Davide Pala

Post-doc Fellow at the CAS-SEE

(Center for Advanced Studies ‒ South East Europe)

davide\_pala@hotmail.com

**Experts,** **Good Citizens, Democratic Public Debates and Global Warming**

Among climate experts there is an overwhelming consensus that (i) global warming is occurring, that (ii) this fact is alarming, and that (iii) humans are causally responsible for it. Notwithstanding, 16% of American citizens deny that (i) global warming is occurring; 48% question (ii) its seriousness; and 50% think that (iii) human activity has no role in causing it. In this talk, I will provide a normative framework to assess the attitude of those citizens that, like American citizens, in democratic public debates concerning the elaboration of public policies, mistrust experts, i.e. *trustworthy epistemic authorities*, in regard to beliefs that are *justified* and *almost undisputed* within the scientific community. I will argue that this attitude is *bad*, because citizens showing it do not possess the *virtue* of the *epistemic trust in trustworthy epistemic authorities* (ETITEA), which is demanded by the non-exhaustive ideal of the *good* citizens publicly debating in democratic contexts. According to this ideal, in democratic public debates citizens trust trustworthy epistemic authorities as a way to *respect* themselves and each other as *peers* in circumstances of *epistemic dependence*. In detail, I will show that ETITEA is required by three ideas specifying this ideal: the idea of *rational citizens*;the idea of *reasonable citizens*; and the idea of *responsible citizens*.

First, ETITEA is demanded by the idea of *rational citizens*. Rational citizens normally want to act successfully, and know that justified beliefs lead to successful actions more than unjustified beliefs. Yet, rational citizens know that, in those domains in which they are laypersons, they do not have first-hand evidence justifying the related beliefs, and cannot acquire the expertise necessary to understand either the evidence or the claims relative to the evidence. Consequently, rational citizens dismiss the idea of *epistemic independence* as irrational, acknowledge their epistemic dependence, and show ETITEA, thus respecting their rational powers.

Second, ETITEA is required by the idea of *reasonable citizens*. Reasonable citizens respect a *reciprocity constraint*, therefore they restrain themselves from publicly advancing unjustified and sectarian beliefs, because they do not meet almost uncontroversial scientific standards and would not be endorsed by everyone. Furthermore, reasonable citizens accept, among the *burdens of judgement*, *the fact of epistemic dependence* *on epistemic authorities* as a condition that all citizens share. Both features lead reasonable citizens to show ETITEA as a way to *respect* each other as *peers* in circumstances of *epistemic dependence*.

Third, ETITEA is demanded by the idea of *responsible citizens*. Responsible citizens do not want to unduly harm others and know that public policies based on unjustified beliefs likely harm others. Also, they are aware that they cannot autonomously shape justified beliefs in those domains in which they are not experts. Hence, in public debates concerning the elaboration of public policies, responsible citizens show trust in trustworthy epistemic authorities in those domains in which they are laypersons ‒ thereby respecting co-citizens and outsiders.

Finally, I will employ this framework to assess the attitude of those citizens mistrusting climate experts in regard to global warming, and argue that it is *bad* because it shows a lack of *rationality*, *reasonableness*, and *responsibility*.

**SHORT-BIO**

**Davide Pala** is a Post-doc Fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies ‒ South East Europe of the University of Rijeka. Previously, he was a Post-doc Fellow at Fondazione Burzio of Turin (Italy) and a PhD Student at the University of Turin (Italy), in the Department of Cultures, Politics and Society. He was Visiting Post-doc Fellow at the University of Frankfurt and at the University of Manchester. He works in the field of normative political theory applied to international issues. In particular, his research focuses on global justice, world poverty and economic inequalities. On the matter he wrote several articles focused on institutional cosmopolitanism, capability approach, and nationalism. He is currently developing a republican idea of global political justice.