

# Institutional Work of Regional Language Movements: Options for Intervention at the Regional Level Taken Brittany as an Example<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, the Breton language is severely endangered. While there were over 1 million Breton speakers around 1950, only 194,500 remained in 2007. The annual decrease in Breton speakers by 8,300 cannot be compensated at present, leading to the crossing of the threshold of 100,000 Breton speakers in about a quarter of a century. The constitutional amendment in 2008, according, for the first time, an official status to regional languages in France, did not provide any real benefits either, except for a higher legitimacy for regional politicians and other actors of regional language movements to implement language-sensitive promotional measures. In this regard, the region of Brittany is a pioneer, as it has demonstrated a high commitment to the promotion of the Breton language since the mid-nineties. In this context, this paper investigates what possibilities exist for local-level authorities and other strategic actors in the field to encourage the social use of a regional language in all domains of life. First, the sociolinguistic situation in Brittany is outlined and evaluated using secondary data. Second, a qualitative study (in-depth interviews) was conducted to provide further insights into the interdependencies between the different actors in the field of the Breton language policy, and revealed options for policy instrument development by regional governments. Institutional theory is used as a theoretical framework in order to assess distinct practices and instruments for promoting a regional language. Existing and frequently claimed measures are assigned to different forms of institutional work (e.g. mobilisation of support, imitation of best practices); they are performed by the stakeholders in the field and are aimed at boosting the social use of a language. From this institutional perspective, we observe intensive efforts by single persons, organisations and communities (institutional work) and solutions (institutions or socially accepted practices) for introducing institutional change. There is still additional and unused room to manoeuvre at the regional level and a lack of planning for operational implementation. The analysis shows that three forms of institutional work should be further developed in particular, namely: mimicry, theorising and educating. Educating is especially important as it translates into a demand for obligatory bilingual education in order to stabilise the number of speakers. Nonetheless, the motivation of the Breton population, when establishing a language policy for Brittany, should not be overlooked. This means that both top-down and bottom-up perspectives should be pursued at the same time.*

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this article (in particular chapter 3.4) have already been published in German: Lesk, Susanne. 2012. Aktuelle und zukünftige sprachenpolitische Strategien für die Bretagne: Möglichkeiten institutioneller Arbeit für regionalsprachliche Bewegungen. In *Europa Ethnica* 69 (3-4). 61-69.

## 1 Introduction

In the course of the European integration process, the preservation and promotion of linguistic diversity in Europe constitutes an explicit value and agenda issue of the Council of Europe. The “protection of the historical regional or minority languages of Europe, some of which are in danger of eventual extinction, contributes to the maintenance and development of Europe’s cultural wealth and traditions” (Council of Europe 1992). This part of the preamble of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* appears to encourage national governments to protect their regional and minority languages. However, the charter has not yet been signed or ratified by all member states. The French government, for example, signed the *European Charter* in 1999 in Budapest but did not ratify it due to legal and political reservations about its compatibility with the French Constitution (cf. Nolan 2011: 93; Carcassonne 2011: 78). Examples like this demonstrate that the European language policy is, at least in certain cases, not very successful in gaining the commitment of its member states. A lack of power and assertiveness on the part of the European institutions, and subsequently of involvement at the national government level, might explain such developments (cf. Alexandrova, Carammia/Timmermans 2012).

Although heads of states and governments might block measures to be taken in favour of the language emancipation of minorities, the regions within the European Union are getting more and more attention and are beginning to attain a position in which they are able to compensate at least partly for the failures in the language policy of their national governments (cf. Czernilofsky 2001: 170-171; Nolan 2011). This is especially true for the regional languages in France (e.g. Breton, Occitan, Corse, Catalan, Basque, Alsatian), where regional authorities have obtained more competencies in recent years in the fields of culture and education within the context of the French decentralisation process (cf. Kremnitz 2001a: 22; Hoare 2003: 26).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the possibilities French local-level authorities have available to them to enhance the use of their regional language. It further explores how regional governments and other strategic actors in the field could stimulate the use of the regional language in all domains of social life. Institutional theory is used as a theoretical framework for classifying and evaluating the potential success of different measures for promoting a regional language. Institutions are defined as socially accepted and automatically transmitted practices, structures, concepts and other enduring patterns of social life (e.g. laws, professional standards, educational systems and pedagogical concepts). The institutional context requires legitimacy from successful actors in its field. As it is assumed that the logic of appropriateness shapes the behaviour of individuals and organisations, it appears necessary for representatives

of regional language movements<sup>2</sup> to find socially accepted (and legitimised) organisational forms to promote their goals and hence gain support from society. The most powerful dimensions of institutions seem to be rules and laws, as their basis of legitimacy can thus be legally sanctioned (cf. Scott 1995: 35; LeRoux 2011: 568). In this paper, collective action in favour of linguistic diversity and multilingualism is considered to be comparable to other forms of institutionalisation projects and activities such as e.g. those of political and social movements (cf. Hensmans 2003; Davis/Anderson 2008; Schneiberg/Lounsbury 2008; Strang/Soule 1998; Rao, Monin/Durand 2003; Clemens/Cook 1999; Clemens 1993; Owen-Smith/Powell 2008: 602; Rao 1998).

In this research, the situation of the Breton language in France is taken as a case study, firstly, to illustrate the sociolinguistic and political situation of an endangered regional language in Europe, and secondly, to deliver options for policy instrument development on the part of regional governments. As (public) financial resources are usually scarce, there is a great need for estimating the likely future success of measures in language policy in order to avoid inefficacy. In this respect, institutional theory is used to deliver theoretical and empirical evidence for determining beneficial measures and practices in language policy depending on the actual status of a linguistic minority. Following the principles of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in favour of cultural diversity, these policy instruments should enhance the private and public use of the respective regional language and ensure the diffusion of all kinds of promotional activity in this regard.

## 2 Language policy and its goals

In a first step, it is necessary to define the term “language policy” as it is used in this article. For the purpose of this paper, I use a rather broad definition that includes social behaviours of individuals and groups that is not formally institutionalised as well as formal actions by official representatives of language policy (cf. Kremnitz 1994: 80). In this sense, language policy can be directed top-down as well as bottom-up. Different groups within a linguistic community, or belonging to two or more different linguistic communities, may articulate their interests and attitudes, and, depending on their sources of power and negotiating skills, they will achieve their goals or not (cf. Kremnitz 2001b: 158; Czernilofsky 2001: 169). Language policy therefore refers to a concept of wider scope than language legislation. The latter comprises legal and contractual regulations referring to the use of languages in a country (cf. Schmidt 2005:

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<sup>2</sup> Nolan (2011) presents the Gallo movement as an example for the activism of a regional language movement in France. Gallo, as a local linguistic Oil variety of Upper Brittany, is affected by a similar sociolinguistic situation as Breton (territory, legal status), but suffers from an even lower number of speakers and from identity problems due to an increased need for linguistic differentiation from other Oil varieties (the group of Romanic linguistic varieties in northern France) and a competitive relationship (at least in some areas) to the other regional language, i.e. Breton. From a pure linguistic perspective, Gallo often is considered as a single linguistic variety of a common standard language (i.e. French). However, even in a linguistic view, Gallo can be perceived as a language because of its relatively strong Breton adstrate. The sociolinguistic perspective seems to be less contested, as it regularly incorporates extra-linguistic factors as additional decision criterion. With regard to the collective linguistic consciousness of the Gallo speakers or its legal status, Gallo here is regarded as a distinct (regional) language (*une langue d’oil*) (Kremnitz 2008: 10; 2013a; Éloy/Jagueneau 2013a; 2013b; Tréhel-Tas 2007; Ofis publik ar brezhoneg 2013b).

612-613) and constitutes only one realm of language policy, e.g. the legal or constitutional establishment of linguistic rights for minorities or the fixation of an official language in a given territory (cf. May 2012). Thus, language legislation is viewed here as the final codification of the ongoing process of language policy, which often lags behind the topical political discussions, and, accordingly, can also be regarded as the product of language policy. In addition, in an institutional perspective, laws represent just one possible form of a social structure with a high degree of resilience and stability, defined in institutional terminology as an institution (cf. Scott 2001: 48).

Regional language policy as a link between national institutions and the speakers of a regional language can be impeded, tolerated or supported by the representatives of the state. Of course, the question of whether measures of language policy fail or succeed depends greatly on the target population: the willingness of the actual speakers to adopt the measures implemented or their decision to reject them. Language policy in practice should be in alignment with the social reality of the concerned territory. In this point, the role of the collective linguistic consciousness of a minority is of major concern (cf. Kremnitz 2001b: 162-163).

To predict the future success of the measures taken and to assess efficacy, it is useful to know the underlying objective. Language policy goals can be categorised as either explicit or implicit. Explicit language policy tries to influence languages, groups of speakers and their linguistic practices relatively overtly and directly (e.g. by according a legal and official status to a formerly unofficial language), whereas implicit language policy addresses and regulates widely varying fields of action, but nevertheless can represent a powerful tool for encouraging the social use of a minority language. Measures promoting the social status of speakers and their economic success used to mostly be seen as operating implicitly (cf. Cichon 2012: 18; Kremnitz 2013b: 106; 1994: 80). However, as current regional language movements seem to have integrated this knowledge into their daily political work and regularly pursue measures of implicit language policy to overtly pursue their linguistic aims, the distinction outlined above is becoming less and less clear. Therefore, I would suggest a more fluid vision of the boundaries between the two categories which allows for shades of grey. Alternatively, we could introduce other criteria to distinguish the goals of interventions in language policy, such as e.g. those political aims which intend to influence the official status of a language, those which affect the social prestige or those which raise the communicative value of a language (cf. Bein 2001; Kremnitz 2002, 2003, 2013a: 98, 2013b: 107). However, we might expect interferences and ambiguities in this case as well. Regardless of possible problems of conceptualisation, for evaluation purposes, a clear definition of goals seems to be essential.

### **3 An autochthonous linguistic minority: the case of Brittany**

#### **3.1 The sociolinguistic situation in Brittany**

The Breton language is classified as being severely endangered<sup>3</sup> according to the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*. This categorisation is based – amongst a number of other criteria such as intergenerational transmission of a language

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<sup>3</sup> For a critical view on discourses of endangerment see Duchêne/Heller 2008 and Réaume/Pinto 2012.

or language sensitive attitudes of the government and the population – on the absolute and relative number of speakers within a (bilingual) region (cf. Moseley 2010). In 2007, a survey by *TMO-Régions* (cf. Broudic 2009: 18-179) counted the lowest number of Breton speakers up till then in all five *départements* of the historical province of Brittany (194,500). In Lower Brittany (*Basse-Bretagne* in French, *Breizh-Izel* in Breton), the area where the Breton language was traditionally spoken, 172,000 speakers (13% of the total population) were counted. Within 10 years, the number of speakers of this last Celtic language on the continent (cf. Bock 2002; Favereau 2005) dropped by 7%. This continues a trend that started to emerge in the middle of the last century. The social use of Breton has been in steady decline since then. Whereas around 1950, 1,100,000 Breton speakers were counted in Lower Brittany, by the turn of the millennium, this number had decreased by almost 80% and given way to an overwhelming monolingual French-speaking majority. At first glance, this is surprising, considering that there had been a monolingual Breton-speaking majority in Lower Brittany at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within three to four generations, processes of substitution and phases of widely spread bilingualism finally left behind a marginal bilingual Breton and French speaking minority.

Currently, we can observe an annual decrease in Breton speakers of 8,300, which is mostly related to age, as most of the native speakers are already over 60 years old and many of them die each year. The age pyramid among Breton speakers will continue to influence the development of the total number of speakers in the near future and should be taken into consideration when searching for viable and potentially successful promotional strategies to increase the social use of the regional language. In 2007, the overall amount of 172,000 speakers in Lower Brittany was composed of 163,000 older native speakers and 9,000 new secondary speakers socialised in the school system or in adult education from 1997 to 2007. Clearly, the current output of new speakers cannot compensate for the annual drop in old speakers. Thus, Broudic (2013, 2009: 73-190) estimates that under relatively consistent demographic conditions (population growth, mortality rate and number of pupils in the bilingual school system), the merely symbolic threshold of 100,000 Breton speakers might be reached in about a quarter of a century. Compared to other regional languages in France (e.g. Basque, Alsatian), the development of the number of Breton speakers has so far not been reassuring (cf. Ofis ar brezhoneg 2007: 19).

Consequently, the communicative value of the Breton language for its speakers seems to be rather limited. Yet, survey results do not reflect this disadvantage, for the prevalent attitude of the Bretons towards their regional language is predominantly positive. The vast majority of Bretons in Lower Brittany (89%) call for a preservation of their language. Even in the entire historical province of Brittany, 58% of the inhabitants desire linguistic promotional activities. At the same time, the majority of the population (52%) questions the real value of the Breton language, a figure that probably better represents social reality: generally, Breton is only used occasionally among friends and in the neighbourhood. Accordingly, only 12% use their regional language more often than French. On the other hand, there is a positive trend in young bilingual families, although the absolute figure is still negligible: one third of young bilingual parents prefer to communicate with their children in Breton. Additionally, 15- to 19-year-old Breton speakers are the only age group with a positive growth rate that rose from 1% (1997) to 4% (2007) (cf. Broudic 2010: 26-27, 2009: 150-184).

However, if we investigate other domains of social life, Brittany can be seen as a pioneer region, since relevant actors at the regional level have managed to considerably expand their scope of action within the French legal framework. Moreover, the latest constitutional modifications with regard to linguistic legislation reevaluated the status of the regional languages. In 2008, the constitutional amendment granted a truly official status to the regional languages for the first time in French history and defined them as being a heritage of France. The article 75-1 was added to the French Constitution, reading, “*Les langues régionales appartiennent au patrimoine de la France.*” (“Regional languages are part of France’s heritage.”) Unfortunately, no law to protect and promote this part of the *patrimoine* apart from the aforementioned article has been enacted since then. Draft laws were rejected and the respective opposing decisions of the *Conseil d’État* and the *Conseil Constitutionnel* just reinforced the diglottic situation of the regional languages in France (cf. Bertile 2011; Cichon 2012). Nevertheless, the new constitutional provision allowed for more tolerance in public life (e.g. toponymy, signposts, education, administration), which affected the visible, but partly only symbolic use of regional languages. The new legal situation furthermore provides more legitimacy for regional politicians to promote local languages and culture. However, no legal right to use the regional language in all social contexts can be deduced from this for the individual speaker.

Considering the demographic composition and the falling number of Breton speakers, it becomes evident that education must play a major role, provided that the region really wants to focus on preserving the Breton language. From this perspective, the bilingual school system should be expanded, and the range of Breton language classes for other target groups (apprentices, adults with different levels of active and passive knowledge) should be extended.

At present, parents can choose between three distinct bilingual school systems. Since 1977, the private association *Diwan* (“seed, source” in Breton) has been offering free, secular education, applying the paedagogical concept of linguistic immersion (cf. Vetter 2005: 71-79; Perazzi 1998: 15-29). The public sector followed with their first bilingual schools (*Div Yezh*, i.e. “two languages”) in 1983, based on the *Circulaires Savary* (cf. Jung/Urvoas 2012: 38-40). Finally, in 1990, the private catholic schools (*Dihun*, which stands for “awakening”) caught up. In contrast to *Diwan*, *Div Yezh* and *Dihun* can use their existing network of schools for offering new bilingual classes. In the school year 2013/2014, a total of 15,338 pupils are taught in the three bilingual systems: 3,705 at *Diwan*, 6,662 at *Div Yezh* and 4,971 at *Dihun*. The yearly growth rate of the number of bilingual pupils amounted to 4.4% in 2012/2013. To assess the real impact of these numbers, it is interesting to know that only 1.69% of all school age children are socialised bilingually (cf. Ofis publik ar brezhoneg 2013c: 5, 38, 2013d: 6; Abalain 2004: 190-202).

In adult education, numerous non-profit organisations are offering evening classes, language placements, language training at the workplace, and distance learning (e.g. *Skol an Emsav*, *Stumdi*, *Roudour*, *Skol Ober*, *Emgleo Breiz*, *Kentelioù an Noz*, *Studi ha Dudi*, *Ar Falz/Skol Vreizh*, *KEAV*). Many of these institutions depend on the commitment of volunteer staff (*bénévoles*). In 2011, 5,339 adults attended Breton language courses. Around 500 new secondary speaker are trained each year (cf. Ofis publik ar brezhoneg 2012).

At the public universities in Brest and Rennes (*Université de Bretagne Occidentale*, *Université de Rennes 2*), it is possible to study Breton-Celtic languages including the

doctoral level. Together with the students from the institutes for teacher training (*Institut supérieur de formation pédagogique Kelenn* in Quimper for the *Diwan* schools, *École supérieure du professorat et de l'éducation Bretagne* in St. Brieuc for the *Div Yezh* schools, *Institut Supérieur de Formation de l'Enseignement Catholique* for the *Dihun* schools) more than 300 people study the Breton language in higher education each year (cf. Broudic 2010: 137-140; Ofis ar brezhoneg 2007: 75-78).

The media presence of the Breton language is traditionally insignificant. This is especially true for the print media. For example, a daily newspaper written in Breton has never existed. Nowadays, there are some weekly (*Ya!*), monthly (*Bremañ*, *Rouzig*, *Louarnig*) and professional journals targeting special clienteles. In most cases, the only mode of distribution is subscription by interested readers. Publishing houses edit approximately 80 to 90 books in Breton per year with an average of 1,300 copies each (i.e. 6 to 7% of all new editions in Brittany). There is no public Breton radio or TV channel, but the local (French speaking) public radio station *France Bleu Breizh Izel* and the local public TV channel *France 3 Bretagne* broadcast a very limited number of hours in Breton each week. Moreover, there are four private local radio stations, two of them monolingually Breton (*Arvorig FM*, *Radio Kerne*) and two of them bilingually Breton and French (*Radio Kreiz Breizh*, *Radio Bro Gwened*). They only have restricted local coverage but can be received globally via the Internet. Since 2006, the Internet TV channel *Brezhoweb* regularly airs programmes in Breton, mostly talk shows, sitcoms, cartoons, documentaries, dubbed movies, etc. (cf. Broudic 2011; Ofis ar brezhoneg 2004).

Whereas the presence of the Breton language in the traditional media is unimportant, the Internet proposes apparently more attractive incentives for the actors of the Breton regional language movement to become visible. As a place where people can communicate, act and interact in the languages of their choice, the Internet becomes a place not only for globalised linguistic practices, but also for specific localised linguistic practices as previous research already tried to unveil (cf. Leppänen/Peuronen 2012: 389). The social use of Breton on the Internet is frequent. The Bretons are involved in social networks, blogs and video blogs to communicate in their regional language. Many websites are bi- or multilingual (e.g. the official websites of the *Région Bretagne*, the *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*, the local radio stations mentioned above, *Diwan*, *Div Yezh*, *Dihun*, *Brezhoweb*, *Dizale*, *Kalanna Production*, the *marque Bretagne*, etc.), which enhances the linguistically proficient user to practice the Breton language and tries to officialise the regional language. In addition, the *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* offers online services (special dictionaries, an automatic translator). Compared to the estimated number of Breton speakers, the Breton language is overwhelmingly represented in the online encyclopaedia Wikipedia in terms of articles. In a bottom-up view of language policy, these developments are especially interesting (cf. Ofis ar brezhoneg 2007: 117-121; Lesk 2011: 102-107; Broudic 2013: 450).

### 3.2 The Breton language policy

In 1978, the *Charte culturelle bretonne* was signed. This was the beginning of an officially recognised promotional regional language policy in Brittany. Measures were taken in many fields of social life (school, media), and linguistically and culturally relevant organisations were founded (the *Conseil culturel*, the *Agence culturelle* and the *Institut culturel de Bretagne*) (Ofis ar brezhoneg n.d.). However, the financial commitment of the local authorities was unimpressive compared to their rather

ambitiously formulated objectives. Thus, the registered effects were minor. A cross-party consensus was reached in 2004 that can be regarded as a historically important event as it led to the unanimous joint signature of a bilingual text, “*Une politique linguistique pour la Bretagne*”. It stands for an official recognition of the linguistic diversity of Brittany at the regional level and explicitly mentions the most critical goals, such as intergenerational transmission of the Breton language, stabilising the number of Breton speakers, promoting the social use of Breton and the recognition and preservation of Gallo.

Assurer le maintien et la transmission du breton populaire, ce qui suppose de viser la stabilisation du nombre de locuteurs. Permettre à chaque breton qui le souhaite d’apprendre, d’écouter, de parler et de lire le breton. Favoriser la présence de la langue bretonne dans les divers champs de la vie sociale en Bretagne. Il s’agit bien de promouvoir le bilinguisme. Assurer la reconnaissance du gallo, encourager l’initiation et favoriser son expression. (Région Bretagne, Direction de la Culture 2004: 5)

Since 2000, the regional expenses for language policy issues have been rising continuously (except in 2009) and amounted to 7,515 million Euro in 2011. In contrast, the disposable budget of the regional government in Wales is around 24 times as high for the same purposes and with an equivalent population. In 2008, a self-assessment of the region of Brittany revealed some critical domains and areas of neglect in spite of otherwise positive tendencies. Problems were identified in education (financial difficulties, particularly in the case of immersion classes in childcare centres, bilingual *lycées* and Breton textbooks), public life (signposting, documents), documentation (incomplete statistics), and other sectors of social and economic life (due to the weak communicative function of the Breton language in all contexts). In 2004, the region of Brittany anticipated 20,000 pupils in the bilingual systems by 2010, a goal that was not achieved. The same is true for the aim of training 150 bilingual teachers per year, although the number of the respective scholarships granted by the region (*Skoazell and Desk*) is steadily growing (cf. Région Bretagne 2012: 69, 33-34; Région Bretagne, Direction générale adjointe « Culture – Environnement – Jeunesse et Sports – Tourisme » Mission Langues Bretonnes 2008: 12-14; Ofis ar brezhoneg 2005: 2-5, 2007: 30-33; Région Bretagne, Direction de la Culture 2004: 5).

Currently, the *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* (*Office public de la langue bretonne*) is responsible for implementing the regional government’s language policy. In 2010, it was transformed into an *Établissement public de coopération culturelle* (*EPCC*) which could be seen as a stronger institutional anchoring of the Breton language policy. (From its foundation in 1999 to 2010, it had been a non-profit association.) Its task is to promote the Breton language, sensitise the population to the topic, mobilise important stakeholders in order to strengthen the communicative function of the Breton language in all areas of social life, and observe and evaluate the (socio)linguistic situation in the five *départements* of the historical province of Brittany. At present, the development efforts in the bilingual school systems are of major concern (cf. Région Bretagne 2012: 16-19).

### 3.3 Methodology and findings

A mixed-methods approach was chosen for studying and answering the research questions of this paper. Already available empirical data (e.g. the latest survey of *TMO*-



*Régions*, reports from the *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*, information from stakeholder websites) was used and updated to describe and evaluate the current sociolinguistic situation in Brittany. Additionally, a qualitative study with more than 40 in-depth interviews with experts was conducted in 2009 to gain further insights into the interdependencies between the different actors in the field of the Breton language policy (cf. Lesk 2011). This combined approach allowed the comprehensive gathering of knowledge about unused opportunities, challenges and threats. The collected information constitutes the basis for further reflection about relevant stakeholders and their possible impact on the success of a future language policy at the regional level.

Regional language movements depend on active stakeholders for enhancing the diffusion of concepts, practices and structures. Threatened languages are an area that is especially amenable to attempts at institutional change induced by strategic actors in the field. Linguistic elements play an important role in supporting this process of diffusion (cf. Phillips, Lawrence/Hardy 2004; Strang/Meyer 1993: 492-502; Berger/Luckmann 1980: 85-87.). The “strategic use of persuasive language, or rhetoric, is the means by which shifts in institutional logic are secured” (cf. Suddaby/Greenwood 2005: 35).

Based on the analysis of the qualitative interviews conducted in Brittany, I identified a number of actors in the field of the Breton language policy:

- adult education (universities, teacher education, organisers of evening classes and immersion experiences)
- institutions of linguistic and cultural policy (*Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*, *Conseil culturel de Bretagne*, *Association des régions de France*)
- representatives and organisations of other linguistic minorities within and outside of France
- employers (public sector, education, media industry, artists, tourism)
- media (radio, television, press, publishing houses, Internet)
- schools (*Diwan*, *Div yezh*, *Dihun*)
- the regions Brittany and Pays de la Loire (regional governments, *départements*, communities)
- the state of France
- the European Union

To pursue their aims successfully, social and political movements have to get access to different resources such as job performance, financial means, reputation and accorded legitimacy that ensures continuous support from the stakeholders (cf. Walgenbach 2002: 181-182). From this perspective, regional language movements need to mobilise resources in order to further their goals, such as being able to diffuse structures and practices that develop the linguistic competence and performance of the target population. This means that actors have to take steps to improve the theoretical linguistic knowledge of speakers (via adequate instruction) and to provide incentives to encourage the social use of the Breton language in private, public and work life.

The strategic actors in the organisational field of the Breton language policy can induce institutional change through all kinds of activities described here as institutional work. An analysis of the collected information disclosed many possible forms of

institutional work in the Breton context, either as already applied measures or instruments, or as emphatically demanded practices or structures. A non-exhaustive list of the most important results is presented in the next section.

### 3.4 Institutional work of regional language movements

Institutional work of regional language movements refers to “the purposive action of individuals [as well as organisations and regions] aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (Lawrence/Suddaby 2006: 215; Lawrence, Suddaby/Leca 2009, 2011). The main focus of activities seen as institutional work carried out by regional language movements lies in (re)gaining communicative functions of the marginalised, or minority, language (cf. Kremnitz 2012: 20). In the case of Brittany, activities for creating new institutions are of particular interest because the organisational field of the Breton language policy is still at the stage of pre-institutionalisation or habitualisation, where the diffusion of new institutional elements is central, initiation of new practices is the principal impetus, and critical discussion of the new concepts is likely to occur (cf. Tolbert/Zucker 1996: 180-182).

Table 1: Institutional work in organisations (Lawrence/Suddaby 2006: 220-238)

Creating Institutions	Maintaining Institutions	Disrupting Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enabling work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disconnecting sanctions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• defining</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• disassociating moral foundations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vesting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deterring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undermining assumptions and beliefs</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constructing identities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• valorising and demonising</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• changing normative associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mythologising</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• constructing normative networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• embedding and routinising</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mimicry</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theorising</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educating</li> </ul>		

Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) reviewed empirical studies on institutional work and identified different forms of institutional work that could be found in the field of the Breton language policy as well. Strategic adoption of these activities might lead to the desired outcomes (i.e. the enhanced social use of the Breton language). The most important forms of institutional work in the Breton context are described in table 1. I will give typical examples for these forms of creating institutions as they pertain to the Breton context.

*Advocacy* relates to the “mobilization of political and regulatory support through direct and deliberate techniques of social suasion” (Lawrence/Suddaby 2006: 221), e.g. lobbying, advertising and public opinion formation. As a first step, marginalised actors

(e.g. the representatives of a minority language) try to produce cognitive legitimacy by influencing the legislative body (e.g. as a pressure group) in order to achieve a legal status and codified rights for their language. In Brittany, the regional government contributes directly to public opinion through its active language policy. There are several political demands in this regard:

- the ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages by the French State,
- an intensified legislation to promote the regional languages of France on the basis of the constitutional change of 2008,
- the adaptation of French legal regulations with regard to education (*Code de l'éducation*) to achieve greater prevalence of the regional languages starting at the pre-school education level,
- the expansion of already legally guaranteed promotional activities to the entire historical territory of Brittany (including Loire-Atlantique), and
- the introduction of compulsory classes with Breton as the teaching language in (parts of) Brittany after having adapted the legal framework accordingly.

*Defining* refers to “the construction of rule systems that confer status and identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchies within a field” (Lawrence/Suddaby 2006: 222). New regulations allow the official accreditation of certain practices for language promotion. In Brittany, promotional measures are already partly implemented, but to ensure their success, further diffusion would be vital.

- The campaign *Ya d'ar Brezhoneg* (“Yes to Breton”) for organisations and communities is an example of certification in practice on a small scale. The campaign honours organisations and communities that promote the public and professional use of the Breton language in everyday life.
- In adult education, standards to evaluate the linguistic competence based on the European Language Portfolio are used (*Le Diplôme de Compétence linguistique pour la langue bretonne*).
- Although the current legal situation in France does not allow the status as a co-official language in the region (which would be ideal), the official voluntary use of the Breton language in Brittany is tolerated in public life and could be increased immediately (e.g. through signposts, street signs, in administration and in education).
- There is an ongoing political discourse and practice in Brittany to include the fifth *département* Loire-Atlantique, as a target area of activities for promoting the regional language. Despite partially controversial discussions<sup>4</sup> about a future

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<sup>4</sup> Along with Rennes, Nantes was the historical capital of Brittany, and for parts of the population, it still embodies that symbolic value. Therefore, and for other possible reasons (economic, administrative etc.) the claim for a reunification remains alive in the daily political discourse of France.

reunification of all five *départements* within one administrative region<sup>5</sup>, the local language policy in a bottom-up view as well as in a top-down view, nowadays usually aims at extending the geographic territory for promotional activities and is characterised by intensive cooperation between all five *départements*. The *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* is a structure installed by representatives of all five *départements* and both regions (Bretagne, Pays de la Loire). In education, the three bilingual school systems are also active in Loire-Atlantique with a slight temporal delay and less impact. Especially, the presence of *Diwan* schools can be considered as a bottom-up initiative. In this perspective, the inclusion of Loire-Atlantique leads to a rise in potential speakers and a new definition of the boundaries of the field.

- The same is true for the definition of the target group by the regional government. The Breton language is declared to be the heritage of all Bretons. There is no limitation to a traditional territory or to native speakers, which can be seen as a revaluation of the language.

*Vesting* means regulative institutional work for conferring or establishing rights of disposition or property in a new manner, i.e. if the state authority distributes property rights differently or destroys state monopolies. It includes negotiations between the state and regional authorities aimed at decentralising competencies in the realm of education and culture and challenging French as a linguistic monopoly in the territory.

- In 2004, competencies in the field of culture, school and vocational education were transferred to the local authorities, e.g. the right to found new primary schools. However, today (after 2010, when another push of decentralisation in France took place) the local competencies are still limited to ownership of or the obligation to maintain the school buildings (*collèges, lycées*). The strategic areas of teacher recruiting and the establishing of new bilingual classes remain under central authority (*L'Éducation nationale*).
- In the future, the regional actors could try to benefit more strongly from the competencies that have already been conferred upon them and to negotiate additional transfers. Agreements between local and state authorities could comprise:
  - the integration of the private *Diwan* schools into the public sector (to guarantee their funding) (cf. Vetter 2005: 71-79; Perazzi 1998: 15-29),
  - negotiations between the central education authorities and the local representatives of the schools to debureaucratise the offering of new classes in the public sector, and
  - founding of a public radio station and television channel broadcasting in Breton.

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<sup>5</sup> All five *départements* (les Côtes-d'Armor, le Finistère, l'Ille-et-Vilaine, la Loire-Atlantique et le Morbihan) together represent the territory of the historical province of Brittany, which existed until the French Revolution. When the *régions administratives françaises modernes* were created in 1956, the *département* Loire-Atlantique was not included in the newly established region of Brittany, but added to the region Pays de la Loire.

*Constructing identities* is a form of institutional work relating to processes of social identity construction within groups of speakers. “Constructing identities as a form of institutional work is central to the creating of institutions because identities describe the relationship between an actor and the field in which that actor operates” (Lawrence/Suddaby 2006). Hence, for a successful institutionalisation of practices for promoting the social use of a local language, regional language movements depend on the prevalent identity constructions of the speakers. The socially constructed collective identity of the Bretons is affected by the characteristics of their language awareness (cf. Stegu 2008: 87-89, 2012; Cichon 2005; Kremnitz 2013a: 97). The dynamic and complex construct of the Breton identity (cf. Le Coadic 1998, 2007; Simon 2007; Hoare 2003; Abalain 2004: 308-330) constitutes an internal factor of the group of speakers which strongly influences the potential effectiveness of implemented language policy measures. A good fit between planned measures and socio-cultural schemes of interpretation of a specific target group is vital for a successful language policy. The diffusion of new institutional elements only works if they are in alignment with shared socio-cultural beliefs, understandings and systems of meaning. The group of speakers must feel cognitively and emotionally represented in these systems in order to ensure that they drive for the social practice of a language (cf. Cichon 2001).

Additional efforts to direct the attitudes of Bretons towards their regional language into an even more “positive” direction might have an impact on the cohesion among speakers and thus on lived linguistic practice. In 2007, at least 52% of the population of Brittany did not believe in the value of the Breton language (and its communicative usefulness) even though 58% desired promotional activities for the regional language (cf. Broudic 2009: 143-153).

Disputes over the *right* orthography also seem to hinder the construction of a shared Breton identity. Processes of standardisation (the general acceptance of one common orthography or one linguistic variety) have not been fully realised so far (cf. Blanchard 2008: 67-68, 2003: 41-46; Broudic 2001: 2-4; Abalain 2000: 85; Kremnitz 2012: 14-19). The parallel existence of several standards for written and oral Breton comes at the expense of the communicative function of the language (e.g. not all native speakers identify with the Breton variety used in electronic media or at school). This might contribute to the building of identities for local varieties of Breton (demarcating function of language) but it weakens the group of Breton speakers as a whole to some extent by fragmenting the totality of speakers. This is particularly problematic in the Breton context because linguistic proficiency among speakers is heterogeneous, which also blocks a common identity construction (cf. Réaume/Pinto 2012: 46; Vetter 2005; Kremnitz 2001a).

Furthermore, the two existing regional languages Breton and Gallo are explicitly referred to in relation to identity building. This should also be regarded as an official commitment of the regional government. “Le pluralisme linguistique de la Bretagne est ancien et constitutif de son identité” (“Brittany’s linguistic pluralism has a long tradition and is a constituent factor in its identity”) (Région Bretagne, Direction de la Culture 2004: 1). As measures related to language policy tie in with this statement, it is possible that the Bretons not only consider the symbolic value of their regional language, but also its social usefulness.

*Mimicry* refers to the diffusion of new institutions by imitating best practices and ideal solutions for similar problems in comparable fields. Successful models are copied in order to achieve similar results. The transfer of a tested practice, structure or other

institutional elements works all the better if it can be attached to some already existing cognitive scheme and if similarities of the problem and/or institutional element can be perceived easily by the new adopters. If this succeeds, the solution will soon become normal and unchallenged. Language policy activities in Brittany often rely on this kind of institutional work, as the Bretons like copying promising institutions used by other regional language movements in and outside of France.

- The *Diwan* schools were inspired by the Basque schools (*ikastolak*) and their concept of language learning by immersion.
- The Bretons continuously compare themselves to Celtic languages on the British isles, especially to the framework of the Welsh language policy (legal status, budget, public media, business sectors). The better conditions in Wales are reformulated as political objectives for Brittany. New industries and activities for people with regional language competencies are developed based on established fields of work in Wales (e.g. film and television industry, information technology, translation sector, public administration).
- The *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* periodically compares the sociolinguistic situation in Brittany to that of other regional languages. For example, the numbers of bilingual pupils and the establishment of bilingual classes in Alsace, Corsica and the French Basque Country (*Iparralde* in Basque, *Pays basque français* in French) regularly develop more favourably than in Brittany, in spite of the identical legal context. This disequilibrium provokes attempts to imitate and to balance the outcomes (cf. *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* 2013c: 41).
- Within the region of Brittany, there are some model communities (e.g. Carhaix, Landerneau) with regard to bilingualism. The local offering of bilingual classes, the number of bilingual pupils and the creation of bilingual town signs, street signs, signposts, public building signs (on town halls, railway stations and airports) could lead to imitation by neighbouring communities.
- The same effect can be expected from the official honouring of committed stakeholders. In Brittany, the *Prix Régionaux de l'Avenir du Breton* is an award for innovative projects promoting the Breton language.
- Finally, certification can provide an incentive for imitation (e.g. the *Diplôme de Compétence linguistique (DCL) pour la langue bretonne* in adult education).

*Theorising* means institutional work through language, such as the naming of new practices, concepts and ideas. Naming ensures that the new institutional elements become visible and part of the field, although they might take on a life of their own after having been said or written (cf. Greenwood/Meyer 2008: 263). Such concepts become cognitively anchored and are transformed into a piece of social reality through the act of being named. Theorising helps communicate explanatory models and chains of cause and effect that are central when creating new institutions. Through arguments and sensemaking, they acquire support from stakeholders that facilitate their diffusion. Successfully performing this kind of institutional work is a *condicio sine qua non* for regional language movements and their goals.

- Oral or written public statements, concessions and promises of representatives of the regional government or of activists in the field may serve to diffuse concepts.
- Public presentations (e.g. on television) by language policy experts, activists or Breton speakers dealing with the sociolinguistic situation in Brittany or press conferences of authors on the topic may increase the language sensitivity of the population.
- In the bilingual school system, parents are attracted by publicity for multilingual paedagogy. The advantages of an early language acquisition are often highlighted (e.g. the empirically supported positive impact when learning other languages later in life).
- Encouraging research in the field of language policy is another important area. Studies on language policy issues have traditionally been conducted mainly in disciplines like sociolinguistics, but also sociology, psychology, anthropology and ethnology. Only recently, have political science (politics of language), economics (economics of language policy), organisation and management studies (language policies in multinational companies) become more and more interested in the topic. Important theoretical knowledge and empirical findings from these disciplines can support the work of regional language movements if they are theorised accordingly and distributed publically (cf. Rindler-Schjerve 2012; Sonntag 2010; Grin, Sfreddo/Vaillancourt 2010; Piekkari/Tietze 2012).

*Educating* refers to increasing the linguistic qualification of actors in the field, so that they have the required (linguistic) skills and knowledge to be open to the new (linguistic) practices and hence to support the new institution. In the context of the Breton language policy, all forms of language education are covered here. This includes measures that increase the linguistic competence and performance of speakers and address various target groups (e.g. pupils, adults with active or passive language knowledge, language teachers, students of vocational schools, bilingual parents). Linguistic educational provision in this sense aims at enhancing linguistic proficiency of already existing bilingual speakers or at educating new secondary speakers and thus raising the total number of Breton speakers (cf. ARF 2008).

- Increasing the number of pre-school daycare places (immersion classes). By doing this, the transmission of the Breton language within families where only one parent knows the regional language could be stimulated.
- Raising the number of bilingual classes (in the three systems) all over Brittany, with a special emphasis on the *collèges* and *lycées* where the numbers of classes (and students) is still disappointing. The inclusion of the secondary technical and vocational colleges with its likely repercussions on the labour market would be of particular importance.
- The integration of the *Diwan* schools into the public sector. *Diwan* struggles considerably with its financial and operational management, as it has to be partly financed by parents. Not even all personnel costs are paid by the national or local authorities, and new schools or class positions have to be self-financed within the first five years as well.

- The regional language could be integrated into courses of study other than Breton-Celtic, which could also have an impact on the labour market. Additionally, regional language-sensitive courses could be implemented in teacher-training involving all disciplines.
- Raising the number of bilingual teachers by according more and higher scholarships to interested students and by improving the societal image of the teaching profession would lead to a greater supply of teachers for Breton language classes.
- New bilingual or monolingual Breton vocational training courses or the integration of Breton training modules into existing craft training and apprenticeship programmes could raise the social and practical usefulness of the language. At present, there is a higher demand for Breton-speaking personnel in some sectors (media, leisure animation for children or adults, public health service). In 2012, there were approximately 1,300 full-time positions (*Équivalent Temps Plein – ETP*) for which a proficiency in Breton was indispensable (cf. *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg* 2013a: 3).
- At the regional level, the operational implementation of already fixed goals (planned number of bilingual pupils, the real number of granted scholarships in the bilingual teacher training sector) and the negotiation skills and efficiency of the regional authorities towards the national authorities could be improved.
- Compared to regional language movements in other countries, there is still a lot of room to increase the national, regional and local budget for language policy issues. Additional financial resources in Brittany could facilitate the intended effects of the regional language policy tremendously.

## 4 Conclusions

This paper concludes that even in France, where the existing legal framework and many other aspects of the national language policy still impede sustainable success of regional language movements, regional governments possess an important range of potential action for protecting and promoting their regional language(s). Still, this potential is strongly limited by the support of the institutional environment, as the case of Brittany clearly demonstrates. However, the region of Brittany can also be regarded as a pioneer insofar as high commitment across political parties facilitated the implementation of an institutionally rooted regional language policy (incorporated by the *Ofis publik ar brezhoneg*), and there are remarkable initiatives at the regional level aiming at introducing institutional change and permitting the spreading of practices which could encourage the social use of the Breton language.

Many forms of institutional work already exist at least on a small scale. However, three forms in particular (mimicry, theorising and educating) should be further developed, because in other contexts, these forms of institutional work were relatively efficient at supporting the creation of new institutions during the stage of pre-institutionalisation. In this early phase, new concepts and practices are critically discussed (e.g. the pedagogical concept of immersion vs. parity of hours – *enseignement à parité horaire* – in bilingual education), the group of new adopters is relatively homogenous (e.g. the organisations that signed the campaign *Ya d'ar*



*Brezhoneg* belong to very few sectors) and they are few in quantity. Mimetic processes (imitation, contagion via spontaneous transmission, social learning and planned transfer) are the engine for diffusion, and innovations are only accepted if they can be defined as promising solutions for imminent problems. (cf. Tolbert/Zucker 1996: 180–185; Walgenbach/Meyer 2008: 97; Strang/Soule 1998).

Language policy in Brittany already strongly relies on imitation (mimicry) of best practices (e.g. the *Diwan* schools, self-comparisons to other regional language movements) and on theorising (e.g. the public statements of the regional governments, the work of local journalists with regard to the Breton language). In contrast, educating as a form of institutional work has to be strengthened, as the crucial issue in the sociolinguistic situation of the Breton language is the ongoing decline in speakers due to demographic changes, which means that nowadays, Breton speakers have very few opportunities to meet other Breton speakers. The number of speakers can only be stabilised by educating many new secondary speakers and simultaneously offering them opportunities to use the Breton language in daily life, which might also raise its communicative value. Measures of implicit language policy, such as creating new jobs where the Breton language is needed as a mandatory qualification, could effectively help sustain language use as (new) Breton-speaking employees are then motivated, at least extrinsically, to use their regional language.

However, this paper should not be seen as pleading only for a top-down perspective. Of course, the social reality in Brittany and the willingness and motivation of the Breton population have to be taken into account. Moreover, the successful acceptance and implementation of policy instruments depends upon their identification with the regional language policy. It is therefore recommendable to combine the perspectives of (potential) speakers as well as stakeholders in the field of Breton language policy into an integrative regional language policy (top-down and bottom-up). At the same time, it should not be ignored that the success of any measures at this stage depends on reaching a critical mass of adopters (speakers) which will probably require obligatory bilingual education at school (which is not legally feasible in France), as the examples in Wales and the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country in Spain impressively reveal.

Although much inspiration for other dominated languages can be drawn from the concept of institutional work, efforts do not always lead to the expected results. There are cases where processes of institutionalisation fail, especially when the institutional environment is hostile. Thus, the actors at the regional level in Brittany face great challenges on the way to making institutional change happen.

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