

# Participatory Democracy and the Future of Consociation in South Tyrol

Stephen Larin

Wednesday, March 7, 2018  
2:30 pm – 4:00 pm  
Dunning Hall, Room 27

**About the Lecture:** South Tyrol is an autonomous, predominantly German-speaking province in Italy, and one of the most successful cases of consociational power-sharing in the world. Nevertheless, the Province recently conducted a participatory-democratic process known as the 'Autonomy Convention' to debate and draft a proposal for revising its Autonomy Statute. It is the first such process with the stated intent of amending a power-sharing arrangement, and the opening question in this lecture will be whether that represents a new type of consociational negotiation. The answer is 'no'—the Convention is best seen as a 'participatory-ish consultation' which had no formal power. But the problems that it faced, and the fact that it occurred at all are evidence of consociational democracy's potential to transform conflicts. The Convention is the result of 'normal', not 'ethnic' politics, and two generations of successful power-sharing made that possible. The lecture will then propose to build on this broader success and genuinely bolster South Tyrol's liberal-democratic legitimacy by amending the Autonomy Statute to include 'Others'—the Province's designation for people who do not want to declare membership in one of its three official linguistic groups—in the executive proportionality rule, and adjust the reservation of the Provincial Council's Vice President positions so that an 'Other' could hold one of them. These changes would shift the Province from 'corporate' towards 'liberal' consociation without jeopardizing the necessary protections that have made progress possible, and it would only have an effect if that is what the people of South Tyrol want.



**About the Speaker:** Stephen Larin is an Assistant Professor (adjunct) of Political Studies and a Research Fellow with the Centre for the Study of Democracy and Diversity at Queen's University. Previously, he was a Senior Researcher with the Institute for Minority Rights at the European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC) in South Tyrol, Italy; an Endeavour Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Sydney, Australia; and a Visiting Researcher at Aarhus University, Denmark. Dr. Larin's fields of research are comparative politics and political theory, and he specializes in the study of nationalism, migrant integration, power-sharing, and related issues.