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A History of Boundaries:
An Oral History Archive in South Tyrol

[Historia granic:
Archiwum historii mówionej w Południowym Tyrolu]

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Abstract
The analysis of some video interviews collected by the local historian Giorgio Delle Donne demonstrates how family background and external factors such as politics and the media have influenced the way the Italian-speaking population, which arrived in South Tyrol between the 1920s and 1940s, experienced its settling in a new area. The Oral History Archive stored in the Claudia Augusta Italian Provincial Library portrays the issues between the German and Italian-speaking groups in this borderland.

Abstrakt
Analiza kilku wywiadów wideo zebranych przez lokalnego historyka Giorgio Delle Donne pokazuje, w jaki sposób pochodzenie rodzinne i czynniki zewnętrzne, takie jak polityka i media, wpłynęły na sposób, w jaki ludność włoskojęzyczna, która przybyła do Południowego Tyrolu w latach 20. i 40. XX w., przeżywała zadomawianie się na nowym terenie. Archiwum Historii Mówionej przechowywane we Włoskiej Bibliotece Prowincjonalnej im. Claudii Augusty przedstawia problemy między grupami niemiecko- i włoskojęzycznymi na pograniczu.

Keywords
oral history archive, life stories, boundaries, South Tyrol

Słowa kluczowe
archiwum historii mówionej, historie życia, granice, Południowy Tyrol

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Also known as "the land on the threshold,"[1] South Tyrol, Italy, is a transit region connecting Northern and Southern Europe. More than a hundred years of political conflicts have shaped the lives of thousands of people as well as the region's geography. The two world wars and totalitarian regimes inevitably caused fractures in South Tyrolean society. For instance, the Fascist policy of the forced Italianisation of the German-speaking population influenced the lives of the local population: some of them left permanently, while others replaced them[2].

Between 2003 and 2007, the South Tyrolean historian Giorgio Delle Donne[3] recorded video oral history interviews to collect the experiences of people who had settled in South Tyrol. Delle Donne is a local historian who focuses his research on the contemporary history of South Tyrol. He has published numerous books and articles related to the so-called "South Tyrol Question."[4] In 2003, he submitted a proposal to the Italian Culture Department of the Province of Bolzano for the creation of an Oral History Archive.[5]

Delle Donne aimed to explore the methodology of oral history and the use of oral sources in the field of contemporary history. What makes the project so captivating is Delle Donne's desire to store these interviews in the Claudia Augusta Italian Provincial Library[6] in Bolzano/Bozen to provide schoolteachers with the opportunity

1   G. Grote, H. Obermair, *A Land on the Threshold: South Tyrolean Transformations, 1915–2015*, Oxford 2017.

2   The bibliography about the contemporary history of South Tyrol is diverse. See some introductory books such as B. Mazohl, R. Steininger, *Geschichte Südtirols*, München 2020; E. Kustatscher, C. Romeo, *Übergänge und Perspektiven: Grundzüge der Landesgeschichte*, 3 vol., Bozen 2010–2013 (trans. *Passaggi e prospettive*, 3 vol., Bolzano 2010–2013); R. Steininger, *Südtirol im 20. Jahrhundert: Vom Leben und Überleben einer Minderheit*, Innsbruck 2004.

3   Giorgio Delle Donne's website includes his curriculum vitae and a complete list of publications; see: https://www.giorgiodelledonne.it/ (accessed: 24.09.2022).

4   See: A. Di Michele, A. Gottsmann, L. Monzali, K. Ruzicic-Kessler, *Die schwierige Versöhnung: Italien, Österreich und Südtirol im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bozen 2020; G. Bernardini, G. Pallaver, *Dialogue Against Violence: The Question of Trentino-South Tyrol in the International Context*, Bologna-Berlin 2017; G. Grote, *The South Tyrol Question, 1866–2010: From National Rage to Regional State*, Oxford 2012.

5   Giorgio Delle Donne's project was funded by the Italian provincial administration and represented the final part of a broader reflection on memory and identity as well as on the settling of the Italian-speaking group in South Tyrol. Giorgio Delle Donne explained the details of this project in an interview which is stored in the Italian provincial library "Claudia Augusta." The transcription of this interview was published on the website of the Italian Oral History Association; see: https://www.aisoitalia.org/intervista-giorgio-delle-donne/ (accessed: 24.09.2022).

6   The library was established in 1999 and provides access to different types of resources with special attention to Italian publications; see: https://claudiaugusta.provincia.bz.it/ (accessed: 24.09.2022).

to use these video interviews in their teaching of local history. Furthermore, he believes that the library should become a centre for researchers who intend to conduct new interviews. By the end of the project, Delle Donne had interviewed 148 people, "privileged witnesses" of local history, as he called them, selected from the Italian-speaking community of South Tyrol.[7]

The history of the Italian-speaking community of South Tyrol is a key issue in Giorgio Delle Donne's studies and his own personal background. He was born in Bolzano, but his parents were from Iseo, a small town in the Italian Province of Brescia. They arrived in South Tyrol following the migratory routes which linked the smallest towns to the main cities; these routes were opened by family members or friends who provided job opportunities and community life.[8]

At the beginning of my doctoral research project, I decided to reconstruct the history of the Claudia Augusta Library and Delle Donne's life. I asked him about his childhood and the arrival of his parents in Bolzano as well as his educational background and job. From my perspective, being familiar with Giorgio Delle Donne's life appeared necessary to understanding the context in which the interviews were conducted. Having a clear understanding of his history is not only relevant for the analysis and description of the video interviews but is also useful for the identification of the relationships between the personalities involved in the project.

During our interview, Giorgio Delle Donne recounted the establishment of an Italian community originating in Iseo in the 1920s. He remembered the arrival of the first "adventurer," Paolo Gatti, who opened a snack bar in the central square of Bolzano and convinced Delle Donne's father to move to South Tyrol. Afterwards, the historian told me about his first home, a ruined former kindergarten classroom that had been bombed during the Second World War.[9] His narration flowed without interruptions and the need for further questions, as if he were following

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7   Giorgio Delle Donne interviewed 120 men and 28 women (210 hours of video recording). He decided to interview people who have reached high positions in society, such as politicians, business managers, heads of important associations, teachers, and trade union leaders. Half of the interviewees (72 out of 148) were born outside the Trentino-South Tyrol region, and 3 out of 2 arrived in South Tyrol between the 1920s and the 1940s. See the map which shows the birthplaces of people arrived in South Tyrol in this period: https://www.scribblemaps.com/maps/view/Intervistati-fuori-TAA/rsNlxsz601 (accessed: 24.09.2022).

8   For more information on the history of internal migration in Italy from political unification (1861) to present, see: S. Gallo, *Senza attraversare le frontiere. Le migrazioni interne dall'Unità a oggi*, Roma–Bari 2012; S. Gallo, *Italy: internal migration 1800–present*, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444351071.wbeghm603 (accessed: 4.09.2022).

9   Interview with Giorgio Delle Donne recorded at his home in Bolzano/Bozen by Patrick Urru, 4.10.2021. A copy of each videorecorded interview as well as the transcriptions used for this article are stored in the Italian Claudia Augusta Provincial Library. In this paper, I have translated all quotations from the interview from Italian into English.

a script. I am aware that our interviewees often choose, more or less consciously, how to self-represent themselves. While it is true that "the inter/view is an exchange of gazes"[10] – an inimitable encounter of different mutually influencing motivations and interests – it happens that we find ourselves on an already set itinerary.

The narrative structure of this interview, as well as the topics discussed, follows a very similar pattern as that of the life stories of Delle Donne collection. In fact, more than half of the interviewees were born outside South Tyrol and moved there between the 1920s and 1940s, especially from Northeast Italy. Delle Donne always asked them about their family's arrival and their first accommodation. One of the main reasons for moving was the search for a job and better living conditions. However, some of the interviewees came for other reasons; for example, Giuseppe recalls: "My father was Postal Service officer, an anti-Fascist and communist; he was transferred twice as punishment, once to Belluno and then, in 1934, to Bolzano." Although it was a punitive decision, Giuseppe remembered it as a pleasant experience: "We had a great time in Bolzano. As a young boy, that bilingual environment fascinated me, and we felt immediately at home."[11]

Another life story recorded by Delle Donne reveals a different point of view which was quite common among Italians who had arrived in South Tyrol. Piero, for example, was a well-known artist who moved to Bolzano in the 1930s. His step-uncle had come to South Tyrol in the 1920s to supervise the transition from the Austrian legal system to the Italian one. Piero remembered his first time in Bolzano: "I loved being outside and painting. The idea of Bolzano stimulated me and pushed me, also because, especially in those days, you felt like you were abroad while being in Italy."[12] The Trentino-South Tyrol region came under Italian jurisdiction after the First World War, and South Tyrol as an autonomous province was created in 1927 under the Fascist regime. Mussolini intended to Italianise the territory and therefore promoted massive immigration.[13]

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10   "An inter/view is an exchange of gazes, persons both seeing and listening to each other"; see: A. Portelli, "Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience," *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 45, No. 2, pp. 239–248, https://doi.org/10.1093/ohr/ohy030 (accessed: 4.09.2022).

11   Interview with Giuseppe Negri (1920–2013), recorded at his home in Bolzano/Bozen by Giorgio Delle Donne, 20.04.2004.

12   Interview with Piero Siena (1912–2003) recorded at the Villa Armonia nursing home in Bolzano/Bozen by Giorgio Delle Donne, 06.08.2003. Piero Siena was born in Castelberforte, a small village near Mantua. He became a well-known artist and art critic and for almost fifteen years served as the director of the Museion-Contemporary Modern Art Museum in Bolzano.

13   See: A. Di Michele, F. Focardi, *Rethinking Fascism: The Italian and German Dictatorships*, Berlin–Boston 2022; A. Di Michele, N. Tranfaglia, *L'italianizzazione imperfetta: l'amministrazione pubblica dell'Alto Adige tra Italia liberale e fascismo*, Alessandria 2003 (trans. A. Di Michele, *Die unvollkommene Italianisierung: Politik und Verwaltung in Südtirol 1918–1943*, Innsbruck 2008).

In more general terms, because of Mussolini's pro-natalist policies and anti-emigration campaign, "emigration became an evil to be avoided, replaced by migration within the peninsula toward the reclaimed marshland, or toward the Italian colonies in Africa; moreover, urban growth had to be arrested in order to encourage the country's ruralisation."[14]

The political drawing of South Tyrol's new geographical boundaries and the idea of the nation state came into conflict with the reality of a land and people who were not Italian. "Likewise in Friuli-Venezia Giulia Fascism tried to practice a policy of centralisation, nationalisation, and incorporation of the population into its mass organisations. Italianisation, alongside fascistisation, was considered critical to political sovereignty under Mussolini's regime."[15] This nationalistic idea of a state in which borders, language, and citizens are one homogeneous entity shaped people's idea of national affiliation.

The personal experience of national belonging arises from some interviews collected by Giorgio Delle Donne. For example, Piero discusses the difficulty in understanding this territory: "[I was] somehow fascinated by the idea of being Italian, by the right of the Winners! Maybe I was a victim of these things and so I didn't analyse it. Then, you know, I came from the province of Mantua, where the word *todesc* is still used to say that someone is a fool. The hostility and the rage for the occupants remained for a long time."[16] This was the same state of mind with which Umberto arrived in South Tyrol in 1934: "I have to tell the truth: because of my family background, I was a nationalist when I arrived in South Tyrol. I was someone who was very self-aware of his national identity; I considered others as intruders."[17]

14   S. Gallo, *Italy: Internal Migration, 1800–Present*, in: Ness I. (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, New York 2013, p. 2; https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444351071.wbeghm603 (accessed: 4.09.2022).

15   E. McLean, *What Does It Mean to Be a(n Italian) Borderland? Recent Literature on Italy's New Provinces* of South Tyrol and the Julian March, "Contemporary European History," Vol. 30 (2021), issue 3, p. 8, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777320000545 (accessed: 20.09.2022). Regarding the border region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, an important project to take into consideration is the "Memory Archive," which promotes the collection, preservation, and dissemination of oral sources and photographs related to the border area between Italy and Slovenia during the twentieth century. The Delle Donne collection together with the "Memory Archive" could become a resource for researchers studying the border memories, especially those of the Triveneto historical region; *The Memory Archive: stories of life and places*, http://www.quarantasettezeroquattro.it/wp-content/uploads/volantino-Archivio-della-memoria.pdf (accessed: 24.09.2022).

16   Interview with Piero Siena.

17   Interview with Umberto Gandini (1935–2021) recorded at the Italian Claudia Augusta Provincial Library in Bolzano/Bozen by Giorgio Delle Donne, 27.04.2004. Umberto Gandini was born in Milan. His father was an Italian army officer, his mother was born in Dalmatia, his grandfather was an Alsatian of German nationality, and his grandmother was from Croatia. He worked as a journalist and German translator.

In both examples, we can clearly identify two linked aspects: the self-identification with Italy as a nation-empire – exemplified by the expressions "the idea of being Italian" or "self-aware of his national identity" – and the opposition towards the others, seen as "occupants" or "intruders." "In the nationalist mental framework, the German speakers of South Tirol were regarded as native but at the same time considered foreign to the land, which was now coded as Italian in geographical (based on the Alpine watershed), as well as historical terms (based on the identification between Fascist Italy and Ancient Rome)."[18]

However, one particular event in Gandini's life brought a significant change in this "nationalist mental framework." As a journalist, he covered the trial of the terrorists who conducted bomb attacks in South Tyrol.[19] Umberto remembered the moment when the prisoners arrived in Milan in the 1960s: "Seeing these people chained up reminded me of the «Martyrs of Belfiore» [*Martiri di Belfiore*], our heroes of the Risorgimento. We realised that these people had lived in South Tyrol for decades and that they had the right to a special self-government. They had the right to be respected in their own cultural identity. Italy owed them respect."[20]

The parallel between the Risorgimento resistance against the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and the terrorists who were claiming South Tyrol's autonomy is interesting because this comparison allows Umberto to reduce the distance and break down a cultural border. Broadly speaking, I believe that this example confirms that identity needs to be understood as a symbolic construction, as a cultural phenomenon and a product of historical, social, and political circumstances. As the Italian anthropologist Ugo Fabietti argues, it is necessary to take into consideration the complexity of the identity dimension, analysing its reasons, without "cultivating" and exasperating the differences which separate us from the others. Only in this way is it conceivable to move in a common space, where everyone, despite their differences, can see their identity recognised.[21]

The role played by the press and politics in the construction of the cultural identity of the Italian and German-speaking group is the second essential aspect that emerges from the interviews conducted by Delle Donne. The most widely

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18   R. Pergher, *Staging the Nation in Fascist Italy's "New Provinces"*, "Austrian History Yearbook," Vol. 43, 2012, p. 102; https://doi.org/10.1017/S0067237811000610 (accessed: 24.10.2022).

19   The trials of activists accused of several bombing attacks conducted in South Tyrol in the early 1960s took place in Milan in 1963 and 1964. See: P. Nuvolone, *Il processo di Milano nelle arringhe della difesa*, Vienna 1966. Further readings on the bomb attacks in South Tyrol from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s, see: H.K. Peterlini, *Feuernacht Südtirols Bombenjahre: Hintergründe, Schicksale, Bewertungen*, Bozen 2021; R. Steininger, *Die Feuernacht und was dann?: Südtirol und die Bomben: 1959–1969*, Bozen 2011; E. Baumgartner, H. Mayr, G. Mumelter, *Feuernacht Südtirol Bombenjahre: ein Zeitgeschichtliches Lesebuch*, Bozen 1992.

20   Interview with Umberto Gandini.

21   U. Fabietti, *L'identità etnica*, Roma 2005, p. 21.

read newspapers in South Tyrol, "Dolomiten" and "Alto Adige," both reflect this issue. These journals contributed to increasing tensions between the groups during the discussions on self-government. As Umberto explains: «Alto Adige» was the newspaper of Italian nationalism. It was like a mindset that influenced many of us."[22].

On the opposite side was the "Dolomiten" which, for example, in the 1950s published an article by the local priest Michael Gamper who spoke of a "Death March" for the German population as a result of Italian immigration[23]. The German "Dolomiten" and the Italian "Alto Adige" "reflected two very different realities and perspectives, usually covering different stories and almost always offering very different views on society."[24] The above-mentioned expression used by Umberto Gandini exemplifies the well-established assumption that "media coverage contributes to national identity building" but also that "exposure to domestic media coverage will enhance the evaluation of one's own nation and, thus, strengthen an individual's identification with the nation."[25]

On the political side, Giorgio Delle Donne interviewed the leaders of different Italian political parties who experienced significant events in South Tyrol's contemporary history first-hand.[26] One of the most important topics discussed during these interviews is the relationship between the Italian and German-speaking populations. Another issue addressed was the negotiations between the political parties on the implementation of the measures contained in the Second Statute of Autonomy (1972).[27] For instance, there was a disagreement between the South

22   Interview with Umberto Gandini.

23   *Bemerkungen zu einem Kommentar. Der Abstieg eines Volkes*, "Dolomiten," 28.10.1953, p. 1; M. Gamper, *Es ist ein Todesmarsch*, "Dolomiten," 21.04.1956, pp. 4–5.

24   G. Grote, *op. cit.*, p. 168. For more information on media and political legitimation in South Tyrol, see: G. Pallaver, *Die ethnisch halbierte Wirklichkeit. Medien, Öffentlichkeit und politische Legitimation in ethnisch fragmentierten Gesellschaften. Theoretische Überlegungen und Fallbeispiele aus Südtirol*, Innsbruck 2006.

25   P. Muller, *National Identity Building Through Patterns of an International Third-Person Perception in News Coverage*, "The International Communication Gazette," Vol. 75, No. 8, 2013, p. 734; https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048513482546 (accessed: 24.09.2022).

26   The political leaders interviewed by Giorgio Delle Donne are: Lidia Menapace (1924–2020), Pietro Mitolo (1921–2010), Giuseppe Sfondrini (1923–2012), Lionello Bertoldi (1928–2022), Marco Giacomelli (1928), Claudio Emeri (1923–2017), Giorgio Pasquali (1925–2012), Anselmo Gouthier (1933–2015), Decio Molignoni (1915–2005), Luis Durnwalder (1941), Romano Viola (1941), Giovanni Salghetti Drioli (1941), Giancarlo Bolognini (1938–2019), Marcello Ferrari (1935), Giorgio Tireni (1934), Michele Di Puppo (1945), Grazia Barbiero (1951), and Giovanni Ivan Benussi (1948).

27   The First Autonomy Statute was adopted in 1948 and the Second in 1972. An updated select bibliography on the autonomy of the Province of Bolzano/Bozen-South Tyrol was published in S. Parolari, C. Zwilling, *Die Südtiroler Autonomie: eine ausgewählte Bibliografie = Bibliografia ragionata sull'autonomia dell'Alto Adige = A Bibliography on the Autonomy of*

Tyrolean People's Party (sᴠᴘ) and the neo-Fascist Italian party *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (ᴍsɪ). The latter was firmly against the agreements on the autonomy of South Tyrol. The Italian neo-Fascist party was particularly hostile towards two measures included in the agreements: the "declaration of linguistic belonging/aggregation and the certificate of bilingualism (*Patentino*), which is required for employment in public administration."[28]

It is important to consider that "the entire institutional design of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen is based on the separation and forced cooperation of the two major language groups."[29] The question of "separation" between groups is one of the aspects emphasised by the sᴠᴘ, which had a very clear position about this theme, exemplified by one of its most famous leaders, Anton Zelger: "For me, there is no such thing as «one within the other.» I believe that the more clearly we separate, the better we will be able to understand each other in our country: separate, with mutual respect."[30] This protection/separation model

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South Tyrol, Bolzano 2018. In 2022, the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Statute is being celebrated, and multiple scientific events approach diverse aspects related to South Tyrolean autonomy and its recent developments from an interdisciplinary angle. For more information on the activities and publications, see the *Anniversary Autonomy Statute* website: https://www.eurac.edu/en/institutes-centers/institute-for-minority-rights/projects/anniversary-autonomy-statute (accessed: 24.09.2022).

28   "The South Tyrolean autonomy model is based on an ethnic quota system. The declaration determinates the quota size of each ethno-linguistic group, German, Italian and Ladin and calculates the proportions for the ethnic quotas to which a set of rights and benefits are connected. The declaration also allows one to stand for public office, receive subsidies and financial support, and to be employed in public administration. Failing or refusing to provide a linguistic declaration, or aggregating to one of the ethno-linguistic groups, automatically causes exclusion from the proportional system and the renunciation of the rights and benefits which can only be enjoyed through it;" A. Piacentini, Power-Sharing, Ethnic Quotas and "Others": "Opportunistic Alignment" as a Strategy to Overcome Exclusion? Evidence from South Tyrol and Bosnia Herzegovina, 26.01.2021, https://www.eurac.edu/en/blogs/eureka/power-sharing-ethnic-quotas-and-others-opportunistic-alignment-as-a-strategy-to-o (accessed: 24.09.2022).

29   E. Alber, *South Tyrol's Negotiated Autonomy*, "Treatises and Documents Journal of Ethnic Studies/Razprave in gradivo revija za narodnostna vprašanja," Vol. 78, 2017, p. 43, https://rig-td.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/78_-5.pdf (accessed: 24.09.2022).

30   Anton Zelger (1914–2008) was one of the most important leaders of the sᴠᴘ. During one county council meeting in 1979, he gave his famous speech: "[…] For me there is no South Tyrolean culture; there is only a German, an Italian, and a Ladin culture in South Tyrol. […] And to clarify once again: for me there is no integration. There is instead peaceful coexistence, and I am ready for that at any time. […] And I believe that the more clearly we separate, the better we will understand each other in our country: separate, with mutual respect. […] We can speak many languages, a lot of people speak many languages, but life, cultural life, is only possible in one culture! We, the ethnic German group of the South Tyrolean People's Party, want to continue to live in German culture;" *Wortprotokoll der 8. Sitzung vom 20. März 1979*, pp. 34–40, https://www.consiglio-bz.org/it/banche-dati-raccolte/legislatura-8.asp?somepubl_action=300&somepubl_image_id=132143 (accessed: 24.09.2022).

was brought to a separation of the groups in different social and cultural areas, and this made it very difficult to promote an idea of closeness among a part of the population. Regarding this aspect, Giorgio Delle Donne interviewed Marco Garau, who was a member of the South Tyrolean Communist Party (PCI/KPI) and secretary of the local section of Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL). Marco recounts the difficulty in promoting greater integration between the groups but, on the other hand, he recognises the need to apply that model to ensure peaceful coexistence between the groups:

> We thought we were being coherent with our desire for workers" unity, but in people's minds it was different. We were trying, but we couldn't follow these selfish urges that went in favour of one or the other. We always tried to find points of understanding, points of agreement, which were not easy, but we saved South Tyrol from becoming like Ireland or the Basque Country, and I have to say that we tried hard. Clearly, to get votes you have to stand in line with common opinion, so you give up the task of training, educating, stimulating more noble thoughts.[31]

These several lines reveal some interesting themes that cannot be discussed in-depth in this paper. However, it is important to briefly depict the context beyond this recollection. Marco remembered the municipal elections held in Bolzano in 1985 when the neo-Fascist MSI party obtained a large number of votes, especially from the working-class districts. The "declaration of linguistic belonging/aggregation" and the certificate of bilingualism were harshly criticised by part of the Italian linguistic group, who feared losing power and becoming a minority within the province.[32] The neo-Fascist party exploited these anxieties to its advantage, setting itself up as the defender of the Italian rights in the name of the Italian-ness of the province. In this interview, Marco emphasises the failure

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31   Interview with Marco Garau (1927–2018) recorded at the CGIL trade union headquarters in Bolzano/Bozen by Giorgio Delle Donne, 23.04.2004. The General Italian Confederation of Labour [*Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*] is the largest trade union federation in Italy. Marco Garau was born in Sant'Antioco, an offshore island in southwestern Sardinia. His father was a blacksmith, and his mother came from a "good family." Marco arrived in Bolzano shortly after the end of the Second World War. He became involved in the activities of the local communist party and in later years held important roles in the trade union.

32   The concern was further accentuated by the results of the 1981 census, which showed that the Italian population had decreased compared to the previous census of 1971, whereas the German linguistic group had increased. It is important to notice that while the census of 1971 was anonymous and had a purely statistical character, the population census of 1981 was fundamental for the implementation of the legislative provisions enacted under the Second Autonomy Statute. The Italian resident population in 1971 was 137,759, and in 1981 – 123,695. The German resident population, meanwhile, grew from 260,351 in 1971 to 279,544 in 1981; ASTAT, *South Tyrol in figures 2021*, Bozen / Bolzano 2021, p. 19, https://astat.provinz.bz.it/downloads/Siz_2021-eng(4).pdf (accessed: 24.09.2022).

of the left-wing political elite represented by him in convincing the population against pursuing a segregation policy, which, after all, was the basis of the approved Statute of Autonomy.

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In conclusion, I have presented only a few examples of the numerous interviews collected by Giorgio Delle Donne. I have focused on the perception of the border among the Italian-speaking group settled in South Tyrol and how they experienced the relationship with the German-speaking group. Life stories of boundaries, both crossed and built, also demonstrate how external factors like politics and the media contributed to exacerbate the conflict between the two main linguistic groups in South Tyrol. While some interviewees felt like strangers in their own country, others tried to reduce the cultural distance and to build new bridges. One example is Carlo Lazzerini, who decided to stay in South Tyrol after the Second World War:

> I decided to stay here because it was a beautiful place. I considered it like a bridge between people. We must build the bridge here instead of being a place of conflict. It must be the new Europe. The idea of Europe as it was discussed at the time was upsetting me, because it was intended to be anti-Soviet, but it was clear that there was a need to overcome the cruel nationalistic ideas that had led to wars in Europe.[33]

I briefly referred to the importance of reconstructing Giorgio Delle Donne's life in order to understand the context in which the oral history project was realised. During my interview with Delle Donne, I was surprised to find in his account the same narrative scheme as the ones of the people he had interviewed: family history, the circumstances of the move to South Tyrol, first living accommodation, school, his career. The life of Delle Donne, the son of an Italian family who had come to South Tyrol to find prosperity, helps us understand the origin of his interest in the history of the Italian-speaking group in this area.

Another important aspect in the historian's life is his involvement in the local political scene of the 1970s. He supported the ideas of left-wing extra-parliamentary groups, especially against disunity, isolation, and ethnic division. In Delle Donne's decision to interview "privileged witnesses" belonging to the Italian linguistic group, we can detect a double intent. Firstly, as we have already mentioned,

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33   Interview with Carlo Lazzerini (1920–2010) recorded at the Italian Provincial Library 'Claudia Augusta" in Bolzano/Bozen by Giorgio Delle Donne, 6.05.2004. Carlo Lazzerini was born in Livorno, a port city on the western coast of Tuscany, and grew up in a middle-class family. He became a famous teacher at the G. Carducci Classical Lyceum in Bolzano.

he wanted to retrace a migration experience similar to that of his family; he tried to find an echo of his own story in that of the interviewees.

Secondly, he attempted to understand the point of view of those who, for many years, played an important role in society and had the power to change things, but often without succeeding:[34] "The interviews plunge me into my own past: as I listen, the film of what I was doing at the time unreels."[35] To a certain extent, these interviews "plunge" Delle Donne into his own past yet viewed through the perspective of the interviewees" generation, an experience that enables him to understand their point of view. Therefore, we believe that so-called intersubjectivity – "the interaction between an interviewer's sense of self and identity and an interviewee's sense of self and identity" – is the greatest power of oral history.[36] This is a crucial topic when we decide to work with oral history archives.

In a broader sense, by analysing an oral history archive, the idea of intersubjectivity involves even the researcher who did not collect the interviews. This researcher observes the relationship between interviewees and interviewer, whereby his subjectivity becomes part of the archive. The activities of cataloguing, transcribing, and indexing, but especially the interpretation of the interviews, "plunge" the researcher into a "multi-layered series of pasts," such as the time of the recording of the interview and that of the interviewees" lives. An oral history archive is more than a collection of historical documents; it is like a mirror reflecting the relationship between interviewee, interviewer, and researcher, showing stories of affinities, but also stories of boundaries.

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34   I refer especially to interviews with politicians who had governmental roles and contributed to the permanency of an ethnic division within society.

35   L. Passerini, *Autobiography of a Generation: Italy, 1968*, Middletown 1996, p. 1.

36   *Editorial*, *"Oral History,"* Vol. 50, No. 1, 2022, p. 2.

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Summary
This article explores the life stories which constitute the basis of the Oral History Archive of the Claudia Augusta Italian Provincial Library in Bolzano/Bozen, Italy. Nearly 150 people were interviewed by the local historian Giorgio Delle Donne; some of them played an important role in South Tyrolean society as politicians, teachers, artists, and trade union leaders. The analysed examples of oral history interviews of those who moved to South Tyrol between the 1920s and the 1940s demonstrate how family backgrounds and external factors, such as politics and the media, have influenced their perceptions of the landscape. Through the lens of intersubjectivity, the oral history archive became a "living organism" shaped by the encounter between the interviewer, interviewee, and researcher.