

## **The governance of Basque language revitalisation in the Basque Autonomous Community: from confrontation toward collaboration**

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Abstract:

In recent decades, language revitalisation policies, programmes and initiatives have had to develop in an environment of major social, political, economic, or technological changes that have had an extraordinary impact on the governance of minority language revitalisation. In this context, we have studied the changes that have taken place in the governance of the revitalisation of the Basque language in the Basque Autonomous Community during the first two decades of the 21st century: from open antagonism to a common commitment to collaborative governance. We present an analysis of the models of governance confronted in the field of the revitalisation of the Basque language, of the rationalities that inform them or provide them with resources of meaning and legitimation, and of the process by which a model of collaborative governance has been arrived at.

Keywords: Governance, Language Revitalisation, Basque Language, Confrontation and collaboration

### **1. Introduction**

Language revitalisation is a field of action in which public policy and social movements meet and interact and, as in any other area of public policy, these relationships, whether conflicting or cooperative, are subject to governance and meta-governance. In recent decades, language revitalisation policies, programmes and initiatives have had to develop in an environment of major social, political, economic, or technological changes (Lewis & Royles, 2018: 504)

that have had an extraordinary impact on the governance of minority language revitalisation (Lewis & McLeod, 2021).

In this context, we have studied the changes that have taken place in the governance of the revitalisation of the Basque language in the Basque Autonomous Community (from now on, BAC) during the first two decades of the 21st century. Specifically, we have analysed the changes in the discourses and practices of governance through the programmatic texts of the main actors (socio-community and governmental). These texts have defined and projected language policies and their governance, using the resources of meaning and legitimisation of different rationalities. Therefore, they give an account of the revitalisation process and its governance, in this case, from open antagonism to a common commitment to collaborative governance. In short, we present an analysis of the models of governance confronted in the field of the revitalisation of the Basque language, of the rationalities that inform them or provide them with resources of meaning and legitimation, and of the process by which a model of collaborative governance has been arrived at.

Regarding the structure of the text, in the first section we will set out the critical apparatus that will guide the analysis: the relationship between the governance of public policies and neoliberal rationality, as well as the presence in the revitalisation of minority languages of alternative rationalities and models of governance. In the second section, we will present the context and the course of the governance of Basque revitalisation policies and initiatives in the BAC from the end of Franco's regime to the end of the 20th century. Thirdly, we will analyse the discursive topics of the programmatic texts of the first two decades of this century. Finally, we will examine the current dynamics and the meta-governance discourse corresponding to the co-governance model.

## **2. Governance and neo-liberal rationality in public policies**

### ***2.1 Neoliberal governance***

Governance has been defined as the regulation of a socio-political system that emerges from the interactions of actors (Kooiman, 1993: 258) or as the coordination of the complex reciprocal interdependence between operationally autonomous agents, organisations and functional systems (Jessop, 2016: 166). There are three basic models of governance: hierarchical governance, self-governance and co-governance (Kooiman, 2003) or command, exchange, network (Jessop, 2016: 124). Each model has its own logic of legitimation and its own success/failure criteria. In hierarchical or command governance, the criterion is effectiveness in the fulfilment of the hierarchy's policies; in self-

governance or exchange, efficiency in the relationship between needs and resource allocation; and in co-governance or network governance, the capacity for deliberation, coordination, and decision-making based on negotiations, agreements and consensus (Jessop, 2016: 167). In a narrow sense, governance has been limited to the latter model (Jessop, 2016: 167). Perhaps for this reason, from a normative perspective, good governance is often referred to as open, collaborative or democratic governance and the mechanisms that would make this good governance possible are detailed: participation, mutual recognition, transparency, coherence, accountability, evaluations, etc.

However, actual cases of governance are over-determined by ideologies and rationalities as much as by institutional structures and material and historical conditions, so that governance can indicate both a model of democratisation and a strategy of privatisation of power. As a substitute for hierarchical government, governance spread during the 1980s in a context of crisis of governability and legitimacy of representative democracy (Santos, 2005: 4) and hand in hand with processes of neoliberalisation: the state was to be left to social actors to manage their interactions, aspiring to constitute a kind of network government, of government without government in a world of multi-scalar networks (Rhodes, 1996).

Although governance is not neoliberal in nature, it came to be seen as the matrix of neoliberal globalisation (Santos, 2005: 4) and the primary administrative form of neoliberalism (Brown, 2015: 122).

## ***2.2 Neoliberal rationality***

Drawing on Michel Foucault, Wendy Brown conceives of neoliberal rationality as a normative order of reason and truth that governs and structures life and activity as a whole, determining legitimate and reasonable modes of behaviour (Brown, 2015). More than just an economic policy or a phase of capitalism, neoliberal rationality would be "the new reason of the world": a set of discourses, practices and devices that establish competition as a universal principle and natural form of human relations (Dardot & Laval, 2009). According to Brown, this rationality imposes the logic of the competitive market between private interests and reduces citizenship to homo economicus, eliminating the idea of citizenship as people, as demos, which asserts its political sovereignty over public life (Brown 2015: 39). According to neoliberal rationality the ideal governance will have the following characteristics (we partially follow Wendy Brown, 2015: 122-142):

- Economisation and company form. Actors, including the state, will act as competitive enterprises.
- Governance and control of conditions. The state will reduce social and political conflicts and guarantee the free market. However, the deregulated market and the authoritarian and security state can complement each other to ensure accumulation and governance of markets (Jessop, 2016: 224-225).
- Delegation and accountability. Responsibility for decisions will be delegated to actors who are responsible for their market value.
- Expertise (technical or administrative). The successful experience and effective knowledge of agencies and institutions will replace political, ethical or normative discussions.
- Decisions will be legitimised through problem solving and consensus (technical or expert). Means such as stakeholder consultation, multi-stakeholder cooperation or stakeholder participation will be used to produce and implement practical solutions to technically defined and depoliticised problems.

It has been pointed out that some of the discursive clichés and devices of (neoliberal) market governance (e.g. voluntary participation, horizontality, autonomy, coordination, consensus, partnership, self-regulation or the empowerment of social agents) are also found, informed by different rationalities, in alternative and even 'insurgent' and 'counter-hegemonic' models (Santos, 2005: 17).

Governance practices do not occur as the rationalities that inform the models would have it, but because of tensions and struggles for hegemony. To analyse these tensions and negotiations, two higher levels must be considered. In the first place, meta-governance and collibration, or the governance of each of the models according to their own criteria plus attempts to modify the institutional conditions in which they confront each other. Secondly, collibration or third-order governance, the attempt to modify the relative weight of each of the modes of governance within the overall balance and equilibrium (Jessop, 2016: 173-174 ).

Co-governance can only be understood as an unstable outcome resulting from the pressure of alternative models of "counter-governance" that try to make hierarchical and market governance fail (cf. Paquet, 2005; 2011). One well-known proposal is community governance. It is usually understood either as the common government of the governed over themselves and the commons

(as opposed to the private), or as the organisation and development by the plural third sector (Mintzberg, 2015) of what the state delegates to it, of its interrelationships or its initiatives (Cardinal & Forgues, 2015: 4). In both cases, by claiming and substantiating the intervention of civil society, community governance and similar proposals demand a model of co-governance without imbalances, without subordination either to the command of hierarchy or to mercantile rationality - and if this is not achieved, they can be presented as counter-governance and even as counter-power.

### *2.3 Governance of public policies and language policies*

Stephen P. Osborne (2010) summarises the change in public administration governance models in three phases.

The first, from the 1940s to the 1970s, is the phase of the old Public Administration, that of classical bureaucratic management with professional civil servants functionally and hierarchically organised under the rule of law.

The second phase is that of New Public Management (from now on, NPM). A model, essentially inspired by neo-liberal business management, it was introduced into UK public policy during the 1980s. By the 1990s, 'entrepreneurship' had conquered the public sector in the name of efficiency and economic effectiveness. The state was presented as a catalyst that should energise all sectors (public, private, voluntary) and guide the regulation of markets in an indirect and flexible way (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992: 19-20).

Criticisms of the consequences of NPM pointed out that outsourcing and privatisation had weakened the coordination and control of state apparatuses. In addition, that the fragmented and multi-agency public sector had not been slimmed down and that monitoring and quality assessment mechanisms had destroyed trust among public workers. These criticisms pointed out that the 'corporate culture' had led to the loss of the spirit of public service (Bevir & Rhodes, 2011; Diefenbach, 2009; Dickinson, 2016).

Thirdly, around the year 2000, with the arrival of New Labour, people began to talk about New Public Governance (from now on, NPG) and a new public service (Dickinson, 2014; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000). It was presented as a response to the problems of NPM, with the aim of recovering public administration as a service to democratic citizenship (Stoker, 2006) but inserted in a network of alliances between institutional, social and/or private actors,

under the pressure of the search for cooperation and mutual trust (Rhodes, 1997, 2007).

Jonathan Davies argues that the movement from hierarchy to governance is a feature of the continuing struggle for hegemony under neoliberalism (quoted by Jessop, 2016: 182). In language policy, this movement of meta-governance is embodied in the move from language policy to language governance. Terms such as language policy, language management or language planning have been linked to the hierarchical control and intervention of centralised institutions and bureaucratic apparatuses (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997: xi; Johnson, 2013: 325) typical of the classical phase of Osborne's model, a language policy directed and planned by government administrations through laws and regulations. In language governance, however, we would find the oscillations and tensions typical of (meta)governance: multiple actors, diverse scales, complex networks of influences, etc. (cf. Williams, 2007). If so, linguistic meta-governance would be the agonising tension around hegemony in the field of language policy. A framework in which pro-language social movements can, depending on their social strength, strain the ambivalences of governance in order to promote models that include the recognition of their agency and favour their claims to hegemony. This has been the framework in which the governance of the revitalisation of the Basque language has developed over the last 40 years, moving from a conflict between community and governmental models to a model of co-governance.

### **3. The revitalisation of Basque language at the end of the 20th century**

During the Franco dictatorship, the pro-Basque language social movement (from now on, BLSM) lived clandestinely and the few possibilities for public activity offered by the regime. It was a movement strongly linked to the Basque peoples' resistance to the dictatorship and, from the 1960s onwards, to left-wing separatism. After Franco's dictatorship and in the face of the development of the State of Autonomies, the BLSM was immersed in the political struggle between the forces that supported the reform of the Spanish state and those that demanded a complete break with the dictatorship and refused to recognise the institutions that emerged from the reform as legitimate (cf. Goirigolzarri & Landabidea, 2020). In the period of autonomous institutionalisation, the social actors had to reposition themselves in a new framework that included the co-official status of Basque, its introduction into the education system, and the creation of public media in Basque. Also, they needed to take a position on the legitimacy of the new legal framework, the new institutional actors, and their language policies (Urla, 2012a; Larrinaga, 2017).

### *3.1 The power/counter-power cycle*

If during Franco's regime the BLSM's binding force was opposition to the dictatorship, after the dictatorship part of the movement positioned itself with the strategy of rupture of radical left-wing separatism, and found itself involved in a dynamic of anti-institutional counter-power, also directed against the new autonomous institutions. The latter responded with a discourse denouncing the partisan use of Basque and in several cases with parallel public initiatives in competition with the social ones. All this led to internal conflict both within the BLSM and within the language community itself (Larrinaga, 2018: 327). Even so, the BLSM never limited itself to confrontation; it built up a whole network of local associations for the promotion of the language, Basque language teaching centres for adults, the media, etc. In many cases, these initiatives gave rise to people who would become professional experts in the sub-state administrations as language policies were developed.

### *3.2 The cycle of expert knowledge and new management*

The late 1980s saw the beginning of a cycle characterised by a growing autonomy of the BLSM from political or partisan confrontation and by the development of professionalisation and expert knowledge. It was a slow change that defined linguistic governance during the 1990s and 2000s. In this period, two ways of understanding action for language took shape, one more political, which placed language in the context of power relations and political action, and the other more cultural and managerial (Larrinaga, 2018: 328). The managerial framework was taken up by the BLSM and became more relevant as collaboration with institutions increased (Erize, 2013). The strategic principle of this current was the autonomy of the language community and the revitalisation of the language (as opposed to subordination to political strategies), as well as the need to develop expert, technical knowledge and to take advantage of the flow of resources (regulatory support, infrastructure, subsidies, etc.) from the autonomous administrations and from the Basque Government (from now on, BG). At this time, together with numerous community associations and due to the extension of language normalisation plans to public and private spheres, the number of language technicians in the public administration grew and language services and consultancy companies that applied NPM methods emerged. In addition, instruments of diagnosis and periodic and quantitative evaluation of the revitalisation process were implemented, such as censuses, surveys or sociolinguistic maps (Urla, 2012a, 2012b). In a sense, neoliberal governmentality found a place in the BLSM.

In 1996 the federation of associations of language activists, *Euskaltzaleen Topagunea* (the Meeting Point for Basque Language Activists), was created, and in 1997 *Euskararen Gizarte Erakundeen Kontseilua* (the Council of Social Organisations of the Basque language). Since then, both organisations have been essential players in the revitalisation of the Basque language, working to bring together and strengthen the Basque-speaking community and to articulate and plan the revitalisation process as a whole. By the year 2000, the language movement was (self-)represented by a triple structure: social associations, technical-business entities and professional and/or trade union groups which, depending on the case, were guided by a strategy of normalisation, by a strategy of power (of political antagonism), or by both.

*Topagunea* is currently made up of some 20,000 members in 81 local associations dedicated to promoting social and cultural activities in Basque. *Kontseilua* brings together some 30 heterogeneous entities in the field of Basque (media, consultancies, publishing houses, educational and cultural associations, etc.). *Topagunea* has based its activity on non-partisan grassroots activism, aimed at the cultural sphere and favouring collaboration with the administrations. *Kontseilua* has focused on demanding the effective fulfilment of linguistic rights and demanding policies for the comprehensive revitalisation of the Basque language.

Regarding the institutional structure, language policy is the responsibility of a Vice-Ministry that is advised by the Basque Government's Basque Language Advisory Council (from now on, BG-BLAC), a body formed in a personal capacity by experts from civil society and the author of a large part of the Basque Government's language policy texts. However, there is no forum that brings the administrations together with the associations of the BLSM.

### ***3.3 The legal framework for normalisation***

Since the end of the dictatorship, the development of initiatives and policies to revitalise Basque has been understood as "normalisation", a signifier adopted from the Catalan model, which has been subject to different interpretations. For the BLSM, it is understood as the process towards the functional completeness (Moring, 2007) of Basque, while the administrations tend to understand it as the legal regulation of the official status of the language.

The laws and regulations in force in the BAC have given rise to an asymmetrical co-officiality: the Spanish Constitution provides that knowledge of Spanish is compulsory (Article 3 of the Preliminary Title) and the Statute of



Autonomy provides that knowing and using Basque is a right of the inhabitants of the BAC (Article 6). In 1982, the Basque Normalisation Law (1982) was enacted, which obliges institutions to guarantee the linguistic rights of citizens and orients language policies towards normalisation, understood as equivalence between co-official languages, at least in their institutional use. Institutions must enforce and protect the right to use Basque in official settings (cf., Totoricagüena & Urrutia, 2008).

The linguistic normality projected in BG policies is based on individual linguistic rights. But, given the socio-linguistic situation, these rights are only partially fulfilled. The gap between formal rights and their actual non-fulfilment is one of the main axes of tension between administration and BLSM (Larrinaga, 2018: 327). Basically, two language ideologies are confronted: language as a resource and personal right (use before official institutions), versus language as a community structure and activity whose right of use is guaranteed by the social body.

#### **4. Period from 2000 to 2017: confronting rationalities**

##### ***4.1 The textual ecosystem***

In the field of Basque revitalisation, we find a network of devices, artefacts and dispositions of actors of different scales and nature (private, public, social, community):

- a) Technological-bureaucratic management devices such as plans, regulations or quality systems;
- b) Accounting, classificatory and mapping technology artefacts (sociolinguistic surveys and maps; Urla, 2012b);
- c) Dispositions (values, beliefs, imaginaries, etc.), which are the continuous object of research and management for motivating, activating and making speakers more responsible.

All these elements are exposed and articulated in discursive practices that say what the relevant language policies are and who, how and why they should be made. Part of this discursive work is explicit and public in one type of device: programmatic texts. Apart from providing a reasoned and reflexive exposition of ends and means in temporary plans, programmatic texts define the field of action and the legitimate agents, adopting the language and logic of rationalities that operate as a code of common sense and legitimation. The texts articulate with each other and with the other devices, artefacts and dispositions

of the field of Basque; they question each other, complement each other or confront each other in open antagonism.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the Vice-Councillor for Language Policy of the BG has produced a series of programmatic texts, research and agendas or plans. The research provides technical-scientific coverage for the programmatic proposals (see table 1) which in turn establish the strategic objectives, while the plans guide the practical implementation of some of the proposals in specific institutional scenarios. All these texts were drawn up and published in a temporal chain in which each new text built on the preceding ones from a seminal text drafted by the BG-BLAC, Euskara21. Basis for a Language Policy for the early 21st Century. Toward a Renewed Agreement. Together they form a single text with different and consecutive temporal adaptations and advances in specific areas or aspects, an intertextual network that confronts and complements the texts of the BLSM, particularly those produced by the two main social actors, Kontseilua and Topagunea.

**Table 1:** Programmatic texts (2009-2017)

Basque Government (BG)	Topagunea (BLSM)	Kontseilua (BLSM)
Euskara21. Basis for a Language Policy for the early 21st Century. Toward a Renewed Agreement, 2009	Basque-speaking associations in the 21st century. Report to reach a basic consensus and objectives, 2010.	A new and effective language policy, 2009.
Action Plan for the Promotion of Basque, 2012	From Federation to Movement, 2012.	Axes. 10 proposals for strengthening and developing language policy, 2014.
Strategic Agenda for Basque Language 2013-2016: a living language for peaceful coexistence, 2013	Re-learning and reviewing. A review of the last half century to conclude a future of such reading, 2015.	
Analysis of Basic Discourses concerning the Basque Language, 2016.		

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Where do we go from here? Sustainability in the Development of the Basque Language or "A rolling stone gathers no moss", 2016.

Strategic Agenda for Basque Language 2017-2020, 2017

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**Note:** Titles of the texts translated by the authors themselves or by us (in case there is no English translation).

#### ***4.2 Institutional discourse***

The institutional texts of this period have formal and stylistic characteristics that assume the usual mechanisms of NPM (consensual and expert advice, business, or management lexicon, etc.). But our analysis will focus on the topics or semantic macrostructures of discourse (Van Dijk, 2015: 212), that is, on the structuring topics of discourse in which we can see how a particular rationality defines, legitimises and gives meaning to aspects of governance (field of action, objectives, actions, actors, antagonisms, etc.).

- In the middle of the power/counterpower cycle, the seminal text on language policy defends the legitimacy of the autonomous legal framework, of the *institutional authority* and of its policies. It directly criticises some assumptions of the BLSM discourse: it rejects "the myth that presents the work in favour of Basque as a resistance movement" and that considers "the public authorities as enemies of the Basque language or, at least, negligent and lax in its defence". Furthermore, it only considers legitimate interlocutors to be those who accept institutional policies, and rejects political confrontation and "destructive hypercriticism" (BG-BLAC, 2009:36).
- A *hierarchical complementarity between the public and private sectors* is defended: the "private sector" cannot "set the priorities of language policy", and must limit itself to collaborating with the policies decided by the public authorities (BG-BLAC, 2009: 38).
- *Consensus building* through selective participatory processes is the privileged tool for legitimising programmatic proposals (BG-BLAC, 2009: 58). But a limited consensus: "(...) the aim has never been to

synthesise what does not admit of synthesis (...) [but] a fair contrast of opinions that leads to an effective form of consensus" (BG-BLAC, 2009: 17).

- *Depoliticisation*. Language policy is presented as the technical, scientific or bureaucratic implementation of legal mandates and expert diagnoses: problem solving and plan implementation (with references to sociolinguistics, marketing or management). In this framework, the topics of NPM appear: modernisation, flexibilisation, innovation, quality, learning and continuous improvement, efficiency, etc. (BG-BLAC, 2009: 25; BG, 2013: 4).
- Citizenship is presented as a *customer of public services*, in this case the customer is the individual speaker, and the service, the administrative response to the formal right to choose the official language of choice. The speaker and his or her choices are ultimately delegated the responsibility for the linguistic situation (BG-BLAC, 2009: 31).
- Language policy is legitimised as a *guarantee of equality in the choice* of the language of use (BG-BLAC, 2009: 58). It is a matter of organising, promoting and guaranteeing a free, competitive but balanced language market, a "balanced bilingualism". Beyond the metaphor, political intervention should not replace the real market; competition is the optimal regulatory mechanism for an "emancipated and normalised" cultural production, even in the minority language (BG-BLAC, 2009: 47).
- The so-called "social coexistence" becomes the priority objective of language policy, as opposed to the demand for the fulfilment of rights or the reversal of the situation of minority status. In the name of realism, and under a diffuse "technical" signifier, "sustainable diglossia", sustaining the current diglossia becomes an objective (BG-BLAC, 2009: 27-29). The renunciation of the functional fullness of Basque is legitimised and the institutional language policy is positioned as the only technically and scientifically possible one (Escribano, 2017: 215).

In the first years of this period, the institutional discourse oscillates between the constant vindication of the legitimacy of the autonomous authorities and their policies (with a hierarchical model of governance but full of elements of neoliberal management) and the commitment to the autonomy of the market, even in the revitalisation of the Basque language. However, from 2010 onwards, the BG began to promote a model of "open government" and "good governance" in other areas of public policy (Ahedo, 2020), which in a relatively short period of time will extend to language policies.

From 2014 onwards, changes were introduced in the institutional texts. Those published in 2016 show a rapprochement between the BG and Topagunea (2015) on the need for a new framing for Basque (cf. Martínez de Luna, 2013, 2016), a new consensual and positive discourse that "depoliticises" the language and that bases revitalisation on marketing techniques, image management, etc. In "Where do we go from here?" it is proposed that institutional policies and social actors should complement each other, and for the first time, the "third sector" is mentioned (with references to Henry Mintzberg) and its "active participation as in democratic processes" (BG-BLAC, 2016: 28). The text also introduces "egalitarian bilingualism, in which all citizens have the same linguistic rights" (BG-BLAC, 2016: 52), although "sustainable diglossia" does not disappear. Finally, the 2017-2020 Strategic Agenda consolidates the previous changes, places the achievement of equality in social activation (with a mention of gender policies) and introduces governance "based on dialogue and cooperation, in joint work between public entities and social agents" (BG, 2017: 40).

### *4.3 Social actors' discourse*

During this period, the main topics of stakeholder discourse are the following:

- The goal of language policy is to overcome linguistic subordination and conflict (Kontseilua, 2009: 11), to fulfil linguistic rights and to achieve the social hegemony of Basque (Topagunea & Sorgunea, 2010: 12; Topagunea, 2015: 30; Kontseilua, 2009: 4).
- The BLSM focuses on the social conditions that affect language use. Kontseilua explicitly rejects the argument of the administration that blames speakers for not using Basque enough and for the bad situation of Basque (Kontseilua, 2009: 7).
- The BLSM actors propose a model of collaborative governance in which public and socio-community functions are distributed and in which a single political direction or authority is articulated to guide and coordinate the revitalisation process (Kontseilua, 2009: 5; Topagunea, 2015: 9).
- Social actors advocate a complementarity of expert knowledge and socio-community activism (Topagunea, 2015). They include in this expert knowledge the know-how accumulated by Basque associations and their style of activism: creative, joyful, accessible, pragmatic (Topagunea & Sorguneak, 2010: 27).

- Furthermore, they are committed to a renewed ideological framework for the autonomy of the movement that is not linked to party ideologies (Topagunea & Sorguneak, 2010).

In short, in this period Topagunea set itself the task of new governance, which the other socio-community actors, with differences in priorities and some nuances, accepted. But at that time, the demand for change was not limited to governance; the perception of the exhaustion of official language policies and the type of practices and discourses of the BLSM was widespread. In 2017, several studies were published showing that progress in the learning and use of the language had stagnated. Accordingly, the demands for a "new paradigm" that promotes social scenarios for the use of Basque, pragmatic adherence to the language and that takes into account global changes and supra-state levels of regulation were multiplied (Goirigolzarri et al., 2017; Amonarriz & Martinez de Lagos, 2017). Alongside this new paradigm, a new discourse is also demanded and proposed with practical-discursive contributions from movements such as feminism that would serve as support for an alternative rationality centred on the denunciation of subordination and the non-fulfilment of rights (Agirre & Eskisabel, 2016).

## **5. Period from 2017 to 2021: co-governance and new language policy paradigm**

### ***5.1 Social actors' discourse***

From 2014 to 2017, there was a convergence between the discourse of the BG and that of Topagunea, favoured by the ambivalences of neoliberal governance, particularly the externalisation of governmental functions in external entities, although from a social perspective these movements are perceived as steps towards community-based co-governance. The year 2017 was a year of inflection, of launching a co-governance whose first objective was precisely the definition of co-governance. Opposing rationalities, interests and objectives meet in a process of meta-governance that builds the co-governance of the revitalisation of the Basque language.

During 2017 and 2018, in the gaps left open by the ambivalences of opposing rationalities, discourses and practices gradually converged, the actors repositioned themselves and resituated their own relationships, antagonisms and alliances, and new practical proposals for collaboration emerged.

The most important for its size, social impact and level of collaboration was the *Euskaraldia*, a social experiment in transforming language practices held in

December 2018, which mobilised more than 200,000 people. Organised by Topagunea and public institutions, more than 4,000 municipalities and 200 entities of all kinds collaborated and, in addition to the objectives themselves, the experiment served to test collaboration between institutions and social associations on a large scale (Jauregi & Anduaga, 2019).

Evidence of a change of cycle, however, can be seen in the relations between BG and Kontseilua. The entities integrated in Kontseilua have habitually delegated to this council the confrontation and criticism of public policies and the work of demanding political and legal changes, so it is not surprising, then, that in this period Kontseilua is, together with the BG, the protagonist of the meta-governance of co-governance. Since 2016, a series of bilateral meetings have been initiated between the two, to which Kontseilua contributed several working documents proposing a detailed model of co-governance.

In summary, the documents speak of the need for a stable framework of cooperation between the administration and the social entities, of mutual respect and recognition, and of a division of tasks according to the character of the actors. The administration will legislate, plan, subsidise or provide resources, the socio-community part will participate in decision-making, policy development and evaluation or mobilise the community. An integrated multi-stakeholder and multi-level commission that would oversee the direction, leadership and strategy of the language policy would ensure the co-governance of this division of tasks.

In his capacity as president of ELEN (European Language Equality Network), Paul Bilbao -- the secretary general of Kontseilua -- took part in a workshop organised by the Revitalise research network on "Language revitalisation, the state and the transformation of governance", held in Cardiff in 2019. In his presentation, Bilbao linked ELEN's official position with the governance model on which Kontseilua was working at the time and with the actual enforcement of language rights: "civil society can create a context that is conducive to proactive intervention by government with regard to legislation, planning and resources" (Lewis et al., 2019: 8).

By 2019, two general changes had taken place. First, all actors were aware that previous antagonisms were being transformed into a field of collaboration. Second, this transformation has prompted them to publicly position themselves in the face of mutual interpellations about co-governance. Most of the actors in

the revitalisation of the Basque language, whether major or not, did so favourably during 2019.

### 5.2 Discursive and practical convergence

A good indicator of the consolidation of co-governance is the collaboration in organising events, workshops and campaigns. A single agency effect is thus produced. Of all these collaborations, Euskaraldia (second edition, November 2020) once again stands out as a true laboratory of co-governance, in this case, between Topagunea and the three sub-state administrations of the Basque-speaking territory (Basque Government, Government of Navarre, Communauté d'agglomération du Pays Basque, provincial councils, town councils, etc.).

**Table 2** Texts for the new governance (2017-2021).

Basque Government (BG)	Topagunea (BLSM)	Kontseilua (BLSM)
	<i>Reinforce and jump, 2020.</i>	<i>The future from the Basque language, 2020</i>
<i>Strategic Agenda for Basque Language 2017-2020, 2021</i>		<i>Social consensus to influence language policies, 2021</i>

**Note:** Titles of the texts translated by the authors themselves or by us (in case there is no English translation). These are unpublished working papers. We are grateful to Kontseilua for access to these documents and for permission to use them in this research.

As might be expected, practical collaboration has been accompanied by a convergence in the discourses of programmatic texts (see table 2) to form a discourse of and for co-governance, the common themes of which are as follows:

- The common diagnosis: critical state or stagnation of the revitalisation process and new challenges (migration, new technologies, globalisation...) that make co-governance necessary.
- Open, democratic and transparent meta-governance for co-governance or shared and multilevel governance. Agreement on methodologies: expert consultation and interest groups or activists, openness to broad



social participation, shared decision-making, etc. (Topagunea-Topalabea, 2020; Kontseilua, 2020).

- Redefinition of objectives: comfortable use of Basque, universalisation of knowledge of the language (as a citizen's right), safeguarding of rights and linguistic diversity (Kontseilua, 2021).
- Common ideological framework: linguistic rights as an element of a democratic society that respects the rights of minorities, an egalitarian and cohesive society (Kontseilua, 2021).
- The field of the Basque language, Euskalgintza, as an autonomous actor in the face of private or foreign interests (to the revitalisation of the language), effectively and legitimately capable of appealing to all social sectors, of proactively involving the entire social body (Topalabea-Topagunea, 2020).

Although common, the topics are expressed in terms that are specific to the trajectory of each of the actors, varying in the priority or intensity with which the objectives are claimed. Where the social actors say "guaranteeing" or "achieving" full respect for language rights, the BG speaks of "making progress" (BG, 2021: 14) or where Topagunea speaks of equal participation (in diagnoses, planning, etc.), the BG claims the leadership of public institutions and, in particular, of the BG-BLAC (BG, 2021: 65). Even so, the BG's Agenda 2021-2024 explicitly recognises social actors: if in previous agendas a generic "social agent" was used, in this one Kontseilua, Topagunea, etc. are expressly named and taken into consideration.

The political character of revitalisation is also understood in different ways. For the BG, it is necessary to overcome "areas of contact with socio-political thought" (BG, 2021: 9). Kontseilua, however, aims for the Basque language field to become a collective actor that "shakes up" social consensus and achieves political consensus by exerting pressure on political groups. To this end, it has drawn up a road map for the new language policy (Kontseilua 2021) expressly presented as social consensus to influence language policies.

Topagunea takes as a reference the social movements for the defence of minority rights and claims the autonomy of the countryside as a guarantee of socio-community strength in the face of big interests in a context in which "the elites of the business, political and financial spheres are being placed at the centre of governance, prioritising their private interests over the benefit of society, putting the sustainability of the ecosystem and the basic rules of democracy at risk. This risk is building democratic governance, which is based

on sustainable community development and territoriality" (Topagunea-Topalabea, 2020: 10).

## 6. Conclusion

From our perspective, the analysis of governance cannot be reduced to the analysis of influence and power games between pressure groups, lobbies, associations or communities. In this analysis, the ideological framework and the rationalities at play must be taken into account. Here, the ideologies of language, politics and public policies, and the rationalities that give meaning and legitimacy to the discourses and practices of Basque language revitalisation, as well as to the models of governance and the manoeuvres, disputes or collaborations to make the desired model a reality.

Through the discourse of the programmatic texts we have seen how the actors present themselves, how they legitimise their actions and how they intend to perform the sociolinguistic reality. Discourse is an instrument of meta-governance which, in a situation of conflict, is directed towards the delegitimisation of antagonists and self-legitimation, but it is also an instrument of negotiation and change and innovation. In the Basque case, the actors, highly motivated by an "ideology of revitalisation", have been able to use ambivalent practices, discursive ambiguities or diffuse signifiers to overcome the previous conflict or ideological polarisation and create a field of common discourse and practice, the current co-governance, through a constant work of discursive innovation applied to praxis.

These ambiguities served as a meeting point, on the one hand, because the BLSM had already partially incorporated neoliberal rationality through techniques of governmentality (cf. Urla 2012a, 2012b) and because it sought to overcome the antagonism of political legitimacies and build transversal consensus that would reinforce a progressive leap in revitalisation. And, on the other, because the BG had decided to promote policies inspired by co-governance or open government (Ahedo 2020: 226).

Neoliberal rationality continues to inform language policy. There is still talk of language as personal capital, of competition between the private and the public in a market for language services, of managerial knowledge, and so on. Democratic rationality is still present in the topic of language as a right of all citizens that must be materially guaranteed by public policies. And the communitarian rationality speaks of direct political action and practice, of communitarian adhesion against subordination, of social change, etc. However,

in a certain sense, the meta-governance of co-governance is possible thanks to a meta-discursive framework that allows discourses informed by divergent and even antagonistic rationalities to circulate. A framework in which each actor participates without losing coherence, identity or autonomy.

In short, the discourse of co-governance and its practice has repositioned the revitalisation of the Basque language within the framework of social and political innovation, in synergic and multi-scale networks of heterogeneous actors, directing it towards the defence of minority rights with a community base and support from the hierarchy. It is a discursive framework open to interpretation and particular nuances, but with that minimum ambivalent commonality that makes co-governance possible (cf. Amonarriz, 2019).

Collaborative metagovernance faces many challenges: the administrative fragmentation of the territory of the Basque language, the multilevel and scalar nature of language policies, the trends of social change, the linguistic hegemony of the majority languages, global audiovisual markets, artificial intelligence, etc. However, the main challenge is its own consolidation. Fundamentally, the model coincides with dialogic governance as defined by B. Jessop (2016), i.e. the coordination of self-organised networks in negotiation, deliberation and redefinition of objectives in view of the circumstances around a long-term consensual project. And one of the main problems of network coordination is the tendency to degenerate into hierarchical coordination by failing to cultivate governing subjects capable of solving problems of political practice and management in depoliticised, trust-based networks (Davies cited by Jessop, 2016: 181). In the Basque case, however, these actors do exist, they are co-authors of the networks and have a marked activist and community character. Nor is this an absolute guarantee that the dynamics of meta-governance will not erode the autonomy of social actors and produce a case of 'passive revolution', i.e. the absorption and incorporation of BLSM into an institutional language policy that lowers its demands.

The development of co-governance will clarify to what extent the autonomy and community leadership of BLSM organisations is strengthened, or whether, on the contrary, they end up in the 'shadow of hierarchy' (Jessop, 2016: 181), as an effect of institutional collibration, that is, of the rebalancing of forms of governance operated from the institutions of government.

## 7. References

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