

### Agriculture & Food: Growing our Network

RC-40 is a Research Committee within the International Sociological Association (ISA) dedicated to the sociology of agriculture and food.

RC-40 members have been some of the pioneers in the scholarly advances in agrarian political economy, food regime theory, agri-food standards, financialization of agri-food systems, food democracy, civic food regimes, sociological readings of food security and food sovereignty, rural dynamics and farm labour in global agri-food systems – just to name a few of the contributions from the group.

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### Member Snapshot

**113↑**

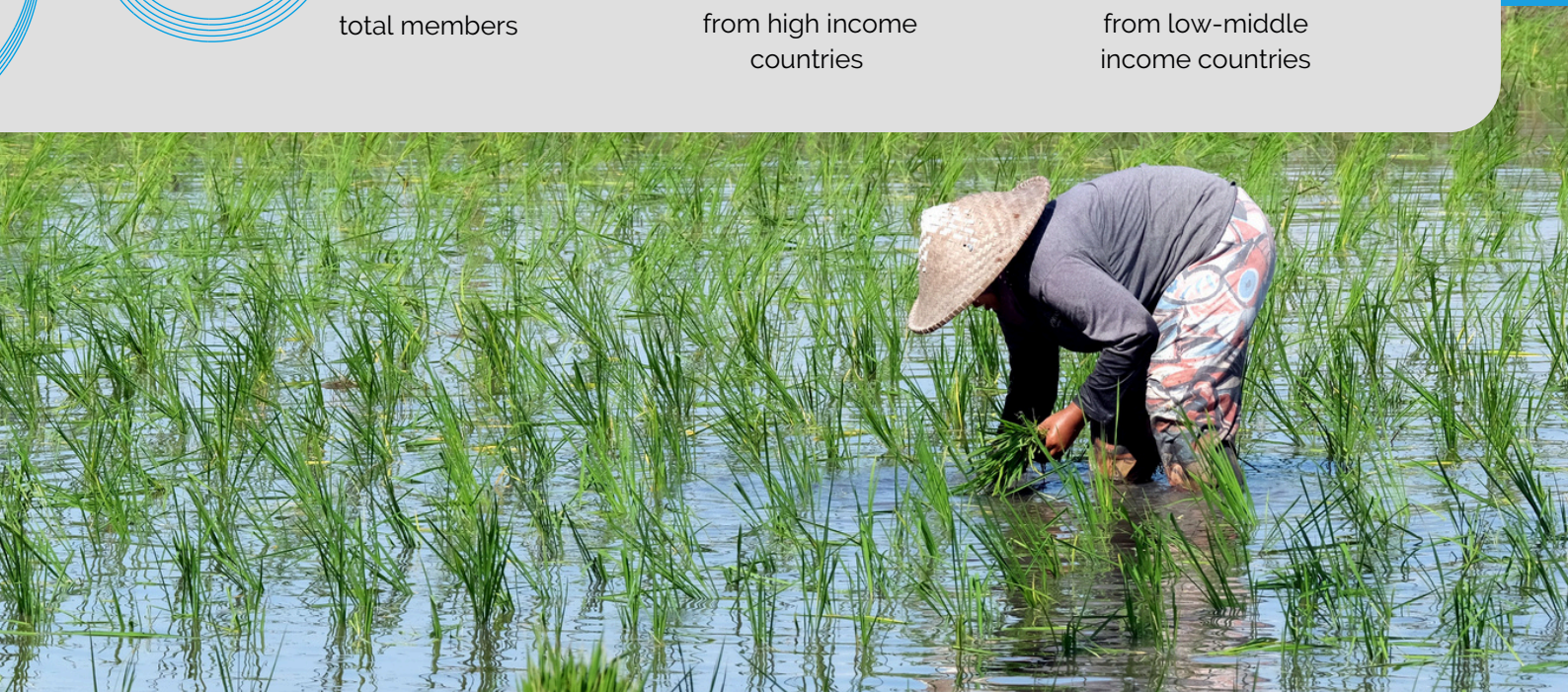
total members

**69%↓**

from high income countries

**31%↑**

from low-middle income countries



# President's welcome

**KATHERINE LEGUN**

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As 2024 comes to a close, we at the RC40 executive have been busy—we've been finishing up our programming for the ISA Forum, compiling and sending out our newly established digest, meeting for our book club, and working on some new initiatives for 2025. Stay tuned. Among other things, we're working on an online workshop with the newly established Food Working Group of the Indian Sociological Society, and a call for grant EOIs. Read more information [here](#).



Next year also marks the 50th anniversary of the RC40 from its initiation as a Working Group in 1984. This group was developed by Lawrence Busch (USA), Alessandro Bonanno (USA), Ana Barbic (Yugoslavia), Manuel Belo Moreira (Portugal), Ivan Segio F. Sousa (Brazil), Bill Friedland (USA), and Terry Marsden (UK). To recognize this milestone, Mustafa Koc (RC40 Secretary, 1998-2002) and Atakan Buke (Executive Committee, 2023-2027) are organizing a special session at the ISA Forum, and will be sending out a survey to the membership to prompt some reflections on the RC40. Keep a look out for the survey in your inboxes.

This also provides a nice moment to reflect on our domain, the sociology of agriculture and food (SAF). Emerging as a subdiscipline of rural sociology in the 1970s, and then progressing to its own sub-discipline of sociology in the 1980s (see Bonanno 2008), it at once was embedded within one area (rural sociology) while launching from it based on the transgressive subject: agriculture and food. This material concern—food production, circulation, and consumption—was relevant to understanding broad social dynamics, beyond the rural context. It ushered in a new wave of theorizing social dynamics by drawing from classics like *The Agrarian Question* (Kautsky 2021 [1899]). Indeed, in 1983, Howard Newby suggested that the sociology of agriculture provided a novel intervention into what was seen as a somewhat stagnant and undertheorized rural sociology, as it offered some more theoretically rich entry points and stronger policy connections.

This history also creates a challenge for the sociology of agriculture and food, and it can seemingly remain in a silo despite its widespread appeal. As a result of its emergence and continued embeddedness within rural sociology, it can remain isolated from other mainstream sociology departments and yet not distinct enough to have a totally independent identity. It may also be difficult to shake the historical context of agricultural extension, where social science could be seen to serve aggressive technology transfer agendas associated with the green revolution. Indeed, I think many of us have had the experience of being invited onto grant proposal consortia to participate in the “adoption” work-package. These factors can impede our ability to meaningfully define and advance our perspective while also recognizing new theoretical approaches, methodologies, or topical areas that deviate from our roots.

Increasingly our area shares a lot of space with environmental sociology, sociology of consumption, and science and technology studies, and we could use our interaction to extend and enliven SAF. I was recently at a workshop organized by ROTO-RUB in Bochum, Germany, with a bunch of philosophers of science who were talking largely about trends in botany. It struck me how much we could say to each other, but seemingly hadn't in the past. We also want to consider, and think critically about, why some alternative disciplinary framings can be so appealing to students working in topics we would associate with SAF. Perhaps they have a critical contemporary style that has currency in popular cultural understandings of science and the urban university. Perhaps the conservative political characterization of farming and plantations, and rurality in general, makes it seem like a hostile environment to the diverse and radical kinds of (future) colleagues with whom we want to engage. What is the role of the RC40 within this space? How do we forge an open, inclusive environment that brings more scholarship into our intellectual conversations? How do we also advance the SAF approaches and their critical contributions to contemporary social life?

We hope you will join us in Rabat to discuss these kinds of questions. Alternatively, come along to any of our activities! We hope to see you soon.

Katharine

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**“THE SOCIOLOGY OF  
AGRICULTURE AND  
FOOD ACCOMPANIES  
THE ANALYSIS OF  
EXISTING SOCIAL  
RELATIONS WITH A  
GENUINE DESIRE TO  
CHANGE THEM”**

**References**

- Bonanno, A. (2009). Sociology of Agriculture and Food Beginning and Maturity: The Contribution of the Missouri School (1976-1994). *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 24(2), 3.
- Kautsky, K. (2021 [1899]). The agrarian question. In *The Agrarian Question* (pp. 51-59). Routledge.
- Newby, H. (1983). The sociology of agriculture: Toward a new rural sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9(1), 67-81.

# Meet the Exec

## PEOPLE BEHIND THE RC40 COMMITTEE

### KATHERINE LEGUN

#### President

Knowledge, Technology and Innovation Group, Wageningen U, NL.  
Katharine.legun@wur.nl

Katharine is an Assistant Professor who works on science and technology in agriculture at Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Her work looks at the politics of plant breeding, autonomous AI robotics, and local environmental governance.

### KIAH SMITH

#### Secretary/ Treasurer

Centre for Policy Futures, The University of Queensland, Australia  
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Kiah is a Senior Research Fellow and theme lead in Social Justice, Rights and Empowerment at the Centre for Policy Futures, UQ. Her research in food systems focuses on food justice and security, financialization, resilience, sustainable livelihoods, gender and the SDGs.

### CYNTHIA GHARIOS

#### EMCR representative

University of Munster, Germany  
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Cynthia's research addresses the intersection between the environment and agriculture technology in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with a focus on AgTech intermediaries in the USA, and transformations of agrarian landscapes in South Lebanon, Yemen and Morocco.

### ANGGA DWIARTAMA

#### Webmaster

Institut Teknologi Bandung, Indonesia  
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Angga is an Associate Professor at the School of Life Sciences and Technology, Institut Teknologi Bandung. His research focuses on multiple aspects of agrifood studies: value chain and livelihood, agri-environmental governance, Alternative Food Networks (AFNs), food security-sovereignty-justice nexus, and resilience.

### MADELEINE FAIRBAIRN

Environmental studies department, U. California Santa Cruz, USA.  
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Madeleine's research explores the political economy of food and agriculture, including the financialization of farmland and, more recently, the rapid growth of the Silicon Valley agri-food tech sector. She is the author of *Fields of Gold: Financing the Global Land Rush* (Cornell University Press, 2020).

### ATAKAN BUKE

Research Centre Global Dynamics, Leipzig U.  
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Atakan is an affiliated research fellow at the Research Centre Global Dynamics at Leipzig University. His research interests include the agrarian/peasant question, food regime and agrifood system analysis, digitalization, and alternative socio-ecological agrifood movements.

### HILDE BJØRKHAUG

Department of Sociology and Political Science, NTNU, Norway  
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Hilde's research focusses on recent changes in agriculture and food value chains, and the emergence of new issues for stratification such as environment, climate change and animal welfare, land use issues, power relations. Hilde served as RC-40 Secretary/Treasurer 2018-2023

### STEVEN WOLF

Cornell University Ithaca, USA.  
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Steven's research and teaching focus on the interplay between state and non-state actors in environmental (mis)management. Current projects include critical analysis of venture capital-funded agtech entrepreneurship; accountability relations and the climate crisis; and experimental strategies for public engagement. Steven served as RC40 President 2018-2023.

### FRIDAH MUBICHI-KUT

School of Applied Economics and Management Cornell University, USA.  
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Fridah's work focuses on the role development policies play in the promotion and adoption of new agricultural innovations, economic development, and gender equity among rural populations in Sub Saharan Africa. Fridah is the RC40 African Regional Representative, and helped established the Rural Sociology Working Group within the South African Sociological Association (SASA).

# In memoriam

We remember Bill Heffernan, who passed away on September 11th 2023. He made major contributions to the agrifood domain and will be missed within our community.

<https://www.online-tribute.com/WilliamDHeffernan>



We also remember Miguel Murmis, who passed away in September 2024. Miguel was a “foundational researcher for Argentine sociology and an excellent teacher. But, above all, he was a charming, amiable and affectionate individual.” (Adreina Adelstein, University Nacional General Sarmiento).

# Secretary & Treasurer's report

## KIAH SMITH

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The work of the RC40 Executive during 2024 has been focused on forward planning and strengthening communications with our 113 members around the world. As a scholarly collective informed by diverse critical schools of thought and theoretical frameworks, RC40 tries to create spaces of sustained dialogue and critical scholarly engagement.

We aim to do this through strong engagement in the ISA World Congress and ISA Forums, as well as leading international conferences related to the sociology of agriculture and food, such as the International Rural Sociology Association (IRSA), the European Society for Rural Sociology (ESRS), and the Rural Sociological Society (RSS).

We also aim to grow our support for regional activities such as member-led workshops, webinars and mini-conferences that aim to expand intellectual engagement beyond established forums. The high number of quality abstracts we received for RC40 sessions in the forthcoming ISA Forum in Rabat is testament to the vital importance of our ongoing collective work in understanding and improving global food and agricultural systems - and justice and sustainability within them.



Considering the worsening situation in Gaza, we (the RC40 Executive group) collectively endorsed a statement of solidarity with Palestine. The joint statement with RC48 (Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change), RC47 (Social Classes and Social Movements), and RC44 (Labor Movements) articulated a message aligned with the values of human rights, non-violence, peace and solidarity, reflecting a broader consensus within our international sociological community. The statement does not reflect the views of the International Sociological Association (ISA) nor all members (including Board Members) of RC40, but rather the commitment of members of the RC40 Executive to addressing issues of injustice and human rights violations globally.

Kiah

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# Grants update

Financial contributions from the ISA are based on memberships. We also receive 4-yearly contributions from royalties for our journal, the International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food. The final type of regular income comes from the ISA in the form of small activity grants. These grants are allocated to the Research Committees to support activities such as conferences, workshops, and/or the production and distribution of the newsletter.

In the past, the RC40 has used activity grants to support member-initiated activities such as regional writing workshops and conference side events. The only requirements for us to be eligible for these funds is that we (1) report to our members via a newsletter at least twice a year, and (2) organize at least one international conference between World Congresses where all of our members can participate [including ISA Forum], on a theme of wide interest to our members. These grants are a great way to mobilise our members around a specific regional event, creation of online dialogues, or to support a side event.

Our Executive group decided not to apply for a small activity grant in the first round in 2024 – but we will be applying for this funding for 2025.

## EOI OPENING SOON -

## EARLY CAREER WORKSHOP GRANTS

RC40 Activity Grants for 2025 will be used to support an early scholars' workshop in Paris before the ISA Forum in Rabat and before the ESRS meeting in Riga, in July 2025.

Funds will contribute towards costs for selected applicants to get to Paris, stay there for 3 days and then go on to either Rabat or Riga to present their research.

Our only criteria for selecting scholars to receive this support is that they (a) are an active RC40 member within the ISA, and (b) have an accepted abstract for presentation in either of the Rabat or Riga conferences. More information on how to apply will be coming soon!

# Call for ISA Forum Morocco 2025 Registration grants



Each Research Committee (RC), Working Group (WG) and Thematic Group (TG) is responsible for allocating registration grant(s) to person(s) selected by its Board, following the criteria established by the ISA. For the ISA Forum 2025, RC40 can support approximately 7 Registration grants to eligible individual ISA members in good standing (i.e., those who have paid the individual membership fee) and who are active participants in the conference program. Priority will go to applicants from low and lower middle-income countries (ISA income category B and C) and/or early career scholars.

Interested participants must send an e-mail requesting a registration grant directly to the RC/WG/TG Program Coordinators by **January 31, 2025**. Applications for a grant can be submitted to only one RC/WG/TG. Please send your expression of interest to the RC40 Secretary [k.smith2@uq.edu.au](mailto:k.smith2@uq.edu.au); please include the title of the ISA session that your abstract has been accepted to. Candidates will be selected by the RC40 Executive committee, with successful candidates advised by February 15, 2025. Awardees of previous grants will be ineligible; grants are not paid in cash but will be handled directly by the ISA Secretariat prior to the early registration deadline of the conference (March 22, 2025).

## ISA Film Festival

The ISA is calling for the submission of audiovisual works (documentary films, fiction, experimental works, artworks, etc.) related to research in sociology or social sciences produced/directed/written by ISA & RC/WG/TG members and to promote the discussion on using moving images in sociological research. Selected films will be presented/screened during the 5th ISA Forum of Sociology at Mohammed V University in Rabat, Morocco. Submissions due **December 15, 2024**. See [Call for Films - 5th ISA Forum](#) for more information.



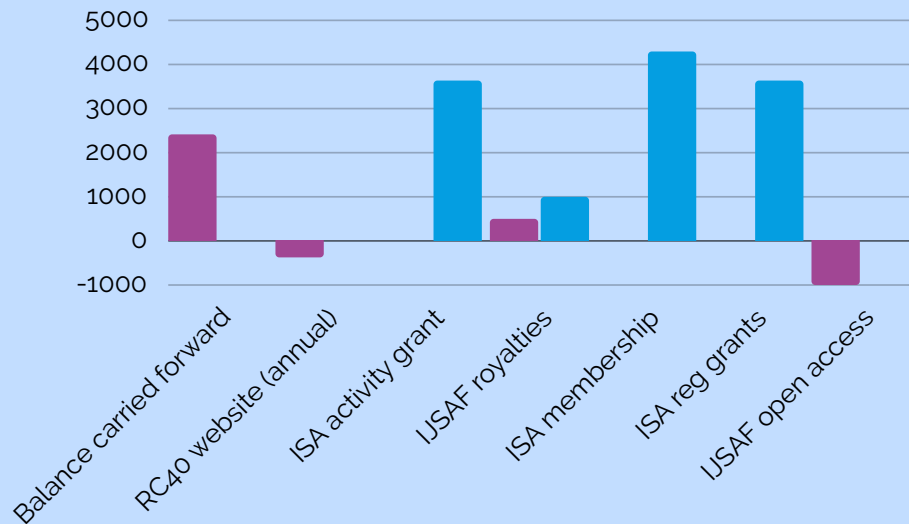
# Current position

# \$6,709

2024 income and expenses include balance transferred from previous RC, RC40 website fees, and IJSAF costs (pink).

Projected income 2024-2026 includes ISA memberships, ISA activity grant, ISA registration grant and IJSAF royalties (blue).

All figures in \$AUD



## Source \$

## Details

### ISA memberships

Financial contributions from the ISA are based on member numbers, and are paid every two years. This year we have grown above 100 members, moving RC40 into a higher tier for ISA payments.

### IJSAF royalties

We receive 4-yearly contributions from royalties for our journal, the International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food.

### ISA grants

These grants are allocated to the Research Committees to support activities such as conferences, workshops, and/or the production and distribution of the newsletter.

# Regional update: Beyond Adaptation - New Insights from Southeast Asia's Agrifood System

RC40 REGIONAL WRITING WORKSHOP, DECEMBER 2024

Over the years, there has been increasing discontent with the concept and practice of climate change adaptation. Scholars argued that, conceptually, the dominant view of adaptation is too narrow to capture the multifaceted, nonlinear dynamics of social-ecological change and yet too abstract to be translated into concrete, measurable outcomes. As a field of practice, adaptation has produced an assemblage of identities, practices, and institutions that renders climate change as a techno-managerial problem, reinforcing regimes of power and knowledge that produced anthropogenic climate change in the first place (Newell and Paterson, 2010; Clapp, 2022). In the agrifood sector, early adaptation research and practice gravitated towards the 'pipeline' model of agricultural research and development that narrowly conceived adaptation as technological change. Recently, there has been a growing body of literature that attempts to broaden what adaptation means in the agrifood sector.

Southeast Asia presents a compelling case to rethink adaptation, particularly in the agrifood systems contexts. Despite the declining contribution of the agriculture sector to the economies of most countries in the region, smallholder farmers are observed to persist amidst the social-ecological transformations. This phenomenon, in combination with other socio-cultural contexts, influences the type of urbanization and rural-urban linkages emerging in the twenty-first century Southeast Asia. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic compounded the climate impacts on the agrifood systems and revealed the highly inequitable distribution of income across the supply chains.

With these themes as background, this regional workshop provides a space for early-career scholars to present and advance their empirical work in Southeast Asian countries, offering new insights into how we understand climate adaptation in the agrifood sector. After the writing workshop, authors will be supported to develop a full paper and submit it collectively to a Special Issue in the International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food.

We look forward to sharing the outcomes of this workshop with you soon!

Winifredo Dagli (University of the Philippines at Los Baños)

Angga Dwiartama (Institut Teknologi Bandung)

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**THE PARTICULAR ECOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, CULTURAL, AND ECONOMIC POSITIONALITIES OF MANY SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES OFFER DIFFERENT WAYS TO UNDERSTAND, MITIGATE, AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE.**

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# International conferences

## Mark your calendars

**IV ISA FORUM  
RABAT,  
MOROCCO**

**7-11 JULY 2025**

**January 31, 2025** - 24:00 UTC/GMT Applications for Registration Grants

**March 22, 2025** - 24:00 UTC/GMT Registration Deadline for Presenters. Confex matches registrations with accepted presenters and will send out the last reminder to register. Presenters who have failed to register will be automatically deleted from the program.

**May 9, 2025** - 24:00 UTC/GMT Online program published

Plans are also underway to convene a **field trip and social dinner** for RC40 members attending the V ISA Forum in Rabat. This will be an excellent opportunity for our network to meet in person, and learn something of the Moroccan location in which the conference is located. More information will be coming in early 2025!



### 2025 **V ISA Forum of Sociology**

7-11 July, Rabat Morocco: 'Knowing Justice in the Anthropocene'



### 2025 **XXIX European Society for Rural Sociology**

7-11 July, Riga, Latvia



### 2026 **XVI World Congress of Rural Sociology**

July, Porto Alegre, Brazil



### 2027 **XXI World Congress of Sociology**

4-19 July, Gwangju, Korea

# SPOTLIGHT ON RABAT

## RC40 ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

Following a very successful call for sessions, the ISA closed the call for abstracts with a historical record: 9210 proposals from 148 countries! The RC40 will be hosting 20 special sessions, including an additional 9 exciting joint sessions with RC12, RC17, RC18, RC24 and RC31.

Thank you to everyone who submitted abstracts to the RC40 programme – we have accepted 170 in-person paper presentations. All session Chairs and co-Chairs have now been finalised, and all authors should have received their final notification letters (accepted or rejected) by 15th December 2024.

In addition to RC40 paper and roundtable sessions, Rabat will include a whole common programme of sessions dedicated to the theme of 'Knowing Justice' that will take place every evening of the Forum, organized by the ISA Scientific Committee led by Allison Loconto. The opening and closing ceremonies will include high level speakers from the Moroccan government as well as invited keynote speakers on the conference theme.

In addition to 20+ academic paper sessions, RC40 is hosting two roundtables as part of the ISA Forum programme. Both roundtables reflect on the history and futures of key themes in the sociology of agriculture and food, with an intention to support publication outputs by the scholars involved. These are described further below, to give just a taste of the many exciting sessions being coordinated by the RC40 for Rabat.



# Future trajectories of the Sociology of Agriculture and Food: An intergenerational dialogue

**ATAKAN BUKE**

It has been nearly half a century since the Sociology of Agriculture and Food (SAF) was established as an Ad Hoc Group in 1978 at the 9th World Congress of Sociology of the ISA. Since then, bolstered by the proliferation of critical approaches within the broader social sciences and humanities, SAF scholars have made substantial contributions to analyzing agrifood systems by formulating various frameworks, concepts, and methodologies.

This roundtable aims to revisit the classical themes of SAF with a future-oriented perspective, addressing the pressing contemporary multifaceted crises of the capitalist-industrial agrifood system, manifested in, but not limited to, climate change, food insecurity, public health, working conditions, degradation of on- and off-farm environments, erosion of ethnic-cultural diversity, the concentration and centralization of agrifood capital, financialization, food insecurity and hunger, and agritech and bio-industrial approaches.

**[Click here to participate in the survey](#)**

**Contact: [atakanbuke@gmail.com](mailto:atakanbuke@gmail.com)**



More broadly, we aim to leverage insights from current and past RC40 members to identify 21st-century challenges and research directions for SAF and critical agrifood studies. We plan this event in two stages. Firstly, current RC40 members will be asked to participate in a short survey that will include a reflection paper on critical agrifood studies' historical and future trajectories. Discussion questions for the roundtable session at the ISA Forum (Rabat, Morocco, July 2025) will be prepared based on the survey results. We hope that both the results of the survey and roundtable will feed into the planning for RC40's 50th-anniversary celebration in Gwangju, Korea (2027).

# Recent perspectives in the Sociology of Organization and Food: Paper development session

**ROBERT JUNGSMANN**

The sociologies of organization and food are dynamic, multi-faceted, and multi-paradigmatic fields that delve into various organizational forms or aspects of food production, distribution, and consumption, and their impact on society. This Joint Paper Development Session between RC17 Sociology of Organization and RC40 invites junior scholars (pre-doc and early-stage post-doc) to contribute to the dynamic discourses in the sociologies of food, agriculture and organization as well as their manifold intersections by submitting work-in-progress research papers that we seek to advance during the session.

We have received a total of 18 submissions and will start with some basic insights on publishing by experienced editors of both RC-Journals, the "Journal of Organizational Sociology" and the "International Journal of Sociology of Agriculture and Food". Editors and peers will discuss the papers in three thematic streams. The session aims to provide a space for reflection on publishing and developing contributions for both RC-Journals. Paper topics include, but are not limited to: tourism and gastronomy; organizational models such as food retail, agribusiness, social enterprises, food rescue organizations, circular economy; tensions between food sovereignty, food security, fair food, food justice; urban and regional case studies of food system governance.

The roundtable will engage with a range of conceptual frameworks to analyze organization and food in relation to wider social dynamics or explore new kinds of sociological imagination; explore how organization and food shape collective activities, standards, identity, traditions, and social gatherings; Investigate organizational and food access disparities across different social groups; consider food and organization through historical and comparative lenses across time and space; and examine how food and organization become a political tool or site of struggle.

Contact: [jungsmann@uni-trier.de](mailto:jungsmann@uni-trier.de)



# RC40 Book Club

The RC-40 book club welcomes individuals interested in the sociology of food and agriculture, irrespective of their RC40 membership. Members collectively select the book and attend online meetings, with two sessions scheduled to accommodate diverse time zones. Our members represent various career stages and backgrounds, and this also contributes diverse perspectives.

Conversations focus on the impact of selected texts on the sociology of agriculture and food, as well as their relevance to teaching and research.

On November 25th, the RC40 book club met to discuss **Real Food, Real Facts** by **Charlotte Biltekoff**. We had a lively discussion based on the book, covering topics like the reactionary mobilization of facts, industry funding for research, and the awkward and often deflective exploration of values within large corporate companies. The team is currently putting together a review for the IJSAF.

To join the book club, please sign up through this [form](#)

## Book reviews

**Kelly Bronson**

The Immaculate  
Conception of Data

**Monica  
White**

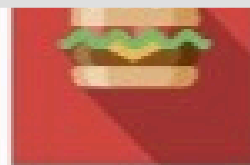
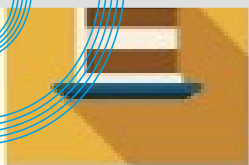
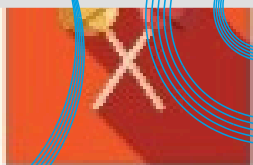
Freedom  
Farmers

**Annemarie  
Mol**

Eating in  
Theory

**Hugh  
Campbell**

Farming inside  
invisible worlds



# REAL FOOD, REAL FACTS

PROCESSED FOOD AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

CHARLOTTE BILTEKOFF

# Communications update

## RC40 DIGEST

### SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2025

To replace the previous RC40 Forum on the webpage (which was unfortunately not as dynamic as we had hoped), this year has seen the introduction of a regular **RC40 Digest**. We hope you like the new format?

Thank you to all of our members who have sent in their news, events, publications, job postings or other information for us to circulate to the networks. We aim to collate items by the 15th of every month, and share the Digest monthly on/around the 25th. Please continue to send any information you'd like included in the Digest to [RC40.digest@gmail.com](mailto:RC40.digest@gmail.com).

We made some minor updates to our **website here**, where you can find information about RC40, its history, statutes, board members, promotional materials, and RC40's journal (IJSAF) updates.

We will also be refreshing our use of social media, including a shift to **Bluesky** to replace our twitter account in early 2025. The ISA has already made this change.



We also aim to update the RC40 **Weblog** (or Blog for short) - this is a page for members to write stories, summaries of their work, or ideas related to the sociology of agriculture and food, which we hope may be spread to the wider audience and able to promote members' works as well.

Beyond this, as part of the cross-RC work in ISA, a series of **Webinars** will commence in February 2025. The first topic will be dedicated to "living on earth" and will likely include themes of interest to RC40 members. We will keep you posted!



# Contribute your news ...

Aside from the RC40 Forum where members can submit news directly (although through a moderated process), you are also welcome to share your stories or information about events/conferences via our Community Blog,

You need to contact the website administrator ([dwiartama@itb.ac.id](mailto:dwiartama@itb.ac.id)) for the news to be uploaded to the website.

We're looking to have a more automated process in the future, but at this stage, we hope to support you through our web admin.

## Are you sure that you are a full member of RC40?

- Some of our friends have active memberships in ISA but have forgotten to renew their membership in RC40.
- Some of our friends have active memberships in RC40 but have not updated their membership in ISA.
- If you are not a full RC40 member, you can of course still be a friend of RC40, receive newsletters and participate actively on our own websites and forums.
- Please circulate this invitation to join the RC40 to your networks!

## BUSY BOOKS

We are currently compiling a list of **books** recently published by our members. If you've had a book come out in the last year (2024), please email the title and a cover image to Madeleine, [mfairbai@ucsc.edu](mailto:mfairbai@ucsc.edu)



[RC40.digest@gmail.com](mailto:RC40.digest@gmail.com)



<https://www.isa-agrifood.com/>

<https://www.isa-sociology.org/>

Please check your membership status at <https://members.isa-sociology.org>