



The Palgrave Handbook of Minority Languages and Communities

Edited by
Gabrielle Hogan-Brun
Bernadette O'Rourke

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“This Handbook is, quite simply, a tour de force. Offering far greater breadth, depth and analytical heft than ever before, the handbook extends the fields of minority language studies and multilingualism conceptually, disciplinarily, geographically, and pragmatically. It is sure to be a key reference for years to come.”

—Stephen May, *University of Auckland, New Zealand*

“This truly informative and expert Handbook offers detailed accounts of the history and contemporary context of minority language communities on every continent. The overall effect is a stunning testament to the resilience of minority language policy actors and community identities in the face of migration, mobility and globalizing forces in every corner of our world.”

—Nancy H. Hornberger, *University of Pennsylvania, USA*

“This is an outstanding collection of perspectives, analyses and views of the dynamic role of minority languages in the public life of communities all across the world. The Handbook makes a signal contribution to practical understanding and intervention in legal, educational and policy fields. Expertly edited to produce coherence of focus and consistency of treatment, the Handbook as a whole and its individual chapters provide excellent coverage of a diverse range of settings across the world. It is clear from reading the volume that our ‘science’ of multilingual studies has been premised on too few cases, too few histories, and too narrow a range of experience. The Handbook is a consolidated resource that rewards regular reading and deep study.”

—Joseph Lo Bianco, *University of Melbourne, Australia*

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun
Bernadette O'Rourke
Editors

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ISBN 978-1-137-54065-2 ISBN 978-1-137-54066-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54066-9>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018953783

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This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Limited
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Acknowledgements

This Handbook could not have been written without the efforts and dedication of a considerable number of people. First and foremost, our thanks go to each of the contributors. From our initial invitation to the production of their final chapter, their responses have been marked by courtesy, timeliness, and commitment. With their deep knowledge of international law, policy studies, sociology, anthropology, education, and sociolinguistics, they have contributed to a rich volume in this diffuse field of study. The reviewers of each chapter are the unsung heroes. Here at least we are able to publicly thank them for their detailed comments on the initial drafts. We would also like to acknowledge the speakers of minority languages and the challenges they face around the planet. The themes explored in this Handbook reflect their lived realities.

The Handbook has grown from the book series *Palgrave Studies in Minority Languages and Communities*. Many thanks go to the people at Palgrave Macmillan for their long-standing support: Cathy Scott, Beth Farrow, Judith Allan, Chloe Fitzsimmons, Libby Forrest, Olivia Middleton, Rebecca Brennan, Esme Chapman, and Jill Lake who took on the series well over a decade ago.

Finally, we are indebted to Bill Dale and Terry Jones for their careful proof-reading of parts of the script and to John Hogan for his generous support throughout.

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun
Bernadette O'Rourke

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1

Introduction: Minority Languages and Communities in a Changing World

Gabrielle Hogan-Brun and Bernadette O'Rourke

According to recent accounts 'one half of our planet's population speaks one or more of the 23 "top" languages, the other half speak the remaining 7,074'.¹ In other words, most of the world's languages are to some degree threatened. Under the effect of globalization, the pressure of dominant languages on minority languages is relentless, partly because many users of smaller languages can see more opportunities if they switch to a dominant one. Such homogenizing trends are also at play in countries, where cross-border migrants are expected to become proficient in their host language. However, from the Arctic to Latin America, through Europe to New Zealand, there is also considerable resilience among minority language speakers, who wish to reclaim their own language in spite of prevailing global pressures.

Given these conflicting and overlapping forces, the time is ripe to assemble the latest research from a wide range of different relevant disciplines, in order to explain and understand the challenges to both minority policy actors and community identities in the face of migration, mobility, and globalizing influences.

It is an immense privilege to have been able to assemble in this Handbook's perspectives by renowned scholars in international law, social anthropology,

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history, linguistics, education, and economics. Among the topics covered are the politics of recognition and autonomy, the role of economic and linguistic markets, the potential of social media and new speakers, language revitalization and shift, and the continuing debate over the use of minority languages in education. These chapters offer a compelling treatment of the complexity of issues in the legal, educational, and policy fields that affect minority language communities around the world today.

One of the problems facing those interested in this field of study is that a plethora of definitions is used to shape approaches to minority language speakers and their rights, as applied in instruments and standards at regional and international levels. Such differences are rooted in diverging attitudes towards minority language speakers. Varying concepts of justice and law have resulted from changing power dynamics. Unpeeling such different understandings on what constitutes a minority, by whom, where, and under what circumstances is the red thread that runs throughout this collection.

For the most part, the concept of 'minority language communities' is used to describe numerically inferior groups of people who speak a language different from that of the majority in a given country, who are in a non-dominant position, and, to some extent, who seek to preserve their distinct linguistic identity. The term is based chiefly on factual criteria, which means a minority language community in a particular country (e.g. speakers of German in Hungary or Denmark) may constitute a majority in a kin state (i.e. Austria or Germany).

This collection is divided into seven parts, as follows: Minority language rights, protection, governance (Part I); recognition, self-determination, autonomy (Part II); migration, settlement, mobility (Part III); economics, markets, commodification (Part IV); education, literacy, access (Part V); media, public usage, visibility (Part VI); endangerment, ecosystems, resilience (Part VII). The Handbook's 22 chapters that are summarized below present richly detailed accounts on the history and the current state of particular minority language contexts across the world. Our hope is that these chapters shine a critical light on broad areas of concern surrounding minority language communities today.

Part I: Minority Language Rights, Protection, Governance

The first set of chapters (2, 3, and 4) considers different definitions and applications of minority language rights and standards. Language is central to human nature and is an expression of identity. As such, issues surrounding language are particularly important to linguistic minority communities who

seek to maintain their identity. Securing rights for the minority can require legislation and standards to be put in place in contexts where the minorities are subjected to marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination. Fernand de Varennes and Elżbieta Kuzborska set the scene by focussing our attention on the various (and at times almost contradictory) understandings of minority-related concepts involved in different supra-national regimes. The fundamental questions in their chapter are as follows: What are the minorities intended to be, the holders of language rights or the beneficiaries of state obligations? And what is the extent and nature of such rights? The authors show how the use of terms is fraught with uncertainties, disagreements, and contradictions from the perspective of international law. Examples include 'national minorities' versus 'minorities', 'protection of linguistic-cultural diversity' versus 'protection of the human rights of minorities', and designations such as 'indigenous' versus 'autochthonous' minorities. They unravel some of the disparate positions that underpin these notions ranging from divergent points of view as to what constitutes a minority, to the substance and objectives being addressed in international and regional instruments by the protection of minorities or minority rights. Taking a long look at 'minority rights' at the supra-national level, the authors also consider some of the challenges in the future.

An example of such challenges is Russia. With its unusual federal, ethnic, and linguistic mixture this country has a history of compliance and conflict with international minority language rights standards. In his chapter Bill Bowring explores minority language legislation, rights, and practices within the Federation's unique multilingual structure. He sketches developments in the Russian Empire and the USSR, traces the consequences of the collapse of the USSR and the 'parade of sovereignties' of 1990–1992, and then introduces the Constitution of 1993 and its radical provisions. Paying particular attention to the situation of the Volga Tatars in Tatarstan, he supplies a precise comparative analysis of the policy towards minority languages and communities in the state. He discusses the similarities and differences amongst the subjects of Russia's constitutionally asymmetric Federation and explores the extent to which the situation in Tatarstan is different from that in the fellow republics. He goes on to show how there has been a significant shift away under President Putin from special status for 'national', ethnic languages in the context of the Federation. The chapter concludes with the dramatic events of the past few years and considers how matters stand at the time of writing, asking: Will these recent developments in language policy mean the end of diversity in Russia?

Another complex language scenario is in Ireland. An uneven framework exists there that offers Irish mostly limited or symbolic protection. Whilst

overtly, the pre-eminence of Irish is anchored constitutionally and is reflected in aspects of public discourse, covertly national policy promotes the dominance of English. Irish is practically treated as a minority concern. Colin H. Williams and John Walsh look into the manner in which minority language governance and regulation have been developed over the past generation from the perspective of international law, with particular focus on minority rights and the growth of the regulatory state. They argue that the government demonstrates limited practical engagement with current Irish policy, whose legislative and regulatory framework reflects a mixture of both the historical approach to Irish as the 'national language' and more contemporary ideological stances. Against this background they examine the role and general contribution of ombudsmen, commissioners, and regulators and offer a case study example of the potential impact of the International Association of Language Commissioners (IALC). Drawing out the implications of the IALC and Irish for minority language vitality, they suggest that even where supportive infrastructure for language promotion, protection, and regulation may be in place, their adequacy is demonstrated in the manner of their implementation within the relevant jurisdiction and their full incorporation into the machinery of government.

Part II: Recognition, Self-determination, Autonomy

The second group of chapters (5, 6, 7, and 8) moves away from a legal minority rights and protection perspective to focus on the recognition of language rights and the idea of (cultural) autonomy. These have become key elements in a much broader set of legal and policy tools to enable minority language speakers to be recognized and treated as equal members of societies. The chapters highlight the many different ways in which the right of self-determination can manifest itself in politics, ranging from antagonism to basic non-discrimination provisions and complex federal and autonomy regimes as in the case of devolution in Spain and the United Kingdom. In his contribution on the politics of recognition in politics, Christian Giordano distinguishes between nation-states (as models of culturally homogenized countries such as in France or Germany) and language plural 'consociations'² (as practised in Switzerland, Canada, Belgium, or Malaysia). In differentiating between classic and liberal polity types, he proposes that a liberal-oriented political agenda cannot necessarily be exported to plural societies nor can that of plural societies necessarily be transported to other societies. Moreover, he points out that

practically all these diverse types of governance of multiculturalism have a wide range of problems, especially regarding their recognition of ethno-cultural and linguistic diversity in a globalized world. As he sees it, this is because recognition of linguistic plurality is still rather problematic even though it is a matter of fact in most polities. In his view this challenges the soundness of universalistic models of interpretation. This explains his call for a differentiated politics of recognition *in lieu of* paradigms that see cultural conformity as a conduit to solidarity among citizens and multilingualism (often a feature of minority groups) as a threat to national social cohesion.

There is a widening perception amongst international organizations and states that their application of language rights is crucial for the fostering of peace, stability, and security. Language rights might then be even more salient for those societies that are deeply fractured along ethnic lines but which are transitioning from a period of conflict to peace. Even after conflict, language can continue to be a symbolic marker of competing groups with differing political aspirations. Máiréad Nic Craith and Philip McDermott explore how language rights in deeply divided places have been integrated into formalized peace agreements, treaties, and/or new constitutions. They evaluate the routes of recognition in deeply divided societies along the spectrum from antagonism to reconciliation for minority languages, with emphasis on the effect on the utility of language rights as a peace-building tool. Their chapter presents a critical analysis of both the transformative and the disruptive potential of the politics of language with reference to their homeland Ireland and in regions such as Guatemala, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and the Ukraine. Beginning with the theoretical notion of recognition and how these debates are particularly relevant to post-conflict places, they move on to consider how language rights are applied or ignored at different levels in such wide-ranging political settings. They consider in their chapter the various schools of thought which champion the notion that recognizing linguistic minorities is crucial in the mitigation of conflict versus those which are more sceptical, who view such processes as responsible for further politicizing ethnic identities in already fragile circumstances.

In Eastern Europe, especially in new states born out of the ashes of the multicultural empires, changes to restrictive attitudes as regards minorities were sought during the rising tide of linguistic nationalism to manage linguistic and cultural affairs at the national level. It was here where the concept of national cultural autonomy (NCA) was developed in the nineteenth century by Austro-Marxists.³ Based on the notion of the 'personality principle', the idea was that communities can be autonomous (and sovereign) within a multi-ethnic state, regardless of whether they have, or identify with, a particular

territory. David Smith, Federica Prina, and Judit Molnar Samsun discuss in their chapter how this notion was rediscovered in the 1990s and incorporated into the law and practice of ethnic communities in four countries (Hungary, Estonia, Serbia, and Russia). They also go into how aspects of NCA were applied in Belgium and Canada and in arrangements for the accommodation of indigenous peoples. Using a comparative approach, they reflect upon the potential contribution of the NCA principle today in advancing the linguistic rights of national minorities. They propose that this approach may serve as a platform to articulate concerns of relevance to national minorities, encompassing minority participation and multilingual education, thereby also preserving linguistic pluralism.

National and international policies for the recognition of the Deaf community's right to self-ownership and support of their sign languages have undergone a protracted evolution. Since the European Parliament's resolve in 1988⁴ that member states should grant their indigenous sign languages equivalent status to that of the national spoken languages, countries have gradually begun to offer some degree of official acknowledgement. In their chapter, Maartje De Meulder, Verena Krausneker, Graham Turner, and John Bosco Conama catch up with recent developments and critically discuss how the twenty-first century has brought a unique dynamic for Sign Language Communities (SLCs) in response to threats and opportunities resulting from changes in both external and internal language environments. They scrutinize those changes, as well as policy and planning aimed at sign languages, and explain how linguistic rights of deaf signers heavily depend on interpreting services and why this is problematic. The current ideological climate means that linguistic human rights, educational linguistic rights, self-determination, and the right to physical integrity are at the top of the SLCs' agenda. While many aspects that affect SLCs are similar to those faced by other linguistic minorities, some issues are more specific, since SLCs are also seen as people with disabilities. In particular, both the SLCs' long history of dealing with attempts at medical normalization and the current genetic discourse that questions the signers' right to exist raise concerns about the long-term vitality of various sign languages.

Part III: Migration, Settlement, Mobility

The next chapters (9 and 10) deal with the effect of globalization and ensuing social mobility as contemporary phenomena on language use, maintenance, and shift. They examine the complex, multidimensional nature of

globalization as it pertains to minority language communities in different parts of the world. As Anne Pauwels explains in her contribution, there is a growing sense that the ‘transition’—from migration and settlement to frequent mobility—forces researchers to rethink the classical approaches to language maintenance (LM) and language shift (LS) in the context of immigrant language communities, on the one hand, and indigenous language minorities, on the other hand.⁵ She begins with a review of the history of research on LM and LS in transnational (or migrant) contexts, covering its emergence, development, and expansion during the twentieth century. She then goes on to present the theories used to understand these processes and introduces the main approaches used to investigate and account for differences in the language practices of various ethnolinguistic groups. She considers how globalization has significantly altered what constitutes ‘migration’ today. Rather than seeing it primarily as a process resulting in ‘permanent’ (re)settlement elsewhere, she discusses how migration results in ongoing mobility, using examples of diasporic settings of communities moving from Europe to the ‘Anglophone’ world and of non-European groups moving to Western Europe (post-1960). Her chapter outlines how in turn these changes in social mobility affect language practices in diaspora settings today and impact on our understanding of what constitutes LM. In her conclusion she points to the challenges of this change for future work on LM and LS since classical approaches are less suited to deal with today’s greater fluidity of the linguistic scenarios, especially in urban settings.

As Donna Patrick’s reminds us in her contribution, a complex set of factors is driving language change and decline in the far North. Her research in Canada’s Inuit homelands has over the years explored local, regional, national, and global influences on the languages used (among them Inuktitut and Inuvialuktun) and the challenges faced by speakers with regard to linguistic, cultural, and environmental sustainability. The effects of colonization, industrialization, and environmental degradation have accelerated this trend over the course of the twentieth century and are now compounded by global warming and the rapid rise of communication networks, scientific technologies, and extractive resource industries. All these developments are affecting the future of Arctic peoples and their languages. She shows how despite these challenges the Inuit communities are continuing to maintain and shape their languages as active agents through everyday interactions with their land and through channels that have opened up with globalization.

Part IV: Economics, Markets, Commodification

The role of minority languages in economics currently receives growing attention in the research literature and is treated in the next set of chapters (11, 12, and 13). As is evident in Wales and Catalonia, the health of a minority language is prone to improve when speakers become productive in the economic domain. If the revenue generated through 'peripheral' entrepreneurship flows back to the community, this can be empowering and aid regional economic development. Both Welsh and Catalan have the vitality and status to be included as languages within educational systems and to be deployed as a resource. Elsewhere however, for example, in parts of Africa, even the official recognition of selected indigenous languages does not necessarily translate into greater prestige, status, and usage for those languages.⁶

Nkonko M. Kamwangamalu sees such failure as lying in the planners' lack of focus on the link between an education carried out through the medium of an indigenous language and the economic returns for the target populations. Examining the perennial question of the role in education of Africa's indigenous languages, he argues that policies designed to promote indigenous languages in different social spheres must also demonstrate the demand for these languages. He proposes that to succeed, such policies must corroborate a language's usefulness, not only in terms of it as a means of communication but also with explicit reference to the material benefits that speakers can expect.⁷ Drawing on theoretical developments in language economics⁸ and critical theory,⁹ he posits that the demand for indigenous languages can be established in the light of Bourdieu's notions of social fields, capital, and markets, whose properties afford linguistic products with a certain 'value'.¹⁰ This view sees language not solely as a means of communication but also as symbolic capital that can be gained and lost, which may be transformed to economic capital with impact on language vitality.¹¹

The economic potential of minority languages has also been linked with processes of commodification, where language (skills) are seen as a resource that can be bought and sold.¹² While global developments variously affect the role and position of many minority languages, many users find new opportunities through localizing forces that form part of the massively growing language industries. Sari Pietikäinen, Helen Kelly-Holmes, and Maria Rieder explore how selected minority languages figure in economic development and point to ways in which they can be invested with values of expertise, distinction, and authenticity. Drawing on their studies of minority and indigenous language practices and discourses in peripheral, multilingual Irish and Sámi

sites, the authors discuss the changing and expanding role of minority languages in the key economic domains of advertising and marketing, tourism, media, and in job markets. They also reflect on the conditions and consequences of economic processes as indices of the exchange value of minority languages in changing markets.

The effects of the globalized economy on the industrialization of translation are the focus of Matthieu LeBlanc. In his chapter he cautions against the risks of rapid rationalization and the utilitarian instrumentalism it engenders for linguistic minority communities. In particular, he explores the work of professional translators in minority language communities in Canada. A former translator himself, the author is more concerned here with cultures of production in the public domain than with cultures of reception. After reviewing some of the theoretical literature, he dissects the impact of translation on the shaping and dissemination of minority languages. He draws attention to the changing practices in professional (non-literary) translation as a result of increased technological automation and industrialization. Offering a case study of the transformations that have marked the government of Canada's Translation Bureau since the mid-1990s, he shows how these changes put minority languages everywhere under pressure in terms of both access to translation resources and pressures on translators through shrinking deadlines, which has implications for the quality and legibility of texts. His chapter illustrates how translation is intrinsically linked with language ideologies, language policies, power relations, language rights, and identity and why translation activities figure as key tools in the (re-)construction and development of minority languages.

Part V: Education, Literacy, Access

Chapters 14, 15, and 16 cover educational policy and practice for indigenous and immigrant minorities. Across the world, speakers of minority languages often have to make difficult choices between investing in language for social mobility on the one hand and preserving the cultural heritage of their community on the other hand. Often, language choices in education result in response to market-driven values. Such decisions about languages in education mean that children can grow up without knowing their own mother tongue and end up disenfranchised. In fact, an estimated 40% of people have no access to education in a language they understand.¹³ Being taught in a language that is not their own leaves many with a cognitive gap that they cannot bridge. Yet ample research evidence¹⁴ shows that this deficit will be

reduced if pupils are taught in their mother tongue during the course of primary school or even beyond it. But the supply of teachers and materials is one of the many challenges to mother tongue-medium education in the context of small languages.

Refreshingly, around the world, there are numerous local initiatives that serve as examples of good practice. Particularly successful are community-based education programmes such as those emerging in the Philippines, Mexico, parts of Africa, and in Australia where indigenous speakers are trained to teach in the community languages. In their chapter on the language practices of indigenous Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Samantha Disbray and Gillian Wigglesworth review the considerable variety of studies on young Australian Aboriginals' early language learning environments and processes. These are mainly youngsters from remote settings where English is taught at school, but it is neither their first language, nor the language of the community in which the children live. The authors also examine more recent investigations that show how pupils acquire some remaining traditional languages through child-directed speech styles and practices. In this complex linguistic environment, the development of new and emerging contact languages (both mixed languages and creoles) is found to influence the ways in which children and young people alter and innovate their language ecologies.

The focus then shifts to language, education, and nation-building in Southeast Asia's mainland and maritime areas. Peter Sercombe examines the deployment in states of language policies as instruments of controlling and assimilating indigenous populations. He uses a social justice perspective¹⁵ in tracing the key factors that affect the cultural, economic, and political marginalization of native minority groups. Presenting a case study of that of the Najib in Malaysia, he points out that mostly these indigenous people tend to be few in number and are frequently materially poor. They inhabit interior areas that are removed from centres of power. In terms of social organization, they are generally distinctive from politically major groups. Similar to many other native populations, they are egalitarian, with an accompanying animistic belief system, rather than being socially hierarchical and subscribing to a major religion. During the course of regional independence efforts, the socio-economic position of these minorities has tended to decline. This chapter explores the manner in which this is happening, with specific reference to current language education policy and practices.

We then turn to issues of literacy in minority languages and their relationship to current and future social and economic development. Clinton Robinson explores in his chapter the purposes and rationale of minority language literacy

in relation to national and global forces in language use with a focus on language endangerment, preservation, and shift. He discusses approaches to literacy provision in local minority or non-dominant languages, drawing on practice in Cameroon, Papua New Guinea, and Senegal. He examines similarities and differences in the three countries and compares policy and practice with respect to multilingualism, policy formulation, and programme structure. In his assessment of the prospects for literacy provision in local languages he sets out questions for multilingual policies and practices in the context of international education frameworks and with reference to issues of inequality, marginalization, and opportunity. He stresses the need to address policy considerations, community engagement, the nature of the learning process, and the fact that languages are simultaneously both instruments of communication and symbols of identity. The principal argument here is that literacy in non-dominant languages increases educational opportunity and cultural affirmation for those in minority communities and strengthens their equitable place in society.

Part VI: Media, Public Usage, Visibility

Given the threat to many of the world's languages, new technologies including digitization, electronic mapping, and social media can play an important part in supporting the future of many minority language communities. This role in their vitality of the media is explored in Chapters 17, 18, and 19. In the context of globalization, questions concerning the effect that the media might have on minority languages and their users have become more urgent. In his contribution, Tom Moring explores the impact of policies, power relations, and citizenship in a changing media environment and takes issue with existing financing and organization of media services for, of, and on minority language communities. Covering a range of existing international and national policies for minority media, he examines the effect of their implementation on users. He also discusses the complexities of lived citizenship in the context of an environment with changing, individualized media habits and the role of e-technologies for LM and revitalization.

Concentrating on web-based communication technologies, Daniel Cunliffe provides insights into current understandings of the relationship between social media and minority LM and revitalization. He examines the extent to which social media provide permissive environments for minority language use. He also discusses the factors that influence the language behaviours of minority language speakers on social media and the potential impact of online

media habits on the minority language itself. With specific reference to the Welsh context, he offers a comprehensive overview of what is known about the use of Welsh in social media, from policy perspectives down to individual user behaviour. Drawing on a range of academic and non-academic sources, he paves the way for methods and perspectives relevant to other minority languages on social media.

Recent research has also focussed attention on public '(in)visibility' of minority languages and their promotion, for example, through bilingual road signs, shop signage, and product packaging or instructions. The chapter by Durk Gorter, Heiko Marten, and Luk Van Mensel looks at minority language use in the linguistic landscape (LL). It is embedded in studies that investigate frequencies, functions, and power relations between languages and their speakers in the public space. This line of research aims to understand how the production and perception of signs reflect and simultaneously shape speakers' realities and sense of belonging. In this sense, the LL is seen as a dynamic place where processes of minorization take place. The visibility or invisibility of minority languages and the functional and symbolic relationships to majority languages are in many ways directly related to negotiations of minorities' place in society. The authors discuss which policy categories and domains of language use are of particular relevance for understanding minority languages in the LL. Issues of conflict, contestation, and exclusion scrutinized are illustrated with examples from Israel, Canada, Belgium, the Basque Country, and Friesland.

Part VII: Endangerment, Ecosystems, Resilience

UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (1995–)¹⁶ lists 7097 languages currently spoken across the world, of which an estimated 2464 are at risk of falling out of use (or endangered). In appraising this situation, the Handbook's concluding chapters (20, 21, and 22) consider minority ecosystems and issues of resilience. Language decline¹⁷ happens for multiple reasons, across our planet, and is often the result of speakers' lacking status in society. Among the causal factors are environmental and social economic drivers. Researchers¹⁸ forecast that language-rich territories undergoing rapid economic growth, for example, in the tropics and in the Himalayas, will be the primary areas of small-language losses in the near future. They call for conservation efforts to focus on these parts of the world. In its linkage with language rights and minority rights considerations, minority language revitalization is