STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

In this document I summarize the research project that I would like to develop during my stay at GEMASS if it is accepted. First of all, I briefly expose the details of the project. Second, I argue why I would like to work with Dr. Gianluca Manzo during my stay and how could this cooperation be fruitful for my work. On the link between the project and my previous work and experience you can see my attached CV.

This project intends to investigate the social mechanisms that explain the emergence and maintenance of pro-social attitudes and motivations that support the fiscal and social policies of the current Welfare State. The project will focus on two goals: (1) to elaborate a theoretical model that allow us to conceptualise all the relevant factors that intervene in the interaction between pro-social motivations and the design/implementation of redistributive policies; and (2) to investigate empirically the basic causal mechanisms that produce social perceptions of distributive justice/injustice, as well as their influence in the support or rejection of egalitarian policies.

The project will differentiate between (a) the causal mechanisms that generate pro-social motivations independently of public policies; and (b) the causal mechanisms that generate those motivations as a result of the design and implementation of fiscal and social policies. These later effects can, in turn, be twofold: (b1) effects about the judgements and social perceptions of distributive justice, which can lead to the support or the rejection of the corresponding policies; and (b2) effects about the behaviour of individuals as a response to those policies. In this respect, it is necessary to differentiate between the judgments and behaviour of the recipients or beneficiaries of the policies, of the net tax-payers, and of those who implement the policies. The distinction between these three types of actors creates several possible types of interaction between them and the designers of the policies, with normative and strategic implications that this project aims to analyse.

This project also aims to clearly differentiate, from an empirical point of view, four types of pro-social attitudes and motivations: (1) strong reciprocity; (2) altruism; (3)

inequality aversion; and (4) solidarity with peers and/or with basic necessities. These motivations can influence the feasibility of redistributive policies in one of the two following ways: (a) they can support their introduction and implementation in the short term; and (b) they can support their consolidation and maintenance in the long term. The project will define theoretically and investigate empirically the social mechanisms that underlie the formation of the above mentioned motivations and their effects on the feasibility of the redistributive function of the tax and benefit system. Methodologically, the project will apply innovative techniques used by contemporary analytical sociology such as social experimentation and multi-agent simulation, in addition to exploit available datasets measuring attitudes and motivations.

With regard to social utility, this project aims to draw implications that allow us to optimise the design and implementation of redistributive policies with egalitarian objectives, both for social benefits and for the tax system.

I believe that the GEMASS is the best place for me to develop the project. Both the opportunity to interact with a number of outstanding scholars and to have access to excellent facilities encourage me to apply for this visit. Specifically, I would like to work with Dr. Gianluca Manzo during my stay since he has been working in such fields as analytical sociology, quantitative and mathematical sociology, multi-agent simulation and social policy (educational policy) which are closely related to my research project and to my general scientific interests.

Jordi Tena-Sánchez
Grupo de Sociología Analítica y Diseño Institucional
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
November 2010