

Guide to writing dph articles

WHAT IS A DPH ARTICLE?

A **dph article aims to present an experience, an analysis or a proposal in such a way that it can be easily shared** with others, including those living in other continents or working in a completely different field.

The format of the dph article, including its main features and its inherent philosophy, is modelled on the initial idea of experience-sharing.

- The content needs to be **concise enough** to effectively convey the key information and retain a potential reader, while remaining **comprehensive enough** to give an overall picture of the issue or action concerned and its context. It is for this reason that the maximum length for an article is 12 000 characters.
- The dph article is an **awareness-raising** tool for **actors** and for initiating **action**. Even when an article is based on analysis and theory, it needs to be written in a way that demonstrates how whatever major abstract forces or processes being dealt with are incarnated out in the field, who it is that is driving them and who it is that is resisting them. In contrast, there should also be a minimum degree of analysis in relating a concrete experience in order to highlight how the experience in question is of a more general relevance and interest.

Other than this general framework, dph articles can and do have very different forms:

- a summary of a situation in a country or region in regards to a certain issue (i.e.: agro-energy in Latin America, water in Australia, a particular slum in Mumbai);
- the presentation of a concrete grassroots project or initiative(not necessarily limited to the local);
- the history of an organisation or social movement;
- life experiences related by activists, social leaders and people involved in a process of social change;
- the explanation of concepts or analyses and their relevance to a certain idea or process
- thoughts relating to a particular book or article, drawing out, if possible, lessons to share with others;
- etc.

WRITING GUIDELINES

* **The title, subtitle and indexation of the article using keywords should be chosen with care.** The person browsing the site selects articles after reading the title and subtitle, so they should accurately reflect the article's content. This is very

important as the search engine first identifies terms entered in the keywords, title and subtitle in order to provide the most relevant response to the request.

* **The article should be easy to read.** An effective piece that entices one to read right to the end is one that is clear, easy to read and can be understood by anybody interested in the subject mentioned in the title.

* **The article should be comprehensive, but concise.** In order to convey the general context of the article and give the reader the best possible understanding of it, the content should generally answer the following questions: Where, When, Who, What, Why, How. Basing oneself on these questions also helps to avoid unnecessary excess information.

* **The article should be self-sufficient.** The article should contain all the information necessary for it to be understood. When someone writes a series of articles under a given subject, they need to keep in mind that each article is an individual piece and that the articles will be read separately. It may therefore be necessary to repeat certain information in the articles.

* **The article should be based on the concrete.** Dph is not a site intended for propaganda or even advocating certain ideological values, but a place where actors (from very diverse contexts) can access and share experiences in working to build a fairer and more sustainable world. Wherever possible, sweeping declarations based on principles should be avoided, as should describing the world in terms of great abstract forces – except when these forces are anchored in reality. It is the point of view of ‘real people’ and the issues they face that dph is primarily interested in.

TO BE STRICTLY AVOIDED

* **Lengthy pieces** – In order for the article to be accessible and clear, and, most importantly, for it to be informative, it’s best to keep to the fundamental points. If a particular subject warrants more than 12 000 characters, it can be broken down into several articles.

* **A disjointed style** – It should be consistent and without repetition. A well-structured piece is that much more clearer and helpful for the reader.

* **Clichés** – Dph’s philosophy is based on sharing experiences and common references between actors working towards change. With this in mind, it’s often more effective to highlight the drawbacks and the problems encountered in a given experience rather than trying to present everything through rose-coloured glasses, which can potentially overlook the concrete reality.

* **Jargon or an allusive style** – a dph article is intended to be read by people from backgrounds which can be remarkably different. This means that any code language

from a particular professional field or any unexplained allusion should be avoided. Writing a dph article sometimes involves stepping out of one's usual thought patterns in order to express one's analyses and ideas in ordinary language.

* **A style that is too journalistic or anecdotic** – Lingering over aspects that are purely secondary or superficial to the experience or process, giving irrelevant or trivial details that are not related to the subject of the article.

* **Viewpoints that are based too much on a local context or are not developed enough** – the article should be of interest to someone living on the other side of the world. It should focus on what can be shared with others.

* **Generalised, ideological speeches** – this is undoubtedly the number one defect of current dph articles. The piece should illustrate rather how the shift is made from principles to reality.

* **An academic style** – Apart from the jargon and an allusive style mentioned above, too much time is spent on conceptual or ideological debates in themselves. Sentences tend to focus on abstract concepts or forces rather than on people or groups.

* **A bureaucratic style** – It involves adopting a purely institutional and formal viewpoint instead of the reality of what is actually going on for actors and people out in the field. Ready-made expressions and abstract, general terms are primarily used.

EDITORIAL CHARTER

The authors of dph articles undertake to respect the following points:

- the principle of good faith, to cite all relevant sources of information, to avoid reproducing distorted information, or use information out of context;
- to accept the conditions of the Creative Common Licence – “Attribution – No Derivative Works” ([see the details of this contract](#));
- to make an effort to remain clear, to draw conclusions from the information, to contribute something to the community, to concentrate on the essential;
- All defamatory content that is an attack on a person's honour, dignity or integrity is strictly forbidden, as are insulting, abusive or offensive remarks.