

Making waves



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Issue 25 of *The Broker* is a milestone. A fitting moment to look back at four years of pioneering journalism. More importantly, *The Broker* is at a crossroads, about to embark on an exciting new venture. This month we are launching an entirely new website at www.thebrokeronline.eu.

The Broker – short for its original working title, the Global Development Knowledge Broker – began four years ago as a 16-page bimonthly magazine. Our aim was to present solid knowledge in the field of globalization and development. In an easily accessible style, backed by well-sourced overviews of cutting-edge academic and policy discussions.

A lot has changed since. We have gradually found an editorial scope and format that we are comfortable with. Our interdisciplinary approach helped us create a niche that brokers between different policy sectors and communities within the vast area of globalization and development. We expanded the magazine with more pages, new sections and special reports. We experimented with innovative themes, such as civic-driven change, complexity theory and global public goods.

Our intention was to stir up the devitalized development sector by providing alternatives for more effective policy making and more critically engaged political action. A constant, throughout, has been our strict and thorough editing and review process, which may have surprised some of our authors, but which we believe is why we have earned the 'quality stamp' that has become our hallmark.

The Broker has had an online presence from the very start. Initially, our website was merely a reflection of the printed magazine: we published longer versions of the articles on line, with extra boxes, footnotes and links for further reading. Two years ago we started blogging. It was ad hoc and experimental at first, the idea being to 'let a hundred flowers blossom'.

We also hosted some very well-attended online debates, such as the one on *Less Pretension, More Ambition*, the report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR). Our blogs from conferences in different parts of the world featured guest bloggers and videos. And our website kept growing and growing, until it threatened to collapse under its own weight. We have hosted a great deal of interesting information on our website, and still do, but sometimes even we were unable to locate it.

That's why we have been working hard these past few months on a completely new website. It is not only technically new, with a new design, but above all it is a website that enables us to implement a completely fresh editorial approach. From now on, the website will be *The Broker's* guiding force, and the print versions of our magazine will be a reflection of it.

The website is much better suited to *The Broker's* aims: creating networks, exchanging knowledge and establishing links between articles, discussions, sectors and communities. We will place specific reading suggestions on every website page, as well as

references to related content and isolated discussions. This will be brought about by the use of advanced software, but above all through the active intervention of experienced editors.

One of the website's important innovations is that it – and therefore also *The Broker's* editorial policy – will be divided into themes. For now, we will focus on five main themes: inclusive economics (including sustainable development), human security, global food security, social change and global development strategies. *The Broker* is also working on a series of international partner networks based on specific themes (more about our partner plan in issue 26). We intend to use this initiative to consolidate the work and expertise of knowledge institutes and knowledge networks around the world and to enhance the exchange of knowledge between them. *The Broker* will be fulfilling its role as an independent intermediary in these networks in the literal sense of the word.

We are going to put more energy into conference reports, online debates and blogs. For example, we will continue to pursue a discussion instigated a few years ago about what should happen in 2015, after the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals expires. We will be examining the role that Europe should play in a rapidly changing world. And in the near future, *The Broker* will be actively monitoring the process leading up to the Rio+20 conference in May 2012.

Twenty years after sustainable development became a serious agenda item, it is in dire need of a boost: politically speaking, the environment is clearly still fighting an uphill battle – indeed, the issue has not been convincingly linked to other major issues, such as development and justice. *The Broker* will publish special reports and organize special events on these issues and related projects.

And finally, *The Broker* will continue to publish its series. An example is the new series, published for the first time in issue 24, that kicked off with an article about Turkey. The series explores the foreign policies of various emerging – or emerged as we call them – powers in the world. This issue focuses on Brazil. Lula da Silva, former president of Brazil, and his successor Dilma Rousseff, have been confidently braving the stormy waters of world politics. Much more so than hesitant Europe, which cannot seem to decide on how to handle the changing relationship with its African, Caribbean and Pacific partners. Check out our special report 'The old man and the seas' for more details.

The Broker is at a crossroads. We proudly look back on what we have accomplished over the last four years. But we also intend to borrow some of that Brazilian self-confidence as we chart new waters. We hope to make more waves in the future. ■