

Anticipatory Innovation Governance South Tyrol

Content Analysis of Strategic Plans of the South Tyrolean Regional Administration Since 2021

Framing and Integrating
Current and Future Challenges and Solutions

Scientific Coordination

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1. Introduction

The concept of future viability (Zukunftsfähigkeit) has become increasingly significant in today's rapidly changing world. As regions face a multitude of challenges—from economic shifts and demographic changes to environmental concerns and social inequalities—it is crucial to evaluate how well they are prepared for the future.

This report aims to examine the future viability of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – Südtirol/Alto Adige (hereafter South Tyrol), analyzing its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats across key dimensions such as economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and social well-being. By understanding these factors, we can identify strategic priorities and actionable recommendations to ensure that South Tyrol remains adaptive, competitive, and sustainable in the face of future challenges.

A key component of this assessment involved a content analysis of the strategic plans of the South Tyrolean provincial administration from January 2021 to June 2024. This analysis aimed to answer the question: "How are current and future challenges and solutions framed in these strategic documents?" The goal was to determine the extent to which future competence—defined as the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to future challenges—is present within the public administration and among those responsible for strategic processes in South Tyrol.

The findings of this report will serve as a foundation for policymakers, businesses, and community leaders in South Tyrol to make informed decisions and develop robust strategies for sustainable development. By fostering a proactive approach to future planning, South Tyrol can enhance its resilience against external shocks, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and promote a high quality of life for its residents. This report not only highlights the current state of the province's future viability but also sets the stage for ongoing dialogue and action towards a more sustainable and prosperous future.

2. Methodological Approach

To evaluate the future viability of South Tyrol, we conducted a comprehensive inductive content analysis of the strategic plans issued by the South Tyrolean provincial administration between January 2021 and June 2024 (see table 1). This method involves systematically examining documents to identify recurring themes, patterns, and the underlying framing of issues. The analysis was focused on understanding how current and future challenges, as well as potential solutions, are presented in these strategic papers. The primary objective was to assess the level of future competence within the public administration and among those responsible for strategic processes in South Tyrol.

Strategic plan (original title)	Strategic plan (English title)	Year	Authors
Alto Adige Digitale 2022—2026 (available on request)	Digital South Tyrol 2022—2026	2022	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol
Everyday for Future. Gemeinsam für die Nachhaltigkeit	Everyday for Future. Together for sustainability	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Komplexer Sonderauftrag „Nachhaltigkeit“
Familienförderplan. Leitlinien zur Entwicklung und Förderung der Familien in Südtirol	Family Support Plan. Guidelines for the Development and Promotion of Families in South Tyrol	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Familienagentur
GAP—Strategieplan 2023—2027. Maßnahmen der I. und II. Säule der gemeinsamen Agrarpolitik	CAP Strategic Plan 2023—2027. Measures of the 1st and 2nd Pillar of the Common Agricultural Policy	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Abteilung Landwirtschaft Amt für EU—Strukturfonds in der Landwirtschaft
Gleichstellungsaktionsplan Südtirol 2023—28	Equality Action Plan South Tyrol 2023—28	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Amt für Landessprachen und Bürgerrechte, Frauenbüro
Innovation und Forschung Südtirol 2030. Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) der Autonomen Provinz Bozen—Südtirol	Innovation and Research South Tyrol 2030. Smart Specialisation Strategy (RIS3) of the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano – Südtirol/Alto Adige Province of Bolzano—South Tyrol	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort Bevölkerungsschutz, Bürgerrechte, Gleichstellung und Kommunikation
Klimaplan Südtirol 2040	Climate Plan South Tyrol 2040	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Komplexer Sonderauftrag „Nachhaltigkeit“

Landessozialplan 2030	Regional Social Plan 2030	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort Sozialer Zusammenhalt, Familie, Senioren, Genossenschaften und Ehrenamt
Landesplan für nachhaltige Mobilität 2035	Regional Plan for Sustainable Mobility 2035	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort Infrastruktur und Mobilität
LANDESPRÄVENTIONSPLAN 2021—2025	Regional Prevention Plan 2021—2025	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Abteilung Gesundheit (Südtiroler Sanitätsbetrieb)
LandWIRtschaft 2030 Strategiepapier für die Südtiroler Landwirtschaft	Agriculture 2030 Strategy Paper for South Tyrolean Agriculture	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort Landwirtschaft, Forstwirtschaft, Tourismus
Regierungsprogramm für die Legislaturperiode 2023 – 2028	Government Program for the Legislative Period 2023 – 2028	2024	Südtiroler Landesregierung
Regionale Entwicklungsstrategie 2021 – 2027. Dokument als Grundlage für die Nutzung der EU Strukturfonds	Regional Development Strategy 2021 – 2027. Document as a Basis for the Use of EU Structural Funds	2021	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol
Südtirol tritt in die Pedale. 2022—2030 Fahrradmobilitätsplan Südtirol	South Tyrol Pedals Forward. 2022—2030 Bicycle Mobility Plan South Tyrol	2022	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort für Infrastruktur und Mobilität
Waldagenda 2030 Strategiepapier für die Südtiroler Forstwirtschaft	Forest Agenda 2030 Strategy Paper for South Tyrolean Forestry	2023	Autonome Provinz Bozen—Südtirol, Ressort Landwirtschaft, Forstwirtschaft, Tourismus

Table 1. List of analyzed strategic plans

The coding of the documents was carried out using MAXQDA, a specialized software for qualitative data analysis. MAXQDA enabled a structured approach to categorizing the content, which helped in uncovering key insights into how the administration addresses future—oriented issues. This methodological approach provided a detailed understanding of the extent to which future challenges are anticipated and strategically planned for within the province's governance framework.

3. Findings

To assess South Tyrol's future viability, we have inductively categorized the following key aspects: challenges, goals, solutions, measures and actors.

These aspects formed the foundation for a comprehensive evaluation of the strategies, enabling us to thoroughly examine their potential to adapt to future challenges and opportunities. The following section presents the key findings derived from this approach.

3.1 Identified Challenges

We began by analyzing the status quo and the challenges outlined in strategic documents. These challenges fall into two main categories: ecological and socio—economic, both encompassing a broad array of interconnected issues that often overlap, creating a complex foundation for progress. The Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027 acknowledges that South Tyrol has established a solid foundation for future advancement. However, it also warns against complacency or adhering to a "business as usual" approach:

"This good starting position of South Tyrol should not lead to a simple 'business as usual.' Firstly, because important success factors cannot remain unchanged without systematic further development; secondly, because various framework conditions are changing significantly, altering the significance of the success factors; and thirdly, and not least, because the changed conditions also open new opportunities that must be proactively seized."¹ (Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027, p. 6)

To ensure the continued development and seize new opportunities for a sustainable future in South Tyrol, it is essential to first identify the current challenges. On top of these, an additional challenge is the need to adapt to ever—changing global and local conditions. As highlighted in the Regional Social Plan 2030, its renewal comes at a time of significant shifts in both the economy and the labor market, including events like the financial crisis and the Covid—19 pandemic:

"The renewal of the provincial social plan comes at a time of great upheaval in the economic and labor world. Following the financial crisis of 2008 and the subsequent economic turbulence, state social policy has proven to be an essential societal stabilization mechanism even during the Covid—19 pandemic."² (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 12)

Ecological challenges

According to the climate plan of the region, climate change represents one of the greatest challenges of our times and the provincial government's plan also emphasizes that: "The advancing climate change and the associated natural events present a tremendous challenge in this context."³ (Government Program for the Legislative Period 2023—2028, p.19)

South Tyrol, like all regions worldwide, is affected by the impacts of climate change and therefore places a major focus on addressing its consequences. On one hand, South Tyrol sees itself as impacted by climate change; on the other hand, it acknowledges a strong responsibility for its contribution, like other wealthy industrial countries and regions. The Regional Social Plan 2030 identifies unsustainable lifestyles, along with the underlying production and service systems, as the primary causes behind this disproportionate contribution to climate change. It argues that social and economic structures of our fast paced, globally connected world must be urgently realigned with the ecological demand of a finite planet. However, such a transformative process might increase current inequalities as well as creating new ones:

"Our society must face an additional challenge on all levels: Climate warming and its effects threaten the integrity of our living environment on a global scale. This is primarily due to our lifestyle and the production and service systems aligned with it. The economic and social organizational models of our accelerated and globally interconnected society urgently need to be coordinated and aligned with the ecological requirements of a resource—limited living space. This fundamental transformation process will deepen existing disparities and create new imbalances in the coming decades."⁴ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p.14)

As a disproportionate contributor to climate change, South Tyrol's per capita carbon footprint stands at 6 tons of CO₂, with an even higher indirect footprint—up to 7.5 tons of CO₂ per capita, as highlighted in the 2018 Climate Report (p. 29). This means that South Tyrol has an obligation to implement measures to reduce its own carbon footprint as well as to take action to enhance its resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Particular attention is given to the two sectors of transportation and agriculture. Transportation is responsible for 56% of the CO₂ emissions generated in the province, with the Brenner Corridor alone accounting for 37% of road traffic emissions:

"As the analyses conducted within the framework of the LPNM and the South Tyrol Climate Plan 2040 show, the Brenner Corridor is the main source of CO₂ emissions from road traffic, accounting for 37% of total emissions. Considering that the transport sector is responsible for 56% of CO₂ emissions, it can be estimated that the contribution of traffic on the A22 alone accounts for about 21% of the CO₂ emissions produced in the province."⁵ (Regional Plan for Sustainable Mobility 2035, p. 96)

In South Tyrol, agriculture and the food industry are among the main contributors to CO₂ emissions, accounting for 18% of total emissions (Agriculture 2030, p. 7). This is partially due to an increasing intensification through technologies that simultaneously cause climate change and a decline in biodiversity: "For the habits and technologies that have made our daily routines faster, more convenient, and safer, as well as the intensification of agriculture that has ensured food security, contribute to climate warming and affect biodiversity."⁶ (Agriculture 2030, p. 3)

At the same time, it is these sectors that are particularly vulnerable to, and already suffering from, the effects of climate change. For instance, the Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027 identifies climate change as one of the most significant foreseeable changes for South Tyrol, which will notably impact weather— and climate—dependent production sectors such as agriculture and tourism, and challenge the population's supply security, including access to drinking water—a resource essential for agricultural production.

Additionally, climate change will lead to rising temperatures and an increase in extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, hail, or late frost, which will negatively affect agriculture. Forests are also suffering under these conditions, as demonstrated by the damage caused by recent storms Vaia in 2019. According to the Forestry Agenda, it is crucial to prepare forests for future events, as they play a critical protective role in the region: "Even today, the forest must be prepared to withstand the rising temperatures, long dry periods, and extreme weather events of the coming years and decades."⁷ (Forest Agenda 2030, p. 7) and "Nature is the first victim of climate change. However, the impacts are ultimately also felt by humans. The forest plays a special protective role in this context."⁸ (Forest Agenda 2030, p. 10)

In summary, South Tyrol is both a contributor to and affected by climate change. While the Climate Plan aims to transform the region into a sustainable and climate—neutral society, it

acknowledges that this can only be achieved through significant efforts and a strong political and societal foundation, driven by solidarity between generations. However, the current EU targets for 2030 and 2040 are insufficient to meet the +1.5°C goal, and more ambitious interim targets and strategies are needed:

"It can be assumed that, from the current perspective, the +1.5 °C target and the associated net—zero target can only realistically be achieved with great effort; necessary interim targets must already include strategies for the rapid achievement of the net—zero goal. The current targets of the EU for the years 2030 and 2040 are no longer sufficient for this and cannot serve as minimum target benchmarks."⁹ (Climate Plan South Tyrol 2040, p. 11—12)

Socio—economic challenges

In addition to ecological challenges, South Tyrol faces a range of socio—economic issues, some of which are exacerbated by climate change. Recent events like the COVID—19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, the energy crisis, and rising inflation have also impacted the region, as they have across Europe (see Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 3). These circumstances have brought social challenges to the forefront, highlighting the urgent need for decisive action from individuals, businesses, and governments to fundamentally rethink current lifestyles and economic models: "The climate crisis represents one of the greatest challenges of our time. It requires decisive action from all of us, from individuals to businesses to governments, and a fundamental change in the way we live and conduct our economy."¹⁰ (Climate Plan South Tyrol 2040, p. 7) According to South Tyrol's Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027 (p. 6), some of the most significant foreseeable changes include shifting demographics, technological transformation, and changing lifestyles. The demographic shift, characterized by an altered age pyramid and consumption structure, is viewed not only as a challenge but also as an opportunity for new offerings and organizational forms. Additionally, the strategy emphasizes the importance of actively managing migration, encompassing both immigration and emigration on national, European, and global scales, along with the associated challenges. In terms of technological transformation, the strategy underscores the need to establish a societal consensus, technical expertise, and ethical standards to effectively address potential future challenges, also regarding the effects of automatization and digitalization. Finally, emerging lifestyle changes in key markets of the South Tyrolean economy reflect ongoing discussions about how the next generation envisions their lives, with movements like Fridays for Future being a significant part of this discourse. Shifts in lifestyle and consumption are expected to reshape many markets within a generation, necessitating adaptation and anticipation while also presenting new, albeit currently unclear, opportunities. Further socio—economic challenges identified in the analyzed strategy papers include social inequality and the risk of poverty, demographic changes, challenges of consumption and land use, gender equality, and social cohesion. Each of these points will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Combating poverty has become a central concern worldwide, increasingly affecting even the highly industrialized nations and regions, such as South Tyrol. In 2019 the amount of the population at risk of poverty amounted 18% (Climate Plan South Tyrol 2040, p. 13). Since 2008, poverty and existential security have increased due to the financial and economic crises that resulted in cutbacks in government budgets, and most recently the COVID—19 pandemic increase already existing structural inequalities. This is why the regional social plan highlights support of the socially and economic disadvantaged in the fight against poverty that have emerged in the growing divide between those that can be considered winners and losers of prosperity: "Supporting the socially disadvantaged and combating poverty have emerged as

priority areas across Europe, in light of the growing divide between those benefiting from prosperity and those falling behind."¹¹ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 12)

Certain groups are particularly at risk, such as unemployed individuals, those in precarious employment, families with many children, single parents, and refugees among others. At the same time, the cost of living is rising steadily while wages are stagnating and the resulting reduction in purchasing power is exacerbating the risk of poverty. Additionally, the structural change in the economy, driven by technological innovations and digitalization, has occurred alongside stagnating wage growth and a contraction of social security systems. As many people find it difficult to maintain their usual standard of living amid rising costs, stagnant wages, and overall declining purchasing power, the risk of poverty remains a significant challenge: "As many people are unable to maintain their usual standard of living due to rising living costs, stagnant wage growth, and the general reduction in purchasing power, the risk of poverty remains a challenge."¹² (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 53)

Next to the risk of poverty, South Tyrol also faces the challenge of deep demographic change. This shift affects the region's population structure, leading to an aging society, changing workforce dynamics, as well as evolving social needs. The Regional Social Plan notes that due to demographic change, the number of young people entering the labor market after completing their education will decline over the next 20 years. Additionally, South Tyrol is affected by brain drain, particularly among highly qualified individuals with tertiary education degrees. For those who want to (re)move to South Tyrol but are still uncertain about whether they want to stay or not, the housing situation poses a significant obstacle as the housing market is very challenging (Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027, p. 12, p.22). Additionally, even with incentives to increase the participation of the existing female labor force, prolongation of the working life, and adjusting educational programs to meet the qualifications needed by public and private companies, it will not be possible to fully compensate for the shortage of skilled workers. These challenges need to be planned today as they require relatively long lead times before they become impactful:

"An increase in female labor force participation and an extension of the working life that counts toward retirement may temporarily compensate for the decline in the working—age population due to falling birth rates, but it cannot provide a sustainable solution to the problem."¹³ (Family Support Plan, p. 31) and

"This [demographic change] represents a significant challenge for the entire society, which must be addressed today, as all effective instruments have relatively long lead times before they take effect."¹⁴ (Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027, p. 9)

Another challenge for South Tyrol is the very limited space—only 6% of the region is suitable for settlement. At the same time, South Tyrol boasts a highly attractive natural environment and receives 33 million overnight stays from tourists each year. This leads to conflicts over land use and poses the risk of overexploitation, as the pressure on the environment from tourism and other activities continues to grow:

"South Tyrol boasts an exceptionally attractive natural environment (as evidenced by 33 million tourist overnight stays), but this very attractiveness makes it particularly vulnerable: local phenomena such as conflicts over land use and overexploitation are prevalent. The use of non—spatially bound resources, such as CO₂ emissions, represents a transregional component—effects that extend beyond the region—which imposes a moral responsibility even on a small region like South Tyrol."¹⁵ (Regional Development Strategy 2021—2027, p. 14)

This challenge indirectly raises the question of how people in South Tyrol want to consume or not consume in the future and how these conflicts over resources are expressed in society. One example here is mobility, where many interests clash, including an inefficient road system, a somewhat weak public transportation network, a lack of information for citizens, and a lack of awareness. As a result, people ultimately tend to opt for individual transportation in their own cars (Regional Plan for Sustainable Mobility 2035, p. 73—74). This can also be understood as an example of the individualization process that increasingly runs through societies. The Regional Social Plan 2030 notes that in societies the focus has shifted towards individual and personal well-being goals partly caused by a weakening sense of community and the emphasis on consumerism while simultaneously feeling that their existence lacks meaning. Such short-term pursuit of material possession hinders the necessary compromises for long-term integration into a community. Further, income statistics indicate a growing divide between the rich and the poor. All these trends could risk altering societal cohesion and the acceptance of societal differences:

"The weakening of the sense of community and the emphasis on consumerism have resulted in individual wealth and well-being goals taking center stage in our society. People invest a lot of energy in fulfilling their consumer desires, yet they simultaneously feel that the search for meaning in their existence is lacking, and that the short-term focus on material possessions hinders the necessary compromises for long-term integration into the community. Income statistics show a growing divide between rich and poor."¹⁶ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 48)

According to the Regional Social Plan 2030, South Tyrol aims to position itself as a modern and pluralistic society. However, this understanding comes with its own unique challenges such as that a growing diversity of cultural identities can lead to differing value systems and perceptions of conceptions of humanity:

"A pluralistic modern society is increasingly challenged, as there are no longer unshakable common values and goals, as there were in the past, to which all members of society adhere. Another challenge that both society and the individual must face is the increasing confrontation with diverse cultural identities, which often come with differing value systems and views of humanity."¹⁷ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 179)

According to the Equality Action Plan South Tyrol, a society that sees itself as pluralistic and modern must also address the issue of gender equality—women should not be hindered from participating in society due to caregiving and educational responsibilities. The shaping of society cannot be left solely to men; otherwise, the concerns and perspectives of women will not be adequately considered. Therefore, there is a need for incentives to promote a gender-equitable distribution of caregiving time, along with social and financial support for caregiving periods. (see Equality Action Plan South Tyrol 2023—28, p. 29—30) This transformation is further accompanied by a general shift in values that questions the traditional understanding of family which have historically constrained women's participation, are beginning to change.

"Familial change is currently most evident in the transformation of family structures, such as household composition, fertility, and marriage and divorce behaviors. However, attributing these changes solely to a shift in values is too simplistic. Familial change must be understood through a variety and combination of different factors. These include values and notions regarding gender roles and family relationships, as

well as changing societal conditions due to demographic developments and changes related to employment and family work."¹⁸ (Family Support Plan, p. 11)

With all the socio—economic challenges mentioned above in certain clusters, it is important to note that many of these challenges are deeply interconnected and cannot be addressed in isolation. A comprehensive approach is required to tackle them effectively.

3.2 Goals

In examining the strategic plans of the South Tyrolean regarding which and how goals were formulated, "Environment and Sustainability" emerged as a prominent theme, reflecting the administration's commitment to sustainable development and environmental protection. This theme is broad and encompasses several categories that highlight various aspects of sustainability and environmental stewardship. The analysis of these categories reveals a multifaceted approach to addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainability as a core principle.

A significant emphasis is placed on sustainability and environmental protection as central pillars of policymaking. Categories such as "Sustainability and Environmental Protection as a Chance" and "Sustainability as the Highest Maxim" underscore the importance assigned to these concepts in the strategic documents. For instance, in the Everyday for Future document it says:

"Sustainability also means seeing the bigger picture, that is, understanding the interconnections on this small planet and the interconnectedness of all humanity. At the same time, we must accept our limited capacities. We can change our behavior, the way we live in this country. We can try to inspire others as well [...]. The encouraging thing is that the realignment of society and the economy offers enormous opportunities. The technical prerequisites are largely already in place today. Let's use them! Let's pursue the goals consistently and in solidarity!"¹⁹ (Everyday for Future, p. 3)

The administration frames sustainability not merely as a regulatory requirement but as a foundational value—"Sustainability as a Basis for a Good Life." This indicates a holistic understanding of sustainability, integrating environmental health with overall well—being and quality of life for the residents. It also suggests a forward—looking approach that incorporates creativity, research, and technology to achieve sustainability goals ("Through Creativity, Research, and Technology, We Become Sustainable") as in the following "The societal effects are also triggered by the use of creative products and services to support sustainability goals in the areas of the environment, quality of life, and social cohesion."²⁰ (Innovation and Research South Tyrol 2030 (RIS3), p. 4). This reflects a commitment not only to innovation and leveraging new technologies but also to creativity to enhance sustainable practices.

The subcodes under the theme of "Mitigating Climate Change" and "Protecting Nature" reflect a proactive stance towards climate action. The strategic plans highlight several critical areas, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adopting circular economy practices. These initiatives indicate a recognition of the need to transition towards more sustainable production and consumption patterns to mitigate environmental impacts. Also, the forest is considered

"As a living environment for people, plants, and animals, as a great equalizer and stabilizer, as a supplier of raw materials, a protective shield, and a natural cleaner—

all of this for centuries. Today, the forest is also an important ally in the fight against climate change and its consequences."²¹ (Forest Agenda 2030, p. 3)

Further, there is an emphasis on "Adapting to Climate Change" and "Prevention," which highlights the dual approach of mitigation and adaptation in the province's climate strategy. This demonstrates an understanding that addressing climate change requires both immediate actions to reduce environmental impacts and long—term strategies to adapt to its inevitable effects. The category "Protection Against Hydrogeological Hazards" indicates a concern for the increasing risks posed by natural disasters, which are likely to be exacerbated by climate change. This concern is coupled with the topic Resilience, pointing to a strategy focused on building adaptive capacity and ensuring the region's preparedness to respond to environmental and climatic challenges. The inclusion of Modernization, Innovation, and Digitalization within the environmental context suggests a strategic intent to harness digital tools and innovative practices to support sustainability efforts. This aligns with global trends where technology is increasingly seen as a vital enabler of sustainable development, facilitating smarter resource management and enhancing environmental monitoring capabilities. The PNRR is mentioned for

"Identifying digitalization as one of the three strategic pillars, alongside ecological transition and social inclusion, focusing on the need to address the deficit accumulated over the years in terms of citizens' digital skills and the adoption of digital technologies for the innovation of infrastructure, processes, products, and services."²² (Digital South Tyrol 2022—2026, p. 5)

Several subcodes emphasize the conservation of natural resources and the promotion of sustainable energy. These reflect a clear policy direction towards reducing the environmental footprint of energy consumption and enhancing resource efficiency. The focus on ecological sustainability through biological agriculture and animal welfare further underscores a commitment to sustainable agricultural practices and ethical treatment of animals, promoting biodiversity and ecological balance.

The category called "Implementing the Principle of Sustainability in All Areas of Life" captures the comprehensive approach of the administration to embed sustainability across all sectors and activities. This integrative approach is also reflected in sustainable economic growth" and sustainable development eco—social economy, indicating a balance between economic development and environmental preservation. The strategic documents advocate for growth that does not compromise environmental integrity, thereby aligning with the principles of sustainable development. Lastly, preserving biodiversity highlights the strategic focus on protecting the region's natural heritage and diverse ecosystems. By emphasizing biodiversity, the strategic documents recognize the intrinsic value of ecosystems and the need to maintain them for future generations. In the CAP Strategic Plan 2023—2027 one financial promotion is dedicated to biodiversity as it states:

"The aim of this support measure is to preserve and enhance the biological diversity of species and habitats on both agricultural and non—agricultural land, as well as to improve their connectivity."²³ (CAP Strategic Plan 2023—2027, p. 37)

The content analysis of the strategic plans reveals a comprehensive and proactive approach to Environment and Sustainability as a strategic goal. The South Tyrolean provincial administration appears committed to embedding sustainability into all facets of its policies and practices, recognizing the importance of environmental stewardship as fundamental to the region's long—term viability and prosperity. The various subcodes provide a clear indication of the administration's priorities, ranging from climate action and resource conservation to

technological innovation and resilience building. Together, these initiatives reflect a robust strategy aimed at ensuring the sustainable development of South Tyrol in the face of evolving environmental and socio—economic challenges.

The second prevalent goal is "Social Justice and Society", reflecting a broad commitment to equity and community well—being. This theme encompasses several key areas that illustrate the administration's priorities in fostering a just and inclusive society. The emphasis on inclusion and integration highlights a dedicated effort to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their background, are actively included and integrated into the social and economic fabric of South Tyrol. The Regional Social Plan 2030 also focuses significantly on the integration and inclusion of young people, for example:

"Preventive inclusion projects are being promoted to support young people from difficult family backgrounds, those with behavioral issues (e.g., violence—prone youth), or those with problematic alcohol or drug use who are unwilling to cooperate with institutional support systems, in order to prevent them from slipping into social exclusion."²⁴ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 127)

This priority reflects a deep commitment to social equity and access to opportunities for everyone. Moreover, a strategic focus on creating a just society underscores the commitment to fairness and justice. This includes efforts to ensure that resources and opportunities are equitably distributed, addressing systemic inequalities to build a more balanced society. For instance:

"All forms of wealth, especially environmental, social, and cultural wealth, must be managed in such a way that at least the current level can be passed on to future generations."²⁵ (Regional Development Strategy 2021-2027, p. 7)

Addressing gender equality is also a significant aspect of the strategies, showing a commitment to reducing gender disparities and promoting equal opportunities across all genders. This is a crucial element in advancing social justice and ensuring that everyone has the same chances to succeed. The focus on solidarity and a diverse society emphasizes the importance of building a community characterized by mutual support and diversity. This priority reflects the goal of fostering social cohesion and embracing the richness of different backgrounds within the community. Ensuring good housing is a central aspect of the strategy, indicating the importance of providing adequate and quality housing as a fundamental component of social well—being. This reflects a commitment to improving living conditions for all residents. The education system is recognized as a critical factor in promoting social equity. By investing in education, the strategy aims to provide equal opportunities and address disparities, thereby supporting long—term social development. Social sustainability highlights the commitment to maintaining social stability and ensuring that social policies contribute to enduring community well—being. This reflects an understanding of the need for long—term strategies that support sustained social health. The priority given to preservation for future generations underscores the goal of ensuring that current social policies and resources are preserved and remain beneficial for future generations. This reflects a forward—looking approach to social justice and equity. The strategic focus on social justice and society reveals a comprehensive approach to enhancing equity, inclusion, and overall community well—being. Key areas such as "Inclusion & Integration," "Just Society," and "Gender Equality" demonstrate a strong commitment to addressing social disparities and building a fair and inclusive community. The emphasis on "Solidarity and Diverse Society," "Good Housing," and "Education System" further illustrates the administration's dedication to improving quality of life and ensuring sustainable social development.

The goal of "Economic Competitiveness" prominently features in the strategic documents, highlighting the region's dedication to strengthening its economic position and ensuring long-term resilience. Several critical areas within this theme illustrate the strategic focus on enhancing economic performance. A significant emphasis is placed on promoting economic growth, which reflects a goal to stimulate expansion and increase productivity across various sectors. This focus aims to boost the region's overall economic vitality and create new opportunities for development especially in rural areas as the following quote shows:

"The intervention aims to promote economic growth in rural areas by strengthening the productivity, profitability, and competitiveness of the agricultural and food industries, as well as the agribusiness sector, while simultaneously improving their climate and environmental performance."²⁶ (CAP Strategic Plan 2023—2027, p. 43)

The strategy also prioritizes "Strengthening Local Economic Circuits," aiming to support and expand regional economic networks. By fostering local businesses and encouraging self-sustaining economic practices, the region seeks to build a robust and resilient local economy. To implement a sustainable management is a key focus, emphasizing the importance of conducting economic activities in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. This approach ensures that growth is balanced with sustainability, supporting long-term economic health while addressing ecological concerns. Another important area is "Efficient Consumption and Usage," which involves improving how resources are utilized and optimizing consumption patterns. This initiative aims to enhance efficiency, yielding benefits for both the economy and the environment. The aim to fostering specialization highlights a strategic approach to concentrate on specific sectors or industries where the region can excel. By focusing on areas of strength, the strategy aims to maximize effectiveness and competitive advantage in targeted fields. The role of research and technology transfer is emphasized as a crucial driver of success. This reflects a commitment to leveraging research advancements and technological innovations to propel economic development and maintain a competitive edge.

The strategic emphasis on "Economic Competitiveness" reveals a comprehensive approach to boosting the region's economic performance. By focusing on "Economic Growth," "Local Economic Circuits," and "Sustainable Management," the strategy addresses both expansion and sustainability. The commitment to "Efficient Consumption and Usage" and "Research and Technology Transfer" further illustrates the focus on optimizing resource use and driving innovation to achieve long-term economic success.

The strategic focus on "Health and Well—Being" underscores a commitment to improving the quality of life and supporting both individual and community health. This theme is addressed through several key areas, each highlighting different aspects of well-being. A central priority is self-efficacy and independent living, which emphasizes enabling individuals to take control of their own lives and make independent decisions. This focus aims to enhance personal empowerment and self-sufficiency, which are essential for overall well-being. The well-being of children is also a significant concern, with strategies designed to improve their health and development. This priority reflects a strong commitment to addressing the needs of younger populations and ensuring they have a supportive environment for growth. Health and health promotion is another key area, reflecting efforts to advance public health through various initiatives.

"The new National Prevention Plan places special emphasis on the issue of health equity. For this purpose, the Health Equity Audit (HEA) instrument has been

introduced to help identify and address inequalities, while including particularly vulnerable individuals."²⁷ (Regional Prevention Plan 2021—2025, p. 3)

This includes promoting healthy behaviors and preventive measures to improve overall community health and well-being. Although less emphasized, maintaining a high quality of life is an important aspect of the strategy. This goal involves creating conditions that support a satisfying and healthy lifestyle for all individuals. The emphasis on "Health and Well—Being" in the strategic plans highlights a comprehensive approach to enhancing quality of life and health. By focusing on "Self—Efficacy and Independent Living," "Children's Well—Being," and "Health Promotion," the strategy aims to empower individuals, support children, and improve overall health outcomes. The attention to maintaining a high quality of life further complements these efforts, ensuring a holistic approach to community well-being.

The strategic focus on the goal "Cooperation and Resources" reflects a commitment to enhancing collaborative efforts and efficient resource management. The emphasis on strengthening cooperation and transparency shows a clear intent to improve partnership dynamics and operational openness. Efforts towards sectoral integration and building trust in Public Institutions further support the goal of creating a more coordinated and trustworthy system. Together, these priorities aim to optimize resource use and foster effective collaboration.

Lastly, the strategic emphasis on "High—Quality Public Services" reveals a commitment to modernization and improved communication. Key priorities include "Provincia Smart" and "Communication/Dialog Strengthening," which aim to enhance service delivery and foster better interactions with the public.

3.3 Proposed Solutions and Measures

In reviewing the strategic papers from South Tyrol, various solutions are presented for addressing future challenges. Notably, these proposals are predominantly found in the documents "Innovation and Research South Tyrol 2030 (RIS3)" and "Everyday for Future," with the latter containing most of the solutions. These solutions can be categorized into three distinct areas, reflecting the region's thematic priorities: "Participation", "Sustainable Development", and "Clear Goal Setting, Implementation and Evaluation".

A strong focus on participatory processes and social cohesion is evident throughout the documents. The regional government emphasizes that sustainability can only be achieved through the active involvement of all societal actors—citizens, businesses, and organizations. By promoting participatory decision-making processes, the government aims to ensure that diverse interests are considered while maintaining adherence to sustainability goals.

"Sustainability is not achieved solely through the decisions of politics and administration. To be successfully sustainable, it requires the will, conviction, knowledge, expertise, and innovative strength of everyone who lives and works in society, all organizations, and everyone running a business. [...] The results are implemented into a coherent regulatory and incentive policy."²⁸ (Everyday for Future, p.14)

The emphasis on "Societal Participation as a Fundamental Principle of Democracy" illustrates the need for public involvement in decision-making processes. Mechanisms like elections, referendums, and other participatory tools are essential to balance and represent all interests. The strategic documents highlight that the objective of a sustainable future can only be reached

by bringing together all sectors of society, including the public, businesses, NGOs, and the political sphere.

Furthermore, the strategy paper aims to raise awareness and provide targeted information to professionals, families, and the broader public, promoting a shift in gender roles and increasing acceptance of family—related and non—traditional gender roles. Key measures include making information easily accessible for parents and expectant parents, encouraging lifelong learning, and empowering women to recognize their economic potential and the value of their contributions. This also involves combating economic and gender—based violence. Additionally, public campaigns will emphasize the value of work—life balance, particularly highlighting the importance of care for families, children, and vulnerable individuals, and promoting flexible work arrangements. The overall goal is to create a more inclusive society by breaking down gender stereotypes and encouraging respect for diverse life choices. Public campaigns will run over several years, using a variety of media to reach specific target groups, including students, parents, and workers. By addressing both structural barriers and cultural norms, these measures aim to support a positive and proactive transition towards gender equality and social acceptance of non—traditional roles.

Civil society organizations, such as fire brigades and sports clubs, play a vital role in fostering social unity and integration. These groups are highlighted for their critical contribution to social infrastructure by connecting different social and linguistic groups, strengthening community cohesion, and enhancing social integration.

"Civil society organizations are essential for any society, and South Tyrol can rightfully be proud of this 'infrastructure.' They already provide a great service today by fostering connections between social groups and language groups."²⁹ (Everyday for Future, p. 17)

An additional theme in the strategic papers is the importance of cultural support for families and the general population. The government draws on scientific evidence showing the close connection between culture, well—being, and health. South Tyrol is praised for being a leader in the empirical and scientific application of these insights, positioning culture as an essential factor for improving public health and social resilience. Language education should hence be improved, especially in German and Italian, to ensure proficiency for professional communication. Immigrants will have access to intensive language programs for better social and professional integration.

The theme of "Sustainable Development of the Social and Economic System" is central to South Tyrol's strategy. The regional government stresses that economic development must balance societal, economic, and ecological factors. South Tyrol seeks to tackle the climate crisis while maintaining economic growth, aiming to harmonize these aspects for long—term sustainability.

South Tyrol's commitment to international frameworks like the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is another key aspect of its approach: "For it is not only the economy that suffers—the economic, societal, and social effects impact every family."³⁰ (Everyday for Future, p.3)

The region recognizes the necessity of transforming its economy and way of life to remain competitive, aligning with global sustainability trends. The labor market recommendations hence should focus on improving flexibility, making caregiving professions more attractive, and addressing workforce shortages due to demographic changes.

Public support for businesses should be linked to their promotion of work—life balance, with flexible working hours extended to all public sector entities. Caregiving and nursing professions will see better training, job conditions, and competitive wages. Language certification requirements will be relaxed, and part—time study options expanded. Affordable housing will be provided for students and workers in care professions, with incentives for renovating buildings for this purpose.

With fewer young workers entering the market over the next 20 years, efforts will focus on attracting people to care roles through internships, voluntary service, and targeted training modules. A public campaign will promote caregiving as a rewarding career.

To retain skilled workers, caregiving professions need greater financial recognition and improved work conditions. The field, dominated by women, will encourage more men in caregiving roles. Labor market strategies will address the broader challenges of demographic shifts, digitalization, and automation by focusing on skills development and employability.

When talking about the educational system for South Tyrol these key aspects are further brought along. They are promoting gender equality, preventing violence, and fostering inclusivity. Key actions include enhancing financial education, offering salary negotiation training, and reviving support for female entrepreneurship with biennial courses for aspiring women entrepreneurs. In schools, students will receive education on preventing sexual violence. Boys will learn to treat girls with respect, while girls will be taught to recognize personal boundaries. Political education will also be embedded in schools, encouraging student participation and leadership.

Overall, investing in the future is presented as an important task, particularly research and innovation, with a focus on addressing key societal and economic challenges in South Tyrol. A central goal is to create an innovation ecosystem that fosters cutting—edge solutions for the region's issues. Goals include expanding basic and applied research and testing new technologies. For this, more money in regional research facilities wants to be allocated. This is true especially for areas, in which South Tyrol already has big expertise, like agriculture. All these points are summarized by the following quote:

“Creating an innovation ecosystem that fosters the development of cutting—edge solutions for the most important challenges of South Tyrolean society and economy.”³¹ (Digital South Tyrol 2022—2026, p. 30)

Vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or mental health issues, will receive coordinated support across education, employment, and social services. Job placement services will be modernized, offering client—specific support to both job seekers and employers. Poverty and social exclusion will be tackled through a study by ASTAT, assessing financial aid and social services. Work safety will be strengthened through improved regulatory oversight and staffing. These initiatives aim to create a more inclusive and adaptable labor market in South Tyrol.

“Clear goal-setting, implementation and evaluation mechanisms are crucial in the region's strategy. The regional government sets its political priorities and goals through programmatic guidelines and performance plans. These documents serve as a roadmap for both strategic and operational measures related to sustainable development. While the government program sets out long-term goals, the performance plan provides specific steps for implementation. "Numbers and indicators only make sense when they are analyzed and discussed, when effective conclusions are drawn from them, and when the necessary actions are taken." ³² (Everyday for Future, p.19)

A lot of proposed solutions emphasize the importance of enhancing mobility and interconnectedness. In terms of mobility, the development of intermodal transportation systems is prioritized, integrating different forms of transport. This includes strengthening air travel connections with public transportation links to nearby airports. Furthermore, internal connections within cities, main valleys, side valleys, and ski areas will be optimized. Enhancing train services is another key focus, which will be supported by providing parking facilities at stations to encourage greater use of public transport. Additionally, improvements in cycling infrastructure are needed to ensure better continuity between rural and urban cycling networks, along with the provision of bicycle parking and related services at key destinations.

On the environmental front, when talking about mobility, local authorities and institutions are tasked with establishing connections with relevant partners both domestically and across Europe to tackle major sources of CO₂ emissions, which require international cooperation. As part of broader conservation efforts, the creation of natural forest cells will be promoted through agreements between the provincial government and forest owners.

The region places a strong emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, recognizing that numbers and indicators are only meaningful if analyzed and followed by action. South Tyrol's monitoring system, based on international indicators, allows for reflection and evaluation with input from various stakeholders, including the administration, interest groups, scientists, and citizens. This system ensures a comprehensive, data—driven approach to decision—making and progress tracking.

3.4 Actors

A wide range of actors are involved in the analyzed strategy papers in two ways – both in the design and the implementation of the respective strategies. While all strategies are designed for the autonomous region, there are many international and national bodies and institutions affecting the regional future direction. For example, the sustainability strategy of the region (Everyday for Future) is strongly tied to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations. Starting with the Brundtland Report in 1987, through the founding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and a series of international conferences—Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Kyoto in 1997, and Paris in 2015—the United Nations have established a foundation for discussing climate change and its impacts on an international level, as well as creating commitments to combat it:

"Although this multilateral process is laborious and slow, it creates a discussion climate that raises awareness of sustainability. Ultimately, it has led to quantified goals to which important industrialized countries have committed at the national level."³³ (Everyday for Future, p. 5)

At the same time, the region is not only bound to international institutions regarding its sustainability strategies, but the social policies and strategies are also affected by supra—regional institutions. The Regional Social Plan 2030 notes that the social system is increasingly affected by decisions made in Brussels and Rome:

"External factors are increasingly influencing the regional prosperity structure. Our social system is shaped by political decisions made in Brussels as well as by state laws and regulations from the Roman administrative authorities."³⁴ (Regional Social Plan 2030, p. 13)

Regarding the implementation of the strategies the responsibility is distributed across various stakeholders, through the main responsibility for anticipatory decision—making lies with politics as for example the Family Support Plan notices: "It is the responsibility of politics and administration to make forward—looking decisions."³⁵ (Family Support Plan, p. 8)

At the same time, however, the provincial government views itself as bearing primary responsibility for climate and sustainability policy, though with the goal to engage as many stakeholders as possible as well as citizens:

"It is the clear intention of the provincial government to consistently take on this leadership role and to involve as many stakeholders as possible in this, quite literally, vital undertaking, as well as to incorporate a diverse range of ideas and initiatives to achieve the common goal."³⁶ (Climate Plan South Tyrol 2040, p. 12)

These stakeholders include experts from the state administration that continuously assess the given issues and align them the existing regulatory guidelines (Everyday for Future, p. 12). Another example is the participatory development of the Regional Plan for Sustainable Mobility 2035. Here, three specific target groups including Interest groups (environmental associations, business associations, social associations), the mayors of the 116 municipalities of South Tyrol and citizens came together to jointly develop the strategy paper. The sustainability strategy of the region (Everyday for Future) further acknowledges the role of the social movement Fridays for Future that articulates young people's ideas and demands for their future:

"This development has received a decisive boost from the grassroots movement Fridays for Future, which is also active in South Tyrol. Here, the visions of young people for their future and their demands on current politics are articulated very clearly."³⁷ (Everyday for Future, p. 5)

Another crucial actor highlighted by Everyday for Future is science and its role in supporting sustainable development by addressing critical questions for the next 10 to 30 years. Research should aim to close knowledge gaps in transformation strategies, requiring interdisciplinary collaboration. To support South Tyrol's sustainability goals, a new "Alliance for Education and Research for Sustainable Development" will be created, promoting cross—disciplinary cooperation and knowledge sharing:

"What kind of science does a society aiming for sustainable development need? What research is necessary in the next 10, 20, or 30 years to create the transition to a just world? What methods of knowledge transfer are best suited for this purpose? Society, politics, and the economy—all actors need scientifically sound, clearly presented results to make decisions. In the development of pathways and strategies for every transformation, implementation, and monitoring, there are often more or less significant gaps in knowledge. Science must contribute to closing these gaps through its own research as well as by communicating the results of the international research community. Science for sustainable development typically requires interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary work. 'Out of the silos!' is a frequently quoted saying among actors from various scientific disciplines."³⁸ (Everyday for Future, p. 12)

Overall, a wide range of actors is involved in the continuous design of strategies for the region as well as their implementation. The regional government assumes a strong leadership position, taking responsibility for driving South Tyrol's progress. However, the sustainable development of the region involves a broad spectrum of stakeholders whose interest might not always align when it comes to envision where the regions be in 10,20, or 30 years.

4. Critical Discussion of Framings

In discussing the future readiness or future variability within strategic documents of South Tyrol, it is essential to question the extent to which the set goals align with the identified problems. How did decision—makers arrive at the formulated issues, and what methodological approaches were employed in this process? The appropriateness of the proposed solutions and measures also warrants critical examination: do they correspond meaningfully to the challenges identified? Furthermore, it is important to assess how these aspects are framed in the overarching communication strategy especially regarding the future. The coherence among the documents is vital to ensure a unified understanding of the political direction. Additionally, it raises the question of the intended audience for these strategies: who is meant to benefit from the measures, and who is responsible for their implementation? In this context, mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting the strategies should be considered to ensure that the political measures are not only implemented but also continuously improved and adapted to future developments.

In the following discussion, we will specifically explore how future—oriented aspects are framed within these strategic documents, considering how such framing influences public perception and engagement. We will also delve shortly into the implications of these framings for policy effectiveness, particularly regarding sustainability and inclusivity. By critically analyzing these elements, we aim to uncover the nuances that shape South Tyrol's strategic landscape and its potential impact on various stakeholders.

The strategic framings identified in South Tyrol's governance documents present a forward—thinking, ambitious vision for the region. However, a critical examination raises several key considerations about the consistency, feasibility, and inclusivity of these narratives and especially of the aspect of future variability overall.

Many of the framings, such as "South Tyrol is Great" and "We Must Take Responsibility," referring on the present and the future, rely on aspirational language, projecting a positive image of the region and its leadership. While these framings foster a sense of pride and responsibility, they may oversimplify complex issues. For instance, emphasizing "South Tyrol as a Showcase Region" and an international hub positions the region as inherently successful ("South Tyrol Will Be a Pioneer") without acknowledging the significant challenges that exist, such as disparities in socio—economic opportunities or infrastructural constraints. However, the importance of "Learning from Past Mistakes" is often mentioned in this context and it highlights the need to reflect on and acknowledge previous errors to avoid repeating them in the future. This reflective approach is crucial for informed decision—making and sustainable progress. Another key theme is the recognition that "The Necessary Change Will Demand Something from Us." This suggests an understanding that meaningful transformation requires effort, sacrifice, and a willingness to adapt, underscoring the collective responsibility in driving and supporting change. The framing of "South Tyrol is a great location" suggests a focus on modern, globalized economic growth, but it could clash with the more traditional values of local communities, especially those engaged in agriculture or small—scale industry. In such a context, it's crucial to critically assess whether the push for modernization respects the pace and needs of all sectors of society, including those that might resist rapid change or feel threatened by globalization.

However, the general optimistic framing might obscure important ongoing issues, like social inequality or environmental degradation. By framing South Tyrol as already exceptional, there is a risk of downplaying the need for deeper reforms in areas like education, healthcare, or

environmental resilience. Therefore, while these framings contribute to a strong regional identity, they might limit critical self—reflection.

The framings related to sustainability and environmental protection as central pillars of policymaking, stress South Tyrol's commitment to environmental protection and sustainable growth. However, the practical implementation of these values remains somewhat ambiguous. The focus on "Sustainability and Environmental Protection as a Chance" or "Sustainability needs time" frames sustainability as an opportunity and a process but doesn't offer concrete strategies for reconciling economic growth with environmental protection. There is a risk that these goals are more rhetorical than substantive if not accompanied by actionable policies that prioritize ecological preservation over economic interests.

Moreover, while inclusivity is framed through "social equality and society," with significant focus on themes like "inclusion and integration" and "fair society", these terms are broad and may lack specificity. How will these goals be achieved in practice? Are marginalized communities, such as low—income families or immigrants, effectively represented in these discussions? Framing inclusion as a key goal is commendable, but without clear, targeted actions, there is a risk of superficial commitment to social justice.

The strategic emphasis on "Future Potential and Upcoming Generations are Central" highlights the importance of long—term thinking and responsibility towards the future and future generations. Several subthemes emerge as central to this strategic focus, such as the need for "Participation for Sustainable Development," which emphasizes the importance of involving various stakeholders in creating a future—proof society. While this commitment to inclusivity is commendable, the extent to which participation is genuinely inclusive remains – again— vague. Often, public involvement can be tokenistic, inviting stakeholders to participate in dialogues without real influence on decision—making processes, creating a superficial sense of inclusivity where input is gathered but not integrated into policies.

Additionally, the notion of "Responsibility for Future Generations" can be used as a rhetorical device without translating into tangible actions. While the documents emphasize the importance of leaving a sustainable world for future generations, there is often a lack of concrete mechanisms to ensure accountability. It raises questions about how South Tyrol holds its institutions accountable for decisions impacting future generations and whether there are measurable benchmarks for long—term success. The emphasis on "Cross—Sectoral Cooperation" sounds promising, yet there is a danger in overestimating the ease and effectiveness of such collaboration. Cooperation across sectors, particularly between public, private, and civil society entities, often encounters bureaucratic inertia, differing agendas, and conflicts over resources. Thus, while cooperation is presented as a key to unlocking future potential, the challenges inherent in such collaborations are often downplayed.

The focus on "Visionary Thinking" is essential but can border on overly idealistic. Scenarios and strategies for the future often ignore the complexities of present political and economic realities. Visionary plans that look far into the future need to be balanced with practical, short—term goals that ensure stability today while preparing for tomorrow. The emphasis on the framing "Prevention Instead of Intervention" reflects a proactive and forward—thinking approach in the strategic documents. By prioritizing preventive measures and early intervention, the strategy aims to create a more sustainable and resilient system that addresses challenges before they require more significant interventions. While preventive measures are essential, they cannot always substitute for the urgent needs of marginalized communities or crises that require fast and targeted intervention. In some cases, placing too much focus on prevention might lead to underfunding or

ignoring sectors that are in desperate need of intervention today, thus compromising the welfare of vulnerable groups in the short term.

Furthermore, the idea of prevention tends to focus on future risks but may overlook present inequalities. If preventive policies are designed based on average population needs, they can fail to address the specific and often immediate needs of marginalized or at-risk groups. This framing risks becoming overly technocratic, focusing more on efficiency and cost-effectiveness than on social equity. The framing of "Problem—Specific (Target Group Adapted) Solutions" demonstrates a strategic intent to address issues in a nuanced and effective manner. By tailoring solutions to the unique needs of different groups, the strategy aims to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of its interventions, ensuring they meet the specific demands of the populations they serve. However, this approach can also pose a risk of segmentation or creating overly fragmented strategies. By focusing too much on target-group-specific policies, the broader systemic factors influencing these issues may be ignored. While a focus on particular groups might improve policy efficiency, it may detract from addressing the root causes of these issues, such as structural inequalities in income, education, or access to healthcare.

Additionally, this approach requires robust data collection and a deep understanding of the specific needs of various groups. Without adequate resources or data, there is a risk that so-called "targeted" solutions will actually miss the mark, addressing symptoms rather than causes. The framing of "Policy for All" emphasizes the importance of inclusive governance that ensures all groups within society benefit from political actions and decisions. However, this vision often encounters practical limitations. The challenge lies in ensuring that policies truly benefit all segments of society, especially when political decision-making tends to be influenced by more powerful groups. Marginalized communities may still be left behind if their voices are not sufficiently amplified in these decision-making processes.

Furthermore, the subtheme of "Integration of Ethical Principles and Social Values" is idealistic but could be vague again. While embedding shared moral standards in policies is important, it is crucial to consider whose values and ethics are being prioritized. In multicultural societies like South Tyrol, ethical principles can vary significantly between different cultural and socioeconomic groups. There is a risk that policies will reflect the values of dominant groups, potentially alienating or marginalizing others. The subtheme of "Living Together with Multiple Cultures and Language Groups Brings Advantages" rightly highlights the benefits of diversity, but it could also obscure the challenges associated with multiculturalism. Cultural differences, if not well managed, can lead to social fragmentation rather than cohesion. The narrative of cultural harmony risks overlooking the need for continuous efforts in integration, intercultural dialogue, and conflict resolution.

Both framings emphasize essential elements for South Tyrol's success: leveraging EU support to bolster regional initiatives and maintaining flexibility through the continuous adaptation of strategies. However, the focus on EU support may lead to a dependency on external resources and policies that may not always align with local needs. While European frameworks can provide important resources and guidelines, the region must balance this with its unique context to ensure that local priorities are not overshadowed by broader EU objectives. Furthermore, the framing of "Continuous Adaptation" suggests a level of agility that is commendable, but adaptation needs to be backed by clear evaluation criteria and feedback mechanisms. Without these, constant strategic shifts may lead to confusion and policy inconsistency, which can hinder long-term planning and trust in public institutions.

The strategic framings in South Tyrol's governance documents present a compelling and ambitious vision for the future and reflect a commendable attempt to address future challenges. However, there are risks of oversimplification, neglect of present needs, and over—reliance on idealistic narratives. The challenge for South Tyrol lies in ensuring that these framings translate into effective and equitable policies that truly benefit all segments of society while maintaining accountability, balancing short—term realities with long—term visions, and fostering genuine, inclusive participation in the decision—making process.

5. Conclusion and Outlook

In this study, we conducted a content analysis of 15 strategic papers to identify the extent to which the region of South Tyrol, post—2021, incorporates future competence. This refers to the ability to foresee, prepare for and respond to future challenges.

In general, it can be observed that South Tyrol is highly active in its strategic work and in addressing future issues. The documents we analyzed, covering various topics and fields, show a high degree of consistency in the identified challenges and key action areas. Specifically, the three main pillars — “sustainability”, “social justice and society” and “digitalization” — can be seen as the guiding principles for future work.

The documents clearly communicate that more and less significant changes are planned for society, the economy, and the environment, and that a "business as usual" approach will no longer suffice to meet future challenges.

However, it is also apparent that these strategic papers do not explicitly attempt to deviate from the current path. They do not introduce or explore new thinking models or future concepts. Instead, there is a risk that an overly positive assessment of past achievements may obscure the need for action adaptation, leading to a false sense of security.

Although South Tyrol positions itself as highly internationally connected, with substantial dependencies and linkages, the strategy documents do not indicate an intention to look toward alternative models or successful regions elsewhere for guidance. There is a strong belief in the “South Tyrolean way,” which is presented as a model for others to follow.

At the same time, the strategy documents demand that it will be up to individual citizens to actively initiate change processes. However, it would be desirable for the region itself to take a more active role and, in collaboration with other regions, lead efforts to develop alternative futures. Examples of this could include a shift away from nitrogen fertilizers in agriculture, improving the balance between work and family life, a true departure from fossil fuels in transportation or energy supply for building, strengthening regional economic cycles, and promoting sustainable economic models as mentioned in the [“A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in Bolzano—Bozen, Italy”](#) a OECD project in cooperation with the Province of South Tyrol in 2023.

The strategic work in the documents we analyzed primarily focuses on developments that are already known and are expected to have a significant impact, but these remain within the limits of the current imagination (“known knowns”). However, in terms of alternative future planning, it would be more important to consider, how currently unimaginable events could be anticipated and how to respond to them (“unknown unknowns”). Here, increased collaboration with similar regions seems advisable.

Therefore, as a next step, we are looking forward to work with the OECD to identify international cooperation partners who have expertise in future planning and are willing to jointly develop new tools. We then plan to work with those responsible in the South Tyrolean provincial administration to test ways of implementing these findings in the province's strategic work. In this way, we want to contribute to further strengthening the future viability of the province of South Tyrol.

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¹ “Diese gute Ausgangsposition Südtirols darf aber nicht zu einem einfachen “weiter soverleiten. Dies einmal, weil wichtige Erfolgsfaktoren nicht ohne eine systematische Weiterentwicklung bestehen bleiben, zum Zweiten weil sich diverse Rahmenbedingungen stark verändern und sich damit die Bedeutung der Erfolgsfaktoren verändert und drittens nicht zuletzt, weil die geänderten Rahmenbedingungen auch neue Chancen eröffnen, die proaktiv ergriffen werden müssen.” (Regionale Entwicklungsstrategie 2021-2027, p. 6)

² “Die Erneuerung des Landesozialplans fällt in eine Zeit großer Umbrüche in der Wirtschafts- und Arbeitswelt. Nach der Finanzkrise von 2008 und den darauffolgenden wirtschaftlichen Turbulenzen hat sich die staatliche Sozialpolitik auch während der Covid-19-Pandemie als wesentlicher gesellschaftlicher Stabilisierungsmechanismus erwiesen.” (Landesozialplan 2030, p. 12)

³ “Die voranschreitende Klimaveränderung und die damit verbundenen Naturereignisse stellen in diesem Kontext eine enorme Herausforderung dar.” (Regierungsprogramm für die Legislaturperiode 2023-2028, p.19)

⁴ “Unsere Gesellschaft muss sich auf allen Ebenen einer zusätzlichen Herausforderung stellen: Die Klimaerwärmung und ihre Auswirkungen gefährden auf globaler Ebene die Intaktheit unseres Lebensraums. Dafür verantwortlich sind vor allem unser Lebensstil und die darauf ausgerichteten Produktions- und Dienstleistungssysteme. Die ökonomischen und sozialen Organisationsmodelle unserer beschleunigten und weltweit vernetzten Gesellschaft müssen dringend aufeinander abgestimmt und mit den ökologischen Erfordernissen eines ressourcenmäßig begrenzten Lebensraumes in Einklang gebracht werden. Dieser grundlegende Transformationsprozess wird in den nächsten Jahrzehnten bestehende Disparitäten vertiefen und neue Ungleichgewichte schaffen” (Landesozialplan 2030, p.14)

⁵ “Wie die im Rahmen des LPNM und des Südtiroler Klimaplan 2040 erstellten Analysen zeigen, ist der Brennerkorridor mit 37 % der Gesamtemissionen die Hauptquelle der CO₂-Emissionen des Straßenverkehrs. Wenn man bedenkt, dass der Verkehrssektor für 56 % der CO₂-Emissionen verantwortlich ist, kann man schätzen, dass der Beitrag des Verkehrs auf der A22 allein etwa 21 % der in der Provinz erzeugten CO₂-Emissionen ausmacht.” (Landesplan für nachhaltige Mobilität 2035, p. 96)

⁶ “Denn die Gewohnheiten und Technologien, die unsere Alltagsabläufe schneller, bequemer und sicherer gemacht haben, sowie die Intensivierung der Landwirtschaft, die für Lebensmittelsicherheit gesorgt hat, verursachen die Klimaerwärmung mit und beeinflussen die Artenvielfalt.” (LandWIRtschaft 2030, p. 3)

⁷ “Schon heute muss der Wald daher darauf vorbereitet werden, den steigenden Temperaturen, langen Trockenperioden und extremen Wetterereignissen der kommenden Jahre und Jahrzehnte zu trotzen.” (Waldagenda 2030, p. 7)

⁸ “Die Natur ist die erste Leidtragende des Klimawandels. Die Auswirkungen sind letztlich jedoch auch für den Menschen spürbar. Dem Wald kommt hier eine besondere Schutzfunktion zu.” (Waldagenda 2030, p. 10)

⁹ “Es kann angenommen werden, dass das +1,5 °C-Ziel und das dazugehörige Netto- Null-Ziel aus derzeitiger Sicht nur unter großer Kraftanstrengung noch realistisch zu erreichen ist; notwendige Zwischenziele müssen bereits Strategien zum schnellen Erreichen des Netto-Null-Ziels enthalten. Die derzeitigen Ziele der EU für die Jahre 2030 und 2040 reichen dafür nicht mehr aus und können auch nicht als Mindestzielvorgabe dienen.” (Klimaplan Südtirol, p. 11-12)

¹⁰ “Die Klimakrise stellt eine der größten Herausforderungen unserer Zeit dar. Sie erfordert von uns allen, von Einzelpersonen über Unternehmen bis hin zu Regierungen, entschlossenes Handeln und eine grundlegende Veränderung unserer Lebens- und Wirtschaftsweise.” (Klimaplan Südtirol 2040, p. 7)

¹¹ “Als vorrangige Aufgabengebiete haben sich europaweit angesichts des immer größeren Gefälles zwischen Wohlstandsgewinnerinnen und -gewinnern und Wohlstandsverliererinnen und -verlierern die Unterstützung der sozial Benachteiligten und die Bekämpfung der Armut herauskristallisiert.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 12)

¹² “Da viele Menschen bei steigenden Lebenshaltungskosten ihren gewohnten Lebensstandard aufgrund der stagnierenden Lohnentwicklung und der allgemeinen Reduzierung der Kaufkraft nicht aufrechterhalten können, bleibt die Armutsgefährdung eine Herausforderung.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 53)

¹³ “Eine Erhöhung der weiblichen Erwerbsbeteiligung und die Verlängerung der rentenbegründenden Lebensarbeitszeit können den Rückgang der Bevölkerung in erwerbstätigem Alter aufgrund sinkender Geburtenraten zwar eine Zeit lang kompensieren, das Problem aber nicht nachhaltig lösen.” (Familienförderplan 2021, p. 31)

¹⁴ “Dies bedeutet eine erhebliche Herausforderung für die ganze Gesellschaft, die heute angegangen werden muss, weil alle wirksamen Instrumente verhältnismäßig lange Vorlaufzeiten bis zu ihrer Wirksamkeit haben.” (Regional Entwicklungsstrategie 2021-2027, p. 9)

¹⁵ “Südtirol weist einen außerordentlich attraktiven Naturraum (wie durch die 33 Mio. touristischen Nächtigungen belegt wird) auf, der aber gleichzeitig gerade durch seine Attraktivität auch besonders gefährdet ist: Nutzungskonflikte und Übernutzung sind die zugehörigen lokalen Phänomene. Die Nutzung räumlich nicht gebundener Ressourcen, beispielsweise CO₂ Emissionen, sind die transregionale Komponente – also Wirkungen, die über die Region hinausgehen - die eine moralische Verantwortung auch für eine kleine Region wie Südtirol darstellt.” (Regional Entwicklungsstrategie 2021-2027, p. 14)

¹⁶ “Die Schwächung des Gemeinschaftsgedankens und die Forcierung des Konsumdenkens haben bewirkt, dass in unserer Gesellschaft die individuellen Wohlstands- und Wohlfühlziele im Vordergrund stehen. Die Menschen verwenden viel Energie für die Einlösung ihrer Konsumwünsche, spüren aber gleichzeitig, dass die Sinnverortung ihrer Existenz zu kurz kommt und die Kurzfristigkeit des Habens den notwendigen Kompromissen langfristiger Einbettung in Gemeinschaft im Wege steht. Die Einkommensstatistiken belegen ein wachsendes Auseinanderdriften von Arm und Reich.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 48)

¹⁷ “Eine pluralistische moderne Gesellschaft ist zudem immer mehr gefordert, da es nicht mehr wie früher unumstößliche gemeinsame Werte und Ziele gibt, an die alle Mitglieder einer Gesellschaft festhalten. Eine weitere Herausforderung, welche die Gesellschaft und das Individuum stellen müssen, ist, dass man mit immer mehr verschiedenartigen kulturellen Identitäten konfrontiert wird, mit zum Teil unterschiedlichen Wertevorstellungen und Menschenbildern.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 179)

¹⁸ “Familiärer Wandel zeigt sich derzeit am deutlichsten in der Veränderung von Familienstrukturen, wie der Haushaltszusammensetzung, der Fertilität und des Heirats- und Scheidungsverhaltens. Diese Veränderungen jedoch nur auf einen Wertewandel zurückzuführen, greift zu kurz. Familiärer Wandel ist durch eine Vielzahl und Kombination unterschiedlicher Faktoren zu begreifen. Dazu gehören Werte und Vorstellungen in Bezug auf Geschlechterrollen und familiäre Beziehungen ebenso wie sich wandelnde gesellschaftliche Bedingungen aufgrund demografischer sowie erwerbs- sowie familienarbeitsbezogener Entwicklungen.” (Familienförderplan 2021, p. 11)

¹⁹ “Nachhaltigkeit bedeutet auch, das Ganze zu sehen, das heißt die Zusammenhänge auf diesem kleinen Planeten und die Verbundenheit der gesamten Menschheit. Gleichzeitig müssen wir unsere begrenzten Möglichkeiten akzeptieren. Wir können unser Verhalten, unsere Art und Weise, in diesem Land zu leben, ändern. Wir können versuchen, auch andere dazu zu inspirieren [...]. Das Ermutigende daran ist, dass die Neuausrichtung von Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft ungeheure Chancen bietet. Die technischen Voraussetzungen sind schon heute weitgehend gegeben. Nutzen wir sie! Verfolgen wir die Ziele konsequent und solidarisch!” (Everyday for Future, p. 3)

²⁰ “Die gesellschaftlichen Effekte werden zudem durch die Nutzung von Kreativprodukten und -dienstleistungen zur Unterstützung von Nachhaltigkeitszielen im Bereich Umwelt, Lebensqualität und sozialem Zusammenhalt ausgelöst” (Innovation und Forschung (RIS3), p. 4)

²¹ “Als Lebensraum für Menschen, Pflanzen und Tiere, als großer Ausgleicher und Stabilisator, als Rohstofflieferant, Schutzmantel und Saubermacher in einem – und das seit Jahrhunderten. Heute ist der Wald außerdem ein wichtiger Verbündeter im Kampf gegen den Klimawandel und seine Folgen” (Waldagenda 2030, p. 3)

²² “individua la digitalizzazione come uno dei tre assi strategici, alla stregua della transizione ecologica e dell’inclusione sociale, ponendo l’attenzione sull’esigenza di recuperare il deficit accumulato negli anni in termini di competenze digitali dei cittadini e di adozione di tecnologie digitali per l’innovazione di infrastrutture, processi, prodotti e servizi” (Alto Adige Digitale, p. 5)

²³ “Ziel dieser Fördermaßnahme ist die Erhaltung und die Aufwertung der biologischen Vielfalt von Arten und Lebensräumen auf landwirtschaftlich genutzten oder ungenutzten Flächen sowie deren Vernetzung.” (GAP-Strategieplan 2023-2027 (Gemeinsame Agrarpolitik), p. 37)

²⁴ “Es werden präventive Inklusionsprojekte gefördert, um Jugendliche aus schwierigen familiären Verhältnissen, mit Verhaltensauffälligkeiten (z.B. gewaltbereite Jugendliche) oder einem problematischen Konsum von Alkohol bzw. Drogen, die mit den institutionalisierten Hilfesystemen nicht zusammenarbeiten wollen, aufzufangen und ein Abgleiten in soziale Ausgrenzung zu vermeiden.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 127)

²⁵ “Mit allen Formen von Vermögen, allen voran mit Umweltvermögen sowie sozialem und kulturellem Vermögen, muss so umgegangen werden, dass den zukünftigen Generationen zumindest der heutige Bestand weitergegeben werden kann.” (Regional Entwicklungsstrategie 2021-2027, p. 7)

²⁶ “Die Intervention zielt auf die Förderung des Wirtschaftswachstums ländlicher Gebiete ab, indem Produktivität, Rentabilität und Wettbewerbsfähigkeit der Agrar- und Ernährungswirtschaft sowie der Agrarindustrie gestärkt und gleichzeitig ihre klimatische und ökologische Performance verbessert werden.” (GAP-Strategieplan 2023-2027 (Gemeinsame Agrarpolitik), p. 43)

²⁷ “Im neuen Nationalen Präventionsplan liegt ein besonderes Augenmerk auf der Frage der gesundheitlichen Chancengleichheit. Dazu wurde das Instrument des Health Equity Audit (HEA) eingeführt, das helfen soll, Ungleichheiten zu erkennen und zu bekämpfen und dabei die besonders gefährdeten Personen einzubeziehen.” (Landespräventionsplan 2021-2025, p. 3)

²⁸ “Nachhaltigkeit wird nicht nur durch die Entscheidungen von Politik und Verwaltung erreicht. Um erfolgreich nachhaltig zu sein, braucht es den Willen, die Überzeugung, das Wissen, das Know-how und die Innovationskraft aller, die in der Gesellschaft leben und arbeiten, aller Organisationen, aller, die ein Unternehmen führen. [...] Die Ergebnisse werden in eine kohärente Ordnungs- und Anreizpolitik umgesetzt.” (Everyday for Future, p.14)

²⁹ “Sie [zivilgesellschaftliche Organisationen] sind für eine Gesellschaft unerlässlich und gerade Südtirol kann auf diese “Infrastruktur” zurecht stolz sein. Sie leistet heute bereits einen großen

Dienst in der Verbindung zwischen den sozialen Gruppen und den Sprachgruppen.” (Everyday for Future, p. 17)

³⁰ “Denn nicht nur die Wirtschaft leidet – die wirtschaftlichen, gesellschaftlichen und sozialen Effekte wirken in jede Familie hinein.” (Everyday for Future, p.3)

³¹ „Realizzare un ecosistema dell’innovazione che favorisca lo sviluppo di soluzioni all’avanguardia per le sfide più importanti della società ed economia altoatesina.” (Alto Adige Digitale, p.30)

³² “Zahlen und Indikatoren haben nur dann einen Sinn, wenn sie analysiert und diskutiert werden, wenn effektiv Schlussfolgerungen daraus gezogen und die notwendigen Maßnahmen getroffen werden.” (Everyday for Future, p.19)

³³ “Obwohl dieser multilaterale Prozess mühselig und langsam verläuft, schafft er ein Diskussionsklima, das Nachhaltigkeit bewusst macht. Er hat schließlich zu quantifizierten Zielen geführt, zu denen sich wichtige Industriestaaten auf nationaler Ebene verpflichtet haben.” (Everyday for Future, p. 5)

³⁴ “Immer stärker beeinflussen externe Faktoren das regionale Wohlstandsgefüge. Unser Sozialsystem wird durch politische Weichenstellung in Brüssel ebenso geprägt wie durch staatliche Gesetze und Vorgaben der römischen Verwaltungsbehörden.” (Landessozialplan 2030, p. 13)

³⁵ “Aufgabe von Politik und Verwaltung ist es, Entscheidungen vorausschauend zu treffen.” (Familienförderplan 2021, p. 8)

³⁶ “Es ist der klare Wille der Landesregierung, diese Führungsaufgabe konsequent wahrzunehmen und möglichst viele Stakeholder in dieses, im wahrsten Sinn des Wortes überlebenswichtige, Vorhaben einzubeziehen und die vielfältigsten Ideen und Initiativen zur Erreichung des gemeinsamen Ziels zu.” (Klimaplan Südtirol, p. 12)

³⁷ “Einen entscheidenden Schub hat diese Entwicklung durch die Graswurzelbewegung Fridays for Future erhalten, die auch in Südtirol aktiv ist. 4 Hier werden die Vorstellungen junger Menschen für ihre Zukunft und ihre Forderungen an die aktuelle Politik extrem klar formuliert.” (Everyday for Future, p. 5)

³⁸ “Welche Wissenschaft braucht eine Gesellschaft, die sich eine nachhaltige Entwicklung zum Ziel setzt? Welche Forschung ist in den nächsten 10, 20, 30 Jahren notwendig, um den Wandel zu einer gerechten Welt zu schaffen? Welche Art und Weise der Wissensvermittlung eignet sich hierfür am besten? Die Gesellschaft, die Politik, die Wirtschaft - alle Akteure brauchen wissenschaftlich fundierte, verständlich aufbereitete Ergebnisse, um Entscheidungen zu treffen. Bei der Entwicklung von Pfaden und Strategien für jede Transformation, jede Umsetzung, jedes Monitoring, klaffen immer wieder mehr oder weniger große Wissenslücken. Die Wissenschaft muss durch eigene Forschung aber auch durch die Vermittlung der Ergebnisse der internationalen Forschungsgemeinschaft dazu beitragen, diese Lücken zu schließen. Wissenschaft für nachhaltige Entwicklung erfordert in der Regel inter- bzw. transdisziplinäres Arbeiten. “Raus aus den Silos!” lautet ein oft zitierter Spruch von Akteurinnen und Akteuren der diversen Wissenschaftsdisziplinen. Zur Unterstützung der Nachhaltigkeitsstrategie der Südtiroler Landesregierung soll dies von einer neu zu gründenden “Allianz für Lehre und Forschung für eine nachhaltige Entwicklung Südtirols” begleitet werden.” (Everyday for Future, p. 12)