



Language revitalisation and the role of governments

Conclusions from the work of the Revitalise research network

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Outline

- The Revitalise research network: some background
- Conclusions arising from the work of the Revitalise network relating to the role of governments:
 - Language revitalization as a multi-level activity
 - Balancing the role of governmental institutions and civil society actors in language revitalization
- This afternoon: further conclusions relating to language use in the family and the community



The Revitalise research network

- A two year project (2017-19), funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK)
- Funding to support a research network that brought together academic researchers, policy practitioners and civil society actors working in the field of language revitalisation
- A series of 4 workshops, featuring research and policy presentations – over 50 participants in total
- A series of briefing reports published along the way – available on the project website: <http://revitalise.aber.ac.uk>



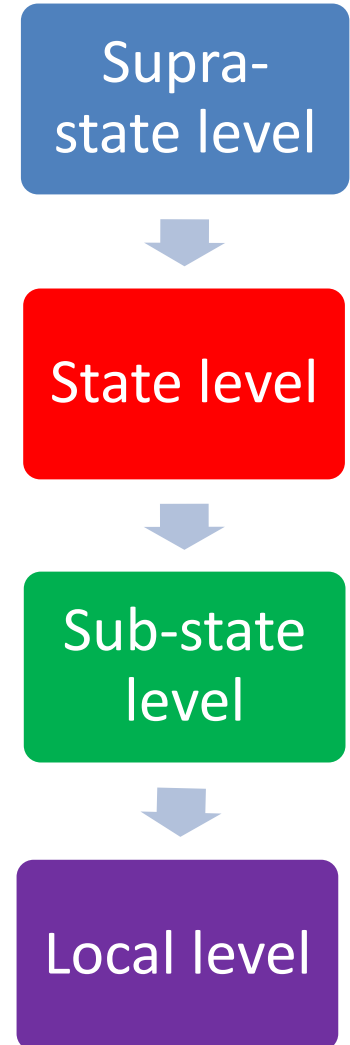
The Revitalise research network

- **Key question:** What are the implications of contemporary patterns of social, economic and political change for how language revitalization efforts should be designed and implemented?
- **Rationale:** Factors traditionally emphasised as being key determinants of a language community's level of vitality relate to areas of life implicated in current patterns of social, economic and political change., e.g.:
 - Family
 - Nature of community
 - Economy
 - Structure of government



Language revitalisation as a multi-level activity: context

- An age of multi-level governance: influence over policy-making in many domains is dispersed among numerous actors across various territorial levels
- Yet, analysis of policy interventions in support of regional or minority languages, has tended to focus on specific territorial levels in isolation
- There has been less attention to the impact of *interactions between* actors or institutions across multiple territorial levels for language policy
- More attention needs to be given to the move towards multi-level patterns of governance when assessing the development of policy interventions relating to regional or minority languages.





Language revitalisation as a multi-level activity: conclusions

- Sub-state level activity is likely to remain the main influence on the nature and extent of language revitalisation efforts
- Yet, even when formal competence for policy relating to regional or minority languages is located at the regional level, state-level structures are still likely to exert a significant influence
- Some evidence that the significance of continental or global level structures for regional or minority languages will depend on the orientation of the state in question:
 - When the state adheres to a restrictive approach, the international level may be more significant for actors at lower levels
 - When the state adopts a more a permissive approach, the international level may be less significant, though not irrelevant



Balancing the role of governmental and civil society actors: context

- Many areas of public policy have witnessed a decline in the influence of government over recent years
- Yet, governmental institutions – particularly sub-state governments – have emerged as increasingly influential actors in many cases of language revitalisation
- Legislation granting rights and official status, policy strategies, public funding
- Too much emphasis on the role of governmental institutions leads to a situation where the potential contribution of non-governmental, grassroots actors is discounted, both by officials and activists alike





Balancing the role of governmental and civil society actors: conclusion

- Language revitalisation efforts cannot be maintained solely on the basis of official governmental action – broad popular engagement through civil society remains a vital component
- There is a pressing need to reflect critically on the relative balance between the role governmental and civil society actors in language revitalisation
- Which types of activities are governmental institutions in the best position to administer, and which are ones where activity by civil society is likely to be more effective and appropriate?
- Due to a decline in many locations in levels of civic participation, the challenge of maintaining a robust revitalisation movement within civil society is likely to be a key consideration for proponents of regional or minority languages over the coming years



Diolch yn fawr!

(Thank you!)