Preface

The origins of this book go back to a workshop I organised at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris in May 2003. This was possible due to the financial support of the European Union who had granted me a Marie Curie Fellowship, and due to Renaud Dehousse who was ready to host the event.

The aim was to create an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas on civil society and European governance. From my experience at the European University Institute I know how difficult it is to get an interdisciplinary group together. Fortunately, Paris is an easy place to attract people. More difficult is getting them to stay in the working room, in particular in a place like Saint-Germain-des-Prés. But apparently it worked, and people even appeared to enjoy it. (Many thanks go to Astrid Gerecke for the practical organisation). Even to the extent that when the workshop had finished some went on debating civil society in the Jardin du Luxembourg rather than strolling through Paris. But it might also have been that they were just too exhausted by the workshop and the surprising spring heat that they didn't get further than the nearby Jardin du Luxembourg, where unintended they bumped into their colleagues again. Anyway, it was at that moment, having some refreshment under the trees and backed by the funny James Bond tunes of the jazz band in the park, that I definitely decided the initiative should be given a follow-up in a book project.

I am very grateful to all those that were ready to engage in this experience. In addition to the contributors to this book, I would also like to thank Deidre Curtin, Robert Geyer and Tom Burns. To the contributors, I am particularly thankful for their patience (in particular those delivering early), and for standing for my comments and my insistence (in particular for those delivering late). Special thanks go to Peter Bonnor, Roland Erne, Carol Harlow, and Gráinne de Búrca for inspiring comments. I am grateful to Stefano Fella for language corrections.

I am also indebted to the publisher Edward Elgar, and in particular to Luke Adams for his patient and friendly collaboration.

I would like to dedicate this volume to a civil society movement that is currently aiming at improving my life quality: the movement of 'pendolari padani', i.e. people commuting by train in Northern Italy who are fed up with the bad public transport service. They are very disorganised and very spontaneous (even the name 'pendolari padani' is a name I gave them, since they haven't one themselves – and they may even not like this one), but

apparently that does not seem to impede them from having some first (minor) successes. It is as if they all want to prove the correctness of Putnam's well-known *Making Democracy Work (Civic Traditions in Modern Italy)** ... Let's hope then – Putnam's analysis in mind – that eventual improvements of public transport in the North will not be at the expense of investment in the South.

Stijn Smismans
Trento, April 2005

* Putnam, R. (1992), *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.