



## Foreword

GIANLUCA BRUNORI

This special issue results from the interest of the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Agriculture and Food (RC40) in sponsoring the Mini-Conference 'Sources and Mechanisms of Power in the Food System and in Rural Areas: Domination, Resistance, Alternatives. It was part of an RC40 initiative to contribute to the XXII Congress of the European Society for Rural Society on 'Mobilities, Vulnerabilities and Sustainabilities: New Questions and Challenges for Rural Europe', held at Wageningen, 19–20 August 2007.

The call for papers posed the following questions: What are the sources of power in specific food systems and rural areas? Who are the actors involved? What types of power (for example, 'soft' power and 'hard' power) prevail and how are they combined? How is one type of power turned into other types? How do mechanisms of domination change? Which are the modern 'weapons of the weak'? How can dominance and resistance be detected and measured? The RC40 Mini-Conference explored these issues, giving particular attention to the 'context specificity' of trends, patterns and outcomes, and looking with particular attention to the implications for agricultural, rural and development policies.

The papers presented in this special issue are a selection of the papers presented in the mini-conference, that was chaired by Tomiko Yamaguci and Alberto Arce, who is the author of the Introduction to this volume.

As president of RC-40, I would like to acknowledge the involvement of Tomiko Yamaguci, who, as chair appointed by the Executive Council, has contributed to the writing of the call, coordinated the organization of the workshops, and has been involved in the first phase of the preparation of the special issue. Further acknowledgements should be made to Masashi Tachikawa, Secretary of RC40, who guaranteed his support to the whole process, and to the RC40 Executive Council Members for their support to the initiative.