

Strategic Initiatives for Minority Language Education in the EU.

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Bugail Aberdyfi

Mi geisiaf eto ganu cân
I'th gael di'n ôl, fy ngeneth lan
I'r gadair siglo ger y tân
Ar fynydd Aberdyfi
Paham, fy ngeneth hoff, paham
Gadewaist fi a'th plant dinam
Mae Arthur bach yn galw'i fam
Ei galon bron a thorri
Mae dau oen lliwaeth yn y llwyn
A'r plant yn chwarae efo'r wyn
O tyrd yn ôl, fy ngeneth fwyn
I fynydd Aberdyfi.



EU Initiative

- Mother Tongue plus two languages

Europe: languages



Constellation of languages

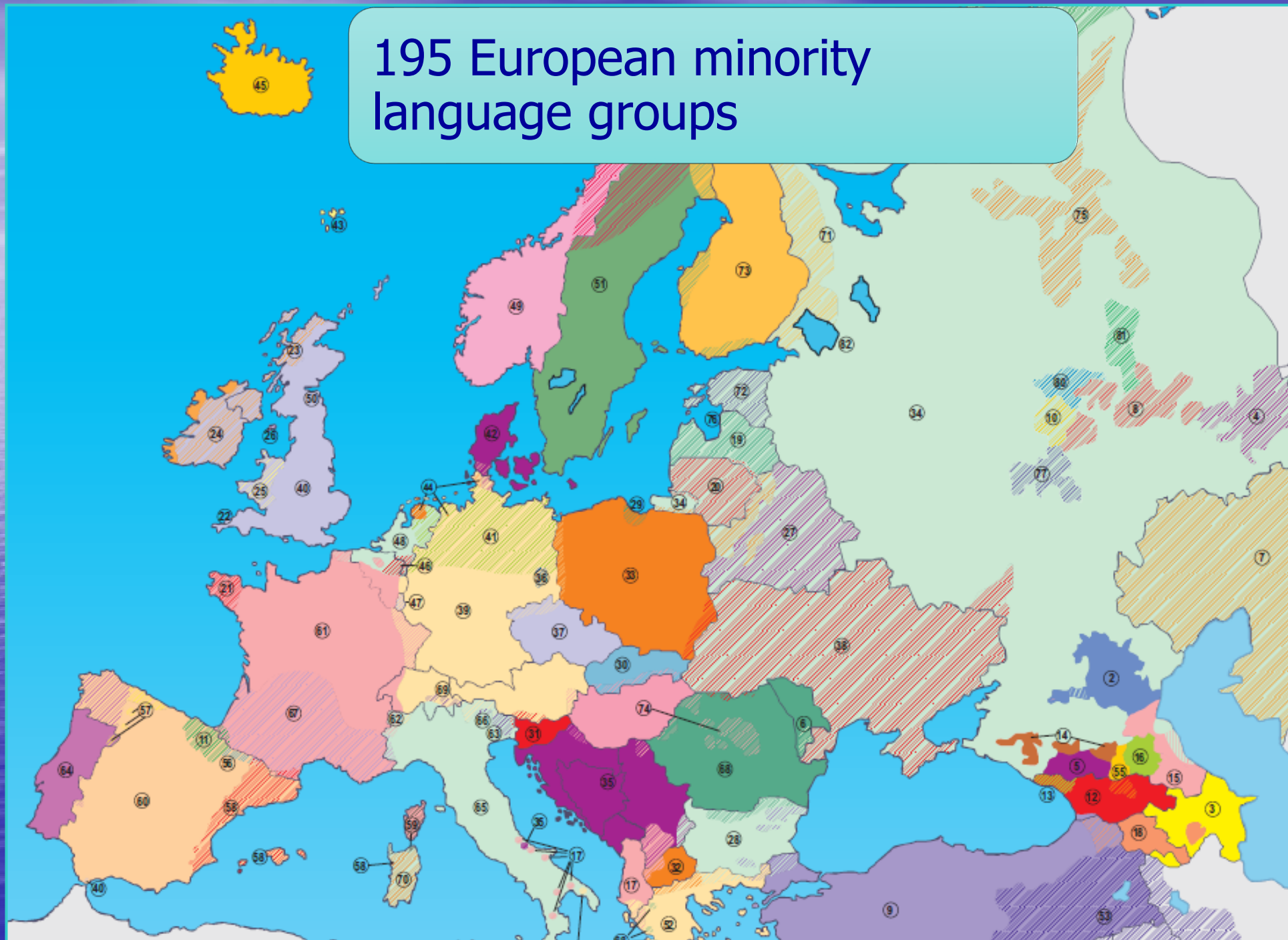
State languages: English, Spanish, French, Dutch

Immigrant minority languages: Turkish, Arabic

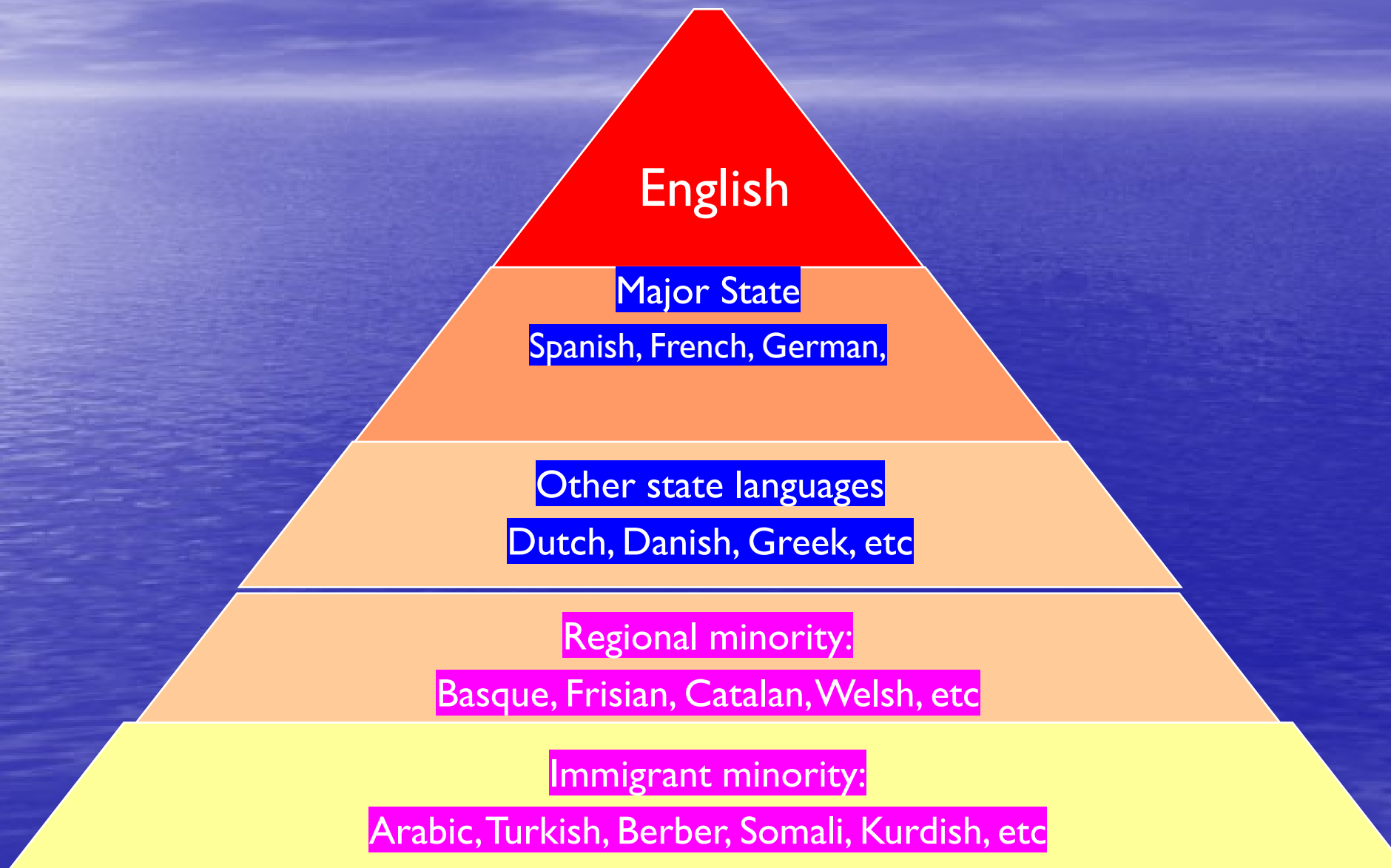
Sign languages

Regional or minority languages

195 European minority language groups



Language constellation: hierarchy



EU-based typology

Unique

- a) **Welsh**, Frisian, Galician
- b) Catalan (E, I, F), Basque (E, F)

'Kin-state'

- a) German (B, Dk, F, I, Cz, Slo, Hu, Ro), French (I), Slovene (Au, I), Swedish (Fin)
- b) Ukrainian (Sl, Pol), Russian (Est, Lit, Lat)

Special

- a) Luxembourgish, **Irish** (Ir and UK), Maltese
- b) Romani, Yiddish

Paradigm Shift to Multilingualism

- Bilingualism replaced by multilingualism.
 - English the dominant language.
 - Migration increases linguistic diversity (RM,IM).
 - Revitalization also- Basque, Frisian, Welsh.
 - In city-regions, the locus of real multilingual interaction, urban governance issues often ignore linguistic aspects and service-provision in health, education, legal affairs.
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Research priorities

- **Comparative language strategies**
 - Language rights and responsibilities
 - Modernisation, promotion and regulation
 - Research discourse on RM and IM groups
- **European Union's disjuncture**
 - Multilingualism at institutional level – versus -
 - Dwindling role attached by EU to minority languages

Presumed benefits of multilingual education

- Brief list of the benefits from individual, corporate, international.
- Socio-cultural, arts, literary, musical and ideologies
- Educational and cognitive
- Commercial, economic and social capital skills
- Leisure, sport, media and entertainment
- IT and Language Technologies
- Diplomacy, international relations, military and intelligence community
- Spiritual, faith communities, global outreach.

If this is the desiderata, how do we enter in?

- Navigating into the mainstream the overriding trajectory for generations.
- Some educational systems such as the Catalan, Basque, Frisian and Finnish have, like the salmon fish, jumped the hurdles to go from ocean to fresh water to spawn and nurture their languages.
- But there are casualties on the way, in some contexts English has replaced French or Russian, so not necessarily more multilingual education, just a different mix of languages.
- For others, achieving competence in three or more languages remains a struggle and doubts are cast on the investment in languages.

Paradigms: A Generational Shift

A generation ago we would have been addressing the benefits of bilingual not multilingual education.

Change due to four trends:

1) The development of Modern Language teaching within statutory education

2) The hegemonic growth of English and other LWC

3) The emergence of 'minority languages' as a salient element of formal education in some contexts

4) The decline of classical languages such as Greek and Latin.

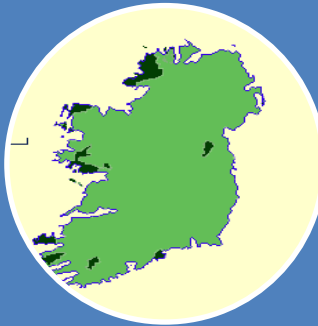
Official Language and Educational Strategies

- In implementing these Strategies the fundamental concern is how advocates of 'minority language schooling' have had to balance their desire for legitimacy, growth and educational effectiveness with the democratic majority's concern with social uniformity, equity, value for money and the defence of their historical hegemonic position within the state structure.
- Ideological and partisan differences thus have to be negotiated if selected languages are to flourish within a dominant educational system which previously disavowed their right to exist.

Determinants of success

- The key determinant of success has been political control at the local state level in devolved or autonomous regions, e.g. Euskadi, Catalonia and Wales.
- For three generations the minority language was conceived as a special interest, a countervailing trend to the established norms of the nation state.
- The current situation has been transformed so that minority educational initiatives are seen as part of the public good and embedded within routine policy development and reflective of ambitious socio-political goals related to either normalisation or language revitalisation.

Administrative reforms



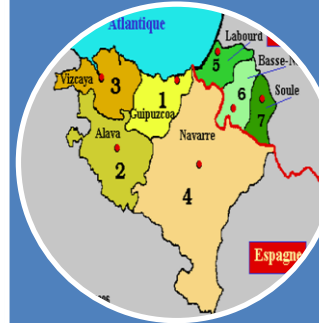
Twenty
Year
Language
Strategy



Salience
minority
language
policy



Language
Commission



Political
renewal



Devolution
of language
policy

Creative Ambiguity: Role of Majority

- While still deeply contested in some quarters, the fact that so many of the current students in 'minority language' schools come from homes where neither parent speaks the language i.e. sections of the majority have been convinced of the merits of the quality of the education on offer, is both heartening and a challenge for the integrity and distinctiveness of the 'minority school system.'



New ways at looking at old issues

- Key question is how to create conditions which allow indigenous language to be sustained and grow in an ever changing context.
- Tried and tested methods are paramount as is policy development in relation to intergenerational family transmission, formal education, community development and economic vitality.
- The big challenge is how to translate skills and competence into actual routine usage so that the language is reinforced as a medium of genuine transactions and meaningful relations.
- Increasing numbers, whether it be a million Welsh speakers, or any guess work for Gaelic and Irish, is laudable, but without a concomitant social and economic push it will be a thin patina of success. Why?

The
conundrum-
why if after all
the policy
reforms we still
need fresh
initiatives?

Usage presumes a skill set and capacity-building so that spaces and opportunities can be used to use minority language.

Increasingly in this regulated society it also requires political conviction and legitimisation.

But it also requires smart thinking as to how to adopt new ideas of social psychological engineering such as **Behaviour Modification, Nudge Theory and Conviction.**

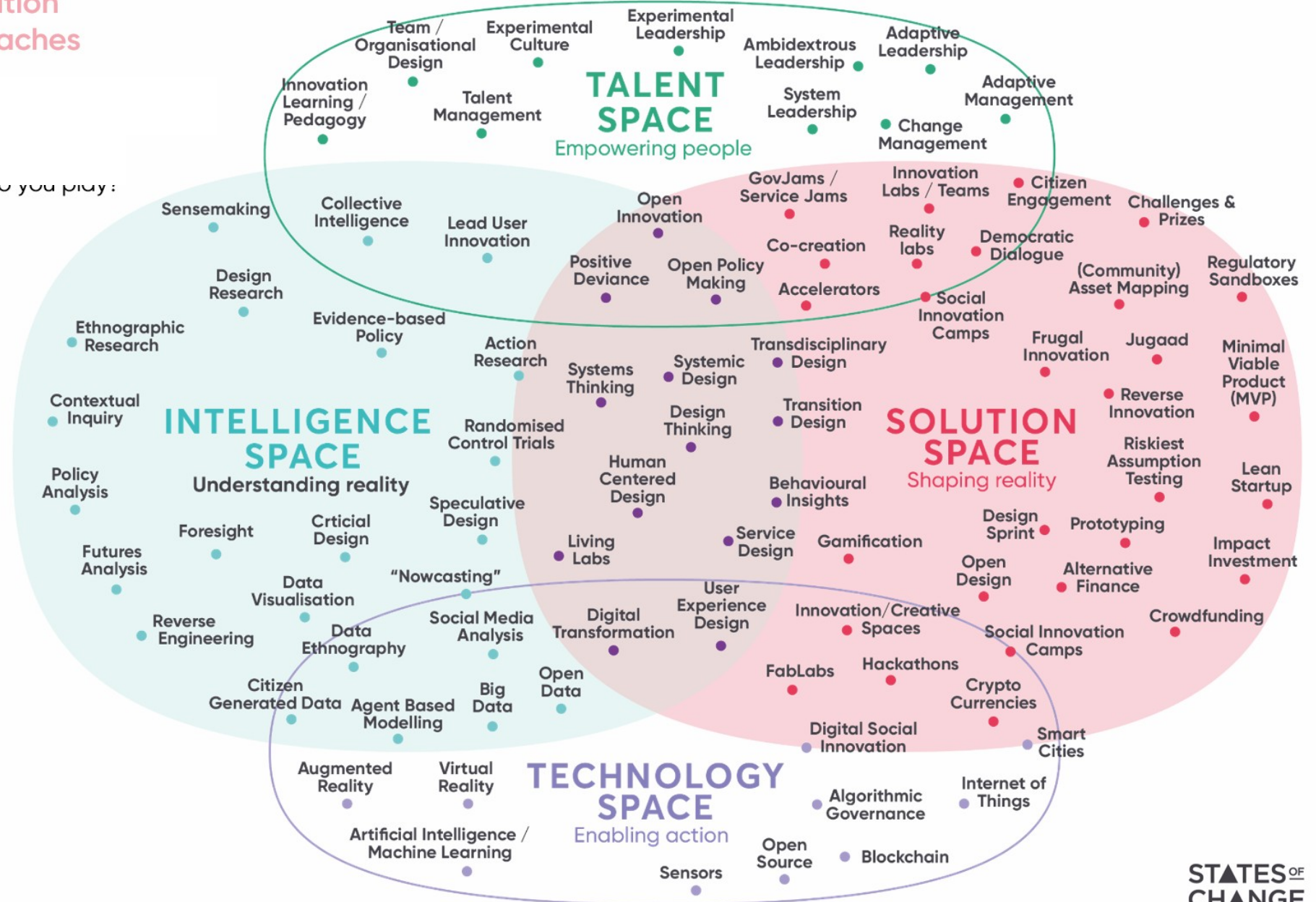


Outcomes not just outputs

- Governments set targets, budgets and define outputs by which their actions are deemed a success or not.
- UK government policy has identified behaviour modification, nudge theory and conviction as important ingredients of its policy development and outcomes have come to challenge outputs as the desired maxim.
- Is language policy and strategy significantly different in its social psychological aspects from other types of policy.?
- Successful interventionist campaigns have modified behaviour in domains such as health care, dangerous drink driving or current examples the reduction of sugar content in foodstuffs and soft drinks and the removal of plastic packaging so as to ameliorate the worst effects or maritime pollution.

Landscape of Innovation Approaches

where do you play:





Promising Avenues

- Increased emphasis on economic added value of target language is welcomed. Can become so instrumental that it threatens to reduce the emotive, identification and socio-cultural aspects of language transmission and group dynamism in favour of atomised individualisation.
- Need to develop network-based programmes to deepen sense of belonging.
- Consideration of **immigrant integration** and **new speakers** a relatively rare focus which is not fully detailed in most Language Strategies, though doubtless this will improve as revised versions are prepared.
- All require CONVICTION in POLICY TERMS:
BASQUE ILLUSTRATION

BASQUE INITIATIVE HOW TO MANAGE SUCCESS?



- One illustration will suffice: the Basque Education System. A miracle of post-Franco Euskadi- how the society has embraced the integral use of Basque from kindergarten to Higher Education. A generation ago some 20% enrolled in **Ikastolas**, now 80% plus with only some 5% enrolled in conventional Spanish-medium schools. This a result of a massive swing in parental choice. Huge investment by successive governments and educational authorities in teacher training, educational resources, assessment bodies.

And yet, doubts, uncertainties, fears!

- Formal assessment of various skills and competencies do not match the expectations of professionals and parents.
- Early-warning signals that the spectacular growth to date may be questioned by both supporters and opponents alike.
- Some teacher trainers argue for better training methods, others for differentiated class-room practices to account for diversity of home language and argue that it is unfair to expect L2 to match L1 competences in a short space of time.
- How to manage the expected backlash?

Growth does not automatically produce use!

- It was assumed that increasing the total number of speakers through the education system, Basque for Adults, Government initiatives and the social mobilisation of actors, would automatically transfer into social usage outside education, given the sheer weight of numbers and socio-economic transformation of the workforce, requiring increased skills in Basque.
- Social investigation research by specialist organisations such as Soziolinguistika Klusterra offer a diagnosis, methodology for evaluation and ideas for improvement e.g. Arrue (analysis), Berbekin (spoken competence), Aldahitz (promote language switching).
- Increasing Basque language use is a major challenge.

Udaltop: Government and social initiatives

- Basque society has a strong tradition of innovation and initiatives.
- Basque government language policy unit is a dynamic and technically sophisticated outfit.
- **Udaltop** is an annual gathering of language officers, social activists and government, who seek to diffuse innovative practices.
- In May 2018 Udaltop in Lasarte sought to embed the social use of Basque through a programme known as Euskaraldia run by 316 local committees.



Aims of Euskarak 365 egun dynamic

“To change language habits and encourage the taking of steps in order that as many people as possible start to make greater use of the Basque language.

To prompt action among local agents who work in favour of the Basque language in order for them to facilitate new language practices and energize the Basque-speaking community.

To encourage all kinds of organisations to take protective steps making it possible to live in the Basque language and minimising obstacles in this respect.

To succeed, once the initiative has been completed, in maintaining the progress made and the relations established in the Basque language.”



"Euskaraldia" initiative

- “Euskaraldia: 11 days in Euskera”. 23 November to 3 December (International Day of the Basque Language).
- Adult speakers are encouraged to use Euskera in their daily relations with the aim of breaking inertia and promoting linguistic practices in Euskera.
- Citizens become "Ahobizi" (“an active mouth”) and "belarriprest" (“an attentive ear”).
- “Ahobizi” are people who will speak in Euskera with anyone who understands the language and will carry an identifying pin during those 11 days.
- “Belarriprest” are people who at the least understand Euskera and who invite others to talk to them in Euskera (even though they are not obliged to speak in Euskera). The “belarriprest”s will also carry an identifying pin during those 11 days.




Legal measures and regulatory authorities.

- Welsh Language Board abolished in March 2012.
- Promotional activities went into a strengthened Government Welsh Language Unit; regulatory functions were vested in a new Welsh Language Commissioner, established in April 2012.
- Welsh Language Commissioner the most powerful Commissioner in Wales, has investigated and intervened in issues of non-compliance of statutory language standards which govern public institutions.
- Government review in 2017 recommended abolition of WLC and replaced by Welsh Language Commission.

Promotion and Regulation: Shaping the Commission

- Proposed legislative change due late Autumn 2018.
- A single commission with its overall head.
- Deputy Commissioners responsible for Promotion; Regulation and Compliance; IT Digital Data; Language Planning; Innovation and Behavioural Change.
- The relative primacy and autonomy of regulation would be reconfigured and the function of a Welsh Language Commissioner would be tasked to a Deputy within a Welsh Language Commission.



Cymraeg 2050: Welsh language strategy

- August 1st 2016 at the National Eisteddfod, the First Minister, Carwyn Jones, declared that the ambition of the new strategy would be the creation of a million speakers by 2050.
- How feasible is the target of achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050?
- Where did the figure originate, is it based on solid evidence or on political propaganda and wish fulfilment by both government and language activists?

Six Key Areas:2018 onwards

- Planning and Language Policy
- Normalization
- Education
- Language Transmission in the Family and Workplace
- Supportive Infrastructure
- Improved Legislation and Stronger Language Rights.

Targets and Implementation

- If the target is not met, does it really matter?
- For what really matters is the actual usage of Welsh in a wide range of domains in daily life, not a putative set of skills by a politically symbolic target population.
- How will progress towards the implementation of the Strategy be evaluated?

Education the Key to Growth of Bilingualism

- Will the education system invest in the required number of new Welsh-medium teachers?
- Need to expand Welsh-medium nursery provision (MYM).
- Need to open new bilingual or Welsh-medium schools.
- Need to embed more effective Welsh-medium teaching in hitherto English schools.
- Support the work of Further Education and Higher Education institutions in staff skills development and in curricula design so as to create the effective bilingual workforce lauded in the Strategy?

Wider context: unknown consequences

- Language use in many domains not so encouraging.
- Communities continue to atrophy-no collective rights.
- Increased commercial pressures, fiscal probity.
- The impact of promoting Welsh in an increasingly multicultural context, some success but overall a changed discourse and diverse clientele make it harder to anticipate behavioural change.
- The great debate-uncertainty created by Brexit and post-Brexit relationships. How will they impact on arguments that used to promote Welsh language skills as an example of European 'normalacy' rather than exceptionalism?

In what way will the new system :-

- Increase use
- Create new speakers
- Develop linguistic rights (individual and community)
- Ensure policy consistency in the medium term
- Spread responsibility and commitment beyond politicians and civil servants
- Support international activity on language promotion issues ?

Refresher Initiatives: Outstanding Issues

- Promotion, Implementation and Regulation
- Evidence-based policy impact on underlying structures and tendencies, many evidences-political filter to select expedient data and discourse
- Socio-economic dvlpt and mobility is crucial, but marginal in L.P.Strategies
- Language Acquisition and Language Usage different phenomenon
- The Role of IT, Media and Communication
- Co-ordination of Government Departments
- The Role of the Majority and New Speakers
- Achieving Targets and Outputs is not equivalent to Behavioural Change and Outcomes.