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PROFILE

Helder Ferreira do Vale

Helder Ferreira do Vale is a Ph.D. researcher in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy, where he holds a fellowship from the Spanish International Cooperation and Development Agency (AECID). His doctoral research compares the evolution of intergovernmental relations in Brazil, Spain, and South Africa after these countries' respective transitions to democracy.

One important contribution of Helder's doctoral research is to advance a comparative framework that explains the processes of decentralization, federalization, and development of subnational autonomy in these three countries. With this comparative frame of analysis, the research analyzes the intergovernmental mechanisms behind decentralization and federalization, the bargaining interaction between national and subnational political elites, and the institutional changes in the intergovernmental relations under democracy. This case-oriented research has been based on several in-depth interviews to local and national politicians as well as public officials in Brazil, Spain, and South Africa.

As a visiting scholar at the APSA Centennial Center, Helder has been interviewing decentralization experts working at international organizations in Washington, DC. Furthermore, he is using his time to deliver presentations in academic institutions in the DC area on his comparative framework. This experience has been extremely useful for Helder's research, as he is having a unique opportunity both to disseminate his preliminary research findings and to receive important insights for further improvement of his dissertation.

Since the beginning of his doctoral research, Helder has benefited from visits to several academic institutions from many countries. From 2004 to 2008, with a fellowship from the Spanish Ministry of Education, he was a fellow at the University of Barcelona's Department of Sociology. During this period, he worked on a project on the development of parliamentary regional political elites in democratic Spain. In 2006, Helder was a visiting scholar in Denmark at the University of Aalborg's School of Postgraduate Interdisciplinary Research. In 2007, he conducted fieldwork in South Africa as a visiting student in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town. Lastly, in 2008, Helder

was a visiting fellow at the Social Science Institute of the University of Lisbon, under the European Commission's Marie Curie Fellowship Program.

As a result of Helder's research, he received in 2006 the Stein Rokkan Award from the International Political Science Association (IPSA) to present a paper on the Brazilian experience with municipal participatory democracy at IPSA's World Congress in Fukuoka, Japan. In 2005, he was awarded the Jorge Sampaio European Research Award from the European Academy of Yuste on his research on the development of subnational and local governments under democracy in Portugal and Spain. ■

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