



Workshop Briefing Report 4

Language revitalisation and the transformation of governance

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April 2019



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Executive summary

- This paper reports on the deliberations of the fourth Revitalise project workshop held in Cardiff on 14-15 February 2019. The workshop was **entitled 'Language Revitalisation and the Transformation of Governance'** and its aim was to provide an opportunity to critically assess some of the main trends in how contemporary efforts to revitalise the prospects of minority languages are governed. Key conclusions arising from the workshop are listed below.
- **The increasing role of governments in language revitalisation (pp. 4-6).** Over recent decades, governments – usually sub-state governments – have emerged as increasingly influential actors in many European language revitalisation efforts. This has meant that in several European locations language revitalisation has moved away from being an activity that is based primarily on the language community itself working through different civil society organisations.
- **The relationship between government and civil society in language revitalisation (pp. 6-8).** Tensions may arise between governments and civil society organisations when the former emerge as increasingly influential actors in language revitalisation efforts. Consequently, there is a need to reflect critically on which types of activities associated with language revitalisation that governmental institutions are in the best position to administer, and the ones where activity by civil society is more appropriate and effective.
- **The role of legislation and the courts in language revitalisation (pp. 8-9).** The effects of legislation on language vitality go beyond simply offering symbolic affirmation. Legislation can contribute to status planning, by creating opportunities to use the language in a variety of domains; it can also facilitate acquisition planning efforts by guaranteeing access to minority language education. The courts system can also contribute to language revitalisation efforts in important ways, but the significance of the courts will often depend on the nature of a state's legal and political cultures.
- **Language commissioners as new actors in language revitalisation efforts (p. 10).** Language commissioners have the potential to act as important drivers of a broader language revitalisation effort, for example by providing independent oversight of language policy implementation. Yet the effectiveness of these posts will depend a great deal on the nature of their founding legislation. Once established, managing the political relationship with government can also be extremely challenging for the language commissioner.
- **Language revitalisation as a multi-level activity (pp. 10-12).** Sub-state level actors have overseen most of the recent activity across Western Europe in support of regional or minority languages. Yet, state-level structures and continental or global level structures are also potentially significant. As a result, greater attention needs to be given to the move towards multi-level patterns of governance when seeking to understand the political dynamics that underpin the development of policy interventions relating to regional or minority languages.
- **The significance of the supra-state level for language revitalisation efforts (pp. 12-13).** There is evidence that indicates that language revitalisation activity being undertaken at the European level can impact in important ways on work being undertaken by actors at lower levels. This can involve practical benefits resulting from the sharing of best practice through different types of minority language networks. Potential benefits can also be conceptual in nature as members of a minority language community may be offered an opportunity to rise above long-established discursive norms associated with their particular state context, and to be exposed to new ideas, terms or concepts that can be used to articulate their position and aims in a novel manner



Language Revitalisation and the Transformation of Governance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper reports on the **fourth Revitalise workshop, held at the National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff on 14 and 15 February 2019**. Revitalise is an interdisciplinary research network, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), that aims to examine the implications of some of the major social, economic and political changes witnessed across Western societies today for understanding how contemporary language revitalisation efforts should be designed and implemented. It brings together an international group of academic researchers, spanning the arts, humanities and social sciences, along with a number of prominent language policy practitioners. The network is led by Dr Huw Lewis (Aberystwyth University), Professor Wilson McLeod (Edinburgh University) and Dr Elin Royles (Aberystwyth University).
- 1.2 The fourth workshop was entitled '**Language Revitalisation and the Transformation of Governance**'. The aim of the event was to provide an opportunity to critically assess some of the main trends in how contemporary efforts to revitalise the prospects of minority languages are governed. Participants were encouraged to reflect on the different types of actors that contribute to the process of developing and implementing different language revitalisation initiatives, and on the nature of the relationship between some of these different actors. This entailed assessing the relationship between, and relative influence of, both governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as evaluating the significance of different territorial scales – local, regional, state and international – for language revitalisation efforts. Overall, the workshop sought to consider the extent to which current trends in language policy governance should prompt a rethink in traditional understandings of how the challenge of language revitalisation should be approached.
- 1.3 This report summarises key issues raised during the workshop, drawing on the content of the fifteen presentations delivered over the two days, along with the questions and comments that followed during discussion periods. Further material from the workshop can be found on the project's website: <https://revitalise.aber.ac.uk>. A copy of the workshop programme can be found at the end of the report.
- 1.4 This report is organised thematically and is structured according to the different dimensions of the language-economy relationship raised during the workshop. The sections that follow therefore centre on the following themes
 - The increasing role of governments in language revitalisation
 - The relationship between government and civil society in language revitalisation
 - The role of legislation and the courts in language revitalisation
 - Language commissioners as new actors in language revitalisation efforts
 - Language revitalisation as a multi-level activity
 - The significance of the international level for language revitalisation efforts

2. The increasing role of governments in language revitalisation

- 2.1 Over the past thirty years, academic researchers in fields such as political science have drawn attention to the important shift witnessed in the role that governments play in the process of coordinating society. It has been posited that, across a range of different social and economic spheres, governments can no longer be seen as all-powerful decision makers. Rather, it is claimed that we have moved to a situation in which non-governmental actors, including various



appointed, arms-length, bodies, but also private corporations and civil society organizations, play an increasingly significant role in the development and implementation of public policy. Consequently there is an increasing recognition that ‘elected leaders and government officials are players in the game rather than the drivers of the engine’ (Colebatch 2004: 79).

- 2.2 Yet, an important theme that emerged during several of the workshop’s sessions was that when the focus turns to how efforts to revitalise minority languages have been organised over recent years, we see a slightly different trend. As Huw Lewis and Elin Royles argued in their presentation, since the late 1970s language revitalisation efforts across Western Europe, for example in places such as Catalonia, the Basque Country, Wales or Scotland, have been characterised by the emergence of governments – usually sub-state governments – as increasingly important and influential actors. This has meant that language revitalisation in such locations has moved away from being an activity that is based primarily on the language community itself working through different civil society organisations.
- 2.3 The increasing role of governments was a theme echoed by Meirion Prys Jones, who provided an overview of how the ‘governance’ of language revitalisation efforts in relation to the Welsh language in Wales has evolved over recent decades. He argued that during this period the influence of governmental institutions, elected politicians and civil servants had increased consistently. This process, it was posited, commenced during the 1980s – prior to the formation of regional government in Wales – when the Welsh Office (the UK Government’s department of state for Wales) began to accept the need for proactive planning to promote the prospects of the Welsh language. This resulted in a greater status being accorded to the Welsh language in fields such as education and the establishment of S4C as a Welsh language television channel. Later, the passing of the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the establishment of the Welsh Language Board signalled a further increase in the influence of politicians and civil servants over the coordination of language planning in relation to Welsh. Post-1999, following the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, devolved government has come to play a more central role in policy formation. Initially, the Welsh Language Board continued to function as an arms-length language planning agency. Yet, the Welsh Language Measure (2011) dissolved the Welsh Language Board and established the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner. This change led to responsibility for work seeking to promote greater acquisition and social use of the Welsh language being transferred to the Welsh Government’s civil service. Consequently, since 2012, competence over Welsh language promotion lies within government, the responsibility for statutorily mandated bilingual services belongs to the Welsh Language Commissioner, and elected politicians are dominant in decision-making.
- 2.4 A broadly similar trajectory in which government and associated statutory bodies have gradually assumed a more prominent role in language revitalisation, was described by Allan Campbell, who reflected on recent developments in how efforts to support the Gaelic language in Scotland are organised. During the 1970s there were calls for the establishment of a government agency that could plan for developments with respect to Gaelic. Following that, in 1984 Comunn na Gàidhlig was funded by the Scottish Office (the UK Government’s Department of State for Scotland) as an agency to co-ordinate Gaelic language development. Yet much of this work continued to be conducted at a grass-roots level. Post-devolution the passing of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 led to further institutionalisation with the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig in 2005 as an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government with responsibility for Gaelic.
- 2.5 However, it became apparent that an important exception to the trend described above is Ireland. As John Walsh and Seán Ó Cuirreáin argued in their respective presentations, a feature of Irish language policy has been the gradual retreat of government. For example, Walsh described



how reforms introduced via the Gaeltacht Act 2012 have effectively transferred the responsibility for local level language planning in favour of Irish to voluntary local committees that have very limited resources and expertise to draw upon in order to guide their efforts. Reflecting on his decade in the post of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (the Irish Language Commissioner), Ó Cuirreáin argued that the recent withdrawal of government is also reflected in trends such as the unwillingness of governmental institutions to adequately recognise the decline in language use, particularly in the Gaeltacht; the unwillingness to comply with their own commitments in terms of appointing Irish language officers within governmental departments; and the inability to fulfil commitments to review the current language legislation. In comparative terms, it is striking that the recent retreat in the level of government engagement seen in the Irish case involves competences being exercised at the state level, while the gradual increase in government engagement seen in the Welsh and Scottish cases involves competences at the sub-state level,

- 2.6 In his presentation, John Walsh also drew attention to the need to pay close attention to the role of permanent civil servants when considering changes in how different governments – state or sub-state – approach language revitalisation. Though a careful historical discussion, Walsh demonstrated how individual officials within the Irish civil service – former Secretary of the Department of Finance T. K. Whitaker being the most prominent – were instrumental in overseeing the shift in policy focus that occurred in Ireland during the 1960s from one that emphasised Gaelicisation and the revival of Irish to one of bilingualism and the notion of Irish as a minority language. The key argument advanced by Walsh based on this historical example was that in a weak governance framework, strong individuals can have a significant influence over the direction of language policy.
- 2.7 The example of Ireland also underscored the importance of an argument advanced by Peter Kraus in his presentation, that specific national or local traditions, trajectories and contexts continue to play an important role in the dynamics underpinning policy formation in relation to language revitalisation (as in other contexts). There is a risk that overemphasising convergence in relation to overarching trends may distort our understanding of the role of language in specific cases. In particular, it is important to consider the varying ways in which governments and other institutions may treat language as a kind of ligature, building ties between individuals and organisational structures within a specific framework for action.

3. The relationship between government and civil society in language revitalisation

- 3.1 Another important theme that arose consistently throughout the workshop involved the challenges and tensions that can arise when governments and civil society organisations both play an active role in language revitalisation efforts. The issue of how to manage this relationship was a concern for many contributors, as was the question of what is the distinctive contribution that governments and civil society organisations can/should make as part of a general language revitalisation effort. Moreover, these were clearly issues of concern both in those cases that have witnessed an increase in the active involvement of governmental institutions as well as those where there has been a gradual retreat by government.
- 3.2 While outlining changes in the ‘governance’ of language revitalisation efforts in Wales (see 2.3 above), Meirion Prys Jones argued that the gradual increase in the control and influence of governmental actors since the early 1980s corresponded with a significant decline in the level of energy and innovation apparent within civil society. He questioned whether too much emphasis on the role of governments had led to a situation where the potential contribution of other non-governmental, grassroots actors had been discounted. He also suggested that in such a context the opportunities for language activists to innovate and to experiment with different initiatives can be constrained, as more direct involvement on the part of government (e.g. through the



provision of funding) leads to greater oversight and control. Jones stressed that these types of concerns were particularly relevant when considering efforts to promote greater use of a minority language in informal social domains such as the home and local community. In sum, it was argued that the important role of government in language revitalisation should not be discounted, but equally, that it was important to seek an appropriate balance between different types of actors, thus ensuring that no one actor becomes too dominant.

- 3.3 Allan Campbell also considered some of the pitfalls that must be considered when language revitalisation efforts become more institutionalised. Reflecting on his experiences in Scotland, he observed that the establishment of *Bòrd na Gàidhlig* in 2005 as an executive non-departmental public body of the Scottish Government with responsibility for Gaelic had had varying effects. While the work of the *Bòrd* had clearly contributed to increasing the general status of Gaelic, Campbell also suggested that its creation may have led to a degree of complacency within the Gaelic language movement. He also questioned whether the focus on the work of the *Bòrd* had led to an approach to Gaelic promotion that was increasingly mechanistic and regulatory in nature, and that did not place sufficient emphasis on the need to consult regularly with Gaelic speakers and communities in order to achieve growth in the number of Gaelic speakers.
- 3.4 By drawing on the concept of the 'shadow state', Rhys Jones discussed a recent trend apparent across many western democracies in which multiple civil society organisations have assumed responsibility for the implementation of public policy services or programmes that were previously overseen and implemented by official governmental institutions (either at the state, regional or local levels). Significantly, he argued that this general trend has implications for how many civil organisations associated with the promotion of minority languages approach their work. Jones explored this theme by drawing on ongoing research that examines the work of several non-governmental organisations associated with efforts to promote the prospects of the Welsh language in Wales, for example the *Mentrau Iaith*, *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* and *Mudiad Meithrin*. Each of these organisations have benefited financially as government involvement in language revitalisation in Wales has become more extensive, particularly during the post-devolution period. However, in return for this funding, and, moreover, in order to secure possible increases in future funding, there is a need for such organisations to demonstrate how their work aligns with general strategic priorities set by government. For example, in the case of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru*, a youth organisation that was founded with the aim encouraging greater social use of the Welsh language among young people, Jones suggested that the relationship with government had pushed it towards seeking to align itself closely with a series of broader governmental priorities related to youth provision (e.g. creating active citizens, developing employability skills, promoting physical exercise, improving mental health). Consequently, Jones suggested that it was appropriate to question whether there is a risk that the work of such organisations can sometimes be skewed away from focusing on their core linguistic missions. While this is a concern that is not limited to minority language organisations, Jones posited that the problem may be particularly acute in this context. Today, the tendency is for many governments to expect that funding for civil society organisations working in different areas of social policy should adhere to a norm of 'results-based accountability', whereby it is possible to envisage that future monetary savings may arise from investments made in the present. Yet, as Jones asked, how can organisations such as the *Urdd* demonstrate value for money by solely conceiving their work in terms of seeking to achieve certain linguistic outcomes?
- 3.5 As part of his presentation, John Walsh offered a hard-hitting critique of the relationship that has developed in Ireland between the Irish Government and various Irish language organisations. Once again, the core issue at stake was the manner in which being a recipient of government funding can influence the activity of civil society organisations. Yet, according to Walsh, the impact in the Irish case had been much more far-reaching. He argued that the funding



arrangements had emasculated the autonomy of many Irish language organisations and had left them either unwilling or unable to critique or challenge the government regarding its language policy priorities.

- 3.6 Reflecting across a range of European cases, based on his work with both the Council of Europe and the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity, Jarmo Lainio also argued that the nature of governmental funding arrangements can impact on how effectively civil society organisations can contribute to language revitalisation efforts. The impact may not always be as substantial as what had been observed in Ireland by Walsh. Nevertheless, Lainio argued that the tendency for governments to allocate funding for different language promotion projects on roughly 3-year cycles creates a degree of uncertainty for such organisations and, echoing Jones (see 3.2), a tendency to be risk averse.
- 3.7 Overall, what seemed to emerge from a number of different contributions during the workshop was that there is a need to think strategically about how governments and civil society organisations can contribute effectively to language revitalisation efforts and how their respective roles can be conceived. On this issue, Paul Bilbao Sarria's discussion of how government and civil society efforts in support of the Basque language have evolved over the years, and how the relationship between them is understood, was particularly pertinent. According to Bilbao Sarria, language revitalisation should be seen as requiring four key elements: i) adequate legislation; ii) adequate planning; iii) adequate resources; and iv) strong public interest and support. While civil society can play a role in each of these areas, it was argued that it has a particularly important role to play in creating circumstances that are characterised by strong public support for the language. In doing so, civil society can create a context that is conducive to proactive intervention by government with regard to legislation, planning and resources. While this represents just one way in which a fruitful relationship between the role of government and civil society in language revitalisation can be conceptualised, it demonstrates the type of strategic thinking that could prove valuable across a number of different cases.
- 3.8 A further important point that emerged out of several of the comments made during the workshop regarding the government-civil society relationship was that it is necessary for discussions to avoid being framed as an over-simplified choice between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches. This seems to be a tendency in some parts of the academic literature on language revitalisation, with the grass-roots, bottom-up approach often viewed as being normatively superior. Overall, participants at this workshop did not question the value of official governmental intervention in relation to minority languages, either through legislative, financial or other policy measures. Rather, the emphasis was on the need to recognise that this involvement does not come without implications, and that finding ways to continue being able to harness the contribution of various civil society actors should be a key consideration as language revitalisation efforts (often due to the campaigning success of those very same civil society actors) become more institutionalised within formal governance structures.

4. The role of legislation and the courts in language revitalisation

- 4.1 Approaches to language revitalisation can vary significantly across different cases. In those instances where governments – either at the state or sub-state levels – play a more proactive role, a key question that often arises is how much emphasis should be placed on the role of legislation and the courts in comparison with other policy instruments and institutions.
- 4.2 In his presentation, Rob Dunbar argued that legislation can play a central role in language revitalisation. He posited that the effects of legislation on language vitality will go beyond simply offering the symbolic affirmation that comes with increased public status. Dunbar outlined the



different ways in which legislation can serve both symbolic and more practical functions. It can contribute to status planning, by creating opportunities to use the language in a variety of domains; it can also facilitate acquisition planning efforts by guaranteeing access to minority language education. In sum, Dunbar argued that Joshua Fishman's influential characterisation of legislation as being merely a 'higher order prop' in language revitalisation efforts should be challenged.

- 4.3 Echoing this line of argument, Emyr Lewis critiqued the tendency in Wales over recent years for discussions regarding how to approach language revitalisation to be framed as a binary choice between approaches that featured legislation and the creation of language rights, and approaches that features more of an emphasis on community-based promotion of language acquisition and use. Lewis argued that this represented a false dichotomy and that it was necessary to recognise the potential for legislation to also facilitate promotion.
- 4.4 Building on these points, Paul Bilbao Sarria argued, based on his experiences working in the Basque Country, that legislation should be seen as one of the four essential pillars in a coordinated language revitalisation or normalisation effort. As noted above (3.7), the other key pillars are then adequate planning, adequate resources and strong public support. Bilbao Saria also argued that the respective roles of public bodies and civil society can be assessed with reference to these pillars, particularly with regards to creating speakers, providing opportunities to use the language, the tools and the spaces to do so.
- 4.5 In his presentation Rob Dunbar also considered the distinctive manner in which the court system can contribute to language revitalisation efforts. He argued that in certain cases the role of the courts can be quite significant, but that this will often depend on the nature of a state's legal and political cultures. He also emphasised that interventions by courts can both support and constrain the promotion of a particular language. For example, in Spain, sub-state governments have been taken to court with the aim of seeking to narrow the interpretation of language legislation and thus curtailing the scope of certain promotional policies.
- 4.6 Whilst further attention is required in order to fully understand the range of ways in which the outcomes of court processes can influence language revitalisation efforts, Dunbar highlighted key points from his ongoing research on this issue: first, court decisions can spur changes in law and policy with respect to minority languages; second, court decisions can influence the working practices and attitudes of governmental institutions and public bodies through 'ripple effects' ; third, they can strengthen and encourage further language activism; and fourth, court decisions can potentially influence attitudes towards a language and the practices of speaker communities (e.g. awareness of rights, confidence to seek provision or willingness to complain when provision is not made).
- 4.7 However, it was argued that other aspects of the legal framework and legal culture also feed into the extent and potential of courts to impact upon language governance in different cases. As highlighted above, the broader legal framework at multiple levels plays a role, including any international legal obligations; domestic constitutional law; non-language specific legislation, such as equality law; and public law remedies. The legal framework also determines to what extent the right or ability to bring legal action is in the hands of individuals, civil society organisations, language commissioners, or other levels of government and consequently the extent to which these types of cases may go to court.
- 4.8 A more expansive range of factors are also relevant to understanding the extent to which the courts play a prominent role in language policy governance, including the resources and capacity available within certain communities to turn to the courts. In this respect, the leadership and



capacity of civil society organisations; the extent to which there are lawyers willing to act as advocates; the contribution of judges who understand the condition and context of the minority language; the role of the media and their relationship with language NGOs can determine the extent to which it is possible and worthwhile to take a case to court. Moreover, the issues of capacity deserve greater recognition, particularly in contexts where austerity has influenced access to the legal system in a number of different ways, including reduction in legal assistance and making it more difficult to take cases forward.

5. Language commissioners as new actors in language revitalisation efforts

- 5.1 Drawing on an international research project comparing the role of language commissioners, Diarmait Mac Giolla Chríost discussed the experiences the language commissioners in Wales and Ireland. He pointed to the fact that in both cases, far-reaching reforms to these offices had been discussed only a few years following their creation: the intention to merge *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (the Irish Language Commissioner) with the Office of the Ombudsman in the Irish case, and the intention in Wales to replace the post of Welsh Language Commissioner with a Welsh Language Commission.
- 5.2 Mac Giolla Chríost posited that such developments were more than a coincidence and potentially reflected commonalities with regard to the regulatory remit of the two bodies. Suggested similarities included: the complexity of the rules and regulatory standards created by their founding legislation; the implications of the offices for established institutional relationships; conflicting views regarding the degree of independence enjoyed and consequent problems in the relationship with the respective governments; and finally, the corporate identity of the regulatory body.
- 5.3 Additionally, Mac Giolla Chríost argued that the style of regulation and enforcement employed in both the Irish and Welsh cases tended to adhere strictly to legally determined requirements, with the overall effect that public bodies felt confronted by new and complex regulatory burdens that were considered as being overly challenging and of limited public benefit, given a low level of uptake of services. This regulatory approach was contrasted with a more enabling approach where greater emphasis is placed on the need to advise and negotiate and where there is a more regular dialogue between commissioner and the bodies required to comply with the legislation.
- 5.4 Practitioners at the workshop also contributed to the discussion regarding the role of language commissioners as new actors in language revitalisation efforts. Reflecting on his decade in the post of *An Coimisinéir Teanga* (the Irish Language Commissioner), Seán Ó Cuirreáin argued that language commissioners had the potential to act as important drivers of a broader language revitalisation effort, for example by providing independent oversight of language policy implementation and by providing verifiable, evidence-based research and analysis. However, he also warned that managing the political relationship with government can be extremely challenging, as in his experience, when its independent analysis was presented, this could have negative repercussions for the office, including a tendency to undermine it.
- 5.5 Reflecting on the Canadian case, where the post of a language commissioner has been created to regulate on behalf of two large official language communities, Linda Cardinal also suggested that whilst the supervisory role of language commissioners is accepted, it does not follow that their recommendations will be respected and put into practice. Consequently, whereas language commissioners have been established by a number of governments concerned with language maintenance or promotion in order to carry out designated functions, their distinctive role within language policy governance may yet to be fully accepted.



6 Language revitalisation as a multi-level activity

- 6.1 During his presentation Michael Keating offered an incisive analysis of what he termed current patterns of ‘rescaling’, in which different social, economic and political functions migrate to new levels, both above and below the state. Keating noted that there is an influential tendency across the social sciences to view these trends as signifying an end to the age of the traditional nation state, and by extension, the end of territory as a central factor in the organisation of social, economic and political life. In contrast, he argued strongly that current patterns of social change should not be viewed as simply representing a radical de-territorialisation, but also a *re-territorialisation* of different aspects of social, economic and political life at new territorial levels. On the one hand, the supra-national level has emerged as an important territorial scale above the state, for example in fields such as environmental protection and higher education. On the other hand, we have also seen the (re)emergence of what Keating termed the ‘meso’ level, below the state, as an increasingly important space for economic development, social policy and political competition.
- 6.2 Significantly, Keating also posited that his general arguments regarding how current patterns of rescaling should be understood had important implications for how efforts to support minority language communities are conceptualised. He warned against accepting the thesis that the nature of contemporary life, in particular the significance of different forms of communication technology, meant that territory can be discounted as a factor that has relevance for how we think about patterns of language use, as well as the planning of efforts to support specific language communities. While acknowledging that not all language communities are located neatly within defined areas, and that they may span across territorial borders, Keating argued that language policies, and in particular policies aimed at promoting minority languages, can be viewed as being highly territorial. This is exemplified by the fact that these policies are usually administered by institutions that organise themselves on territorial grounds and that the same territory then influences how these institutions organise their work (e.g. the delivery of services). Indeed, the growing institutionalisation of language revitalisation efforts through the increasing involvement of different governmental institutions at the sub-state level is a clear example of aspects of social life being re-territorialised at new scales. Even when it comes to thinking about patterns of social language use among community members, Keating argued that these interactions will still usually take place in specific territorial locations. Consequently, even as people live increasingly mobile lives and use new forms of communication, it does not follow that we are witnessing a disappearance of territory, but rather the reterritorialisation of life to new scales.
- 6.3 In their presentation Huw Lewis and Elin Royles also reflected on the notion that social, economic and political functions have been migrating to new territorial levels, both above and below the state. It was argued that this move towards increasingly multi-level patterns of governance needed to be taken into account when seeking to understand the political dynamics that underpin the development of policy interventions relating to minority languages, particularly in the European context. Sub-state level actors may have overseen much of the activity in support of languages such as Catalan, Basque, Gaelic and Welsh over recent decades, reflecting the radical expansion in regional autonomy across Western Europe during that period. Yet, regional-level initiatives have rarely been conceived and developed in isolation. Emerging patterns of multi-level governance raise the prospect that, as in other domains, policy interventions targeting regional or minority languages are influenced by political dynamics at multiple levels. State-level structures as well as continental or global level structures are also potentially significant. Therefore, Lewis and Royles argued that a comprehensive understanding of the factors that explain language policy choices in such contexts calls for a systematic examination of the



interactions between these different levels and an assessment of their relative influence at different points in time.

- 6.4 Lewis and Royles acknowledged that many contributions to both the academic and policy literature on language policy have recognised that language policy activity should be seen as encompassing the actions of actors and institutions located at multiple different scales. In the case of language revitalisation, this is exemplified by the often utilised distinction between 'macro' and 'micro' level interventions. Yet, despite a general awareness of the multi-level nature of language policy activity, it is striking that, to date, the nature of the interaction between actors and institutions located at different territorial levels, and the manner in which these interactions can either enable or constrain language policy options available in specific locations, is a dynamic that has not been systematically analysed by language policy researchers.

7 The significance of the supra-state level for language revitalisation efforts

- 7.1 Building on the above argument that there is a need to assess the relative significance of language revitalisation activity across multiple territorial levels, the workshop's final session focused specifically on current activities at the European level. First, the discussion served to highlight the different types of minority language networks that have emerged at the European level: these include the Network for the Promotion of Linguistic Diversity (NPLD), whose membership is comprised of governmental institutions as well as other public bodies, and the European Language Equality Network (ELEN), which is more of a civil-society based organisation.
- 7.2 In discussing the work of ELEN, Paul Bilbao Sarria explained that the organisation drew together a large number of European minority language organisations. He argued that the distinctive role of ELEN is to work as a link between these grass-roots organisations and relevant European and global institutions. Amongst its key contributions are facilitating a transfer of knowledge and good practice between organisations; providing a space for the development of collaborative projects; conducting advocacy work, particularly in relation to the EU, the Council of Europe and the United Nations; and also work to develop international-level policy proposals to promote and support regional and minority languages.
- 7.3 Similarly, in her contribution, Elin Haf Gruffydd Jones reflected on the benefits and strengths of trans-European interactions for different minority language communities. Alongside the very practical benefits that can emerge from networking activity between different governmental or non-governmental organisations (e.g. sharing of best practice), she argued that it was also vital to acknowledge the deeper conceptual gains that can result from international engagement. Based on her years of experience working with Mercator, Jones posited that networks such as those mentioned above (7.1) provide an opportunity for members of a minority language community to rise above long-established conceptual or discursive norms that may be associated with their particular state context, and to be exposed to new ideas, terms or concepts that can be used to articulate their position and aims in a novel manner. Concrete examples included how notions such as language normalization and new speakers had been shared and utilized by minority language advocates in different contexts to re-conceptualise and re-articulate arguments regarding the promotion of language use or language acquisition.
- 7.4 Additionally, Jones argued that trans-European interactions allow for the development of recommendations in response to common challenges facing regional and minority languages, such as the impact of the digitalization of knowledge on minority languages. Whereas the strengths and benefits of exchanging practices and the value of network working were noted, financial constraints make it more difficult to exchange, particularly amongst some groups. The



promotion of partnerships and networks across between language groups was emphasised in order to avoid the interactions only becoming a second -hand experience.

- 7.5 In his contribution, Emyr Lewis emphasised the formative contribution of work at the European and global levels for the interests of regional and minority languages. Drawing on his experiences as a former member of the Committee of Experts for the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, Lewis argued that international instruments can play an important role in ensuring recognition of a language, particularly in the context of strong central states where the historical tendency has been to oppose any official recognition of regional or minority languages.
- 7.6 Yet, Lewis stressed the need to appreciate the distinction between international law/conventions and supranational legislation (e.g. EU legislation). States may not necessarily implement the former, but they are bound to integrate the latter into their domestic legal frameworks. Consequently, as an international convention, the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages promotes the interests of minority language communities, but it does not create rights that governments are obliged to implement. Rather, state governments are expected to report on their progress in implementing relevant sections of the charter. Consequently, the limitations of the charter as an international tool for language promotion become particularly apparent when there are common implementation problems across cases. The more problematic cases for its Committee of Experts are where there are fundamental issues of compliance with the arrangements, for example the UKs lack of reporting on progress in the case of Northern Ireland.
- 7.7 Building on these comments, Jarmo Lainio, a current member of the Charter's Committee of Experts, suggested that a lack of implementation tended to be apparent in three types of circumstances. First, when sub-state-level governments do not implement state-level commitments with respect to international conventions, due a strong degree of autonomy. Second, cases where state-level policies overrule efforts at the regional level to take steps that would lead to the implementation of the convention. Third, in some federal states, central government is too weak to implement the convention. The key factors considered to influence the extent of the convention's implementation in different cases were historical context and political changes, with the latter including the results of elections and changes of personnel within governments (e.g. ministerial changes that signal a change in viewpoint).



Workshop 4: Language revitalisation and the transformation of governance

Day 1: Thursday 14 February 2019

Location: Members Briefing Room, Y Senedd, Cardiff Bay

10.15 Welcome and introduction

10.30 **Session 1**

Michael Keating (University of Aberdeen)

Rescaling Europe: territory, community, institutions and policy

11.15 Break: tea/coffee

11.30 Session 2

Linda Cardinal (University of Ottawa)

The governance of language regimes

Huw Lewis and Elin Royles (Aberystwyth University)

Language revitalisation and multi-level governance

12.45 Lunch

14.00 Session 3

John Walsh (National University of Ireland, Galway)

The governance of Irish in the neoliberal age: the retreat of the state under the guise of empowerment

Rhys Jones (Aberystwyth University)

Language promotion, civil society organisations and the shadow state

3.15 Break: tea/coffee

3.30 Session 4



Revitalise: Workshop Briefing Report 4

Peter Kraus (University of Augsburg)
Globalisation and linguistic governance

4.15 – 4.30 Concluding remarks and close

Day 2: Friday 15 February 2019

Location: Pierhead Centre, Cardiff Bay

10.00 **Session 1**

Current trends in the governance of language revitalisation
Round table discussion with contributions from:

- Meirion Prys Jones (former CEO, Welsh Language Board)
- Seán Ó Cuirreáin (former Irish Language Commissioner)
- Allan Campbell (former CEO, Bòrd na Gàidhlig)

11.15 Break: tea/coffee

11.45 Session 2

Rob Dunbar (University of Edinburgh)
The role of the courts in minority language promotion

Diarmait Mac Giolla Chriost (Cardiff University)
Official language commissioners and language revitalisation

13.00 Lunch

14.00 Session 3

Assessing the significance of the supra-state level for language revitalisation
Round table discussion with contributions from:

- Emyr Lewis (former member of the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts for the Charter for Regional and Minority Languages)
- Jarmo Lainio (Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity // Stockholm University)
- Paul Bilbao (Secretary-General, Kontseilua and European Language Equality Network Vice-President)
- Elin Haf Gruffudd Jones (Mercator)

3.30 Concluding remarks and close