

## FEAR OF “OTHERS”? PROCESSES OF SECURITIZATION IN SOUTH TYROL

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### ABSTRACT:

*SITUATED AT THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE FIELD OF ETHNIC POLITICS, MIGRATION AND SECURITY STUDIES, THIS ARTICLE ANALYZES PROCESSES OF SECURITIZATION IN SOUTH TYROL, AN ITALIAN PROVINCE WITH GERMAN AND LADIN-SPEAKING POPULATIONS AND A SOPHISTICATED CONSOCIATIONAL SYSTEM TO PROTECT THEIR CULTURAL FEATURES. SINCE THE 1990S, THE PROVINCE WITNESSED THE ARRIVAL OF MANY MIGRANTS FROM FOREIGN COUNTRIES. SCHOLARSHIP ON SECURITIZATION HAS TENDED TO REPRODUCE KYMLICKA'S DYCHOTOMY BETWEEN ETHNIC/IMMIGRANT GROUPS AND NATIONAL MINORITIES; WHEREAS MANY SCHOLARS FOCUS ON THE SECURITIZATION OF MIGRANTS AND MIGRATION, OTHER RESEARCH APPLIES THE CONCEPT TO THE POLITICS OF ETHNO-NATIONALISM. DEPARTING FROM THIS DICHOTOMY, I CONSIDER CULTURAL DIVERSITY ITSELF, RATHER THAN A SPECIFIC COMMUNITY, AS THE TARGET OF SECURITIZING MOVES. WITH THIS FRAMEWORK, THE ARTICLE ANALYZES TO WHAT EXTENT, HOW AND ON WHAT TERMS SECURITIZATION DYNAMICS HAVE UNFOLDED IN SOUTH TYROL VIS-À-VIS THE PRESENCE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND DIVERSE CULTURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE PROVINCE, WHETHER HISTORICALLY ROOTED OR DERIVING FROM RECENT MIGRATORY FLOWS. TO CONDUCT THE ANALYSIS, I ADOPT THE COPENHAGEN SCHOOL'S UNDERSTANDING OF SECURITIZATION AS A SPEECH ACT. I USE A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY FOCUSED ON ANALYZING DISCOURSES THAT EMERGED IN PARTY PROGRAMS AND POLITICAL SPEECHES. IN THIS WAY, THE ARTICLE AIMS TO BRING TO LIGHT HOW DIFFERENT FEATURES OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY BECOME TARGETS OF SECURITIZING MOVES AND HOW DISTINGUISHED PROCESSES OF SECURITIZATION INTERACT OVER TIME.*

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**KEYWORDS:** SECURITIZATION, SOUTH TYROL, NATIONAL MINORITIES; MIGRANTS

### INTRODUCTION

The presence of culturally diverse ‘others’ remains an enduring test in many EU countries. Some states struggle to recognize and/or implement minority rights whereas even highly protected minorities might provoke schismatic tensions. Migrant inclusion is a challenge for many countries as shown by the retreat from multiculturalism and the concerns regarding Muslim migrants and the risk of radicalization. In this context, the concept of securitization, developed in Security Studies, is a powerful analytical tool that brings attention to what extent and under what circumstances minorities and culturally diverse ‘others’ are constructed as a

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threat and to what extent institutional/legal/political instruments of minority accommodation address processes of securitization. The past decades have seen several publications that applied securitization to minority issues. Though informative, this scholarship presents some limitations, *in primis* the distinction between works focusing on “old” national minorities and research on “new” communities stemming from recent migratory flows,<sup>2</sup> as well as an excessive focus on a master narrative securitizing a specific minority.

This article contributes to this line of research, combining the fields of ethnonational politics, migration research and security studies. Defining securitization as the process through which cultural diversity itself, rather than a specific community, is presented as a threat, I analyze the unfolding of processes of securitization in the Italian province of South Tyrol. Characterized by a German-speaking population, a small Ladin minority and a complex system of measures to deal with their cultural features and resolve past ethnic tensions, in the last decades South Tyrol witnessed the arrival of many people migrating from foreign countries. Thus, the province epitomizes the example of a highly diverse society, in which to analyze how processes of securitization vis-à-vis both old and new minorities develop. Using the Copenhagen School’s understanding of securitization as a speech act, I conduct a qualitative analysis of political discourses, focusing on the electoral programs elaborated by South Tyrolean political parties for the last 2019 Provincial election. The analysis builds a more balanced account of securitization processes, revealing the variety of such processes and concentrating attention on unexamined linkages among securitizing moves targeting diversity as it relates to the presence of old and new minorities.

The article is divided in three parts. First, after providing a brief analysis of studies of securitization, in particular of its application to minority politics, I highlight my specific understanding of the process of securitization and the methodology used in the analysis of South Tyrol. Second, I provide an historical-institutional account of South Tyrol and current demographic data concerning cultural diversity in the province. Then, I analyze processes of securitization as emerge in recent South Tyrolean parties’ program and in the conclusion, I compare the parties’ discourses and discuss future lines of research.

### **SECURITIZATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO MINORITY POLITICS**

Developed in the 1990s within the field of Security Studies, the concept of securitization has become a common analytical tool, applied in several academic fields in social science, including politics concerning minority communities (both old minorities and new migrant communities). As developed by the so-called Copenhagen School of Security Studies, securitization refers to the process through which an issue is considered as an “existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”.<sup>3</sup> This is a constructivist understanding of securitization where this process does not refer to an objective state and the existence of a real existential threat; rather an issue is securitized because it is presented as a threat.

Thereafter, scholars have long debated how and where processes of securitization unfold as well as the context and conditions behind such processes. In the original formulation of the Copenhagen School, the process of securitization is a “speech act” developed in political discourses, according to which “by saying the words, something is done”.<sup>4</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>2</sup> For the distinction old/new minorities see Roberta Medda-Windischer, “Integration of Old and New Minorities: Beyond a Janus-faced Perspective,” *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* 14 (2017).

<sup>3</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 23

<sup>4</sup> Buzan, Ole Wæver and de Wilde, *Security*, 26.

securitizing speeches need to be accepted and endorsed by a public audience. Other scholars, including the so-called Second Generation of securitization analysts, have elaborated a sociological variant to understand processes of securitization, highlighting the role of historical narratives, social and legal practices, social, cultural and political contexts, public images, media, institutions and physical acts.<sup>5</sup> Finally, scholars of the so-called Paris school of Security Studies apply Foucauldian bio-politics to argue that the process of securitization is the outcomes of a series of acts that make up everyday practices used to govern our society and order the life of people, such as prevailing rationalities of governance, methods of social control and surveillance technologies used in specific loci of power.<sup>6</sup> All these approaches are not mutually exclusive but rather show different dynamics through which processes of securitization could happen.

The concept of securitization has been applied, in all its various understandings, to numerous specific perceived security problems concerning minority politics. This scholarship development has tended to reproduce Kymlicka's dichotomy between ethnic/immigrant groups and national minorities, since scholars have addressed processes of securitization vis-à-vis these two segments of the population separately.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, one strand of research has focused on processes of securitization concerning migration, showing how various segments of the migrant population (from undocumented migrants to asylum seekers to second/third generations) have been framed in political discourses, media or government practices as a threat to states' cultural identity and/or their political, economic and welfare systems.<sup>8</sup> Another strand of research has instead brought the securitization concept in studies on ethnic conflict and politics of ethno-nationalism, showing how specific national minorities, like Palestinian citizens of Israel, have been securitized through legal and policy documents.<sup>9</sup>

These studies offer new perspectives that advance our understanding of minority issues, concentrating attention on contingent processes and unexamined linkages. Indeed, they problematize the dynamics through which they develop negative connotations concerning the presence of minorities, providing a better sense of how to comprehensively deal with diversity and encourage peaceful co-existence among majority and new/old minority communities. Furthermore, the concept of securitization explains why discriminatory practices persist; indeed, illiberal practices are justified and accepted because ethnicity is articulated as a matter of security.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, these studies enrich our understanding of securitization processes. According to Gromes and Bonacker, securitization has three main components. First, it consists of a narrative claiming an existential threat to survival and requiring exceptional measures. Second, it implies the adoption of an emergency mode and extraordinary actions beyond normal politics. Third, it has effects on the relations between involved units (the referent object, namely what should be protected, and the perceived threat) through exceptional measures

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<sup>5</sup> Thierry Balzacq (ed.), *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve* (London: Routledge, 2011); Matti Jutila, "Securitization, history, and identity: some conceptual clarifications and examples from politics of Finnish war history," *Nationalities Papers* 43:6 (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," *Alternatives* 27 (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Jef Huysmans, "Migrants as a security problem: dangers of 'securitizing' societal issues," in *Migration and European Integration*, ed. Robert Miles and Dietrich Thränhardt (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> Ronnie Olesker, "National Identity and securitization in Israel," *Ethnicities* 14:3 (2014).

<sup>10</sup> Olesker, "National Identity," 376, 387.

targeting the supposed threatening entity.<sup>11</sup> When the concept of securitization is applied to minority issues, the second component loses its importance; indeed, minority members can be the target of exclusionary and illiberal measures enacted through democratic decision-making process and liberal procedures.<sup>12</sup> Instead, in the field of minority, another key component of securitization is highlighted, namely the fact that it has an identity element and exclusionary effects. Indeed, processes of securitization foster a friend-enemy distinction, shaping the boundaries of the communities, i.e. the group to be secured, the threatening groups as well as who is an insider and who is an outsider.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the process of securitization is exclusive in two ways: first, the other is presented as evil and as the villain; and second, within the group to be secured, those who do not fit are marginalized.<sup>14</sup>

The scholarship, however, presents some limitations. First of all, the schism between these two strands of research is unfortunate because “old” and “new” minorities present similar features and dynamics when it comes to processes of securitization; thereby potential connections and insights are missed.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, behind processes of securitization of new or old minorities, lies the same diversity conundrum, namely the fact that, in Toivanen’s words, it is “the recognition of diversity” and “of being different” that is actually missing.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore both strands of research tend to focus on a master prevalent narrative that present processes of securitization that target a specific minoritarian community. In this way, as pointed out by Bilgic, the research “does not reflect the pluralism of the politics of security;” instead, the politics of security involves multiple actors and there are alternative discourses, ideas and practices embedded in the polity, which remain ignored.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, by focusing on minorities as the target of processes of securitization, a dichotomy is created between the ‘good’ victimized minority, which should be protected by such processes, and the ‘bad’ state authority/majoritarian community, which is the perpetrator, the securitizing actor. However, minorities themselves can initiate processes of securitization.

In this regard, some scholars, rather than focusing on processes of securitization that target a specific minority, have examined this process in regards to ethnic tensions/conflicts, like former Yugoslavia, looking at how all parties involved in tensions/conflicts act as securitizing actors.<sup>18</sup> Along these lines, I define securitization as the process through which cultural diversity itself and the presence of several cultural communities (rather than a specific cultural minoritarian group) is ethnicized, in the sense that is perceived in prevalently exclusionary forms centered on a ‘we vs. them’ dichotomy, implying homogenous entities in conflictual oppositions that requires extraordinary measures to be securitized; in this way diversity is identified as a supposed threat to state’s survival, as well as to the well-being of communal entities and their individual members.

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<sup>11</sup> Thorsten Gromes and Thorsten Bonacker, “The concept of securitization as a tool for analyzing the role of human-rights-related civil society in ethno-political conflicts,” *SHUR Working Paper Series* (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Dimitrios Skleparis, “Studying the ‘migration-security nexus’ in Europe: Towards which end of the ‘nexus’” (paper presented at UACES Student Forum 12th annual conference, Guildford, June 30-July 1, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Andrea Carlà, “From security considerations to de-securitising the discourse on ‘old’ and ‘new’ minorities,” in *Extending Protection to Migrant Populations in Europe*, ed. Roberta Medda-Windischer et al. (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>14</sup> Jutila, “Securitization,” 938.

<sup>15</sup> Carlà, “Security considerations.”

<sup>16</sup> Reetta Toivanen, cit. in Carlà, “Security considerations,” 171.

<sup>17</sup> Ali Bilgic, *Rethinking Security in the age of Migration* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Niels van Willigen, “From nation-building to desecuritization in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Security and Human Rights* 2 (2010).

In the following pages, I analyze whether and how such processes of securitization are present in today South Tyrolean society. With its past of ethnic tensions, its current situation of successful peaceful cohabitation and the recent inflow of foreign migrants to the province, it is an ideal case to examine whether and in what forms processes of securitization emerge and intersect. To conduct the analysis, I adopt the Copenhagen school's approach that considers securitization as a speech act, focusing on political discourses, and in line with Bilgic's suggestion I consider the discourses of a variety of political actors. Specifically, I consider the political discourses of all the political parties elected in the Provincial Council in the last 2019 provincial election, conducting a critical discourse analysis of their electoral programs. In the analysis I focus on the following elements: 1) the "foregrounding," namely "the prominence given to parts of a text, either by their physical placement or size or by the emphasis given them through word choice or syntactic structure;" 2) the "background," i.e. the "taken-for-granted, usually implicit, elements against which new elements are to be understood by the listener or the reader;" 3) the use of specific "codes," which consist in a "polarized scheme, dividing the world according to a meaningful distinction"; 4) the "narrative," namely "the report of connected events, real or imaginary, presented in a sequence."<sup>19</sup> When necessary and possible,<sup>20</sup> the analysis is enriched by insights from previous political speeches, examined in previous research conducted by the author. Before proceeding with the analysis, I present a brief historical-institutional account of South Tyrol as well as demographic data reflecting the degree of diversity in the province.

### **SOUTH TYROL: HISTORICAL-INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND**

Part of the Habsburg Empire and mainly inhabited by German-speakers and a small Ladin community, South Tyrol was annexed to the Italian state after the First World War. A few years later, Mussolini Fascist government started a program for the Italianization of South Tyrol. This included, for instance, the prohibition of the use of the German language in public spaces, the closure of German-language schools and newspapers, the Italianization of names, and the substitution of local administrators with personnel from other parts of Italy. Furthermore, the fascist government built several industries to attract Italian migrant workers. In this way, the Italian population grew from 7,000 people in 1910 to more than 100,000 in 1943. In 1939, Hitler and Mussolini signed the so-called Option Agreement, which gave South Tyroleans the choice between emigrating to the Third Reich, or remaining in South Tyrol and accepting the Fascist Italianization program. Consequently, 86 percent of South Tyroleans voted for leaving; but because of the Second World War, only 37% actually left. After the war, Italy and Austria signed an agreement with which the Italian government committed to provide some forms of protection and political autonomy to the German-speaking inhabitants. However, the government in Rome poorly implemented the agreement. Meanwhile Italian immigration continued, and in this regard a securitizing speech developed. Indeed, the expression *Todesmarsch* started to be used to refer to the 'march to death' taken by the German speaking community, which – this was the fear – was becoming a minority in its own land and would soon be extinct. Ethnic tensions emerged from the late 1950s to the 1970s, with separatist activists targeting symbols of the Italian state. In 1972, the Italian State enacted the so-called Second Autonomy Statute, which provided for additional measures to protect the German and Ladin population and led to the settlement of the conflict.

<sup>19</sup> Giuseppe Sciortino, "Critical discourse analysis" (presentation Bolzano, March 19, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Some South Tyrolean parties are new and thereby previous political discourses are not available; other parties are small and changes in the leadership does not allow continuity in the analysis of parties' political discourses.

The Second Autonomy Statute consists of a sophisticated power sharing system that combines an extensive territorial autonomy for South Tyrol, where the German-speaking population is the majority, with measures of corporative consociationalism. The main measures are: proportional representation of the linguistic groups in legislative and executive government bodies of the province; the so-called ethnic proportion, i.e. the distribution of public employment and public resources among the linguistic groups in proportion to their numerical strength, as measured through a declaration of linguistic belonging/affiliation released at the time of the census; mandatory bilingualism of public signs and public officers; and education in the mother tongue, implemented through three separate school systems.

The system has guaranteed peaceful cohabitation within the South Tyrol population, which in the last 2011 census consists of 69.4% affiliated to the German-speaking group, 26.1% to the Italian-speaking group and 4.5% to the Ladin group. Whereas the Second Autonomy Statute provided groups with a feeling of protection and encouraged elites' interethnic collaboration and mutual trust, at the same time it maintains some divisions between the linguistic groups in aspects of social/political life, since each group has created its own structures like political parties, associations and mass media and social contacts between groups are limited.<sup>21</sup> However, in the past decade there have been improvements in terms of increasing interethnic interaction and cooperation in the civil society.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, the South Tyrolean autonomy no longer matches the changing demography of the territory. On the one hand, it does not take into account the increasing number of bi- or plurilingual raised people, estimated to be around 25,000- 35,000 people. On the other hand, it does not consider that since the mid-1990s South Tyrolean society has become more diverse due to the arrival of many migrants from foreign countries. Foreign migration in South Tyrol started to become relevant with the turn of the century. At the end of 2018, 50,333 migrants from more than 130 countries lived in South Tyrol, representing 9.5% of the total population. One third of these migrants came from European Union countries, another 30% from other European countries, 19.3% from Asia, and 14.1% from Africa. The main nationalities are Albanian (5,767 / 11.4%), German (4,500 / 8.8%) and Moroccan (3,650 / 7.2%), followed by Pakistani (3,550 / 7.0%) and Romanian (6.6%).<sup>23</sup> In addition, in the past years South Tyrol witnessed the arrival of asylum seekers, mostly from countries in Central Africa as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, which amount to around 1400 persons.<sup>24</sup> In this context, South Tyrol is along the path of many people in transit attempting to reach Central and North-European countries through the Brenner Pass. In their attempt to pass the border, some have ended up in Bolzano/Bozen, South Tyrol's main city, as undocumented migrants.

It should be noted that, under the Italian administrative framework, the South Tyrolean provincial government has responsibilities over several areas that concern the accommodation/inclusion/integration of migrant residents (i.e. social services, health services, social housing, and education), whereas the central state has authority over the control of the border, citizenship, political rights, asylum and refugee status. In 2011, the Province enacted a specific law to regulate the process of integration of the migrant population in South Tyrol. However, as in the rest of Italy and other European countries, the recent arrival of asylum

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<sup>21</sup> Joseph Marko, "Is there a South Tyrolean 'Model' of Conflict Resolution to be Exported?" in *Tolerance through Law*, ed. Jens Woelk et al. (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Günther Pallaver, "South Tyrol's changing political system: from dissociative on the road to associative conflict resolution," *Nationalities Papers* 42:3 (2014).

<sup>23</sup> ASTAT, "Popolazione straniera residente 2018," *AstatInfo* 30 (2019).

<sup>24</sup> Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and EURAC Research, "Richiedenti asilo e rifugiati in Alto Adige" (2017).

seekers, with the related focus on undocumented migrants, has, in part, hijacked the public and political debate in matter of migration.

### **SECURITIZATION PROCESSES IN SOUTH TYROL PARTY PROGRAMS**

As shown above, South Tyrol is a highly complex and diverse society. In the following pages, I analyze how the topic of diversity, of both the German/Italian/Ladin linguistic groups and the new minorities stemming from foreign migration and recent flux of asylum seekers, is discussed in the electoral programs of the parties elected in the last 2019 provincial elections. The analysis highlights whether and on what terms diversity and the presence of diverse communities are the target of processes of securitization. The parties analyzed are: the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP), the Lega, Team Köllensperger, Verdi-Grüne-Vërc (Green party), Partito Democratico (PD), Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), Die Freiheitlichen (dF), Süd-Tiroler Freiheit (SF), and L'Alto Adige nel Cuore Fratelli d'Italia Uniti.

The SVP is a catch all party that has traditionally represented the German (and Ladin)-speaking population and has dominated the South Tyrolean political landscape since World War II. In the 2019 election, this Christian-oriented center political force received 41,9% of the votes and 15 representatives. Following the 2019 election it governs together with the Italian-speaking Lega, as mandated by the South Tyrolean consociational system. The Lega is a national party with, today, a populist anti-migrant and EU sceptic agenda. Historically the party has never been particularly strong in South Tyrol, but saw an exploit in the last election among the Italian-speaking population, receiving 11.1% of the votes and gaining 4 representatives. The Lega took the place in the local government of the national center-left PD, which in the last election confirmed its decline, receiving 3.8% of the votes and one representative. The main opposition party is Team Köllensperger, a newly founded local party that split before the election from the Italian populist party M5S. It saw a great electoral success, receiving 15.2% of the votes and six mandates, whereas the M5S got 2.4% and one representative. Since the 1990s, the Verdi-Grüne-Vërc is a stable force in South Tyrol political landscape, proposing an interethnic and environmental political agenda. In the last election, it received 6.8% of votes and three mandates. The dF, which is inspired by the national-liberal ideology of the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, and the SF are German right-wing nationalist parties that have in their political agenda the independence and self-determination of South Tyrol. After growing for years, in the last election they experienced a setback obtaining respectively 6.2% and 6% of the votes and two representatives each. On the other side of the linguistic spectrum, L'Alto Adige nel Cuore Fratelli d'Italia Uniti is a coalition of Italian-speaking right-wing nationalist parties that received 1.7% of the votes and one representative.

The analysis is organized in three sections: government parties (SVP and Lega), Italian or German right-wing parties (dF, SF, and L'Alto Adige nel Cuore Fratelli d'Italia Uniti), and other opposition parties (Team Köllensperger, Green, PD and M5S).

#### ***Government parties***

The program of the SVP restates the role that the party has given to itself as the protector of South Tyrol and the German and Ladin-Speaking groups and the party of the autonomy system that has provided their protection. Indeed, the program emphasizes the concept of the “homeland South Tyrol,” which is the title of the first section of the program, and the terms “customs,” “traditions,” “language,” and “culture” are mentioned and highlighted in bold in the first section.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Südtiroler Volkspartei, “Stabil. Stark. Südtirol!” (October 21, 2018), 8-11. Author translation.

The program reflects two main assumptions of the SVP vision. First the idea that in South Tyrol there are three linguistic groups that are internally homogenous and externally well distinct. For the (German and Ladin-speaking) linguistic groups language and culture play a key role since they are the “core” of the identity, the “epitome” of the feeling of home; along the same line customs and traditions are extremely important, since “our customs are an integral part of our lives and determine our everyday life.”<sup>26</sup> In this regard, as emerged in other SVP policy document, groups should reinforce their culture before interacting.<sup>27</sup>

Second, the SVP program assumes a defensive attitude. The primary focus is on the need to protect the German and Ladin-speaking groups and their language and culture. This task is presented as a duty and as occupying the party’s central concern. Thus, the assumption is that there might be some kind of danger for the German and Ladin-speaking population, though what this danger might be is not explicit. In any case, this danger does not refer to the Italian-speaking group and cultural diversity, which are not seen as a problem or threat. It is interesting to notice that the Italian-speaking group is actually never mentioned directly, but only indirectly in regard to the coexistence of the three linguistic groups, which is peaceful thanks to the autonomy system, in which the ethnic proportion and mother tongue education are indispensable keystones to preserve the identity of the German and Ladin speaking group.

The peaceful coexistence is assumed to be in danger as well, but in this case the threat is well specified. It is “migration movements of recent years” which “have posed great challenges to this orderly coexistence,” though the program does not spell out why migration is a challenge.<sup>28</sup> In this way, migration comes to be securitized in the SVP program. This securitizing move is highlighted by the fact that migration is addressed with the topics of coexistence and security within the section on “living together.” In this regard, in the past, the SVP has voiced a demographic fear against the risk of foreignization and more recently pointed out the concern that migrants have integrated mainly in the Italian-speaking group. However, it should be noted that, in previous political discourses, the SVP expressed an ambivalent position toward migration, considering it an economic necessity and rejecting xenophobia but at times embracing populist arguments against migrants, especially from Muslim countries, stressing that migrants should learn the local language and culture while supporting the idea/practice of limiting their access to some social benefits so that migrants will not be a burden for South Tyrolean welfare.<sup>29</sup> Among measures proposed by the SVP to deal with migrants, the program highlights that they must adapt, following the rules, and respect and adhere to South Tyrolean values, which are rooted in the “Christian and humanist” tradition.<sup>30</sup>

To conclude the analysis, the SVP program offers two binary codes, dividing the society into a clearly polarized scheme. On the one hand, there is the contraposition of “our” (of the German and Ladin-speaking population) language/culture/customs vs those of others, but these others are actually never mentioned. On the other hand, there is a positioning of “our” (South Tyrolean Christian) values vs. the values of migrants.

Moving to the SVP government ally, the program of the Lega confirms its role as a party with a strong populist anti-migrant agenda, which in previous political discourses presented itself as the defender of Christian and Western values against foreigners, especially

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<sup>26</sup> Südtiroler Volkspartei, “Stabil,” 10. Author translation.

<sup>27</sup> Andrea Carlà, “Tensions and Challenges between New and Old Minorities: Political Party Discourses on Migration in South Tyrol,” in *Migration in Autonomous Territories. The Case of South Tyrol and Catalonia*, ed. Roberta Medda-Windischer and Andrea Carlà (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 74.

<sup>28</sup> Südtiroler Volkspartei, “Stabil,” 21. Author translation.

<sup>29</sup> Carlà, “Tension,” 75-77.

<sup>30</sup> Südtiroler Volkspartei, “Stabil,” 21. Author translation.

Muslim migrants.<sup>31</sup> Though migration appears in the program as only in the fifth of six sections, the topic acquires further relevance since it appears and is discussed mainly in negative terms in other sections. The program takes for granted that migrants are in a privilege position and takes advantages of the situation whereas the Italian population is at a disadvantage. In addition, it hints that migrants are taking over society, for instance, pointing out that in schools “our” children “feel like foreigners in their own home.”<sup>32</sup> Based on two overlapping binary codes: Italians vs. foreigners and/or asylum seekers; and autochthonous South Tyroleans vs. non-autochthonous (mainly foreigners), the narrative of the Lega clearly securitizes migration and links it with security issues. Indeed “immigration and security” is the title of one of its sections. The program points out how migration and migrants threaten society in several ways, for example highlighting the violence and crimes committed by asylum seekers and arguing that the presence of migrant pupils in schools “hinders the education of our children!” and their future.<sup>33</sup> In response to these threats, Lega proposes some drastic measures such as a curfew for reception centers of asylum seekers and limitations on their access to health services.

Besides migration-related issues, the program stands out for what is actually missing in its background. The topics of the relationship between the linguistic groups along with their coexistence as well as the autonomy system are almost never mentioned. The Lega’s vision does not give any relevance to these matters, thus it seems to assume that cultural diversity in terms of the presence in South Tyrol of Italian, German and Ladin speaking groups is a normal feature of South Tyrolean society and does not raise any problems and contrapositions among groups.

### *Italian or German right-wing parties*

As expected, the programs of SF and dF highlight the concept of independence, which is respectively the first and second topic of the programs. In this context, the SF program presents the South Tyrolean population as a unitary community that has no link whatsoever with Italy, as summarized in the slogans “We South Tyroleans are not Italians!”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, building on the dichotomy South Tyrol vs. Italy, both programs present the Italian state as a threat because belonging “to Italy has made us politically and economically dependent” and “as long as South Tyrol is part of Italy, developments that endanger the survival of the German and Ladin minorities can never be ruled out.”<sup>35</sup> Among the various ways in which Italy endangers South Tyrol, the dF program lists the risks that the autonomy will be eroded, that the mother-tongue education will be questioned, as well as citing the Italian State’s public debt, its bureaucracy, its tax burden and the ongoing absence of legal certainty that taken together endanger South Tyrolean economy.

This negative understanding of the Italian State does not extend to the Italian-speaking population in South Tyrol. Though using a dichotomy South Tyroleans/Tyrolean vs Italians, the program of the SF does not mention the Italian-speaking community. Thus, it is not clear how the party sees cultural diversity and the presence of different linguistic groups in the province. Instead, in the program of dF, all three linguistic groups would be part of the South Tyrolean people in an independent South Tyrol, overcoming thinking in terms of majority and

<sup>31</sup> Carlà, “Tensions,” 91.

<sup>32</sup> Lega, “Domenica Ottobre 21. Il Programma,” 3. Author translation.

<sup>33</sup> Lega, “Domenica,” 4. Author translation.

<sup>34</sup> Süd-Tiroler Freiheit, “Programm der Süd-Tiroler Freiheit für die Landtagswahl 2018,” (2018), 1. Author translation.

<sup>35</sup> Süd-Tiroler Freiheit, “Programm,” 1; Die Freiheitlichen, “Das freiheitliche Wahlprogramm zur Landtagswahl 2018,” (2018). Author translation.

minority. The party has, indeed, a positive understanding of the presence of different (German, Ladin, Italian) groups in the province, considering their presence an opportunity “to act as a bridge between the German and Italian cultural and economic areas, offering our homeland and its people prosperity, quality of life and great opportunities.”<sup>36</sup> However, this is the case only as long the groups and their culture remain distinct and are preserved, especially through the maintenance of a distinct education system, avoiding an “egalitarian uniformity porridge.”<sup>37</sup> Thereby dF, like the SF party, opposes the creation of mixed schools and sustains the need to preserve the German features of German schools, like measures to maintain a high percentage of German-speaking pupils. Behind these statements, lies the fear that mixed school classes will slowly bring about assimilation into the Italian-speaking group.

Together with the Italian state, both party programs highlight and securitize the topics of migration, assumed to be a threat to South Tyrolean society. Immigration is the third topic addressed in the SF program, under the title section “Immigration: We don't want over alienation!” whereas in the program of dF the first section is entitled “Migration needs control, so that South Tyrol remains (our) homeland.”<sup>38</sup> Among the threats that migration represents for South Tyrol, for example, SF links it to anticriminal measures, whereas dF points out things such as that immigration reduces the level of education in South Tyrolean schools and brings new old diseases. Furthermore, in the past, both parties connected the fear towards migration to its effects on the relations between South Tyrolean linguistic groups, stressing the need to prevent that “today’s migrants become tomorrow’s Italians,” shifting the ethnic balance; thought dF speeches usually reflect more common xenophobic arguments that highlight the social, economic and cultural problems caused by migration.<sup>39</sup> To deal with migration the parties propose measures such as the denial of residence for immigrants without proof of identity and limits to migrants’ access to social benefits, and stress that migrants should adapt to the South Tyrolean way of life and traditions.

However, in the SF’s program, the threat posed by migration is subsumed by the threat posed by the Italian state, which determines which and how many foreigners come to South Tyrol. Instead, according to dF, not all migrants are seen in negative terms. Building on a dichotomy good migrant vs bad migrant, the party program invokes a migration “compatible with the special ethnic structure of the territory, the cultural characteristics of South Tyrol, the needs of the South Tyrolean economy and the social structure.”<sup>40</sup>

On the other side of the linguistic spectrum but with a similar ideological stance, the analysis of the program of Alto Adige nel cuore/Fratelli d’Italia Uniti is limited because the coalition adopted only a short program in bullet points.<sup>41</sup> The coalition represents what is left of a strong tradition in South Tyrol of post-fascist nationalist political forces, which appealed to the Italian linguistic group and aimed at protecting the interests and rights of the Italian-speaking population against the South Tyrolean measures that protected the German-speaking group. Alto Adige nel cuore/Fratelli d’Italia Uniti inherited this role, though there is a de-emphasis of the conflictual aspects of the relationship between the Italian-speaking and German-speaking groups and there is no longer any questioning of the salient elements of South Tyrol Statute of autonomy.

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<sup>36</sup> Die Freiheitlichen, “Wahlprogramm.” Author translation.

<sup>37</sup> Die Freiheitlichen, “Wahlprogramm.” Author translation.

<sup>38</sup> Süd-Tiroler Freiheit, “Programm,” 2; Die Freiheitlichen, “Wahlprogramm.” Author translation.

<sup>39</sup> Carlà, “Tensions,” 82, 84.

<sup>40</sup> Die Freiheitlichen, “Wahlprogramm.” Author translation.

<sup>41</sup> The program is actually a commitment to maintain specific positions when engaging, after the election, with other political forces in discussions to form the new provincial government.

The political coalition presents itself as the defender of the role of the Italian-speaking group in South Tyrol. The assumption in the program is that the Italian-speaking group has a diminished status in South Tyrol. The coalition's narrative is, thus, to give back to the Italian-speaking group "dignity" and the right to be treated as equal inside the South Tyrolean political autonomy.<sup>42</sup> It should be stressed that such position does not see the other linguistic groups and the measures to protect them as a danger. Instead, highlighted in bold, problems derive from the German-speaking right-wing parties, whose initiatives are presented as "a detriment to the cohabitation" among the linguistic groups.<sup>43</sup> Thereby, the program is shaped around the distinction between moderates vs German-speaking right-wing extremists.

Missing from this narrative is the topic of migration, which is not dealt with at all in the program. From an analysis of past political discourses of the local leader of Alto Adige nel cuore, A. Urzì, it seems that the party has a positive approach to migration. Connecting today's migration to the fact that many people in South Tyrol come from outside the territory, Urzì, has argued that any person can belong to South Tyrol, contributing to the heritage of the society. However, it is necessary that migrants integrate, in the sense that they understand and incorporate the rules, culture and values of the society.<sup>44</sup> More recently the party leader has embraced securitizing discourses vis-à-vis undocumented migrants. In a recent interview, he links the problem of criminality and that of undocumented migration and the fact that criminals have taken over public spaces from citizens and that the police cannot expel an undocumented migrant.<sup>45</sup>

### *Other opposition parties*

Exhibiting some variation, other opposition parties present the most positive and non-securitizing discourses towards diversity related to both old and new minorities. The program of Team Köllensperger is available in Italian and German language and it should be noted that there are some discrepancies between the Italian and the German version. The program addresses in the second of its twelve sections the matter of cohabitation, highlighting (in the Italian version) the concepts of being "beyond differences" and working together.<sup>46</sup> The program assumes that bilingualism is an added value, but it is based on the idea that South Tyrolean institutions causes problems. In particular, separate schools are viewed negatively as dividing the society and taking away opportunities because "compulsory schooling to the sole option of the 'solid-colored' enclosure of the language group to which they belong will not make them (students) feel part of a community that is enriched by mutual differences, will not prepare them for the future and will not make them competitive."<sup>47</sup>

These assumptions are based in the rejection of codifying South Tyrolean societies in binary terms as composed by opposites. According to the program

"'cohabitation' is an abused and especially outdated concept. 'Coexist' remind us that we are different, that there is an 'us' and there is a 'them,' two parallel universes that should tolerate each other, coexisting on the territory as separated at home ... it is time to go beyond the fences to look forward together."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Alto Adige nel cuore/Fratelli d'Italia Uniti, "Patto prima del voto," October 19, 2018. Author translation.

<sup>43</sup> Alto Adige/Fratelli, "Patto." Author translation.

<sup>44</sup> Carlà, "Tensions," 87.

<sup>45</sup> "Intervista di Alessandro Urzì alla 'Tribuna Elettorale' andata in onda su TGR," October 19, 2018, accessed March 26, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/AltoAdigeNelCuore/videos/860629724326220/>.

<sup>46</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punti per un Alto Adige moderno. Il nostro programma per le elezioni provinciali," accessed March 26, 2019, <https://www.teamkoellensperger.it/it/il-nostro-programma/>. Author translation.

<sup>47</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punti." Author translation.

<sup>48</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punti." Author translation.

Thus, the party reflects the desire to go beyond the distinction between the linguistic groups, since daily problems, like pollution, affect everybody. In this light, the party's narrative is centered on preparing South Tyrol for the future with measures such as plurilingual education with mixed classes to foster real bilingualism.

Noticeable this specific approach is missing in the German version of the program, which presents a different message. The German version stresses the concept of "living together" instead of "beyond differences."<sup>49</sup> It assumes that there are elements of frictions in South Tyrolean societies, but new generations might have a different perspective, in this way building on a dichotomy older people vs. young people, who have a different starting point. The program's narrative in German highlights the need of sharing ways of life, in particular through cultural events, and of learning other languages, stressing the role of families (rather than schools) to improve the coexistence among the language groups. In this way, whereas the party appeals to go beyond an understanding of South Tyrolean society as composed by different linguistic groups, the program of the party with its two different linguistic versions treats actually the linguistic groups as different entities with different needs and perspectives.

Instead, the issue of migration is treated in common terms in the German and Italian versions of the program. The topic is addressed in the fifth section of the program, and the key concepts highlighted are "solidarity," "control," "responsibilities," "integration," and "workforce."<sup>50</sup> Four main features emerge. First there is a strong distinction between refugees and economic migrants, underscoring the assumption that these categories of migrants should be addressed differently. On the topic of refugees, the program stresses their right to seek asylum and points out that South Tyrol should assume its responsibilities. Second, the program rejects the use of an emergency tone and securitizing discourses vis-à-vis migration since the current numbers are manageable. However, migration is seen as a potential problem and requires control because the capacities of integration of hosting countries are limited. Third, the program addresses non-refugee migrants exclusively in economic terms, stressing the needs of South Tyrolean economy. Fourth, the program sees refugees and labor migrants as part of South Tyrol, which "welcome and consider migrants as equal candidates for work and housing opportunities and as member of our society."<sup>51</sup> At the same time, the Team Köllensperger's narrative assumes that the process of integration is based on the will of migrants to integrate and it consists of a 'qui pro quo' dynamic, where migrants should respect fundamental values in exchange of access to labor market and all public services.

As its most successful spin off, the short bullet point program of M5S highlights the concept of "plurilingual school" and assumes that South Tyrolean schools create divisions.<sup>52</sup> In its narrative, M5S's consider bilingualism in positive terms, since it "is an opportunity, not an instrument of division" and it believes that "the language should be used to eliminate cultural and linguistic gaps that are present in this territory," for example through mixed classes.<sup>53</sup> The diversity brought by the migrant population is not included in this view. Instead the matter of migration is mentioned only under the topic "more security" (the ninth and second to last point

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<sup>49</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punkte für ein modernes Südtirol. Unser Programm für die kommenden Landtagswahlen," accessed March 26, 2019, [https://www.teamkoellensperger.it/12\\_punkte\\_programm/](https://www.teamkoellensperger.it/12_punkte_programm/). Author translation.

<sup>50</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punti." Author translation.

<sup>51</sup> Team Köllensperger, "12 punti." Author translation.

<sup>52</sup> Movimento 5 stelle, "10 punti per l'Alto Adige" (n.d.). Author translation.

<sup>53</sup> Movimento, "10 punti." Author translation.

of the program).<sup>54</sup> In this way, though in a more moderate tone, the party embraces the link between migration and citizens' insecurities and the dichotomy citizens/migrants. However, since the final goal is to better integrate migrants, the program seems to imply that the problem is not the migrant population itself but its numerical strength.

More than any of the other parties, the programs of the Green party and the PD reflect an interethnic and inclusive vision that aims at overcoming divisions in South Tyrolean society vis-à-vis the presence of both old and new minorities, centered on the concept of plurilingualism and plurilingual society. In the Green program, plurilingualism, together with "respect" and "solidarity" is the slogan, and its importance is restated in various sentences such as "plurilingualism as a way of life setting", and the fact that the program is completely bilingual (German and Italian).<sup>55</sup> The PD program highlights the concepts of multiculturalism, inclusive and especially plurilingual society several times and in various ways (i.e. bold and capital letters). Rooted in this vision, both parties consider that identities, though important, are not fixed, but are instead dynamic, and assume a positive understanding of diversity, rejecting a view of society divided along linguistic lines. The Green party "recognize(s) the value of diversity and the right to be oneself," "consider(s) precious the plurality of language" and "see(s) in interaction among various culture a great opportunity."<sup>56</sup> Instead, in the PD program, there is the awareness that differences in history and traditions of South Tyrolean groups can cause tensions, but they are mainly view as an opportunity of enriching encounters and common growth. Through awareness, understanding and mutual respect it is possible to avoid conflicts and learn to appreciate differences.

This vision does not regard exclusively the South Tyrolean linguistic groups, but includes as well the migrant population and its diversity. As stated in the Green program:

"Plurilingualism and multiculturalism area an important asset of South Tyrol, enriched every day by persons coming from all over the world. This great variety represents an opportunity for change, enrichment and renewal."<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, as pointed out in previous party's discourses, migrants are an economic, social and cultural enrichment for South Tyrol and should be able to manifest their culture.<sup>58</sup> Along similar lines, the PD program rejects a dichotomy between locals vs. foreigners and provides a positive view of migrants, defined in terms of "new citizens" and considered "an integral part of South Tyrol's present and future" and the "strength of the new multicultural social texture."<sup>59</sup> Indeed, according to the PD the same *modus operandi* that works for South Tyrolean old diversity today favors migrants' integration.

In light of this understanding of diversity, both parties' narratives point out that there is something wrong in South Tyrol, linking the topic of migrant diversity with issues of autonomy and cohabitation among linguistic groups. The PD program presents the implicit message that

<sup>54</sup> Movimento, "10 punti." Author translation.

<sup>55</sup> Verdi-Grüne-Vërc, "Grün bewegt/Spinta verde. Wahlprogramm Landtagswahl 2018/Programma per le elezioni provinciali 2018," (n.d.), 3-4. Author translation.

<sup>56</sup> Verdi-Grüne-Vërc, "Grün bewegt," 6. Author translation.

<sup>57</sup> Verdi-Grüne-Vërc, "Grün bewegt," 47. Author translation.

<sup>58</sup> Carlà, "Tensions," 93.

<sup>59</sup> Partito Democratico, "Alto Adige, insieme con fiducia. Progetto politico" (n.d.) 2, 4. The PD program presents as well a contribution from its political ally, Radicali Italiani. In this contribution there is a link between undocumented migration and insecurity. However, this link is does not develop in a securitizing move towards undocumented migrants. Instead the contribution aims at tackling illegality by facilitating residence permits and fostering legal channel of immigration, and facilitating increase intercultural mediators in schools.

South Tyrolean society is not yet truly inclusive and open. The autonomy system, though seen in a positive light in the past, is no longer adequate and should be reformed and “made suitable for a process of growth capable of seize all the opportunities of a plural history without limiting its potential;” indeed, “the Statute of Autonomy is to be understood and applied as a dynamic tool to protect and promote all language groups as well as new citizens.”<sup>60</sup> Specifically, the PD focuses on measures to implement plurilingualism and trilingual education, consider a key element for cohabitation and transformation and the development of an open society. The Green program refers to increasing mental barriers; thereby it proposes a turnaround to open South Tyrol to the future. Building on the dichotomy ‘openness vs closure’, rather than dichotomies between communities of people, the party program argues that against “the risk of nationalism and racism” it is necessary “to develop a common territorial identity,” foster a “plurilingual society” and develop “a good cohabitation among all linguistic groups, beyond the traditional ones” (i.e. Italian, German and Ladin).<sup>61</sup> Thus, the party proposes measures such as the establishment of a common plurilingual school, and the right to vote in provincial elections for migrants.

## CONCLUSION

As shown in the above analysis, past securitizing moves towards the presence of old minorities have mostly disappeared from South Tyrolean political landscape. Though with some important differences, all South Tyrolean parties do not see old diversity as a threat, but rather in positive terms. If a threat is identified, it instead consists of the Italian state (dF, SF) extremist claims (Alto Adige nel cuore/Fratelli d’Italia Uniti) or the rigidity of South Tyrolean consociational mechanisms that hinder intergroup interactions (Green, Köllensperger, PD, M5S). However, some securitizing aspects persist. Indeed, not all parties refute an exclusionary understanding of diversity and ‘we vs. them’ dichotomy, seeing diversity and interaction among cultures as an enrichment. Some parties, instead, maintain a vision of diversity as implying entities that are and should remain distinct and/or in potential competition (SVP, dF, SF, Alto Adige nel cuore/Fratelli d’Italia Uniti).

At the same time, with few exceptions (Green and PD), we can trace the development of processes of securitization of diversity related to recent migratory flows. Interestingly, in addition to the common cultural and social threats that are usually associated to migration in other contexts, in South Tyrol at times this process of securitization (or its absence) intersect with discourses concerning the coexistence of old minorities.

These speeches find some confirmation in South Tyrolean public attitudes as registered in public opinion surveys, used as a proxy to measure public acceptance of securitizing acts. Indeed, according to surveys, an increasing majority of the South Tyrolean population (77.9% in 2014) considers the presence of more linguistic groups in South Tyrol as an enrichment or as an enrichment under some conditions. 54.2% of the German-speaking population and 44.6% of the Italian-speaking population considered it an enrichment. Furthermore, without major distinctions among the linguistic groups, 72.6% of the population thinks that knowing one or more language is a personal enrichment and 45.7% see it as an advantage. Only a minority has negative attitudes, considering it a necessity (18.5%), useless (1.2%), and a threat to cultural identity (0.6%).<sup>62</sup> Concerning migration, according to a 2007 survey, for almost half of the

<sup>60</sup> Partito Democratico, “Alto Adige,” 2. Author translation.

<sup>61</sup> Verdi-Grüne-Vöer, “Grün bewegt,” 41. Author translation.

<sup>62</sup> ASTAT, *Südtiroler Sprachbarometer/Barometro linguistico dell’Alto Adige 2004*, (Bolzano: Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano-Alto Adige, 2006), 190, 193; ASTAT, *Südtiroler Sprachbarometer/Barometro linguistico dell’Alto Adige 2014*, (Bolzano: Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano-Alto Adige, 2015), 181.

South Tyrolean population, migration from non-EU countries is among the three main problems of the country. Furthermore in 2016, 48.9% of South Tyrolean think that increasing migration leads to the spread of terrorism and crime and 29.9% disagree with the statement that migrants' presence is positive because it allows to confront other cultures (35.5% of the population agrees and 34.6% neither agree or disagree).<sup>63</sup>

However, the above analysis shows also the great variety of political discourses developed in South Tyrol. In particular, regarding diversity related to migration, there are alternative non-securitizing discourses. Though it is not possible to foresee whether such discourse will prevail in the future, it is a good reminder that securitization processes are not an unavoidable development but the result of political choices as well as of political, social and cultural contexts. In this regard, it remains to examine how the specific securitizing speeches that characterized South Tyrol today are interrelated with specific features of South Tyrol, in particular the South Tyrolean consociational institutional context that fosters separation among the linguistic groups and ingroup thinking<sup>64</sup> and the provincial policies and legal practices towards migration. In order to explore these dynamics, further research is necessary, combining Copenhagen school understanding with other approaches to securitization processes, such as those that look at social and legal practices or institutions.

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<sup>63</sup> ASTAT, *Indagine sulla famiglia 2016* (Bolzano: Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano, 2018), 86: ASTAT, "Problemi sociali percepiti dalla popolazione altoatesina," *astatinfo* 32 (2008), 1.

<sup>64</sup> Verena Wisthaler, "South Tyrol: the importance of boundaries for immigrant integration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42:8, (2016).

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