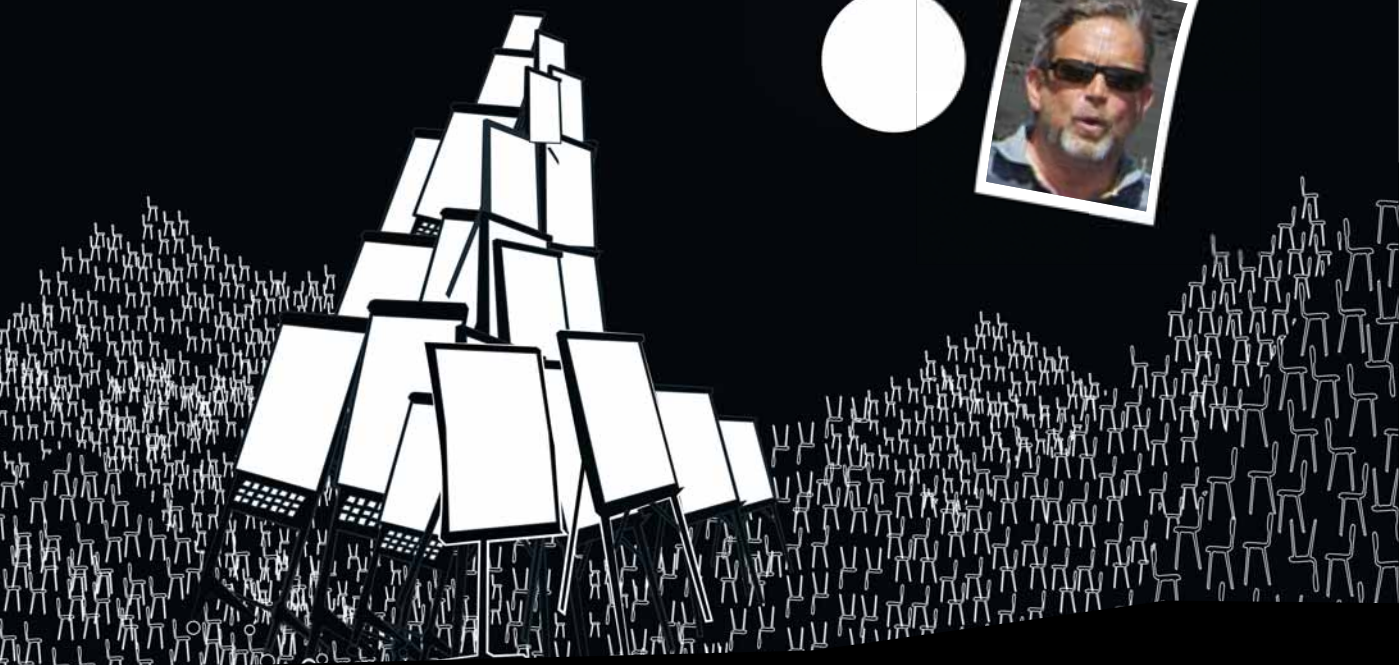




# The survival guide of the dogmatic facilitator

by Gisèle Evrard, Darko Markovic and Mark E. Taylor

Illustrations by Marlies Pöschl

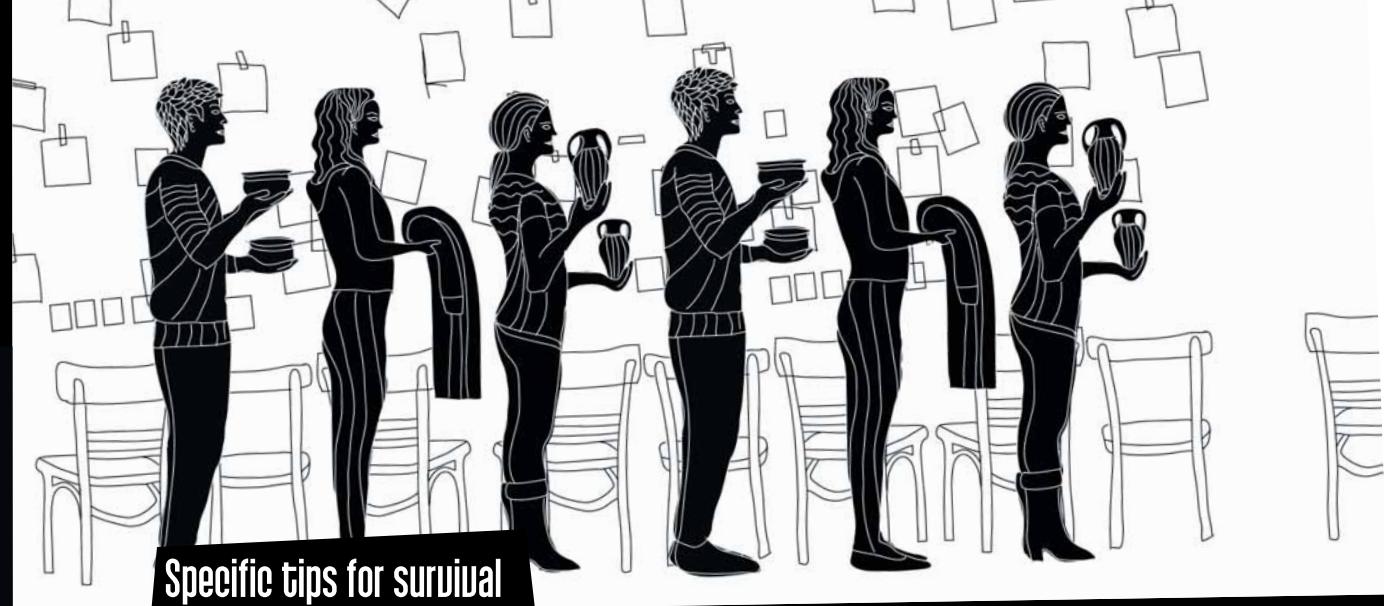


## General bases for your work

Frankly speaking, your truth is greater than the participants' truth. Meaning that at the end of any educational activity facilitated by you, the participants should see your truth as their own truth.

Transferring your wisdom to participants is more efficient than wasting public money on individual discoveries. Trusting in the group process makes no sense, because if they don't know where to get to, how would they know how to get there? If you give freedom to your participants, they will certainly abuse it. The best questions to ask are the ones leading to conclusions you would like the group to make.

It has been said that there are no such things as "good groups" or "bad groups". Still, if something goes wrong, it is obviously not linked to your brilliant facilitation skills – only to the resistance of some group members. The principles of non-formal learning in educational activities? Of course you know them. They exactly describe what you do and the way you do it. Learner-centred is precisely the approach you follow. In the end, it is just about making people feel and express their needs as you create them.



## Specific tips for survival

When sharing a theory, make sure you bring numerous related books along with you that you'll leave on the table "for display only". Mark several pages (randomly, it doesn't matter), write down some notes and open and close the books about a hundred times to make them look old and very much used. That will contribute to your undoubted credibility. Use "yes, but" as many times as possible when someone contradicts you. Make sure that what follows the "but" is complicated or complex enough to end the discussion. Alternatively and not to repeat things again and again, you can also nod regularly while the participant shares his/her/hir views on the topic. Onomatopoeic interjections such as "Hmmm" are allowed too. If you feel lost at some point (it will probably never happen), create confusion and send the ball back to the group. It always helps in escaping a difficult situation.

Allow participants to choose their own working groups as long as you are in agreement with the composition of the groups. Make sure that every working group includes at least one of your trusted participants. Give working groups their tasks in writing. Include one question that even you do not really understand. Then criticise the groups for failing to provide the correct answers. Provide useful templates for plenary reports – in the form of PowerPoint presentations – ensuring that the correct answers are already included as helpful examples. Praising all learners who are supporting your way of thinking will set a good example for others. Promise good participants that you will give them free online coaching after the event. Use some nice positive music and an emotional slide show of photographs from the event during the evaluation; this will help participants sign the prepared evaluation form happily.

## And, if you are not alone as facilitator...

If you have the misfortune to be forced to work with a colleague with a different approach, it is clear that s/he/zie must be wrong. (Correct your colleague in public, so s/he/zie can learn from the experience.) Do not allow your colleagues to take bribes – make sure you take them for yourself. Don't ever, ever share your material (presentations, handouts, session outlines). Even if some people say that you did not invent everything, it doesn't matter: from the moment you used it, it became yours.

And, finally: On no account allow others to use humour to undermine your authority – always make sure you use it first to undermine theirs.