

CHINA CROSSROADS

Saturday, April 10th, 2021, 16:30 – 18:00

Civil Society, Democracy, and Politics: The Western Tradition and Contemporary Europe

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Editor of [Civil Society and International Governance](#)

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References to “civil society” abound both in academic as well as in public discourse. Civil society is associated to civility, public mindedness, and civic spirit, and often invoked as the bulwark of democracy. As such, civil society often appears as the opposite of “politics”, depicted as the realm of power games and manipulation. This talk will debunk some commonplace ideas associated with civil society and explore its relationship with subtle yet penetrating forms of power, such as economic or epistemic power, by referring to a few exemplary cases in Europe and abroad as well as to some key authors in the Western political tradition. More specifically, the talk will analyze how right wing populism manipulates the language of civil society in view of authoritarian and ethnocentric political projects.

[Debora Spini](#) is Assistant Professor of Liberal Studies and Faculty Fellow at NYU Shanghai and faculty at Syracuse University in Florence. Previously, she taught at the School of Political Sciences in Florence, where she taught Philosophy of Social Sciences, Social Philosophy, and Philosophy of the Public Sphere. Her research focuses on religious groups in the public sphere, secularization and post-secularization, monotheism and violence, and the rise of xenophobic populism with a focus on gender issues. She is author of [Post-National Civil Society](#) (La società civile post nazionale, 2006), co-editor of [The Art and Practice of Citizenship](#) (La parola, le pratiche, la cittadinanza, 2015), co-editor of [The Protestant Conscience](#) (La coscienza protestante, 2015), as well as co-editor of [Civil Society and International Governance](#) (2010). She earned her PhD in Political Philosophy from Scuola Superiore di Studi Universitari e di Perfezionamento (SSSA) in Pisa, Italy.

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a “crossroads” of the world and itself at a “crossroads” in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.