Cùchulainn's challenge

Imageries and Values in parliamentary debates on the Irish Language Act in the Northern Ireland Assembly: An Epistemic Governance Approach

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Northern Ireland, located in the province of Ulster on the island of Ireland but part of the United Kingdom, has a long history of violence between its communities and its society is engaged in a peace process dealing with the remnants of the civil conflict known as the Troubles to this day. The Troubles saw Catholic Irish nationalists and republicans fight with civil, political, and partly terrorist means against the discrimination they were subjected to by the governing Unionists. Division in society is not yet overcome and one aspect viewed by some as divisive is the Irish language. This thesis looks at the controversial debates around an Irish language Act in the Northern Ireland Assembly, which would safeguard the rights of Irish speakers in the community, however, which is strongly opposed by unionist parties in the Assembly, due to the language's association to Irish separatist and terrorist movements.

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to epistemic governance literature and add research on the linguistic dimension of the conflict by studying how the approach can explain political actors' argumentative behaviour in a local context. For this purpose, the thesis works with the case of the Irish language Act debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Qualitative research, namely political discourse analysis and value-based argumentation, is used to analyse official transcripts of parliamentary debates with direct references to an Irish language Act from Northern Ireland's parliamentary session between 2007-2017.

Focusing on the third object of epistemic work, shared norms and ideals, the study found several arguments based on these common values and identified the usage of imageries by the various parties in the assembly. It showed that actors in the local sphere deploy the same imageries as predicted in the theory and that they are not bound to the usage of one single imagery. Interestingly, despite the opposing views in the debate, the actors apply the same mechanisms of governance in an attempt to persuade their audience of their cause.

Key words: Northern Ireland, Irish Gaelic, Irish language Act, Epistemic Governance, World Society Theory

List of Abbreviations

CCS – Cross-Community-Support

DUP – Democratic Unionist Party

ECRML – European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

IICD – Independent International Commission for Decommissioning

ILA – Irish language Act

IRA – Irish Republican Army

MLA – Members of the Legislative Assembly

MoCAL – Minister of Culture, Art & Leisure

NIA – Northern Ireland Assembly

PBP – People before Profit Alliance

RUC – Royal Ulster Constabulary

SDLP – Social Democratic and Labour Party

SF – Sinn Féin

TUV – True Unionist Voice

UUP – Ulster Unionist Party

UWC – Ulster Workers' Council

Table of content

1. Introduction

Akin to the heroes of ancient Greece Herakles and Achilles or Siegfried of the Nibelungen's song, Cùchulainn of Muirthemne, also referred to as the Hound of Ulster, is revered as a great hero in Irish mythology. The men to "fight all fights, defend all fords and fight all the battles" (Gregory & Yeats, 1902) on behalf of Ulster, the northern most region of Ireland. His glorious deeds are narrated in tales of old, and stories are told full of passion, wrath, honour, and the fearless battles Cùchulainn fought to protect his people[1] . While these past battles may long be over, the challenge the hero of Ulster would face in this time and age is the rift dividing the society in Northern Ireland. Mending the anguish of the people of Northern Ireland would not be an easy task for the ancient hero and neither is it for the politicians of today.

The population in Northern Ireland faces divisions along several lines, which are focused around nationality, religion and language. These divisions can be traced back to the end of the 12th century to the invasion of Ireland by the British, and strongly came into effect in Ulster by the beginning of the 17th century, when most of the fertile land in the region was taken from the native, Catholic Irish and handed over to Protestant British, loyal to the Crown. After centuries of institutionalised discrimination towards the natives, which forbade practising their religion and almost resulted in the death of their mother tongue – Irish Gaelic –, the island of Ireland finally achieved her independence. However, the majority of the Ulster region stayed part of the Union and became Northern Ireland. In this part of the United Kingdom, discrimination towards Catholics and Irish speakers continued, tensions between them and the majority protestant community rose and erupted in the decades of bloodshed and civil war widely known as "the Troubles". The Troubles saw Irish nationalists and republicans go to war with the Unionists, and the already profound rift between the parties grew even deeper. Both sides had to lament numerous casualties as paramilitary groups, terrorists, police forces, and the army delivered fight after fight.

It was also during these times that the Irish language was instrumentalised by Irish republicans to emphasise an Irish identity. While the language was formerly spoken by all of the population, it went gradually extinct through the British occupation

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[1] For the full story see the plays of Yeats or Lady Gregory's collection of Irish Mythology.

and was later reintroduced, mostly by Irish republicans to distinguish themselves from the Unionists. Since terrorists of the IRA also employed the language, until this day, some people in the region associate Irish Gaelic with terrorism and violence. Due to this kind of associations, issues concerning the Irish language tend to become controversial, especially the discussions on the Irish Language Act.

The Irish Language Act is a piece of controversially debated language legislation aiming at ensuring the rights of Irish Gaelic speakers and securing the status of the language in Northern Ireland. Nowadays a rough eleven percent of the population of Northern Ireland have some knowledge of Irish Gaelic and less than one percent use it as their language at home (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2011). However, the enthusiasm for Irish Gaelic is strong. So far, Irish Gaelic and Ulster Scots- the other regional language in Northern Ireland- are protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, providing a legal framework for the protection and promotion of regional and traditional minority languages. Despite this, calls for an Irish Language Act or Acht na Gaeilge have become louder and are articulated by language rights groups, nationalist and Irish republican politicians, and the people alike. On the political front the Irish republican party Sinn Féin and the Social Democratic and Labour Party are pushing for the Act.

Sinn Féin was one of the two power-sharing parties in the Northern Ireland Assembly – the devolved legislative parliament of Northern Ireland – together with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). The Assembly was dissolved early 2017 due to political difficulties over a mismanaged financial affair and Sinn Féin is refusing to get back at the negotiation table without the assurance for an Irish Language Act. Their party, as well as the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), argue that an Irish Language Act was part of the Good Friday Agreement (also known as Belfast Agreement) - the peace agreement ending the Troubles in 1998 – and consecutively the St Andrew's Agreement. Most of the smaller parties, present in the Assembly also support the introduction of an Irish Language Act. Yet, the Unionist parties; the DUP, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), and the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) party deny that such an act was part of the above-mentioned agreements, as well as the need for this kind of legislation.

While a lot of research has been done on the religious and national identity dimensions of the conflict in Northern Ireland, the language issue has not been paid that much attention to. Although, there is already some research on the political implications of the Irish language in the context of Northern Ireland, as well as on its symbolism, so far little attention has been paid to the discourse people's representatives employ when discussing these issues. This thesis aims to address the linguistic aspect of the Northern Ireland conflict by investigating how the Irish language issue is handled in local parliamentary debates. The focus on parliamentary debates stems from their importance for the public articulation of ideas deemed acceptable. By discussing issues in a certain manner, politicians set a frame for what is considered the proper way of discussing these matters in the general public. So, investigating how members of the Northern Ireland Assembly debate the Irish language Act, can yield interesting insights into what is considered as adequate manner of articulating Irish language issues. Furthermore, the mechanisms with which actors aim to persuade their audience based on their perception of social reality will be identified by utilising the epistemic governance approach. This adds a new perspective to the already existing research of the conflict, by revealing how politicians in the Assembly presume their audience to view the Irish language issue and society in Northern Ireland. To achieve this purpose, following questions will be answered:

- What are the arguments employed by the political actors to make their case for or against the Irish Language Act and which values are they based on?

- What imageries of society can be identified and how are they deployed?

To answer these questions, I investigate the official transcripts of the parliamentary debates about the Irish Language Act in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Therefor, I use the theoretical framework of world society theory paired with the epistemic governance approach. World society theory is a neo-institutionalist approach presuming the existence of so-called world models, which influence decision making elites around the globe. An example for this is the notion that traditional languages are valuable and worth protecting, e.g. Irish Gaelic. While world society theory focuses on the

institutions, it tends to overlook the role of actors. Hence, in addition to this theory, I utilise epistemic governance to explain the mechanisms by which actors, in this case the members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, try to convince others of their cause based on their perceptions of the world. To perform epistemic work, actors need to address three objects: the ontology of the environment, individuals, and shared norms and ideals. Furthermore, three imageries of society have so far been identified that underlie the actors' and the audience's perception of social reality: the imagery of society in progress, the imagery of competing blocs, and the imagery of a hierarchical society.

The data-set consist of the Hansard reports, the official transcripts of the debates of the Northern Ireland Assembly and counts 53 documents with 186 mentions of the Irish Language Act, not including the mentioning of "Acht na Gaeilge", its term in Irish Gaelic. It is a universal data set of naturally occurring data which I analyse by means of political discourse analysis and by working with value-based practical arguments.

The structure of this paper follows the subsequent outline. In total, this thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter two gives a contextual overview over the issue of the Irish language in Northern Ireland. It introduces the regional and minority languages in the United Kingdom and how they are protected by the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, as well as by their respective language acts. It includes a section on the origin of the conflict, the partition of Ireland, the civil war, and the following peace process, and introduces the reader to the Northern Ireland Assembly and its parties. Chapter three explains the theoretical framework namely world society theory and epistemic governance, and chapter four provides the description of the data-set and methodology. Next, the data is analysed in chapter five, providing answers for the research questions and the conclusion in chapter six completes the textual part of the thesis. It is then followed by the references and the appendices.

2. Background: Language Protection, History of the Conflict, and the Northern Ireland Assembly

To understand the arguments brought forth in the debate around the Irish language Act it is important to be aware of the context these discussions are embedded in. Therefore,

this chapter provides information on the situation of other regional or minority languages in the United Kingdom, the history of the conflict between the split communities in Northern Ireland, and an overview of the Northern Ireland Assembly and its parties.

2.1. Minority and Regional Languages in the UK

The UK is home to several regional and minority languages, which are protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML). Signed in March 2000, the charter was ratified in March 2001 and put into action in July of the same year (Council of Europe, 2018). The languages covered by the charter are Cornish, Irish (Gaelic), Scots, Ulster Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Manx Gaelic, and Welsh (Council of Europe, 2015). The charter is the only legal instrument specifically created for the protection, as well as promotion, of regional or minority languages in Europe and it monitors developments concerning measures for these languages in three-year cycles to observe its implementation (Parayre, 2008). The term regional or minority language in the Charter covers languages that are traditionally spoken by a group of nationals, smaller than the majority of the state's population, in a certain territory of this state and that are not an official language (ECRML, 2000). While all regional or minority languages covered by the Charter are protected under Part II, languages considered as stronger (demographically) are furthermore covered under Part III (Parayre, 2008).

In the UK, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic, and Irish are protected under Part II (Article 7), and Part III (Articles 8-14) and Manx, Cornish, and Ulster-Scots under Part II (Article 7) (Council of Europe, 2015). Two of these are recognised as minority or regional languages in Northern Ireland, namely Irish and Ulster Scots. All the minority or regional languages with the exception of Scots and Ulster Scots are Celtic languages, with Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx being classified as Gaelic and Welsh and Cornish as Brittonic languages.

To better understand the Irish language issue in Northern Ireland and the demand for an Irish Language Act it is useful to know how minority and regional languages with a similar background are protected in the UK in their respective territories, apart from the ECRML. Thereby, the other demographically stronger languages – Welsh and

Scottish Gaelic – are of special interest, as comparisons are sometimes drawn to these tongues when discussing the ILA.
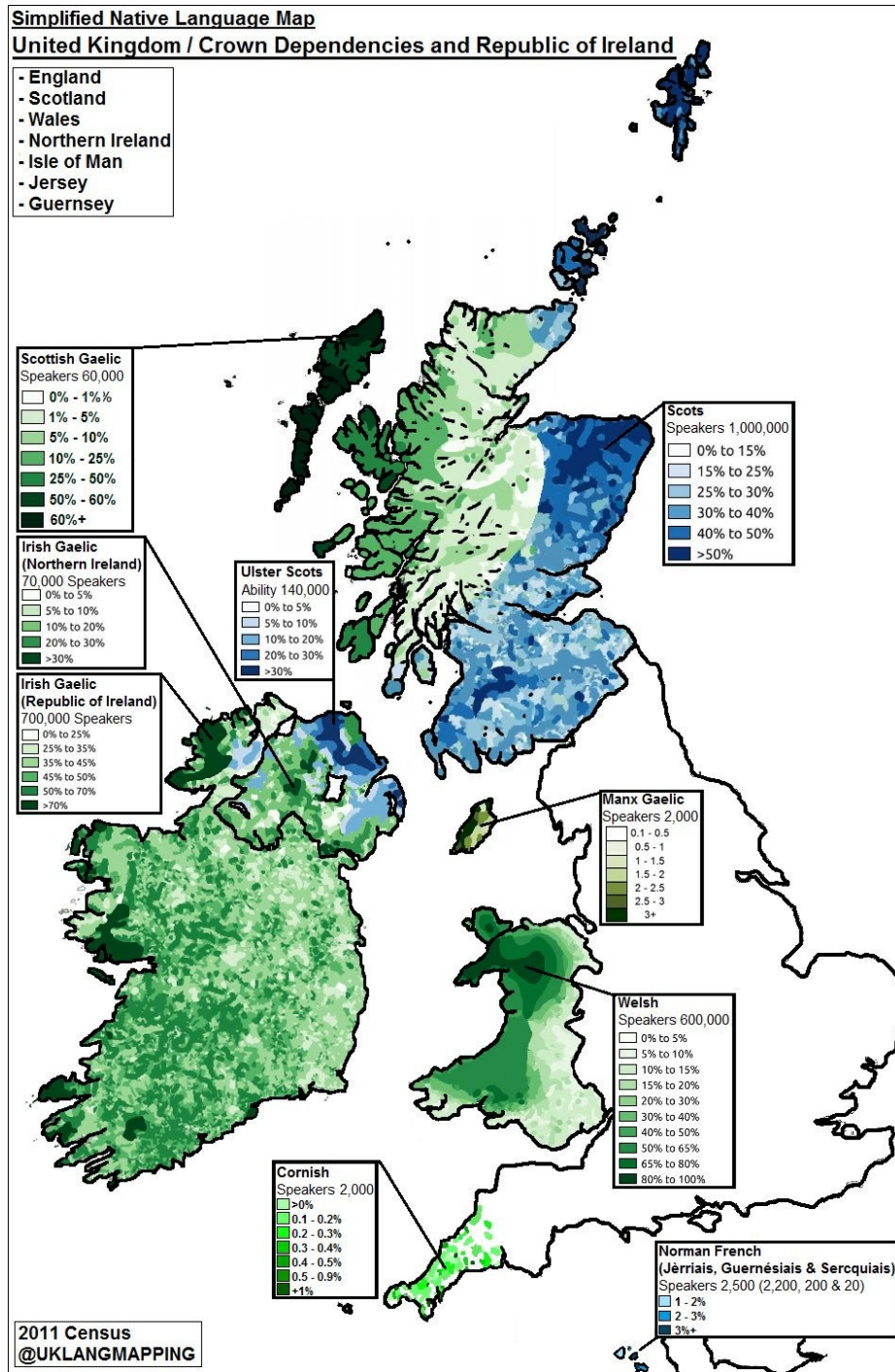
2.1.1. The Celtic Languages and their Protection

Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh are all classified as Celtic languages, historically spoken by Celtic tribes. The origin of the Celts is unclear, however, the Iron

Age Cultures of Hallstatt and La Tène, from the 7th and 5th century BC respectively, stand witness to an age of great Celtic power that led to the expansion of their tribes amongst others to the British Isles (MacAuley, 1992, p.1-8). With the spread of the Roman Empire, the Celts lost most of their influence in the continent, as well as in what nowadays is Great Britain. In Britain, the Celts had to defend themselves not only against Germanic tribes, but also against invaders from Irish Celts, which had not been under the sphere of Roman influence. While most of the Celtic languages on the continent died out around 500 AD, they were able to survive on the British Isles, where in the North Pictish was replaced with the Gaelic of the Irish Settlers, and in the South the Brittonic languages further developed with certain Latin influences to form Welsh, Cornish, and Breton (MacAuley, 1992, p.1-8). Akin to many other languages around the world such as Aboriginal languages in Australia, or indigenous languages of Native Americans, the Celtic languages were marginalised to the brink of extinction due to colonialisation, which attributed a higher status to the language of the colonialising force, in this case the English language (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Given the advantageous position of anglophone elites on the British Isles in terms of power, they were able to impose their language on the Celtic speaking population, who had to assume English in order to improve their opportunities (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Currently, Welsh, Scottish Gaelic and Irish Gaelic are still spoken on the Isles, albeit by a relatively small number of people, while Cornish and Manx still persist, yet are not used as community languages any more (MacAuley, 1992, p.1-8).

Welsh

The predecessor of the Welsh language, Brittonic was originally spoken in the territory from today's West-England to the Firth of Forth in the north. After Germanic tribes started to spread to further to the West, they drove a wedge between the language communities, from which point on Brittonic developed into different varieties, including Welsh and Cornish. The common origin of the two is evident in the striking similarities found in their syntax and phonology (Thomas, 1992).

With the arrival of the Normans and progressing anglicisation, Welsh became marginalised and its use was confined to rural communities. The Welsh elites in order to remain influential abandoned their native language in favour of the more prestigious

language of the court in London. The marginalisation of Welsh continued up until the second half of the 20th century and was especially enforced through the education system, in which English was the only option. For the sake of economic prosperity many Welsh native speakers preferred their children to speak English and by doing so, they sped up the regression process of the language. Its survival is mostly due to the translation of the bible into Welsh and to the Clergy's use of it in Sunday Schools (Thomas, 1992).

When Wales fully became part of England, the "Laws in Wales Act 1535" (UK Government, 1535) declared English the only official language in Wales. In the course of the 20th century the "Welsh Courts Act 1942" (UK Government, 1942), as well as the "Welsh Language Act 1967" (UK Government, 1967) reversed the old laws. However, it was only the "Welsh Language Act 1993" (UK Government, 1993) that gave Welsh equal rights with English in Wales. This Act proclaims:

> *The principle that in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality.*

In addition, it regulates other measures to protect and promote the Welsh language in Wales (UK Government, 1993). Besides this, the Welsh language is protected under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages mentioned above.

Scottish Gaelic

Experts agree that Scottish Gaelic most likely found its way to nowadays Scotland through Irish settlers migrating to the region. Most of the settlement took place after the Roman's sphere of influence started to decline. The most important Irish colony in the area used to be Dál Ríata, which in the beginning was part of an Irish kingdom in county Antrim (MacAuley, 1992, p.137-248). As the Gaels' sphere of influence expanded, so did the use of the language, which peaked around 1100 AD and began to decline when Scottish aristocrats gradually stopped using it (Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, n.d.).
Unlike Welsh in Wales, Scottish Gaelic was never the sole language spoken in the region and it competed at all times with other languages, from Brittonic to Latin, to later

on French and of course English. The language managed to maintain its somewhat prestigious status until the 16th century. In the following centuries the status of Scottish Gaelic varied. Several times it was banned from schools and reintroduced. Furthermore, the language of the Anglican Church was English and Gaelic was deemed barbaric and an inconvenience. As a result, it only regained some of its prestige with the translation of the Bible into Gaelic, which happened only in 1767. Even though the Gaelic-speaking population declined, Gaelic Societies since the end of the 18th century work on giving the language a place in the public sphere (MacAuley, 1992, p.137-248).

While also finding protection under the European Charter, Scottish Gaelic obtained its first specific formal recognition through the "Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005". The goal of this act is:

> *Securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language, including the functions of preparing a national Gaelic language plan, of requiring certain public authorities to prepare and publish Gaelic language plans in connection with the exercise of their functions and to maintain and implement such plans, and of issuing guidance in relation to Gaelic education (UK Government, 2005).*

Compared to the Welsh Language Act, the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act does not reach as far. However, the establishment of the Act was an assurance of the commitment to the Scottish Gaelic language and its speakers.

Irish Gaelic

The first evidence for a Celtic language later developing into Irish Gaelic in nowadays Ireland appears in the form of old Ogham inscriptions dating between the 1st to 6th century AD, which can be found in the southern territory of Ireland. Yet, how and when exactly this predecessor of the Irish language emerged on the isle is unclear and there are several theories around it, none of which can be fully confirmed (Ó Dochartaigh, 1992).

The Irish language developed over the first millennium AD and stayed relatively free of foreign influences. The Norse language of the Vikings left little impact and only

a little bit of Latin found its way into the language through the clergy. However, things changed with the spread of the Anglo-Norman influence. English settlers were forbidden to mingle with the native Irish population and encouraged to educate their offspring in English only. Despite a large number of settlers adapting to the Irish way of life anyway and Irish being a fully functional language used in all spheres of daily life, by the 18th century all major political and economic power was gathered in the hands of the English-speaking population on the island. Gaelic became associated with poverty and peasantry and the Irish-speaking population dwindled. However, in the mid and late 19th century, Irish Gaelic experienced a revival through the raise of nationalist ideas, though more for symbolic than functional purposes and with the creation of the Republic of Ireland, ideas of the revival of the language were promoted by the newly formed state (Ó Dochartaigh, 1992).

In Northern Ireland the language is associated with Catholicism and Irish nationalists and republicans nowadays. However, this was not always the case. In the 19th century it was actually influential Protestants and Unionists who showed a deep interest in Irish Gaelic and contributed to its preservation (Pritchard, 2004). Over the past decades, the Irish language has experienced a rejuvenation in Northern Ireland, with more people showing an interest in learning and using the language (Chríost, 2000) and according to a census in 2011, about 11 per cent of the population have some knowledge of Irish in the province (Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency, 2011).

While Irish Gaelic is one of the official languages of the Republic of Ireland, no specific legislation for language protection is in place in Northern Ireland. Despite sharing similar circumstances with Welsh and Scottish Gaelic in the UK, Irish language legislation in the form of an act seems to be out of reach for now. Introduction of an act comparable to the ones in Wales or Scotland is controversial since the language carries political connotations and is by some still associated with republican ambitions for the unification of the island, as well as the terrorists of the IRA. Although Irish Gaelic is protected under the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages, calls for an Irish Language Act or Acht na Gaeilge have been clearly audible for decades and after the Northern Ireland Assembly was reinstated in 2007, the responsibility for language protection was transferred from the UK government to the Assembly.

Img.2 Selby, Frank. https://twitter.com/uklangmapping/status/954058635243646976
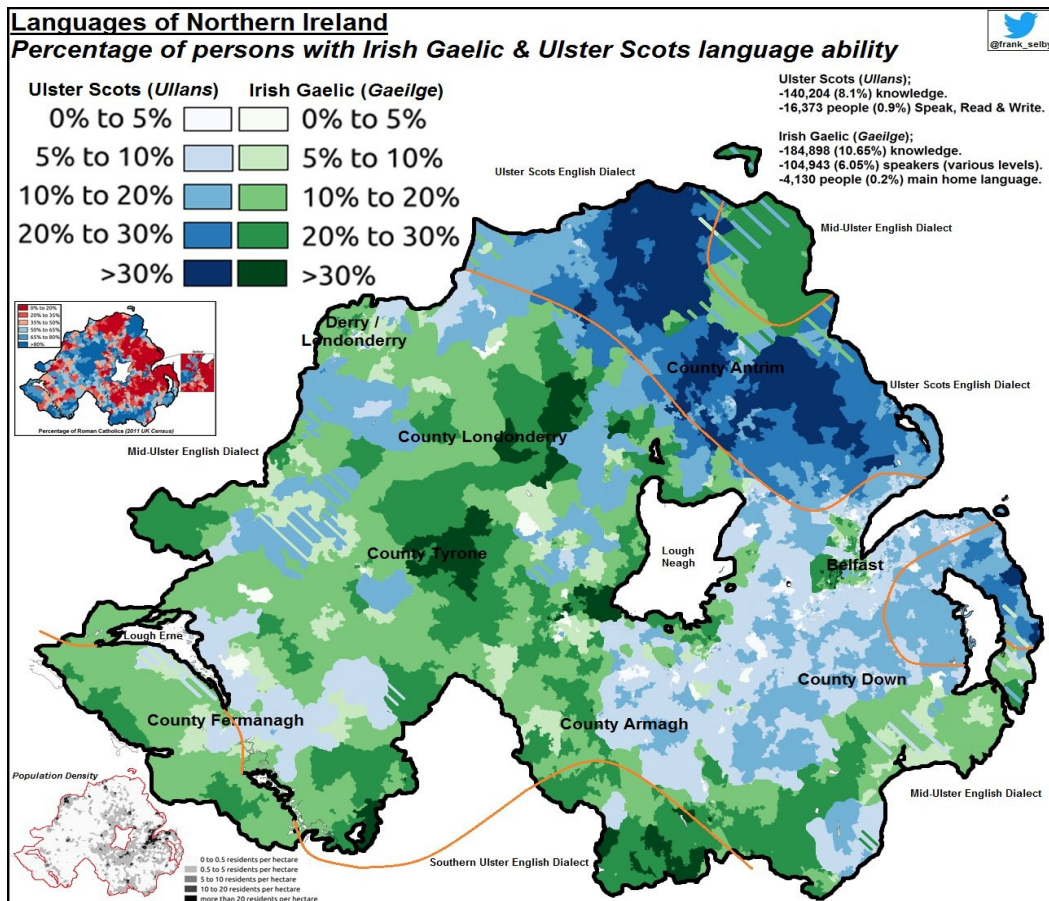
References to the status of Irish Gaelic are made in the Good Friday Agreement (also known as Belfast Agreement) from 1998:

All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots... (Good Friday Agreement, 1998)

Further, the St Andrews Agreement from the year 2006 states that:

The Executive Committee shall adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language. (Northern Ireland Office, 2006)

Also, in Annex B of the St Andrews Agreement a clear commitment to an Irish language Act can be found (Northern Ireland Office, 2006).

On the foundation of these paragraphs the debate has ensued amongst the parties of the NIA, one side arguing that an Irish Language Act is in order and the other side opposing this idea by claiming the language was already given sufficient status through those very Agreements.

2.1.2. Ulster-Scots

As compared to the above mentioned Celtic languages, Ulster-Scots or 'Ullans', the second regional language of Northern Ireland, is of West Germanic origin, descending from the Northumbrian dialect of Anglo-Saxon (Ulster Scots Agency, n.d.). It is mostly spoken in Antrim, but also in parts of Derry, Down, Tyrone, and Donegal (Fenton, n.d.) and around eight per cent of the population of Northern Ireland claims to have some ability in Ulster-Scots (Northern Ireland Statistics & Research Agency, 2011). Alike Irish Gaelic, Ulster-Scots is legally protected under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages although it is only covered by Part II of the Charter (ECRML). Furthermore, the language is also referred to in the same paragraphs as Irish in the Good Friday Agreement (see above) and in the St Andrews Agreement (Northern Ireland Office, 2006).

2.2. History of the Northern Ireland Conflict

In the section about languages, context was given for how some of the regional or minority languages in the UK are protected in their respective regions and it is clear that although Irish Gaelic shares a similar background in terms of origin with the other demographically stronger languages, it has not been awarded the same legislative status. The following short overview over the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland will provide some information on the background of the social divisions and should be helpful in understanding the political connotations of Irish Gaelic in the region.

Origin of the conflict

English influence in Ireland started in the late 12th century when King Henry II, wishing to attach Ireland to his realm, gained control in the Pale, an area around Dublin. From this small area, the English tried to extend their influence over the next four hundred

years, and in the Pale English administrative practices and the English language were introduced (Darby, 1995).

It was during the 16th century that the British sphere of power in Ireland truly began to expand and by the end of the century the island was under British rule (Darby, 1995). Of the four regions of Ireland, Leinster, Munster, Ulster, and Connacht, Ulster was able to remain in Gaelic hands longer than the rest, because of the natural barriers between this region and the others. However, after defeating the last of the Earls in Ulster in 1607, the British replaced the native Irish population there with Scottish and English settlers to whom they gave the lands of the Gaels – an event commonly known as the *Plantation of Ulster*. While there was already a distinct cultural rift between the two populations, this was reinforced by their different religious convictions, which effectively prevented assimilation (McCarney, 1996).

When William of Orange ascended the British throne, the situation for Catholics in Ireland worsened and institutionalised discrimination against them was reinforced by instating an all-Protestant parliament in Dublin and through the introduction of the Penal Laws, which barred them from practising their faith and holding office. This law also affected the Presbyterians, who in response formed the United Irishmen. In the beginning the group only consisted of Protestants, however later also Catholics joined their ranks for the common cause. The United Irishmen rebelled against the Penal Laws in 1798 but the rebellion was quickly put down and provided the British with a reason to abolish the parliament in Dublin and reassert London's grasp on the island. The rift between the Irish and the British deepened when the British ignored the starving Irish during the Great Famine between 1845-1847, which was due to the failure of the potato crop. In the following decades several revolutionary groups were formed on behalf of an independent Ireland, including the Fenians, the Gaelic League, and the Irish National Volunteers (McCarney, 1996).

After a Liberal government forced a Home Rule Bill for Ireland through the British parliament, which would allow Ireland some autonomy, and which faced strong opposition in Ulster, the Ulster Volunteer Force was established in 1912 to fight against the enforcement of the bill (McCarney, 1996). The passing of the bill however was interrupted by the outbreak of WWI, followed by the Easter Rising in 1916 (Darby, 1995). Although the Easter Rising was quickly quelled and its leaders executed, it

succeeded in rallying support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA), as well as for its political section, Sinn Féin, who won the consecutive parliamentary election on the island. By winning the election Sinn Féin practically replaced the former leading party, but instead of taking up their seats in Westminster they established their own parliament in Ireland (Darby, 1995). This action was not without consequences and tensions climaxed in the War of Independence fought between the British and the IRA, and resulted in the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, granting Ireland home rule. Meanwhile, starting with the proposal of the Home Rule Act, the Protestant community in Ulster grew exceedingly worried over the future of the island and its place in the Union. In response they tried to ensure that Ulster would remain with the Union and succeeded when this demand was acceded to in the Act of 1920, which consequently led to the partition of Ireland (Darby, 1995).

The Partition

Following the Government of Ireland Act, civil war broke out on the island between the supporters of the Act and its opposers, who felt defrauded. This civil war ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Ireland but also led to six of the nine counties of Ulster (Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Derry – also referred to as Londonderry - and Tyrone) to become the province of Northern Ireland (Darby, 1995*)*. Around two thirds of the population in Northern Ireland at that time were Protestant as opposed to a one third Catholic minority. While the IRA kept campaigning for a united, independent Ireland, institutions were created in Northern Ireland to ensure Unionist control over the region. Under this system Catholics faced constant institutionalised discrimination. The parliament in Stormont was set up so Unionists would always retain the majority, obvious gerrymandering was practised to prevent any Catholic majorities even in Catholic districts, and the police force was almost exclusively Protestant. The Catholics' situation improved slightly after Westminster launched free secondary education throughout the state, which led to the development of a Catholic middle class and consequently to the civil rights movement in the 1960s (Darby, 1995). However, grave discrepancies remained, especially concerning housing, education, and employment and the accumulated tensions finally erupted in the Troubles.

The Troubles

The civil war named the Troubles began in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and the death toll counts around 3500 people - a large number of which were civilians - and left tens of thousands injured[2]. The fights involved several paramilitary groups from Unionist and Irish republican sides, as well as the British Armed Forces and Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) -the Ulster police forces. In the years between 1969-2001 republicans killed 2060, Loyalists/Unionists 1016, the British Forces 363, and others account for 89 deaths (O'Ruairc, 2011). Numerous events were part of the Troubles with the key events being the civil rights campaign, internment, the Ulster Workers' Council strike, the hunger strike, and finally the peace process which continues to this day (Melaugh, n.d.)[3].

The civil rights campaign, based in Derry, lasted from 1968 until 1972 and took the form of street demonstrations organised by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association. Catholics took in thousands to the streets in order to demonstrate against the discrimination they faced and to pressurise the Unionist government to improve their situation. When one of the marches was prohibited in late 1968, the demonstrators took to the streets regardless and the protest was consequently broken up with batons by the RUC. The violence with which the situation was handled provoked an outrage and from then on, the marches attracted even more demonstrators. Further violence, as well as the emergence of the provisional IRA, resulted in the British government sending armed forces to the province and forcing the Stormont government to introduce reforms. The end of the mass demonstrations for civil rights came in January 1972 when 13 demonstrators were shot dead by the British Army, an event widely known as 'Bloody Sunday' (Melaugh, n.d.).

Along with the British Forces came internment. Internment was a measure introduced by the British government on behalf of the Stormont government to contain the Troubles, and it was a process by which people suspected of being members of illegal paramilitary groups could be arrested and held without trial. Contrary to its purpose, internment served to antagonise the conflict. This was partly because measures were taken almost exclusively against Catholics while widely ignoring Unionist

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2   A list of deaths from 1969 to 2017, which is updated on a regular basis can be found Malcolm Sutton's Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland.

3   For a more detailed account of the Troubles refer to, for example, McKittrick & McVea, *Making sense of the Troubles: A History of the Northern Ireland Conflict*, 2012.

violence, and also because a considerable number of detainees were later proven to not be members of any paramilitary groups and had to be let go. Due to the one-sidedness of the internment application, support for the IRA rose, as well as the level of civil unrest and potential political solutions were hindered. Internment ended in December 1975 (Melaugh, n.d.).

Another key event in the Troubles was the Ulster Workers' Council (UWC) strike, taking place for 15 consecutive days in May 1974. It followed the emergence of the IRA and the deterioration of the security situation in Northern Ireland. Feeling betrayed by the British government and threatened by the reforms benefitting the Catholic communities in the province, which led to the introduction of the first power-sharing government in Northern Ireland, the Unionists discontent rose. After several strikes aimed at achieving political change, the UWC strike succeeded in bringing down the power-sharing government and put Northern Ireland back under direct rule from Westminster (Melaugh & McKenna, n.d.).

The UWC's strike however, was not the only notable strike during the Troubles. Another strike marking a key point in the development of the Troubles was the hunger strike in 1981, when Republican prisoners decided to starve themselves to gain back the status of political prisoners. Concretely, they had five demands they wanted to see fulfilled in order to end their self-imposed ordeal: the right to wear civilian clothing, to have free associations in the cell blocks, to not do prisoner's work, to restore remission of sentence, and to have recreational, as well as educational facilities. The strike started with the then-leader of the IRA, Bobby Sanders, refusing to eat in March 1981 and ended in October of the same year, with 10 prisoners starved to death. While not all of the demands were met, concessions were made, and active and tacit support for the IRA, as well as political support for Sinn Féin soared (Melaugh, n.d.).

The British government led several initiatives to settle the situation in Northern Ireland all of which featured power-sharing elements between the Catholics and Protestants and shattered on opposition in the province. At last, when no progress could be made, the British government reached an agreement with the government of the Republic of Ireland – the Anglo-Irish-Agreement (AIA) - bestowing a consultative role on the Republic of Ireland and institutionalising the cooperation between the two states, which was an important step in pathing the way for the peace process (Darby, 2003).

The Peace Process

Following decades of violence and numerous settlement attempts, the peace process finally began taking shape in the 1990s. Several factors played into the process; the establishment of cooperation between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, collaboration between the SDLP and SF under the leadership of respectively John Hume and Gerry Adams, increased willingness to compromise from Loyalist paramilitary groups and their political wings, and the involvement of the US government. Slowly the peace process was on the way through two different channels, one through the constitutional parties of Northern Ireland, and the other one through underhand talks between the British government and the IRA, as well as between the Irish Prime Minister at that time and senior SF members. These talks led to the agreement of both states that Northern Ireland was to determine itself whether to stay part of the Union or become part of the Republic (Darby, 2003).

In 1994 a ceasefire by the IRA was followed by the same move of Loyalist paramilitary groups. However, the peace process was stalled over the demand for decommissioning of weapons, which the IRA refused, and subsequently ended the ceasefire by detonating a bomb in London, killing two and injuring dozens despite prior warnings (BBC, 1996). While slowing down the peace process, this did not stop it entirely and it gained momentum again in 1997 when Tony Blair became Prime Minister in the UK and brought the formerly excluded SF into the peace negotiation process. Working on the Good Friday Agreement, the Unionists never negotiated directly with SF, while SF contributed relatively little to the negotiations themselves as they were weary of another assembly. Despite the different ideas of what power sharing should look like between the two communities in the new executive, the Good Friday Agreement was sent out to the households of Ireland to vote on in April 1998 (Darby, 2003). The Good Friday Agreement contained six main constitutional issues: the legitimate choice of the people of Northern Ireland to freely decide with the majority of the population whether to belong to the UK or the Republic of Ireland; that it is solely the right of the people of Ireland, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if the majority of the population in Northern Ireland decides on it; acknowledgement of the current wish of the majority of the population of Northern Ireland to remain part of the Union with the UK; affirmation of both parliaments to support and introduce legislation,

should the majority of the population in Northern Ireland wish to become part of a united Ireland in the future; affirmation that the power of the sovereign government with jurisdiction in Northern Ireland shall be exercised with impartiality on behalf of all the population of the province; and acknowledgement of the birth right of all people of Northern Ireland to identify as either British, Irish, or both (Good Friday Agreement, 1998). Both, the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voted in favour of the Agreement with a considerable majority of 71.1% and 94.4% respectively in May 1998 (Northern Ireland Elections, 1998) and thus the Good Friday Agreement was implemented, and a fragile peace could be established. Yet, unresolved issues such as decommissioning, demilitarisation, and policing continued to hamper the process, and by 2002 the executive and assembly in the province were dissolved and Northern Ireland was once again under direct rule from Westminster (Darby, 2003). One of the toughest points in overcoming the Troubles was the issue of the IRA decommissioning, which they refused until a political settlement was reached, but which the Unionists demanded to happen before entering any talks with the IRA. Finally in 2001, the IRA began decommissioning under the surveillance of the Independent International Commission for Decommissioning (IICD), a process announced to be finished by the IICD in September 2005 (Melaugh, n.d.). In 2006, the UK government and all major parties in Northern Ireland negotiated the St Andrews Agreement in order to restore political institutions in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office, 2006) and consequently the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) was re-established in 2007.

Since the time of the Troubles, a lot of progress has been made in the peace process. Yet, a lot still has to be done, which was illustrated by the renewed suspension of the NIA in 2017 and by the aftermath of the Troubles still claiming victims in the present.

2.3. The Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) is a devolved legislative body of the UK, responsible for creating laws and scrutinising ministerial and governmental departments. The latest version of the NIA in the legislative period from 2016-2017 consisted of nine statutory committees and seven standing committees (NIA, n.d.). It

was established in 1998 as a consequence of the decisions made in the Good Friday Agreement, and features four main elements of power sharing between unionists and nationalists (NIA, n.d.). The first one is power sharing at the executive level of the Assembly, which includes a multi-party executive and the joint office of First Minister and deputy First Minister, with one having to be nationalist and the other Unionist. Second, the Single Transferable Vote system is used to ensure Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are represented proportionally. Third, cultural equality of the two main traditions is to be ensured, and fourth, the concept of cross-community support. Cross-community support is a requirement for certain decisions, such as election of the Speaker and deputy Speaker, budget allocations, changes to the rules of the Assembly, and also an Irish language Act and it requires not only majority support but a certain percentage of nationalists and unionists to agree (NIA, n.d.). The legislative and executive powers of the Assembly are dependent on which matters they concern. For the so-called transferred matters, the NIA has full power and the areas include public service administration, such as health and social services, education, and agriculture. Other matters the NIA may govern, are reserved matters, which fall under the competency of the Assembly with the consent of the Secretary of State and concern for example, postal services, import and export controls, and telecommunication services. Matters concerning national security are so-called excepted matters and the NIA does not have power over those (BMA, 2011).

Eight parties were present in the last NIA, namely the Alliance, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), the Green Party, the People before Profit Alliance (PBP), Sinn Féin (SF), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). In addition, one seat was held by an Independent Unionist (NIA, n.d.).

The Democratic Unionist Party
The DUP was founded in 1971 and constitutes the most popular party in Northern Ireland at this time. It evolved out of the Troubles when hardliners from the UUP, dissatisfied with concessions made to the Catholic population, split from the party (Arthur & Cowell-Meyers (b), 2017). For four decades, the party was led by Reverend Ian Paisley, a prominent figure of the Troubles, known for his fundamental protestant

views and absolute opposition to all potential compromises with the Irish nationalists or republicans (Tonge et al., 2014). By 2014 almost a quarter of the party members had joined the DUP as early as the 1970s or 1980s and were joined in the 1990s and 2000s by Unionists, especially former UUP members, dissatisfied with the compromise achieved in the Good Friday Agreement. The historical DUP catered to the interests of a religious, conservative and Unionist electorate with strong ties to the Orange Order and firmly against all compromises with the opposing parties of the Troubles. However, the tone of the party changed, became softer, and Paisley surprised Northern Ireland in 2006 with agreeing to the St Andrews Agreement and thus to a coalition between the DUP and the Irish republican party Sinn Féin. Not only has the DUP grown considerably since its founding as a protest party, it also shifted to more moderate ways of operating. While still being protestant, conservative and Unionist, those aspects have become weaker and the party has evolved to a catch-all party (Tonge et al., 2014).

Concerning the coalition with Sinn Féin, despite everyday dealings with the leftist republican party, old prejudices and distrust are still common. Their stance on the Irish language Act is decidedly negative.

Sinn Féin

In comparison to the DUP, Sinn Féin is much older, with its foundation date in 1905 when all of Ireland was still under British rule. The party's orientation is left-wing, secular, and republican. One has to note that in the context of Irish Republicanism, "republican" refers to the aim of one united Republic of Ireland and may not be used in the colloquial sense, such as in debates about amongst others American politics.

Being part of the republican movement in Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin had close ties with the IRA during the Troubles and was regarded as its political wing (Arthur & Cowell-Meyers (a), 2017), however the party distanced itself from the military movement towards the end of conflict. Outlawed in the UK until 1974 due to its ties with the IRA, the party gained political traction in the 1980s when it shifted to more political and parliamentary strategies. By working together with the SDLP, Sinn Féin led by Gerry Adams at that time, helped forge the compromise that led to the Good Friday Agreement and consequently the decommissioning of the IRA.

Ever since the St Andrews Agreement and the establishment of the NIA, Sinn Féin came in a clear second after the DUP in the NIA elections, being only one seat behind them in the snap elections of March 2017 (Arthur & Cowell-Meyers (a), 2017). In addition to its seats in the NIA, SF does have seats in the House of Commons in the British parliament. However, the party has a long tradition of abstaining from taking up their seats out of principle. Sinn Féin is one of the parties strongly campaigning for an Irish language Act.

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

The UUP is the oldest Unionist party in Northern Ireland and constituted every government in Stormont from the partition of the island until the province came under direct rule of the British in 1972. Originating from the Ulster Unionist Council, founded in 1905 to ensure Ulster's place in the UK, the party holds strong Unionist values and can otherwise be classified as conservative. During the Troubles, the UUP frequently opposed concessions made to the Catholic community, as well as the Anglo-Irish-Agreement and organised protests and other activities. However, these activities only produced limited results and in the beginning of the 1990s the UUP joint peace talks with the Irish and British governments, and other parties in Northern Ireland, except SF who the UUP avoided talks with until the end of the decade over the issue of decommissioning (Cowell-Meyers & Arthur, 2017). Under the leadership of David Trimble, the UUP agreed to the Good Friday Agreement together with seven other parties, excluding the DUP. Priorly the strongest unionist party in the province, the UUP's support dwindled after the Good Friday Agreement, which many Unionists disagreed with and during the last elections in March 2017, the UUP's seats dropped to only ten in the NIA and the party lost its representation in the House of Commons (Cowell-Meyers & Arthur, 2017). Like the other Unionist parties, the UUP is completely opposed to the introduction of an Irish language Act.

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

The SDLP was founded amidst the civil rights movement in August 1970 and played a major part in the struggle for peace in Northern Ireland. From the beginning, the SDLP advocated for a peaceful way to resolve the conflict. They state to be working for a

conflict-free, just, and equal Ireland for all its people (SDLP, n.d.) and concerning their values, the party can be described as labour, left-leaning and Irish nationalist. The SDLP's most prominent figure is John Hume, who is one of the founding members of the party and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1998, together with John Trimble of the UUP, for his efforts in the Northern Ireland peace process, as well as the Ghandi Peace Prize and the Martin Luther King Award (SDLP, n.d.). During the Troubles, the SDLP stood by its wish to reach a peaceful solution, yet also thought that peace could not be reached without help from outside of Northern Ireland. Thus, the SDLP established connections with the Republic of Ireland, European partners, and Irish Americans. Furthermore, Hume himself made efforts to dissuade SF from utilising violent means to reach their goals and together with Gerry Adams he issued a statement about the "three-stranded approach" to peace, involving Northern Ireland, Britain, and the Republic of Ireland (Arthur & Cowell-Meyers, 2018). Once the biggest party representing the Catholic electorate, the SDLP started losing votes to SF ever since the Good Friday Agreement and after the last elections its seats in the Assembly was only half the number of 1998. The party strongly supports and advocates for an ILA.

Concerning the four smaller parties in the Assembly, the PBP, the Alliance, and the Greens support the calls for an Irish language Act, while the TUV voices strong opposition to it (The Irish News, 2017).

3. Theoretical Framework

To understand the spread of the values on which arguments in the NIA are founded and the mechanisms through which actors in the Assembly seek to persuade their audience based on their perception of social reality this chapter introduces the concepts of world society theory, and epistemic governance.

3.1. World Society Theory & World Culture

As its name indicates, world society theory works with the assumption of society being entwined in a global network, shaping the thoughts and deeds of the actors within it

(Meyer 2007). Individuals, organisations, as well as nation states may appear as actors and what constitutes actorhood is the strengthened position of those involved, as well as their enhanced understanding of the scientific and rational nature of their surroundings (Meyer, 2010). These brings about an awareness for mutual interdependence and despite the lack of a 'world state', actors follow global standards of what is perceived as appropriate behaviour. The relevance of world society theory for this thesis stems from its potential to explain the spread of values, based on which actors formulate their arguments concerning the implementation of an Irish language Act in Northern Ireland.

In comparison with the either anarchic or networked world presupposed by realist theories, world society theory presumes the cultural transcendence of social reality and emphasises the importance of causal links (Meyer et al., 1997). There are three indicators suggesting that this is the case: the first is that actors, such as nation states, IGOs or NGOs, often act and justify their actions on the basis of global models. The second is that these global models enjoy a high level of consensus around the world and are permeating in nature while the third is that the models are assumed to be practicable worldwide (Meyer et al., 1997).

According to world society theory, world models have an essential impact on national, regional, and local policies, and changes in accepted world models lead to changes in local ones. Furthermore, world models emphasise citizens' virtue and motivate states to be work towards being perceived as righteous (Meyer, 2007). They can be identified through three characteristics. First, nation states present themselves as 'good', in the sense that they no longer openly strive for expansion but emphasise working for the benefit of their people. Second, the citizens of a state are referred to in standardised ways, as a people who collectively aim for the progress of society. Finally, people are defined as individuals, who constitute the centre of state policies and have rights to equality and justice, which are constantly expanding (Meyer, 2007). With the spread of global models comes the rise of "scientization" and rationalisation, and since science is perceived as trustworthy it is frequently used to legitimate actor behaviour (Drori et al., 2009).

Within the world society theory framework there is the concept of world culture. World culture is the social reality constructed around the perception of the world as an entity (Boli, 2005). However, it is necessary to point out that for a constituent to be

considered as world-cultural, it does not have to occur everywhere. Boli (2005) argues the most outstanding characteristics of contemporary world culture to be rationale, organisation, and universality. Examples for the spread of world culture can be found, amongst others, in the area of human rights. Here, it is notable that countries not implementing them partly or at all in practice still commit to them in theory, for it is considered the norm to be perceived as a modern state. Elliot (2014) answers the question of why this particular ideology spread worldwide with the expansion of the perception of the 'sacred' individual. The consistently rising value of the individual in contemporary society morally compels actors to protect the rights of said individuals, and it is notable that the discourse around human rights took off almost simultaneously with the rise of the importance of the individuum (Elliot, 2014).

While world society theory provides substantial explanations for the global spread of norms and standard, aspects of it have been criticised for being inadequate in one way or another. As explained by Hasselbladh and Kallinikos (2000), world society theory focuses too much on some aspects, such as diffusion, while leaving other issues practically untouched. They address the gap between theoretical explanations and empirical praxis, in which the theory is often formulated too generally and idealistically to guide empirical research (Hasselbladh & Kallinikos, 2000). Furthermore, Alasuutari and Qadir discuss the lack of attention being paid to agency, and how actors attempt to influence others through affecting their ambitions and convictions (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). In response to this issue, they developed the 'epistemic governance' approach, which is used in this thesis to give insight into actor behaviour in the debate on the Irish language Act in Northern Ireland.

3.2. Epistemic Governance and Imageries

While world society theory serves as background framework for the spread of the values and goals underlying the Irish language Act discussion, the epistemic governance approach is used in this thesis to give insight into how actors in the Northern Ireland Assembly aim to persuade their audience based on their presumed perception of the world. Originating from Ancient Greek, "epistemic" refers to knowledge, understanding or science. Epistemic governance emphasises governance through influencing others'

conception of the world. Actors wishing to influence their target audience do so by appealing to the audience's common conception of the world and the events around them, and then seek to utilise and shape these to gain a favourable outcome (Alasuutari & Qadir, forthcoming). Furthermore, the term "governance" refers to anyone's actions aiming at influencing others' behaviour, and with it the political environment as a whole. It is not meant to be an exclusive term for formal decision-making bodies only. Not only does the actor strive to shape others' conception of the world, they also have an understanding of reality themselves, and are often convinced that their actions are necessary and righteous. Epistemic governance is visible best when actors are appealing to people's hopes and ambitions, however the threat or use of violence constitutes an attempt to influence people's perception of reality too (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014).

The discursive process of epistemic governance works with three "objects of epistemic work", ontology of the environment, actors and identifications, as well as norms and ideals, which have paradigmatic and practical dimensions (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). The paradigmatic dimension is our basis for the comprehension of facts regarding particular policies, it is a fundamental understanding of what for example, categories such as "society" mean. This background understanding then allows us to comprehend actions performed in the practical dimension (Alasuutari & Qadir, forthcoming). The first object of epistemic work, ontology of the environment, refers to the perception of the situation at hand shared by the audience and actor, meaning every person involved has a concept of how the world works, which they consider accurate. The second aspect of actors and identifications is in regard to how people think about themselves and others. It focuses on how they perceive themselves, what groups they identify with and who the other actors in the social world are (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). The last object of epistemic work concerns the shared values actors appeal to when trying to convince others of their. Of the three objects, this one is paramount in the thesis, albeit all epistemic work requires all three objects. Working with the third object of epistemic work, actors refer to commonly shared principals, moral obligations, and social criteria of what one is allowed to do or not allowed to do (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014). Such principles and values include freedom, equality, and rationality, as well as loyalty towards one's own group (people from the same community, e.g. compatriots) and their spread can be explained with world society theory (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014).

The paradigmatic dimension of this object of epistemic work constitutes a background understanding of the meaning of 'desirable' and 'right', which originates in the moral ideas of rights and responsibilities inherent to humans. By reinforcing this background understanding through rhetorical means practical arguments are formed with the purpose of influencing an audience to support or oppose a certain action. Epistemic work based on norms and ideals gains effectiveness through the ostensible self-evidence of the values it appeals to, through appealing to comprehensions about religious, or highly emotional precepts, and by invoking rationality and scientific evidence (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2014).

To briefly exemplify how epistemic work is done imagine a politician wanting to have themselves elected with the slogan "if the economy does well, we all do well". They first presume that their electorate has an understanding of what the economy is (first object of epistemic work). Furthermore, they appeal to the identification of their electorate as a community in which they also include themselves: "we all" will do better (second object of epistemic work). Lastly, they work with the assumption that their electorate wants prosperity for all, as it appeals to the shared ideal that everyone is equal and deserves the same chances (third object of epistemic work).

Furthermore, according to the epistemic governance approach, actors understand the world through so-called imageries. Imageries are "configurations of metaphors articulated with a policy rationale, typically easily captured in images" (Alasuutari & Qadir, forthcoming). Drawing on the concepts of Brown's 'root metaphors' - helping people to understand and work with the world around them and others (Brown, 1976) - as well as Taylor's 'social imaginaries' (Taylor, 2004), these imageries are narratives that outline a more or less coherent perception of the terms in which people view social reality. They are based on combining root-metaphors with motivations for an action or policy. Moreover, actors work with the premise that others perceive the world in similar ways to them and act accordingly (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). While until now the literature mostly focuses on nation states, this thesis addresses how imageries are employed on the provincial stratum. So far, Alasuutari and Qadir (2016) have identified three basic imageries of social reality; a modernising society striving for development, society competing in blocs against each other, and society organised in a hierarchy of power.

Imagery of progress

The first imagery is based on the belief that for a state to stay up-to-date it has to develop with the rest of the world. The reasoning is rooted in the Darwinian ideas of evolution, where the "fittest" organism is able to pass on its legacy, and when actors invoke this imagery they often appeal to the authority of science. In accordance with the imagery of progress, states have to keep up with the progress of other states to be perceived as modern and acknowledged as successful (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). The assumption when employing this imagery is that no state wants to be perceived as backward. Thus, once the need for reform has been pointed out, it makes for a powerful argument to convince others of the need for new policies, based on the idea of modernisation (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). When utilising this imagery, actors traditionally address their audience as a community, sharing common interests, and often also seek to portray interests of one particular group as common concerns.

An example of the imagery of progress can be seen in the PISA tests, where states change their educational policies based on the results of the study because they believe they need to match the most successful countries or keep up their success in order to progress (Rautalin & Alasuutari, 2009).

Imagery of competing blocs

The imagery of competing states or blocs assumes that different groups are in contest with one another and act to pursue their individual goals. According to this perception of society, what moves the international system is egoism, groupism and self-interest, with high-order ideals being subordinate to national interests (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). It pictures society as warring tribes against each other, which sows suspicions towards 'others' and their actions, implying that they compromise or hinder 'our' prosperity and at the same time it aims to create or reinforce a feeling of community for the members of 'our' group. It is a discourse not limited to nation states but also frequently found in other settings (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016).

This imagery of competing blocs often becomes visible in for example, far right-wing political discourse about immigration especially from Muslim countries, where politicians argue that "we", the hardworking Christian and/or secular community, have

to protect our values and nations against "them", the lazy Muslims, coming to take advantage of "our" welfare systems and trying to undermine "our" beliefs.

Imagery of a hierarchical society

Lastly, the third imagery perceives the world as organised according to a spatial hierarchy with a clear chain of command in which the elites, such as governments, stand at the top and command. This is characterised as a spatial imagery, because society is divided into different levels -global, national, and local - according to the power they hold (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). This imagery obtains its rhetorical influence from the applicant's ability to use it to either appeal to or blame an authority above them for certain actions that need to be taken or for implementing reforms. Examples for utilising this imagery can be seen, amongst others, when people with less power delegate responsibility to higher-ups by employing the argument that they are not able to act against the chain of command and just follow orders, and it is fairly commonly employed in political discourse (Alasuutari & Qadir, 2016). It is possible to observe this for example, when Greek PM Tsipras blamed the EU and the IMF for the stalling recovery of his country's economy, by claiming that the continuous disagreements between the two institutions were to blame for unfavourable investment conditions in Greece (Georgiopoulos, 2016)

To contribute to the research on the linguistic dimension of the conflict in Northern Ireland, as well as to literature on epistemic governance, I use this approach to analyse the political debate on the Irish language Act in Northern Ireland to ascertain how its mechanisms work on the local level.

4. Data & Methodology

This chapter illustrates what kind of data-set was used and the reasoning behind the choice and further contains an explanation of the data-organisation process, as well as a description of the data-set. Furthermore, I explain the methodology utilised to analyse the data, namely political discourse analysis.

4.1. The Data

My data-set consists of Hansard Reports, the official reports of the Northern Ireland Assembly, containing mentions of the Irish language Act dating from 2007 until 2017, from the time the NIA was re-instated until it was dissolved. The reports are named after Thomas Curson Hansard, who published unofficial reports of parliamentary debates in the UK at a time when it was still punishable by law and contributed thereby to the development of free speech. Since 1909 Hansards are common practice in the UK and nowadays they are common practice also in the UK's devolved regional parliaments, as well as in other parts of the world (Farrel & Vice, n.d.). The report is essentially a verbatim transcript of everything said and decided on in the plenary sessions of the assembly (NIA, n.d.). Some light editing is done to remove repetitions, palpable mistakes, and minor formalities; however, this is carried out without changing the meaning of statements (UK Parliament, n.d.)

I chose this kind of data for several reasons. First, the decision to work with parliamentary debates is based on the significance of those very debates. In a democracy, parliamentary debates serve as a process of legitimation for the governing parties in which they symbolically gather support from the members of parliament (MPs) for decisions made and where they acknowledge the responsibility for said decisions (Alasuutari & Qadir, forthcoming). The debates are usually prepared in advance and the outcome is often already clear before the start of the session, so the nature of these debates is mostly performative and lacks flexibility (Rasch, 2011). Despite their ritualised character parliamentary debates provide worthwhile data for research since they operate as a public forum for the politicians to articulate their arguments in a way that is not only convincing from a logical point of view, but also morally acceptable. This means that through these debates, politicians set a frame for how an issue can be discussed by the public. After all, the debates are not for a handful of MPs only but designed to reach a wide audience through broadcasting, or the possibility to spectate (Tiaynen-Qadir et al., 2018). Even though the parliamentary debate in itself is hardly determining the result of a bill and debate about an issue does not necessarily lead to the immediate improvement of the situation at hand, the purpose

of these displayed arguments is to establish norms and standards aiming at improving society (Alasuutari & Qadir, forthcoming).

In addition to its significance as parliamentary debates, the data is naturally occurring and has not yet been interpreted by other researchers or journalists, avoiding another layer of interpretation in-between. Furthermore, besides being naturally occurring, the data is also readily available and can be downloaded from the homepage of the assembly. Through this, it is possible to get the set in an organised form relatively fast, without the necessity of havint to travel to its physical location and scanning an archive. Lastly, the data-set is free of charge and as such allows for cost-efficient research.

The time span I have chosen stretches from the reopening of the NIA in 2007 until its dissolution in 2017. The re-establishment of the NIA in 2007 was preceded by the St Andrews Agreement, which Sinn Féin is convinced envisaged an Irish language Act. Therefore, this seems the perfect starting point for the conduction of my research. Furthermore, the topic was still controversial just before the dissolution of the assembly, thus debates until 2017 are relevant for the analysis.

All of the data is available online and most of it is stored in PDF format, making it easy to search for certain keywords to gain an overview over which documents are relevant to the thesis or not. However, all the files of the legislative period from 2007, and some of the period from 2007-08 are only obtainable in HTML format. In these cases, I first copied the content of the HTML files into text documents, which then allowed me to search for keywords. There is a different number of reports for each legislative period. These periods normally start in September and end in June, or occasionally July, of the next year, the two exceptions here being the first period of the new assembly in 2007 which lasted from May until August of 2007, and the last period that ended prematurely in March 2017. Another exception can be found in the data of the year 2011, where the Hansard reports of the months of May and June of the previous legislation period, are saved on the web page in the legislation period from 2011-2012.

Concerning the organisation of the data: giving the vastness of the data-set, I first limited the reports to the ones of relevance for my study. For this purpose, I searched for certain keywords. Those were "Irish Language Act", "Irish Language",

"Gaelic/Gaeilge", "Ulster Scots/ Ulster-Scots", "Scottish Gaelic", "Welsh" and "Cornish". I chose these key words because they are either directly or indirectly related to the content of my thesis. The first four concerning the issue of minority languages in Northern Ireland, and the other three referring to other minority languages in the UK. This was to ensure that the language debate is seen in a proper context. After realising that "Cornish" was not used in reference to the Irish Language Act debate, I stopped including it in the search. The same, I did later with "Welsh" and "Scottish Gaelic" because "Welsh" did not yield notable results concerning language policies, and in the few cases MPs mentioned Scottish Gaelic it could be found with the key word of "Gaelic" as well and hence there was no need for the additional keyword.

Documents without any hits for these words have been sorted out, and a I only marked a hit, when it seemed to be directly related to language concerns, not e.g. when it appears as a simple adjective, for example, "the Welsh Minister" or when Gaelic comes up in the context of the Gaelic Athletic Association, which was frequently the case. Since I did not know how much material I would find in the beginning of the sorting process, I considered analysing documents that do not refer directly to the Irish language Act, but to the Irish language in general. In the end however, I decided to limit it to the documents explicitly including referrals to an ILA, since it allowed me to analyse a universal sample, while at the same time keeping the data-set tractable. Thus, the analysis focuses on documents containing the words "Irish language Act" in English. On occasion the Irish Language Act is also referred to as Acht na Gaeilge, its Gaelic term. I do not analyse these paragraphs directly though, since it is mostly embedded in a speech held in the Irish language, and I do not have the language skills necessary to evaluate it. However, since the MLAs speaking in Irish give a translation in the Assembly, it can safely be assumed that content-wise no aspect of the debate is overlooked. In the end, I obtained a data-set of 53 documents with 186 mentions of the Irish language Act in English in total for analysis, which constitutes a universal sample of the data available. The chosen unit of analysis are paragraphs, as this makes it possible to establish some context to the debates, while avoiding obtaining too much information unrelated to the aim of the thesis. Consequently, I investigated the paragraphs mentioning the ILA and respectively the ones before and after. The total number of paragraphs to analyse amounted to 326.

Following the sorting process, I examined the sectors of the debates in which the Act was mentioned, as well as the party memberships of the members of the NIA who speak about it. The appearances of "Irish language Act" in the transcripts range from a short reference to the issue in the middle of some paragraph to full on discussions on the Irish language in Northern Ireland. It is mentioned in different sectors of the debates, the most frequent of which are "Culture, Arts, and Leisure" -18 times, "Executive Committee Business" -six times, "Ministerial Statement" -eight times, and "Private Member's Business" -14 times. In addition to these it is mentioned twice under "Assembly Business", "Office of the First and deputy First Minister", and "Committee Business" and once under "Education", "Opposition Business", and under no specific section, categorised as "None". The debates referring to the ILA are often about language strategies, but it is also brought up when discussing various other topics, as can be viewed in Table 1 of the appendix.

All research was conducted according to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (ALLEA, 2017) to ensure the thesis is up to the general ethical and professional standards. In addition, it fulfils the conditions for ethical research conduct in social sciences described in the 'Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences, Humanities, Law and Theology' provided by the Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees (2016).

4.2. Political Discourse Analysis

The methodological framework applied to this study is political discourse analysis based on the works of Fairclough and Fairclough (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013), and I analyse the arguments of the debate according to Walton's structure for practical arguments (Walton, 2007).

The definition of discourse in social sciences varies from its every-day application, in which it is normally used correspondingly to 'discussion' or is considered to mean a 'mode of talking' (Hajer, 1995). However, in social sciences the meaning of discourse is more precise and yet varied. It may be understood in relation to the social practices in which the discourse is produced, or be comprehended as an assemblage of

ideas, thoughts, and classifications (Hajer, 1995). In this paper, I use Hajer's definition of the concept with discourse being a

specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities. (Hajer, 1995)

Discourse analysis is a term frequently used in qualitative research and it has about as many definitions, as it has applications. In general, discourse analysis shows four common characteristics: the text occurs naturally, words are comprehended in their context, non-literal meaning or power of words is taken into account, and the social consequences of the utilised words are unveiled (Antaki, 2008). Discourse analysis permits the understanding of meanings, agency, and structures but also the synergy between those three. Apart from traditional discourse analysis, there is also critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis differentiates from traditional discourse analysis in that it focuses on the relation between power and discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

In this paper, I focus on one specific kind of critical discourse analysis, namely political discourse analysis. Based on Fairclough and Fairclough (2013), political discourse analysis perceives political discourse foremost as a manner of argumentation, especially practical argumentation used to support or oppose a cause. Hereby, they work with the premise of choice - according to circumstances and goals - being the main issue politics is concerned with, and these very choices are built on practical argumentation (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013). In summary, political discourse analysis can be comprehended as the analysis of political discourse from an angle concentrating on the replication, as well as the challenging of political power (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013).

Concerning the structure of a practical argument in political discourse analysis, it consists of three components: the goal, the values supporting the goal, and the measure whose application will result in achieving the goal (Walton, 2007). Or, to shortly illustrate:

Scheme for Value-Based Practical Reasoning

I have a goal *G*.

G is supported by my set of values, *V*.

Bringing about *A* is necessary (or sufficient) for me to bring about *G*.

Therefore, I should (practically ought to) bring about *A*. (Walton,2007)

In this case study, I have identified three values (V) shared by the opponents and supporters of the ILA. These values are the foundation of the goals (G) aimed at by the representatives in the Assembly. The means (A) by which these goals can be brought about are twofold, either by implementing an Irish Language Act or by preventing the implementation of this very act. The values found in these practical arguments correspond to the third object of epistemic work, the shared norms and ideals. From these values it is possible to identify the underlying imageries based on which the various actors formulate their arguments, so whether they perceive society as a modernising society, a society of competing blocs, society as a hierarchy, or maybe something else entirely. In the following analysis I use the structure of value-based practical reasoning to dissect the arguments presented in the Assembly and order them in categories based on the third object of epistemic work. I then describe the various goals the actors aspire to reach based on these values and how the introduction or prevention of an ILA can achieve them. Subsequently, I identify the actors' imageries of society based on how they debate the shared norms and ideals. Furthermore, the various steps of the analysis are illustrated by extracts of the reports.

5. Case Study: Values and Imageries in the Irish language Act Debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Investigating the data-set, it is noticeable that the discourse around the ILA has changed only marginally in the years from 2007 to 2017 and that effectively there was no progress on the issue since the establishment of the NIA until its dissolution. Despite the many categories under which the issue was mentioned, the nature of the arguments does not change in content, but only in length per speaker, according to the minutes available to each, which differ from section to section and depending on party size and position in the assembly. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the issue is mostly discussed by

members of the four most established parties in the assembly - the DUP, the UUP, the SDLP, and Sinn Féin. On occasions contributions to the discussion are also made by members of the Alliance Party, as well as by independent members.

I have identified three core values, which lay the foundation for the practical arguments made in favour or against the ILA, namely equality, justice, and peace. These three values underlying the practical arguments, correspond directly to the third object of epistemic work, which are the norms and ideals a society is rightly assumed to share. The actors engage in epistemic work by appealing to these values as foundation for their arguments in order to persuade their audience and said arguments can be made sense of only in the context of the shared norms and ideals. This means that for example, basing an argument on the value of peace is a reasonable thing to do in contemporary societies, which condemn violent conflicts and it is bound to resonate with the vast majority of the audience. However, in the past when war was seen as glorious, and battle was the way of, for example, obtaining a place at the table with the gods in Valhalla like in Nordic and Germanic mythology (Anderson & Sturluson, 2006), basing an argument on the value of peace would have made less of an impact, since the societal norms were different. A good explanation for the dissemination of the three identified values as shared norms and ideals can be provided by world society theory. Naturally, these values are not entirely separable from each other as they are interconnected and, for example, a goal based on the value of equality might lead to a similar outcome as another goal based on the value of justice although they are articulated differently in the arguments. However, for the sake of comprehensibility the three values are analysed under separate headings in this thesis.

As to the practical arguments based on the values of equality, justice, and peace, I have identified several goals in accordance to Watson's structure for value-based practical arguments. These goals are articulated by the members of the NIA as achievable through the implementation or prevention of an ILA. Their articulations in turn enabled me to extrapolate the imageries of society invoked by the actors in the NIA, and to explore which imageries are utilised most frequently by both sides in the debate, as well as by individual actors. The frequency of an imagery used allows me to draw conclusions about how the Northern Irish society is assumed to perceive its world by the actors in the NIA. While some of the goals may be based on more than one value,

I categorise them under the predominant one in the name of which they occur in the discourse. First, I analyse the arguments founded on the value of equality by identifying their goals, and the imageries used in the debate. Then, I continue the same process for the values of justice, and peace and conclude this chapter with a short insight into noticeable tendencies when invoking imageries on the individual and party level.

5.1. Value of Equality

Equality is a reoccurring value in the debates about the ILA over the analysed time span. It certainly stands out as a shared ideal, as all parties advocate for its importance and base their arguments on the perception of equality being a common value in society. I have identified three goals aimed at by the Members of the NIA in the name of equality: to end discrimination, to protect cultural heritage, and to use resources prudently.

Goal of Ending Discrimination

Ending discrimination is the ascribed goal of both, pro-ILA and contra-ILA debaters. They all advocate bringing an end to discrimination, yet the means on how to do this differ. For one side this means to bring about an ILA, for the other side it is to prevent such an act.

The Assembly members striving for the ILA, primarily from the SDLP and Sinn Féin, raise the issue of the ILA as means to end discrimination of the Gaelic speaking population, which they have been subjected to over centuries. It is brought up together with other issues calling for more equality, such as LGBT rights, poverty, racism, and people with disability. Furthermore, they make a point of native Irish speakers being discriminated against by not being able to use their mother tongue in every aspect of daily life. Not only do they not have the opportunity to use the language, for example, in court or in most offices, but Irish speakers, so the supporters of the Act argue, are often the victims of ridicule and ill-founded prejudice based on their linguistic heritage.

> *...an Irish language Act would give recognition to many children and families who have Irish as their first language. It would end the insults, the offence and some of the*

nonsense that people continue to peddle, all of which are regrettable ... (Ní Chuilín, SF, 12.01.2016)

These problems could be solved through the introduction of the ILA, giving Irish Gaelic a more protected and respected status in society, therefore ending discrimination against speakers, as well as learners of the native tongue of the island.

On the other hand, opponents of the ILA, mostly from the DUP and the UUP, argue that the Act would discriminate against English and Ulster-Scots speakers, by giving Irish a privileged status over the other traditional minority language and the majority language in the region. While this side shares the third object of epistemic work – equality - with supporters of the ILA, they formulate their arguments on the base of language equality already being in place and an ILA threatening to unbalance this equilibrium and creating a discriminatory factor in society through language legislation.

The case for the legislation appears to rest on an assumption that, at present, Irish speakers suffer some form of discrimination. ...In fact, what supporters of the legislation really seek is a privileged position for the Irish language that is impossible to justify. (Browne, 08.11.2010)

They articulate that an ILA would be unjust towards the majority of the community who do not speak Irish and such an Act would discriminate against them by putting the Irish speakers above them. Furthermore, advocates against an ILA also point out the perceived overprivileged status of Irish Gaelic in comparison to Ulster-Scots. Hence, to achieve the goal of ending discrimination and thereby creating a more equal society, it is necessary to prevent further privilege for the Irish language in the form of a language act and distribute resources for traditional minority languages more evenly between the two.

Goal of Protecting Cultural Heritage

The second goal aimed at on the foundation of the value of equality is the protection of cultural heritage. The actors in the NIA work in accordance with the global norm of all cultures being equally valuable and therefore deserving protection (Boli & Lechner,

2005). While both sides articulate their commitment to the protection of cultural heritage, the premises for their arguments differ, and it is an approach more commonly found with the supporters of the ILA.

Favouring an ILA, members of the NIA argue that a language act would protect the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland in form of the Irish language and help its development. They make their point on the premise that Irish Gaelic is not exclusively the "property" of native Irish speakers, but rather that it is the cultural heritage belonging to all the inhabitants of the region equally and that its safeguarding is therefore not to the benefit of one segment of society only, but to Northern Irish society as a whole. Furthermore, they acknowledge the importance of other linguistic legacies in the region, however, assert that an ILA would not infringe on the status of these in any way and that dealing with different languages separately is in the best interest of the respective languages. So, instead of dealing with Ulster-Scots and Irish in a joint language strategy, they argue it to be preferable to take care of each language individually, to be able to tailor the strategy to the needs of the language.

> *The committee of experts observed that the progress of the measures to support the Irish language and Ulster Scots are being held up because of inappropriate claims for parity of treatment for both languages ...I agree with that view. (D. Bradley, SDLP, 08.11.2010)*

Regarding the protection of cultural heritage, comparisons are drawn to the language acts in Wales and Scotland, which would potentially have served as models for an Irish language Act and they are brought forward as positive examples for language legislation.

> *There was quite a bit of discussion on the Scottish and Welsh models in particular and on how, when legislation is brought forward, the rights of those language speakers are enshrined in law… (J. McCann, SF, 02.12.2014)*

In a similar vein, it is also pointed out, how native Irish speakers are the only ones in the UK who do not enjoy rights comparable to their Scottish and Welsh counterparts.

The premise of the contra-ILA argument on the other hand is based on the presumption that an ILA is not necessary for the protection and development of the Irish language. While they do uphold the worth of cultural diversity and cultural heritage, they argue that an ILA would give the Irish heritage a higher status than Ulster-Scots or Unionist culture. Thus, an equitable language strategy for both minority languages is the best measure to protect their linguistic heritage on the basis of equality. Furthermore, those opposed to the Act point to the Republic of Ireland, where they state that popularity of Irish Gaelic is low although it is the official language of the state, while it is on the rise in Northern Ireland, where no such status is granted.

> *... the Irish-speaking community appears to be growing in Northern-Ireland, where we do not have an Irish language Act, and declining in the Republic of Ireland, where there is legislation. (Poots, DUP, 16.10.2007)*

Hence, they argue, language legislation does not necessarily contribute to the protection of cultural heritage and is therefore not needed in the province.

Goal of Prudent Use of Resources

Allocating resources in a prudent manner is a common practical argument, as no politician wants to be seen wasting their electorate's money and it is no different in the province of Northern Ireland. Again, this line of argument is based on the value of equality, as both sides agree that it is the right thing to do and resources should be invested to benefit society as a whole and to contribute to a more equal Northern Irish community. Notably, this argument is exclusively used by the contra-ILA section of the NIA, the reason for which is simple: The supporters of the language act regard expenditure for the act not as a waste but as a worthy investment in the future of the Irish language, the Irish speaking people, and the community in its entirety. On the other hand, those opposed to the ILA make ample use of this argument based on two premises. The first one is that spending money on the language act is a right-out waste of money, and the second one is that there are more important things to take care of first, before money should be invested into linguistic legislation.

The first premise is based on the perception of the Irish language getting enough funding already and that spending even more on it would be irresponsible towards the community. They argue that the Irish language is already sufficiently protected, and has a high enough status, but also that the demand for more Irish in everyday life is too small to justify pumping so many resources into a language act. Furthermore, they articulate that it would be unjust to the majority of the people to invest the money needed for the ILA into a project benefitting only a fragment of society.

> *There is no fairness and equality in doing that. Surely the equitable approach would be to use the money that is set to be wasted on that unnecessary Act on something that would benefit the whole Province ... (Shannon, DUP, 09.10.2007)*

Thus, the implementation of an ILA would amount to an unnecessary waste of money for the privilege of a section of the community.

The second premise on which the argument of the goal of prudent use of resources is founded is the one of more pressing matters at hand. While the actors here do not argue that an ILA is necessarily a waste of resources, they rather point out that other things need to be prioritised. Those include amongst others, housing issues, unemployment, hospitals, and infrastructure and by emphasising the pressing nature of these, the importance of the language act is marginalised. Compared to these urgent matters affecting the whole community, the lack of language legislation is a negligible issue at that time, according to the contra-ILA side.

> *We all need to deliver, particularly for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. ...You cannot eat an Irish language Act. (Purvis, Ind., 05.06.2008)*

The opponents of the ILA claim that the introduction of the language act would deprive the community, both Irish and non-Irish speaking, of essential means. Thus, the language act has to be prevented to ensure the usage of resources in a way that equally benefits the people of the whole region. Here, one reference is also made to Wales, where seemingly concerns were mentioned about the public expenditure due to the Welsh language Act to reinforce their point.

Imageries of society when valuing equality

Two of the so far identified imageries of society, modernising society and society of competing blocs, can be singled out in the debate around the Irish language Act based on the value of equality.

The imagery of society in progress is invoked when arguing for an Irish language Act to end discrimination and to protect cultural heritage. Based on the idea of society striving for modernisation and not wanting to be perceived as backwards, MLAs call for reforms and new policies tackling issues of discrimination, including an Irish language Act, which they portray as necessary to progress.

> *I believe that an Irish language Act is well overdue. For the generations who are waiting for language rights, it would definitely be a sign that this place was moving in the right direction. (Ní Chuilín, SF, 14.09.2015)*

This discourse is tied to the idea of discrimination being a characteristic not fit for a modern society. Therefore, the ILA is necessary to end said discrimination, so Northern Ireland can join the rank of progressive regions in the UK, but also in a wider international frame. Akin to a society without discrimination, a society valuing cultural diversity and heritage is also one of the norms and ideals spread through world models. This is not limited to the majority culture in the region alone, but also emphasises the worth of minority cultures, and by putting effort into their protection and development a region/state complies with one condition of a modern state (Boli & Lechner, 2005). In this case, the lack of an ILA to protect and develop the status of Irish Gaelic is articulated as a failure of the region to advance to a more progressive level.

> *Instead of trying to curtail cultural rights and diversity, we should be trying to facilitate them. The message that we should send out is that we are open to diversity and we facilitate it, not that we are narrow-minded bigots who cannot share our own cultural traditions. (D. Bradley, SDLP, 09.10.2007)*

Especially compared to the rest of the UK where language acts are already in place in both Scotland and Wales, Northern Ireland lacks behind when it comes to equal treatment for native minority language speakers.

Interestingly, there is a Welsh language Act in Wales and a Scots language Act in Scotland. This is the only part of the so-called United Kingdom in which native language speakers do not have the same rights as others. (Adams, SF, 15.11.2010)

The imagery invoked here, is again the one of a progressing society in which the province of Northern Ireland should keep up with the rest of the UK. The supporters of the ILA appeal to their audience's presumed wish of being on an equally modern level with the rest of the state to gain support for their cause. Typically for the utilisation of this imagery, the issue is portrayed to concern all the community of Northern Ireland as opposed to just Irish-speakers alone, to strengthen support for language legislation.

...the language [Irish Gaelic] is cherished, supported and enjoyed by members across the community, ..., including the different Churches. ...; the language belongs to everybody. ...I know that there is overwhelming support from everybody in the community for this [ILA] to be brought forward. (Nì Chuilìn, SF, 14.09.2015)

Concerning the arguments based on the value of equality, the imagery of modernising society is invoked by supporters of the ILA, who portray the Act as necessary for Northern Ireland to progress and address the community as a whole in order for their arguments to carry more weight. In addition to this, the authority of science is invoked by referring to experts who recommend proper language legislation. Furthermore, arguments are also based on statistical evidence, such as surveys, to illustrate demand for an ILA with scientific facts.

Yet, the imagery of society in progress is also utilised by actors opposing the Act, who argue that for society to be able to progress more important things need to be taken care of. They portray an ILA as a potential obstacle in the path of the development of the province, which would take away important resources from issues such as housing, hospitals, or employment and therefore hinder progress in the whole community.

> *I fully support the Minister in his decision not to introduce Irish language legislation. ... I believe that the public would rather that that money was employed to address much more serious issues, such as unemployment, funding of schools and hospitals and financial support for the regeneration of businesses. (Browne, DUP, 08.11.2010)*

By deploying this imagery, they suggest that the public agrees that for the region to progress stability and economic recovery are a priority.

The second imagery invoked by MLAs in the debate around the ILA is the one of competing blocs, which is applied by both supporters and opponents of the legislative proposal. When employed by supporters of Irish language legislation arguing for an ILA to end discrimination, the notion of us vs. them - *Irish speakers vs. non-Irish speakers* - is mostly directed at opposing sides in the NIA rather than at the community. Usage of this imagery aims to illustrate the struggle of Irish speakers to achieve the same rights as their English-speaking counterparts, and fight against the discrimination they are experiencing, by pointing out the challenges Irish language speakers experience in the NIA and in daily life.

> *...no racist, anit-Gaelic racist, or political parties have the right to deny the people of the North of Ireland their right. It is not proper...to show disrespect for the Irish language, Irish speakers or supporters of the Irish language. (Brolly, SF, 09.10.2007)*

Furthermore, characteristically for this imagery, actors try to rally the "team spirit" of the fraction they are representing.

> *...we are optimists, so we are looking for somebody to take a... leap forward into space so that they look on language as non-threatening. ... Those of us who support the irish language and who come from Irish language communities need to keep doing what we are doing ... (Adams, SF, 08.11.2010)*

Used in all three arguments of opponents of the ILA, the imagery of competing blocs is the predominant one in their discourse opposing language legislation based on the value of equality. The notion of *Irish speakers vs. non-Irish speakers,* when aiming

to end discrimination is based on the assumption that non-Irish speakers need to be protected from impending discrimination in case of the implementation of an ILA and that it is in fact other language communities that are discriminated against and lack equal treatment.

> *Under the previous devolved Government, there was a substantial disparity in funding, support and commitment regarding the two languages [Irish and Ulster Scots] ...Therefore, the concept of equality was not there. (McCausland, DUP, 09.10.2007)*

In a similar manner, the imagery is employed when arguing for the protection of cultural heritage without the introduction of an ILA, as well as for the responsible spending of resources. Although the importance of Irish cultural heritage is acknowledged the efforts for an ILA are portrayed to be at the expense of other sectors in the community.

> *Does the Minister agree that, given the serious financial constraints on his Department, had the Irish language Act proceeded, it would have had a detrimental impact on other areas, such as the arts, sport and culture? (Elliot, UUP, 12.11.2007)*

Here, the MLAs opposing an ILA emphasise the competition for limited resources in the province by stating that if too many resources or more rights are given to the Irish-speaking community the majority of the Northern Ireland's population will lose out.

Notably in all three practical arguments; ending discrimination, protecting cultural heritage, and using resources prudently, the imagery used by opponents of the ILA appearing most frequently, is the one of competing blocs. While this is also used by people advocating for the ILA, the imagery predominantly invoked by them is the one of modernising society. This shows that the contra-ILA members of the NIA rely more on separating factors in the society, which they perceive to resonate with their constituency. Instead of portraying the community in Northern Ireland as a whole, they constitute Irish speakers as a separate group competing with the rest of the population in the province for resources, status, and cultural domination. In comparison, the pro-ILA section emphasises the connecting attributes of a shared cultural heritage and the

importance of ending discrimination of minority groups based on language in order to help the region progress and take its place among the other modernised regions in the UK and the EU. Along party lines, the SDLP consistently deploys the imagery of society in progress, as compared to SF, who uses both this, and the imagery of society in competing blocs as foundation for their arguments. Both DUP and UUP commonly rely on the imagery of competing blocs and additionally portray a hierarchical structure in society when it comes to its needs. The Alliance party, as well as some independent MLAs also make use of the hierarchical imagery of society when debating based on the value of equality.

5.2. Value of Justice

The second shared ideal identified in the debates on the ILA and corresponding to the third object of epistemic work is the value of justice. Alike to the value of equality, this is also a value shared by all and various actors in the NIA base the goal of their arguments on the foundation of the perception of justice being an ideal worthy of pursuit. Two goals were identified based on this value in these debates: the first one is the goal of complying with legislation and the second one is the goal of upholding individual rights.

Goal of complying with legislation
When arguing for the importance of complying with legislation, the law is portrayed to uphold the value of justice in society and the laws concerned range from local over national/EU legislation to international law.

Referring to local legislation concerning the ILA, actors point to the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement While there normally is a consensus on the need to comply with these agreements, interpretations of the content of the agreements differ on the subject of language legislation, especially concerning the St Andrews Agreement. The clause referred to in the Good Friday Agreement is mostly article 3:

All participants recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities.... (Good Friday Agreement, 1998, p.24)

Based on this paragraph, a section of the St Andrews Agreement was formulated to read as follows:

The Executive Committee shall adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language. (Northern Ireland Office, 2006, 15 (1), p. 16)

Furthermore, in Annex B to the St Andrews Agreement a clear commitment to an ILA can be found, since it states the following under the section for "Human Rights, Equality, Victims and other Issues":

The Government will introduce an Irish Language Act reflecting on the experience of Wales and Ireland and work with the incoming Executive to enhance and protect the development of the Irish language. (Northern Ireland Office, 2006, Annex B, p.12)

Even though this seems to be a clear statement, strong disagreements become apparent during the debates as to the meaning of these paragraphs. This is because "the government" mentioned in the statement refers to the UK government, which was responsible at the time for the region of Northern Ireland and negotiated the Agreement with Sinn Féin and the DUP. Both parties signed up for the agreement and in the process of devolution responsibility for language protection and development transferred from the UK government to the newly reinstated NIA. So, while the DUP itself never explicitly agreed to an ILA but rather coherently states its opposition to it, by agreeing to the St Andrews Agreement containing the pledge for the language act, they left room for interpretation on their stance.

As to the arguments brought forward by both sides of the debate, the pro-ILA side bases their arguments on the statement in Annex B, which distinctly spells out the

government's commitment to an ILA. Hence, their position is clear and it follows that to reach the goal of complying with the law a language act has to be implemented.

> *... will we have an Executive that will fulfil all their commitments in that agreement [GFA] and the commitments made at St Andrews, which inlcude ... the Irish language Act ... (Nì Chuilìn, SF, 17.11.2008)*

The rhetoric on the contra-ILA side however, is not a unified one. On the one hand, the members of the governing DUP party claim that they never agreed to an ILA, although they were part of the agreement negotiations. They mostly ignore the statement in Annex B when bringing forward their argument, which is that to comply with the law all they need to bring forward is an Irish language strategy - based on the Good Friday Agreement - and 15(1) of the St Andrews Agreement, but not an act. If they do refer to the statement above, then it is only to point out that it was the commitment of the British government to a language act, and not theirs. On the other hand, some members of the opposition who are also opposed to the ILA use Annex B to denounce the governing DUP party. Their argument is that the DUP, by agreeing to the St. Andrews Agreement, is also responsible for agreeing to an ILA and therefore, the governing party is also to blame for the ongoing debate about the issue. An example for this can be found in the question of independent Unionist NIA member Mr. McFarland to the minister of Culture, Arts & Leisure, Mr. Poots, from the DUP:

> *Therefore, does the Minister agree that the discussion on timetabling would be irrelevant had he and his party not agreed to an unnecessary Irish language Act at St Andrews? (McFarland, Ind., 10.09.2007)*

So, while the other members in the NIA coincide with the goal of complying with the law, even though they have different interpretations of what that means, these members of the opposition do not share this regarding local legislation. However, that does not mean that they do not share the value of justice, but rather that they, unlike the other MLAs do not portray this law as just. Furthermore, they have nothing to gain from supporting a law, their electorate presumably does not approve of and which they are

not responsible for since they did not agree to the St Andrews Agreement in the first place.

Nationally, there is no specific language protection legislation established by the UK apart from its commitment to language protection in the St Andrews Agreement. Instead protection is provided by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, which the UK signed and ratified. Every language covered by this charter, has certain rights according to its status, which in the case of Northern Ireland means that Irish has a different status from Ulster Scots. References to EU legislation are made by both sides of the debate, albeit in a different manner. On one hand, the pro-ILA side uses the European Charter to demonstrate that by implementing an ILA but not an Ulster Scots Act, they are complying with EU law, which awards a higher status to Irish than to the other regional language. Since the EU differentiates between the status of the two languages, the NIA has a justification for introducing separate language strategies according to the needs of the two languages, meaning an act for Irish and a separate strategy for Ulster Scots.

> *It [the European charter] notes that the situation of the two languages is quite different here in Northern Ireland and that language measures directed towards each language individually are needed. (D Bradley, SDLP, 15.11.2010)*

Therefore, they are not putting Ulster Scots at a disadvantage, but are merely acting according to the example set by the EU and ratified on the national level.

On the other hand, the contra-ILA side argues that no ILA is necessary, since the Irish language is already so well protected under the EU charter and that therefore, all provisions for the protection and development of the Irish language are already established. Hence, the goal of complying with the law has already been accomplished, and there is no need for a separate language act.

> *Northern Ireland is in full compliance with the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. (MoCAL Campbell, DUP, 12.01.2009)*

Apart from referring to local and national or EU legislation, several references in the debate about the ILA are also made to international law, namely Human Rights

commitments. The Human Rights discussions in the context of establishing an ILA are mostly initiated by those supporting the introduction of a language act, and the contra-ILA side takes a defensive stand in those debates.

The argument of the pro-ILA side is that according to human rights, the Irish minority of the province has a right to see their native tongue properly protected under the law. Thus, by international standards, they have the right to a language act, which safeguards the status of the language and provides a prosperous environment for its speakers to use it.

> *... the human rights of a minority are not subject to the agreement of the majority. ... That brings us to the further demand, in human rights, that an Irish language Act be put in place, ... (O'Loan, SDLP, 08.11.2010)*

By contrast, the contra-ILA side argues that whether or not an ILA is introduced is not a human rights issue at all. From their point of view, they are complying with the legislation in place in its entirety, since no right to language legislation in the form of an act is mentioned anywhere in the documents. When the Human Rights Commission drew a comparison between minority rights in Russia and Northern Ireland in the context of the language issue, the contra-ILA actors dismissed it completely as a non-comparable issue.

> *... the Barankevich case ... is not directly relevant to language rights. Furthermore, it must be remembered that article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights does not give a right to a language Act or even to the use of a language. (McCausland, DUP, 08.11.2010)*

So, while not challenging human rights law itself, they did instead question the conclusiveness of the argument brought forward by the Commission, thereby portraying themselves as respectful towards internationally recognised legislation, while at the same time defending their point of view by rebutting an - in their opinion - illogical argument.

Goal of upholding individual rights

This goal is based on the premise of inherent rights of the 'sacred' individual (Elliot, 2014) and it is one that only the supporters of the ILA utilise in this debate. The argument is that Irish speakers have a natural right to use their language as freely as English speakers, as it is their native tongue and the native tongue of the island. This includes being able to use it in every situation in everyday life, including education or in courts. While some aspects, such as education, are at least partly available in Irish already and receive government funding, not all aspects are covered yet.

> *Many parents and children have a deep interest in the Irish language. Those children are growing up, and they expect to live in an environment in which their primary language is respected and given every opportunity in the public sphere. (O'Loan, SDLP, 08.11.2010)*

Hence, a legal framework in form of a language act should be provided to ensure that Irish speakers may use their language without restrictions just like their fellow English-speaking citizens. In addition to their inherent rights as 'sacred' individuals, supporters of the ILA argue that Irish speakers also have a right to language legislation as tax-paying citizens of the province. They are contributing to society like everybody else ergo they should have the same rights too, which includes the right to conduct all their business in Irish Gaelic.

> *Indeed, they [Irish speakers] have an entitlement to access goods and services though the medium of Irish. After all, Irish language users are ratepayers and taxpayers, and they, too, have rights. (Nì Chuilìn, SF, 12.01.2016)*

The adherence to individual rights is closely related to the goal of ending discrimination under the value of equality as the outcome of upholding those rights would result in the end of discrimination at least in the legal and administrative sector.

Imageries of society when valuing justice
The imagery mostly used in this discourse is the one of society as a hierarchy, where the authority of the law is drawn upon to convince others of the righteousness of their cause. While the government parties themselves are on a high level in the hierarchy,

above them is still the law, which they have to follow. The actors use this imagery when trying to convince the audience of the justness of their goal, portraying themselves as dutybound to the legislation.

The pro-ILA side tries to get support from the electorate, with the argument of laws having to be followed to guarantee that justice is done, which is what they expect the electorate to view as a good cause. The contra-ILA part of the government agrees that laws need to be followed for justice to be done, however in their narrative, they already comply with the law by introducing language strategies.

Concerning local, national/EU, and international law, supporters of Irish language legislation portray the law not as an oppressing hierarchical force, which they need to follow, but rather as a supporting framework whose authority gives further strength to their argument. They draw upon the commitments made in local legislation and the failure to comply with it to underline their duty to introduce language legislation.

> *Where is the Irish language Act that was agreed to at St Andrews? Why is that legislation not included in the legislative programme ...? (A. Maginness, SDLP, 20.11.2007)*

Additionally, they appeal, to the highest authority - international law - and its recognition and objectivity, and connect it to their cause to reinforce their argument.

> *International human rights have always been very important for the people of the North, as they are truly objective and stand with what is right and wrong. ... As a Gaelic speaker, I think that the Irish language Act should be implemented immediately. (Lynch, SF, 05.12.2016)*

Also appealing to the authority of local legislation, the DUP argues that since no Irish language Act is mandatory they are in full compliance with the law and its implementation is unnecessary. In that way, they justify the absence of language legislation through the imagery of society as a hierarchy in so far that the institution above them – the law- does not require them to introduce an ILA and thus, they do not have any responsibility to do so.

Compared to the other members of the NIA, the contra-ILA opposition is faced with two levels of hierarchy above them: the law and the government. While they do not query the authority of the law, they use the imagery of a hierarchical society to blame the government for coercing the population into getting an ILA by agreeing to the St Andrews Agreement. They invoke the imagery of the hierarchy as an oppressing force, hindering them from changing the situation, as is characteristic for this imagery. This suggests that they perceive their electorate to agree with the notion of the ILA being forced upon them by the governing parties, which signed up for the agreement and futher that they expect to appeal to the Unionist section of the community by making a rhetorical stand against this law. By invoking the imagery of a hierarchy, who they are powerless against as long as they are in opposition, they also imply that if the electorate wishes to prevent the ILA or punish the party responsible for it they should and will vote for Unionist opposition.

> *I understand the angst in the DUP, ..., because it knows that some day it will have to face the electorate.... It [the DUP] has conceded something around an Irish language Act -- we still do not know what – and has agreed to side deals. (McGimpsey, UUP, 08.11.2010)*

Therefore, it appears that they are trying to gain political capital from the debate around the ILA by using the imagery of society as a hierarchy and making the DUP responsible for agreeing to the Act.

Much like the supporters of the ILA, their opponents also invoke the imagery of society as a hierarchy with the EU above the NIA, and their argumentative pattern is the same as when concerning local legislation. Since the EU has not told the government of Northern Ireland that an ILA is obligatory there is no need for it, because if the EU thinks that a language strategy is sufficient and in compliance with its charter, why should the NIA disapprove. Yet, they too appeal to an audience respecting the authority of the law and try to convince it of their opinion with the reassurance of the law being followed.

...there has been no acceptance of the need for an Irish language Act, either in that charter [ECRML], by the UK Government or through Executive agreement. (MoCAL,DUP, 23.09.2008)

In regard to international legislation, the imagery coming into effect in the contra-ILA's argumentation is also the one of society as a hierarchy in which the authority of human rights law itself on top of the pyramid is not questioned but sought to comply with. While both sides acknowledge this, the supporters of the ILA emphasise the importance of the Human Rights framework for the UK, as well as the respect towards their representatives, e.g. the Human Rights Commission. However, the opponents, though not questioning international legislation, do question the rationality of its representatives when being criticised by them.

I find it amusing and, indeed, ironic that the Human Rights Commission chooses to cite the prevention of freedom of worship in Russia to support the case for the introduction of an Irish language Act to protect minority language interests here. (Browne, 08.11.2010)

While not explaining why this comparison would be amusing or ironic, stating that it is, shows the disregard in which the MLA holds the judgement of the Human Rights Commission in this case, without invalidating the authority of human rights law itself.

Concerning the goal of complying with legislation, the imagery consistently invoked by all actors in the NIA is the one of a hierarchical society regulated by the law. By conjuring this imagery, they work with the perception of their audience holding a strong appreciation for the rule of law and respecting the judicial system as the practical manifestation of the value of justice. Hence, the political actors place an emphasis on their compliance with legislation whether it be local, national, supra- or international. Referring to local legislation, this means that to achieve the goal of complying with the law, an ILA has to be introduced according to its supporters, while the framework for the legality of the language act is provided by UK/EU and Human Rights law. The actors preventing an ILA continuously argue that no language act is required to achieve the goal of complying with the law, since the right to a language act is not enshrined in

legislation anywhere. The only exception to this line of argument is by some opposition members who blame the governing DUP for committing to an ILA, and hence to achieve compliance with the law, a language act is needed. This shows that while no one opposes the authority of the law itself, the law makers (DUP in this case), or the arguments of its representatives (Human Rights Commission), are queried nonetheless.

The second imagery found under the value of justice is the one of modernising society, which is deployed when arguing for the goal of upholding individual rights. The pro-ILA parties invoke the imagery of modernising society which values the rights of individuals, including minority rights and cultural diversity - ideals shared by modern global society (Elliot, 2014).

> *Those issues…are about…the principle of upholding the right of people to express their Irish identity on an equal basis… with those who see themselves as British. (J. McCann, SF, 13.01.2014)*

By appealing to these rights, supporters of Irish language legislation are calling for reform to change the status quo and give Irish speakers the rights they are entitled to - a line of argumentation also found when discussing goals based on the value of equality.

> *The Irish language community in this region has been waiting for legislation that would give it the rights that it so richly deserves. (D. Bradley, SDLP, 14.09.2015)*

Akin to the usage of this imagery under the value of equality, it is applied by both Sinn Féin and the SDLP alike also when arguing for the goal of upholding individual rights based on the value of justice.

5.3. Value of Peace

After decades of civil war, peace is an especially appreciated value in the province of Northern Ireland, and its continuity still requires work given how deeply entrenched the Troubles are in the collective consciousness of the region's society. Several practical

arguments in the debate around the ILA are based on the value of peace, and the goals I have identified are: Uniting society and living democracy.

Goal of Uniting Society

Uniting the society in Northern Ireland is an aspirational goal for all members of the NIA and it manifests itself in different forms. One of these forms is the discussion about the ILA. Several points are made when discussing this goal, one of which is the need for historical reappraisal. What is meant by historical reappraisal in this context, is working with the Irish language in a way, which acknowledges the grievances of the past connected to the language issue and strives to get past these in a manner acceptable to the citizens of the province. Given the political connotations of the Irish language, instrumentalised by the IRA and henceforth being branded a language of terrorists in the past, the debate harbours conflictual potential.

The pro-ILA side acknowledges the political implications of the Irish language and argue that the way to depoliticise it is to make it an administrative matter. Thus, by bringing forward the ILA, the NIA could turn the language issue over from the government and politics into the hands of the administration, and thereby successfully depoliticise it. Supporters of the ILA also draw a parallel to the implementation of the language act in Wales to give their argument more weight. Furthermore, introducing a language act, agreed on by both coalition parties, would send an encouraging signal to the citizens of Northern Ireland, showing that a part of the division has finally been overcome and that society is moving one step closer to a truly shared society in the province.

> *People would certainly see it as a sign that people have moved on politically and recognised that the language does not belong to one section of the community; it belongs to us all. (Ní Chuilín, SF, 14.09.2015)*

Politicians opposed to the ILA however, regard the proposed language act as a hindrance to successfully overcoming the rift in society. Their argument is that due to the language's political implications, providing extra legislation for it would not go down well with the part of society who suffered at the hands of the IRA. Therefore, when confronted with comparisons to the language acts in Wales and Scotland, their

position is that these are not comparable, since neither Welsh nor Scottish Gaelic are so highly politically charged. So, by emphasising the language issue and forcing an ILA on the people, damage would be dealt to the peace process in Northern Ireland. Often, the ILA is described as too polarising and hence a danger to the peace process. In addition to this, contra-ILA members also use the topic to accuse mostly Sinn Féin of utilising the ILA, and the language in general, as a political tool with which they hope to gather support from the electorate, while not actually caring for the rights of Irish speakers.

> *Having alienated much of the non-terrorist-supporting community …, why does the Minister now want to alienate further swathes of – the population of Northern Ireland by the promotion of a language that she uses as a political tool? (Allister, TUV, 07.06.2011)*

Goal of living democracy

Naturally, being democratically elected representatives, the members of the ILA have a responsibility to act in accordance with the wishes or in the best interest of their electorate. However, in the debate around the ILA the will of the people is utilised in arguments for or against the language act. The value of peace lays the foundation for this goal, because if the wishes of the electorate are constantly perceived to be ignored, tensions will eventually arise. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge the electorate's interests and deal with them in the democratic framework.

The pro-ILA side, using this argument much more frequently than their counterparts, argues that it is the people's wish to have an ILA, and therefore the language act should be introduced. They base this argument on a number of surveys and censuses, in which according to them, the vast majority of the people across the communities in Northern Ireland are in favour of a language act, independently of whether they are from the Irish-speaking community or not.

> *Ninety-five per cent of respondents expressed their support for an Irish language Act. … --those responses came from right across the community -- (Nì Chuilìn, SF, 12.01.2016)*

Furthermore, they refer to the efforts of an active civil society campaigning for an ILA to strengthen their argument.

By contrast, the contra-ILA side hardly refers to the people's opinion of the Act. Rather, to rebut this argument, they point out how the support was mobilised through significant financial means, or that no census has been conducted on behalf of Ulster Scots, which makes the situation unfair. Instead of relying on people's support for their argument, they instead refer to the necessity of Cross-Community-Support (CCS) for the implementation of an ILA. CCS is a form of voting anchored in the Good Friday Agreement, which requires the majority of both communities to support a bill for it to go through the NIA. Opposers of the ILA argue that since CCS cannot be achieved for this issue in the Assembly under any circumstances, advocating for a language act is a waste of resources given that it will never be realised. While they do not directly refer to the people's wishes expressed, for example, in the surveys, they assert to act according to the will of their respective voters as their elected representatives in whose name they reject an ILA.

> *... they must question the need for money to be wasted on the implementation of an Irish language Act. ... Quite simply, poor decisions on those issues will not be popular with the electorate ... (Hale, DUP, 13.01.2015)*

Imageries of society when valuing peace

When discussing arguments based on the value of peace, all three so far identified imageries are deployed by the actors in the NIA.

The imager of society in progress is invoked for the goal of uniting society through a language act by those actors aiming for an ILA. It is based on the notion of moving forward, of putting the conflicts of the past behind and moving into the future with one less issue to divide society.

> *I honestly do not see how it [ILA] would not [advance good community relations]. ... advancing an Irish language Act ... will be good for the people who need and are waiting for an Act. (Nì Chuilìn, SF, 20.02.2012)*

Here, the supporters of the ILA appeal to their audience's presumed desire for peace, reflected through good relations between the communities of Northern Ireland, which could be improved through Irish language legislation. In a similar manner, this imagery is deployed by pro-ILA actors in regard to the second goal of living democracy. The population is portrayed as a community which has overcome most of its differences and is ready to celebrate their shared cultural heritage. Thus, they are in favour of an ILA, even when having a Unionist background.

> *I suggest that the community out there – is again way ahead of where you and some of your party are at. Other members of the unionist community who responded to the consultation in a very positive way have nothing to fear from an Irish language Act ... (Ní Chuilín, SF, 12.01.2016)*

Typically for the invocation of this imagery, there is an element of people challenging the status quo which is found in the large number of people from the whole of the Northern Irish community supporting, or calling for, the introduction of a new Irish language policy.

In this line of argumentation, the contra-ILA actors also make use of the imagery of society in progress by portraying the ILA as counterproductive to achieving a fully functioning, peaceful environment in Northern Ireland.

> *To facilitate the development and maturation of our society, we must all learn to appreciate, accept and tolerate our respective cultures, history, tradition and politics. ...Members must realise that such an Act at this time would have the potential to polarise our community, increase division, heighten distrust and damage community relations. (Humphrey, DUP, 08.11.2010)*

Again, the need for development is pointed out as typical for the imagery of society in progress, and to ensure this development an ILA has to be prevented.

This however suggests that ,while the country is moving forward, it is still split into competing blocs and here the second imagery is deployed. Society, when appealing to the audience based on this imagery, here is split into *Irish nationalists and republicans vs. Unionists*. Those working with this imagery portray an ILA as the

glorification of Irish culture, while Unionist and Ulster-Scots culture is left behind and they sometimes conjure a downright *Feindbild*[4] of Irish identity, including the language, by comparing it to a weapon used against the majority of the population. These accusations include the language being used as a political tool against Unionists in the assembly and the whole province.

> *In many ways, Sinn Féin uses the Irish language as a kind of warped ideological jihad. (Kennedy, UUP, 09.10.2007)*

Notably, the usage of this imagery paired with the goal of unifying society by the contra-ILA side has become less aggressive over the years, and though the divisive nature of an ILA is still proclaimed by its opposers, the *Feindbild* seems to have disappeared.

Lastly, the imagery of a hierarchical society in this argument is deployed by pro-ILA members of the Assembly to put responsibility for the absence of language legislation despite its support from the population on the opponents of the ILA. Here, political parties holding power are portrayed to undermine the will of the people, who time and time again have supported the idea of an ILA.

> *There have been two consultations. The first showed overwhelming support for an Irish language Act ... The second consultation resulted in the same answer. That is why we make a pledge ... that our work to deliver an Irish language Act ... will continue ... despite the fact that the Minister has had a dead hand in ensuring that that has not happened. (McCartney, SF, 08.11.2010)*

According to this argumentation, the elected representatives in the Assembly have the power and use it to exert their will over that of the people, revealing them to be above the population in the hierarchical structure of society and leaving politicians supporting the ILA unable to do so by taking advantage of the decision-making system in place.

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4 Feindbild, a German word describing the idea of someone or something presenting a threat, a word which seems to be lacking in the English language.

While the imagery of society in progress is used consistently by the SDLP, the Alliance party, and Independent MLAs when forming arguments based on the value of peace, Sinn Féin invokes the imagery of a hierarchical society in addition to this, to shift responsibility for not introducing an ILA away from the party. The DUP and the UUP both invoke the imagery of society in progress, as well as the one of competing blocs and the TUV adheres strictly to the latter one.

In summary, when looking at the utilisation of imageries along party lines or by individuals certain tendencies can be identified. First, the SDLP shows the most consistent deployment of imageries of the major parties in the NIA with sticking almost exclusively to the imagery of society in progress. Another party that is very consistent in their usage of imageries is the TUV, who exlusively invokes the imagery of competing blocs. However, since this party is only represented by one single member who holds strong unionist views, this hardly counts as a surprising discovery. Less steady in their usage of imageries are Sinn Féin, the UUP, and the Alliance party. While SF deploys the imagery of society in progress frequently, both, the imagery of competing blocs and of a hierarchical society are not unusual. The UUP favours basing their arguments on the perception of society in competing blocs, however, also opts for the other imageries at times, while the Alliance party mostly, but not exclusively, deploys the imagery of society in progress. Notably, the DUP has the most variations in its deployment of imageries, with the predominant one being the imagery of competing blocs but members often opting for other imageries as well. Overall, the predominant imagery of all the Unionist parties is the one of competing blocks, while the predominant imagery invoked by the other parties is the one of society in progress. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that the contra-ILA side acts more frequently on the assumption of its audience viewing Northern Irish society as divided between competing blocks, while the pro-ILA side chooses to approach its audience based on their presumed perception of modernising society.

On the individual level it shows that actors change the imageries invoked in accordance with what best fits their argument (in their opinion). While some politicians are very consistent in basing their arguments on only one imagery, e.g., D. Bradley from the SDLP, others frequently change the imagery and use up to all three so far identified

imageries of society in their argumentations. Notably, especially those holding the title of Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, namely Campbell (DUP), McCausland (DUP), Ni Chuilìn (SF), and Poots (DUP), who are responsible for language issues change imageries frequently. On the individual level, in rare cases it was not clear which imagery was used, due to the analysed paragraph in question being too short.

Given that the units of analysis are paragraphs, it is not possible to go into depth when analysing the individual or party usages of imageries fully and further research could be done concerning these matters.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to give insight into to the political actors' deployment of epistemic governance in the local sphere. It focused on the third object of epistemic work - commonly shared norms and ideals - and imageries of society, invoked by members of the Northern Ireland Assembly when discussing the implementation of an Irish language Act. This chapter contains a summary of the findings, limitations of the conducted research, and suggestions for future research.

For the analysis of the universal data-set consisting of the Hansard reports I applied political discourse analysis and the structure for value-based practical arguments. The result was that epistemic work and imageries are employed in the local context in the same manner as epistemic governance theory explains them to be used in the national or international sphere. Concerning the shared norms and ideals, which appeal to the audience because of their apparent self-evidence, three values were identified in this thesis based on which the actors in the NIA form their arguments: equality, justice, and peace. The question regarding what arguments are used by supporters and opponents of the ILA was answered by distinguishing seven value-based practical arguments based on the above-mentioned values, which are ending discrimination, protecting cultural heritage, using resources responsibly, complying with legislation, upholding individual rights, uniting society, and living democracy. Furthermore, just as in the national sphere, actors in the local sphere utilise different imageries of society in an effort to persuade their audience of their goals. Alasuutari's and Qadir's three imageries - society in progress, in competing blocs, and as a

hierarchy- could be clearly distinguished in the debates around an ILA, but no additional imageries made themselves evident. Concerning the manner of usage, though some actors show great consistency when deploying imageries, they are not bound to a single one and a lot of them base their arguments on two or more imageries. Similar to this behaviour most parties also work with the whole range of imageries available rather than adhering to only one. Overall, the pro-ILA parties Sinn Féin, the SDLP, and the Alliance favoured the imagery of society in progress, while the contra-ILA DUP, UUP, and TUV relied most on the imagery of competing blocs. This shows that in order to convince people of the necessity of a language act, actors deem it preferable to portray society as a unified community striving for progress. By contrast, to dissuade people of the idea of an ILA, actors emphasise the separating dimensions in the society of Northern Ireland, assuming that this argumentation will result in a preferable outcome for them.

The impact of this thesis on future research lies in how it utilises the structure of value-based practical argumentation in combination with the epistemic governance approach, thereby creating a functional framework for identifying imageries. Not only can this be applied to other parliamentary debates, but also to other types of data, such as media reports or interviews. The limitation of this extension so far is that it has been tried only with a focus on the third object of epistemic work, as the values (V) of the structure for value-based argumentation ideally correspond to the shared norms and ideals of this object. For future research, it would be interesting to see whether this structure could also be applied when focusing on the ontology of the environment or on actors and identifications. Concerning the first object of epistemic work, it might be possible to connect the framework to the goals (G) of the structure for value-based argumentation, so for example, to investigate the idea an audience is presumed to have of the concept of discrimination, when the goal is to end discrimination. Regarding the second object, identifying imageries by means of value-based argumentation might help determine the identifications of the audience and actors, such as who constitutes 'the electorate' or 'the taxpayers' in an argument against an ILA. However, further research would have to be done on how precisely this would work.

Further limitations of the research revealed themeselves concerning the unit of analysis. Although choosing paragraphs as the unit of analysis had its advantages in

terms of keeping the data manageable, it also limited the conclusions that could be drawn when analysing the usage of imageries by parties and individual MLAs. For a more comprehensive understanding of the individual utilisation of imageries, a more comprehensive unit of analysis would be preferable.

Furthermore, for future investigation, it could be enlightening to dive deeper into individual usages of imageries and conduct research based on what reasons different imageries are invoked to discover whether there is a pattern behind their deployments. Moreover, investigating the debate from the perspective of the first and second object of epistemic work would surely add to the picture. Lastly, it would be exciting to see how the discourse develops with Brexit approaching and the possibility of the UK exiting its EU treaties, including the ECRML, in which case the Irish language would be left without one of its main protection mechanisms. Unfortunately, this will be hard to follow given that Northern Ireland is under direct rule from Westminster at the moment. However, better understanding the mechanisms actors in the NIA employ to convince their audience might help to ensure the protection and facilitation of the rights of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland by giving insights into the perceptions of society, based on which political elites formulate their arguments. So, revealing the actors' assumptions about Northern Irish society could help to address the underlying problems that the community still faces.

Finally, it became evident while writing this thesis that the community in Northern Ireland and especially its political parties still have a lot of work to do until the rifts of the past are mended, and so Cùchulainn's challenge continues.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Documents providing paragraphs for the analysis

Name	ILA Mentions	Pages	Topic	Speaker(s)
230117	1	119	GFA values and principles	Kelly
170117	2	78	Failure of the Executive	Eastwood, Hanna
51216	1	45	International HR day	Lynch
120116	8	86	ILA: Consultation Cost	Ni Chuilin, McCorley, Lyons
210915	2	36	North/South Ministerial Council: Language Body	Ni Chuilin
140915	3	56	Irish Language Bill	Ni Chuilin,O Muilleoir
200415	1	59	Westminster Elections	D Bradley
240215	3	130	Irish Language/Ulster Scots: Funding	Nì Chuilìn, Cree
160215	1	77	Irish language bill: Executive Approval	P Robinson
30215	1	73	Irish Speakers: DCAL Staff	Ni Chuilin
190115	1	73	Protecting Core public services	J McCann
130115	3	67	Irish Language/Ulster-Scots Strategies	McMullan, Ni Chuilin
21214	3	63	British-Irish Council: Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-used Languages	D Bradley, J McCann
130514	2	58	NI Peace Monitoring Report nr.3	Hale
130114	1	96	Haass/O'Sullivan Proposals	J McCann
161012	3	76	Ethnic Minorities: Cultural Identity	McGimpsey, Ni Chuilin
250612	1	90	Budget (No.2) Bill: Second Stage	Wilson
170412	4	64	Líofa 2015	Ni Chuilin, D Bradley
280212	1	84	Department of Justice	Givan
200212	5	62	DCAL: Cohesion, Sharing and Integration; Education: Irish Medium Schools	Nesbitt, Ni Chuilin, McKevitt, O'Dowd
121211	7	74	ILA	S Anderson, Ni Chuilin
291111	2	66	British-Irish Council: Indigenous, Minority and Lesser-used Languages	Ni Chuilin
270911	1	72	Líofa 2015	J McCann
280611	1	72	DCAL:Regional language Strategy	D Bradley
200611	4	100	Budget (No.2) Bill: Second Stage	Swann, Wilson
70611	3	58	St Andrews Agreement: Irish Language	D Bradley, M McIlveen
151110	3	46	North/South Ministerial Council: Language Sectoral Format	MGlone, McCausland (MoCAL)
81110	29	62	Irish Language Strategy	D Bradley, Browne, K Robinson, Humphrey, McCartney, Campbell, Burns, Adams, McCausland (MoCLA), O'Loan, Leonard
90310	2	70	Policing and Justice Powers	McGimpsey, P Robinson (1st minister)
230209	1	42	Single Equality Bill	A Maginness
160209	1	56	Irish in the Workplace	Campbell (MoCAL)

30209	1		60	North/South Ministerial Council: Language Sectoral Format	McNarry
120109	2		60	ECRML	A Maginness, Campbell (MoCAL)
171108	5		60	Executive Committee:Requirement to meet	Ni Chuilin, Purvis, Poots, Kennedy
41108	1		48	Assembly Business	McLaughlin
61008	1		62	Strategy for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration	Molloy
230908	3		60	North/South Ministerial Council: Language Sectoral Format	Butler, Campbell (MoCAL)
160908	2		36	Executive Matters	McLaughlin, Long
240608	1		70	Irish-Medium primary School	M Bradley
90608	1		89	Supply Resolution for 2008-09 Main Estimates and Supply Resolution for 2006-07 Excess Vote	Shannon
50608	4		15	None	Reg Empey
100308	1		63	Eames/Bradley Consultative Group on the Past	Purvis
40208	4		92	Assembly Business; ILA	Campbell, Brolly
41207	1		48	Outline of a Vision for our Education System	Ross
261107	1		86	Draft Programme for Government and Draft Investment Strategy	Storey
201107	3		48	Legislative Programme 2007-08	Ni Chuilin, A Maginness
121107	10		46	Irish-language Legislation	Poots, Brolly, Elliot, Simpson, S Ramsey, Shannon
161007	14		79	Outcome of the proposed Irish-Language Consultation Process	Poots (MoCLA), McElduff, McCausland, McNarry, D Bradley, Farry, Shannon, Adams, P Ramsey, Easton,
151007	1		73	Executive Legislative Programme	Attwood
91007	22		79	Irish Language Bill	McNarry, McCausland, Ni Chuilin, D Bradley, Farry, G Robinson, Brolly, Shannon, Campbell, Kennedy
100907	5		79	Irish and Ulster Scots: Funding and Parity	Storey, McFarland, Poots, McCausland
20707	1		67	NHS Dental Treatment	McCarthy
110607	1		93	Non-indigenous Languages	Poots(MoCAL)
	186				

Table 2: Sections under which the ILA was mentioned

Assembly Business	Culture, Arts & Leisure	Executive Committee Business	Ministerial Statements	Opposition Business
41108	80216	250612	210915	170117
40208	120116	280212	21214	
	140915	200611	291111	
	240215	90310	151110	
	30215	90608	30209	
	130115	201107	230908	
	161012		41207	
	170412		161007	
	200212			
	121211			
	270911			
	280611			
	70611			
	160209			
	120109			
	121107			
	100907			
	110607			

Private Members' Business	None	Office of 1st & deputy 1st minister	Committee Business	Education
230117	50608	160215	130514	200212
51216		230209	261107	
200415				
190115				
130114				
81110				
171108				
61008				
160908				
240608				
100308				
151007				
91007				
20707				

Table 3: Imageries used by party and party memberships

1- imagery of modernising society

2- imagery of society in competing blocs

3- imagery of society as a hierarchy

DUP	Imageries	UUP	Imageries	TUV	Imageries
Browne	2	Elliot	2	Allister	2
Campell	1, 2, 3	Empey	1		
Cree	2	K Robinson	?		
Easton	2, 3	Kennedy	1, 2, 3		
Givan	2, 3	McGimpsey	1, 3		
Hale	1, 2	McNarry	1, 2		
Humphrey	1, 2	Nesbitt	2		
Lyons	1, 2	Swann	2		
M McIlveen	2	Wilson	1, 2		
McCausland	2, 3				
G Robinson	2	5/9; 6/9; 2/9			
P Robinson	3, ?				
Poots	1, 2, 3				
Ross	2				
S Anderson	1, 2				
Shannon	1, 2				
Simpson	1				
Storey	1				
9/19; 15/19;6/19					

the Unionist parties

SDLP	Imageries	Sinn Féin	Imageries
A Maginness	1, 2	Adams	1, 2
Attwood	1	Brolly	1, 2 , 3, ?
Burns	1	Butler	3
D Bradley	1, 3	Gildernew	3y
M Bradley	1	J McCann	1
Eastwood	1	Kelly	1
Hanna	1	Leonard	1, ?
McGlone	1	Lynch	1
McKevitt	1	F McCann	1
O'Loan	1, 2	McCartney	1
P Ramsey	1	McCorley	1
		McElduff	2
11/11; 2/11; 1/11		M McGuinness	1
		McLaughlin	1, 2
		McMullan	1
		Molloy	1
		Ní Chuilín	1, 2, 3
		Ó Muilleoir	3
		O'Dowd	3
		S Ramsey	1
		Ruane	1
		15/21; 5/21; 5/21	

The Irish nationalist parties

Alliance	Imageries	Ind	Imageries
Farry	1	McFarland	3
Long	1	Purvis	1
Lyttle	1		
McCarthy	3	1/2; -/2; 1/2	
3/4; -/4; 1/4			

Others