

Maria Zambrano International Call

Universitat de Barcelona

Political Science

Grants description

The [Universitat de Barcelona](https://www.ub.edu) (UB) is offering 16 “María Zambrano” grants to hire international talent in political science and related disciplines.

These grants are aimed at researchers with a postdoctoral career of (minimum) 24 months in universities or R&D centres outside their doctoral institution. Grants will be 1-to 2 year contracts, with a total gross monthly amount of 4,000€, plus a unique initial payment of maximum € 3,500 for travel and first accommodation costs. The main purpose of these grants is to contribute and strengthen existing research lines of hosting research groups at the UB.

Who we are

The GREL (Research Group on Local Studies: www.ub.edu/grel) is a research group at UB’s Political Science Department, located in the Faculty of Law. Our lines of research include the study of local government, comparative territorial politics, urban studies, and judicial politics, all of which are currently funded through the research projects listed above.

Applications

If you are interested in joining us for 1 or 2 years, the GREL is welcoming potential candidates on any of the mentioned research lines. Candidates should submit their Maria Zambrano applications through this link:

<https://seu.ub.edu/ofertaPublicaCategoriaPublic/listPublicacionsAmbCategoria?categoria.id=225116>

Please contact us at luismedir@ub.edu and estherpano@ub.edu to address general inquiries and to ask for the documentation that the GREL has to provide. We will also be happy to guide you throughout the bureaucratic process. Applications must include the following documents:

Abbreviated curriculum vitae of the candidate.

Scientific and technical history of the receiving group.

Short memo justifying the candidate's suitability for the research and transfer needs of the receiving group and expected impact.

Document of acceptance of the stay by the receiving center.

Deadline for applications: July 30, 2021

GREL PROJECTS

Transparency at the local level: citizen and institutional impacts. PI: [Jaume Magre](#)

Since 2014, several transparency laws had entered into force in Spain. This project aims to offer a different way of understanding and analyzing the effects of transparency policies on citizens, and institutions. Much of the efforts made by transparency research focus on the effects over citizens (increasing trust on institutions) and largely neglects the organizational impacts on political institutions. The research question of this project wants to investigate on the institutional and citizen impacts of the implementation of transparency laws. Therefore, this project intends to analyse 853 municipal web pages to, first, monitor the level of compliance with the regulations and, subsequently, analyse the impact within the political institutions (organizational and structural changes) and as a political output (increasing citizenship and institutional trust).

In most of the current scientific literature, transparency appears as a crucial policy to solve the main dysfunctions and problems of political and administrative systems. The implementation of transparency policies is conceived as a fundamental principle of institutional design allowing to achieve a set of really very broad objectives: to foster greater trust in government, to reduce public corruption and improve institutional performance and management. However, the available scientific evidence is far from being evident.

On the one hand, concerning the increase of citizens trust in institutions by the means of open government initiatives, the evidence is rather mixed. There seems to be a greater tendency for transparency to improve the quality of financial management and reduce levels of corruption in the public sector, than to improve trust, legitimacy, and accountability, which obtain fewer clear results. On the other hand, concerning the analysis on the organizational impacts and their determinants, they appear as a rather unexplored field in a systematic manner by the scientific literature.

Our main general hypothesis points out to consider that transparency policies have developed a greater impact inside public organizations, than on increasing citizen confidence in institutions. Our expectation would be that transparency policies may have generated internal impacts in organizational terms and internal dynamics, but they have not showed an impact in the subjective perception of citizens towards the institution. That is to say, that administration has glass walls (transparency) that may imply "inward" changes but, nevertheless, those same glass walls (non-porous material) are not capable of generating effects outwards (citizenship). Trust would therefore be shown as a necessary background for a good reception of the information and distrust would act as a trigger for the demand for information.

Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe ([DEMOS](#) -H2020-). PI in Spain: [Jaume Magre](#)

DEMOS is a research and innovation project studying populism and its impacts on democracy. Funded by the [EU Horizon 2020 Framework Programme](#), the project is carried out by [15 partner institutions in Europe](#) and involves 10 scientific disciplines. DEMOS investigates the phenomenon of populism through the lenses of democratic efficacy. The idea combines attitudinal features (political efficacy), political skills, knowledge, and democratic opportunity structures. A novelty, democratic

efficacy is understood as a condition of political engagement needed to address the challenges of populism.

Specifically, DEMOS addresses under-researched aspects of populism at micro-, meso-, and macro-levels: its socio-psychological roots, social actors' responses to the populist challenge, and populism's effects on governance. DEMOS focuses not only on the polity, but equally on citizens' perspectives: how they are affected by, and how they react to, populism. Politically underrepresented groups and those targeted by populist politics are a particular focus. Examples include youth, women, and migrants.

As populism has varying socially embedded manifestations, DEMOS aims at contextualising it through comparative analysis on the variety of populisms across Europe, including their historical, cultural, and socioeconomic roots, manifestations, and impacts. DEMOS develops indicators and predictors of populism and elaborates scenarios on the interactions of populism with social actors and institutions both at the national and the EU levels.

DEMOS combines in-depth research on populism and democratic efficacy with action research and pilot projects in order to develop lasting tools and timely policy recommendations. Project methods include experiments, deliberative polling, text mining, surveys, and legal analysis. DEMOS places strong emphasis on communication and productive interactions with a variety of stakeholders throughout the project, including policymakers, journalists, students, and the general public.

Metropolitan Governance in Spain: Institutional Building and Models (METROGOV). PI: [Mariona Tomàs](#)

The 20th century has witnessed a transformation of the European territory. Today, 75% of the European population live in metropolitan areas. How to govern metropolitan areas? What are the models of metropolitan governance and how can their differences be explained? The development and change of metropolitan institutions has been at the heart of political and theoretical debates for decades, at least in political science. Metropolitan governance is explained by the interrelations between the specific institutional context (intergovernmental system) and political culture (attitudes towards metropolitan cooperation). This institutional milieu sets the conditions for the action of political actors and favours the existence of a specific model of metropolitan governance. We can differentiate four models according to their degree of institutionalization, that is, depending on the type of institutional arrangements that have been made: metropolitan governments, metropolitan agencies, vertical coordination and horizontal collaboration.

Spain has an urban society in a preponderantly rural territory: the densely populated urban areas on the coast and in Madrid contrast with a pattern of lower density development in the central zones of the country. Despite evidence of a metropolitanization process, the Spanish political system has not responded to this phenomenon. Indeed, there is a gap between the process of urbanization and metropolitanization and the institutional setting, since there is only one metropolitan government (Barcelona). The aim of this project is to evaluate the institutional building of metropolitan governance in Spain. Compared to other European countries, in Spain there is a scarce development of metropolitan institutions. This is particularly interesting for two main reasons. First, it exemplifies one of the problems of metropolitan governance: the permanent gap between

institutions and the process of metropolitanization. Second, in Spain there is a diversity of models of metropolitan governance, which is useful to analyse the reasons for this variation. METROGOV seeks to provide a comprehensive analytical framework to explain this phenomenon.

This is a 3-year project. During the 1st year a new database of metropolitan institutions will be created. This database will provide precious information such as the model of metropolitan governance, the number of municipalities involved and the sectors with most and less institutionalization. The 2nd year will be devoted to the analysis of case studies based on theoretically driven criterion, with documentary research and the realization of interviews. The last year of the project will be focused on the analysis of the interviews and the documents, as well as the publication and divulgation of results.

To sum up, METROGOV wants to cover a literature and research gap on this topic. The members of the team are all professors, belonging to different Spanish universities strategically distributed across the territory and with different academic backgrounds. They all have in common having worked on urban governance and having proven experience on research.

Preferences, career and territory. The politics of judicial inequality in Spain. PI: [Joan-Josep Vallbé](#)

When courts make unexpected or unpopular decisions we assume that factors such as gender and policy preferences (e.g., ideology) may affect judges' decisions. At the same time, the institutional context of such decisions (the judicial and political systems) sets a structure of incentives that may change the way these factors work and eventually how judges decide. The common consequence of such mechanism is judicial inequality—the fact that different judges can make opposite decisions when deciding on very similar cases. The main research question of this project is how personal, political and institutional mechanisms work in the judicial system to shape judicial inequality in Spain. The empirical analysis of judicial behavior has adapted the principal-agent framework to model the judge: as a government employee, she is an agent to the government, which is the principal. Judges behave according to a number of incentives and constraints, some of which are personal (gender, policy preferences, career interests) while others are imposed by the principal (e.g., capacity to reverse decisions made by lower courts). Given that judges in both civil-law and common-law democracies enjoy a certain degree of discretion provided by their tenure and by the lack of exogenous imposition of specific rules for their decision-making, they may be described as imperfect agents of a diffuse principal. The principal-agent framework has proved fruitful to model judicial behavior because judicial systems are based on hierarchy. In large bureaucratic organizations, public or private, the delegation of work and responsibilities yields to information asymmetries and creates agency problems. In the judicial system, these tensions arise because (1) upper courts can reverse the decisions made by lower courts, and (2) lower court judges have incentives to be promoted to upper courts positions. However, on the one hand, usually it is the case that reversals and decisions on promotions are not made by the same courts. On the other hand, judicial appointments to distinct levels of the judiciary are not always based on merits, but by design some appointments to appellate courts (TSJ of the autonomous communities and the Supreme Court) can be influenced by the dynamics of national or regional politics. This sets a

structure of incentives that may have different effects (and may be even cross-cutting) at different levels of the judicial hierarchy. This project develops and tests a theory of strategic behavior in a multiple-level hierarchy within the context of a unitary judiciary such as Spain. To this end, the project will gather data at the three relevant judicial levels (trial courts, regional appellate courts and the Supreme Court) to (1) analyze the effect of gender on collegiate judicial decisions in Spain; (2) measure and analyze bi-dimensional preferences (policy and national identity) of judges in Spain; and (3) build and test a principal-agent theory of judicial behavior within a multiple-level hierarchy.