with organisation and reaching out to families and students. Our purpose was to collect the full range of views about the school meal and engage all actors interested by the issue. This included students (in most cases, 9-13 years old), parents, teachers, school directors, cooks (when present), caterers, nutritionists, and health professionals.

2 We are all influenced by group and power dynamics ascribable to roles, occupations, age, gender, race, sexuality and many other aspects. Pay attention to such dynamics and make sure the discussion is not hijacked by anyone. For example, we preferred to engage parents and children who were unrelated, to avoid reciprocal influences.

3 There is no universal rule concerning the number of participants in group activities. But, focus groups generally include 6–12 participants, so that groups are neither too large nor too small. In our case, on average, 10 participants took part in the group activities.

4 Write down a scripted choreography: what happens, when, why you are doing the particular task, etc.

5 As in the case of interviews, make sure participants are aware of the purpose and the follow-up of the participatory process. Also, share the agenda with those involved on the moderation beforehand.

We suggest you read Crang and Cook (2007, pp. 90–103) to gain more insights about focus groups, but also Guimarães Pereira and Völker (2020), Guimarães Pereira *et al.* (2004) to know about many others.

Ethnography

The full report is available here: https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/participatory-democracy/about-competence-centre-participatory-deliberative-democracy_en.

Read more about material deliberation

When we imagine a dialogue, we are likely to associate it with spoken words and reasoned argument. Yet, as dialogue is more a disposition than a technique, expressions of various kinds – from drawing or making to acting – are all ways of knowing and dialoguing.

This toolkit and the research process behind it draw from a methodological approach called 'material deliberation'. Material deliberation posits that human beings interact and thus deliberate in diverse ways: through words but also with their bodies, by making reasoned arguments, by using expressing affection or emotions (hate, love, fear, attachment, pleasure, nostalgia), by laughing and singing, by touching or by telling stories or making

Material deliberation might entail engaging with non-human species in creative ways.

plays. The word 'materiality' stresses the material things that structure our life: objects and buildings, places and streets and, affections and emotions. Material deliberation posits that the ways in which we agree or disagree with each other, and the ways in which we express ourselves in such interactions, are multiple.

Such diversity of expressions is rich and important for deliberating better: it allows us to grasp meanings and understandings that matter and to address the right concerns. ([13])

([13]) This all may sound odd given that, as this book is being put together, we are living through times in which the need for physical distancing imposes restrictions to touching hands and bodies, playing together with materials and sharing stories with others beyond our households in the same physical environment. Yet, there are ways, even in times of strict limitations to physical social life, to maintain a 'degree of materiality' in the ways in which we interact with each other. After all, our memory of touch does remain untouchable, as we quickly return to what we know. In practice, this means that we can design activities, stories and exercises in asynchronous terms and organise the work across multiple sessions. This includes the possibility to combine the use of digital and analogue tools, mixing individual and group work in creative ways. There are still many ways to collect stories about what concerns us, and to build dialogue in creative ways in order to do so.

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Script No. 1: THE COOK

Materials suggested for your performance: apron, hair net, knife (fake!), jar

So, there is cooking. You take a chicken breast, you chop it. You can feel from the texture how it was raised. The colour reveals what the animal was eating during its life. Solid rather than flaccid meat, vividly coloured pinkish-yellow rather than pasty, shiny rather than opaque, and it has to smell fresh: a pungent and almost metallic odour is tangibly perceptible when you face a *good* piece of chicken! Smelling and touching are key if you are a cook: I need to feel the food, my skin and my senses are the ways through which *quality is assessed* in my job. I do not trust if I do not touch, if I do not feel. True, trust is key across the whole chain. A butcher, a *good* butcher, is able to build consumer loyalty in a variety of ways. But, you'll know you weren't fooled only when you cook it, when you touch it. For example, if you put the meat on the grill and it shrinks, it is not a good sign. It means the meat was pumped with water or that the hanging was shorter than it should have been. The chicken, after the slaughterhouse, has to rest for sometime. Chicken meat rests shorter than red meat as muscles settle and relax.

But then, besides cooking, there is the bureaucracy that running a kitchen means nowadays. Everything that comes in and any surplus food that we cook, by law, must be registered and stored in an appropriate way. See this? (*take the jar!*) Well, that is a typical jar in which cooked and raw food is placed. It goes directly into fridges and on it, the date of production or blast chilling must be reported. I am not saying that the HACCP – Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points – is bad. I am just saying I am facing two trends. The one I just mentioned – increasing food safety regulations, and the one I am about to tell you.

Indeed, what is interesting about the animal 'chicken' is that, over the years, it has become a valuable meat. Much more appreciated than it was in the 1990s, there are many qualities of chickens, different ways to raise them, and people start asking you: 'Is this a free range chicken? Does it eat only corn? Do you kill it when it is young or old?'

Also, name-change and playing with words and semantics is a thing right now: if you go to a restaurant and you read on the menu 'chicken salad', you are less likely to be seduced than if there is a 'cockerel salad with walnuts and seeds of sesame' for which they charge you 17 € even if the chicken is a 'regular' one, coming from intensive husbandry.

In a nutshell, humans are narrative 'junkies'. Media, a renewed sense of aesthetics, rising new tastes for luxury, food pornography made food a thing to talk about and the cook a job you want to do, an expert in the field – and certainly someone you want to go out with.

Script No. 2: THE FARMER

Material suggested for your performance: polypropylene coveralls and hair net

So, you are wondering what I am wearing?

I am wearing what guarantees that the food that you have on your plate is safe and healthy. I am wearing a material, a suit, that makes sure that the probability for chickens to get ill because of external contamination is the lowest possible. And guess what? Not everybody can wear this as very few people per livestock can access the warehouse where chickens are. You need to be certified by an external body to become a 'chicken expert'.

We, humans, are actually the major threats to chicken welfare.

Animal welfare is what ensures that animals are raised and grow in the best possible living conditions. 'Healthy', 'safe', 'genuine' all happen if good management is there every day over the 50 weeks of chicken's life and production cycle.

If you get the healthiest possible chicken on earth and you keep it in a dirty space, the need for antibiotics will automatically arise.

Keeping conditions are essential to avoid that. To have *enough* space – even if they are creatures of habit and if placed here (*use your finger to bodily express 'here'*), they wouldn't go there (*same as before*), to have a clean space with daily checked good quality of air and the right temperature.

Sight tells you if a chicken is healthy: if they move, if they eat, if they are active. And if their feathers look nice.

Also, chickens have to rest during the night with no lights on: ours are not chickens for egg production, when the sun goes down they go to sleep as we do. All these things make the broiler a good, tasty, healthy, low-fat and high-protein food to eat.

Do you know where does the name 'broiler' come from? It comes from the verb 'to broil'. A classic and traditional cooking technique, perfect to cook the most desired cut of the chicken: the breast. As a result of modern breeding, the broiler satisfies the market demand for tradition, at the same time allowing the chicken to be a democratic product. Chicken is for people, *for normal people with normal budgets* (emphasis).

Script No. 3: THE VET

Materials suggested for your performance: white coat, latex gloves, hair net

When I started as a vet, in the early 1980s, the poultry man was not a job that granted you a social prestige of some sort. Quite

the contrary. Where I am from, the poultry man was called the 'poulailler'. Someone that had no skills to raise *quality* animals such as cows. Rather than farmers, poultry men were seen as low-status backyard bird-keepers.

Things have changed. Chicken farmers are now respected professionals in animal husbandry, and the poultry production has literally gone through a revolution. Animal welfare, biosecurity, hygiene and safety EU measures have led the sector from medieval times to a new era – just like the shift from a pager to a cellphone.

When I began, cows were tied with chains from day one until they were sent to the slaughterhouse. During summer times, chickens would die due to warm temperatures, and nobody would care about it.

A major driver of change has been the large-scale retail distribution. If they want organic or 'antibiotic free', then we go for it. Yes, I said 'antibiotic free', *pretty incredible, huh?* (emphasis). It is about one year and a half that the poultry sector is committing itself to use zero antibiotics. Better managed and clean spaces, technical advancements, use of micro-doses of probiotic and acetic acids that modify the gut flora of chickens – and first and foremost, a shared understanding that *animal welfare is key for animal health and, therefore, for public health.*

What exactly do I do? Without notice, I go to a farm together with a small group of trusted colleagues. We normally do checks for each cycle of production – for the chicken's lifespan. For intensive husbandries it means 50 days, from the delivery of chicks to the farm to 'chicken loading' heading to the slaughterhouse.

When I go a farm, I certainly check density per square meter. Take a square meter (*walk the square meter!*), the law says

that there should be no more than 33 kg per square meter – 39 if farms are particularly well managed. How many chickens is 33 kg per m2? About 15!

I know you are confused, let me explain you in simple terms: *the weight of the animal depends on the request of the market* (emphasis, slow down and spell it out clearly). Few years ago, slaughterhouses were asking chickens weighting over 4 kg. Right now, chickens reach in between 2.3 and 2.5 kg. The market has changed and for the better!

Script No. 4: THE BUTCHER

Materials suggested for your performance: apron, knife and chicken (both fake!)

Mine is a joyful chicken. It is a broiler, yes – just like the one you have heard about before. But, the one I sell in my butcher's lives for 70-80 days, rather than 50.

Even if this specific breed is man-made, we – me and other *concerned* butchers and farmers – do different broilers.

Ours are happier because they eat natural and locally grown corn of a particular kind. What they eat gives the meat a more natural yellowish-gold colour. The texture is solid rather than feeble, and the meat lasts longer. By slowing down the production, pushing back the slaughtering for some days, we produce and sell a different broiler.

Less fat and cheaper than red meat, people started asking for chicken meat of higher quality. We've accepted the challenge to deliver a *product* (emphasis added) that meets the expectations and demands of *housewives* (emphasis added) and their families.

Breast is the most refined and popular cut of the chicken – no wonder why the broiler, known for rapidly developing its breast, is the common choice by farmers.

But, really, all parts of the chicken are enjoyable and can be cooked in a variety of ways. The chicken thigh is juicy as it is fatter – delicious if browned in butter by the way! – and chicken wings are great for barbecue and 'manning the grill'.

From behind the meat counter, I've heard my customers demanding tradition, quality and sustainability.

Differently from a regular type of broiler livestock, our chickens are no more than 4-5 per m^2, the light in the warehouse isn't kept on for them to be continuously stimulated to eat. Ours are less pushed beyond their bodily limits, respecting the 'natural' growth pattern of this animal. Our chickens do not get fat: their bones do not crumble, and their legs do not weaken because of excess weight or lack of movement. They stay robust as bones should be!

Also, animal stress is reduced to the minimum: even when we do 'chickens loading' that lead to the slaughterhouse, we load them manually (*take the chicken and fake the load*), rather than using pipes that 'suck' their heads to make the whole process more efficient – faster. Everything, from farming to slaughtering is done locally to guarantee environmental sustainability and lower animal stress.
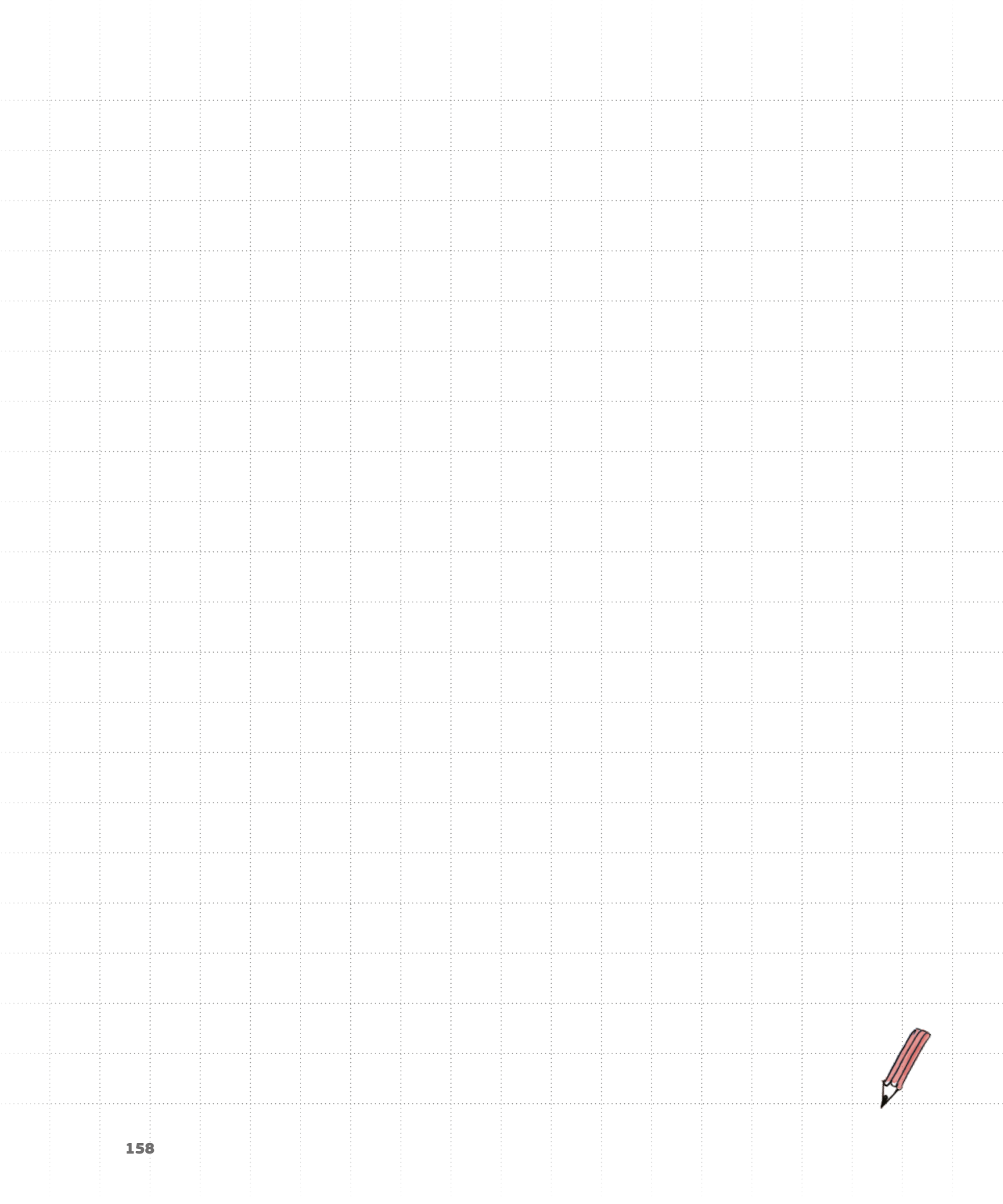
Fake you are leaving the stage. Then pause as if you were remembering something and say:

Oh, you are asking me what is my stake in discourses about reducing meat consumption? Precisely, because I am butcher – I have a stake and interest in the issue.
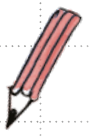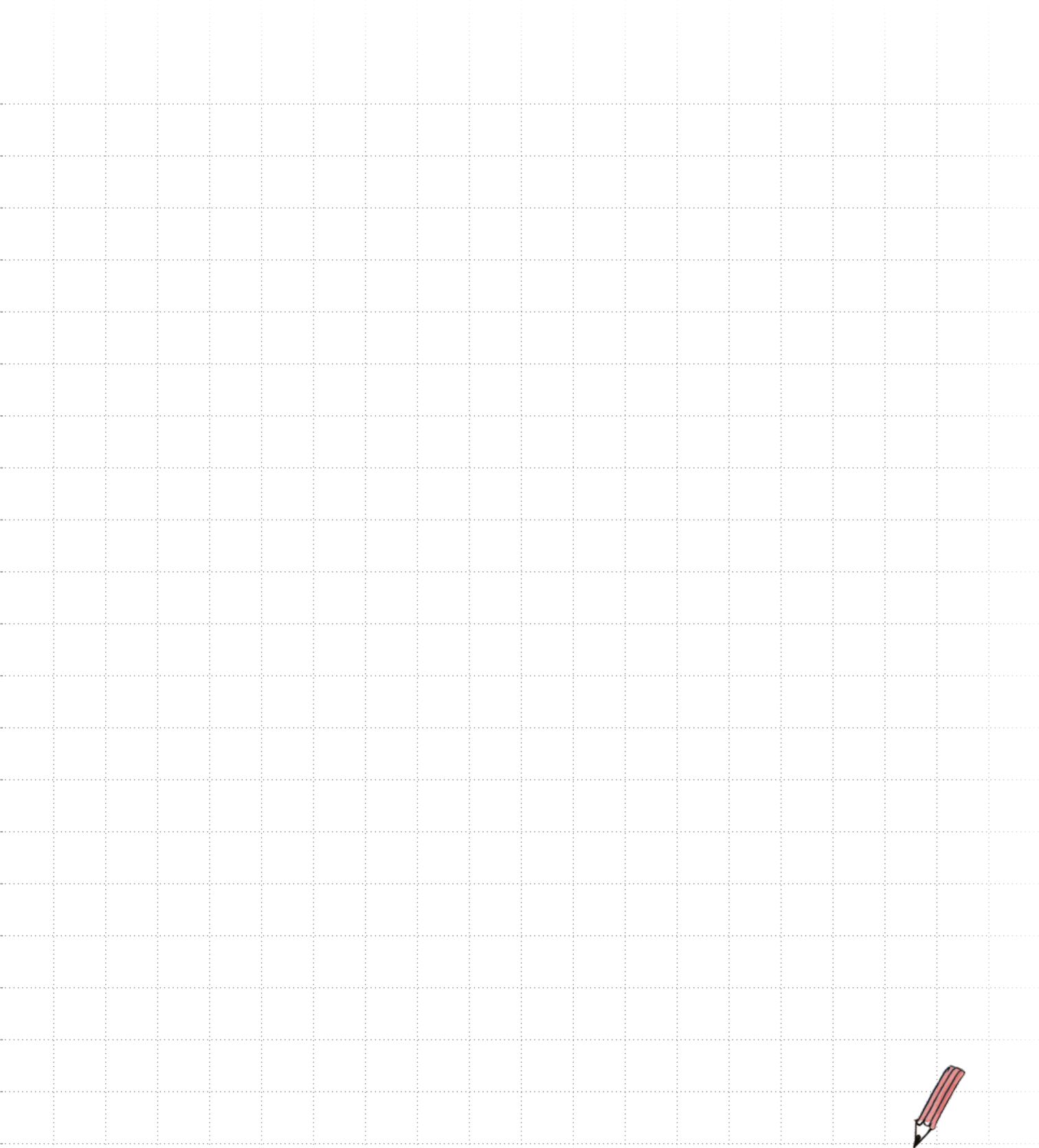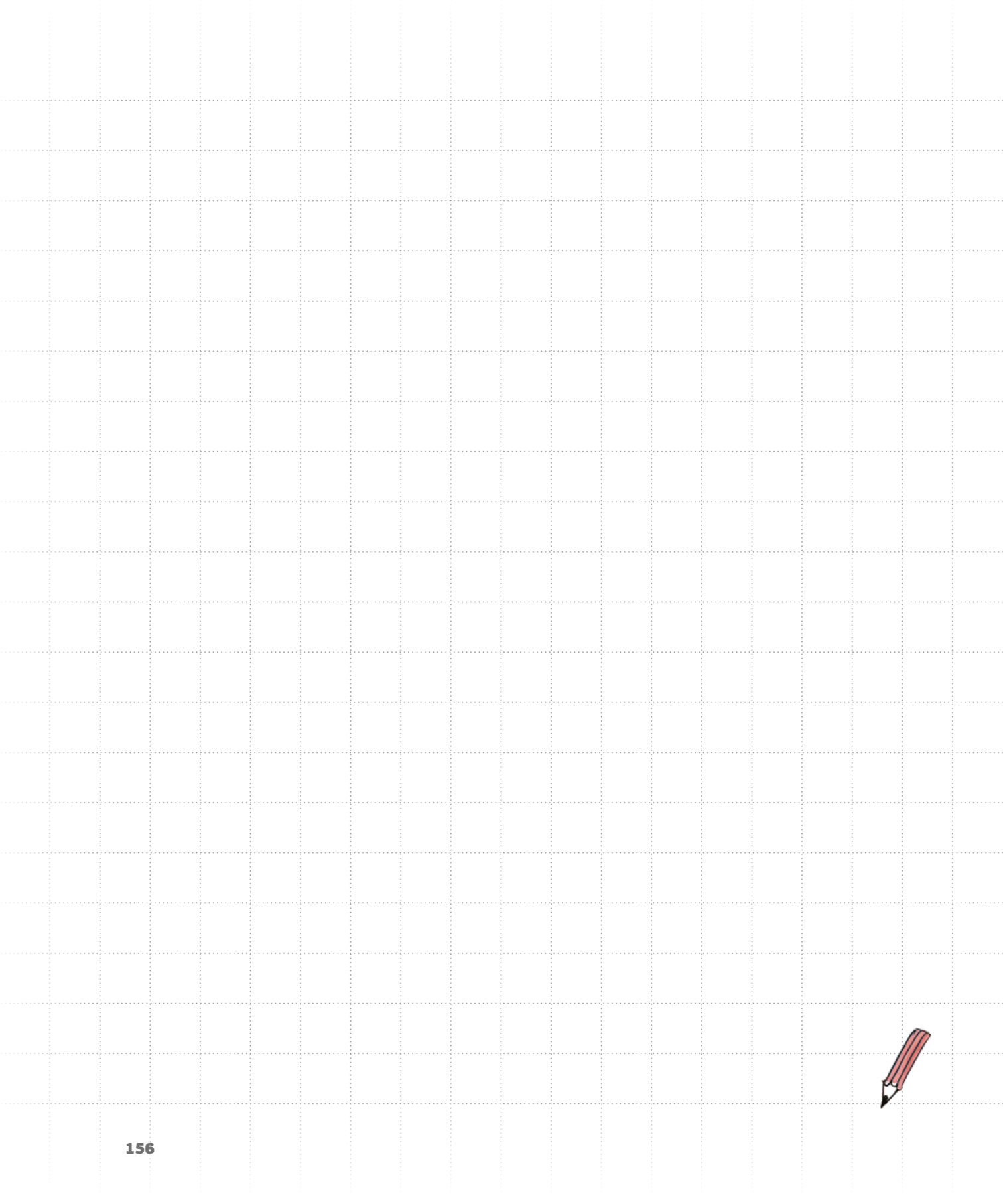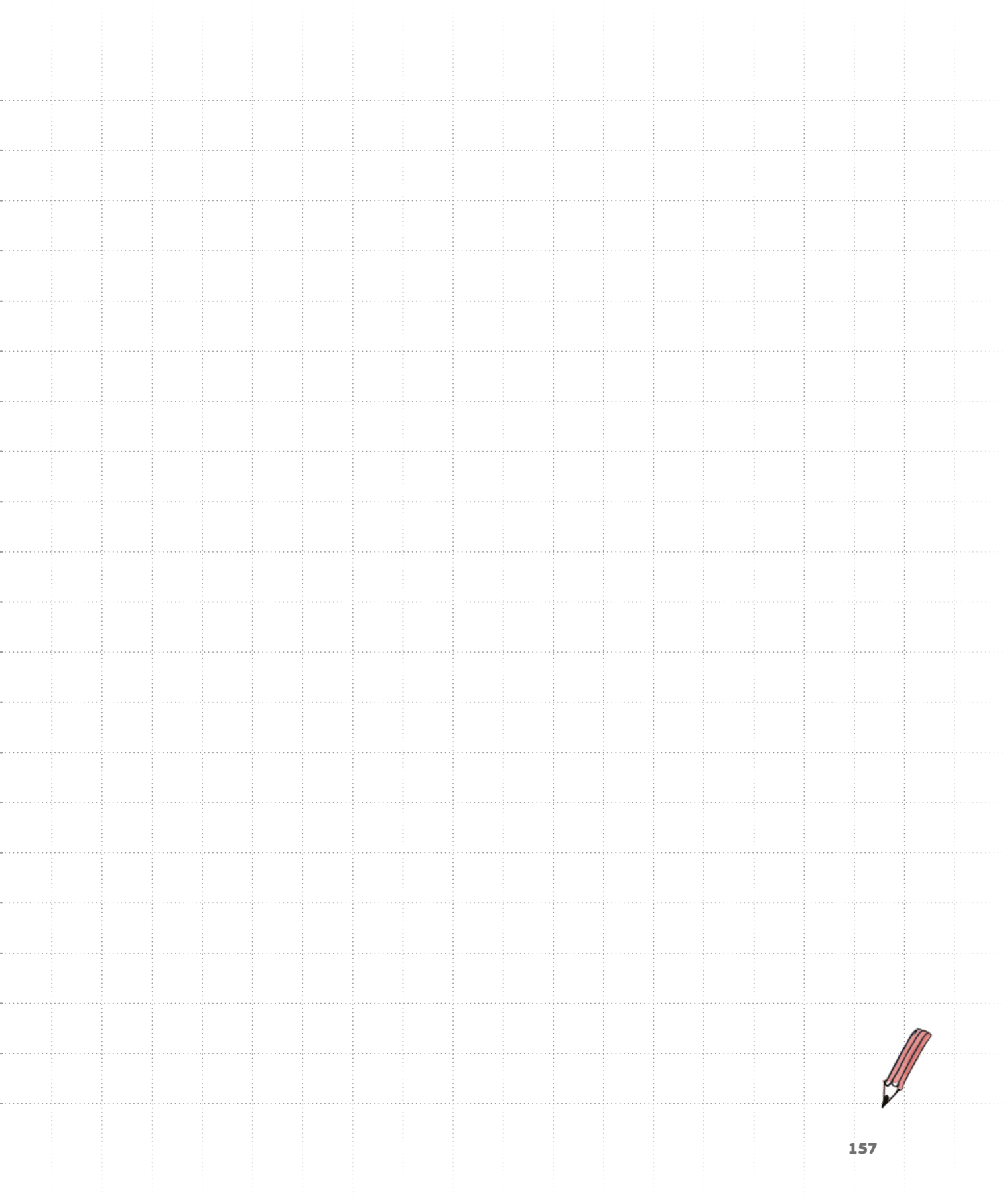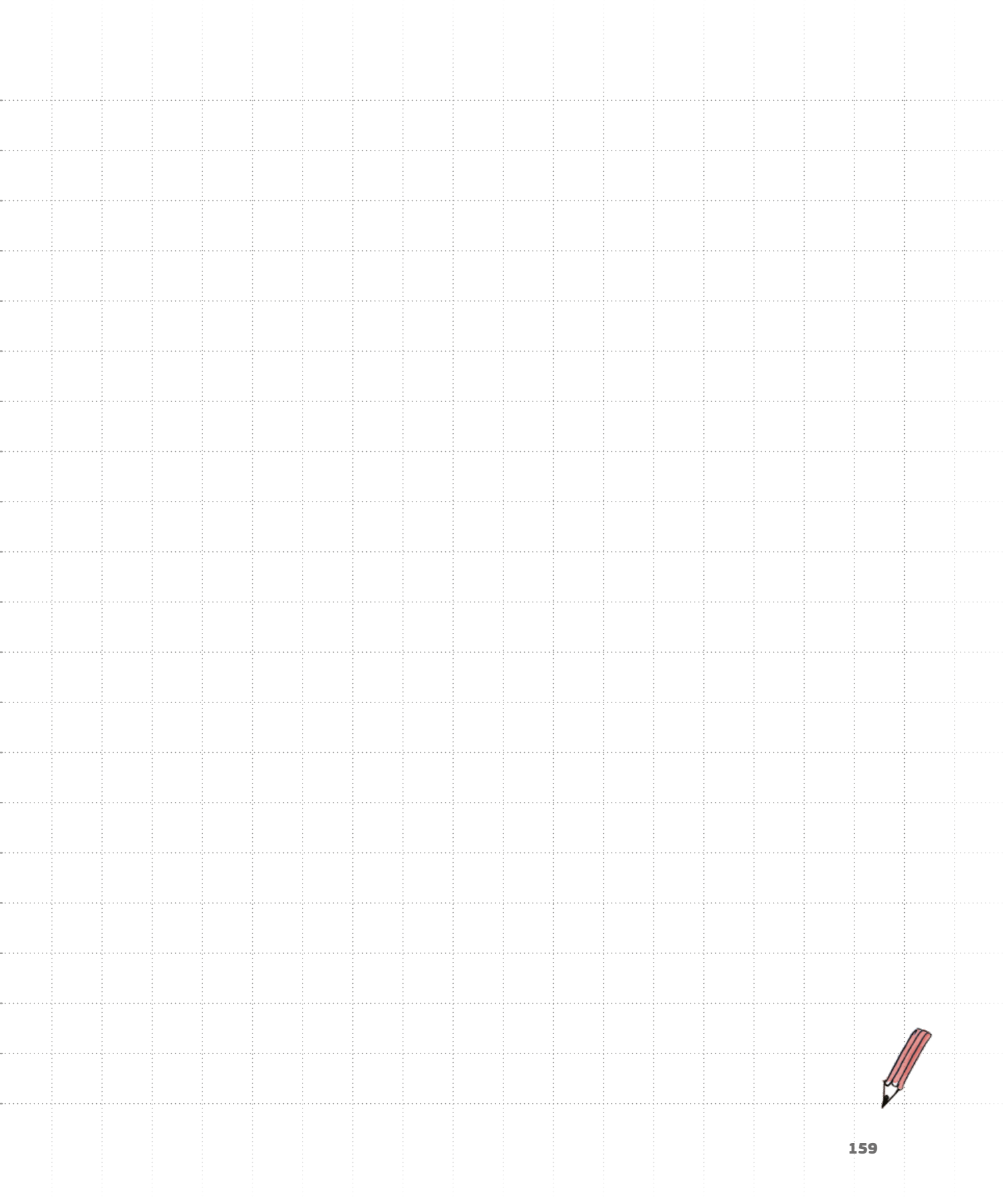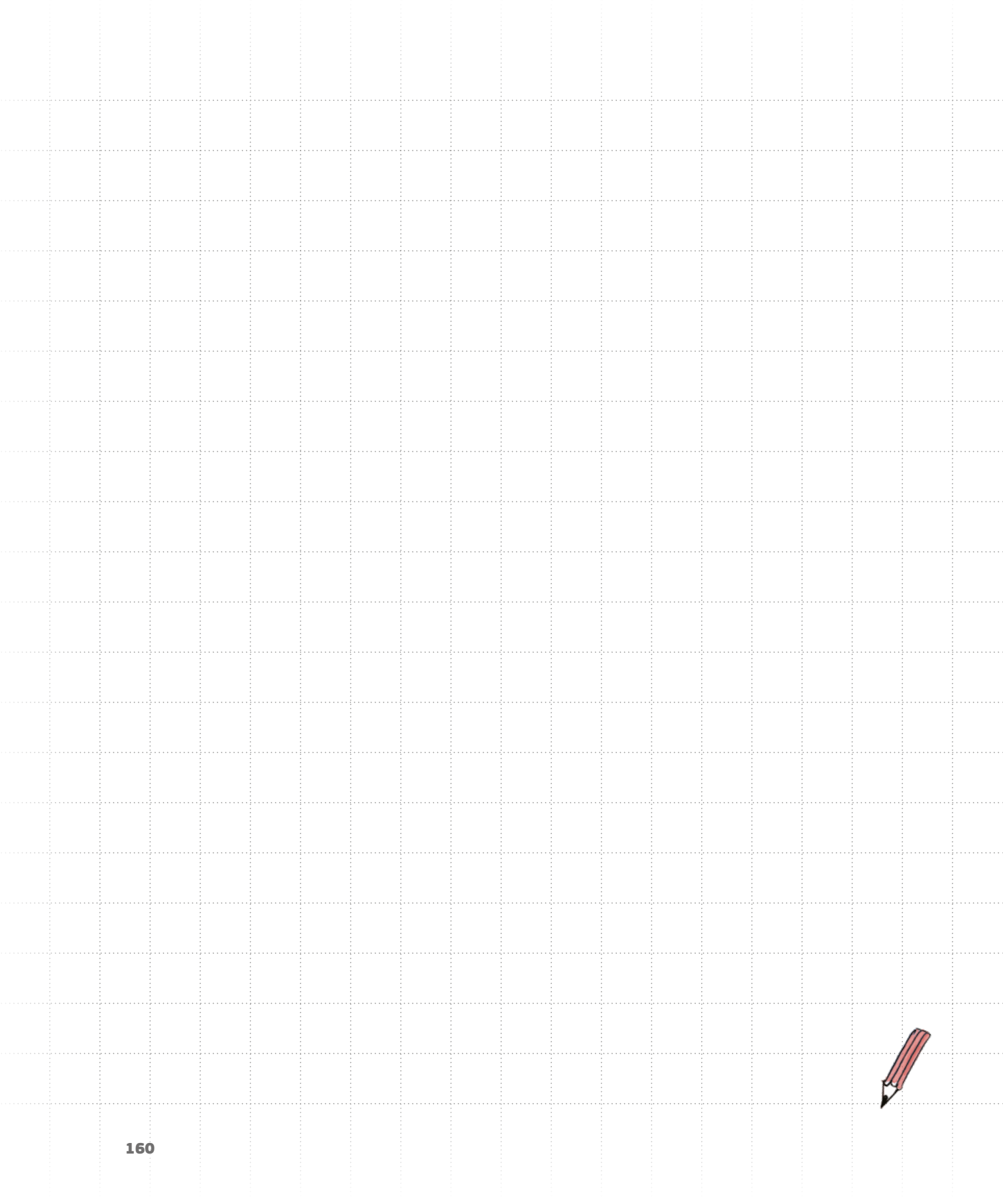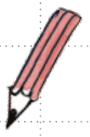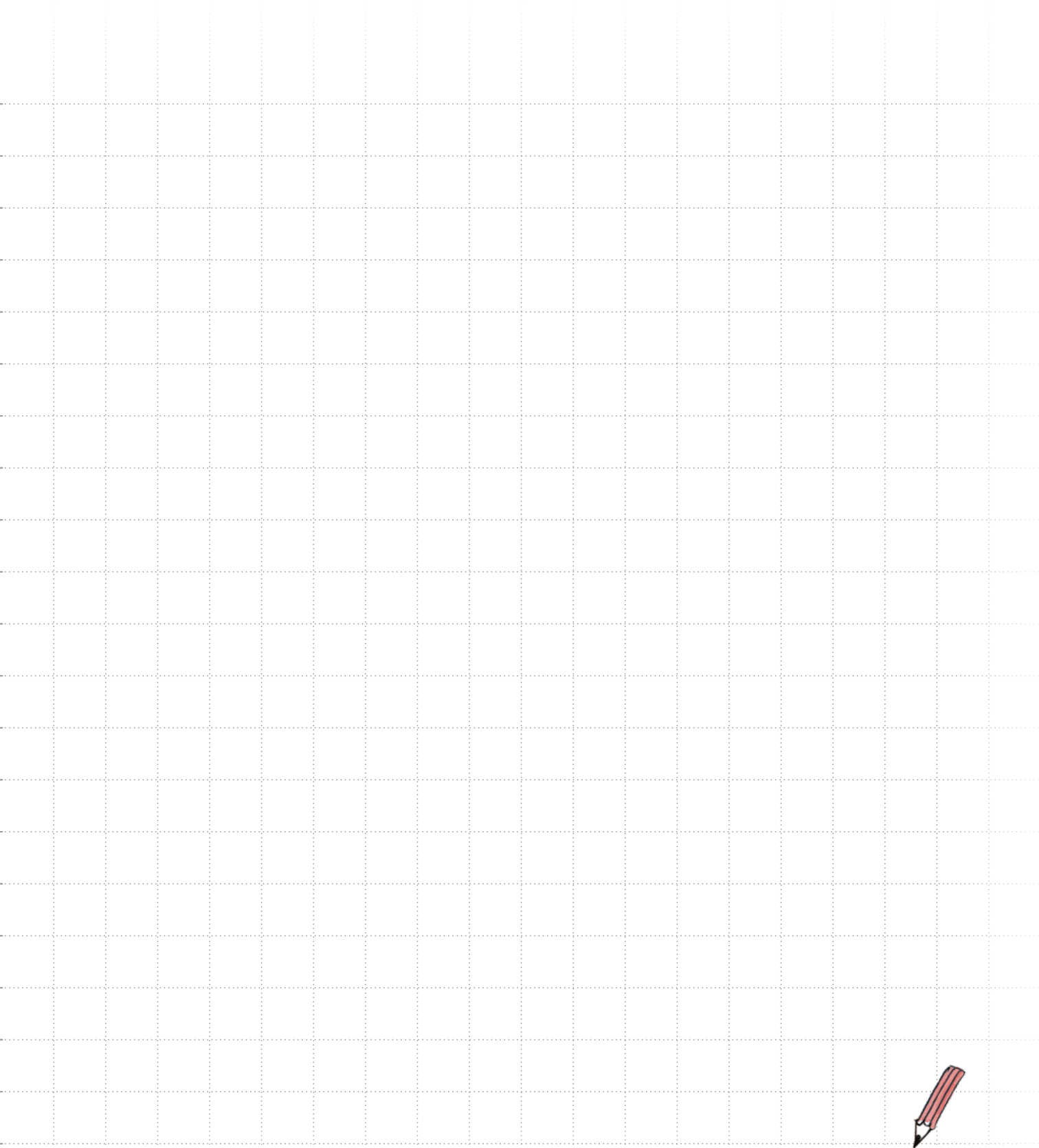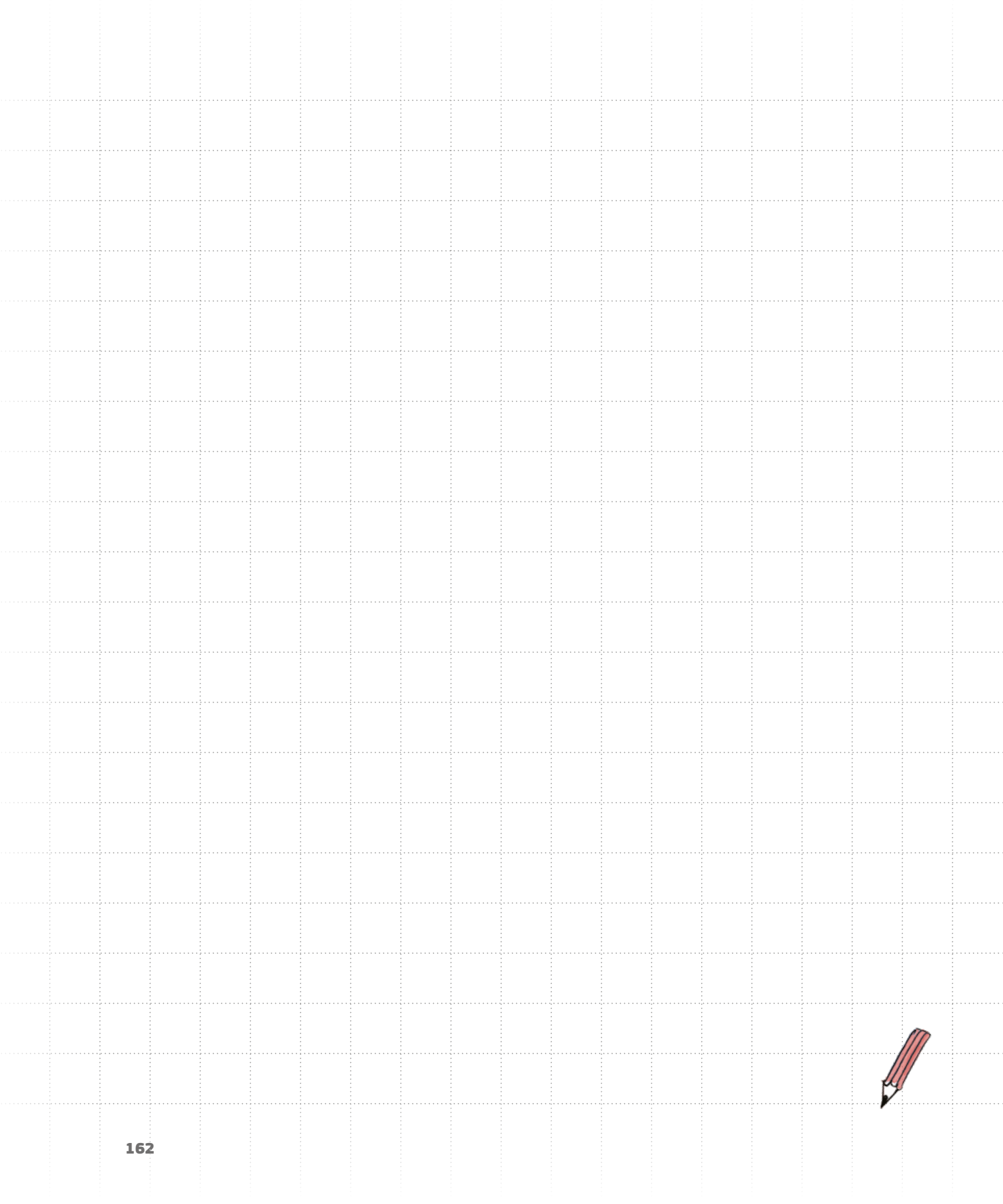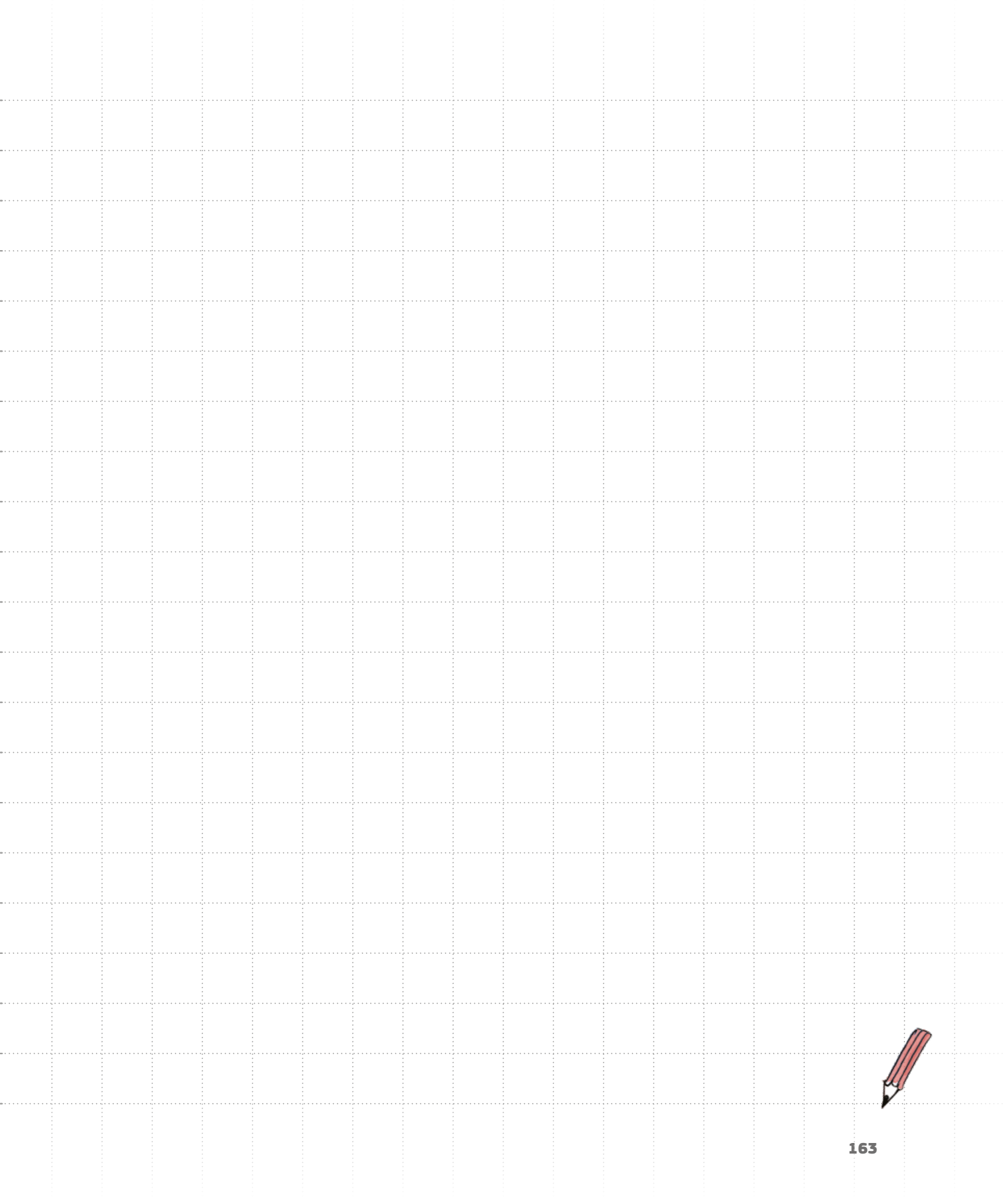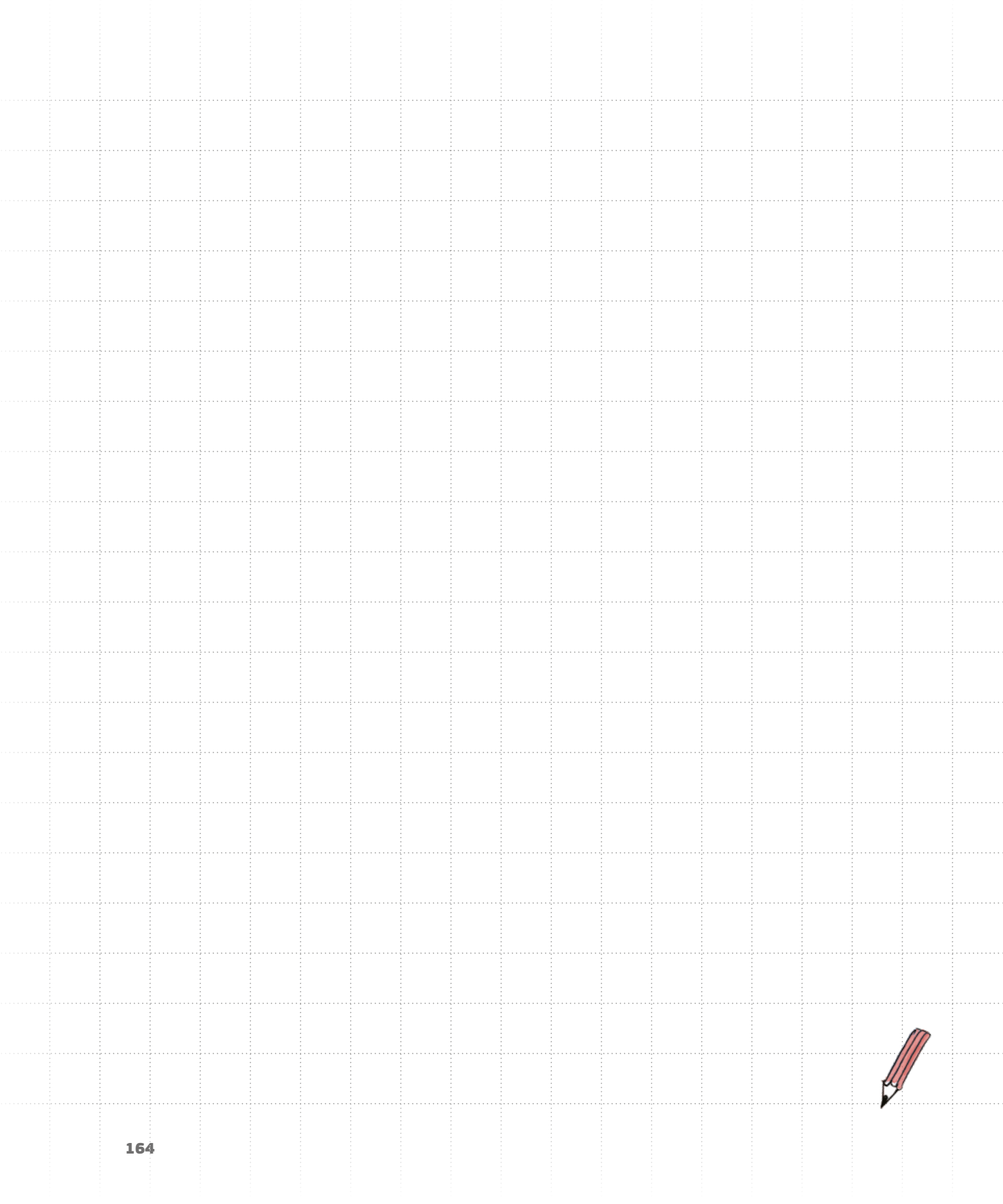
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