sciendo *Studia Celtica Posnaniensia Vol 6 (1), 2021*
doi: 10.2478/scp-2021-0002

ECONOMIC DISRUPTION AND LANGUAGE SHIFT – SOME ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA FROM IRELAND AFTER THE 2008 CRASH

BEN Ó CEALLAIGH

Aberystwyth University

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses some of the ways in which the "Great Recession" which followed the 2008 economic crash affected the vitality of Irish-speaking ("Gaeltacht") areas. In addition to a brief discussion of the nature of neoliberalism – the cause of the 2008 crash – and some of the ways in which this ideology stands in contradiction to the requirements of language revitalisation, examples are given to illustrate the way in which the recession affected state language policy. Various micro-level consequences of these macro-level economic and policy developments are then discussed by reference to ethnographic data gathered in the Gaeltacht. Issues such as deindustrialisation, unemployment and the problematic nature of tourism in minoritised language communities are discussed, as is language use amongst young people and the way in which technology can contribute to language shift. The paper concludes with a discussion of the potential for anti-systemic movements and policy proposals such as the "Green New Deal" to create, coincidentally, a macro-economic regime that would be more favourable to linguistic minorities than that of neoliberalism.

Keywords: Language shift, neoliberalism, minority languages, Irish, language policy

1. Introduction

Explanations of language loss and extinction frequently make reference to the central role that economic forces have in driving this process. Grenoble and Whaley, for instance, state that economics "may be the single strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages" (1998: 52). Despite a great number of similar assertions in the literature[1], as Grin (1999: 169), Austin and Sallabank

[1] E.g., Baker 2011: 62; Crystal 2000: 175-176; Edwards 1984: 304; Euromosaic 1996: 7-11; Kaplan and Baldauf 1997: 280; McColl Millar 2005: 26; Nettle and Romaine 2000: 126-147; Ó Murchú 1996: 39; Ó Riagáin 2001: 206; O'Rourke and Pujolar 2013: 54; Romaine 2006: 456; Williams 1991: 4, etc.

(2011: 21) and Amano et al. (2014: 2), have noted, there is very little work which attempts to explain in detail the exact nature of this commonly-referenced causal link.

This paper attempts to rectify this deficit by examining the situation of the Irish language in the wake of the "Great Recession" which began in 2008, and which, ultimately, was a crisis of neoliberal economics (Gamble 2009, 2014). It uses ethnographic data gathered in Irish-speaking ("Gaeltacht") areas to explore some of the ways in which economic disruption on a macro-scale contributed to language shift at a micro-scale.

Irish, although officially the first language of the Republic of Ireland, is a minoritised[2] language – spoken daily outside the education system by just 73,803 people in the Republic, out of a population of 4,757,956 (CSO 2017a: 8, 66). It remains the community language in only a handful of scattered pockets, mostly remote areas on the west coast. For generations following the foundation of the state in 1922, Gaeltacht areas received significant state support aimed at community and economic development in these often-impoverished districts - in the hope that this, in turn, would facilitate language maintenance. This article, however, charts the dramatic weakening of such interventions post-2008. Despite its constitutional status, Irish is classed as "definitely endangered" by UNESCO (2018).

As I have elsewhere discussed at length many of the key ways in which the post-2008 crisis caused the Irish state to rationalise top-down language revitalisation policy (e.g., Ó Ceallaigh 2020, 2021, forthcoming), this paper will focus primarily on presenting previously unpublished ethnographic data. These data were collected during over eight months of participant observation in some of the strongest remaining Gaeltacht communities. Various issues caused or exacerbated by the global economic crisis, such as unemployment, a decline in tourism and an increased dependency on English-language technology, are discussed. Following my previous work, it will be demonstrated that neoliberalism, the economic hegemony of our time, inherently conflicts with language revitalisation efforts, which invariably consist of both social planning and the re-allocation of resources to non-dominant groups – two principles stridently opposed by advocates of neoliberalism. I conclude by discussing how efforts to destabilise neoliberal hegemony driven by, for instance, environmental concerns and the need for a "Green New Deal", potentially offer a glimmer of hope regarding the possibility of a macro-economic regime more favourable to linguistic minorities being brought about.

---

[2] Following Lo Bianco (2018: 37), I use this term – rather than "minority" – in order to avoid eliding the agency and intent behind the colonial policies which saw Irish reduced from being the language of all the island's population to its current, threatened position (Mac Ionnrachtaigh 2013: 20-92).

2. Neoliberalism, Ireland and language policy

Neoliberal ideology was originally theorised by members of the Mont Pelerin Society, a right-wing thinktank founded by Austrian economist Friedrich von Hayek in 1947 (Mirowski 2013). Although initially a fringe theoretical position that stood in opposition to both the Keynesian social democratic capitalism then dominant in the west and authoritarian centrally planned economies such as the USSR, neoliberal policies began to be adopted by liberal democratic states in the 1970s in response to the stagflation crisis of that time (Harvey 2005). In the intervening decades neoliberalism has become the dominant economic orthodoxy worldwide, including, as will be seen, in Ireland.

While often misunderstood as being in favour of total state withdrawal from the economic sphere, neoliberalism in fact sees a role for a strongly interventionist state. It is argued, however, that the good society can only be created when state intervention in the market is limited to intercessions designed to *support capital*, namely through creating favourable business conditions, low tax rates, offering businesses bailouts when required, etc. (Mirowski 2013; Slobodian 2018). It is thus about both "rolling back" traditional forms of governance and "rolling out" a new form of state (Peck and Tickell 2002), one which limits its involvement in social policies such as the provision of healthcare, education, housing, etc. As Klein (2007) noted, neoliberal policy has frequently been advanced through the manipulation of crises, which are used as opportunities to force through drastic pro-market reforms – a point of great relevance to the Irish case post-2008.

While the Republic of Ireland (henceforth "Ireland" for reasons of brevity) suffered a degree of underdevelopment unparalleled in Western Europe throughout most of the 20th century (O'Toole 2010), the onset of the "Celtic Tiger" in the early 1990s saw the country come to be viewed internationally as a shining example of the virtues of neoliberal economics (Kirby 2010). This period of high economic growth was based initially on the Foreign Direct Investment of multinational corporations (many of which use Ireland as a tax haven) and later by a property boom which saw house prices treble over a decade (McCabe 2013: 168-170; Gamble 2009: 3).

Being so thoroughly integrated into the international capitalist order, when the global economy crashed in 2008, Ireland suffered enormously. So severe were the effects of the crash for Ireland that a 2012 report for the International Monetary Fund (hereafter "IMF") stated that Ireland experienced "the costliest banking crisis in advanced economies since at least the Great Depression" (Laeven and Valencia 2012: 20). In 2016 a follow-up report for the same organisation noted that "[t]he extent and rapidity of Ireland's fiscal deterioration in the latter part of the 2000s was virtually unprecedented among post war

industrial country experiences" (Donovan 2016: 11). In response to this crisis, a punitive policy of austerity was introduced, unemployment increased from under 5% in early 2008 to nearly 15% in 2012, some 610,000 people emigrated between 2008-2015, and, at a cost of some €70 billion to the public, the banks were infamously "bailed out" (Murphy 2014: 135; Glynn and O'Connell 2017: 299). While the social effects of this crisis were widely discussed by academics in various fields in the following years (e.g., Roche et al. 2017), very little attention was given to the effects of the crisis on the vitality of the Irish language and its heartland communities, despite the drastic degree to which language policy was rationalised during this time.

Indeed, discussions of Irish-language policy published since 2008 (e.g., volumes edited by Lenoach *et al.* 2012 or Ó hIfearnáin and Walsh 2018) make no discussion of the fraught economic context in which recent policies such as the *20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language* and the *Gaeltacht Act 2012* were made. In fact, both of these important policies were introduced while the Irish economy was under the direction of the IMF, the European Central Bank and the European Commission (the "Troika"). As Hardiman and Regan (2012: 9) wrote at the time: *"*[a]ll budget decisions must be cleared with the Troika, fiscal performance is subject to quarterly reviews and Troika personnel are embedded in the core government departments" – a context not referenced in any of the academic literature on Irish since 2008. In addition to 13 of 19 state funded national Irish-language promotion bodies being closed during the austerity period, grants for parents raising their children through Irish in the Gaeltacht were abolished, as were housing or third level education grants for Gaeltacht residents, and many, many other supports for the Gaeltacht (Ó Ceallaigh 2019: 85, 107-112). Indeed, cuts to the Gaeltacht and language revitalisation efforts more generally were noticeably more severe than for other sectors (Guth na Gaeltachta 2010). The state department responsible for the Gaeltacht had its budget cut by over 70% over just three years, 2008-2011, and the Gaeltacht development authority, Údarás na Gaeltachta, received a budget cut of 73.7% between 2008-2015 (Ó Ceallaigh 2020: 106). Shocking as those figures are, the permanent nature of the state's neoliberalisation of Irish-language policy is perhaps most evident in the fact that the €178m proposed as expenditure on the Gaeltacht and islands in the *National Development Plan 2018-2027* (Government of Ireland 2018: 50) amounts to only slightly more than *half* of the spend on this sector between 2006-2016, post-2008 cutbacks notwithstanding (Byrne 2018: 10). While often simplistically explained as the result of specific politicians disliking Irish, this is more productively understood as a product of neoliberalism's antipathy to issues which are of little market value, which are not seen as areas the state should be involved in.

Although the teaching of Irish as a compulsory subject in all schools in the Republic is a significant aspect of official language revitalisation policy, this is funded from the budget of the Department of Education and Skills and is not ordinarily understood as dedicated Irish-language spending. It is notable, however, that cuts to education budgets, (themselves not trivial) also led to a range of negative impacts for Gaeltacht communities (Ó Ceallaigh 2019: 86; 236).

In classic "disaster capitalism" fashion (Klein 2007), then, the 2008 crisis was used as a chance to rationalise public policy of all manner in Ireland (Mercille and Murphy 2015), language policy included. This tension between neoliberal policy and the needs of many "grant dependent cultures" (Williams 2013: 295) such as Irish, which has long since survived in a "state-funded cocoon" (Wright 2016: 481), is a key issue facing many linguistic minorities today, despite this issue almost never being acknowledged in the relevant literature.

As I have previously discussed at length the degree to which austerity affected Irish-language revitalisation policy and institutions elsewhere (Ó Ceallaigh 2020, 2021, forthcoming), I will not offer further comment on that aspect of the crisis in this paper. Instead, I present some of the findings of ethnographic research conducted in several of the strongest remaining Irish-speaking communities between 2015-2017.

3. Methodology – an ethnography of the Gaeltacht

The ethnographic data presented in the remainder of this paper were gathered over the course of some eight months of fieldwork between 2015-2017 in communities in Galway and Donegal, in the mid- and north-west of the country respectively. These communities, which are unnamed due to ethical requirements regarding anonymity, were chosen due to being amongst the strongest remaining Gaeltacht areas. Indeed, Ó Giollagáin et al. (2007) and Ó Giollagáin and Charlton (2015) categorise all the areas in which I conducted field work as "Category A" Gaeltacht communities, wherein over 67% of the population speak Irish daily outside the education system. The most recent Census further confirmed these to be the areas where Irish is most vital (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht 2017).

Whilst living in these areas I engaged in participant observation – attending community meetings, festivals, protests and other events. As is standard practice in ethnography, regular field notes were kept throughout the course of my fieldwork. These anonymised notes detailed events that were telling in regard to the social, economic and/or linguistic vitality of these areas. Additionally, I conducted 52 semi-structured interviews with adults from a wide range of age groups (including recent school leavers, parents, retirees) and of different social

classes (from the un- or under-employed through to career civil servants and factory owners employing dozens of people). After a handful of initial interviews with people previously known to me, further participants were recruited via the "snowball", friend-of-a-friend method. 50 of these interviews were conducted in Irish, the remaining two being with learners who did not feel comfortable speaking in Irish on record. Translations of interview extracts given below are my own.

Rather than attempting to obtain a totally random or proportional sample of interviewees, I applied a process of "purposeful" or "judgemental" sampling (Fetterman 1989: 43; Crang and Cook 2007: 12), whereby sampling is conducted with specific goals in mind, allowing the researcher to follow up on certain cohorts or individuals who are particularly pertinent to the research project (Bryman 2008: 415). These interviews were later transcribed, resulting in a corpus of some 375,000 words, and then coded before a thematic analysis was conducted on the data.

Furthermore, in line with a recent trend in ethnography (Ortner 2010: 219), data obtained through participant observation and interviewing were "triangulated" by reference to the wide range of policy documents and budgetary information that are available for Irish. Some of the information gleaned from this analysis was presented above – particularly regarding the extent of the cuts that Irish-language institutions received – allowing for a detailed perspective on the nature of the cuts that informants often felt, but struggled to quantify when speaking to me.

4. Employment

Between 2008-2012 Ireland's workforce of two million suffered 300,000 job losses (O'Connell 2017: 232), with the Gaeltacht inevitably experiencing its share of this disruption. Considering the longstanding nature of deprivation in the Gaeltacht (Hindley 1990: 28-29), it is unsurprising that the Donegal and Galway Gaeltacht areas contain five districts that appear on the Central Statistics Office's list of "unemployment blackspots" – the 79 electoral divisions (of 3,440 total) wherein the unemployment rate is at or above 27%. Indeed, Scainimh in west Galway and Mín an Chladaigh in north-west Donegal are included in the 15 electoral divisions with the highest unemployment rates in the country – the only two rural areas on a list of otherwise urban districts, most of which are in Limerick city (CSO 2017b: 117).

Typical of a peripheral area, much of the Gaeltacht suffers from the type of educational inequality that militates against workers being employed in "white collar" positions, as well as there being a lack of employment for those who do attain higher level qualifications. Consequently, many males from Gaeltacht

areas found employment in construction pre-2008 and were thus hit hard by the sector's catastrophic collapse – from an enormous 25% of GNP at the height of the Celtic Tiger to less than 6% by 2012, accounting for some 163,000 job losses (Glynn et al. 2012: 38). Of course, a wide range of service industries – shops, restaurants and other businesses that are more likely to employ women – had grown up to support the construction industry and so were in turn hit severely by the crash. Notably, in rural areas such as the Gaeltacht unemployment "increased by double the rate of cities, at about 200%, largely as a result of the collapse of the construction sector" (O'Donoghue 2014: 19).

In addition to this collapse of construction, Irish manufacturing was also seriously affected by the crash, with a 16.9% decrease in employment therein between 2007-2012, followed by a partial recovery of 4.7% from 2012-2015 (O'Connell 2017: 239). In the Gaeltacht almost all manufacturing is dependent on state support, and as such the severe cuts to Údarás na Gaeltachta discussed above had a significant knock-on effect. One particularly striking example was the industrial estate in Donegal where some 1,300 people were employed before the crash. When I interviewed an executive from the Údarás in 2016, however, he told me there were just 425 people employed there, many on part-time or short-term contracts.

When asked about the main challenges of enticing businesses to locate in the area, this same executive commented on the peripheral, underdeveloped location:

> *B: Céard é an deacracht is mó atá agaibh agus sibh ag iarraidh comhlachtaí a mhealladh?*
> *É: Tá seo go hiomlán in éadan achan rud a deirim go poiblí ach, Tír Chonaill!*
> *B: Sin a shíl mé, iargúltacht?*
> *É: Iargúltacht. Jesus. Níl traein isteach sa chontae, tá muid scartha amach ón sé chontae eile le teorainn . . . Tá tú thuas ansin, tá sé deacair. Tá leathan bhanda millteanach tábhachtach fosta agus níl an tseirbhís cheart againn . . . Is míorúilt é go minic go bhfaigheann muid daoine isteach.*
>
> B: What is the biggest difficulty you have when trying to get companies to locate here?
> É: This is completely against everything I say publicly, but Donegal!
> B: That's what I thought, remoteness?
> É: Remoteness. Jesus. There's no train into the county, we're separated from the six counties by a border . . . You're up there, it's difficult. Broadband is extremely important as well and we don't have a proper service. It's often a miracle we get people to locate here.

Similarly, a businessman from Galway noted that locating his business in the Gaeltacht is not an economically sensible thing to do, being instead reflective of his personal commitment to the area: *"[m]á tá tú ag iarraidh airgead a dhéanamh rachaidh tú go áiteachaí ar nós Bleá Cliath, áit go bhfuil daonra. Má tá tú ag iarraidh difríocht a dhéanamh go do phobal, go do cheantar, fanfaidh tú sa tuath*" – "[i]f you want to make money you'll go to places like Dublin, where there's a population. If you want to make a difference to your community, to your area, you'll stay in the countryside".

This interviewee went on to state that government policy was exacerbating the economic problems of the Gaeltacht:

> *L: Tá polasaithe éagsúla an rialtais go láidir ag tabhairt tacaíocht d'eacnamaíocht lárnach in áit eacnamaíocht réigiúnach nó imeallacha. Bíodh sé go bhfuil siad á dhéanamh sin d'aon ghnó nó bíodh sé nach bhfuil 's acu níos fearr nó píosa den dá rud. But tá sé ag tarlú agus níos measa atá sé ag fáil.*
>
> L: The various policies the government has are strongly supporting the central economy instead of the regional or marginal economy. Whether that's being done intentionally or whether it's just that they know no better, or a bit of both. But it's happening and it's getting worse.

While the facts of geography are obviously immutable, economic development policy is not. Although globalisation has often been heralded as the "death of distance" due to the capacity of technological innovations to minimise the challenges faced by remote areas, in the absence of policies and resources aimed at providing high-speed internet and transport links to such regions, this trend does little to overcome the core-periphery dichotomy and centripetal tendencies which are fundamental to neoliberalism – and, indeed, to capitalism more generally (Wallerstein 2004). The Údarás clearly endeavours to promote the economic development of the Gaeltacht, but must do so not only in the face of budgetary cuts and a state economic policy that favours major population centres, but also in contravention of capitalism's fundamental tendency towards centralisation (Breathnach 1988; Harvey 2008). Furthermore, the efforts of the Údarás notwithstanding, many of the economic challenges of the Gaeltacht have been aggravated by state policies in recent years. The lack of adequate internet provision in much of rural Ireland, for instance, is a product of the privatisation drive of the last several decades. Having been state-owned since its founding in 1984, the national telecommunications provider Eircom was sold off in 1999, termed "the biggest single economic mistake made by an Irish Government – until the disastrous blanket bank guarantee of September, 2008" by the Irish

Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU 2011: 1). Eircom has since been acquired by a French billionaire who has little incentive to invest in servicing the most remote communities, leaving much of the Gaeltacht to endure extremely slow internet which makes stimulating economic activity, industrial or otherwise, exceedingly challenging (Ó Cuaig 2018).

It is also worthy of note that the hospitality industry also suffered greatly during the recession, with many establishments in communities I studied closing, something connected to the decline in the tourist industry which is discussed below. In addition to the obvious loss of employment that this caused, several interviewees made an explicit connection with language shift when discussing this topic with me. As one woman who spoke about the closure of a hotel in Donegal stated:

> *C: [B]hí an óstán sin beo beithíoch ar feadh tamaill agus bhíodh go leor cleamhnais déanta ann, deirtear, agus gur casadh daoine óga ar a chéile. Agus tá cúpla áit eile mar é ann. Agus castar ar a chéile iad istigh i Leitir Ceanainn [anois] agus b'fhéidir nach gcastar dhá Ghaeilgeoir ar a chéile . . . Tá briseadh síos ó thaobh cúrsaí teangeolaíoch ann.*
>
> C: That hotel was very busy for a while and it's said that lots of matchmaking was done there, and that young people met each other. And there's a few other places like it. And [now] they meet each other in Letterkenny and maybe two Irish speakers won't meet . . . There's a linguistic breakdown.

A local parent corroborated this sentiment, noting that such closures have led to his teenage daughter socialising outside the Gaeltacht in a way that had not previously been necessary:

> *É: Tá iníon agamsa atá 17 bliain d'aois, caithfidh sí dul go Leitir Ceanainn chuig dioscó. Bhí muidinne ag dul síos an bealach chuig dioscó . . . bhí tú ag bualadh le daoine eile le Gaeilge. Bhí tú ag iarraidh a bheith sa cheantar, bhí sé maith le dul amach sa cheantar.*
>
> É: I have a daughter who's 17 years old, she needs to go to Letterkenny for discos. We used to go down the road to the disco . . . you were meeting with other people who spoke Irish. You wanted to be in the area, it was good to go out in the area.

While the tendency of rural pub closures to increase instances of social isolation amongst older people has been well documented (Cabras and Mount 2017), it is

clear that within the Gaeltacht such closures also have linguistic consequences, particularly for the important young adult demographic amongst which linguistic exogamy can have a significant impact on the language's future. As the developer of the "Index of Isolation" which aims to address "the probability that a Welsh speaker will meet another speaker locally" points out

> when considering language transmission . . . the most important group of two is the two parents forming a family. These are usually comparatively young people. The most important spatial distributions, or networks, in that respect are those of young people (Jones 2007: 28).

The loss of much of the socio-economic infrastructure key to maintaining such networks due to the recession is thus far from conducive to Irish-language maintenance and was one more factor which contributed to the huge increase in outmigration which the employment crisis prompted post-2008. Space constraints, however, prevent a full discussion of emigration in this article (see, though, Ó Ceallaigh 2020: 109-110).

5. Tourism

In addition to those sectors discussed above, one further industry disrupted significantly by the recession was that of tourism, although, interestingly, this was also viewed as a possible solution to the decline of other parts of the economy. As observed in a report by Euromosaic (1996: 8), many of the peripheral areas across Europe which are home to minoritised language communities depend heavily on this industry, a tendency which much of the Gaeltacht follows. This is part of a wider pattern which has seen tourism developed as a key industry throughout Ireland, with it being described as "the single most important industry in the west of Ireland" in recent academic literature (Anderson et el. 2015: 78).

Although tourist numbers fell significantly post-2008 – by 18% in 2010 alone (Callaghan and Tol 2013: 106) – by 2015 the sector was growing again, with total revenue from tourism for the year amounting to €7.7 billion. Hoping to expand on this market, one of the five pillars of the government's *Action Plan for Rural Development* published in 2017 is "maximising rural tourism" (Government of Ireland 2017: 39). One "key deliverable" of this plan was "to develop a Tourism Investment and Development Strategy for the Gaeltacht" during quarter one of 2017 (Government of Ireland 2017: 42). However, as of the time of writing, over four years later, no such strategy had been forthcoming.

Attendance at the *coláistí samhraidh* ("summer colleges") also dropped during the recession. These colleges typically see tens of thousands of teenagers

attend three-week long language courses in the Gaeltacht where they stay as lodgers with local families, and as such have been enormously important to the Gaeltacht for over 100 years. Between 2008-2014, however, attendance at these colleges fell by 25% nationally. In Donegal this decline was notably higher – 37% (Tuairisc.ie 2014) – a considerable blow for one of the very few forms of tourism inherently conducive to the maintenance of Irish in the Gaeltacht.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Ó Ceallaigh 2020: 107-108), several interviewees claimed that the perception of tourism as offering one of the few ways to create employment in the Gaeltacht, after so much was lost in other sectors, was responsible for the anglicisation of key parts of the Gaeltacht's linguistic landscape during my fieldwork. I noted numerous instances of signs in Irish being replaced with monolingual English ones, seemingly due a belief that this was more amenable to attracting visitors, who are overwhelmingly unlikely to be Irish speakers (Ó Ceallaigh 2020: 107). Of course, tourism can also contribute to language minoritisation in other ways, not least through the housing stock coming to consist largely of holiday or retirement homes, leaving young speakers of the minoritised language priced out of the market and forced to leave the area, a phenomenon affecting many other linguistic minorities too (Euromosaic 1996: 38).

Nonetheless, many of those I interviewed spoke of the importance of tourism for their area and its potential to be one of the few indigenous industries in the Gaeltacht. The following optimistic example is representative of this opinion:

> *S: [S]ílim gur féidir le eacnamaíocht iarthar na hÉireann a fhorbairt an dóigh atá muid ag dul anois, cé go bhfuil sé fadálach. Níl aon réiteach ach cúrsaí iascaireachta, cúrsaí bia, cúrsaí biamhara, cúrsaí turasóireachta, cúrsaí spórtuisce. Agus nuair a amharcann tú síos ar Daingean agus siar ón Daingean [i gCiarraí] déarfaidh tú leat féin is eiseamláir millteanach maith é seo de cheantar atá beo agus atá bríomhar agus a bhfuil fuinneamh ann agus daoine ag teacht isteach ann . . . Tá go leor againn i nDún na nGall. So ab é gurb é cuid den réitiú ná an dóigh, na rudaí atá muid ag déanamh faoi láthair? Tá súil agam gurb ea. Mar caithfidh sé bheith préamhaithe sa timpeallacht agus sa teanga agus sa chultúr agus san fharraige, mar sin iad na buairimh atá againn.*
>
> S: I think that the west of Ireland's economy can be developed in the way we're going now, although it's slow. There's no solution other than fishing, food, seafood, tourism, water sports. And when you look down at an Daingean and west of an Daingean [in Kerry] you'll say to yourself this is an amazing example of an area that is thriving and where there's energy and people visiting . . . We have a lot in Donegal. So, is it that some of the

> solution is the way, the things we're doing now? I hope so. Because you've got to be rooted in the environment and the language and culture and the ocean, as they are the concerns we have.

In addition to obvious economic benefits, tourism can also be of psychological support to peripheral communities. As Brody (1974: 40) explains, tourists can help validate rural ways of life for the locals themselves, offering "reassurance and approval" to populations that may otherwise feel disadvantaged and inferior compared to residents of the developed urban core.

While both dependent on the sector to varying degrees, during my fieldwork considerable variation was visible between Gaeltacht areas in Galway and Donegal, a trend which is largely the product of geographical centrality/peripherality. With Galway city being heavily integrated into the national tourist trail, it receives a very large number of visitors, particularly during the summer. Although this generates considerable knock-on benefit to some of the areas west of the city, much of the Gaeltacht, particularly more remote areas, sees relatively few tourists. As an interviewee from an area on west coast of Galway told me:

> *D: Tá go leor den turasóireacht i dtuaisceart Chonamara, sa gceantar Béarla . . . mar séard a tharlaíonn go dtéann na busannaí siar . . . as Gaillimh agus téann siad go Kylemore abbey [taobh amuigh den Ghaeltacht] agus ansin ólann siad an cupán caifé agus bíonn siad ar ais [sa gcathair] in am le haghaidh dinnéir, dinnéar tráthnóna. Sin nó téann siad go Ros a' Mhíl agus téann siad amach ar thuras go hÁrann . . . [Ach] ní shábhálfaidh an turasóireacht ceantar ar bith, an dtuigeann tú, ann féin. Is cúnamh é ceart go leor.*
>
> D: There's lots of tourism in north Conamara, in the English-speaking area . . . what happens is that buses go west . . . from Galway and they go to Kylemore Abbey [outside of the Gaeltacht] and then they drink a cup of coffee and they're back [in the city] in time for dinner, dinner in the evening. That or they go to Ros a' Mhíl and they go out on a tour to Árann . . . [But] tourism won't save any area on its own, y'know. It's a help alright.

As alluded to by this informant, the Oileáin Árann receive huge numbers of visitors each year. These islands have a much higher profile in the national consciousness than any of the islands in Donegal – largely due to their proximity to other major tourist attractions, but also the literary heritage associated with the area. Such is the strength of Oileáin Árann's tourist industry that it left them better

off than much of the mainland Gaeltacht during the recession, despite being more difficult to reach.

Although numbers tend to be low in the early part of the season, during a visit to one of these islands in April 2016 I observed a definite increase in the number of tourists arriving compared to my previous visit in December 2015. By mid-summer numbers swell enormously. While I was staying on one of these islands in July 2016 there were up to 2,000 people visiting daily. Although many were day trippers, it is nonetheless a huge influx for an island with a population of well under 300. While there was discussion on *Raidió na Gaeltachta* during my stay about there possibly being "too many" tourists visiting the island, with local infrastructure at risk of being overwhelmed, a local interviewee told me that this influx had helped the area avoid the worst of the recession:

> *C: Ar an gcarraig, tá sé sin coinní' sách réasúnta. Tá sórt forbairt inmharthana ansin ar bhealach mar gheall ar an séasúr turasóireachta agus cuidíonn an turasóireacht go mór leis an áit a choinneáil mar atá sé.*
>
> C: On the rock [i.e., island] things are half decent. There's a kind of sustainable development there in a way because of the tourist season and tourism helps a lot in keeping the place as it is.

Nonetheless, another woman on the same island expressed concern that this dependence on tourism was excessive, with the lack of diversity in the local economy placing them at the mercy of external shocks:

> *E: Is turasóireacht uilig cheapfainn a bhun agus a bharr anois . . . Scrios an tAontas Eorpach . . . an t-iascach. Agus i ndáiríre chuirfeadh sé faitíos ort dá ngabhfadh rud amháin mícheart ó thaobh na turasóireachta dhe…*
> *B: Bheadh sibh caillte?*
> *E: Go dona.*
>
> E: It's all tourism now from start to finish . . . The European Union destroyed . . . the fishing. And really, it'd scare you that if anything went wrong with the tourism…
> B: You'd be sunk?
> E: Badly.

In light of the international Coronavirus crisis which began in 2020 and caused the cancellation of all forms of tourism both within Ireland and internationally, this comment takes on a greatly increased salience. While specific research into how this disruption affected the Gaeltacht has yet been to be done, an article in

the Irish Times in January 2021 discussing how the pandemic affected the Oileáin Árann in Galway quoted one islander as saying bluntly "[w]e are down to the last penny" (Irish Times 2021). The ongoing potential for Brexit to disrupt tourism in Ireland (much of which consists of visitors from the UK) remains another potential stumbling block for the industry in the Gaeltacht and elsewhere.

While often linguistically problematic, it must be acknowledged that tourism in Galway has stimulated investment in infrastructure that has not happened in Donegal, particularly on those islands I visited. As one interviewee in a mainland Donegal community told me:

> *S: Níl sé ar an route turasóireachta, téann siad isteach go Baile Átha Cliath, thíos Corcaigh, Ciarraí, thuas go Gaillimh b'fhéidir, Cliffs of Moher agus ansin imíonn siad arís . . . [Ach] muna raibh na turasóirí ann sa samhradh ní bheadh mórán saoil ansin níos mó ar char ar bith, so tá sé ann ach níl sé róláidir ag an am céanna. Ní bheadh sé láidir go leor le daoine a choinneáil in san áit. Tá cúpla mí obair sa samhradh, sin an méid.*
>
> S: It's not on the tourist route, they go into Dublin, down to Cork, Kerry, maybe up to Galway, Cliffs of Moher and then they leave again . . . [But] if not for the tourists in the summer there wouldn't be much life there at all anymore, so it does exist but it's not too strong at the same time. It wouldn't be strong enough to keep people in the area. There's a few months' work in the summer, that's it.

In light of this, it is unsurprising that the degree to which tourism has led to the development of infrastructure in Galway compared to Donegal is very noticeable. A small fleet of relatively large and modern boats owned by two different companies service the Oileáin Árann with as many as eight trips a day from two different mainland locations during the summer. While one of these companies is in receipt of state subsidy, the other is run as a private enterprise capitalising on the large number of tourists travelling to the area each year. Such provision is in stark contrast to the service available to the Donegal island where I conducted some of my fieldwork, where one boat serves the island. Indeed, this same boat was the subject of various protests during my fieldwork by the islanders who claimed it is deeply unsuitable (Ó Ceallaigh 2019: 234-235). Nonetheless, the state refused to budge on the issue, claiming they were bound by EU regulations on public procurement – regulations which, as Kunzlik (2013) demonstrates, are themselves deeply neoliberal.

A further indication of the problematic nature of tourism as a solution to the economic troubles of the Gaeltacht during the time in question is the fact that despite the largest of the Oileáin Árann receiving some 100,000 visitors per year,

it nonetheless experienced a 9.8% loss of population during the 2011-2016 period. While certainly better than it not existing at all, it must be remembered that the tourist sector is typically characterised by poor quality and low-paid employment (Eurostat 2015), with such a decline highlighting the importance of creating attractive employment which adheres to the conceptions of success that many people nowadays hold. While significant, this decline was still less than the 17.4% of the population between 2011-2016 who left the Donegal island that I stayed on and where tourist numbers are too small to support many workers.

6. Language use

Throughout the course of my fieldwork, it was very clear that English is the dominant language amongst teenagers and children in even the strongest Gaeltacht communities. While several informants told me that at least some members of these age cohorts speak Irish together in the absence of older people, throughout the entire duration of my fieldwork I did not see a single peer-to-peer interaction in Irish amongst the under-18 age group when they were not accompanied by adults. Although census data state that in the communities I studied the majority of under-18s speak Irish daily outside school, it would seem to be overwhelmingly to their elders rather than their peers that they do so.

I was fortunate enough to be able to interview three young adults from the same family, aged 25, 20 and 18, and ask them about their own use of Irish. This first exchange was with the eldest sibling:

> *B: Céard faoin dream a bhí ar scoil leatsa, an labhrann sibh Gaeilge lena chéile nó an mbeadh níos mó Béarla ann?*
> *S: Ó Gaeilge i gcónaí, yeah Gaeilge i gcónaí . . . Tá sé an-nádúrtha againn Gaeilge a labhairt lena chéile mar sin an chaoi a d'fhás muid suas.*
>
> B: What about those who were at school with you, do ye speak Irish together?
> S: Oh Irish always, yeah Irish always. It's very natural for us to speak Irish because that's the way we grew up.

This response accords with my own observations of informal social interactions in the area, with it not being unusual for me to see those in their mid-to-late twenties speak Irish to each other.

The middle sibling, aged 20, answered a similar question as follows:

> *B: Agus céard faoin dream ar tháinig tú aníos leofa, an labhrann tú Gaeilge leofa sin?*
> *M: Labhraim Gaeilge leis na leaids.*

B: What about those you grew up with, do you speak Irish to them?
M: I speak Irish to the lads.

Although the term "lads" is often used in Ireland to refer to mixed-gender groups, the interviewee confirmed that she did indeed mean that Irish was more common amongst the males in her peer group. In the relatively small age gap between this woman and her older sister, it would thus appear that females in this community have tended to shift away from Irish – a point on which this interviewee later elaborated. When discussing one of her female peers who is particularly reluctant to speak Irish she said

M: [N]uair atá an cailín seo ann ní labhrann muid Gaeilge mar ní labhróidh sí linn é. Agus tá sé chomh aisteach mar tá an Ghaeilge aici. Bheadh cúpla lá labhródh muid cúpla focal Gaeilge léi . . . ach ní labhródh sí linne é unless go gcuirfeadh muid brú uirthi . . . Níor thaitin sé léi riamh, "níl mé ag iarraidh é a fhoghlaim, tá mé ag iarraidh Béarla a labhairt, níl sé goil tada a dhéanamh dhom, labhrann chuile dhuine Béarla, ní labhrann mórán daoine Gaeilge", an sórt sin rud.

M: When this girl is around we don't speak Irish because she wouldn't speak it to us. And it's so strange because she can speak Irish. The odd day we'd speak a few words of Irish to her . . . but she wouldn't speak it to us unless we pressured her . . . She never liked it, "I don't want to learn it, I want to speak English, it's not gonna do anything for me, everyone speaks English, not many people speak Irish", that kind of thing.

Despite being a significant difference in comparison to the answer of her older sister, this gendered pattern of linguistic use is not overly surprising due to the tendency for males in the Gaeltacht to often be more linguistically conservative and therefore – depending, of course, on the nature of employment they engage in – oftentimes slower to shift to the dominant language (Gal 1979: 167; Labov 2001: 292; Ó Curnáin 2012a: 107).

The third and youngest sibling, a man aged 18, told me that his peer group was entirely English-speaking during in-group interactions:

B: Nuair atá tú ag caitheamh ama le do chuid cairde thíos ag imirt pool san óstán, an labhrann sibh Gaeilge?
G: Á Béarla i gcónaí.

B: When you spend time with your friends down playing pool in the hotel, do ye speak Irish?
G: Ah always English.

As above, this response tallies with all my own observations – including talking to others in his peer group, seeing them socialise on a regular basis, asking their parents, etc. While the above data is from only one family, we can nonetheless see a significant shift in both reported and observed language use within a very short time frame, one which accords with both statistical evidence for ongoing language shift in the Gaeltacht and wider sociolinguistic axioms (Ó Giollagáin and Charlton 2015). While the family vignette given here cannot, of course, be automatically extrapolated to wider Gaeltacht society, it must be emphasised that these extracts accord with the language use patterns I observed throughout my fieldwork in this area and other Gaeltacht communities. Within a space of seven years, to judge from the age gap between the quoted informants, Irish appears to have gone from being the unmarked language spoken by even the youngest adults, to no longer being used peer-to-peer even amongst young males, who could be expected to be slower to shift to English, considering the fact that many of those sectors of the economy in the Gaeltacht in which Irish tends to be strongest (e.g., farming, fishing) are more likely to be male-dominated (see also Ó Curnáin 2012a: 107). Of course, the data I am presenting here must still be approached cautiously – further ethnographic research on this topic with a larger sample size and wider geographical spread would undoubtedly be productive, if not essential, before definitive conclusions about the breadth and pace of language shift in recent years can be drawn.

When pressed to explain this language shift, the young male sibling offered greater communicative competence in English as an explanation:

G: [T]á Gaeilge sórt briste ag go leor acu, go leor acub.
B: Muise? D'aoisghrúpa?
G: Yeah, I mean breathnaigh ar mo chaighdeán.
B: Níl caill ar bith ort a mh'anam!
G: Níl mé in ann sentence a chuir le chéile gan focal Béarla ann [gáire].
B: Agus an mbeifeá ar chomhchaighdeán leis an dream eile?
G: Ó bheadh caighdeán níos measa ag go leor acub!
B: Muise?
G: Yeah, i bhfad níos measa.

G: A lot of them speak sort of broken Irish.
B: Really? Your age group?
G: Yeah, I mean look at my standard.
B: You're not bad!
G: I can't put a sentence together without it having an English word in it [laughs – probably as he said the word for "sentence" in English]
B: Would you be at the same level as the rest of that group?

G: Oh, lots of them would be much worse!
B: Really?
G: Yeah, much worse.

This interviewee's standard of Irish is indeed lower than his older sisters, with a much greater use of functional codeswitching and non-conventional grammatical patterns not used by his siblings, a code reminiscent of the "reduced Irish" described by Ó Curnáin (2012b; see also Lenoach 2012; Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007a: 300-320).

This interviewee also spoke of the way in which his generation do not typically see Irish as an important marker of identity, something which he was aware of being at variance with older generations. As Lenoach (2012: 23) convincingly argues, however, such a breakdown in the use of a minoritised language as a strong marker of identity is itself inherently linked to lack of ability in the language.

Furthermore, while sometimes dismissed as being merely a product of the oppositional nature of teenage identity, the same pattern of English dominance is also clear amongst much younger children. During my stay on an island in Donegal I would get a lift every day from the local minibus driver, who would often have his two-year-old son with him. Despite living on the far side of a remote island with a majority Irish-speaking population and having two local parents who speak Irish to each other, this child would invariably respond to his father's Irish – and to mine – in English. His father seemed unconcerned by this, stating nonchalantly that his son will learn Irish at school, and that it was from television he learned English, because, as the father claimed, *"níl teilifís ar bith i nGaeilg"* – "there's no television in Irish". While there is in fact a channel that predominantly broadcasts in Irish (TG4), this, of course, pales in comparison to the quantity of English-language content. This striking pattern of behaviour brought to mind Harrison's description of the youngest speakers in a minoritised language community acting as "tiny social barometers" which gauge the value of the languages they hear around them and tailor their linguistic behaviour accordingly (2007: 8).

While much of the information presented here is indicative of long-established patterns of language shift and it is unlikely that the data would be vastly different if not for the recession, it is of significance that this shift seems to have taken place very rapidly in recent years. Indeed, most of my youngest informants' formative teenage years coincided directly with the recession. While this time frame should not, perhaps, be afforded undue salience, it is nonetheless a point worthy of speculation, especially considering the well-attested tendency for macro-level economic changes to impact people's ideologies, even on an unconscious level (see the discussion of psychology's "impressionable years

hypothesis" and recessionary periods in Giuliano and Spilimbergo 2014; also Malmendier and Nagel 2011; Inglehart 2018). Further to the cuts and major disruption to the all-important "home-family-neighbourhood-community" nexus (Fishman 1991: 91) described above, this awareness of the recession and its implications for such marginal communities may well help explain Ó Giollagáin and Charlton's finding in their 2015 update to the Ó Giollagáin et al. 2007 study that language shift has occurred at an even more rapid rate than the 2007 study predicted (2015a: 2), something visible in the 11.2% decline in daily use of Irish in the Gaeltacht visible in the 2016 census (CSO 2012: CD964; 2017c: EA055).

7. Technology

A further theme often mentioned by interviewees when discussing language shift, and one worthy of discussion in its own right, was the greater use of technology by young people – a tendency which, as discussed below, is well known in sociology to increase when parents face economic precarity.

While discussing his personal trajectory with regards to Irish, the same 18-year-old who I quoted in the previous section noted the following:

> *G: [T]á teilifís i mBéarla, tá idirlíon i mBéarla, má tá tú ag iarraidh goil ar Facebook, tá na posts ar fad i mBéarla . . . Bhí mé ar an X-bosca agus ag labhairt i mBéarla le chuile dhuine air sin. So bhí, chaill mise an Ghaeilge níos luaithe ná [a dheirfiúracha]. Chaill mise é nuair a bhí mé timpeall 13 – stop mise á labhairt den chuid is mó. Tháinig an teicneolaíocht isteach i mo shaol…*
>
> G: Television is in English, the internet is in English, if you go on Facebook all the posts are in English . . . So I was on the X-box and speaking English with everyone on that. So I lost Irish sooner than [his sisters]. I lost it when I was about 13 – I mostly stopped speaking it. Technology came into my life…

It is of note that while this interviewee's older siblings stated that they use Irish with at least some of their peers, when asked about the use of Irish on social media they both conceded that they only used English thereon. As more and more social interaction takes place via such platforms, this development has obvious consequences for minoritised language use. Of course, this trend has been greatly accelerated by the Covid-19 crisis. In addition to being more deadly to the elderly, who are more likely to be speakers of Irish in the Gaeltacht, the technological implications of Covid are thus likely to have helped cause a further reduction in the use of Irish amongst young people in the Gaeltacht. Further research on this

matter would, of course, be needed before any conclusive statements to this effect could be made, however.

A father I interviewed in Donegal recounted the conversation he had with his five-year-old upon hearing her advanced level of English for the first time during a family holiday in England:

> *P: "Cá háit a d'fhoghlaim tú do chuid Béarla? Ní raibh 's agamsa go bhfuil Béarla mar sin agat!" "Á a dheaide, tá scoil bheag Béarla agamsa mé féin thíos i mo sheomra leapan ag coimhead Netflix".*
>
> P: "Where did you learn English? I didn't know you could speak English like that!" "Ah daddy, I have my own little English school down in my bedroom watching Netflix".

Several other informants also made such observations regarding technology, including this representative quote:

> *D: Feicim na gasúir atá ag [iníon an fhir seo], Béarla acub ó bhí siad dhá bhliain d'aois. Agus gur Gaeilge uilig a labhrann sí leob sa mbaile agus an t-athair freisin. Agus ina dhiaidh sin tá…Mar chuile nóiméad a fhaigheann siad deis tá siad ag breathnú ar video eicínt nó tá siad ar an ríomhaire.*
>
> D: I see [the informant's grandchildren], they know English from when they're two years old. Even though [his daughter] only speaks Irish to them at home, and their father as well. And still…Because every minute they get they're looking at some video or they're on the computer.

While the increased use of technology was sure to have occurred regardless of the economic crash (or, indeed, Covid), it is of note that, as is well established (e.g. Warren 2005; Piotrowski et al. 2015: 169; Domoff et al. 2017: 279), over-worked parents and those in lower income households are much more likely to use television and computers as surrogate child minders, thereby exposing their children to more of the very technologies which are charged with being such key drivers of language shift. With so much of the Irish population suffering from high levels of economic insecurity during the Great Recession (Irish Times 2019), such a pattern would therefore be expected in Gaeltacht families during this time. More recently a countervailing force may also operate, however, with the Covid crisis possibly having had a positive effect in terms of linguistic input due to parents, perhaps, being more likely to be able to stay at home with their children rather than go out to work, at least during the strictest periods of lockdown –

another area which would surely benefit from further exploration. So too would additional research on the more general topic of the effects of technological omnipresence on the language acquisition patterns of young speakers of minoritised languages be valuable, particularly regarding the ways in which this is affected by economic change.

8. Conclusion: challenges, hopes and a possible [Green] New Deal for the Gaels and others

The data presented above have shown some of the ways in which the first international crisis of neoliberalism led to significant sociological – and sociolinguistic – disruption in the Gaeltacht. It thus serves as a reminder that language planning, as Fishman had it, "is but the plaything of larger forces" (2012 [1983]: 383).

Reflective of the era in which it emerged as an academic discipline (Haugen 1966), language planning has often been conceived of in terms of something that a paternalistic, interventionist state enacts (Williams and Morris 2000: 180). As such, the discipline has largely failed to take account of the drastic way in which liberal democratic states have been rationalised since the mid-1970s, as neoliberalism became the global economic hegemony, thus leaving the field with a significant blind spot.

Unlike the Keynesian class compromise which dominated for some 30 years post-WWII, neoliberalism conceives of the good society as one in which social "utility" is maximised through markets in which the state only intervenes in order to support capital, thereby allowing wealth to "trickle down" from the top of the class structure to the bottom (Hayek 2006 [1944]: 18; 2011 [1960]: 331; Mirowski 2013). This conception, and attendant opposition to social planning and redistributive economic policies (Ó Ceallaigh 2019: 144-146), places neoliberalism in stark contrast with the needs of many minoritised language communities. Some of the concrete effects of this tension for Irish have been discussed in this paper. In light of Covid and other emergent crises, language revitalisation efforts dependent on state support may well be left in a very difficult position in the near future – unless, of course, forces opposing the status quo crystalise into a much more powerful resistance movement than has been hitherto seen, something which is, perhaps, not quite as improbable as is sometimes assumed.

As has been seen in recent years, globally there are a whole host of anti-systemic movements aiming to change the distribution of power and resources in society. While some such movements are fascist and must be combatted as stridently as possible, there are also a great number of progressive groups across the world challenging the system from the left. In addition to various movements

opposing long standing oppressions based on racial, gender or sexual grounds (Me Too, BLM, etc.), environmental activism is coming to ever greater prominence, addressing the most significant crisis humanity has ever faced, the present ecological one. Indeed, the "Green New Deal" which many environmentalists are currently proposing (Pettifor 2019; Klein 2020) would seem to offer some hope regarding the move towards a system which protects not only biodiversity, but also, potentially, linguistic diversity. By arguing that the environmental crisis can only be solved by redistributing wealth and decentralising political power, many advocates of the Green New Deal coincidentally align themselves with the sort of policies language revitalisation advocates have often seen as vital for sustaining linguistic minorities. Note, for instance, the similarities between Williams' comment that "political autonomy and economic autarchy [are] the twin pre-conditions . . . of successful language regeneration" (1991: 3) and Klein's observation that a Green New Deal would "need to devolve power and resources to Indigenous communities, smallholder farmers, ranchers, and sustainable fishing folk" (2020: 39). Indeed, while not drawing any link with the rhetoric around the Green New Deal, the title of Ó Giollagáin and Ó Curnáin's recent proposal for revitalising the Gaeltacht is itself translated as "A New Deal for the Gaels" (2016; see also Misneachd 2021).

Although Edwards (2007: 104) has noted the potential for revolutionary change to improve conditions for minoritised languages, he is sceptical about the degree to which this would be desired by most of the population. An era of ecological collapse may yet, however, see radical change come to seem an increasingly appealing option. Were a transformative programme of environmentally-minded progressive social policy to become hegemonic in coming years, it would, serendipitously, help empower peripheral communities like those of the Gaeltacht, which are otherwise likely to suffer most due to ecological breakdown (IPCC 2007: 374; Nós.ie 2021).

Of course, it must be remembered that the original New Deal which occurred in the US in the wake of the 1929 crash was only possible due to a unique set of circumstances relating to crisis and trade union power. Typically, the capitalist class prevents the implementation of widespread reforms aimed at redistributing wealth by threatening capital flight – i.e., that they will divest from a country and reinvest somewhere with more favourable conditions for business. This veto on public policy is a key way in which capitalism defangs even the most radical of governments and ensures public policy is frequently made in favour of business (Block 2020 [1977]). During the 1930s in the US, however, the international nature of the economic crisis meant that there were few more favourable economies for capital to flee to. When combined with a massive and militant trade union movement which could successfully demand change, the reforms of the New Deal were implemented.

While a global Green New Deal would have to be much more ambitious than the policies of the Roosevelt administration, during the time of writing the world remains in the grip of various international crises (including Covid and environmental catastrophe, as well as the looming threat of nuclear armageddon) – factors which may yet spur the development of a window of opportunity for change. Combined with an assertive, militant coalition of anti-systemic movements (which, on an optimistic viewing, can be seen in inchoate form in various areas around the globe), this instability could threaten the ruling class to such a degree that enacting a Green New Deal will seem like the "least worst" option – in much the same way previous eras of class conflict saw concessions such as weekends and the 8-hour day granted, despite initial resistance from the elites. Furthermore, achieving even a relatively moderate social democratic Green New Deal may empower grassroots movements to demand more, and so pave the way for the creation of an entirely new economic order. Afterall, as de Tocqueville famously noted, "[t]he most perilous moment for a bad government is one when it seeks to mend its ways" (Stone and Mennell 1982: 230; see also Piven and Cloward 1979: 12). One source of inspiration regarding the type of alternative political economy that may be developed is the "democratic confederalism" currently implemented on a large scale in the de-facto Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria, where ecology, feminism and decentralisation of political and economic power are combined with strong protections for minority language rights (Jones 2018).

As this paper has demonstrated, neoliberal rationalisation in the decade following the 2008 crash greatly exacerbated what was already a trying situation for Irish-language communities. With so many linguistic communities across the world facing extinction this century, such a pathway to change in the global economic order offers one of the few windows of hope which could see minoritised groups like Irish speakers receive both the resources and power to change their fate. As ever, the future is unwritten, but popular struggle retains the ability to change the course of history – for linguistic minorities and others.

REFERENCES

Amano, Tatsuya, Brody Sandel, Heidi Eager, Edouard Bulteau, Jens-Christian Svenning, Bo Dalsgaard, Carsten Rahbek, Richard G. Davies & William J. Sutherland. 2014. Global distribution and drivers of language extinction risk. *Proceedings of Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 281(1793): 1-10.

Anderson, Elizabeth, Ali Bakir & Eugenia Wickens. 2015. Rural Tourism Development in Connemara, Ireland. *Tourism Planning and Development* 12(1): 73-86.

Austin, Peter K. & Julia Sallabank. 2011. Introduction. In Peter K. Austin & Julia Sallabank (eds.) *The Cambridge Handbook of Endangered Languages*, 1-24. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, Colin. 2011. *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, fifth edn. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Block, Fred. 2020 [1977]. *The Ruling Class Does Not Rule.* https://jacobinmag.com/2020/04/ruling-class-capitalist-state-reform-theory (Accessed 5 March 2022).

Breathnach, Proinnsias. 1988. Uneven Development and Capitalist Peripheralisation: The Case of Ireland. *Antipode* 20(2): 122-41.

Brody, Hugh. 1974. *Inishkillane: Change and decline in the west of Ireland*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bryman, Alan. 2008. *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Byrne, Seán. 2018. *An Plean Forbartha Náisiúnta agus an Ghaeltacht 2018-2027* [The National Development Plan and the Gaeltacht 2018-2027]. https://teachtaniar.eu-/proxy/pdf/anaili-s-ar-chaiteachas-an-rialtais-ar-an-ngaeltacht-agus-an-ghaeilge-leagan-deif-22052018-g/ (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Cabras, Ignazio & Matthew Mount. 2017. How third places foster and shape community cohesion, economic development and social capital: The Case of Pubs in Rural Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies* 55(5): 71-82.

Callaghan, Niamh & Richard S. J. Tol. 2013. UK Tourists, the Great Recession and Irish Tourism Policy. *Economic and Social Review* 44(1): 103-116.

Crang, Mike & Ian Cook. 2007. *Doing Ethnographies.* Norwich: Geobooks.

Crystal, David. 2000. *Language Death.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

CSO. 2012. *Statistical Product – Profile 9 What we Know – A study of Education and Skills in Ireland: Tables CD964, CD965, CD959 & CD960*. https://web.archive.org-/web/20171025073536/http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Database/eirestat/Profile%209%20What%20we%20Know%20-%20A%20study%20of%20Education%20and%20Skills%20in%20Ireland/Profile%209%20What%20we%20Know%20-%20A%20study%20of%20Education%20and%20Skills%20in%20Ireland_statbank.asp?SP=Profile%209%20What%20we%20Know%20-%20A%20study%20of%20Education%20and%20Skills%20in%20Ireland&Planguage=0 (Accessed 16 September 2021)

CSO. 2017a. *Census 2016 Summary Results – Part 1*. http://www.cso.ie/en-/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/census2016summaryresultspart1/Census2016SummaryPart1.pdf (Accessed 16 September 2021)

CSO. 2017b. *Census 2016 Summary Results – Part 2*. http://www.cso.ie-/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/census2016summaryresultspart2/Census_2016_Summary_Results_%E2%80%93_Part_2.pdf (Accessed 16 September 2021)

CSO. 2017c. *Statistical Product – Profile 10 – Education and Skills and the Irish language: Table EA055*. https://data.cso.ie/table/EA055 (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. 2017. *Amharcóir Pleanála Teanga* [Language planning viewer]. https://dahg.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?-id=7090794ee2ca4b53bb785b84c2bd9ad80 (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Domoff, Sarah E., Alison L. Miller, Neeaz Khalatbari, Megan H. Pesch, Kristen Harrison, Katherine Rosenblum & Julie C. Lumeng. 2017. Maternal beliefs about television and parental mediation in a low-income United States sample. *Journal of Children and Media* 11(3): 278-294.

Donovan, Donal. 2016. *The IMF's Role in Ireland: Background Paper for the Independent Evaluation Office of the International Monetary Fund.* https://ieo.imf.org-/~/media/IEO/Files/evaluations/completed/07-28-2016-the-imf-and-the-crises-in-greece-ireland-and-portugal/eac-bp-16-02-04-the-imf-s-role-in-ireland-v5.ashx (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Edwards, John. 1984. *Linguistic Minorities, Policies and Pluralism.* Academic Press: London.

Edwards, John. 2007. Language Revitalization and its Discontents: An essay and review of Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10(1): 101-120.

Euromosaic. 1996. *The Production and Reproduction of the Minority Language Groups in the European Union*. Luxembourg: Euromosaic Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Eurostat. 2015. *Tourism industries – employment.* http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_industries_-_employment#Jobs_are_less_stable_in_tourism_than_in_the_rest_of_the_economy (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Fetterman, David M. 1989. *Ethnography Step by Step*. London: Sage.

Fishman, Joshua A. 1991. *Reversing Language Shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Fishman, Joshua. 2012. Progress in Language Planning: A Few Concluding Sentiments. In Juan Cobarrubias and Joshua A. Fishman (eds.), 381-384. *Progress in Language Planning.* Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Gal, Susan. 1979. *Language Shift: Social Determinants of linguistic change in Bilingual Austria.* New York: Academic Press.

Gamble, Andrew. 2009. *The Spectre at the Feast: Capitalist Crisis and the Politics of Recession.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gamble, Andrew. 2014. *Crisis Without End? The Unravelling of Western Prosperity.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Giuliano, Paola & Antonio Spilimbergo. 2014. Growing up in a Recession. *The Review of Economic Studies* 81(2(287)): 787-817.

Glynn, Irial & Philip J. O'Connell. 2017. Migration. In William K. Roche, Philip J. O'Connell & Andrea Prothero (eds.), *Austerity and Recovery in Ireland: Europe's Poster Child and the Great Recession*, 290-310. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Government of Ireland. 2017. *Realising our Rural Potential: Action Plan for Rural Development.* https://web.archive.org/web/20201012041659/https://www.chg.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/162404-rural-ireland-action-plan-web-2-1.pdf (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Government of Ireland. 2018. *Project Ireland 2040: National Development Plan 2018-2027*. http://www.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/NDP-strategy-2018-2027_WEB.pdf (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Grenoble, Lenore A. & Lindsay J. Whaley. 1998. *Endangered languages: language loss and community response.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Grin, Francois. 1999. Market Forces, Language Spread and Linguistic Diversity. In Miklos Kontra, Robert Phillipson, Tove Skutnabb-Kangas & Tibor Varády (eds.) *Language: A right and a resource: Approaching linguistic human rights*, 169-186. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Guth na Gaeltachta. 2010. *Open letter to An Taoiseach and An Tánaiste about the future of the Gaeltacht.* https://web.archive.org/web/20130709031701/http://guthnag.com/summary.html (Accessed 16 September 2021)

Hardiman, Niamh & Aidan Regan. 2012. The politics of austerity in Ireland. *Intereconomics* 48(1): 9-13.

Harrison, K. David. 2007. *When Languages Die: The Extinction of the World's Languages and the Erosion of Human Knowledge.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2008. The Right to the City. *New Left Review* 53: 23-40.

Haugen, Einar. 1966 *Language conflict and language planning: the case of modern Norwegian*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Hayek, Friedrich. 2001 [1944]. *The Road to Serfdom.* New York: Routledge.

Hayek, Friedrich. 2011 [1960]. *The Constitution of Liberty: The definitive edition.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hindley, Reg. 1990. *The Death of the Irish Language: A Qualified Obituary*. New York: Routledge.

ICTU. 2011. *Privatisation: Learning from the Eircom debacle*. https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/learning_from_the_eircom_debacle.pdf (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Inglehart, Ronald. 2018. *Cultural Evolution: People's Motivations are Changing, and Reshaping the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

IPCC. 2007. *Climate Change 2007 – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Irish Times. 2019. 21 February. *Two in three Irish families lost income during the recession, study finds.* https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/two-in-three-irish-families-lost-income-during-the-recession-study-finds-1.3800854 (Accessed 26 September 2021)

Irish Times. 2021. 4 January. *'We are down to the last penny': Aran islanders on their pandemic year*. https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/we-are-down-to-the-last-penny-aran-islanders-on-their-pandemic-year-1.4449232 (Accessed 26 September 2021)

Jones, Hywel. 2007. The implications of changes in the ages of Welsh speakers and their spatial distribution: translation from Welsh of paper in *Gwerddon*, 1(2).

Jones, Owen. 2018. *Kurdish Afrin is democratic and LGBT-friendly. Turkey is crushing it with Britain's help.* https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/16/turkey-democracy-kurdish-afrin-britain-syria-arming (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Kaplan, Robert B. & Richard B. Baldauf Jr. 1997. *Language Planning: From Practice to Theory.* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Kirby, Peadar. 2010. *Celtic Tiger in Collapse: Explaining the Weaknesses of the Irish Model*, 2nd edn. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Klein, Naomi. 2007. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Allen Lane.

Klein, Naomi. 2020. *On Fire: The Burning Case for a Green New Deal*. London: Penguin Books.

Kunzlik, Peter. 2013. Neoliberalism and the European Public Procurement Regime. *Cambridge Yearbook of European Legal Studies* 15: 283-356.

Labov, William. 2001. *Principles of Linguistic Change, Volume 2: Social Factors.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Laeven, Luc & Valencia, Fabián. 2012. *Systemic banking crises database: An update.* https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2012/wp12163.pdf (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Lenoach, Ciarán, Conchúr Ó Giollagáin & Brian Ó Curnáin. 2012. *An Chonair Chaoch: An Mionteangachas sa Dátheangachas* [The blind alley: the minority language condition in bilingualism]. Indreabhán: Leabhar Breac.

Lo Bianco, Joseph. 2018. Reinvigorating Language Policy and Planning for Intergenerational Language Revitalization. In Leanne Hinton, Leena Huss & Gerald Roche (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Revitalization*, 36-48. New York: Routledge.

Mac Ionnrachtaigh, Feargal. 2013. *Language, Resistance and Revival: Republican prisoners and the Irish language in the North of Ireland*. London: Pluto Press.

Malmendier, Ulrike & Stefan Nagel. 2011. Depression Babies: Do Macroeconomic Experiences Affect Risk Taking? *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126(1): 373-416.

McCabe, Connor. 2013. *Sins of the Father: The Decisions that Shaped the Irish Economy*, 2nd edn. Dublin: The History Press Ireland.

McColl Millar, Robert. 2005. *Language, Nation and Power: An Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mercille, Julien & Enda Murphy. 2015. *Deepening Neoliberalism, Austerity and Crisis: Europe's Treasure Ireland*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mirowski, Phillip. 2013. *Never Let a Serious Crisis go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown*. London: Verso.

Misneachd. 2021. *Empowering Gaelic Communities: A New Deal for Gaelic Language Community Development*. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kWBw6y_OP_dskF9Yebt4dJeY4x-Ut9C5/view (Accessed 5 July 2021)

Murphy, Mary P. 2014. Ireland: Celtic Tiger in Austerity – Explaining Irish Path Dependency. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 22(2): 132-142.

Nettle, Daniel & Susan Romaine. 2000. *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nós.ie. 2021. *Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe is mó i mbaol tuilte de bharr na héigeandála aeráide [Galway Gaeltacht most at risk of floods due to the climate emergency]* https://nos.ie/gniomhaiochas/comhshaol/gaeltacht-na-gaillimhe-is-mo-i-baol-tuillte-de-bharr-na-heigeandala-aeraide/ (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Ó Ceallaigh, Ben. 2019. Neoliberalism and Language Shift: the Great Recession and the Sociolinguistic Vitality of Ireland's Gaeltacht, 2008-18. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of Edinburgh. https://era.ed.ac.uk/handle/1842/37133 (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Ó Ceallaigh, Ben. 2020. Neoliberal globalisation and language minoritisation: Lessons from Ireland 2008-18. *Language & Communication*. 75: 103-116. https://doi.org/10.1016-/j.langcom.2020.09.004

Ó Ceallaigh, Ben. 2021. Breithiúnas an Bhoird Snip Nua agus toil an Troika: polasaí Gaeilge i bPoblacht na hÉireann, 2008-2018 [The judgement of an Bord Snip Nua and the will of the Troika: Irish-language policy in the Republic of Ireland, 2008-2018]. *COMHARTaighde* 6. https://doi.org/10.18669/ct.2021.05

Ó Ceallaigh, Ben. Forthcoming. *Neoliberalism and Language Shift: Lessons from the Republic of Ireland Post-2008*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Ó Cuaig, Seosamh. 2018b. *'Do chuala scéal do chéas gach ló mé' – feall náisiúnta an leathanbhanda*. ['I heard a story that tormented me each day' – the national failure regarding broadband] https://tuairisc.ie/do-chuala-sceal-do-cheas-gach-lo-me-feall-naisiunta-an-leathanbhanda/ (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Ó Curnáin, Brian. 2012a. An Chanúineolaíocht [Dialectology]. In Tadhg Ó hIfearnáin & Máire Ní Neachtain (eds.), *An tSochtheangeolaíocht: Feidhm agus Tuairisc* [Sociolinguistics: function and account], 83-109. Dublin: Cois Life.

Ó Curnáin, Brian. 2012b. An Ghaeilge Iarthraidisiúnta agus an Phragmataic Chódmheasctha Thiar agus Theas [Post-traditional Irish and codemixed pragmatics in the west and south]. In Ciarán Lenoach, Conchúr Ó Giollagáin & Brian Ó Curnáin (eds.), *An Chonair Chaoch: An Mionteangachas sa Dátheangachas* [The blind alley: the minority language condition in bilingualism], 284-364. Indreabhán: Leabhar Breac.

Ó Giollagáin, Conchúr & Brian Ó Curnáin. 2016. *Beartas Úr na nGael: Dálaí na Gaeilge san Iar-Nua-Aoiseachas* [A new deal for the Gaels: the conditions of Irish in post-modernity]. Indreabhán: Leabhar Breac.

Ó Giollagáin, Conchúr & Martin Charlton. 2015. *Nuashonrú ar an Staidéar Cuimsitheach Teangeolaíoch ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht* [Update to the Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht]. https://www.udaras.ie/assets/uploads/2020/11/002910_Udaras_NuashonruI%C2%81_FULL_report_A4_FA.pdf (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Ó Giollagáin, Conchúr, Seosamh Mac Donnacha, Fiona Ní Chualáin, Aoife Ní Shéaghdha & Mary O'Brien. 2007. *Staidéar Cuimsitheach Teangeolaíoch ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht* [Comprehensive Linguistic Study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht]. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ó hIfearnáin, Tadhg & John Walsh. 2018. *An Meon Folaithe: Idé-eolaíochtaí agus iompar lucht labhartha na Gaeilge in Éirinn agus in Albain* [The covert attitude: ideologies and language practices of Irish and Scottish Gaelic speakers in Ireland and Scotland]. Dublin: Cois Life.

Ó Murchú, Helen. 1996. Language and society in a changing world: response to Edwards. In: Hickey, Tina & Williams, Jenny (eds.) *Language, Education, and Society in a Changing World*, 38-44. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters.

Ó Riagáin, Pádraig. 2001. Irish Language Production and Reproduction 1981-1996. In Joshua A. Fishman (ed.), *Can threatened languages be saved?*, 195-214. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

O'Connell, Philip J. 2017. Unemployment and Labour Market Policy. In William K. Roche, Philip J. O'Connell & Andrea Prothero (eds.), *Austerity and Recovery in Ireland: Europe's Poster Child and the Great Recession*, 232-251. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

O'Donoghue, Cathal. 2014. Introduction. In Cathal O'Donoghue, Ricky Conneely, Deirdre Frost, Kevin Heanue, Brian Leonard & David Meredith (eds.), *Rural Economic Development in Ireland*, 18-33. Carlow: Teagasc: The Irish Agriculture and Development Authority.

O'Rourke, Bernadette & Joan Pujolar. 2013. From native speakers to "new speakers" – problematizing nativeness in language revitalization contexts. *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 35(2): 47-67.

O'Toole, Fintan. 2010. *Ship of Fools: How Stupidity and Corruption Sank the Celtic Tiger*. London: Faber.

Ortner, Sherry B. 2010. Access: Reflections on studying up in Hollywood. *Ethnography* 11(2): 211-233.

Peck, Jamie & Adam Tickell. 2002. Neoliberalizing Space. *Antipode* 34: 380-404.

Pettifor, Ann. 2019. *The Case for the Green New Deal*. London: Verso.

Piotrowski, Jessica Taylor, Amy B. Jordan, Amy Bleakley & Michael Hennessy. 2015. Identifying Family Television Practices to Reduce Children's Television Time. *Journal of Family Communication* 15(2): 159-174.

Piven, Frances Fox & Richard A. Cloward. 1979. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail.* New York: Vintage Books.

Roche, William K., Philip J. O'Connell & Andrea Prothero. 2017. *Austerity and Recovery in Ireland: Europe's Poster Child and the Great Recession*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Romaine, Susan. 2006. Planning for the survival of linguistic diversity. *Language Policy* 5(4): 443-475.

Slobodian, Quinn. 2018. *Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism.* Harvard University Press.

Stone, John & Stephen Mennell. 1982. *Alexis de Tocqueville on Democracy, Revolution, and Society: Selected Writings.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tuairisc.ie. 2014. *Titim mhór ar éileamh ar choláistí samhraidh* [Large fall in demand for summer colleges]. http://tuairisc.ie/titim-thubaisteach-ar-eileamh-ar-cholaisti-samhraidh/ (Accessed 17 September 2021)

UNESCO. 2018. *UNESCO Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger: Irish*. http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php (Accessed 17 September 2021)

Wallerstein, Immanuel. 2004. *World-systems Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Warren, Ron. 2005. Parental Mediation of Children's Television Viewing in Low-Income Families. *Journal of Communication* 55(4): 847-863.

Williams, Colin H. 1991. *Linguistic Minorities, Society and Territory*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Williams, Colin H. 2013. *Minority Language Promotion, Protection and Regulation: The Mask of Piety.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, Glen & Delyth Morris. 2000. *Language Planning and Language Use: Welsh in a Global Age*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Wright, Sue. 2016. Language Choices: Political and Economic Factors in Three European States. In Victor Ginsburg & Shlomo Weber (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Economics and Language*, 447-488. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.