

**PhD Candidate: Valentina Gentile**

**Supervisors:** Sebastiano Maffettone (Luiss University), Jolle Demmers (Utrecht University)

**Dissertation Title:** “From Identity-Conflict to Civil Society: the role of civil society in building peace through the protection of human dignity and pluralism”

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**Abstract:**

My PhD explores the nature and role of civil society in deeply divided contexts such as the aftermath of an identity-conflict. From a normative point of view, it is concerned with the possibility of combining the two priorities of *justice* and *stability* in transitional societies. Here ‘civil society’ is understood as a fundamental pre-political stage of development of a social community, while identity-conflict is defined as a conflict where the cleavages are articulated in ethnic or religious terms. The thesis comprises three sections. Section one investigates the nature of identity conflicts. Section two focuses on the normative content of civil society; this part explores whether, and under what conditions, civil society can be seen as a precondition for democracy in deeply divided societies. Civil society is presented here as the sphere where a ‘common culture of civility’ emerges. Section three analyses the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Here the relevance of civil society crucially depends on its capacity to represent the sphere where individuals are able to recognize and deal with transitional issues by appealing to the Bosnian “culture of civility” and developing a sense of justice based on a shared understanding of the idea of human dignity.

**Word Count:** 196