APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

If you wish to apply to direct a workshop at the Joint Sessions in Münster, Germany during 22-27 March 2010, please first see the explanatory notes, then complete this form, which will serve as the cover sheet for your workshop proposal. This form should be sent with your workshop proposal to the ECPR Central Services. You can do this by emailing both documents as an attached file (in word format .doc or rich text format .rtf) to the ECPR Central Services at ecpr@essex.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can print up the information and send it as a fax to the Central Services, fax: +44 1206 872500. The deadline for applications is Sunday, 01 February 2009.

Title of proposed workshop: Ethno-linguistic Mobilisation and Regional Languages in Europe.

Subject area: Nationalism/regional studies/public policy/political sociology/social movements

Abstract of proposed workshop. Maximum of 250 words (suitable for publication in the academic programme leaflet and on the ECPR web site):

Though the pressure for linguistic monopolisation lay at the heart of the modernistic European state project, this process has partially failed. Indeed, empirical research demonstrates both the emergence of a variety of ethno-linguistic social movements mobilising in support of a new deal for regional languages and the taking into consideration of this issue by international agencies (UNESCO, Council of Europe) and state governments. This workshop aims to obtain a better understanding of the connection between the concepts of identity, territory and language – understood as a vector of collective identity and as an instrument for political mobilisation – in the context of the enlarged Europe.

We invite applicants to propose case studies, comparative analyses and more theoretical papers related to ethno-linguistic mobilisations dealing with the three following issues:

(1) Actors, networks and ethno-linguistic mobilisations in Europe: What are the political repertoires used by these movements? Which networks have been the most efficient in institutionalising their structure? What kinds of relations do ethno-linguistic movements maintain with ethno-nationalist parties?

(2) Mobilisations and language policies: How do ethno-linguistic mobilisations influence the language policies elaborated by European governments? What is the relation between ethno-linguistic movements and local-regional representative institutions? How are ethno-linguistic demands filtered by the party system?

(3) The Europeanisation of ethno-linguistic mobilizations? Europeanisation can be narrated as a process generated by the “vertical” pressure exerted by European institutions (like the Council of Europe for example). It can also be conceived as a “horizontal” process, creating cross-border networks uniting different ethno-linguistic movements into large transnational coalitions. We invite papers on both dimensions.

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Please note that the information above is VERY important, as it will be used in all future correspondence and, if the proposal is successful, printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed with 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the explanatory notes/guidelines available on the ECPR website at www.ecprnet.org.

For further information, please contact:
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Ethno-linguistic Mobilisation and Regional Languages in Europe.

Although language is a fundamental issue in contemporary societies, it remains relatively unaddressed by political scientists. The aim of this workshop is to explore and compare the different strategies used by linguistic movements to defend regional languages in Europe.

Europe is far from being the most diversified continent in terms of languages. Nevertheless, in Europe the process of nation-state building generally converted language into an essential political instrument of domination. In other words, language was often used by state governments to produce consistent polities based on linguistic homogenisation.

But despite the theses of “modernist” authors (like K. Deutsh for instance), this process of cultural/linguistic monopolisation partially failed. Indeed, empirical research demonstrates both the emergence of a variety of ethno-linguistic social movements mobilising in support of a new deal for regional languages and the taking into consideration of this issue by central governments (in the Basque Country, in Wales, in Flanders…). On the one hand, the first mobilisations for peripheral languages of the XIXth century were relayed by new social movements during the 1960s (in Spain, France, Ireland, Flanders…) before to convert into important issues of the agenda of ethno-nationalist political parties. On the other hand, the political opportunity structure of European states progressively opened through the general trend of politico-administrative devolution occurred during the 1980s in continental Europe and during the 1990s in Central-Eastern countries after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This tendency was reinforced by the multiple initiatives adopted by international and European institutions like the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination at School (1980) or the Council of Europe’s Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992).

Through the title “Ethno-linguistic mobilisations in Europe” we refer to the whole movements (including social movements, pressure groups, formal parties and political institutions) which defend vernacular languages. As such, this focus on vernacular language excludes the other tongues spoken in Europe like those imported by migrants (Swahili, Chinese…) or those spoken by very specific communities (like Hebrew for instance). The terms used to refer to vernacular languages can vary from a study to the other. Nevertheless, “vernacular languages” and “regional languages” seem the best fitted and most neutral expressions as they do not impose a symbolical hierarchy between the language of the state and the rest of languages spoken within the national borders – since state language is usually a regional language that historically reached to impose to the other ones --. As the term “ethno-linguistic” supposes, we aim to study the political uses of languages spoken in different regions of Europe. Nevertheless, here, the term “regional” only means our analysis refers to the sub-state level. Indeed, the areas of influence of these languages do not always exactly fit with the administrative regional sub-divisions of the European countries and it is rather frequent that these linguistic areas encompass different regions from different states at the same time as in Catalonia or the Basque Country.
Language currently constitutes a very sensitive nexus between concepts of territory and community. Ethno-linguistic mobilisations are confronted to very different situations. Firstly, ethno-linguistic movements do not always constitute homogeneous communities since some of them remain divided into different factions. As a result, some regional languages have been regulated fifty years ago (Basque) while others are still being normalised and crucially lack a minimal visibility (Occitan). Secondly, the degree of institutionalisation of ethno-linguistic movements can fluctuate. Some languages are supported by newly created state governments – and cease to be regional languages (in ex-Yugoslavia for instance) – or backed by an ambitious language planning policy led by a formal regional government (e.g. Catalan), while on the other side of this continuum other movements are composed by a simple network of cultural associations (e.g. Occitan). Thirdly, the relations between ethno-linguistic mobilisations and nationalist political movements also vary from one case to the other. Indeed, Italian Northern dialects spoken in Veneto are currently being re-activated by the nationalist-populist Lega Nord for backing its discourse in favour of the secession from Southern Italy. In turn, other languages like Sicilian remain relatively disconnected from nationalist political claims and are rather supported by the cultural nationalist sector. Lastly, the objectives of these movements are always not the same. On the one hand, some of them aim to directly compete with the main language of the state in order to convert the language they defend into a hegemonic state language (as radical Basque activists); on the other hand, other ethno-linguistic movements (as Welsh movements) only aspire to impose their tongue in certain institutional niches (like television, radio, journals, administration…). This diversity of situations makes of Europe a very interesting field for researchers on language politics.

Language politics in Europe has generated an important political literature during the last thirty years. Such corpus can be divided into five main groups. Firstly, the pioneer investigations led in the early 1980′ by sociologists on regionalist social movements (Bourdieu and Boltanski 1981: 2-17; Touraine et al. 1981) shown languages can channel the frustrations of peripheries respect to central state governments. Secondly, political scientists focusing on the process of state (and nation) building produced interesting analyses on how state languages converted regional languages into lesser-used languages and provoked reaction processes against the dominant language (Allardt 1979: 44-63; Shabad y Gunther 1982: 443-477; Hobsbawm 1996: 85-122; Klatter-Holmer and Van Avermaet 2001; Romaine 2002: 194-212). Thirdly, authors who adopted a regional studies’ perspective stressed the link between identity, language policy and nationalism, demonstrating that the promotion of regional identities and minority languages did not always support separatist aims and that language mobilisations went far beyond nationalist claims (Judge 2000: 44-82; Cole and Williams 2004: 554-579; Harguindéguy and Ballester 2007: 89-108). Fourthly, sociolinguists focusing on language policy established important typologies according to the level of territorial extension and the constraint exerted by such policy (Fishman 1974; Laitin 1988: 289-302; Schiffman 1996). Lastly, political theorists working on theories of justice recently provided a fascinating scheme showing that languages are not only mere instruments used to low transaction costs of social interactions and that they can be desired for their intrinsic value. As a consequence, occidental states established three types of relation with minority languages: a neutral relation respect to all languages as asserts the Rawlsian liberal theory (United States); the active promotion of all threatened languages as claim communitarians (Canada, Spain, Belgium); or the active support of just one language (or a group of few languages) based on a republicanist perspective thought to facilitate the political participation of all citizen (France) (Taylor 1985; May 2001; Kymlicka and Patten 2003).
The intended result of the workshop is to obtain a better understanding of the connection between the concepts of identity, territory and language in the context of the enlarged Europe. Drawing on the current interactions occurring in Western and Central-Eastern Europe, we will attempt to propose a portrait of the actual place of regional languages in European politics both as an internal vector of mobilisation (viz. the meaning of these languages for their defenders) and as an external instrument of political struggle (that is for fighting on the political arena). We welcome papers that address these issues from an empirical and theoretical perspective, investigating the developments of new conceptions and practices of ethno-linguistic mobilisations at a micro, meso and macro level. In particular, we aim at comparing and integrating results of research on political parties, nongovernmental organisations and public administrations, participant observation of movement groups and experiences of decision-making of language policies. The workshop will offer an opportunity for sharing and discussing the results of diverse empirical research on these topics from a cross-country perspective. We invite a wide range of applicants to propose case studies and comparative analyses related to ethno-linguistic mobilisations and coming from different sub-fields of political science like public policy, state/nation-building, political sociology, regional studies and social movements dealing with the three following issues:

(1) **Actors, networks and ethno-linguistic mobilisations in Europe**: What are the political repertoires used by these movements? Are there differences between the coalitions mobilised for defending a regional language? Which networks have been the most efficient in institutionalising their structure? What kinds of relations do maintain ethno-linguistic movements with ethno-nationalist parties and cultural activists?

(2) **Mobilisations and language policies**: How do ethno-linguistic mobilisations influence on language policies elaborated by European governments? Are these movements able to propose an alternative offer to state language planning (in the field of education for instance)? What is the relation between ethno-linguistic movements and local-regional representative institutions? How are ethno-linguistic demands filtered by the party system?

(3) **The Europeanisation process of ethno-linguistic mobilisations**: Europeanisation can be narrated as a process generated by the “vertical” pressure exerted by European institutions (like the Council of Europe for example). It can also be conceived as a “horizontal” process, creating cross-border networks uniting different ethno-linguistic movements into large transnational coalitions. What instruments are used to Europeanise national polities? We invite papers on both dimensions.

The workshop directors are members of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France), the Centro de Estudios Políticos y Constitucionales (Spanish Government) and of the CONNEX network. They will seek to attract funding for the workshop from those Institutions.

REFERENCES:


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