Emma-Katharina David, Sabine Riedel

Europe's Regions: Bridges or Subjects of Disputes?

Theoretical Background and the Example of Multilingualism in Trentino-South Tyrol, Italy[1]

Most scientists regard regions – whether cultural landscapes, economic areas or administrative units – as social constructions. This approach is reflected in the legal framework that has been created. As there are many political systems in Europe, their regions also have very different rights of self-government. For many years, European integration has helped to strengthen and expand these rights. However, with Eastern enlargement of the European Union (EU), regionalisation lost importance because today a majority of EU member states are central states. Some regions are now striving for state independence, which they legitimize with their cultural differences to other citizens. Because this calls into question national and European law, internal conflicts are predictable. which will affect Europe. This makes it even more important to focus on solutions that do not turn Europe's regions into a bone of contention but support their role as bridge-builders. A positive example is Italy's autonomous region of Trentino-South Tyrol. The policy of multilingualism there ensures a balance of interests between the language communities, Italian, German and Ladin. Today, the population understands cultural diversity less as a difference and a divisive factor than as an opportunity to improve their professional qualifications. Language promotion at national level is supported by cooperation between Italy and Austria and at supranational EU level by the Euregio Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino. There is no need to change borders in order to strengthen regional self-government.

Sabine Riedel:

Europe's Regions in Cultural Discourses. Bridges or Subject of Disputes?

In the context of interdisciplinary regional science, it is appropriate to begin this topic of political science with a definition of region. Thus, like many spatial scientists, most social scientists today assume that spaces can be depicted as socially constructed on the basis of certain indicators (Christmann 2016, Goeke u.a., 2015). This also applies to geo-graphic spaces, areas or landscapes that have been shaped and changed by humans for centuries. However, as soon as such a space is embedded as a territorial unit in a state administrative structure, the constructivist approach – whether intentional or unintentional – leads to the centre of political debates. This immediately raises the question of the intention with which a particular region is regarded as socially constructed: Should it be further developed, its borders changed or even dissolved. Whatever the answer, it affects the power relations of states and the legitimacy of their governments.

Discourses on the social construction of regions are therefore always controversial and conducted against the background of different social interests. This can also trigger violent conflicts over border changes that transcend the constitutional framework or affect the authority of elected representatives. It is essential to consider these political framework conditions. In contrast to soial interest, political power relations are always cast

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in treaties. Thus, regions that constitute state administrative units reflect not only regional, but also national and even international legal relationships. In modern international law these are protected in a special way by the principle of state sovereignty, i.e. by the right of states to decide for themselves on their territory and their internal administration. Even if this principle is repeatedly criticized for various reasons or even violated (Neu 2012), it is still the decisive guarantor for the preservation of the international order of states and world peace (Arnauld 2014).

Border regions have always been the focus of interstate conflicts. Strictly speaking, they were the trigger for the two world wars in the twentieth century. Regions in a peripheral geographical location often share cross-border commonalities, which feeds demands for border revisions and makes them seem legitimate at first glance. They have either a common historical connection or a cultural affinity, for instance through linguistic kinship or religious affiliation. These historical and cultural peculiarities of the regions come to the fore very differently in today's states. As already mentioned, their political representation and the extent of their self-government depend exclusively on the political system of their respective nation-states. This internal sovereignty of internationally recognized states, i.e. the right to decide on their state structure or administrative structures without outside influence, is such a fundamental principle that it remained untouched even in the course of European integration. The member states of the European Union (EU) have transferred some of their national competences to the supranational level, or share them with Brussels. However, the EU Treaty states unmistakeably: (see fig. 1)

Figure 1:

Article 4 (2) of the EU Treaty (Lisbon)

The Union shall respect the equality of Member States before the Treaties as well as their national identities, inherent in their fundamental structures, political and constitutional, inclusive of regional and local self-government. It shall respect their essential State functions, including ensuring the territorial integrity of the State, maintaining law and order and safeguarding national security. In particular, national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State.

Source: Consolidated Version, 26.10.2012, p. C 326/18, [4.12.2019]; Blue highlighting: S.R.

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1. Regions as bridge-builders in the course of European integration

In the mentioned text passage of Article 4 (2) of the Lisbon Treaty, not only the internal sovereignty of the EU Member States is confirmed as inviolable. It also contains an important definition of the region: it is an administrative unit defined by the constitutional order of the Member State concerned and is therefore a political entity. Its geographical layout and the question of whether it reflects the specific features of each country and its culture are entirely a national responsibility. Only the respective constitution with its subordinate legislation decides whether a region within the EU has possible special rights that take account of its cultural diversity. The European integration process can only influence this indirectly. This is achieved on the one hand through intergovernmental cooperation and on the other by strengthening the right of the EU regions to have a say at supranational level, for instance in the Committee of the Regions (COR).

Since the COR was founded in 1982, this exchange of experience has played a decisive role in ensuring that the regions today play an important bridging role, namely in stabilising bilateral relations between the EU member states. But it has also brought to light the fact that the regions are endowed with very different rights. This has awakened desire in those regions that have fewer self-governing rights than others, especially in neighbouring countries. As a result, in the 70s of the 20th century, a process of regionalisation began in the then European Community (EC). Many governments were prepared to cede powers to their regions in certain policy areas. In some cases, this decentralisation even led to substantial changes in the constitution and regional self-government.

Let us first go back to the beginnings of European integration in 1957, the year in which the European Economic Community (EEC) was founded. At the time, of the six founding states, West Germany and Italy were the only decentralized states. While the Federal Republic of Germany already had a federal structure and granted far-reaching rights of self-government to its federal entities (Bundesländer, see Bundesrat), Italy already knew forms of regional autonomy, namely in Sicily, Sardinia and in the Aosta Valley (COR, Italy). The remaining four EEC members, France and the three Benelux states Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Belgium still had a central state structure. This was to change gradually with the transformation of the EEC into the European Community (EC) following the Merger Treaty or

the Treaty of Brussels (1967). Because with the first round of enlargement in 1973, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland also Denmark joined the EC, which had experience of regional autonomy. The Faroe Islands, located in the North Atlantic between Norway and Iceland, have been largely self-governing since 1948. In addition, Greenland, as a former colony, had special rights since 1953, which were fixed in an autonomy statute after Denmark's accession to the EC (1979).

The enlargement of the EC seems to have added dynamics to the regional policies of its Member States. Since then, more and more European politicians have been committed to decentralising their state administrations. Particularly interesting examples are Italy and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Their governments also hoped that territorial autonomy would solve their escalating internal conflicts. The demands for independence led to violent conflicts in the early 1970s. Thus, Trentino-South Tyrol (1972) received a new Statute of Autonomy (1972; see the presentation of Emma-Katharina David: The multilingualism policy in the EU in the second part of this article), as had the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region (1963). In contrast, the peace process in Northern Ireland spanned

two decades. Only the introduction of territorial autonomy in 1998 through the Good Friday or the Belfast Agreement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland was able to pacify the secession process. Ultimately, Scotland and Wales also profited from this process and were granted new rights of self-government through their own treaties with the central government. Since then, they have had their own regional parliaments (BBC, 18.9.2016).

In Belgium, a reform process in favour of regional self-government was also initiated in the early 1970s. In this case, it was not a question of introducing autonomy statutes. Rather, the Belgian central government was transformed into a federation within two decades, so that all regions benefited equally. Similar to the autonomy model, additional cultural factors were decisive for this. Therefore, not only the three large administrative units received new competences, namely the regions Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels as capital of the new federal state. In addition, three language communities were given self-governing rights, namely the Flemish, French and German-speaking communities (Begium.be). The idea was that individual multilingualism would contribute to the cohesion of the Belgian state as a whole serve as a bridge to the neighbouring states,

Figure 2: Decentralization and centralization processes in EU member states

EEC/EC/EU *	Unitary State / Centralised State	with regional self-government	Federal State
1958 (EEC)	France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, (Belgium)	Italy	West-Germany, Belgium
1973 (EC)	Ireland, (United Kingdom)	Denmark, United Kingdom	
1981 (EC)	Greece		
1986 (EC)	Portugal	Spain	
1990 (EC)			East-Germany
1995 (EU)	Sweden	Finland	Austria
2004 (EU)	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Cyprus, Malta	United Kingdom	Czechoslovakia Jugoslavia Soviet Union
2007 (EU)	Romania, Bulgaria		
2015 (EU)	Croatia		Jugoslavia
EU-Candidates	Turkey North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia		Jugoslavia
Potential EU-Candidates	Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina Albania (Ukraine)		Jugoslavia Soviet Union

Arrow overlay: Decentralization (downward) and State building = Centralization (diagonal)

* EEC = European Economic Community, EC = European Community, EU = European Union, own compilation	© Sabine Riedel 2019

and become a symbol of national identity. At the same time, the language communities should France, Germany and the Netherlands, thus promoting the European integration process. After all, Belgium, with its capital Brussels, is home to the most important institutions of the EU.

With the following four rounds of enlargement of the EC and the EU between 1981 and 1996, all three models of state received support. Greece, Portugal and Sweden joined as central states, which did not bring any autonomous regions but experience of self-government at local level. The federal element, on the other hand, was strengthened by German reunification (1990). This transformed the then centralized German Democratic Republic (GDR) into five new constituent states of the enlarged Federal Republic. However, with the accession of Austria and its nine federal states to the EU (1996), this development came to an end for the time being. In contrast, the number of member states with regional autonomies increased. While Finland has only granted special cultural rights to its Åland Islands since 1991, Spain has given itself a new constitution after the end of the Franco dictatorship (1978), which grants all 17 regions the status of a Spanish autonomous community.

2. Growing cultural disputes in regional self-governments

This clear trend towards strengthening regional self-government has lost its dynamics since the Eastern enlargement of the EU was put on the political agenda. This major project has been the focus of European policy since the end of confrontation between the political systems in 1990. The reunification of the continent since the first round of EU enlargement in 2004 has pushed the concern of the European regions for more participation into the background, not least because all 13 new members without exception are central states. Some have gone through regionalisation in the course of transforming their political systems and introduced regional parliaments, such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Nevertheless, their character as unitary states remained intact because the governments or their officials appointed by them control the new regional self-governing bodies (Loewen 2018). The literature speaks here of decentralised unitary states, in contrast to centralised unitary states without independent self-governing bodies.

There are essentially two reasons why these new EU Member States are sceptical about extending regional self-government. The first is the experience of becoming a state. Most of the new

EU members became sovereign states only a few years before their accession by means of territorial separation (fig. 2). While Malta and Cyprus were still under British protectorate administration until the early 1960s, Croatia and Slovenia belonged to the former Yugoslavia until 1991, and the three Baltic states Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania belonged to the then Soviet Union. A year later, in 1992, Slovakia and the Czech Republic finally separated, dissolving their common federal state of Czechoslovakia. These six states were thus previously constituent republics of a larger federation, so that they could use their already existing regional self-governing bodies to form new nation-state institutions. Their becoming a state thus went hand in hand with a centralization, with which the formerly regional metropolis developed into a new centre of power, which also received the corresponding recognition on the international stage. For this reason, there have been two tendencies since the EU's Eastern enlargement that actually contradict each other conceptually: On the one hand, European integration is seen as an opportunity for more decentralisation. On the other hand, however, it has offered the new unitary state the opportunity to consolidate itself and to centralise the new political power.

The second aspect concerns the ideological justification of their respective secessions. It had to convince a majority of citizens, especially in times of rapid democratisation of politics and society. Formally, the constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union could invoke their right of withdrawal, even if it had previously been restricted and could hardly be implemented politically. However, since the secession was accompanied by the dissolution of the federal states, there were hardly any concerns from the point of view of international law about the recognition of the European successor states. But even the example of Czechoslovakia, which was one of the very few examples to dissolve peacefully, is a good illustration of the main argument of separation. It was the concept of nation as an independent cultural community that created its own state. This culturalist understanding of nation has developed particularly well in the socialist systems because they rejected the concept of the political nation and its nation state as "bourgeois" and "historically obsolete". The Constitution of Czechoslovakia (1948) for example defined its constituent people as a composition of "Czechs and Slovaks, two brotherly nations, members of the great Slav family of nations" (see fig. 3).

With their accession to the EU, some former socialist states have developed a new under-

standing of nation in the course of democratization. According to their new constitutions, citizenship or nationality is primarily based on political values. Only a few states still emphasise their cultural heritage in the ethnic sense, which narrows the nation down to the model of a cultural and linguistic community in a delimiting and exclusionary way. The Czech Republic, for example, has adopted the political concept of nation, while the constitution of Slovakia (1992) refers to its "cultural heritage" inclusively its "spiritual bequest of Cyril and Methodius". The Bulgarian constitution (1991), on the other hand, describes in Art. 13 Eastern Orthodox Christianity as its historical heritage, even though it defines the nation as a political community of will. Finally, Hungary is an example of the fact that the combination of mother tongue and religious affiliation, in this case Christianity in general, can also serve as a criterion of belonging to a nation (Constitution 2018).

Since the EU's Eastern enlargement began in 2004, there has been increasing competition be-tween these two different nation concepts. This not only leads to domestic controversy, but also creates tensions between the EU Member States on issues of protection of national minorities. In addition, the model of the cultural nation is also becoming popular in the Western EC/EU-founding states, which is putting pressure on the concept of the political concept of nation and their constitutional order. This applies in particular to the regional level, where cultural discourses are launching the state independence of certain European regions. The pattern of argumentation is the same everywhere: political values such as subsidiarity, solidarity and participation, on which decentralisation, regionalisation or devolution are based, should step by step be replaced by the ideology of cultural diversity (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: Separatism as the Opponent of Decentralization

Decentralization	Arguments in Constitutions, Political Programmes or Publications:	Centralization = State Building
Political Nation defined by political values (constitution and legislation)	• Czechoslovak Constitution of 1948: "The Czechs and Slovaks, two brotherly nations, members of the great Slav family of nations, lived already a thousand years ago …" • "The N-VA is a relatively young political party that promotes a modern, forward-looking and democratic form of Flemish nationalism." • "May this September 11 [2018] be a day of celebration and pride for a culture, a language and a history that unites all Catalans," he [the Spanish president Pedro Sánchez] said […]."	**Cultural Nation** based on cultural values or nationalist Ideology
(inclusive) Cultural **Pluralism** Individual Multilingualism	• "Madrid […] disregards the cultural diversity of Spain and the unique characteristics of Catalonia and the Basque Country." • "[…] the Belgian society is characterized by an ubiquitous division between Dutch-speaking Flemings and French-speaking Walloons.[…]. Belgian society is also dealing with growing ethnic-cultural diversity." • "Italian society is also going through a phase characterised by reactive identities and cultural conflicts. […] this situation has so far prevented a real recognition of cultural and religious differences […]." • "Klotz says [South Tyrolean Freedom]: "There are acts of racism each single day. Despite Italian and German both being official languages, I often bump into police officers who don't know German."	(exclusive) Cultural **Diversity** Collective Multilingualism and identities
Political Participation at central, regional and local level (vertical separation of powers)	• "Austria could have sparked a fresh independence struggle after offering passports to German speakers in a province of northern Italy." • "Thousands of people have descended on central Glasgow to demand Scotland's independence from Britain. First Minister Nicola Sturgeon told the crowd it was 'time for Scotland to choose our own future.'" • "[Catalan president] Quim Torra pointed out that the formula for exercising democracy in the 21st century 'cannot be anything else but self-determination.'"	Self-determination **Independence** (= questioning or suspension of the vertical separation of powers)
Solidarity within a nation state based on political values (constitution and legislation)	• "But culture and politics aside, many say the major reason Catalonia wants to secede is economic: Catalonia has the highest GDP out of all the regions in Spain, and at 266 billion euros, almost one-fifth of the country's economic output." • "Scotland has some real economic strengths. It has a thriving financial sector, is strong in food and drink, attracts millions of tourists […] and has the potential to be a world leader in renewable energy." • "Bart Maddens, a professor and Flemish political scientist […] told about the economic motivations because of the annual transfers that the region of Flanders have to do. 'The Flemish regional transfers to Wallonia have remained stable at about €7 billion a year'".	**Limited Solidarity** within a nation state because of cultural difference
	Source: Own compilation	© Sabine Riedel 2019

In contrast to the concept of political pluralism, the term cultural diversity focuses on cultural difference, which ultimately serve as a criterion for attributing group membership to people, for example through their mother tongue or religious affiliation. This terminology becomes politically significant at the moment, when such a culturally determined group is called a nation. This socially recognized status should entitle them to no longer be satisfied with the values of subsidiarity, solidarity and participation, but instead to demand state independence for the region concerned. In doing so, independence movements are denouncing national solidarity with other regions, while demanding the right to self-determination from the international community (Riedel 2019).

A current example of this is Belgium, where Flemish politicians of the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) have been calling for the dissolution of the federal state for years (Introducing the N-VA, see fig. 3). Here the federal structures are already an expression of this competition between the model of the nation as a cultural community on the one hand and the political will community on the other. The supporters of the independence movement demand nothing other than the merging of the language communities and the regional administrative structures. It also becomes clear, however, that the dissolution of the Belgian federal states along linguistic-cultural dividing lines, which is called for, will raise new problems. What happens, for example, to the small German-speaking community or to the Brussels region? The proponents of Flemish independence offer arguments that make the instrumental character of culture shine through: they claim, for example, that today a majority of Belgians speak Flemish at around 60 percent. This percentage would have been even higher if the Walloons had not imposed a French-speaking identity on all Belgians, including the Flemish, in former times. However, here only the collective language is mentioned, the individual multilingualism is completely ignored.

Besides Belgium, Catalonia is another example of the revival of the model of the cultural nation. Here, too, cultural differences are at the focus of attention, which conclude the existence of a Catalan nation and demand the foundation of a nation state of one's own. In addition, however, there are also economic interests that speak for the independence of Flanders and Catalonia (Catalonia 2017). Both regions are economically successful, so that they have to pay corresponding taxes to the state as a whole (Maddens 2017). This form of national solidarity is a thorn in the side of many people and thus a powerful argu-ment for secession. This confirms the assumption that the nation as a cultural community, with its desire for secession, amounts to a de-solidarization within existing states (see further arguments with quotations in fig. 3).

3. The European way: protecting and developing regional participation

The separatist movements in Flanders, Catalonia, Scotland or South Tyrol are no exceptions. Rather, there are already initiatives that support regional demands for sovereignty. Their common concern is the overcoming of national borders in the sense of the dissolution of existing states. They only disagree on further objectives. While separatist parties demand sovereignty, for others, such as the Transition Town Freiburg network, "a return to the nation state" is not a solution. Instead, they are striving for a common European state in which the regions represent administrative units. What is on the presented political map "Europe. Vision 2030" not visible, is the quality of regional self-government. Will the regions of Austria or Germany lose their substantive rights as federal entities? On the other hand, will the French provinces receive new legislative powers from their central state, along the lines of the German federal states? What about the Statutes of Autonomy? As described above, their self-administration rights differ considerably within a nation state and especially in a European comparison.

The visions of European state-building are supported by scientists: "The post-national demo-

Figure 4:
Regional parties of the European Free Alliance (EFA) on course for independence

Source: European Free Alliance (EFA) 2019

cracy in Europe outlined here would be a network of European regions and cities, [...]" (Guerot 2016: 14). However, the proposed "territorial reorganization of the European RePublic" makes us attentive. According to this, "the old European cultural regions will become the constitutional bearers and administrative provinces". A political system is to emerge "that allows us to balance social preferences between culturally different European provinces throughout Europe – instead of asserting obscure national interests." (ibid., pp. 153 and 161) The political nations and their states, firmly anchored in international and European law, are abandoned and must give way to diffuse cultural communities. This will all the more fuel competition between the national and regional levels for the future status in the desired republic.

The European Free Alliance (EFA), a European party with 13 members in the European Parliament, shows that such internal conflicts are already being encouraged. All of its current 47 member organisations demand the independence of their regions on the basis of cultural difference (cf. Fig. 4). Some regional parties are quite successful and hold high political offices, such as regional president (Scotland, Corsica, Flanders) or parliamentary president (Wales, Catalonia, Valencia, see EFA, Leaders). Their culturalist model of nation is worthy of criticism for the very reason that it puts social peace at risk: Because the new national identity only has to be constructed in the course of a process of delimitation and exclusion: Catalans, Flemings, Scots and Bavarians should turn their backs on their political nations.

Such concepts for the political reorganization of the EU therefore do not advance European integration. On the contrary, the regions are abused in terms of power politics. This is demonstrated by the way they deal with their existing participation rights. These are an expression of a vertical separation of powers between the local, regional and national levels of administration. As soon as it becomes a steppingstone to sovereignty, the central government must intervene. This is because it is obliged by law to balance the interests of all regions. It must ensure that values such as cultural pluralism, solidarity and participation are respected. This includes individual multilingualism, as the following article shows. The promotion of linguistic pluralism is a European way because it is peaceful. On the other hand, a nation concept based mainly on language that wants to change existing borders is a conflict strategy from the 19th century.

Emma-Katharina David:

Multilingualism policy in the EU. Italy's autonomous Region Trentino-South Tyrol.

1. Introduction

With 28 member states and 24 official languages, the European Union (EU) has a linguistic diversity that is noticeable on a daily basis: "Respect for linguistic diversity is a fundamental value of the EU, as are respect for the person and openness towards other cultures." (European Parliament). The EU commission has developed frameworks and policies to help achieve multilingualism both on the national and regional but also on the European level. The European Day of Languages is celebrated every year on 26 September. The Erasmus programme supports EU projects in education, training, youth and sport during the period 2014-2020. However, Article 6 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that in the areas of culture and education the European Union has competences only to support and coordinate the Member States' policies. Therefore, the main actors in the area of language policy remain the Member States.

Multilingualism is a rather new area of research in political science as well as in linguistics. Until the 1970s, bilingualism research was rather the exception than the rule in linguistics. For the European Union and therefore also for political scientists, multilingualism gained in importance in the last years reflecting the cultural diversity of its Member States, to which Brussels is explicitly committed to. This was reflected in a top-down approach when the Commission appointed the first Commissioner for Multilingualism in 2007. With the next commission, the area of multilingualism was however reincorporated into the agenda of Education and Youth. In addition, issues such as minority and migrant languages, that are under national competence according to Article 6 of the TFEU, no longer required the appointment of a Commissioner for Multilingualism.

In consideration of the latest developments in Europe, such as the Brexit, the Irish-British border disputes, the Catalan independence movement and so on, questions about the linguistic diversity of Europe have once more moved to the fore. Therefore, this paper discusses the multilingualism in the Trentino-South Tyrol region, which with its bottom-up approach is a successful model. The question arises as to how Italy has dealt with multilingualism of its north-eastern region in the past and whether or how its perspective has changed over the years. The results show that the specific historical backgrounds and political cir-

cumstances played a decisive role. The region promotes language integration with experiences that are relevant beyond the region.

2. The Autonomous Province of Bolzano/South Tyrol

There are twenty regions in Italy, five with a Statute of Autonomy and fifteen without such a special status. The province of Bolzano/South Tyrol belongs together with the province of Trento to the autonomous region Trentino-South Tyrol in north-eastern Italy. Following the accession of neighbouring Austria to the EU, the cross-border Euregio "Trentino-South Tyrol-Tyrol" was founded so that South Tyrol, as an Italian part of the historical region of Tyrol, could revive its ties with the German-speaking community in Austrian Tyrol. Therefore, this Euregion is today regarded as a successful integration model for similar, aspiring multilingual regions.

While Italian-Austrian relations were considered tense after the First and Second World Wars, the relations took a positive turn in the 1990s, especially after Austria's accession to the EU and Italy's tolerance towards language minorities. In the next two sections, the peculiarities of this multilingual region in its historical development are presented, followed by today's language policy in the autonomous province.

2.1. Historical perspective

From 1363 until the end of the First World War, when Austria lost this area to Italy, the province of South Tyrol belonged to the Habsburg Monarchy and later to Austria-Hungary. Italian politics at that time did not respect the agreements of the Saint Germain Treaty on the protection of minorities, so that the German-speaking population went through an assimilation process. German family names as well as German place names were banned and South Tyrol was given the Italian name Alto Adige. During the Second World War Mussolini and Hitler agreed on an option agreement that confronted the German-speaking population with the uncertain decision to either to leave and never return or stay and be completely assimilated.

With the End of the Second World War and the Paris Peace Treaties in 1947 the autonomy of the region seemed to be settled. The new region of Trentino-South Tyrol with the capital in Trento was founded. However, this meant that the region had an Italian-speaking majority and an Italian-speaking capital. The German-speaking community now feared that their identity and language would be lost over time. There were more and more violent protests at public meetings. Austria

then brought the conflict before the United Nations to mediate between Italy and Austria. As a result, a new Autonomy Statute was adopted in 1972. The implementation of the statute lasted until 1992 when Austria and Italy officially ended their conflict before the UN. In 1995 Austria joined the EU and Italian-Austrian relations developed very positively a afterwards.

2.2. South Tyrol today

Only with the new Statute of Autonomy did South Tyrol acquire its autonomous status as a province of the Trentino-South Tyrol region. With approximately 505.000 inhabitants and a German-speaking population of over 60 % (ISTAT 2013), this autonomy has developed into a successful model for language integration. The languages Ladin, German and Italian have equal status in the provincial administration, in political institutions and in courts. In order to fairly distribute the jobs in public administration, the ethnic proportion plays a decisive role. Every ten years the province carries out a language census, in which the population declares which language group (Italian, German or Ladin) it belongs to. In the public services, the employees must present a diploma certifying their knowledge of the two languages. In Ladin-speaking areas, they must speek Ladin.

In the field of education, too, a clear division can be made according to language affiliation. Each of the three recognized languages in South Tyrol has its own regional school authority. This

Figure 5: The 20 Italian Regions

Source:
Regions of Italy with official names, 13.7.2006, in: Wikipedia

aspect is often criticised. However, it goes back to the special history of the region at the beginning of the 20th century when German was banned under Italian fascism. From the point of view of the German-speaking population, the required declaration of language affiliation still serves to protect their linguistic identity today. From the first grade onwards, pupils learn the second official language of the region in addition to their mother tongue (depending on the mother tongue, this can be either German or Italian). The choice of school is free and in the hands of the parents. The Ladin-speaking pupils are a special example of multilingualism, as they learn both German and Italian in addition to Ladin.

The region is not only aware of its multilingual character, but also intensively promotes it. With the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, South Tyrol has a trilingual teaching institution of international reputation. In addition, the province grants research funds to EURAC Research in Bolzano, whose regional studies on social and ecological topics are multilingual. A very special public cultural institution is The Multilingual Centre in Bolzano. It supports the self-learning of languages with the help of multimedia materials and promotes German in particular.

3. South Tyrol as a bridge builder between Trentino and Tyrol (Austria)

The autonomous province of Trento (it. Trentino) is mainly Italian-speaking. Only in a few areas are Ladin spoken (in Fassa Valley and Non Valley) and the two Upper German dialects Mòcheno (in Bersntol) and Cimbrian (in Luserna, see fig. 6). Of the total population of 536,237 inhabitants, Ladin accounts for 3.5% and Mòcheno and Cimbrian for 0.3% each (Statistica 1/2014, Statistica 3/2014, Statistica 7/2014). In recent years, the Province of Trento has changed its language policy. In 2001, Article 102 for the protection of minority languages was included in the Statute of Autonomy (Decreto 2019). The article states that minorities have the right to protect and promote their traditions and languages. In the schools of the municipalities concerned, children are taught in German or Ladin. While in South Tyrol German is taught throughout the country, in Trento the minority languages enjoy special protection only where they are spoken (Trento 2017). The Ladin-speaking community also has a seat in the Provincial Council of Trento according to Art. 48 of the Statute.

The reform of the Statute of Autonomy of the Trentino-South Tyrol Region in 1972 gave the two provinces legislative and political decision-making powers, while the regional structures keep the two provinces together at the administrative level. Thus, Trento and South Tyrol were able to set different priorities in language policy according to the linguistic composition of their inhabitants. However, the common regional structures remain important for both provinces because they are thus on an equal footing with the other Italian regions at national level. In summary, despite its specific autonomous competences, the Province of South Tyrol maintains the Trentino-South Tyrol Region as an administrative framework because it is the basis for its success.

At the intergovernmental level, the autonomous province of South Tirol plays an important role as a bridge to Austria and its federal state of Tyrol (see North and East Tyrol in fig. 6). Together with the Italian province of Trentino, they form the Euregio "Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino" It was founded in 1998 following Austria's accession to the EU and the opening of the borders between South Tyrol and Tyrol. It is regarded as a showcase project within the EU for cross-border institutional cooperation. To name a few interesting measures in the cultural and language field of the Euregio: In 2019 the schools organised an "All-Tyrolean foreign language competition" (News, 14.3.2019). The three universities of Trento, Innsbruck and Bolzano have set up a two-year Euregio Master Programme in addition to student and professor exchanges. It is a study programme for further education for employees of the public administration in the Euregio. The Euregio also serves for the cooperation in the fields of tourism and environmental protection, but also in social issues in view of the increasing migration in the region.

Figure 6: Languages in Trentino-South Tyrol

Source: Simon Mariacher, Sprachen in der Europaregion Tirol-Südtirol-Trentino, 18.9.2018, in: Wikipedia

4. Conclusion: Importance for the European Integration

Today South Tyrol is an autonomous province in Italy and a committed member of the Euregio "Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino". According to the Statute of Autonomy of 1972, three languages are equal: German, Ladin and Italian. In education, these languages have separate school authorities, which contribute to a more multicultural than intercultural environment. This approach was born for historical reasons and was created as a protective mechanism for the language minorities in South Tyrol. Despite this critical aspect, this approach has provided its worth. South Tyrol Is now regarded as a model region for other multilingual communities throughout the EU, not only from a language and intercultural point of view, but also from an economic perspective (Fitch 2019).

South Tyrol is together with Trentino part of a region with a Statute Autonomy that grants them several rights and freedoms. These rights and freedoms are different in the two provinces, as the reform of the Statute of Autonomy in 1972 transferred specific legislative and political powers to both provinces. Nevertheless, they have influenced language policy that means the policy of multilingualism and the protection of the language minorities. South Tyrol has developed from a province with secessionist tendencies into a centre of intercultural and intergovernmental cooperation. This history of South Tyrol is a good example of how the potential of cross-border cooperation can be exploited. With the EU as an integrative platform, the institutional anchoring of the Euregio "Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino" and European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), South Tyrol has managed to protect its cultural and linguistic identity and to cooperate constructively with the Austrian state of Tyrol.

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