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Regionalist parties in South Tyrol and
their responses to European Integration

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the party positions that South Tyrolean regionalist parties hold towards European integration and the European Union from 1989 onwards. Focusing on the German speaking minority in Italy allows for the analysis of several regionalist parties that operate under the same institutional and historical conditions. The positions of the following South Tyrolean parties are scrutinized: the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), the *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc* (Greens), *die Freiheitlichen*, the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS) and the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF). These parties compete on a territorial (center-periphery) and a cultural (identity-based) conflict dimension. While parties with a clearer profile on the former conflict axis view European integration predominantly as a driver or an obstacle for territorial autonomy or secession, parties that put more emphasis on cultural issues tend to shape their perceptions of the EU accordingly. Whereas party positions on the cultural conflict dimension closely correlate with a party's evaluation of the European integration process, this relationship does not hold for the territorial conflict dimension. Therefore, the SVP and the Greens support European integration, while *die Freiheitlichen* and the UfS are Eurosceptic. The S-TF holds a highly ambiguous stance towards the EU.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit untersucht die Parteipositionen, die die regionalistischen Parteien Südtirols gegenüber der Europäischen Integration und der Europäischen Union seit 1989 einnehmen. Der Fokus auf die deutschsprachige Minderheit in Italien ermöglicht die Analyse verschiedener regionalistischer Parteien unter denselben institutionellen und historischen Kontextbedingungen. Die Positionen folgender Südtiroler Parteien werden beleuchtet: die *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc*, *die Freiheitlichen*, die *Union für Südtirol* (UfS) und die *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF). Diese Parteien konkurrieren auf einer territorialen (Zentrum-Peripherie) und auf einer kulturellen (identitätsbezogenen) Konfliktachse. Parteien mit einer klaren Position auf der territorialen Achse sehen die Europäische Integration hauptsächlich als Triebfeder oder Hindernis für ihre Forderungen nach Autonomie oder Sezession, wohingegen Parteien mit einer stärkeren identitätspolitischen Ausrichtung ihre Bewertung der EU an diesen Maßstäben orientieren. Während Parteipositionen auf der kulturellen Konfliktachse eng mit der europapolitischen Ausrichtung einer Partei korrelieren, kann ein solcher Zusammenhang zwischen der territorialen Konfliktachse und der Bewertung der Europäischen Integration nicht festgestellt werden. Daraus ergibt sich, dass die SVP und die Grünen die Europäische Integration befürworten, während die Freiheitlichen und die UfS euroskeptisch sind. Die S-TF nimmt keine eindeutige Position gegenüber der EU ein.

Riassunto

Questa tesi investiga le posizioni che i partiti regionalisti altoatesini/sudtirolesi mantengono verso l'integrazione europea e l'Unione Europea dal 1989 in poi. Concentrandosi sulla minoranza di lingua tedesca presente in Italia permette analizzare i vari partiti regionalisti che operano nelle stesse condizioni istituzionali e storiche. Nel testo sono esaminate le posizioni dei seguenti partiti altoatesini/sudtirolesi: il *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc*, *die Freiheitlichen*, l'*Union für Südtirol* (UfS) e la *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF). Questi partiti competono tanto su una dimensione territoriale (centro-periferia) come culturale (basata sull'identità). Mentre i partiti con un profilo più centrato sulla dimensione territoriale vedono l'integrazione europea prevalentemente come un facilitatore o un ostacolo per l'autonomia territoriale o la secessione, i partiti che enfatizzano maggiormente sulle questioni culturali tendono a modellare la loro valutazione dell'UE in accordo con tali norme. Le posizioni dei partiti sulla dimensione culturale presentano una stretta correlazione con l'orientamento della politica europea di un partito, però, una tale connessione non può essere trovata tra la dimensione territoriale e la valutazione del processo dell'integrazione europea. Pertanto, la SVP e Verdi sostengono l'integrazione europea, mentre *die Freiheitlichen* e l'UfS sono euroscettici. La S-TF mantiene una posizione molto ambigua verso l'UE.

Reintegrating Tyrol?

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Patrick Utz

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1 Introduction

*Unser Weg ist es, die Tiroler Landeseinheit auf europäischem Weg
wiederherzustellen. Schengen war ein Meilenstein.*

Wir wollen keine neuen Grenzen, das ist rückwärtsgewandt.

Arno Kompatscher, Governor of South Tyrol
(Die Presse 27/01/2016)

In April 2016, during the European migration crisis, Austria's government decided to re-establish border controls with Italy. After almost 20 years of free movement of people within the EU, these measures provoked predominantly adverse international reactions. Italy's prime minister, Matteo Renzi, accused the step of being "blatantly against the European rules, as well as against history, against logic and against the future" (www.repubblica.it 2016). A spokeswoman of the European Commission stated that it was necessary "to look at [Austria's plans] very seriously" (www.telegraph.co.uk 2016).

Criticism, however, was not limited to interventions from national or supranational agencies. Fierce opposition to Austria's intentions was also voiced by the political class of Italy's northernmost province, on the border to Austria. Arno Kompatscher, the governor of the miniscule alpine territory of South Tyrol, denounced the implementation of new borders as being "retrogressive". He declared to be in favor of "re-establishing Tyrol's unity through a European way" ("*Tiroler Landeseinheit*", see above).

Mr. Kompatscher's attitude comes to little surprise. Since South Tyrol was annexed by Italy in the aftermath of World War I, the region's predominantly German-speaking population has been eager to maintain close ties with its kin-state, Austria. Before 1946, when a bilateral agreement between Austria and Italy laid the foundation for South Tyrol's autonomy, both, the Austrian government and the political elites of South Tyrol, considered irredentism and secession feasible policy options (Wolff 2004a, 4f). Yet, within post-war Western Europe, shifting borders quickly ceased to

be an appealing alternative. In 1972, Italy's accommodationist policies culminated in the creation of a far-reaching autonomy statute for the province and many of the tensions that had led to political violence in the early 1960s were appeased. Under these new circumstances, South Tyrol's hegemonic party, the SVP (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, South Tyrolean People's Party) increasingly appreciated novel channels of circumventing Italian state centralism. As early as 1972, Mr. Kompatscher's predecessors were committed to "support all efforts to lead the European Community (EC) from economic to political integration"¹ (Statute of the SVP 1972, 39, cited in Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157). Like other parties that aim to represent geographically concentrated national minorities, the SVP has deemed a "Europe of the Regions" to be a promising conception to overcome an allegedly unjust nation state system (see Hepburn 2008). Furthermore, European integration has been seen as a harbinger of renewed and tighter links with co-nationals on the other side of the Austro-Italian border. The governor's reference to the European element of the "*Tiroler Landeseinheit*" can clearly be interpreted in this light.

As the initially mentioned controversy about border controls reveals, however, picturesque South Tyrol is not immune to the negative effects and pitfalls of the European integration process. The European Union's shortcomings and its seemingly unsurmountable challenges have led to opposition to the European project in many parts of the continent. According to Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, 2), "[t]he role of political parties is a crucial component in this process of representing Euroscepticism". As Hooghe and Marks (2009) observe, dissent about European integration has particularly emerged from the late 1980s onwards.

Roughly at the same time, the decade-long hegemony of the SVP in South Tyrol has slowly but steadily waned. Until 2008, the party's strategy to attract all German and Ladin speaking voters permanently secured the SVP the absolute majority of votes and seats at the provincial level. In the 2013 elections, however, the success of populist right and secessionist parties highlighted the continuous erosion of the SVP's hegemony, leaving it without an absolute majority in the provincial parliament (*Landtag*) for the first time since World War II (Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2014). The main questions that arise from this simultaneous process of party system change and increasing Euroscepticism are:

Which role does European integration play in South Tyrol's party competition since the late 1980s? Which policy stances do South Tyrolean regionalist parties hold with regards to the European Union? How do they frame European integration? And how do their arguments relate to other patterns of party competition?

These research questions might seem straightforward. Yet they provoke a relatively large set of sub-questions that need to be addressed before advancing to the actual core of this thesis. The next section will briefly summarize the theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges that I will try to overcome in the subsequent chapters.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

In the context of this work, *European integration* is understood as the process that has “produced a set of supranational executive, legislative and judicial institutions” (Hix and Høyland 2011, 1) within the realm of the European Union (EU) and its preceding organizations. Following Ladrech's (2010) conception of *Europeanization*, the impacts of and the reactions to European integration by domestic political actors are considered to be mediated by intervening factors of the domestic political system.

Starting from this assumption, Chapter 2 provides an overview of South Tyrol's political system. After outlining the most decisive historical and institutional patterns of the South Tyrolean polity, the chapter scrutinizes the province's party system. As this thesis aims to analyze party positions from the late 1980s until very recently, particular attention will be paid to this period. Chapter 2 yields two key findings. Firstly, party competition in South Tyrol is divided into two segments; one is dominated by Italian statewide parties, the other one by South Tyrolean regionalists. Secondly, from the 1990s onwards, South Tyrol's party system has become more fragmented and more polarized.

The aim of Chapter 3 is twofold. On the one hand, it embeds the South Tyrolean party system in a theoretical framework of party competition. On the other hand, it draws on these theoretical approaches to derive a number of propositions regarding party positions on European integration. These two tasks are pursued in the following manner. In a first step, it is argued that regionalist parties in South Tyrol can be investigated in isolation from other parties due to the segmentation of the party

system in the province. In a second step, regionalist parties are defined by their “shared commitment to *sub-state territorial empowerment*” (Hepburn 2009, 482; emphasis in original). Following this definition, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), *die Freiheitlichen* (Liberals), the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS), the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF) and the *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc* (Greens) are classified as regionalist parties in South Tyrol. Based on secondary literature and party documents, it is argued that these parties compete on a territorial and a cultural conflict dimension. In a third step, party positions on these two conflict dimensions are linked to hypothetical party stances *vis-à-vis* the European Union. Based on the existing literature on party politics and European integration, a number of assumptions are outlined with regards to party positions of South Tyrol’s regionalists.

The empirical investigation in this thesis equally pursues two goals. Firstly, it tries to evaluate how parties politicize the European integration process. In other words, it seeks to assess how parties justify their positions towards the EU and what *frames* they apply in their respective discourses. Secondly, this work aims at categorizing party positions on European integration by scrutinizing the development of each party’s stances between 1989 and 2015.

Chapter 4 discusses the data on the basis of which the corresponding analyses are carried out. It is argued that for various reasons the transcripts of parliamentary debates are the most appropriate sources for investigating party positions in South Tyrol over this relatively extended period of time. Furthermore, this chapter outlines how the primary sources have been assessed and maintains that the analysis of frames is best suited for linking the empirical results to the theoretical assumptions stated in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5 starts out with a quantitative overview of South Tyrolean regionalist parties’ positions towards the EU. Unsurprisingly, regionalist parties reveal a high tendency of linking European integration to issues of sub-state territorial empowerment. Yet, the conclusions that parties draw from the relationship between their claims for territorial self-government and the European Union are remarkably divergent. While some South Tyrolean regionalist parties are ardent supporters of the European Union, others distance themselves from the process of European integration to various degrees. The remainder of Chapter 5 analyzes each party’s discourse in more detail and scrutinizes changes of party positions over time. This allows for a precise

categorization of party stances and thus facilitates the cross-party comparison that concludes this chapter.

Chapter 6 summarizes the results of this piece of research and outlines potential avenues for further research in the field of regionalist parties in the European Union.

By investigating the positions of South Tyrolean regionalist parties *vis-à-vis* the European integration process, this thesis contributes to three existing fields of research. Firstly, it sheds light on the relatively under-researched area of party competition in South Tyrol. Whereas party politics in more populous minority regions, such as Scotland, Quebec or Catalonia, have recently attracted a considerable share of scholarly attention, South Tyrol has remained largely unnoticed by party scholars. This comprehensive study of regionalist parties in the province is an attempt to balance this academic shortcoming. Secondly, this thesis adds to the extensive literature on party positions towards the EU. By combining a methodological approach designed for media analysis (i.e. frames analysis) to data directly emanating from political actors, however, this study applies a novel method to the qualitative investigation of party positions on the EU. Thirdly, this text contributes to the growing research on regionalism and regionalist parties in Europe. The relationship between different goals concerning territorial self-government and European integration can best be assessed by focusing on a territory where more than one regionalist party is present, resembling Przeworski and Teune's (1970) Most Similar System Design. The case of South Tyrol (and its links to Austria) is particularly revealing in this context. After all, this piece of research is the first one to investigate the relationship between irredentist movements and European integration in Western Europe.

2 Party competition in a minority-dominated border region:

An introduction to the historical, institutional and political context of South Tyrol

2.1 Historical patterns: Shifts of borders and calls for autonomy

2.1.1 The ravages of nation-building and nationalism: South Tyrol before 1945

For over 500 years, between 1363 and 1918, the historical region of Tyrol was under the reign of the Habsburg dynasty. Given its geographical position around the Brenner Pass, the region had always been a meeting point for Germanic and Romance peoples. However, during most of the period under the Habsburgs, concepts such as ethnicity or nationality were politically irrelevant. At the wake of modernity, conservative Catholicism was the predominant worldview amongst the greatest part of the Tyrolean population (Köfler 2009). When political parties emerged in the second half of the 19th century, clerical traditionalism and Christian democracy remained the dominant forces, while German nationalism and Italian irredentism enjoyed only modest support (Steurer 1993, 184; Kramer 1965). Due to the scarce industrialization of the country, labor movements, socialism and social democracy only played a minor role in pre-1914 Tyrol.

Radical political changes in Tyrol were brought about by the impact of international politics. In 1915, Italy entered World War I due to prospective territorial gains in the North and East. As a result of the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain, Austria had to cede South Tyrol, the Trentino and the Val Canale to Italy in 1919. This northward shift of the border left territorially concentrated German and Ladin (a Rhaeto-Romance language) speaking minorities within the new frontiers of the Kingdom of Italy (see Table 1). The remaining part of the former County of Tyrol was transformed into the *Bundesland Tirol* and remained a part of the Republic of Austria (see Figure 1).

During the short-lived period of liberal democracy in interwar Italy, several political actors brought forward proposals concerning cultural and linguistic autonomy for the Austrian minority south of the Brenner Pass. Yet, after the fascist takeover of Bolzano in 1922, extensive assimilationist policies were carried out by Benito Mussolini's regime. These included the Italianization of toponyms and anthroponyms, the dismissal of German speaking staff in public administration and the suppression of

the German language in education and the media. In addition, the fascist regime fostered the industrialization of the two biggest cities of the province, Bolzano and Meran, in order to attract Italian workers – a measure aiming at outnumbering the German-speakers in the area (Lantscher 2005).

Table 1: Size of language groups in South Tyrol in absolute and relative numbers 1900-2011 (percentage in brackets)

Source: Landesinstitut für Statistik - ASTAT (2013)

Language group Year	German	Italian	Ladin	Other	Total
1900	197.822 (88,8)	8.916 (4,0)	8.907 (4,0)	7.149 (3,29)	222.794
1910	223.913 (89,0)	7.339 (2,9)	9.429 (3,8)	10.770 (4,3)	251.451
1921	193.271 (75,9)	27.048 (10,6)	9.910 (3,9)	24.506 (9,6)	254.735
1961	232.717 (62,2)	128.271 (34,3)	12.594 (3,4)	281 (0,1)	373.863
1971	260.351 (62,9)	137.759 (33,3)	15.456 (3,7)	475 (0,1)	414.041
1981	279.544 (64,9)	123.695 (28,7)	17.736 (4,1)	9.593 (2,2)	430.568
1991	287.503 (65,3)	116.914 (26,5)	18.434 (4,2)	17.657 (4,0)	440.508
2001	296.461 (64,0)	113.494 (24,5)	18.736 (4,0)	34.308 (7,4)	462.999
2011	314.604 (62,3)	118.120 (23,4)	20.548 (4,1)	51.795 (10,3)	505.067

Figure 1: The current polities of the Bundesland Tirol (red); the Province of Bolzano/Bozen-South Tyrol (orange) and the Province of Trento (blue)²

Source: de.wikipedia.org/wiki (2006)



In light of these hardships, a considerable share of South Tyroleans hoped that the expansionist policies of Nazi Germany would eventually integrate their homeland into the *Third Reich*. Hitler, however, preferred tight relations with Mussolini's Italy over voicing territorial claims concerning South Tyrol. A projected program for resettling the German-speaking minority to the *Reich*, known as the so-called *Option*, never materialized due to the surrender of fascism in 1943. When Nazi-German troops occupied South Tyrol in the same year, German was no longer a stigmatized minority language in the so-called *Operational Zone of the Alpine Foothills*. The price to pay, however, was the subjection under the Nazi reign of terror (Steurer 1993).

2.1.2 The struggle for autonomy: international and domestic perspectives

After World War II, the Austrian government aimed at reintegrating South Tyrol into its state territory. In light of the looming Cold War, however, Austria's claims were subordinate to the superpowers' broader geopolitical strategies (Pallaver 1993). The impossibility of a border shift or a referendum on South Tyrol's future resulted in a bilateral agreement between the Italian and the Austrian foreign ministers in 1946. The so-called *Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement* obliged Italy to "safeguard the ethnic character and the cultural and economic development of the German-speaking element" (cited in Wolff 2004b; see also www.landtag-bz.org 2016). This appendix to the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty lays down the fundament for the further implementation of South Tyrol's autonomy. However, it is not entirely undisputed whether the agreement constitutes a guarantee for the current autonomy provisions under international law (Hilpold 2005). As will be demonstrated later on, this question became politically relevant when the Austro-Italian relations were substantially modified by Austria's accession to the EU in 1995.

Notwithstanding the 1946 pact, Italy's commitment to minority protection in the subsequent decades was unsatisfactory. In 1948, territorial autonomy was only granted to the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol³. This region comprises the two provinces of Trento and Bolzano, i.e. a territory predominantly inhabited by Italian speakers (71.5%) which made it a spurious tool for minority protection (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 36). In the public sector, the germanophone population continued to be massively underrepresented and Italian workers were still

actively encouraged to settle in the area (delle Donne 1993). It was only after a series of violent attacks and mass rallies in the late 1950s and early 1960s and two resolutions by the UN General Assembly in 1960 and 1961, that negotiations between Austria, Italy and the South Tyrolean minority were relaunched. These diplomatic interventions resulted in the so-called “*Package*”, a document comprising 137 legislative measures aiming at establishing substantive equality between Italian, German and Ladin speakers and transferring territorial autonomy rights to the provincial level. In 1992, Italy, South Tyrol and Austria declared the final implementation of the *Package* before the United Nations (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 38).

2.2 Institutional patterns: territorial autonomy, group rights and consociational democracy

The core of the *Package*-solution was the new Statute of Autonomy for Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol. It came into force on January 20th 1972 and provided for the shift of most of the far-reaching legislative and administrative competences from the Region to the two Provinces. This gave the predominantly germanophone Province of Bolzano considerable leeway to manage its own political and cultural affairs.

Moreover, the territorial component of the autonomy was complemented by the introduction of power sharing tools at the regional, provincial and local level. The two major language groups, i.e. Germans and Italians, are thereby required to form coalitions at various levels of government, notwithstanding the power relations yielded by elections. This consociational mode of governance has a number of further implications and characteristics (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 46ff):

The compulsory cooperation between the language groups presupposes a complex system of ascertaining the relative size of each group with regards to the respective body of government. Based on the results of the decennial census and the so-called *language group declaration* (*Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung*), a number of individual and collective rights are granted to the members and the aggregates of each faction respectively. As Alber and Zwilling (2014, 46) summarize:

[C]onsociationalism in South Tyrol translates into four main elements: the participation of all language groups in the joint exercise of governmental power, a

system of veto rights to defend each group's vital interests, the principle of cultural autonomy for groups and ethnic quota system based on a linguistic declaration (or affiliation).

The first two elements lead to the previously mentioned obligation to form coalitions and corresponding mechanisms to eventually block decisions taken by a simple majority (Wolff 2004b, 64ff).

The cultural autonomy for the language groups is *inter alia* reflected by the separation of the education systems. Instruction is essentially monolingual, with the other language being compulsorily taught as a foreign language. Multilingual schools only exist in the territories where the Ladin speaking minority is concentrated. Similar patterns of separation can be observed in the media sector (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 51ff).

The ethnic quota system (*ethnischer Proporz*) is a measure that originally aimed at counterbalancing the italophone domination in the public sector – a heritage of the fascist administration. As part of the census that takes place every ten years, each citizen has to declare to which of the three autochthonous language groups (German, Italian or Ladin) he or she belongs. As a first step, this procedure serves to evaluate the share of each language group within the Province (see Table 1). Posts in the public sector are then awarded to the members of each language group in accordance to their relative weight in the overall population. As a second step, the individual *language group declaration* is revealed only when a citizen applies for a job that is regulated by the quota-regime in order to assure his or her eligibility. The same rules apply for the distribution of certain publicly financed commodities (e.g. housing), public sector jobs at the local level and in private firms operating on behalf of the public administration (railways, mail service etc.). Moreover, all civil servants are required to be (at least) bilingual (i.e. speak Italian and German) (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 47ff).

These provisions for minority protection are embedded within a parliamentary system of government. The Provincial Parliament (*Landtag*) consists of 35 deputies. Elections take place every five years, applying a proportional representation system. The Provincial Parliament elects the Provincial Government (*Landesregierung*), as well as the Governor (*Landeshauptmann*). The latter heads the Government and

represents South Tyrol in “external” affairs (e.g. in bilateral negotiations with the central government in Rome) (Avolio 2005).

The institutional framework is complemented by the work of two joint commissions. The so-called *Commission of the Twelve* and the *Commission of the Six* were originally set up to assure the implementation of the Statute of Autonomy. However, as their legislative acts (*Durchführungsbestimmungen*) proved to be decisive for the functioning of the autonomy, the two bodies continue to develop the legal details of the 1972 Statute of Autonomy (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 41ff).

The ongoing work of the joint commissions, as well as certain societal requirements make the South Tyrolean autonomy a permanent work in progress. Various constitutional reforms at the level of the Italian state and subsequent judicial review by the Constitutional Court further contribute to the mutability of South Tyrol’s political system (see Palermo and Wilson 2014). The rapidly developing environment of the European Union is yet another key driver behind the changes of the regional institutional structure. Assuming that these transformations have a vital impact on political parties (see Harmel and Janda 1994; Lefkofridi 2008), I will briefly summarize the impact of European integration on South Tyrol’s autonomy in the next section of this chapter.

2.2.1 South Tyrol’s autonomy & European integration from a legal perspective

In 1993 the European Council defined certain standards to be met by its (future) member states. Among these so-called *Copenhagen Criteria*, the notion of “human rights and respect for and protection of minorities” (European Council 1993) constituted an important step in the evolution of what had formerly been a mere economic union. Critics, however, have been quick to state that “the EU’s conditionality is mostly talk, not sincere” (Saideman and Ayres 2008, 32) and have accused the Union of applying double standards with regards to minority protection; i.e. demanding significant provisions for minority protection from the accession states while ignoring shortcomings in the “old” member states (see Grigoriadis 2008).

Consequently, these disputed innovations at the European level have had little influence on South Tyrol’s autonomy. Rather, it was the universalistic nature of the

acquis communautaire that has put some of the crucial elements of Bolzano's minority-friendly institutions under pressure. Two prominent decisions by the European Court of Justice (ECJ; rulings concerning *Bickel/Franz* and *Angonese*) are probably the most illustrative examples of the conflicts that arise from the hypothetical contradictions between the *acquis* and the Statute of Autonomy. Yet, it should be noted that these conflictual legal issues do not necessarily translate into partisan contestation. Given their potential for politicization, however, I will give some examples of the potentially underlying causes of friction.

Firstly, the ethnic quota system has been created to balance the share of the native language groups with regards to public employment and services. Thus, it has been combined with certain residence requirements, impeding newcomers to take advantage of these provisions. Some legal scholars have argued that these rules contradict the free movement of workers and services (Toggenburg 2005, 475ff). Yet, given the EU's commitment to establish *substantive equality* amongst its citizens, e.g. in the context of gender equality, the ethnic quota system can also be regarded as *affirmative action*, which allows discrimination under clearly defined conditions (see Schiek, Waddington and Bell 2007). In light of these discrepancies, it becomes clear that the details of the ethnic quota system, as well as their particular effects require a careful balancing between the principles of free movement and minority protection. As will be demonstrated below, political parties do not agree on what this balance should look like.

Secondly, the language group declaration has been accused of contradicting the EU's standards of data protection. Being a fundamental element of the functioning of the *Proporz*-system, the decennial census collects individual data from every citizen in South Tyrol. However, only about 10% of the population enjoys the benefits of the quota system (e.g. work in the public sector, dwell in public housing). Thus, the proportionality of the massive endeavor of data collection seems questionable and has led to some debates within academic circles and beyond (Toggenburg 2005, 484ff).

The rulings of the ECJ have, however, demonstrated that most of South Tyrol's autonomy provisions can be reconciled with EU law, even if the former require some adaptation. The case of *Bickel* and *Franz* is a case in point: The right to use the minority language before South Tyrolean courts was originally aimed at granting fair

trials for German speaking natives. Following the ruling of the ECJ, however, the Austrian citizen Mr. Bickel and the German citizen Mr. Franz were conceded the right to have a trial in German language, too. Thus, a measure initially created for the protection of the local minority has been extended to a right applying to all EU citizens (Toggenburg 2005, 462ff).

Notwithstanding the restrictions stemming from the European level, the adaptability of the South Tyrolean autonomy has also led to a proactive use of EU-induced opportunities. One prominent example here is the institutionalization of South Tyrol's cooperation with its neighbors in the Austrian *Bundesland Tirol* and the Trentino. Based on a 2006 EU regulation, these polities now form the *European Region Tyrol – South Tyrol – Trentino* which constitutes a *European grouping of territorial cooperation* under EU law (Obwexer and Happacher 2010; Engl and Zwilling 2013).

Moreover, it has been acknowledged that the EU has created new channels for regional representation at the supranational level, e.g. via direct lobbying or through the Committee of the Regions (Ladrech 2010, Chapter 4; Keating, Hooghe and Tatham 2015). Yet, the *de facto* benefits of these innovations are frequently questioned and debated both in academia and by political actors. As Keating and his colleagues (2015, 448) sum up:

European integration is ambivalent for regions. It provides the opportunity to open up a 'second front' for regions to challenge the national state; yet it may also threaten deeply held regional values and fundamental territorial interests when it constrains local choice.

For the time being, the main political actor that has articulated South Tyrol's interests within this complex system of multilevel governance has been the SVP (*Südtiroler Volkspartei*, South Tyrolean People's Party). Throughout the post-war era, this party has served as the exclusive representative of the South Tyrolean minority in negotiations either with the central government in Rome, its Austrian intercessors or the European institutions. The SVP's privileged position was underpinned by its electoral success which provided the party with an absolute majority between 1948 and 2008 and allowed it to substantially shape South Tyrol's institutions and public policies. As stated in the introduction, however, the SVP's dominant position is gradually eroding.

The remainder of this chapter provides an overview of the South Tyrolean party system and will emphasize the relatively recent developments of the post-*Package* era, e.g. after 1992. In the subsequent chapter, these changes will be embedded in the theoretical literature on regionalist parties and their perceptions of the European integration process.

2.3 Party political patterns: The development of South Tyrol's party system

Unlike Lipset and Rokkan's (1967, 46) finding, according to which the socioeconomic or class cleavage has dominated "at least half" of the party systems in Western Europe, this dimension of partisan contestation has hardly ever played a significant role in South Tyrol. Applying these authors' terminology, it was rather the divide between the (socio-political) center and the (culturally alienated) periphery that has accounted for the largest share of political mobilization in the region. In one of his later writings, Stein Rokkan and his collaborator (Rokkan and Urwin 1982, 4) disentangle the notion of territorial tensions within states by analytically separating

[c]ultural distances, whether linguistic, religious or, in a diffuse sense, 'ethnic' between core areas and 'less privileged' peripheries; and economic conflicts between regional centres competing for the control of trade and productive resources.

In the case of South Tyrol, the cultural component of this conflict clearly has the strongest impact on structuring the party competition in the province. The differences between the German (and Ladin) speaking minority on the one hand, and the Italian population in the area on the other, have yielded a pronounced ethnic cleavage that overshadows all other political divisions (Pallaver 2011a, 273).

In terms of voting behavior and party organizations, this means that German and Ladin speakers (almost exclusively) vote for parties that claim to represent their interests, whereas the same is true for Italian speakers and (mostly) statewide parties. Thus, Pallaver (ibid.) identifies two "ethnically delimited political sub-arenas" that lead to the segmentation of party competition. Contrary to other minority regions, dual voting, i.e. voting for minority parties in one election, and for statewide parties in another, is only observable to a very limited extend (see Pallarés and Keating 2003). The impact of interethnic voting behavior was negligible until very recently (Pallaver 2011a, 274).

2.3.1 The zenith of the SVP's electoral predominance: 1948-1980

Table 2 provides an overview of the election results at the provincial level from the first regional election in 1948 to the most recent election in 2013. This data reveals that the SVP was the only party that represented the German and Ladin speaking communities between 1948 and 1964.

The South Tyrolean People's Party emerged as the successor of the *Deutscher Verband* in 1945 and claimed to be the exclusive representative of the German and Ladin speakers in the province. The monopoly of representation among these language groups translated into quasi unanimous support at the ballots, securing the SVP almost two thirds of the votes. According to Holzer and Schwegler (1998), the SVP's predominant position stems from the fact that the party successfully equaled ethnic belonging and loyalty to the party. Until the 1990s, the impact of this discourse was also mirrored by the extraordinarily high numbers of party membership that summed up to 80.000 in 1993, making almost every second voter an official SVP associate.

Table 2: Results of Provincial Elections in South Tyrol 1948-2013
(percentage of votes, number of MPs in brackets)
Source: Pallaver (2009, 341); www.landtag-bz.org (2013)

Year	'48	'52	'56	'60	'64	'68	'73	'78	'83	'88	'93	'98	'03	'08	'13
Number of Mandates	20	22	22	22	25	25	34	34	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
SVP	67,6 (13)	64,8 (15)	64,4 (15)	63,9 (15)	61,3 (16)	60,7 (16)	56,4 (20)	61,3 (21)	59,4 (22)	60,4 (22)	52,0 (19)	56,6 (21)	55,6 (21)	48,1 (18)	45,7 (17)
DCⁱ	10,8 (2)	13,7 (3)	14,4 (3)	14,6 (3)	13,5 (3)	14,4 (4)	14,1 (5)	10,8 (4)	9,6 (3)	9,1 (3)	4,4 (2)	2,7 (1)	3,7 (1)		
PSI	5,0 (1)	5,8 (1)	5,6 (1)	5,9 (1)	5,4 (1)	7,2 (2)	5,6 (2)	3,4 (1)	3,9 (1)	4,0 (1)					
PCI/PDⁱⁱ	4,0 (1)	3,1 (1)	2,2 (1)	3,1 (1)	3,7 (1)	6,0 (1)	5,7 (2)	7,0 (3)	5,6 (2)	3,0 (1)	2,9 (1)	3,5 (1)	3,8 (1)	6,0 (2)	6,7 (2)
PSDIⁱⁱⁱ		3,5 (1)	4,0 (1)	3,6 (1)	3,8 (1)		3,4 (1)	2,3 (1)							
PSLI	3,1 (1)														
Unione Indipendenti	3,6 (1)														
PLI					2,5 (1)	2,6 (1)									
MSI/AN/AA nel Cuore^{iv}	2,9 (1)	4,8 (1)	6,0 (1)	7,1 (1)	6,2 (1)	4,9 (1)	4,0 (1)	2,9 (1)	5,9 (2)	10,3 (4)	11,6 (4)	9,7 (3)	8,4 (3)		2,1 (1)

ⁱ The DC changed its name to *Partito Popolare Alto Adige* for the 1993 elections, to *Popolari-Alto Adige Domani* in 1998 and to *Unione Autonomista* in 2003. The latter's only MP founded *Il Centro* in 2007, whereas the DC's official successor (*Margherita*) merged into the PD.

ⁱⁱ The PCI ran as *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* for the 1993 elections, and as *Progetto Centrosinistra* in 1998. In 2007 it formed the PD by incorporating other center and center-left parties.

ⁱⁱⁱ The PSDI ran together with the PSI for the 1968 elections.

THP					2,4 (1)										
SFP							1,7 (1)								
SPS							5,1 (2)	2,2 (1)							
Grüne- Verdi-Vërc								3,7 (1)	4,5 (2)	6,7 (2)	6,9 (2)	6,5 (2)	7,9 (3)	5,8 (2)	8,7 (3)
PDU/FPS ^v								1,3 (1)	2,4 (1)	1,4 (1)					
PRI									2,1 (1)						
UfS ^{vi}									2,5 (1)	2,3 (1)	4,8 (2)	5,5 (2)	6,8 (2)	2,3 (1)	2,1 (1)
Die Frei- heitlichen											6,1 (2)	2,5 (1)	5,0 (2)	14,3 (5)	17,9 (6)
Lega Nord											3,0 (1)			2,1 (1)	
Ladins ^{vii}											2,0 (1)	3,6 (1)			
UCAA											1,7 (1)				
Unitalia												1,8 (1)	1,5 (1)	1,9 (1)	
Forza Italia/PdL ^{viii}												3,7 (1)	3,4 (1)	8,3 (3)	2,5 (1)
Il Centro- UDA												1,8 (1)			
S-TF														4,9 (2)	7,2 (3)
M5S															2,5 (1)

Abbreviations:

SVP: Südtiroler Volkspartei; DC: Democrazia Cristiana; PSI: Partito Socialista Italiano; PCI: Partito Comunista Italiano; PD: Partito Democratico PSDI: Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano; PSIL: Partito Socialista Lavoratori Italiani; PLI: Partito Liberale Italiano; MSI: Movimento Sociale Italiano; AN: Alleanza Nazionale; THP: Tiroler Heimatpartei; SFP: Soziale Fortschrittspartei; SPS: Sozialdemokratische Partei Südtirols; PDU: Partei der Unabhängigen; FPS: Freiheitliche Partei Südtirols; PRI: Partito Repubblicano Italiano; UfS: Union für Südtirol; UCAA: Unione di centro Alto Adige; PdL: Il Popolo della Libertà; UDA: Unione Democratica dell'Alto Adige; S-TF: Süd-Tiroler Freiheit; M5S: Movimento 5 Stelle

The attempts to establish competing German or Ladin parties in the 1960s and 1970s remained largely unsuccessful and short-lived. Yet, they had some impact on the internal structure of the SVP. The latter reshaped its organization from a party of notables to a *Sammelpartei* (a party of “gathering” of all co-ethnics). The aim of this transformation was to represent various socioeconomic and cultural interests within the realm of the party, rather than allowing for contestation from other actors in the

^{iv} In 1995, the MSI transformed into AN, and later merged with *Forza Italia* to form the PdL. In 2013, former AN MP, Alessandro Urzì, founded *L'Alto Adige nel Cuore*.

^v The PDU changed its name to FPS in 1988 and merged with the UfS in 1989.

^{vi} Chairwoman Eva Klotz ran for the 1983 elections with the *Wahlverband des Heimatbundes (WdH)*, and for the 1988 elections with the *Südtiroler Heimatbund*. In 2007 Klotz and some of her collaborators founded the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*, while the remaining fractions transformed the UfS into the *BürgerUnion für Südtirol* in 2011.

^{vii} *Ladins* joined forces with the *Popolari* in the 1998 elections, and with the *BürgerUnion* in 2013.

^{viii} *Forza Italia* and AN ran together as PdL in 2008. In 2013, *Forza Italia* joined forces with the *Lega Nord*.

party political arena (Massetti 2009b, 164f). Notwithstanding this development, farmers and employers have remained the dominant fractions within the SVP, while women and workers have faced serious problems when it comes to determining party positions (Holzer and Schwegler 1998, 168). Thus, the SVP's worldview has strongly been shaped by conservatism and Christian democracy (ibid.; Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157).

The Italian speaking political sphere of the post-war era reflected the statewide party system to a relatively large extent. Before the implosion of the Italian party system in the early 1990s, this segment was dominated by the center-right *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC). The mainstream center-left parties PSI and PSDI were also represented in the *Landtag* throughout most of their history. This bloc of moderate Italian parties, led by the DC, served as negotiation and coalition partners of the SVP throughout the post-war era.

The Communist Party, which obtained a significant share of Italian speakers' votes, too, could be considered an antisystem party until the 1970s. However, after adopting more pragmatic stances, it actively engaged in the development of the provincial autonomy (Pallaver 2009, 340f).

The only party that maintained antisystem attitudes throughout the entire *First Republic* was the neo-fascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI). This grouping continuously opposed South Tyrol's autonomy provisions, considering the province an integral part of the Italian state and deeming any special rights an infringement of national sovereignty.

Summarizing the patterns of party competition in post-war South Tyrol, one could argue that the electoral victories of the SVP yielded a predominant-party system in Sartori's (1976, 192ff) sense. After all, the SVP gained the absolute majority of seats in all elections during the period under consideration, by far surpassing this author's threshold of three consecutive ballots. Despite its electoral dominance in the province, however, the SVP was forced to cooperate with other moderate parties (the DC, in particular) to implement its priority policy goals (devolution of powers to the provincial level, provisions for minority protection etc.). Until the late 1960s, this centrist alliance of SVP and DC faced opposition from left and right extremists (MSI and PCI). This fact, plus the large number of parties represented in the *Landtag*,

leads Pallaver (2009, 340) to the conclusion that the South Tyrolean party system at that time should be characterized as *polarized pluralism*. Only after the PCI's shift towards more moderate positions, i.e. after the disappearance of left-wing extremism in South Tyrol, Pallaver (ibid.) speaks of a *moderate pluralist* party system that prevailed during the 1970s (see Sartori 1976).

2.3.2 The emergence of new parties and the "implosion" of the Italian party system: the 1980s and 1990s

At the beginning of the 1980s, the effects of the Second Statute of Autonomy became gradually noticeable for the German and Ladin speakers of South Tyrol. As the SVP's core claims slowly materialized into concrete policies after 1972, the unanimous support for the party could no longer be portrayed as a prerequisite for the cultural and economic survival of the minorities in the province. These novel circumstances led to two opposing reactions within the German (and Ladin) speaking electorate:

On the one hand, right-wing hardliners deemed the *Paket*-solution and its implementation a sellout that substantially threatened the well-being of the minority communities in the province. They insisted on the right to self-determination for the South Tyroleans and considered the autonomy to be the perpetuation of the allegedly unacceptable subordination to the Italian state. On the other hand, the more progressive share of the German and Ladin speakers welcomed the advent of the autonomy but was critical of the separation of the language groups entailed in the *Package*. This camp has held that the segregation of cultural and societal institutions along linguistic lines hinders the creation of a peaceful multilingual society, but instead fosters mutual mistrust and resentments.

In terms of partisan contestation, the more radical faction was able to establish itself as a permanent force from 1983 onwards. In that year, Eva Klotz, the daughter of one of the perpetrators of the politically motivated bombings in the 1960s, gained parliamentary representation with the *Wahlverband des Heimatbundes* (WdH) and obtained 2.5% of the votes. Mrs. Klotz significantly expanded her share of votes by joining forces with the *Freiheitliche Partei Südtirols* (FPS) and former SVP official Alfons Benedikter, which led to the creation of the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS) in 1989.

The UfS's popularity at the ballots grew constantly until it split up in 2007 (Massetti 2009b, 165ff).

The progressive camp gathered around the political movement of the "New Left" (*Neue Linke/Nuova Sinistra*). Initially dominated by Italian speakers, this party soon came to be the first interethnic party in South Tyrol. After its first electoral gains in 1978, it started to include representatives from all language groups in its ranks and campaigned for votes from all South Tyroleans, regardless of their linguistic self-ascription. This interethnic strategy paid off and translated into an increasing popularity at the ballots. After various changes of the party's label, the new movement ran as *Grüne/Verdi/ Vërc* (Greens) from 1993 onwards, highlighting its integrative approach to minority rights with its trilingual name (ibid., 180).

After the Statute of Autonomy was fully implemented and the international dispute between Austria and Italy was officially settled in 1992, questions concerning the quality of the new institutional arrangements once again gained momentum. This led to the creation of yet another German party. *Die Freiheitlichen* (The Liberals) were founded as a sister party of Austria's populist right FPÖ (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). This party considers the current autonomy provisions at best a starting point for pursuing new models of sovereignty and has mixed these claims with a discourse of xenophobia and anti-migration issues. After internal turmoil resulted in electoral setbacks in the mid-nineties, the Liberals' electoral fortune returned in the 2000s.

The transformed political environment of the post-Package era also gave rise to a genuinely Ladin party. *Ladins* obtained one seat in the *Landtag*-elections in 1993 and 1998. However, the party was unable to repeat its success in the 2000s.

In light of this enhanced electoral competition within the German-Ladin camp, the SVP found it increasingly hard to maintain its traditionally high levels of support. In the first elections after the full implementation of the Autonomy *Package* in 1993, its support dropped to "only" 52% of the votes. Despite of a slight recovery in the 1998 elections, the People's Party has thus far been unable to return to its electoral heights of the 1960s.

The Italian political sphere underwent even severer changes during the 1990s. Resulting from the implosion of the Italian party system and the end of the so-called

First Republic, all parties in this sector underwent serious changes or disappeared altogether. At the same time, new competitors, particularly on the center-right of the political spectrum, emerged.

The decline of the *Democrazia Cristiana* was already noticeable towards the end of the 1980s, when it was for the first time overtaken by the MSI in 1988. In the wake of the 1993 elections, the Christian democrats adopted a more regionalist profile (*Partito Popolare Alto Adige*) but this strategy turned out to be rather unsuccessful. In 2007, the organizational remnants of South Tyrol's DC were integrated into the newly founded *Partito Democratico* (PD).

The other group that was merged into the PD was the former Communist Party. After a couple of programmatic and organizational changes, the successors of the PCI had been able to establish themselves as viable representatives of the Italian center-left electorate. This fact is also mirrored by the electoral fortunes of the PD in the late 2000s.

The right wing of the Italian political sphere experienced the remarkable moderation of the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI) and its transformation into the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) in 1995. This process was paralleled by the emergence of Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*. In 2007, AN and *Forza Italia* fused to form *Il Popolo della Libertà*. This center-right party obtained the largest vote share within the Italian camp in the 2008 provincial elections.

Only a small splinter group of the former MSI, led by Donato Seppe, insisted on the fascism-inspired rejection of South Tyrol's autonomy and formed *Unitalia* in the mid-1990s. Unlike in other regions of Northern Italy, the *Lega Nord* could not establish itself as a permanent player in South Tyrol's political arena.

2.3.3 Recent developments

The 2000s constituted a period of consolidation for the party political arena in South Tyrol. Four novel patterns of party competition stand out: Firstly, the increased competition in the German and Ladin speaking segment of the political arena turned out to be a lasting phenomenon. In the last three elections, the interethnic Greens obtained 7.5% of the votes on average, making it the third biggest party in the current

Landtag (i.e. since 2013). The Liberals almost tripled their share of votes in 2008, compared to the 2003 elections. And the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*, a secessionist splinter group from the UfS, emerged as a new competitive political force in 2007, obtaining 4.9% and 7.2% of the votes in the last ballots respectively.

Secondly, given the strength of its new competitors, the SVP had to face unprecedented setbacks in the new millennium. In 2008, it did not obtain the absolute majority of votes for the first time in its history. In 2013, the losses were even more pronounced, leaving the People's Party without the majority of seats in the Provincial Parliament. Thus, after this ballot, the need for coalition building did not only emerge from the consociational provisions of the Autonomy Statute but were also required by the power relations in the *Landtag*.

Thirdly, the Italian segment of the provincial party system largely remained in flux. While the center and center-left could guarantee a certain degree of continuity, particularly after the establishment of the *Partito Democratico*, the center-right was subject to numerous transformations. Until 2003, AN was able to secure around 9% of the votes. In comparison, however, its shared project with *Forza Italia* only yielded modest results in 2008. In 2013, the alliance between *Forza Italia* and the *Lega Nord* only won 2.5% of the votes; while former AN member Alessandro Urzì obtained 2.1% with his *L'Alto Adige nel Cuore* party. Neo-fascist *Unitalia* obtained one seat in the *Landtag* between 1998 and 2013. Its overall support, however, was limited to a tiny fraction of the electorate. A new option for German and Italian speakers emerged in 2013 with Beppe Grillo's anti-establishment *Movimento 5 Stelle*. Although the movement ran for elections in other parts of Italy, too, its only South Tyrolean MP is a representative of the German speaking community.

Lastly, the fragmentation of the italophone party system and the decreasing turnout among the Italian electorate lead to the underrepresentation of the Italian society in the provincial institutions. Since 2013, only 14% of all MPs in the *Landtag* are Italian speakers. This number stands in sharp contrast with the 23% of Italian speakers in the overall population. A similar disproportion can be observed in the provincial executive, which currently includes only one italophone minister (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 56).

Table 3: Effective Number of Parties (ENP) based on votes 1948-2013
(see Laakso and Taagepera 1979)

Source: own calculation

Year	‘48	‘52	‘56	‘60	‘64	‘68	‘73	‘78	‘83	‘88	‘93	‘98	‘03	‘08	‘13
ENP	2,10	2,24	2,25	2,27	2,47	2,49	2,86	2,52	2,67	2,55	3,34	2,92	3,00	3,71	3,84
Mean: Pre/post Package	Pre-Package: 2,442										Post-Package: 3,362				
Mean: 1948-2013	2,479														

Table 3 provides the development of a basic measure of party system fragmentation, Laakso and Taagepera's (1979) *effective number of parties*. This indicator reflects the intensified partisan competition in the post-*Package* era, i.e. after the 1993 provincial elections. Before 1993, the reciprocal of the squared sums of all vote shares yielded 2.4 on average. After 1993, this number increased to 3.4.

This intensified competition resulted from a diversity of competing opinions with regards to the current autonomy provisions. Thus, according to Pallaver (2009; 2011a), the increasingly fierce contestation on the Rokkanian center-periphery cleavage has yielded a polarized pluralist party system, in which the centrifugal logics mirror the growing dissatisfaction of the territorial and cultural status quo (see Sartori 1976).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter summarized the integration of the predominantly German speaking territory of South Tyrol into the Italian state in 1919. After the fascist dictatorship 1922-1943, international and domestic pressures forced the Italian government to grant far-reaching autonomy rights to the Province of Bolzano/South Tyrol and to the three language groups that inhabit the region. Numerous factors, not least European integration, have required modifications of the original autonomy provisions that had entered into force in 1972.

The driving political force pushing for the expansion of autonomy rights for South Tyrol has been the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP). While this group successfully presented itself as an all-German *Sammelpartei* until the 1970s, its electoral appeal decreased from the 1980s onwards. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the electoral competition in the province became fiercer, given the emergence

of several new parties. The resulting polarization of the party system emerges from diverging views on the current Statute of Autonomy and the provisions for minority protection entailed in this piece of legislation.

The next chapter will embed these patterns of party competition within a theoretical framework that allows to derive several implications for political parties' perceptions of the European integration process.

3 Regionalist parties & European integration: a deductive approach to the South Tyrolean case

3.1 Limitation of cases

This thesis aims to analyze the policy stances that regionalist parties in South Tyrol hold *vis-à-vis* the European integration process. Yet, before focusing on this particular party family, it needs to be clarified why parties that do not fall under this category are excluded from this study.

The omission of statewide parties in this piece of research can be justified by three arguments. Firstly, unlike in other territories, regionalists and statewide parties do (generally) not compete for votes in South Tyrol (see Pallarés, Montero and Llera 1997; Pallarés and Keating 2003). This segmentation of party competition (see Chapter 2) allows the intensive investigation of one political sub-arena, without accepting the loss of complexity by disregarding the other sphere. Secondly, as the party stances of Italian statewide parties towards the EU have been extensively investigated elsewhere (see *inter alia* Conti 2006; Quaglia 2008; Roux and Verzichelli 2010), their inclusion would unlikely yield innovative results. Thirdly, numerous scholars of comparative political science have pointed out that regionalist parties form a party family in their own right (von Beyme 1984; Hix and Lord 1997; Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Hepburn 2009). Thus, this study adds substantially to the investigation of this *famille spirituelle*, without conflating its research design with the integration of inexpedient cases.

Consequently, in order to scrutinize the regionalist party family, their distinguishing features need to be highlighted. As the previous pages have made abundantly clear, one basic division can be drawn to categorize the parties competing in South Tyrol. On the one hand, Italian parties mirror the patterns of the statewide political arena and (mostly) constitute an integral part of Italy-wide party organizations; on the other hand, parties canvassing for the votes of the German and Ladin speakers operate exclusively within the Province of Bolzano and usually maintain independent organizational structures without any interference from statewide parties⁴.

This division, however, cannot be taken at face value. Firstly, the territorial limitation of electoral appeal and organizational expansion neither has implications for a party's policy stance on the center-periphery dimension nor does it serve to predict the

salience of issues such as territorial distinctiveness, autonomy or minority rights. Secondly, “borderline” cases further undermine the usefulness of this superficial categorization. *Unitalia*, for instance, has largely restricted its actions to the provincial level. Yet, it has been heavily committed to abolishing special rights for the province and to fully integrate the territory into the nation state’s jurisdiction. The *Lega Nord* constitutes another case that highlights the ambiguity of this approach. While this party struggles for the autonomy or self-determination of “Padania” (i.e. Northern Italy), South Tyrol does not play a major role in its discourse (Bulli and Tronconi 2011). Thus, despite some adaptations of its electoral campaigns, the *Lega*’s organization in South Tyrol resembles that of the Italian, statewide parties (Pallaver 2011a).

In light of these conceptual shortcomings, regionalist parties need to be defined by a different token. Singling out the common patterns of those parties that represent the periphery pole of the Rokkanian center-periphery divide seems to be a useful starting point for this endeavor (see Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Rokkan and Urwin 1982).

3.2 Defining regionalist parties

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) depict the cleavage between political centers and peripheries as a result of nation building processes. Political conflicts emerge from the “increasing resistance of the ethnically, linguistically, or religiously distinct *subject populations*” (ibid., 14; emphasis in original) to the standardizing tendencies fostered by nation building elites in the centers.

Drawing on this Rokkanian approach, Hueglin (1986, 448) defines regionalism as “a protest movement against political administrative and socioeconomic centrality”. Stressing regionalists’ opposition to the political component of centrality, Hix and Lord (1997, 44) argue that the “common strand between [regionalist] groups [...] is that they advocate a reform of the territorial structure of the state in which they operate”. Similarly, Türsan (1998, 6) highlights the regionalists’ “demand for political reorganisation of the national power structure”. In sum, all these contributions emphasize territoriality as a constituent element of peripheral movements. The label *regionalist* clearly stems from this notion of territoriality. Consequently, regionalist parties can be defined by their “shared commitment to *sub-state territorial*

empowerment, which distinguishes them from other party families” (Hepburn 2009, 482; emphasis in original).

Keating (1998, 9f), however, points out that *regions* are no predefined territorial units. They can be construed in geographic, economic, administrative, cultural or other terms. Thus, diverging interpretations of regions have led to considerable heterogeneity within the regionalist parties’ group (Hepburn 2009). While some parties capitalize predominantly on political or economic particularities of their regions (e.g. the *Scottish National Party*, SNP), others have been eager to stress the cultural distinctiveness of the territory that they claim to represent. Due to their insistence on the defense of minority languages and traditions, the SVP, the Liberals, the UfS and the S-TF clearly fall under this latter category. This sub-group’s concurrent emphasis on territory and culture has inspired scholars to apply labels that capture this simultaneity better than the sole notion of regionalism. Gourevitch (1979), for instance, speaks of “peripheral nationalism”, Lynch (1996) terms the underlying ideology “minority nationalism”, while Türsan (1998) introduces the concept of “ethnoregionalism”.

These alternative denominations, however, fail to capture parties with a different approach to cultural distinctiveness. They would, for example, be unable to adequately describe the South Tyrolean Greens who advocate territorial autonomy on the basis of a peaceful cohabitation of all language groups in the Province of Bolzano (Grüne-Verdi-Vërc 2013). Thus, the distinction between Italian statewide parties and those parties that canvass for the votes of the South Tyrolean minorities can best be apprehended by applying the label regionalist as defined above.

Yet, one limitation of the concept needs to be discussed briefly. The notion of regionalism does not include movements that capitalize exclusively on cultural or ethnic patterns. In Western Europe, the most prominent party that disentangles its cultural claims entirely from territorial ones is probably the *Svenska Folkpartiet* (SFP) in Finland (Masseti 2009b, 6). In South Tyrol, this concerns the party *Ladins-Dolomites* (and its predecessor *Ladins*). As *Ladins* was only represented in the Provincial Parliament between 1993 and 2003, and never obtained more than 3.6% of the votes, it does not qualify as a “relevant” party in Sartori’s (1976, 121f) terms. Thus, its omission from the subsequent analysis will only have negligible effects on the presented findings. Moreover, by excluding this purely “ethnic” party, it can be

assured that the concept of regionalism is the overarching pattern that applies to all units of analysis (i.e. parties) in this piece of research.

To sum up, regionalist parties are defined by their “shared commitment to *sub-state territorial empowerment*” (Hepburn 2009, 482; emphasis in original). Consequently, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), the *Freiheitlichen* (Liberals), the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS), the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF) and the *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc* (Greens) classify as regionalist parties in South Tyrol. The next section will scrutinize the patterns that structure the competition between these parties.

3.3 Dimensions of competition between regionalist parties

3.3.1 The territorial dimension

Regionalist parties’ calls for territorial restructuring are by no means homogenous. As Hix and Lord (1997, 44) put it, their demands include “anything from decentralisation or devolution, to complete independence or accession to a different state”. Given that the class or socioeconomic divide has largely been absent within South Tyrol’s minority communities, party political competition is mainly structured around the differences in these territorial claims.

Departing from the South Tyrolean context, Pallaver (2009; 2011a; Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2014) differentiates between “autonomy parties”, “semi-autonomy parties” and “anti-autonomy parties”. This distinction aims at categorizing parties according to their viewpoints *vis-à-vis* the existing autonomy provisions. Yet, it is designed to classify all parties in South Tyrol and thus obfuscates some of the more fine-grained differences within the regionalist party family.

Masseti (2009a; 2009b) presents a more detailed typology for assorting regionalist parties along the center-periphery divide. In a first step, he divides non-secessionist and secessionist parties, whereby the latter seek full independence for their territory while the former prefer solutions within existing state structures. In a second step, Massetti then singles out five groups of parties in accordance with their ultimate territorial goals and the means by which these objectives are pursued. Thus, he arrives at the typology which is portrayed in the horizontal dimension of Table 4, differentiating moderate autonomists, assertive autonomists, autonomists with

ambiguous positions, strongly committed secessionists and extremist, i.e. violent, secessionists.

By focusing exclusively on regionalists' territorial goals (and not the means they adopt), de Winter (1998, 204ff) proposes a slightly different categorization. According to this author, protectionists highlight the “unique character” of the people they claim to represent, while autonomists pursue a markedly different treatment of their constituency within the state (e.g. asymmetric devolution). National-federalists, in turn, aim at a more far-reaching restructuring of the entire state (i.e. transforming a unitary state into a federal or highly decentralized one). Within the secessionist camp, de Winter separates independists and irredentists, with the former seeking self-sustained statehood and the latter struggling for the integration of their territory into another state. These categories are summarized in the vertical dimension of Table 4.

Table 4: Regionalist parties' distribution along the center-periphery dimension according to Massetti (2009a) and de Winter (1998)^{ix}

<div> <div>Massetti (2009a)</div> <div>de Winter (1998)</div> </div>	<i>Non-secessionist parties</i>			<i>Secessionist parties</i>	
	<i>Moderately autonomist</i>	<i>Assertive autonomist</i>	<i>Ambiguous</i>	<i>Strongly committed</i>	<i>Extremist (violent)</i>
<i>Protectionist</i>	Grüne-Verdi- Vërc				
<i>Autonomist</i>		SVP	Die Freiheitlichen		
<i>National-federalist</i>					
<i>Independist</i>				Die Freiheitlichen (2010s)	
<i>Irredentist</i>				UfS, S-TF	(BAS)

As becomes clear from the distribution of parties along the diagonal axis of Table 4, Massetti's and de Winter's typologies are closely interrelated. Yet, it is helpful to bear both approaches in mind. While de Winter's differentiation between independists and irredentists is particularly revealing in the South Tyrolean case, it lacks an intermediate position between secessionists and non-secessionists. This shortcoming is compensated by Massetti's “ambiguous” category that accounts for the vast amount of vaguely defined policy stances that flirt with potential secession in a distant future.

In light of these two approaches, the contrasting positions of South Tyrol's regionalist parties on the territorial dimension of party competition can be assessed as follows.

^{ix} The allocation of parties was carried out by the author based on an assessment of the most recent (1998, 2003, 2008, 2013) election manifestos and other party documents.

As the Greens are largely satisfied with the given level of territorial autonomy, they classify as a moderately autonomist party. Their institutional goals concern the internal working of the Province (e.g. more direct democracy) rather than the status of South Tyrol within the Italian state. The Greens' emphasis on the trilingual character of the South Tyrolean society helps them justify the particularities of the province, which brings them closest to the protectionist camp (Grüne-Verdi-Vërc 2013).

The SVP, in turn, is eager to expand the province's autonomy within Italy to the "greatest extend possible" (SVP 1993, 4). Yet, it is not their primary aim to pursue similar liberties for all (or most) regions in the country. Thus, they fall under the (assertive) autonomist category.

Die Freiheitlichen represent a more complex case. In the 1990s and 2000s, the Liberals held rather unclear policy stances towards the existing autonomy. They stressed the importance of a "European Region of Tyrol" (*Europaregion Tirol*) that entails South Tyrol and the Austrian *Bundesland Tirol*; however, little was said about the international status of this Euroregion (Die Freiheitlichen 2003; 2008). Only around 2010, the Liberals proposed an independent South Tyrolean "Free State", and thus openly favored secession from Italy. This "Free State", however, is not necessarily meant to merge with the northern part of Tyrol or the Republic of Austria, which makes the Liberals the only independist party in South Tyrol (Die Freiheitlichen 2012).

The *BürgerUnion*, UfS' successor party, also supports South Tyrol's separation from the Italian state. Their model, however, is a "Free European Region of Tyrol". The status of this territory is only vaguely defined. Yet, as it is supposed to entail the Austrian and Italian parts of Tyrol, this positions seems to lie somewhere between independism and irredentism (BürgerUnion für Südtirol 2016).

The most overtly irredentist party in the province is the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*. This group insists on a people's right to self-determination and thus rallies for holding a referendum over the future of South Tyrol. The symbols used by this movement (Austrian flags etc.), however, leave little doubt about the fact that its ultimate goal is South Tyrol's integration into Austria (Süd-Tiroler Freiheit 2007).

In South Tyrol, no party has ever pursued its territorial goals through violent means. The perpetrators of politically motivated violence in the 1960s organized under the umbrella of the *Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol* (BAS, Liberation Committee of South Tyrol). However, they never upheld provable ties with any political party (Franceschini 1993).

3.3.2 The cultural dimension

The second dimension of competition between South Tyrol's regionalists concerns their stances on cultural issues. Although this dimension is closely related to the territorial one, it makes sense to disentangle them analytically.

What I term the cultural dimension (see Kriesi et al. 2006) of partisan conflict has gone under a number of different labels. One pole of this divide has been described as “new politics” (Müller-Rommel 1984), “new value” (Inglehart 1977) or “new class” (Kriesi 1998). All these denominations refer to preferences for issues such as multiculturalism, environmental protection or participatory democracy within both, the demand and the supply side of the electoral market. Scholars' insistence on the novelty of these inclinations stems from their increased salience since the late 1960s and their articulation through social movements. Inglehart (1977) famously interpreted the growing importance of these “post-material” issues as the “silent revolution”.

Following Inglehart's terminology, Ignazi (1992) describes the other pole of the cultural conflict dimension as the result of a “silent counter-revolution”. While one part of the electorate has endorsed the “New Left”, another share of it has expressed its dissatisfaction with the established parties by turning towards the radical right. Prominent issues on this side of the cultural dimension are the opposition to immigration, the defense of traditional (i.e. “national”) values and the rejection of the manifold aspects of globalization (see Kitschelt 2001; Kriesi et al. 2006).

Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) summarize the two poles as “Green/alternative/libertarian” (GAL) on the one hand, and “traditional/authoritarian/nationalist” (TAN) on the other. These authors deem the novel political division “a *non-economic* left/right dimension” (Hooghe and Marks

2009, 16; emphasis in original). Moreover, they link the respective poles to *inclusive* and *exclusive* identities. Whereas parties (and voters) on the GAL side consider their identification with a particular group (be it a language group, a nation or other) compatible with other identities (i.e. inclusive), sympathizers of the TAN pole deem their self-ascriptions to be irreconcilable with other patterns of belonging (exclusive). Thus, contrary to Inglehart, Hooghe and Marks (2009, 18) hold that “[t]his non-economic dimension taps *pre-material* (rather than post-material) values arising from group (non)membership” (emphasis in original).

The notion of inclusive and exclusive identities is revealing with regards to the connection between the cultural and the territorial conflict dimension in South Tyrol. The party with the most moderate stance on territorial autonomy, i.e. the Greens, also advocates the most inclusive approach concerning cultural affairs. They aim at overcoming the societal and institutional divisions between the language groups and consider the respective quota system largely outdated. Thus, the Greens include members of all language groups and campaign for voters in all ethnic camps. In addition, the party generally welcomes immigration to South Tyrol and considers the province’s “pluriculturalità” an asset for all citizens (Grüne-Verdi-Vërc 2013).

The relationship between the secessionist/irredentist camp and the TAN pole is somewhat more complex. The fiercest supporters of irredentism, the S-TF, promote an exclusive “Tyrolean” identity by drawing a sharp contrast between the German speaking South Tyroleans and the “Italians”, regardless of whether the latter reside in South Tyrol or elsewhere in the country. Although they are skeptical towards immigration, this issue is only of secondary importance to the S-TF (Süd-Tiroler Freiheit 2013). The *BürgerUnion*, despite holding slightly less radical stances on the exclusivity of the Tyrolean society, rank their policy priorities in a similar fashion (BürgerUnion für Südtirol 2016). The Liberals, in turn, envision a somewhat more relaxed demarcation of the three traditional language groups in South Tyrol and present their proposed “Free State” as a multilingual entity. Yet, they have emphasized their opposition to immigration ever since their foundation in 1992. The latter position has been at least as prominent as their calls for enhanced autonomy or independence (Die Freiheitlichen 2003; 2012). They are thus closer to the populist radical right party family than any other party in South Tyrol (see Mudde 2007). Given that this group of parties has been characterized as the prototypical representative of

the TAN pole (Kitschelt 2001; Hooghe and Marks 2009), one can conclude that the *Freiheitlichen* take the outermost position on the “right” of the cultural conflict dimension in South Tyrol.

Like on the territorial dimension, the SVP takes an intermediate position with regards to cultural issues, too. Its stances on the latter divide are, however, more heterogeneous and reflect its attempt to attract voters from diverse societal backgrounds. Its current party program from 1993 mirrors the party’s conservative and ethnicity-based roots but entails a plurality of references to “new politics” issues, such as environmental protection, grassroots democracy or intercultural dialogue (SVP 1993).

Figure 2: Conflict dimensions between regionalist parties in South Tyrol

Source: own compilation

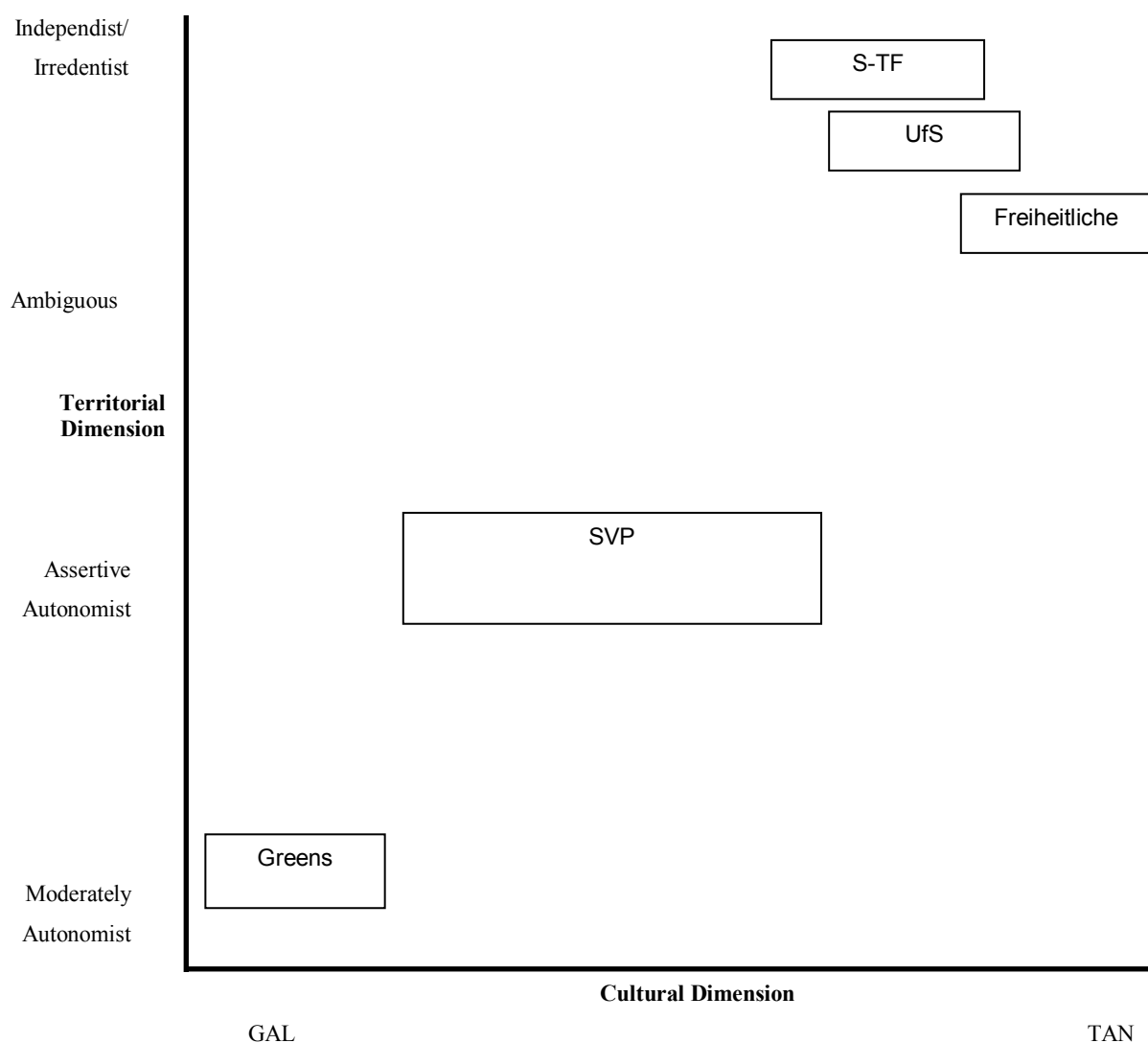


Figure 2 summarizes the relationship between the two conflict lines within the regionalist party family in South Tyrol. While the “inclusive” pole of the cultural dimension clearly coincides with the moderate autonomy pole of the territorial divide (i.e. the lower left corner), this overlap does not exist on the other extremes of the two spectrums. The most paradigmatic proponent of “traditional/authoritarian/nationalist” issues, the Liberals, does clearly not hold the most severe stances on secession or irredentism. Contrariwise, the “flagship” of South Tyrolean self-determination, the S-TF, capitalizes more cautiously on typical TAN issues like the opposition to immigration or the rejection of cosmopolitan elites.

As the regionalist parties in South Tyrol compete along a territorial and a cultural dimension, it can be expected that diverging perceptions of the European integration process are structured, at least in part, by those two conflict lines. Before assessing this relationship empirically, I will review the literature on which this assumption is based. Starting from these contributions, I will draw some tentative propositions with regards to the South Tyrolean case.

3.4 Party positions on European integration

As the process of European integration intensified towards the end of the 1980s, so did partisan contestation on the issue. Hooghe and Marks (2009) have described this growth of disputability of supranational cooperation as a shift from “permissive consensus to constraining dissensus”. In other words, while the initial steps of European integration (e.g. the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community [ECSC] or the European Economic Community [EEC]) were motivated by Western European elites’ will to cooperate across borders, the debates about these issues remained marginal within the wider public. Once the then European Community became more tangible for its inhabitants, particularly due to the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament and the celebration of referenda on the Maastricht Treaty in several countries, diverging opinions on the shape of the European polity and its policy outputs became more salient. Various political parties have capitalized on the tensions that arise from voters’ deviating points of view on the European question and have thus contributed significantly to shifting the loci of European decision making “from an insulated elite to mass politics” (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 13).

Party positions on European integration, however, can hardly be portrayed as a dichotomy of rejection or support. As the integration process itself has been described to be “highly complex and multidimensional” (Elias 2009, 23), more nuanced analytical tools are required to adequately get a hold of political parties’ perceptions of European integration. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008a, 2008b) have prominently sketched parties’ mistrust *vis-à-vis* the European Union as *Euroscepticism*. According to these scholars, parties’ opposition to European integration can be either principled (*hard Euroscepticism*) or qualified (*soft Euroscepticism*). While hard Euroscepticism translates into outright rejection of the European Union “as it is currently conceived” (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008a, 7), soft Euroscepticism describes a party’s opposition to the EU in certain policy areas.

Despite its frequent replication, the distinction between hard and soft Euroscepticism has not remained undisputed. Kopecký and Mudde (2002), for instance, claim that these two categories are too wide and cannot clearly be distinguished from each other. Moreover, the latter authors point out that Euroscepticism should be related to other potential (i.e. positive) party positions *vis-à-vis* the EU. They thus provide an alternative, fourfold typology by analytically separating two dimensions of opinions on European integration.

The first dimension summarizes “diffuse” viewpoints on the integration process, i.e. whether a party supports the underlying ideas of European integration in principle. On the one side of this dimension, Kopecký and Mudde allocate those they call *Europhiles*, namely those who favor supranational decision-making and/or market integration. On the other side, they place the so called *Europhobes* – parties that fail to endorse political or market integration.

The second dimension of this typology serves to differentiate diverging perceptions of the *de facto* development of the European Union. While those who are satisfied with the actual (or “specific”) course of European integration or expect it to evolve in a satisfactory direction, i.e. the *EU-optimists*, occupy one pole, the *EU-pessimists*, who are skeptical of the actual set-up of the EU, are located on the other.

Table 5: Typology of party positions on European integration
Source: Kopecký and Mudde (2002, 303)

		Support for the idea of European integration	
		<i>Europhile</i>	<i>Europhobe</i>
Support for EU	<i>EU-optimist</i>	Euroenthusiasts	Europragmatists
	<i>EU-pessimist</i>	Eurosceptics	Eurorejects

Table 5 combines the two dimensions and reveals four ideal-typical party positions on the issue of European integration. Parties that support European integration in principle and consider the EU in its current or its future state the embodiment of these ideals are labeled *Euroenthusiasts*. Those endorsing the general ideas of integration but deeming the current Union as deviating from these principles are *Eurosceptics*. Parties that are hostile to the underlying ideas of the integration process and to the EU as such are termed *Eurorejects*, while those that support the EU for pragmatic reasons without sharing its basic principles are described as *Europragmatists*.

But how do parties justify their position on European integration? The extensive literature that assesses this question from various angles quasi unanimously states that parties' perceptions of the EU are related to other patterns of party competition and their specific contexts. After all, parties seek a cohesive discourse within which their positions on European integration are compatible with other policy stances on their agenda. With regards to regionalist parties, Massetti (2009b; see Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002) singles out four different rationales that underlie these parties' stances on European integration: one referring to geographical differences, another one to a party's position in the domestic party system, a third one building on a party's ideology, and finally one that considers the common patterns of regionalism. As these models are partly based on deviating assumptions, they yield different expectations concerning parties' perceptions of the EU. In the remainder of this chapter, I will separately elaborate on each of these approaches and derive the corresponding proposition for the South Tyrolean case.

3.4.1 The impact of geographical differences and “national interests”

Intergovernmentalists consider European integration to be the result of cooperating national elites (see Moravcsik 1995). Thus, diverging national interests can further different perceptions about the European Union. Hix (1999, 76), for instance, links national preferences with regards to European integration to the dominant societal factions within each country. While export-oriented industries drive claims for liberal, market-oriented integration in Germany, Austria and the Benelux countries, societies of the less competitive south-western periphery, i.e. Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Ireland, emphasize the importance of the Union's redistribution policies. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b), moreover, stress the potential impact of political institutions on parties' opportunity structures.

In light of these arguments, the conditions provided by a certain national context appear highly relevant for a party's position on the EU. Given the prominence of regional identities and far-reaching provisions for territorial self-government, this is likely to hold true for the provincial level in South Tyrol, too. As I have elaborated extensively on the historical, institutional and political framework of that territory in the previous chapters, any further assessment would be redundant. It should be pointed out, however, that these conditions cannot explain diverging party stances of political actors within a region. Thus, “regional interests” are only of limited importance for the purpose of this study.

3.4.2 The impact of a party's position in the domestic party system

Several scholars have classified political parties as either mainstream or peripheral/niche parties (see Topaloff 2012; Meguid 2008). This distinction was found to have a significant impact on a party's position towards European integration (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002). On the one hand, it is argued that “mainstream parties seek to defuse the salience of a new issue [such as European integration] by taking median positions with respect to it” (ibid., 588). On the other hand, peripheral parties are more likely to capitalize on the European question by adopting a critical stance toward it. According to Marks, Wilson and Ray (2002), the differentiation between these two groups of parties can be operationalized by three different, but frequently interrelated, parameters. Peripherality in the party system might thus result

from an extreme ideological position, a limited share of votes or the exclusion from government.

Particularly the former notion gives rise to what Hooghe, Marks and Wilson (2002) termed the inverted U curve: while parties on the left and right extremes of the socioeconomic conflict axis tend to reject most or all aspects of European integration for ideological reasons, center, center-left and center-right parties generally support this process. In contrast, peripherality in terms of votes translates into strategic incentives to take unconventional policy stances on new issues in order to stand out in the domestic political arena. Thus, minor parties are likely to challenge the course of European integration by questioning mainstream parties' positions on the EU. Similarly, the logic behind the impact of the exclusion from government is construed as the opposition's motivation to criticize the government's engagement at the European level. Following this argument, this critique might translate into a more general repudiation of the EU's institutions. By the same token, when a Eurosceptic party is elected into government, its role at the European level might impel it to become more Euro-friendly than it was during its time in opposition (the Austrian FPÖ is a case in point here; see Fallend 2008).

Given the negligible relevance of the economic left-right divide in South Tyrol, peripherality in this province stems from either government participation or a party's share of votes. Government participation has so far been limited to the hegemonic SVP and its Italian coalition partners (DC, PSI and their respective successors). Similarly, the distance between the SVP's and its competitors' share of votes is still remarkable (in 2013, the difference between the SVP and the second party, *die Freiheitlichen*, amounted to 27.8%). In view of these considerations, the SVP can be expected to uphold a Euroenthusiastic discourse, whereas its regionalist competitors are likely to challenge its predominance by capitalizing on more Eurosceptic stances.

3.4.3 The impact of ideology

In the most simplistic way, ideology can be interpreted as a party's position on the left-right axis (see above). Hix (1999, 73), however, points out that the "Left-Right dimension is really a summary of two 'value-dimensions'". While one dimension deals with economic issues (i.e. free markets vs. state intervention), the second one

resembles the cultural divide that stretches between the GAL and TAN poles. Unlike the inverted U curve yielded by the relationship between the socioeconomic division and support for the EU, party positions on the cultural conflict dimension tend to show a linear relationship with policy stances on European integration (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Hooghe and Marks 2009). Typical TAN-issues, like the opposition to immigration, the preservation of (exclusive) national identities or the skepticism towards cosmopolitan elites are diametrically opposed to the liberal principles of the European Union and the freedoms of the European Single Market. Thus, quantitative studies have demonstrated a strong link between Europhobe positions and a party's allocation on the TAN side of the cultural conflict dimension.

The relationship between GAL positions and support for the EU is, however, more ambiguous. Cosmopolitans and supporters of multiculturalism favor transnational cooperation and the facilitation of cross-border mobility for obvious reasons. Moreover, environmentalists endorse the opportunity of tackling ecological problems on a more encompassing scale via the EU's institutions. Many Green parties, however, are alienated by the EU's alleged democratic deficit, its lack of transparency and the dominance of neoliberal economic policies. These ambivalences notwithstanding, most representatives of this party family have opted for pragmatic, pro-European positions since the 1990s (ibid.; Hix 1999).

In other words, while parties on the TAN side of the cultural political divide, i.e. most prominently those of the populist right party family, tend to oppose European integration, parties on the GAL side, e.g. the Greens, usually represent a less principled approach but are likely to support the integration process. Thus, in the case of South Tyrol, it can be expected that *die Freiheitlichen* are the most Eurosceptical party. They are likely to illustrate their rejection by linking the integration process to perceived threats such as uncontrolled immigration or the loss of cultural identity. The secessionist parties that are close to the TAN pole can be expected to back up their anti-EU stances with a similar discourse. The Greens, in turn, are likely to be the most Europhile party, highlighting the opportunities for the creation of a multicultural society in South Tyrol and beyond. The more ambiguous positions of the SVP make it difficult to state propositions on its stances towards the EU based on the conflict dimension discussed in this section. The prevalence of Christian democratic values in the SVP's party program, however, suggests that the

party shares the pro-European vocation of this party family in other regions (see Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157).

3.4.4 The impact of regionalism

As outlined above, the defining pattern of regionalism is the aim to reshuffle political power in a way that increases the role of sub-state territorial entities by obtaining autonomy, federal arrangements, independence or the integration into another state. The relationship between these intentions and the process of European integration is highly complex and has yielded a range of diverging assumptions (see Keating, Hooghe and Tatham 2015).

The first assumption is inspired by the course of European integration in the late 1980s and the early 1990s and is intimately linked to the notion of a *Europe of the Regions*. During this period, a considerable share of political actors and academic observers deemed regionalists to be quasi-natural supporters of the integration process. According to Elias (2009), this belief was inspired by three concurrent developments. Firstly, economic and political integration, as well as more general evolutions following globalization, limited the functional purposes of nation states. Similarly, considerations of administrative efficiency fostered decentralization and devolution to sub-state entities. In the resulting system of multilevel governance (see Hooghe and Marks 2003), little incentives remained to concentrate political power at the central-state level. Thus, European integration and regionalist aspirations alike have been deemed to challenge nation states' monopoly of political decision-making, yielding a community of purpose between the two movements. Secondly, theoretical and philosophical innovations brought about new perceptions of sovereignty and the belonging of individuals. These schools, in part, downplayed the role of the nation state. Academic notions such as "postnational" (Soysal 1994) or "multicultural" (Kymlicka 1995) citizenship theoretically detached individual rights from nationally constrained policy-making and ultimately furthered proposals for reconceptualizing sovereignty over minority-dominated territories (on the example of the Basque Country see Keating and Bray 2006). Thirdly, the EU has increased regionalists' scope of action with regards to political and economic opportunities. The creation of the Committee of the Regions and the proclamation of the principle of subsidiarity

have boosted regionalists' hopes that a "Europe of the Regions" would relativize the role of nation states in an "ever closer Union". These aspirations encouraged regional authorities to directly lobby European institutions, e.g. via the establishment of permanent representations in Brussels or through Europe-wide pressure groups. Moreover, several member states created channels through which regional actors could influence their country's positions on EU matters, for instance via second chambers or participation in Council meetings (Keating, Hooghe and Tatham 2015). The expansion of the EU's spending on regional development and the introduction of the so-called partnership principle has positively affected the economic performance of poorly developed regions and has given sub-state authorities a (limited) say on the EU's expenditures (Allen 2008). The EU's commitment to minority rights, following the publication of the Copenhagen Criteria, further nurtured ethnoregionalists' expectations that the supranational polity would join their cause. In sum, the phase of intense integration around 1990 resulted in the perception that the post-Maastricht Union would largely be in line with regionalists' aspirations. Thus, the vast bulk of political actors and scholars upheld the conception of a "Europe of the Regions" and reckoned on quasi unanimous support from the regionalist party family (see Hix and Lord 1997).

The second assumption on regionalists' party positions towards the EU is more skeptical about this party family's appreciation of the integration process. It is based on the presumption that a substantial number of regionalist parties reconsidered their positions towards European integration as it evolved towards the constitutionalization of the Union and devoted more attention to neo-liberal reforms. Massetti (2009a) equals this period of constitution-making and market liberalization with the first decade of the 2000s. Hepburn (2008), however, holds that several regionalist parties already adopted more Eurosceptic stances from the mid-1990s onwards. Regardless of the exact date of initiation of this transformation, the underlying propositions suggest that, after a period of optimism about Europe, regionalists shifted towards greater suspicion *vis-à-vis* the EU as a "new model of 'multilevel governance' [...] has not materialised" (Elias 2009, 9). Regionalists' disappointment with the course of European integration resulted from two distinct developments. Firstly, the innovations brought about by the Maastricht Treaty did not generate the desired results. The Committee of the Regions turned out to be a "toothless tiger". Instead, decision-making at the European level remained largely concentrated at the Council of

Ministers and thus neither escaped a state-centric logic nor did it comply with the innovative notions of a “Europe of the Regions” (Hepburn 2008). For most regionalist parties, the enhanced influence of the European Parliament could not compensate for these shortcomings (Elias 2009). Moreover, the EU’s commitment to minority rights hardly translated into concrete policies and particularly failed to do so in the “old” (i.e. EU-15) member states (Grigoriadis 2008). Secondly, the proposed alterations entailed in the Constitutional Treaty perpetuated the alleged deficiencies with regards to the empowerment of sub-state entities. Article I-1 of the European Constitution underlined that the EU shall reflect “the will of the citizens and *States* of Europe” (emphasis by the author). Thus, the Constitution and, ultimately, the Lisbon Treaty have been perceived by many regionalist actors as the unfortunate closure of a window of opportunity that has drawn the curtain over the desired “Europe of the Regions” (see Hepburn 2008, 548).

These two premises indicate generalizing trends about the relationship between regionalism and European integration since the shift from “permissive consensus to constraining dissensus” (Hooghe and Marks 2009) has taken place. Several scholars, however, have stressed persisting differences within the regionalist party family with regards to its perception of the political integration process. Starting from the assumption that regionalist parties are, in general, pro-European, Lynch (1996, 178) highlights that these parties can essentially pursue “two [different] options for European representation, independent statehood in Europe and the evolution of a Europe of the regions”. In other words, this author argues that different positions on the territorial conflict dimension yield diverging preferences concerning the organization of the European Union. While separatists accept the state-centric logic of the Union and want to join the club as a fully-fledged member-state after obtaining national independence, more moderate autonomists favor the transformation of the EU into a vaguely defined system of “international federalism” (ibid., 181). From a somewhat different perspective, Keating (2001, 56f) argues that supranational integration potentially lowers the costs for independence. Thus, separatists use the integration process to portray their ambitions as more feasible in an integrated Europe (see also Jolly 2015). According to Keating, however, European integration also serves to render different models of self-determination and autonomy more practicable, e.g. by allowing for ambivalent stances of “post-sovereignty” or “sovereignty-association”.

What has so far been neglected by scholars of party politics is the relationship between irredentism and European integration. Some authors have studied the links between European integration, kin-states and national minorities in Eastern Europe but have either fallen short of providing consistent theoretical underpinnings (Csergo and Goldgeier 2004) or intermingled the impact of the European Union with that of other international actors (Saideman and Ayres 2008). Some accounts in International Relations, however, suggest that European integration can influence the symbolic value of international borders in such a way that formerly contested geographical divisions might become the focal points of new, inclusive identities (Diez, Albert and Stetter 2008). If this were the case, the integration process would render irredentist claims obsolete as new forms of minorities' self-identifications would be reconcilable with existing state frontiers. In a similar fashion, Mylonas (2012) argues that political alliances between a kin-state and a host-state (i.e. the state where the minority resides) enhance the likelihood for minority accommodation to take place within existing state borders. As international organizations like the EU provide a promising context for the creation of such alliances, irredentist movements are unlikely to succeed when the two states in question are part of such organizations. Consequently, European integration seems to undermine the cause of irredentist parties. They can thus be expected to reject the integration process and uphold the importance of sovereign statehood as the expression of their (exclusive) national identity.

In sum, the relationship between European integration and regionalism can be viewed from two different perspectives. From a "bottom-up" approach, a party's position on the territorial cleavage can be expected to determine its perceptions of the EU. While autonomist parties seek a "Europe of the regions", separatists rather aim at "independence in Europe". Irredentists are likely to reject European integration. From a "top-down" point of view, regionalist parties adapt their party positions to the developments at the European level and adjust their stances as the integration process advances. Around 1990, institutional innovations at the supranational level nurtured hopes for a greater influence by regional decision-makers, pulling regionalists into the pro-European camp. Around 2000, however, regionalists became increasingly disappointed with the course of the integration process. Thus, many regionalist parties adopted more critical stances *vis-à-vis* the EU.

Potential implications for the South Tyrolean case can be summarized as follows. Firstly, all regionalists have turned towards more critical positions on European integration as the integration process advanced in the 2000s. Secondly, the SVP and – to a more limited extend – the Greens support the creation of a “Europe of the Regions” in order to decrease the political importance of the Italian state. Thirdly, *die Freiheitlichen* can be expected to accept the state-centered structures of the current Union and want the “Free State” of South Tyrol to join the club as a fully-fledged member. Finally, the irredentist UfS and S-TF are likely to reject the integration process as they consider a shift of the state border a vital element for expressing their national identity. Such a modification of the international status-quo is, however, unlikely to occur within the European Union.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter started out by defining regionalist parties as parties that aim at increasing the political influence of sub-state territorial entities. These claims are frequently, though not always, linked to cultural demands, e.g. calls for the official recognition of a minority language. Based on this definition, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), the Greens, *die Freiheitlichen*, the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS) and *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF) are identified as regionalist parties in South Tyrol. These parties compete on a territorial and on a cultural conflict dimension. The two cleavages highly correlate but are not congruent. The territorial and the cultural division have been singled out by other scholars as crucial patterns for shaping parties’ perceptions of the European integration process. Other factors that can be expected to have some influence on a party’s discourse on the EU are the national/territorial context within which parties operate and a party’s position in the respective domestic party system. Influenced by these patterns, political parties can take four different, ideal-typical stances towards European integration. They can be Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Eurorejects or Europragmatists. Based on the existing literature on political parties and European integration, four propositions concerning South Tyrolean regionalist parties’ perceptions of the European integration process have been singled out:

- The governing SVP portrays European integration more positively than the other, oppositional regionalist parties.

- Given their positions on the cultural cleavage, *die Freiheitlichen* can be expected to link anti-European stances with an exclusive, nationalist discourse. The S-TF and the UfS are likely to present similar justifications for their Eurosceptic positions. The Greens' allocation close to the GAL pole suggests that they connect their pro-Europeanism to a desired opportunity for an open, multicultural society. The SVP's *Sammelpartei*-strategy makes it harder to estimate its perceptions based on this conflict dimension. Yet, the party's Christian democratic ideology suggests a pro-European stance.
- During the course of the 2000s, all regionalists turned more Eurosceptic.
- The SVP and the Greens support the creation of a "Europe of the Regions", while the irredentist S-TF and UfS reject European integration. *Die Freiheitlichen* accept the EU's state centered logic based on their separatist stances.

The four propositions (partly) point towards diverging directions. Yet, this apparent contradiction is in line with the finding that a party's discourse on European integration is hardly ever cohesive (Helbling, Hoeglenger and Wüest 2010). This results from the fact that party positions on the EU stem from contrasting rationales and seek to entail different aspects of the European integration process (see Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002).

The next chapter will outline the sources and the methodological approach that are used to empirically assess which parties follow what rationales when they politicize European integration.

4 Sources & Methods

4.1 Sources

Party positions on European integration have been investigated by using a variety of data. Szczerbiak and Taggart (2008b, 5), for instance, suggest that official party literature, public statements by party officials and a party's behavior in the parliamentary arena are "key sources" for assessing party-based Euroscepticism. Other authors have extensively drawn on expert survey data in order to explain party stances on the EU (Marks, Wilson and Ray 2002; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002).

Although the survey data applied by the latter scholars (see Ray 1999; Bakker et al. 2015) has also been used for research on the regionalist party family (see Jolly 2007; 2015), it bears some serious shortcomings for the purpose of this thesis. Firstly, it only includes major regionalist parties in a certain territory. Thus, the provided information is insufficient to carry out a more detailed intra-regional comparison of party positions. Secondly, the dataset summarizes party positions on devolution, autonomy or decentralization within one single (metric) variable. Qualitatively different policy stances on the territorial dimension are hence not reflected in the dataset, which would exclude the possibility of assessing the role of irredentism or secessionism within the context of this study.

Party programs and manifestos have been analyzed qualitatively (Elias 2009; Mudde 2007, Chapter 7) as well as quantitatively (Pennings 2006) to explore party stances on the EU. All regionalist parties in South Tyrol use such documents to portray their positions *vis-à-vis* the European integration process. However, their availability for the entire period under investigation, i.e. from 1989 to 2015, is strongly limited. Thus, official party documents and information from party websites are only included in the qualitative analysis in order to back up the findings concerning more recent developments.

Furthermore, in the context of South Tyrol, the use of print media as a source for analyzing party positions suffers from one major deficiency. Like many other aspects of public life, the provincial media landscape is divided along linguistic lines (Alber and Zwilling 2014, 69). Thus, one would need to answer the question whether all newspapers, or only those in German, should be taken into consideration for the purpose of this study. Such a selection can be expected to have an impact on the

presented results, which is why this option will be dismissed for the sake of objectivity.

Consequently, the primary data used in this piece of research are the transcriptions of parliamentary debates in the provincial parliament (*Landtag*). This source has several advantages. Firstly, it uninterruptedly covers party positions throughout the entire period under investigation. By coding the transcripts from all parliamentary sessions between the provincial elections in 1988 to the end of 2015, it is possible to sketch the dynamics of party competition throughout the whole time span in question. Secondly, by exploring data from the *Landtag*, this research draws its data from the level of government which is most important to regionalist parties. As has been stressed in Chapter 2, the provincial level constitutes the “core arena” for regionalists in South Tyrol. Thus, representation, offices and policies at this level are likely to be of higher symbolic value than gains at any other stage of the multilevel governance system (see Elias and Tronconi 2011). Thirdly, Mair (2000) highlights the importance of domestic political arenas for the European integration process. Even though his focus lies with national, rather than regional, politics, the priority attributed to the sub-state level by regionalists requires the analytical shift to the provincial arena. This focal point on the provincial level is further necessitated by the fact that the far-reaching autonomy provisions for South Tyrol have required vast parts of the provincial legislation to be adapted to European rules (see Toggenburg 2005). Lastly, as parliaments constitute an arena for public debates, speeches held in plenary sessions frequently mirror internally predefined party positions (see Sickinger 2002; Copeland and Patterson 1994, 154). Thus, although individual speakers may express diverging positions on certain issues in parliamentary debates, statements that take place under public scrutiny (which is the case for the *Landtag*’s plenary sessions) can be expected to predominantly be in line with official party positions.

In sum, it can be assumed that the party-based dissensus on the European integration process is largely reflected by the public debates in the South Tyrolean *Landtag*. The next section outlines the methodological approach that has been applied to the assessment of this data.

4.2 Methods

The analysis of the primary data will proceed in two steps. Firstly, an evaluation of how parties politicize the European integration process will be carried out. In other words, following Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest (2010, 497), I seek to analyze “which *arguments* [parties] mobilise to *justify* positions” towards the EU (emphasis in original). Secondly, party positions on European integration will be categorized by analytically dividing “diffuse” and “specific” support for the integration process (see above; Kopecký and Mudde 2002) and by observing changes in parties’ discourses over time.

The first step is linked to the four propositions that have been outlined above. In order to evaluate which rationales are the underlying drivers for a party’s position towards the EU, it is crucial to analyze the perceptions a party publicly upholds *vis-à-vis* the integration process. This question will be addressed by scrutinizing the *frames* used by party members in their parliamentary speeches. Given that a “frame spotlights certain events and their underlying causes and consequences, and directs our attention away from others” (Gamson 2004, 245), party representatives are expected to only link selected issues to the European integration process. In so doing, political actors engage in *frame building*, i.e. they portray complex circumstances in a simplified way by delivering certain tools for the interpretation of these complexities. Hänggli (2011) has demonstrated that this process of frame building translates relatively unmediated into news coverage. Thus, the “input” delivered by political parties is directly transmitted to the audience, e.g. potential voters.

Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest (2010) provide three broad categories of frames that have been used by political actors to refer to European integration. These authors distinguish *cultural*, *economic* and *other utilitarian* frames. Due to the importance of issues such as territorial autonomy or federalism in the case of South Tyrol, I add a fourth category, namely *territorial* frames. Following the aforementioned authors, each of these categories is subdivided into more specific frames. The *cultural* category entails *nationalistic* frames on the one hand, and *multicultural* frames on the other. Thus, different statements that fall into the cultural category can be linked to the cultural conflict dimension that has been outlined in the previous chapter. The *economic* category includes frames that highlight the EU’s impact on economic

growth or competitiveness (*economic prosperity*), or the Union's influence on employment, social security etc. (*labor and social security*). This category describes diverging positions on the economic left-right divide. The *territorial* category comprises statements that frame the EU as either *empowering* or *constraining* with regards to provincial self-government. *Other utilitarian* frames cover issues such as *political efficiency* (e.g. arguments that refer to the working of the EU institutions), *ecology* or *security*. Table 6 summarizes the four frame categories, the corresponding conflict dimensions and the different frames that fall under the respective categories.

Table 6: Frame categories, frames and corresponding conflict dimensions
Source: Helbling, Hoeglinger and Wüest (2010, 499); own compilation

Frame category	Frame	Conflict dimension
<i>Cultural</i>	Nationalistic Multicultural	Cultural (GAL-TAN)
<i>Economic</i>	Labor & social security Economic prosperity	Economic left-right
<i>Territorial</i>	Constraining Empowering	Territorial (center-periphery)
<i>Other utilitarian</i>	Political efficiency Ecology Security	

All parliamentary speeches between 1989 and 2015 have been coded by applying this categorization scheme. Each coded statement has been summarized in a structure that includes the *author* of a statement (the party), the addressed *issue*, the *evaluation* of the issue, the *frame* and the *frame category*. The evaluation has been coded on a five-point scale between -1.0 and +1.0. Table 7 provides an example of a coded statement.

Table 7: Example of a coded statement

“Durnwalder (SVP): <i>The enlargement of the Union entails unique opportunities for South Tyrol's economy.</i> ”				
Author	Issue	Evaluation	Frame	Frame category
SVP	Enlargement	+1	Economic prosperity	Economic

In order to assess which parties use what arguments to justify their positions on European integration, the frequency of the frames used by each party will be outlined in the next chapter. Subsequently, qualitative analyses of each party's statements on the EU will allow for a more nuanced evaluation of party positions towards European

integration. This refined approach will help to disentangle “diffuse” and “specific” positions *vis-à-vis* the integration process and will help understand differences between parties and changes of party stances over time.

5 South Tyrolean regionalist parties & European integration

5.1 An overview of frames on European integration

Table 8 provides a quantitative overview of the frame categories that South Tyrol's regionalist parties applied when referring to the European Union in the provincial *Landtag* between 1989 and 2015. The table includes statements that refer to the EU's institutions (polity), procedures of decision-making at the European level (politics) and evaluations of the EU's (prospective or already implemented) policies (see de Wilde 2011). The analysis does not include neutral references to the European Union, i.e. those coded with 0. The shaded columns highlight the dominant direction of each party's discourse. The mean position is calculated as the mean of all evaluations stated by each party in the period of investigation. Again, neutral statements have been excluded from this operation.

Table 8: Frame categories of supporting and opposing statements by parties (1989-2015)

	Greens		SVP		dF		UfS		S-TF	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Cultural	34,2	4,8	22,6	7,6	27,9	24,2	15,1	30,3	23,1	23,5
Economic	9,5	16,7	21,0	29,8	18,6	14,3	39,6	12,6	5,1	5,9
Other utilitarian	49,7	70,2	20,0	46,6	32,6	45,2	41,5	24,4	17,9	32,4
Territorial	6,5	8,3	36,5	16,0	20,9	16,3	3,8	32,8	53,8	38,2
Total percentage	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Mean position	+0,32		+0,38		-0,56		-0,32		+0,09	
N	283		441		295		172		73	

Table 9 has been compiled in the same way. However, this table features the relative shares of all frames, not the frame categories.

As becomes clear from the mean positions in the penultimate line, the SVP has been the most pro-European party in South Tyrol's regionalist camp. The Greens' position is slightly less enthusiastic, even though the difference between this party and the SVP is marginal. As could be derived from their position on the GAL-TAN dimension, *die Freiheitlichen* (dF) are the most Eurosceptic party under scrutiny here. They are the only party that portrays the EU in a manner that their mean evaluation lies beyond the -0.5 (or the +0.5) mark. The UfS' Euroscepticism is less pronounced; yet it mirrors a clearly critical position *vis-à-vis* the integration process. The S-TF's position is more ambiguous. Pro and anti-European statements almost offset each

other, with a slight tendency towards pro-Europeanism. Even though the S-TF's support for European integration seems negligible in quantitative terms, this finding is surprising for the following reason: it indicates that irredentism and support for European integration are not *per se* mutually exclusive. I will come back to the empirical relationship between the two concepts in the S-TF's discourse in the next section.

Table 9: Frames of supporting and opposing statements by parties (1989-2015)

	Greens		SVP		dF		UfS		S-TF	
	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
Multicultural	33,2	1,2	15,5	3,8	7,0	2,0	1,9	0,0	5,1	0,0
Nationalistic	1,0	3,6	7,1	3,8	20,9	22,2	13,2	30,3	17,9	23,5
Economic Prosperity	4,5	4,8	12,9	8,4	18,6	4,8	35,8	5,9	5,1	0,0
Labor & social security	5,0	11,9	8,1	21,4	0,0	9,5	3,8	6,7	0,0	5,9
Ecology	39,7	54,8	5,8	29,0	9,3	16,7	28,3	12,6	2,6	14,7
Political efficiency	10,1	15,5	12,9	16,8	16,3	25,0	13,2	10,1	12,8	17,6
Security	0,0	0,0	1,3	0,8	7,0	3,6	0,0	1,7	2,6	0,0
Territorial Constraining	2,0	2,4	0,0	14,5	2,3	15,1	0,0	32,8	2,6	38,2
Territorial Empowering	4,5	6,0	36,5	1,5	18,6	1,2	3,8	0,0	51,3	0,0
Total percentage	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
Mean position	+0,32		+0,38		-0,56		-0,32		+0,09	
N	283		441		295		172		73	

The SVP frames its support for the integration process predominantly by referring to the opportunities European integration offers for enhancing the province's level of self-government. More than a third of all supportive statements entail frames that fall into the "territorial" category. All of these frames highlight the empowering effect that European integration is said to have on sub-state territorial entities. The remaining statements used by the SVP to underline its support for European integration can be attributed to the other categories to almost equal shares. The predominance of pro-European, territorial frames is observable throughout the entire period under investigation. Thus, the hypothesis of the "fall of the Europe of the Regions" (Hepburn 2008), i.e. the assumption that regionalists have become increasingly disappointed with the EU in the last decade or so, does not hold true for the SVP's discourse. The SVP's main driver for skepticism towards European integration is its concern for the South Tyrolean environment (grouped under the "Other utilitarian" category). This focus largely originates from controversies about transit traffic over the Alps, i.e. the Brenner Pass and the A 22 highway that connects the South of Germany with Northern Italy. Various attempts to limit heavy goods traffic in the area have been

outlawed by the European Court of Justice due to their incompatibility with the Union's Free movement of goods-principle (Obwexer 2015). Thus, skeptical statements by the SVP's parliamentarians frequently contain criticism of the EU's alleged ignorance *vis-à-vis* the sensitive alpine biosphere and its inhabitants. Yet, opposition to the excessive traffic density over the Brenner is not limited to the SVP's statements. All parties express reservations about the issue to varying degrees. Unsurprisingly, the Greens take the lead when it comes to capitalizing on this topic.

The Greens predominantly criticize the European Union for alleged deficiencies of its environmental policies. In this respect, the issue of transalpine traffic plays an important role. Other critical statements that apply ecology frames refer to the authorization of genetically modified food, the exploitation of nuclear energy etc. Ecology frames are used in over 54% of all EU-critical statements expressed by the Greens. This criticism notwithstanding, South Tyrol's Green party is essentially pro-European. Most importantly in quantitative terms, it acknowledges the Union's attempts to coordinate environmental policies and is highly supportive of the cultural aspects of European integration. Unlike all other regionalist parties, the Greens do not voice particular preferences about the relationship between the Union and South Tyrol's territorial autonomy. Thus, the Green's discourse on Europe is largely in line with what could be expected from their position on the cultural conflict dimension: they endorse most components of the integration process but are critical *vis-à-vis* certain policies.

The Liberals' discourse is clearly dominated by anti-EU frames. The largest share of critical statements applies frames according to which the EU's policy-making is inefficient (overly "bureaucratic"), corrupt and opaque. Other frequently used critical frames relate to the EU's alleged potential to undermine the South Tyrolean identity, either by challenging the local provisions for minority protection or by enhancing immigration to the province. *Die Freiheitlichen* also shape a considerable share of their anti-Europeanism by referring to the EU's lax environmental policies. Particularly during the 1990s, however, the Liberals also hoped for EU-induced opportunities in the field of minority protection and provincial self-government. This explains the attribution of the party's few supportive frames. The position of *die Freiheitlichen* relates to our propositions in two distinctive ways. Firstly, their criticism of the workings of the EU institutions can be linked to a more general hostility towards

established modes of policy-making. From this perspective, it is the Liberals' peripherality in the South Tyrolean party system and their exclusion from government that drives this party's skepticism towards the governing elites at all levels of government, including the EU. Secondly, the Liberals' position on the GAL-TAN dimension yields an extensive application of nationalistic frames. On the one hand, according to *die Freiheitlichen*, the division between the language groups in South Tyrol must be maintained regardless of the liberal principles endorsed by the EU; on the other hand, the integration process is rejected due to the foreign cultural influences that it might bring about, e.g. via the facilitation of immigration into South Tyrol. In sum, the Liberals' Eurosceptic discourse mirrors the party's peripherality in institutional and ideological terms.

The UfS' position towards European integration can more easily be attributed to its ethnoregionalist *raison d'être*. Cultural-nationalistic and territorial-constraining frames amount to almost two thirds of the party's Eurosceptic statements. In contrast to *die Freiheitlichen*, the UfS' cultural discourse is not so much concerned with immigration but focusses predominantly on the EU's effects on the ethnic quota system and other provisions for minority protection. In a similar fashion, the UfS is highly critical of the EU's impact on territorial autonomy and the Union's effect on the relationship between Austria and Italy. The latter concerns were particularly salient in the early 1990s when South Tyrol's autonomy was considered to be predominantly a matter of international law. Thus, the UfS' discourse meets the expectation that irredentism and regional integration are *a priori* conflicting concepts. According to this party, Austria's status as South Tyrol's "protecting power" (*Schutzmacht*), has been undermined by Austria's accession to the EU.

The S-TF's discourse on European integration is more complex. On the one hand, the S-TF includes its irredentist demands in a discourse on a post-sovereign "Europe of the Regions". This new European order is portrayed as a patchwork of territorial entities that serve to maintain the cultural distinctiveness of the peoples of Europe. In order to back up its territorial demands, the S-TF presents itself as a representative of a broader, Europe-wide movement and frequently refers to other secessionist parties in the EU. In this context, the S-TF occasionally commends the cooperation between Europe's regionalists under the umbrella of the *European Free Alliance* (EFA; see De Winter and Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro 2002). Consequently, more than

half of the positive statements on the EU apply territorial empowering frames. On the other hand, the S-TF shares the other secessionists and irredentists' concerns regarding the EU's impact on minority protection and territorial self-government. Thus, it can be argued that the gap between the ideal conceptualization of the EU and the perceptions of the Union's *de facto* make-up is particularly pronounced in the case of the S-TF. Similar to the UfS, however, the S-TF's ethnoregionalist core ideology inspires by far the largest share of all statements on European integration.

To sum up, while the SVP structures its pro-European discourse predominantly with territorial empowering frames, the Greens put more emphasis on their multicultural-ecologist ideology. The Liberals' arguments about the EU resemble those of other populist right parties but are frequently combined with the party's regionalist aspirations. The UfS and the S-TF portray their stances on European integration as an extension of their ethnoregionalist demands. While the former comes to the conclusion that the EU constitutes a threat to South Tyrol's autonomy and its fundamentals in international law, the latter deems European integration to be a potential path to redefine statehood, sovereignty and territorial autonomy.

The next section will elaborate on each party's discourse in more detail. This serves three goals. Firstly, a closer look will be taken at the developments of each party's stances and potential changes over time. Secondly, the impact of context factors at the provincial and the European level will be assessed. Lastly, the analysis will allow the categorization of each party's position on the EU with greater precision.

5.2 The Südtiroler Volkspartei

5.2.1 Prospects for cross-border cooperation in a "Europe of the Regions": the SVP before 1995

The SVP endorsed international cooperation and regional integration from its early years onwards. According to Scantamburlo and Pallaver (2015, 157), this stance stems from the SVP's constant search for allies in its struggle for enhanced autonomy for South Tyrol. In the 1950s and 1960s, international support for the SVP's cause primarily came from the United Nations that passed two resolutions in 1960 and 1961, putting increased pressure on the Italian authorities to renegotiate the status of the province.

As early as 1972, i.e. the year in which South Tyrol's Second Statute of Autonomy entered into force, the SVP explicitly referred to the European Community in its party program and expressed its support for closer economic and political integration in Europe. Again, this position was driven by the aspiration for the creation of a "European law of ethnic groups, in order to solve the questions of ethnic minorities"⁵ (Statute of the SVP 1972, 39, cited in Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157).

When the European integration process intensified in the late 1980s, South Tyrol and its governing party, the SVP, were facing two substantial changes. Firstly, in 1989, one of the key figures in the struggle for autonomy, the province's longstanding governor Silvius Magnago resigned after 29 years in office. Thus, Mr. Magnago's successor, Luis Durnwalder, took over the leadership of the provincial government after decades of personal continuity in this position. Secondly, South Tyrol's autonomy provisions were about to be fully implemented in the early 1990s (*Paketabschluss*). Consequently, while the expansion of the *acquis communautaire* fostered greater (legal) homogeneity in Europe, South Tyrol was due to perpetuate its long-desired special provisions within the Italian legal system.

In this context, the SVP continued to uphold its pro-European position, even though it simultaneously highlighted the need to preserve regional particularities in an increasingly interconnected Europe. Three recurrent patterns of the SVP's support for European integration stand out in the period around 1990. Firstly, the SVP was clearly in favor of enhanced market integration. Particularly those party members with a close relationship to the *South Tyrolean Economy Association (Südtiroler Wirtschaftsring)* emphasized the opportunities that the Common Market was expected to bring about for the South Tyrolean economy. Secondly, the institutional changes that were initiated by the Single European Act and the Maastricht Treaty led the SVP to actively campaign for a "Europe of the Regions". The EC institutions were considered a guarantee for the persistence of minority rights and a harbinger of new models of political decision-making. In short, European integration was thought to gradually undermine Italy's influence over South Tyrol. Thirdly, the SVP highly appreciated the prospect of a "borderless" Europe. The (then potential) accession of Austria was deemed an unprecedented possibility to intensify the province's cooperation with its kin-state and with the *Bundesland Tirol*, in particular. These

expectations nurtured a (vaguely defined) discourse about a “European Region of Tyrol” (see Pallaver 2005).

As the SVP’s notion of a “Europe of the Regions” went hand in hand with demands for enhanced cross-border cooperation, the party’s position on European integration in the early 1990s came close to what Keating (1998, 57) defines as “post-sovereigntist”. Traditional statehood was no longer considered a prerequisite for political authority or national self-expression. Rather, the combination of supranational integration and devolution was deemed a viable alternative to classical forms of popular self-determination. As the leader of the SVP’s parliamentary group, Hubert Frasnelli put it,

*South Tyrol is at the center of the grand process of European Unification in Diversity. This process of unification leads to overcoming the conception of the nation state beyond the EC and to the emphasis of regional spaces simultaneously [...]. Those advances allow for the enhanced cooperation in the entire regional space of the historical Tyrol and beyond.*⁶

Frasnelli (56th session, X. LP; 09/05/1990)

This position notwithstanding, the SVP was well aware of the member states’ *de facto* influence on the EU. Thus, the party considered the accession of South Tyrol’s “fatherland” Austria in 1995 an opportunity to strengthen the province’s voice in the supranational arena. Austria’s representatives in the Council and the European Parliament, so the argument went, would provide an additional channel for the articulation of South Tyrolean interests in Brussels and Strasbourg.

One specific policy field in which the SVP reckoned with Austria’s support was the limitation of transit traffic over the Brenner Pass (see above). Although the *Volkspartei* occasionally framed this problem as the result of an increased intra-European trade, its response to this question was essentially European, too. The SVP demanded for the Europe-wide coordination of environmental and transport policies and hoped that Austrian authorities would further the EU’s responsiveness concerning the particularities of the Alpine biosphere.

In a similar fashion, the SVP maintained an ambiguous stance towards the EC’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the early 1990s. On the one hand, South Tyrolean farmers (a traditional core group of the SVP’s electorate) profited significantly from the Community’s monetary contributions. On the other hand, the SVP feared the EC’s lack of sensitivity for the particular needs of the province’s

mountain farmers and frequently expressed its concerns with regards to their products' competitiveness in the Common Market (see Massetti 2009b, 190).

To summarize, despite its objections against some European policies, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* incorporated the two basic elements of a *Euroenthusiastic* party in the early 1990s: it supported the core ideas of political and economic integration and was largely optimistic about the *de facto* development of the integration process. Most importantly, the SVP viewed its core policies on the center-periphery dimension and its support for European integration as mutually reinforcing endeavors, which yielded its enthusiasm for a "Europe of the Regions" and the enlargement of the Union.

5.2.2 The SVP's responses to the "constitutionalization" of Europe: 1995-2005

Austria's accession to the EU in early 1995 once again triggered the debates about the creation of a "European Region of Tyrol". In this context, the SVP increasingly dissociated itself from any ethnic perceptions of cross-border cooperation and portrayed this transnational project as a genuinely multilinguistic and multicultural one. Consequently, the SVP expanded its efforts of interregional collaboration to all parts of the historical territory of Tyrol, i.e. also to the predominantly Italian speaking Province of Trento (see Pallaver 2005).

For the SVP, this prospective Euroregion related to the wider process of European integration in two different ways. On the one hand, the EU provided the framework for closer cooperation between the regions north and south of the Brenner Pass, e.g. by facilitating cross-border mobility. On the other hand, the enhanced cooperation with the *Land Tirol* and the Trentino was deemed to be an opportunity to more effectively lobby the European institutions and to join forces against potential "centralist threats" that might emerge from Brussels and the national capitals. In the words of governor Durnwalder,

*All three countries – the Bundesland Tirol, South Tyrol and the Trentino – are threatened by state centralism and enforced conformity [...]. The future European Region of Tyrol should not only be a protective cloak [...] but should become the political frame for the common will of the three countries and their inhabitants, to give them a voice in Rome, in Vienna, and especially in Brussels.*⁷

Durnwalder (39th session, XI. LP; 10/01/1995)

Like in earlier years, the perceived European paternalism was criticized on the basis of the EU's alleged ignorance with regards to the particularities of the alpine regions. This critique was particularly pronounced around 2000, when the supranational institutions adapted their expenditures to the prospective incorporation of the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries and increasingly centered their discourse on patterns of competitiveness and innovation (*Agenda 2000; Lisbon-Strategy*).

At the same time, nonetheless, the SVP highly appreciated the implementation of the Schengen agreement and the introduction of the Euro. According to the *Volkspartei*, both measures facilitated the rapprochement between North and South Tyrol and thus contributed to uniting the historical region under the umbrella of what party officials called "a European spirit". Moreover, given the SVP's commitment to market economy and free trade, the party expected the common currency to boost the local economy by further diminishing economic barriers between the member states.

Around 2000, the European Court of Justice ruled on two cases that were intimately related to South Tyrol's minority protection provisions (see Chapter 2.2.1). Although the decisions on *Bickel/Franz* and *Angonese* questioned essential elements of South Tyrol's language group-based consociational model of democracy, the SVP maintained a low profile on how to respond to these rulings. Only when tackled by the oppositional parties, the SVP declared that it considered the ECJ's opinion to be easily reconcilable with the principles of South Tyrol's autonomy and downplayed the rulings' effects on the minority protection legislation in the province.

In general, the SVP deemed the *acquis communautaire* to be largely compatible with special legal provisions for ethnic minorities. Thus, the party used the 2004 enlargement of the Union as a new impetus for demanding guarantees for minority rights at the European level. With regards to the economic effects of the EU's enlargement, however, the SVP maintained a rather ambiguous stance.

In the early 2000s, the SVP's discourse on a "Europe of the Regions" again gained momentum. As the European Convention drafted what was supposed to become the European Constitution, the SVP's claims, nevertheless, became more pragmatic compared to the previous decade. With regards to the EU's institutions, the party called for an enhanced role of the Committee of the Regions and a right for sub-state entities to call on the European Court of Justice. Moreover, the party demanded the

strengthening of the principle of subsidiarity and the creation of safeguards for minority rights at the European level. Ultimately though, the Constitutional Treaty entailed little innovations with regards to these demands. Yet, the SVP opted to circumvent the topic in the *Landtag*, rather than to criticize it. This evasive strategy can also be interpreted in the light of a reevaluation of the “European Region of Tyrol”. After all, by the mid-2000s, the concept had turned out to be of limited significance in the EU’s multilevel governance system.

In sum, in the context of the EU’s constitutionalization process, the SVP moderated its “post-sovereigntist” stance and adopted a more pragmatic approach towards the process of European integration. The party maintained its essentially Euroenthusiastic character, despite a somewhat more skeptical evaluation of Brussels’ sensitivity for local particularities. However, the response to this potential “centralist” threat was, again, closer cooperation within Europe and across borders.

5.2.3 Cross-border cooperation as a response to secessionist threats: the SVP 2006-2015

In the second half of the 2000s, three patterns substantially influenced the SVP’s discourse on European integration. Firstly, by creating a legal framework for regional cross-border cooperation, the EU allowed for the institutionalization of the “European Region of Tyrol” under European law. The respective *European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation* (EGTC) was established in 2011. Since then, this entity has served as a central element of the SVP’s pro-European discourse. Secondly, the economic crisis in the European Union required Italy to implement severe austerity measures. Although the effects of the crisis have been relatively limited in South Tyrol, the SVP used the new circumstances as a justification to demand extensive taxing powers in order to increase the province’s financial autonomy from Italy. Lastly, the SVP portrayed the existing autonomy provisions and their potential further development within the European Union as a viable alternative to the emerging secessionist, irredentist and anti-European claims from its political competitors.

With the *Regulation on a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation*, the European Union provided a legal framework for the creation of transnational entities in order to strengthen economic and social cohesion in border regions (Regulation

[EC] 1082/2006). Although these “groupings” can only assume a limited number of responsibilities, the SVP considered this piece of legislation to be an ideal opportunity for the institutionalization of the Tyrolean “European Region”. However, it took until 2011 for the *Land Tirol*, the Provinces of Bolzano and Trento and the respective member states to implement the required legislations to establish the EGTC in the region around the Brenner Pass (Engl and Zwilling 2013).

Roughly at the time the EGTC was prepared, the split of the *Union für Südtirol* and the emergence of the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* led to the intensification of irredentist demands in South Tyrol. Thus, the SVP presented this new form of cross-border cooperation as a more practicable form of “unifying” the territories of the historical County of Tyrol. According to the SVP’s MPs, the European Region, alongside other elements of the European integration process, helps render state borders irrelevant. Thus, claims for border modifications, via secession or irredentism, are said to be anachronistic and in sharp contrast to a peaceful and unified Europe. The SVP’s attempts to take the wind out of the irredentists’ sails also translated into more determined positions during negotiations with the Italian state authorities on economic issues. After decades of agreement on the allocation of taxing powers, the SVP demanded extensive taxing authority for the province as part of a prospective “full autonomy” in its 2013 election manifesto (SVP 2013; see Alber and Zwilling 2014, 54f). Although the SVP does not actively link this claim to its discourse on the European Union, it is an unequivocal response to the secessionist demands that were bolstered by Italy’s difficult situation in the Euro crisis.

In short, while Italy’s and South Tyrol’s situation became more complicated in light of the Europe-wide economic downturn, the SVP responded to the situation by strengthening its pro-European profile and by challenging its secessionist competitors by upholding the virtues of a “regionalized” Europe. This discourse became even more pronounced after the end of Mr. Durnwalder’s decades-long term in office in early 2014. His successor, Arno Kompatscher, equally stresses the benefits of the “European Region” and its role in a new system of multilevel governance. Unlike his precursor, however, Mr. Kompatscher also openly endorses free trade and has not *per se* rejected the controversial free trade agreement TTIP between the EU and the USA. Thus, the protectionist objections that drove the SPV’s skepticism on economic integration in the preceding decades seem to be eroding in the 2010s. The SVP’s

ardent support for open borders in the context of the European refugee crisis (see Chapter 1) is another indicator for the SVP's continuing Euroenthusiastic party position.

5.3 Grüne-Verdi-Vërc

5.3.1 From ambivalence to Euroenthusiasm: the Greens in the 1990s

Since its emergence in the late 1970s, South Tyrol's Green party has campaigned for overcoming the separation between the province's language groups and the corresponding legal provisions, such as the ethnic quota system. In addition to its emphasis on ecological issues, this commitment to the creation of a multicultural (and multilingual) society has shaped the party's discourse on European integration.

Throughout most of the 1990s, the Greens took a relatively low profile on European issues. References to the supranational level never included precise claims with regards to the institutional structure of the EC. Rather, the Greens evaluated European policies in isolation from each other. Given the party's ideology, between 1989 and 1999 over 75% of all statements in the *Landtag* either applied cultural (23%) or ecology (54%) frames. At that time, the Greens interpreted the EC's impact on environmental policies in an ambivalent manner. On the one hand, the Common Market was said to increase road traffic and thus to threaten South Tyrol's alpine ecosystem. On the other hand, Europe-wide cooperation in the field of environmental protection was considered an indispensable tool for ensuring the effectiveness of the respective policies. Furthermore, in the early 1990s, the Greens hoped that the Common Market would deliver incentives for local farmers to increase the production of organic goods. It was believed that South Tyrolian agricultural products could only successfully compete in this market niche.

Contrary to the Greens' ambivalence on the EC's environmental policies, the party considered cultural integration to be predominantly positive. One recurrent argument was (and, in fact, still is) that the intensification of contacts between the peoples of Europe would ultimately help overcome the tensions between the linguistic groups in South Tyrol. In accordance with this multiculturalist stance, the Greens claimed that any form of regional cooperation between the historical parts of Tyrol should also include the Trentino in order to counterbalance potential (German) nationalist

instrumentalizations of the “Euroregion”. Hence, the Greens’ support for a “Europe of the Regions” was moderate and qualified. In 1996, i.e. one year after Austria’s accession to the EU, the leader of the Greens’ parliamentary group, Alessandra Zendron, stated

*It would be interesting to have a serious discussion on the concept of a Europe of the Regions. Here, it is treated as a Europe of peoples and minorities, but instead, I think, we should rebuild a regional identity, not in a linguistic or in a simplified cultural, historical or ethnic sense but in the sense of citizens who live [together] in a certain situation.*⁸

Zendron (86th session, XI. LP; 10/01/1996)

Besides endorsing the EC’s potential effects on the relationship between the language groups in South Tyrol, the Greens supported the Community’s commitment to gender equality. Although in the 1990s the corresponding provisions were largely centered on equal pay and labor market participation (see Defeis 2007), the Greens deemed the corresponding legislation to be crucial for shaping fairer gender relations in South Tyrol.

In sum, throughout most of the 1990s, the South Tyrolean Greens fell short of expressing their principled support for European integration. However, their appreciation for many European policies can be interpreted as a timid adaptation of Euroenthusiastic stances. Particularly in the latter years of that decade, it became increasingly clear that the Greens’ position towards the EU was not just driven by mere Europragmatism but reflected “diffuse” and “specific” support for the integration process.

5.3.2 Cultural integration as a model for South Tyrol? The Greens around 2000

The Greens were the only regionalist party in South Tyrol that explicitly welcomed the ECJ’s decisions regarding the province’s group rights for minority protection. In their parliamentary speeches, the Greens used the Court’s rulings on *Bickel/Franz* and *Angonese* to highlight their rejection of the ethnic quota system and other provisions, which they accused of provoking artificial tensions within the South Tyrolean society. According to this party, the quota system had been a necessary measure to restore equal opportunities for the members of all language groups in the post-war era. Yet, since the implementation of the Statute of Autonomy, they considered it an outdated

and redundant perpetuation of societal divisions along linguistic lines. Consequently, from the late 1990s onwards, the Greens increasingly referred to the ECJ's rulings in order to question the province's arrangements of group rights and to demand a less rigid regime of individual self-ascription to the three autochthonous language groups (*Sprachgruppenzugehörigkeitserklärung*). In addition to explicitly mentioning the ECJ's decisions, the Green party also applied more general references to the EU's legislation in order to justify its multiculturalist positions. In a number of statements, for instance, it highlighted the presumed incompatibility of the province's residence requirements for the reception of specific social rights and the EU's free movement of persons-principle.

As the Greens increasingly exploited the virtues of European integration for their purposes at the provincial level, they also engaged in formulating proposals for the future shape of the European Union. Again, cultural issues played a dominant role in the Greens' respective discourse. At the beginning of the 2000s, the party was particularly supportive with regards to the EU's Charter on Fundamental Rights and emphasized the importance of this document as a core element for a future European Constitution. The Greens' optimism concerning the EU's commitment to democratic values and human rights was further nurtured by the member states' decisive opposition to the inauguration of Austria's center-right government in 2000 (the so-called *sanctions* against the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition under Wolfgang Schüssel). By defending the measures taken against Austria at that time, the Greens were the only regionalist party in South Tyrol to back the EU-14's decision to penalize Schüssel's pact with Jörg Haider's far-right FPÖ. By a similar token, the Greens supported the EU's eastward enlargements in the 2000s primarily due to the anticipated stabilizing effects for the democratic regimes in Central and Eastern Europe.

In the early 2000s, like in the previous decade, the Greens remained ambiguous on their evaluation of the EU's environmental policies. Their criticism of the Union's traffic policies (or the lack thereof) persisted in the new millennium. Moreover, the Greens increasingly expressed their opposition to the EU's approach to genetically modified agricultural products. Contrary to the European Commission's stance, the Greens supported a complete ban of GM crops in the entire Union, or at least an opt-out clause for certain regions or countries. Furthermore, the Greens considered the

Union's labeling requirements for GM food and animal feed to be insufficient. This critique notwithstanding, the Greens continued to endorse a number of European policies in the field of environmental protection. In particular, the party's MPs increasingly appreciated the EU's norms for Environmental Impact Assessments ("EIA Directive") and accused the provincial government on several occasions of not taking these norms sufficiently into account. Thus, in contrast to the assumption according to which opposition parties opt for critical stances *vis-à-vis* the EU, South Tyrol's Green party chose to emphasize the benefits of the Union's environmental policies in order to denounce local elites' spatial planning policies.

In short, as the European Union moved beyond economic integration and increasingly dedicated its policy output to symbolic and cultural issues, e.g. the Charter on Fundamental Rights, the Greens sharpened their profile on European integration and welcomed it as a tool to obtain their multiculturalist policy goals in the domestic arena. The persistence of their critique on environmental policies notwithstanding, they clearly positioned themselves as Euroenthusiasts in the early 2000s.

5.3.3 Promoting multicultural solidarity in a time of crisis: the Greens around 2010

As the political and economic situation in South Tyrol and Europe became more tumultuous, the Greens perpetuated their pro-European position on two dimensions. Firstly, according to the Greens, European solidarity constituted a prerequisite to tackle the Union's economic and social problems in the late 2000s. They claimed a "communitarization" of public debt and demanded coordinated social and economic policies in order to counterbalance what they considered the "excesses" of capitalism. Secondly, they once again emphasized the advantages of European integration for overcoming nationalist aspirations in South Tyrol. As the province's right-wing regionalists increasingly expressed their secessionist agendas, the Greens began to more openly back the existing autonomy provisions and called for them to be "embedded" within a European framework. Moreover, the party started to portray regional cooperation as an alternative to separatism and irredentism. In this context, the Greens appreciated the EGTC as a credible foundation for cross-border

collaboration beyond ethnic nationalist folklore. In 2012, the spokesman of the Greens' parliamentary group, Hans Heiss, summarized this argument as follows:

*We believe in a pathway of autonomy that does not erect new borders but that systematically abdicates old borders. It grants this country an independence within the national sovereignty [of Italy] but foremost within a European context. There is no need for self-determination or separation, but for a consistent awareness that this pathway will persist...*⁹

Heiss (145th session, XIV. LP; 08/05/2012)

While the “European dimension” of South Tyrol's autonomy continues to be a recurrent topic in the mid-2010s, the Greens' optimism about the EU's answers to contemporary social problems is recently becoming more restrained. The party's critique of the negotiations about the TTIP free trade agreement and the Union's migration policies are a case in point. This criticism notwithstanding, the Greens continue to seek “European” responses to the EU's current challenges on the basis of their multicultural-internationalist ideology. Hence, after a somewhat unclear position towards European integration in the 1990s, the Greens maintain a markedly Euroenthusiastic profile since the turn of the millennium.

5.4 Die Freiheitlichen

5.4.1 Support for the idea, rejection of the facts: die Freiheitlichen in the 1990s

When *die Freiheitlichen* were founded in 1992 and first elected into the provincial parliament the year after, their position on European integration largely mirrored the ambiguous stances of their Austrian sister party at that time (Fallend 2008, 211; Pallaver 2013, 123). Like the FPÖ, South Tyrol's Liberals argued that they supported European integration “in principle” but rejected its implementation following the Maastricht Treaty. Yet, they expressed this position predominantly for reasons relating to South Tyrol's particular geographic and cultural situation.

The Liberals' principled support for the integration process stemmed from two different factors. Firstly, European integration, and Austria's accession in particular, was seen as an opportunity to overcome the allegedly illegitimate border (“*Unrechtsgrenze*”) between the *Bundesland Tirol* and South Tyrol. Secondly, in the 1990s, *die Freiheitlichen* considered a prospective “Europe of the Regions” a promising path for the province's emancipation from Italy.

Contrary to the SVP's vision of this concept, however, the Liberals referred to a "Europe of the Regions" in terms of a desired model for the future rather than considering it a part of the already existing European polity. According to *die Freiheitlichen*, the Treaty of Maastricht never entailed any realistic prospects for the creation of a "post-national" Europe. Instead, the 1992 document was said to have perpetuated the existence of nation states within the Union. Moreover, the Treaty was accused of falling short on mentioning the role of minorities and sub-state entities in a future Europe. In line with this position, *die Freiheitlichen* also viewed the negotiations about the Treaty of Amsterdam predominantly negatively, criticizing it for similar shortcomings like its forerunner.

Thus, while the Liberals expressed their principled support for European integration throughout the 1990s, they overtly rejected the implementation of the European project at the same time. Given this seemingly contradictory position, *die Freiheitlichen* closely resemble what Kopecký and Mudde (2002) describe as *Eurosceptics*, i.e. a party that combines "diffuse" support for and repudiation of the *de facto* shape of the EU. This ambiguity is also reflected by the Liberal's stances on specific policies. Towards the end of the 1990s, the party, for instance, supported the introduction of the Euro as a measure that would set free South Tyrol's economy from the invidious Italian currency system. Yet the party continuously warned of rising prices following the introduction of the common currency. By the same token, the Liberals welcomed the implementation of the Schengen agreement due to the resulting facilitation of cross-border cooperation with South Tyrol's northern neighbors. Nevertheless, they accused the abolition of border controls of fostering international crime and undermining security in their domestic constituency. Regional cooperation between the *Bundesland Tirol* and South Tyrol was fitted into the Liberals' discourse by simultaneously sponsoring references to the "European Region of Tyrol" and questioning the functionality of actually existing transnational projects.

In other words, in the 1990s, the Liberal's approach of backing European integration in principle but not in its *de facto* shape is reflected in two dimensions. Firstly, the party criticized the European Union's institutions and their responsiveness to sub-state actors but hoped that a "Europe of the Regions" would materialize in the (rather distant) future. Secondly, the Liberals maintained ambiguous positions towards the

Union's most symbolic policies, such as the common currency or the creation of the Schengen area.

5.4.2 From skepticism to rejection: die Freiheitlichen in the 2000s

As the realization of a “post-national” Europe became more and more unfeasible in the 2000s, *die Freiheitlichen* moderated their diffuse support for European integration. They began to question essential elements of the integration process and thus denounced its underlying ideas as well as its *de facto* implementation.

The party carried on to denounce the prevalence of nation states in the Union's decision making processes and increasingly linked this criticism to accusations of the EU's alleged democratic deficit. The European institutions were blamed for lacking transparency and responsiveness to its citizens and of being too aloof to take the “common people's” concerns into account. In contrast, the Liberals presented small-scale regions as “historically grown” alternatives to Europe's nation states and the EU, and argued that grassroots democracy would thrive in these regions. The “European Region of Tyrol” was said to be one of these promising territorial models. *Die Freiheitlichen*, however, remained rather vague on the future conceptualization of this Euroregion or its status within Europe. The following statement by party chairman Pius Leitner provides an example of the Liberals' anti-Europeanism and their hazy stances on a “post-national” Europe.

If decisions are always taken at the very top, it is not surprising that the bottom does not back them. As long as this does not change, support for the top-heavy European Union will never be substantial. Brussels is a hydrocephalus [...]. Where regional differences are given, you need to take them into account. It is easier to do this with Euroregions, which need to be institutionalized, rather than with the ancient nation states.¹⁰

Leitner (127th session, XII. LP; 09/10/2001)

The Liberals' increasingly anti-European profile also translated into a more decisive opposition to specific policies (or even to the EU's intervention in certain policy fields as such). The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (*Agenda 2000*), for instance, was said to be diametrically opposed to the interests of South Tyrolean farmers. Furthermore, this critique was increasingly mixed with implausible arguments, such as the warnings that the EU would enforce the redirection of drinking water from the Alps to more arid regions of the Union.

The European Union's enlargements in the 2000s constituted a particularly sensitive topic for the South Tyrolean "Liberals". Firstly, they feared that the accession of countries from CEE would augment the volume of transit traffic through South Tyrol. Secondly, facilitated market access for products from CEE was said to have devastating effects on the South Tyrolean economy, particularly in the agricultural sector. By referring to these issues, *die Freiheitlichen* portrayed the expansion of the EU as a threat to what many conservatives considered to be essential pillars of Tyrol's identity (i.e. the alpine environment and mountain farming). In so doing, the Liberals tried to position themselves as a more reliable defender of these "traditionally Tyrolean" concerns than the SVP. In accordance with their nationalist-protectionist ideology, the Liberals' opposition to EU enlargement was furthermore framed in terms of sponsoring "excessive" immigration and thus of fostering social problems in the province. Similar to the FPÖ in Austria, *die Freiheitlichen* also stressed the accession countries' alleged insufficiencies with regards to environmental standards and minority protection (Fallend 2008, 215ff). Accession negotiations with Turkey were forcefully condemned on the basis of supposedly insurmountable cultural differences that were said to exclude Turkey from the concert of European states.

The Liberals' stance on EU enlargement reveals that the party's increasing rejection of European integration in the 2000s was related to two patterns of domestic party competition. On the one hand, their critical position reflected strategic considerations. The references to issues that the SVP has traditionally promoted as crucial elements of the (South) Tyrolean identity can be interpreted as an attempt to challenge the government party's claim to be the exclusive defender of such concepts. On the other hand, the Liberals' critique of the Union's expansion was driven by a central component of the party's ideology. Hence, they claimed to give priority to the well-being of those they consider their co-nationals while denying "outsiders" the possibility to become part of this privileged *in-group* (e.g. wealthy, allegedly morally superior Western Europeans; see Mudde 2007, Chapter 3). In more general terms, the Liberals' growing skepticism towards the EU seemed to stem from this particular combination of strategy and ideology.

To sum up, while *die Freiheitlichen* maintained their pessimistic stances about the *de facto* development of the European Union throughout the 2000s, their principled

support for European integration gradually eroded during that time. The number of positive statements on European issues was extremely limited and referred to isolated policies of only secondary importance. Sporadic assertions of support for the idea of European cooperation were counterbalanced by the aggressive anti-European rhetoric at other times. Thus, starting from the late 1990s, *die Freiheitlichen* shifted from the Eurosceptic to the outright Eurorejecting camp (Kopecký and Mudde 2002). The driver behind this change in party position seemed to be a combination of strategical and ideological considerations.

5.4.3 EU membership following secession? The Liberals' ambiguities in the 2010s

Around 2010, *die Freiheitlichen* substantially modified their territorial goals and abandoned their vaguely defined discourse on the "European Region of Tyrol". What followed were claims for an independent "Free State of South Tyrol". The (potential) relationship between this proposed Free State and the European Union, however, remains unclear for two reasons. On the one hand, the Liberals continue to express their rejection of the European project and have even aggravated their critique in some respects. On the other hand, they released a document titled the "Constitution of the Free State of South Tyrol", which outlines the basic ideas concerning an independent South Tyrol and paradoxically suggests that the Free State should aim for membership in the European Union (Die Freiheitlichen 2012).

The ambiguity of the Liberal's position towards the EU becomes even more confusing in light of the genesis of their current discourse. In line with their critique of the Union's nation state logic, *die Freiheitlichen* decidedly denounced the intergovernmental mode of European crisis management around 2010. The resulting economic policies were criticized from two perspectives. Firstly, they were said to be the outcome of opaque and undemocratic bargaining. Secondly, these policies were accused of exacerbating the needs of the citizens and of enforcing unfair austerity measures. This critique, however, was not limited to the EU but was also directed against Italian state authorities. The latter were accused of pursuing unsatisfactory economic policies and of being mere "puppets" of "Brussels' bureaucrats". In view of these presumed calamities, the Liberals argued that a prosperous future for South Tyrol would only be feasible if the province seceded from Italy in order to escape the

undemocratic fiscal policies enforced by the EU. South Tyrol's hypothetical membership in the European Union would thus (re)integrate the territory into a supranational polity that (in part) triggered secessionist aspirations in the first place. References by party members to other (mostly decidedly pro-European) secessionist movements in Scotland or Catalonia blur the picture of the Liberals' position towards the EU even more.

The party's confusing stances on secession and EU membership notwithstanding, *die Freiheitlichen* continue to harshly criticize the European Union in their day-to-day political activities. Particularly since the initiation of the migration crisis in 2014, the Liberals have intensified their accusations against the European institutions' mismanagement and ignorance *vis-à-vis* the "common citizens'" concerns.

Thus, while the Liberals were skeptical towards the *de facto* implementation of the European integration process throughout their existence, their current position with regards to their principled approach to the EU is not at all clear. Depending on the evaluated sources, the party's position can be described as either Eurosceptic or "Eurorejecting". Following its members' statements in day-to-day politics, however, the party grew consistently more anti-European in the course of its history, which rather suggests the classification as Eurorejects.

5.5 Union für Südtirol – BürgerUnion für Südtirol

5.5.1 European integration through the prism of international relations: the UfS in the early 1990s

The *Union für Südtirol* was founded as an alliance of hardliners on South Tyrol's territorial question in 1989. The party refused to accept the autonomy provisions negotiated by the SVP, and campaigned for the province's right to self-determination. Consequently, the UfS opposed Austria's support for the 1969 autonomy-*Package* and the country's "declaration of dispute settlement" (*Streitbeilegungserklärung*) following the *Package's* full implementation in 1992. The UfS' opposition to Austria's *de facto* foreign policy notwithstanding, the party firmly insisted on the international dimension of South Tyrol's minority problem and was eager to stress Austria's role as the province's protecting power (*Schutzmacht*).

Given the UfS' commitment to keep the South Tyrolean question on the agenda of international politics, the party largely viewed European integration through this prism. Particularly the former SVP vice governor and cofounder of the UfS, Alfons Benedikter, expressed a predominantly anti-European discourse based on his perception of the international dimension of South Tyrol's future. According to Benedikter, Austria abandoned its responsibility towards South Tyrol for the sake of EC membership and by acquiescing Italy's territorial integrity via the acceptance of the Maastricht Treaty. Austria's accession to the European Community, so the argument continued, reshaped the relationship between Austria and Italy in such a manner that all bilateral agreements between the two countries were subordinated to the EC's legal framework. Hence, the relevance of the 1946 *Gruber-De Gasperi Agreement* and all subsequent efforts undertaken by Austria to assure self-government for the South Tyrolean minority were said to be undermined by the EC's 1995 enlargement.

South Tyrol was intentionally sacrificed by the SVP and the so-called protecting power on the altar of the EC. And this sacrifice was crowned by the Maastricht Treaty [...]. The European Union acknowledges the national identity of the twelve member states, and not of the peoples, who live in Europe [...]. This gives a carte blanche to assimilate the minorities that are not compatible with that identity [...]. And by joining [the Union] and becoming a partner of the Maastricht Treaty, Austria recognizes [...] the national identity of Italy, including South Tyrol, and [accepts] that the Treaty of Maastricht derogates the Treaty of Paris.¹¹

Benedikter (2nd session, XI. LP; 13/01/1994)

The warnings of the devastating effects of Austria's EU membership became less frequent after 1995. However, the UfS did not substantially modify its position in this respect throughout the 1990s. In more general terms, the party continued to accuse the European Community of perpetuating the predominance of nation states in Europe and did not see a reasonable possibility for the realization of a "Europe of the Regions" in the near future. Furthermore, the UfS criticized the Italian authorities for marginalizing the country's regions and autonomous provinces with regards to the formulation of Italy's positions *vis-à-vis* the European institutions and concerning these entities' leeway in implementing EC legislation.

In addition to the territorial component of the UfS' anti-European stance, the party insisted on the maintenance of the ethnic quota system and related group rights regardless of potential incompatibilities with the *acquis communautaire*. The party's MPs claimed, for instance, that the free movement of persons undermined the

effectivity of South Tyrol's residence requirements for certain political and social rights and gave clear priority to the latter provisions. On this basis, the UfS openly rejected the introduction of the European Union citizenship, as they feared that voting rights for newcomers would substantially challenge the political balance between the autochthonous language groups in the province. This argument was underlined by recurrent warnings of a massive influx of French citizens of Maghrebi descent who would be allowed to vote in South Tyrol following the establishment of the Union citizenship.

These somewhat bewildered objections notwithstanding, the UfS largely welcomed economic integration in the 1990s and considered the EC's economic liberalism a remedy for state monopolies or excessive market interventions by the provincial government (for example in the energy sector). Moreover, the UfS highlighted the importance of Europe-wide cooperation in certain policy areas, e.g. in the field of environmental protection.

The UfS' initial position towards European integration can thus be summarized as follows: the party supported (some of) the basic elements of the integration process but was extremely hostile to the nation state logic that underlay this process and the consequences that this organizational rationale was believed to have for South Tyrol's future. In more abstract terms, the UfS expressed diffuse support for European integration but largely rejected its *de facto* implementation. Thus, in the early 1990s, the UfS classifies as what Kopecký and Mudde (2002) defined as Eurosceptics.

5.5.2 Reformulating Euroscepticism: the UfS around 2000

As the actual effects of the fully implemented "Paket"-autonomy and Austria's membership in the EU became evident in the second half of the 1990s, the UfS gradually gave up its initial objections against European integration. Particularly after the demission of Alfons Benedikter in 1998, the party's discourse on Europe was remarkably moderated and the recurrent references to the international status of South Tyrol's autonomy were replaced by more issue-specific statements. The UfS' newly defined position towards European integration was characterized by two distinctive patterns. On the one hand, the party changed its previous critique of the

Union's nation state rationale into a more positive discourse of a prospective "Europe of the Regions". The European Union was no longer portrayed as a substantial threat to South Tyrol's autonomy or its safeguards in international law. Instead, the party acknowledged the EU's potential for facilitating cooperation with the *Bundesland Tirol*, e.g. via the Schengen agreement. On the other hand, the UfS continued to condemn the subsequent alterations of the Maastricht Treaty for their ignorance of Europe's sub-state entities and referred to a "Europe of the Regions" as a desired but vaguely defined and distant vision. What obscured the UfS' new conception of a "Europe of the Regions" was the fact that it used this term seemingly interchangeably with the concept of a "Europe of the peoples". Moreover, the party linked this idea to a somewhat opaque stance on South Tyrol's territorial question. The following extract from a resolution proposed by the UfS' parliamentary group in 1999 is revealing in this respect.

*The solution of the South Tyrolean question is not provided by the definite integration of South Tyrol [...] into Italy but by the reunification with North and East Tyrol and the common aspiration for regional statehood in the Europe of the peoples and regions.*¹²

UfS parliamentary group (14th session, XII. LP; 13/04/1999)

Although the UfS modified its overarching evaluation of the European integration process, the party maintained some of its crucial positions towards a number of European policies. Most notably, the UfS preserved its skepticism towards the EU's impact on group rights and minority protection in South Tyrol. Particularly in light of the ECJ's rulings on South Tyrol's legislation in this area, the UfS stressed the necessity to defend the province's regime of language group separation, the corresponding procedures and legal entitlements. Unlike the SVP, the UfS did not assume that the province's provisions for minority protection were easily reconcilable with the Union's *acquis*. Instead, the party suggested that major efforts were to be undertaken to lobby the European institutions in order to grant their responsiveness to South Tyrol's peculiar minority situation. Thus, while the UfS' concerns with regards to minority protection in the EU remained similar throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the party proposed a more pragmatic approach to the solution of this problem in the latter decade and dropped the populist rhetoric that it had applied earlier. In other policy fields, such as environmental protection, the UfS adopted similarly pragmatic policy stances in the early 2000s but remained predominantly critical towards the Union's *de facto* policy outputs.

To summarize, the UfS abandoned its major objections against the EU by the late 1990s and adopted a somewhat confusing discourse of a “Europe of the peoples and regions” around 2000. Although this new position allowed for more pragmatic stances in a number of policy fields, the UfS remained skeptical with regards to many of the EU’s policy outputs and especially their effects on South Tyrol’s minority provisions. Hence, the alterations of the UfS’ position notwithstanding, the party remained Eurosceptic (see Kopecký and Mudde 2002).

5.5.3 Party split & relaunch: UfS / BürgerUnion around 2010

After years of electoral gains, the UfS suffered a major setback in 2007, following the resignation of a number of party members who subsequently created the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit*. The UfS’ only remaining MP, Andreas Pöder, was reelected in 2008 but had to face a significant loss of votes. In 2011, Mr. Pöder tried to balance these challenging tendencies by relaunching his party as the *BürgerUnion für Südtirol* (People’s Union for South Tyrol). In alliance with other minor parties, the *BürgerUnion* managed to preserve its only mandate in the 2013 provincial elections (see Table 2).

Since the split of the party in 2007, the UfS and its successor organization have maintained a low profile on European issues. The European Union is only mentioned occasionally and the party’s positions towards the EU vary according to the policy field in question. Rhetoric linkages between European integration and minority protection or territorial autonomy are no longer the dominant patterns of the *BürgerUnion*’s discourse on European integration. The stances reflected by this new party’s (few) references to the EU reveal a critical position towards many European policies but a general acceptance of the European polity as such. Thus, although the current position of the *BürgerUnion* is more issue-specific and less salient than that of the previous UfS, the party’s Eurosceptic stance continues to prevail after the party’s split in 2007.

5.6 Süd-Tiroler Freiheit

The *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* emerged after the internal frictions within the UfS led to the resignation of the party’s cofounder Eva Klotz and her followers in 2007. Due to Mrs.

Klotz' mandate, the subsequently established S-TF has been represented in the *Landtag* since its foundation.

In the first years of its existence, the party released relatively few statements on its visions about the European Union. It was only after its surprisingly good performance in the 2008 provincial elections that the party increasingly began to link its radical territorial goals to the process of European integration. The resulting evaluation of this process, however, yielded a highly ambiguous picture. On the one hand, the EU was criticized for being dominated by nation states' interests and ignoring the necessities of national minorities and sub-state territorial entities. The idea according to which European integration would empower existing regions and provinces was dismissed as illusionary. According to the S-TF, only radical modifications of Europe's political map (e.g. secession or shifts of borders) would bring about a satisfactory future for the numerous minorities in Europe. On the other hand, European integration was considered to facilitate such territorial upheavals. The S-TF appreciated its cooperation with other regionalist and secessionist forces within the realm of the *European Free Alliance* (EFA) and portrayed the demands of other independist movements in Europe as an example for South Tyrol's political future. Particularly Scotland's referendum on independence and the radicalization of territorial claims in Catalonia (see Barrio 2014) were said to create a window of opportunity for all national minorities in Europe. The potential results of these political movements were frequently compared to the modifications of borders after the fall of the Iron Curtain. By the same token, the appeal that EC membership had to CEE's countries in the early 1990s was equaled to a vision of a European Union that would redefine sovereignty in absolutely novel terms.

In other words, while the S-TF hardly saw any possibilities for the existing EU institutions to provide opportunities for South Tyrol's future, the party deemed European integration at large to be a potential driver for radical political change on the continent. Thus, the S-TF hoped that the referenda in Catalonia and Scotland would serve as a trigger for a profound transformation of the European Union, its member states and the borders that divide them. Although these expectations did not materialize in the intermediate aftermath of those plebiscites, the S-TF maintains its ambiguous position towards the relationship between the right to self-determination and European integration until the time of writing.

In terms of the evaluation of more tangible policies, the S-TF voices numerous concerns regarding the EU's policies' effects on South Tyrol's minority protection regime. Although the party does not consider the provinces' group rights as *a priori* incompatible with EU law, it strongly emphasizes the necessity to preserve the former provisions. However, unlike the UfS, the S-TF also stresses that the *acquis communautaire* bears several advantages for South Tyrol's German speaking minority. Around 2010, for instance, the S-TF regularly referred to the EU's labeling requirements when calling for a more extensive use of the German language in commercial relations and in public life more generally. In a similar fashion, the S-TF appreciates the EU's achievements in promoting cross-border cooperation with the *Bundesland Tirol*. The party thus acknowledges the advantages of the common currency and the Schengen agreement. Nevertheless, the S-TF continuously urges that these measures must not be mistaken for South Tyrol's exercise of the right to self-determination and its ultimate separation from Italy. Consequently, the party rejected the establishment of the EGTC in 2011, depicting it as a placebo for those who seek reunification with North Tyrol on the one hand; and a dispensable superstructure of already existing common projects between the historical lands of Tyrol on the other. In short, the S-TF assesses individual European policies mostly in line with its ethnoterritorial commitment. Hence, the party appreciates a number of measures that it deems helpful for cross-border cooperation or the strengthening of minority rights (e.g. minority language use) but is skeptical towards policies that are believed to threaten these achievements or to constrain their further development and the party's ultimate goal of territorial self-determination.

To sum up, the S-TF considers European integration a potential driver for far-reaching political innovations in Europe. As the S-TF aims at a radical redefinition of South Tyrol's political and territorial status, it portrays its own agenda as part of a larger Europe-wide aspiration for political upheaval. Yet, the European Union in its current state is, at best, evaluated ambiguously by the S-TF. The party acknowledges the EU's contributions to the amelioration of South Tyrol's minority problem but still considers it an obstacle to the province's right to self-determination. Thus, the S-TF can be classified as Eurosceptic as defined by Kopecký and Mudde (2002).

5.7 Conclusion

Table 10 maps South Tyrol's regionalist parties on Kopecký and Mudde's (2002) two dimensional typology of party positions on European integration. The SVP and the Greens have endorsed diffuse and concrete components of European integration throughout their existence and hence classify as Euroenthusiastic parties. The UfS and the S-TF have both welcomed the idea of European integration but have been skeptical towards the *de facto* implementation of the European project. *Die Freiheitlichen* are the only party that has changed its position throughout its existence. After endorsing the principles of European integration in the 1990s, they expressed a more cohesive anti-European discourse in the 2000s and now uphold a highly ambiguous position that oscillates between Euroscepticism and Eurorejection.

Table 10: Party positions of South Tyrolean regionalist parties on European integration
Source: own compilation

		Support for the idea of European integration	
		<i>Europhile</i>	<i>Europhobe</i>
Support for EU	<i>EU-optimist</i>	Euroenthusiasts SVP Greens	Europragmatists
	<i>EU-pessimist</i>	Eurosceptics die Freiheitlichen (1990s) UfS S-TF	Eurorejects die Freiheitlichen (2000s) die Freiheitlichen (2010s)

The SVP, the UfS and the S-TF all predominantly view European integration through the lens of its impact on territorial autonomy. While the SVP considers the European Union an ally in its struggle for enhanced self-government and cross-border cooperation with North Tyrol, the other two parties represent more reserved positions in this respect. The UfS expected the European integration process to have

devastating effects on South Tyrol's autonomy in its early years but subsequently moderated its stances and called for a diffuse "Europe of the regions and peoples". The S-TF hopes that European integration will bring about far-reaching changes to the continent's geopolitical composition, ultimately allowing for South Tyrol's right to self-determination to be exercised.

In contrast to the other three parties, the Greens and *die Freiheitlichen* largely base their positions towards the European Union on considerations other than that of self-government. The Liberals' position on Europe is close to that of other populist right parties. They reject the integration process for two reasons. Firstly, they are suspicious of allegedly undemocratic elites in Brussels, Rome and elsewhere. Secondly, they challenge the incumbent party by questioning its pro-European policies. Similarly, the Greens' position resemble the stances of their sister parties in other regions. They endorse European integration for its potential to shape a more open and multicultural society in South Tyrol and in Europe as a whole.

The diverging motivations that lie behind parties' positions on European integration helps understand each party's vision of the European Union. All the parties that predominantly assess European integration from the perspective of territorial autonomy share a commitment to some form of "post-sovereign" Europe, be it a "Europe of the Regions", a "Europe of the peoples" or a vaguely defined structure of newly assembled territories. Parties with a less clear-cut profile on the territorial dimension, in turn, seek different conceptions of the ideal European Union. After having given up their endorsement for a "Europe of the Regions", *die Freiheitlichen* now intermingle their rejection of the European unification with a hazy call for "independence in Europe". The Greens view the European Union as a largely multicultural project, in which territory only plays a subordinate role. The party's rejection of secessionism, however, alienates the Greens from "post-sovereigntist" positions and makes them accept the persistence of nation states as the organizational rationale of the European Union.

Consequently, unlike the expectation stated in Chapter 3.4.4., it is not so much a party's position on the territorial conflict dimension that shapes its vision of the European Union. Rather, the importance that a party attributes to the territorial question, relative to other issues, seems to determine whether a party opts for a

“post-sovereign” conception of Europe or upholds other aspects with regards to European integration.

The impact of a regionalist party’s ideology, i.e. its position on the cultural conflict dimension or its proximity to another party family, needs to be interpreted in a similar fashion. The clearer a party’s stance on the cultural conflict dimension is, the more this will impact on the respective party’s discourse on European integration. Thus, given the Liberals’ rather unambiguous TAN-profile, their position towards the EU largely resembles that of other populist right parties. In addition, the party only half-heartedly links European integration to its volatile stance on South Tyrol’s territorial future. By the same token, the Greens’ allocation at the GAL-pole largely contributes to this party’s perception of the European Union. In turn, the SVP’s Christian democratic values might motivate some of its members to support European integration. In light of the party’s *Sammelpartei*-approach, however, territorial considerations surpass all other justifications for the SVP’s pro-Europeanism.

The assumption according to which regionalist parties would become more Eurosceptic in the 2000s due to their disappointment with the EU’s limited responsiveness to sub-state entities’ interests needs to be dismissed. Although after the turn of the millennium South Tyrolean regionalist parties did modify their positions towards the EU, these changes either went to the opposite direction than could have been expected (Greens, UfS), were negligible in scale (SVP) or largely unrelated to the Union’s concerns for sub-state territories (*die Freiheitlichen*).

The presumption related to a party’s position in the domestic party system only holds true for *die Freiheitlichen*. They use their critical stance on European integration to stand out in South Tyrol’s party competition and to challenge the incumbent party. The SVP’s position as a governing party could be interpreted through this lens, too. However, as this party’s scope of action also includes arenas beyond South Tyrol’s provincial level, the evaluation of its position in the domestic party system would require a more careful reassessment of Italy’s multi-level party system (see Pallaver 2011b; Bardi 2007, 725).

In short, the SVP and the Greens are the most pro-European regionalist parties in South Tyrol. They both represent moderate stances on the territorial conflict dimension and thus consider the current state of the European Union to be

compatible with their positions on the center-periphery cleavage. While the SVP predominantly endorses the EU's empowering effects for sub-state entities, the Greens first and foremost appreciate the Union's potential to overcome cultural divisions in South Tyrol and in Europe more generally. The S-TF is very ambiguous on European integration but it hopes that the process will bring about an opportunity for popular self-determination in South Tyrol. The UfS was critical of the EU's impact on South Tyrol's autonomy and minority protection regime but is now rather reserved in this respect. *Die Freiheitlichen* are the most anti-European regionalist party in South Tyrol, *inter alia* due to their harsh critique of the EU's supposed democratic deficit and the resulting negative impacts on the province.

6 Conclusion & outlook

This thesis departed from the finding that the politicization of the European integration process and party system change in South Tyrol were taking place approximately at the same time, i.e. from the late 1980s onwards. These simultaneous developments yielded the following questions: Which policy stances do South Tyrolean regionalist parties hold with regards to the European Union? How do they frame European integration? And how do their arguments relate to other patterns of party competition?

I addressed these research questions by, firstly, reviewing the recent changes in South Tyrol's party system in the context of the province's most decisive historical patterns and its autonomous institutions. Secondly, I summarized the defining characteristics of regionalist parties and argued that the representatives of this party family in South Tyrol can be analyzed in isolation from their statewide competitors. Thirdly, it was suggested that the competition between South Tyrol's regionalist parties is structured by a territorial and a cultural conflict dimension. Fourthly, the particularities of the province's party system were linked to the wider literature on party positions on European integration. This yielded a number of propositions regarding the stances of South Tyrol's regionalist parties on the issue. Lastly, I evaluated the plausibility of these propositions by analyzing the party positions of all regionalist parties in South Tyrol towards the European integration process, drawing on parliamentary debates in the provincial parliament between 1989 and 2015.

The two most relevant changes in South Tyrol's post-war party system have taken place since approximately 1990. On the one hand, the South Tyrolean People's Party (SVP) had attained the implementation of territorial autonomy and far-reaching minority rights by the early 1990s. Subsequently, its claim to be the sole representative of the German and Ladin speaking minority has increasingly been questioned by its emerging regionalist competitors, and its decade-long predominance started to erode. On the other hand, the implosion of the Italian party system led to a profound restructuring of the party competition between the statewide parties in the Province of Bolzano. Given the segmentation of the South Tyrolean party system, it has been argued that regionalist parties from that province can be analyzed in separation from their Italy-wide competitors. In order to single out regionalist parties in South Tyrol, they were defined by their "shared commitment to

sub-state territorial empowerment" (Hepburn 2009, 482; emphasis in original). On this basis, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), the *Grüne-Verdi-Vërc* (Greens), *die Freiheitlichen* (Liberals), the *Union für Südtirol* (UfS) and the *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (S-TF) were classified as regionalist parties in South Tyrol. For the sake of conceptual clarity, the exclusively "ethnic" party *Ladins* and borderline cases such as the *Lega Nord* were *a priori* excluded from the study.

Regionalist parties in South Tyrol were shown to compete on two interrelated conflict dimensions. The territorial conflict dimension reflects a party's position with regards to territorial self-government. One basic distinction between potential party stances on this conflict dimension is the division between secessionist and non-secessionist parties. While the former seek the separation of the territory in question from the state that it currently belongs to, the latter aim at establishing (or expanding) self-government within existing state structures. Secessionist claims can further be categorized as independist (i.e. seeking self-sustained statehood) or irredentist (aiming at a territory's integration into another state). The second conflict dimension that structures party competition between South Tyrol's regionalists mirrors their stances on cultural and identity-related issues. While one pole of this "*non-economic left/right dimension*" (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 16; emphasis in original) reflects endorsement of an open, inclusive and multicultural society (the "Green/alternative/libertarian" GAL pole), the other extreme summarizes the promotion of a traditional, "national" identity which is frequently linked to xenophobia, antisemitism or other exclusive discourses (the "traditional/authoritarian/nationalist" TAN pole). The Green party was shown to hold a moderate position on the territorial conflict dimension and to support GAL values. In contrast, South Tyrol's irredentist and secessionist parties tend to position themselves on the TAN side of the cultural conflict dimension. The SVP takes intermediate stances on both political divides. Hence, this thesis maintains that there is a strong correlation between party positions on the territorial and the cultural conflict dimension. This relationship notwithstanding, it is necessary to disentangle the two dimensions analytically in order to assess a party's perceptions of the European integration process.

Following Massetti (2009b), this thesis presented four different rationales that might drive a party's stances on European integration: firstly, the national or regional context within which a party operates; secondly, a party's position in the domestic

party system; thirdly, a party's ideology; and lastly, a party's perceptions of the relationship between European integration and sub-state territorial empowerment. As these rationales are based on diverging assumptions concerning a party's ideology and strategy, they lead to partly deviating expectations with regards to party positions on the EU. Matching these theory-based expectations with the particularities of the South Tyrolean case yielded the following proposition:

- Due to its predominance in the South Tyrolean party system, the SVP supports European integration more than the other, oppositional regionalist parties in the province.
- Given their positions on the cultural cleavage, *die Freiheitlichen* can be expected to link anti-European stances with an exclusive, nationalist discourse. The S-TF and the UfS are likely to apply similar justifications for their Eurosceptic positions. The Greens' allocation close to the GAL pole suggests that they connect their pro-Europeanism to a desired opportunity for an open, multicultural society. The SVP's Christian democratic ideology suggests a pro-European stance.
- During the course of the 2000s, all regionalists turned more Eurosceptic.
- The SVP and the Greens support the creation of a "Europe of the Regions", while the irredentist S-TF and UfS reject European integration. *Die Freiheitlichen* accept the EU's state-centered logic based on their separatist stances.

In addition to these propositions, a more general typology of ideal-typical party positions on the EU was introduced. This typology distinguished "diffuse" support for the idea of European integration, and more specific support for the *de facto* implementation of the European Union. The resulting differentiation between Euroenthusiasts, Eurosceptics, Eurorejects or Europragmatists helped categorize party positions in South Tyrol more precisely.

The empirical analysis of party positions was carried out by coding the transcriptions of all parliamentary debates in the provincial parliament between 1989 and 2015. References to the European integration process, the EU or its policy output were attributed to one out of four frame categories (cultural, economic, territorial or other utilitarian) and were coded according to their evaluation of the supranational integration process (on a scale ranging from -1 to +1). Subsequently, I reviewed the

frequency of all frames and frame categories applied by South Tyrolean regionalist parties when referring to European integration. In a following step, each party's positions, (potential) changes over time and their particular context were analyzed. This yielded the following results:

- The SVP and the Greens both endorse European integration.
- *Die Freiheitlichen* and the UfS both reject the *de facto* implementation of the European Union. While the UfS supports European integration in principle, *die Freiheitlichen* remain unclear regarding this question.
- The S-TF's position is ambiguous. They endorse the transformative potential of the EU with regards to the functioning of existing nation states but are rather critical towards the Union's actual achievements.

Interestingly, unlike suggested by the existing literature, it is not so much a party's position on the territorial conflict dimension that shapes its vision of the European Union. Rather, the importance that a party attributes to the territorial question, relative to other issues, determines whether a party opts for a "post-sovereign" conception of Europe or upholds other aspects with regards to European integration. Hence, the SVP, the UfS and the S-TF predominantly view European integration through the lens of its impact on territorial autonomy. In contrast, the Greens and *die Freiheitlichen* shape their discourse more in line with their position on the GAL-TAN conflict dimension.

These results add to the understanding of the changing party system in South Tyrol in two different ways. Firstly, they start out from the conceptualization of a two-dimensional ideological space that shapes party competition between South Tyrolean regionalist parties. Unlike more inductively conceived case studies, this approach helps embed party competition in South Tyrol in a broader, theory-based framework. This facilitates the integration of the South Tyrolean case into more extensive, comparative research designs in the future. Secondly, this study revealed how European integration is politicized by South Tyrol's regionalist parties. These findings foster an enhanced comprehension of how political actors view the relationship between regionalism, cross-border cooperation and supranational integration. In addition, it has been shown how these patterns are linked to other characteristics of party competition in the province.

In more general terms, this thesis contributes to the existing body of literature on regionalist parties in the European Union. In this context, the South Tyrolean case is particularly revealing. It allows for the comparison of a vast array of regionalist parties that operate within the same territory. Thus, it could be highlighted how different perceptions of the same domestic circumstances lead to deviating evaluations of the European integration process. Moreover, it was demonstrated that there is no uniform relationship between irredentism and the evaluation of European integration, even if potential intervening variables (such as institutional patterns) are held constant.

In this light, the presented findings can be regarded as an additional step towards a more complete understanding of the linkages between (potentially overlapping) identities of ethnic minorities, kin-nations, host states and supranational integration. In an era of globalization, regional cooperation and increasing mobility, individuals' patterns of belonging continue to be an object of political contestation. Thus, questions of identity, territoriality and the relationship between the two constitute crucial elements of contemporary pluralist societies. This thesis is a modest attempt to academically address one of these numerous pressing questions.

Notes

¹ „Die SVP unterstützt alle Bemühungen, die europäische Gemeinschaft (EG) von der wirtschaftlichen zur politischen Integration zu führen“ (Statut und Programm der Südtiroler Volkspartei 1972, 39, cited in Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157).

²² The historical County of Tyrol included a small number of villages that are currently part of other Italian provinces.

³ The Italian Constitution of 1948 establishes five regions with a Special Statute: Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol, Aosta Valley and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. While the first two were granted this status due to their geographical situation, the other regions were created in order to accommodate the German, French and Slovenian/Croatian speaking minorities respectively (Palermo and Wilson 2014).

⁴ For some ballots, the electoral rules render cooperation between South Tyrolean and statewide parties necessary, in order to assure the representation of the former at certain levels of government. The SVP, for instance, traditionally placed its candidates on the DC's list for EP elections (Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015). Such cooperation, however, has not led to any sustained or formalized linkages between these groups.

⁵ „Sie [die SVP] setzt sich ein für die Schaffung eines Europäischen Volksgruppenrechtes zur Lösung der Fragen der volklichen Minderheiten“ (Statut und Programm der Südtiroler Volkspartei 1972, 39, cited in Scantamburlo and Pallaver 2015, 157).

⁶ „Südtirol steht mitten im großen europäischen Prozeß der Einigung in Vielfalt. Dieser Einigungsprozeß führt über die EG hinaus zur Überwindung der nationalstaatlichen Konzeption bei gleichzeitiger Betonung des regionalen Raumes [...] Diese Fortschritte ermöglichen eine verstärkte Zusammenarbeit im regionalen Raum des gesamten historischen Tirols und darüber hinaus“ (Hubert Frasnelli; 56th session, X. LP; 09/05/1990).

⁷ „Alle drei Länder - das Bundesland Tirol, Südtirol und Trentino - sind von staatlichem Zentralismus und Gleichschaltung gefährdet [...]. Die zukünftige Europa-Region Tirol soll nicht nur Schutzmantel sein [...] sondern sie soll der politische Rahmen für den gemeinsamen Willen der drei Länder und deren Bewohner für mehr Mitsprache in Rom, Wien und vor allem in Brüssel werden“ (Durnwalder 39th session, XI. LP; 10/01/1995).

⁸ „Una discussione seria sul concetto di Europa delle regioni sarebbe interessante perché qui viene trattato come l'Europa dei popoli o delle minoranze, invece credo si debba ricostruire un'identità regionale, non linguistica o semplificante culturale e storica in senso etnico, ma dei cittadini che vivono in una determinata situazione“ (Zendron 86th session, XI. LP; 10/01/1996).

⁹ „Wir glauben an diesen Weg der Autonomie, der keine neuen Grenzen errichtet, sondern alte Grenzen systematisch niederlegt. Er beschert diesem Land eine Eigenständigkeit in einer staatlichen Souveränität, vor allem aber in einem europäischen Zusammenhang. Hier bedarf es keiner Selbstbestimmung und keiner Abtrennung, sondern eines konsequenten Bewusstseins, dass dieser Weg weiterführt...“ (Heiss 145th session, XIV. LP; 08/05/2012).

¹⁰ „Man darf sich aber nicht darüber wundern, daß, wenn die Entscheidungen immer nur ganz oben getroffen werden, diese dann unten nicht mitgetragen werden. Bis sich das nicht ändert, solange wird man keine große Zustimmung für diese europäische Union haben, die sehr kopflastig ist. Brüssel ist ein Wasserkopf [...]. Wo die Unterschiede regional gegeben sind, muß man diesen auch Rechnung tragen. Man erreicht sie leichter mit Europaregionen, die auch zu institutionalisieren sind, als mit den Nationalstaaten von vorgestern“ (Leitner 127th session, XII. LP; 09/10/2001).

¹¹ „Südtirol ist also willentlich von der SVP und der sogenannten Schutzmacht auf dem EG-Altar geopfert worden. Und dieses Opfer wurde durch den Maastricht Vertrag gekrönt [...]. Die Europaunion anerkennt die nationale Identität, etwa nicht der Völker, die in Europa leben, sondern der zwölf Staaten der EG [...] womit der Freibrief ausgestellt wird, die mit dieser Identität nicht vereinbaren

Minderheiten zu assimilieren [...] Und damit, indem Österreich jetzt beitreten soll und selbstverständlich auch Partner des Maastricht Vertrages wird, anerkennt Österreich [...] die nationale Identität Italiens, einschließlich Südtirols, und daß der Maastricht Vertrag höher stehe als der Pariser Vertrag“ (Benedikter 2nd session, XI. LP; 13/01/1994).

12 „Die Lösung der Südtirolfrage liegt nicht in der endgültigen Einbindung Südtirols [...] in Italien, sondern in der Wiedervereinigung mit Nord- und Osttirol und dem gemeinsamen Streben nach regionaler Eigenstaatlichkeit im Europa der Völker und Regionen“ (UfS parliamentary group 14th session, XII. LP; 13/04/1999).

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Appendix
Curriculum Vitae

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Date of Birth:	April 16 th 1991	Nationality:	Austrian
Place of Birth:	Stockerath, Austria	City of Residence:	Vienna

Formal education

05/2016 – current:	Offer holder: Doctoral researcher in Politics, University of Edinburgh, UK
10/2014 – current:	Master of Arts: Political science, University of Vienna, Austria
10/2010 – 11/2015:	Bachelor of Arts: Romance studies (Spanish), University of Vienna, Austria/ Universidad de Las Palmas de GC, Spain with distinction (<i>Abschluss mit Auszeichnung</i>)
10/2010 – 04/2014:	Bachelor of Arts: Political science, University of Vienna, Austria with distinction (<i>Abschluss mit Auszeichnung</i>)
09/2005 – 06/2009:	High School Diploma (<i>Matura</i>) with distinction, Pierre de Coubertin Senior High School Radstadt, Austria

Additional training

02/2016:	Winter School on Federalism and Governance: Conflict and Cooperation in Federal Systems, European Academy Bozen, Italy / University of Innsbruck, Austria
08/2015:	European Forum Alpbach, Austria (scholarship holder)
11/2012:	European Forum Alpbach: Colloquium <i>Imagination in Culture and Economy</i> Innsbruck, Austria

Experience

03/2011 – current:	Assistant Floor Manager, Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF)
07/2015 – 10/2015:	Research assistant: Department of Economic Sociology, University of Vienna, Austria
09/2014 – 01/2015:	Tutor for scientific writing, Department of Political Science, University of Vienna, Austria
01/2013 – 01/2014:	Editing and hosting the radio program <i>Subjektiv-Objektiv</i> (Radio Campus, Vienna)
01/2013 – 02/2013:	Coordination of media logistics, FIS Alpine World Ski Championships, Schladming, Austria
10/2009 – 06/2010:	Community service (<i>Zivildienst</i>): disability assistance, Diakonie Österreich

Skills

Languages:	Mother tongue: German	Fluent: English, Spanish, Portuguese
	Basic: French, Italian	Written only: Latin
Computer:	Microsoft Office, Mac OS X, Stata	

Research interests

Regionalism, nationalism, sub-state parties	EU, Europeanization, Multi-level governance
Federalism, autonomy, devolution	Minority rights & language policy