The potential of parliaments for the empowerment of linguistic minorities: Experiences from Scotland and Norway

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1. Introduction

Numerous academics and politicians have in recent years contributed to the description and analysis of language policy for the benefit of smaller languages. The present paper tries to add to these by taking up the notion of yet another aspect of politics and language, exemplified by two case studies. The political aspect is the decentralization of parliamentary power for the benefit of minority languages. The two case studies deal with the relationship between the Scottish Parliament and the Gaelic language on the one hand, and between the Norwegian Sámi Parliament, the Sameting, and the Sámi language on the other hand. The underlying idea is to consider whether parliamentary bodies may contribute to the empowerment of speakers of minority languages regarding the language of individual choice in as many instances as possible. This applies to any domain of language use, but in particular public bodies, education, and the media, at local, regional and national levels.

In line with traditional power structures of minority-majority relations, Gaelic and Sámi speakers are mostly tied to a general pattern in which speakers are obliged to choose the dominant language (English or Norwegian) if they wish to participate in higher levels of power. The choice of Gaelic or Sámi is tantamount to remaining at the margins. Perceptions by speakers such as “you get nowhere with Gaelic” or “I suffered from speaking Sámi, I do not want my children to go down the same road” continue to be detrimental to attitudes towards the languages and their intergenerational transmission. These attitudes are frequent both among speakers of Gaelic and Sámi, and within the majority population. Empowerment of linguistic minorities thus intensely deals with overcoming the notion that English or Norwegian provide potential access to power and resources,
whereas sticking to Gaelic or Sámi implies restrictions and limited access to participation in decision-making.

Fishman (2001) suggests a graphic representation of the use of a dominant and a threatened language in a society. Domains of language use are broadly classified into those associated with power (P), to which parliaments undoubtedly belong, and less powerful domains (n-P). The traditional situation for Gaelic and Sámi speakers would see English and Norwegian as the languages used in legislative bodies. In the Fishman notation, this would be symbolized as:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{P} & \text{English, Norwegian} \\
\text{n-P} & \text{Gaelic, Sámi}
\end{array}
\]

Empowerment of Gaelic and Sámi speakers would imply an elevation of Gaelic and Sámi from n-P to P domains, i.e. from the lower to the upper part of the figure. Yet, as it is hard to imagine that Gaelic and Sámi speakers are easily empowered to use their less dominant languages in any powerful context, the aim should be, initially, to achieve a position of shared functions of the dominant and non-dominant languages in the powerful domains. To aim for more, i.e. the unlimited use of the minority languages in any P situation, should be, more realistically, a long-term goal. The graphic situation to aim for at first should therefore be:

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{P} & \text{English/Gaelic, Norwegian/Sámi} \\
\text{n-P} & \text{Gaelic, Sámi}
\end{array}
\]

Throughout this paper, we will thus keep in mind questions such as: How can parliaments contribute to the empowerment of minority language speakers? How have parliaments enabled speakers to choose Gaelic or Sámi and yet be able to participate at high political levels? And how have power structures and access to power changed through language policy initiated by new decentralized parliamentary bodies? A question resulting from this is how the development of minority language policy depends on the type of parliamentary body. As I will show, both the Gaelic and the Sámi models of decentralization may contribute to minority language speakers’ empowerment in relation to the dominant language group.
The following discussion is divided into four parts. In the next section, I will comment in more detail on the functions of parliaments and their implications for linguistic minorities. I will then address in turn the Scottish Parliament and its impact on Gaelic policy and the Sameting in Norway and Sámi language policy. The final section will try to illuminate the question of how parliamentary bodies may contribute to the empowerment of linguistic minorities.

2. The importance of (decentralized) parliaments for linguistic minorities

Let us now reflect in more detail on the way in which parliaments are of importance for linguistic minorities. Spolsky (2004) explicitly links the discussion of language and power to political entities, mostly states or their sub-divisions. Parliaments as central political institutions in a state provide a chance for minorities to participate in power. According to Hague and Harrop (2001), functions of legislatures are, broadly speaking, representation, deliberation/debating, legislation, authorizing expenditure, and the making and scrutinizing of governments. In the following we will see that these functions are all of potential relevance for minority language speakers.

Concerning representation and deliberation, there is a high symbolic value of multilingualism in a parliament to bridge the abstract concept of a political unit and the individual. Parliaments are in this way one piece of a mosaic of items contributing to personal linguistic identity. Only when the population feels genuinely represented in such an institution does the political entity which the parliament refers to have a positive value. The presence of minority issues is thus highly symbolic in the political system through representation in a parliament, which can guarantee a certain degree of awareness of minority issues in a state.

Broderstad (1995), in the context of the Norwegian Sameting, discusses three core functions of parliaments directly related to the population. First, parliaments speak on behalf of the various groups within the political entity. Second, they are representative, i.e., they display the structure of the population according to certain criteria such as age, class, gender, or language. These two functions are generally in line with the Hague/Harrop function of representation. In opposition to these, there is a third function, the responsiveness to wishes and demands and the promotion of these at different
layers of decision-making. Turan (1994) looks closer at this responsiveness of a legislature, and identifies four dimensions in which this may occur: policy, service, allocation, and symbolism. Symbolic responsiveness implies a focus on attitudes towards the legislature, rather than the behaviour of the legislators per se. The other three dimensions closely relate to the Hague/Harrop functions of legislation, expenditure and government. Language policy making is linked to legislation as the basis of policy making. Authorizing expenditure is related to the provision of services and the allocation of means for the funding of language planning projects. The making and scrutinizing of governments is, finally, of potentially least practical relevance for minority language speakers – there must be a considerable degree of strength to directly influence the formation of a government.

In a similar line of argumentation, May (2001) also discusses parliaments as central institutions which canalise the will of the people and their relation to linguistic minorities. In the persisting political structure with nation-states as the fundamental unit of political action, parliaments have kept their dominant position as the centres of pluralist policy-making. In order to enable minorities to participate adequately in power structures, May calls for a rethinking of nation-states as multicultural. Linguistic minority groups should have distinct rights in the form of self-government or special representation (i.e., at least adequate representation, one might add). Both legitimization of a language through official legislation and institutionalization through its regular use in official bodies “highlight the power relations in situations of minority language shift” (May 2001: 146). A multicultural solution would thus imply empowerment of minority language speakers through participation and an increase in choice opportunities. The ultimate aim is that language varieties different to the dominating one would become “normalized”, i.e., taken for granted in any context, including parliaments.

Summarizing, we can thus broadly assign two relevant components for linguistic minorities to parliaments. On the one hand, they are a highly symbolic part of the domain of public bodies, where the empowerment of minority language speakers lies in the representation and the creation of awareness through the fact that their language is present in one of the most observed state institutions. On the other hand, through its language policy and planning potential, it is a major component in the exertion of power, and as such a channel of empowering minority language speakers if they adequately participate in decision-making, in particular concerning legislation and the distribution of means.
The potential of parliaments for the empowerment of linguistic minorities

The question to follow from this is how a maximum of awareness and of influence on decision-making can be achieved. One evident option is the decentralization of parliamentary power. The Encyclopedia of Democracy (Lippert 1995: 335) defines decentralization as “the devolution of power in a state to elected local authorities”, which in practice is closely linked to democratic principles. This delegation of power to subordinate bodies implies that decision-making is distributed more widely and brought closer to the point of service or action. Applied to linguistic minorities, it is obvious how decentralization is for their benefit: the likelihood that minority members are part of a parliament increases as the political entity and its population decreases in size. In other words, it is much more likely that, for instance, Gaelic speakers would be represented in the Scottish Parliament which stands for roughly 5 million people, than in the Westminster Parliament in which over 50 million people are represented. This change in presence of minority issues affects both the representation of minority language speakers and the potential for policy-making.

In recent years, we have become used to such decentralization processes in democratic societies. For instance, the changes in political structure in Spain since the 1970s have had undeniable impacts on the support for languages such as Catalan and Basque (see also Neff van Aertselaer, this volume, on current changes in language policy after the government change in Spain in April 2004). Another example is the Nunavut Territory in the North of Canada. Established as a new political unit in 1999, it serves a largely homogenous Inuit population as a means of decentralized power. Their main language, Inuktitut, is used as a language of government, and administration, including the regional parliament. Inuktitut speakers have thus received a considerably higher degree of power in regional government affairs (cf. http://www.gov.nu.ca/cley/english/language.htm). These are two very clear examples of how political decentralization may result in a strong increase in language policy efforts and support of minority languages.

In both Scotland and Norway, there are new parliamentary bodies as players in language policy in the political structures. Representation of minority language speakers and responsiveness to their wishes have thus received a chance of gaining more attention than previously. In the following two sections, we will see how these chances have been used.
Let me now come to the Scottish Parliament and its impact on Gaelic policy. The Scottish Gaelic language has, after centuries of decline and a public policy ranging from ignorance to active suppression, experienced a strong increase in support since the 1980s (cf. MacKinnon 2000). However, speaker numbers are still declining, to a level of just below 60,000 in the most recent census of 2001, and the demographic position of Gaelic remains extremely weak. After the establishment of the decentralized Scottish Parliament in 1999, hopes were held that this would also have an impact on the chances of Gaelic to prosper (cf. McLeod 1998).

![Diagram showing the position of Gaelic issues in the Scottish political structure](image)

_Figure 1._ The position of Gaelic issues in the Scottish political structure

Figure 1 shows the presence of Gaelic issues in institutions within the political system of Scotland. They are dealt with to varying degrees by both regional councils and the Scottish Parliament, as well as the Scottish Executive. Circles in the figures vary from bodies where Gaelic is not dealt with at all to bodies which devote a substantial proportion of their work to Gaelic. In Scotland as a whole, Gaelic is an issue in the Scottish Parliament and the
Scottish Executive, even though, not surprisingly, the role of Gaelic is fairly small. As opposed to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Executive as a successor of the Scottish Office, which was responsible for Scottish affairs on behalf of the government in Westminster, is no truly new player in the system. Yet, originating from the Scottish Parliament, it is much more likely to respond to the Scottish population’s wishes. At a position above the Scottish level, a number of issues, most prominently broadcasting, remain under the control of the Westminster Parliament. Here, Gaelic plays an even smaller role than in Scottish national bodies, coming close to near non-existence.

The centre of attention in this paper, however, shall be the Scottish Parliament as the new institution. In its proceedings, Gaelic issues have played a role in numerous contexts. In fact, support for Gaelic is quite common among the Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs). It is important to note that this support is independent of political affiliation: Members of all political parties have spoken in favour of Gaelic at various occasions. Symbolic instances of Gaelic presence are the bilingual English-Gaelic signage in the Scottish Parliament building, the possibility of using Gaelic in communication with the parliament, and that Gaelic is indeed used – albeit at a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Deputy Minister for Gaelic at the Royal National Mod Festival: the first Gaelic speech of a government minister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Agreement to appoint Gaelic Officer for Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Announcement of Gaelic Task Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Announcement of Gaelic parliamentary and legal dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>First debate in Gaelic (on Gaelic issues) in a parliament in modern times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Education, Culture and Sport Committee meeting on Gaelic parents’ organization petition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Increased funding for Royal National Mod announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>First meeting of cross-party Gaelic group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Major events relating to Gaelic in the first year of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Executive’s work
very limited number of occasions – in plenary debates and committee meetings.

Given its symbolic presence in the Scottish Parliament right from the start of operation, the beginning of the decentralized era was quite encouraging for Gaelic. This view is supported by data seen in Table 1, which lists a selection of occasions in which Gaelic played a role in the first year of the Scottish Parliament’s work, between October 1999 and June 2000: As the table indicates, within a few months after the Scottish Parliament had been established, Gaelic featured regularly at various levels. These included both symbolic steps to represent Gaelic in the Parliament, as well as concrete responses to the Gaelic communities’ demands through policy preparation, such as the inauguration of the Gaelic Task Force to prepare a report of the present state of Gaelic, and the announcements of increased funding. The Deputy Minister for Gaelic’s speech at the Royal National Mod Festival in October 1999, the major annual Gaelic Cultural Festival, was the first modern Gaelic speech of a government minister. A month later, the Scottish Parliament agreed to appoint a Gaelic Officer. On March 2nd, 2000, the Scottish Parliament saw the first Gaelic debate in a parliamentary institution in modern times. After the first year of operation, it could thus legitimately be described as pointing towards a coherent Gaelic policy (cf. Marten 2004).

However, when looking at what has happened since then, we find that initial hopes did not hold in the years that followed. In fact, there were a number of major disappointments for Gaelic activists. One first major setback in 2000 was the extremely unsatisfactory debate on the role of Gaelic in the Education Act launched by the Scottish Executive. A right to Gaelic-medium education was denied, despite strong lobbying by Gaelic activists and support by a number of MSPs. In the years 2000 and 2001, several reports on Gaelic that had been commissioned by the Scottish Executive were published. The Gaelic Task Force Report took account of the sad state of affairs of Gaelic. The Gaelic Broadcasting Report was bound to show little influence, given that broadcasting belongs to the policy fields still under the responsibility of the UK government. The report “A Fresh Start for Gaelic”, followed by the “National Plan for Gaelic” in 2002, identified concrete policy issues as suggestions for a holistic reversal of previous Gaelic policy. However, this possible kick-off failed to generate much follow-up. After publishing these reports, the necessary political devotion to bring about substantial change was lacking. As a result, in November 2002,
an opposition MSP, who had argued constantly in favour of Gaelic measures, dealt with his impatience with the Scottish government by introducing a Gaelic Bill to the Scottish Parliament. This Bill was, however, rejected by the Executive. The most concrete achievement of the period was the establishment of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic Language Board. As an institution for the development, coordination, advice and monitoring of Gaelic policy initiatives, its major aims are to increase speaker numbers, to strengthen Gaelic in families and communities, and to extend the use of and access to the Gaelic language in any aspect of life across Scotland. Its strategic priorities lie in the fields of education and learning, culture and arts, and economic and social development (cf. Bòrd na Gàidhlig Web Site, at: http://www.bord-na-gaidhlig.org.uk). The establishment of this central planning agency in itself was certainly an important step forward. However, problems arose concerning the restriction of powers to advisory functions instead of enforcement competence, and the lack of a statutory basis. Furthermore, the appointment of the Board's members caused disappointment, as many candidates whom activists would have liked to see as members were rejected.

At the end of the first term of the Scottish Parliament in May 2003, there had been some promising efforts for Gaelic, but there was still no coherent policy. In the subsequent election campaign, the ruling Labour Party promised that, if re-elected, it would introduce a Gaelic Bill within the first six months of the new term, in other words, by autumn 2003. Since the government indeed managed to be re-elected to another term in office, we may ask if some type of Gaelic legislation has been achieved by now, after more than two further years.

A draft bill, published by the Executive in October 2003, was discussed by the Scottish Parliament with the participation of interest groups and scholars throughout 2004. This process led to the introduction of a Bill to the Scottish Parliament in September 2004, which was debated in the parliament's institutions until it finally passed unanimously as Gaelic Language Act in April 2005 (see http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Arts-Culture/gaelic/17912/12316 for submissions by the public to the debate on the Bill, and http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/billsnotIn-Progress2/gaelicLanguage.htm for the Act and the relevant proceedings in the Scottish Parliament). However, activists and opposition MSPs share the view that the Act is much too weak. It establishes Bòrd na Gàidhlig by statute and requires it to develop a National Gaelic Policy. One of the major aspects is that the Board may demand of public bodies to introduce a Gaelic
policy. There is, however, no true obligation – if a public body rejects such a step, there is little the Board can do. Bodies which did not wish to support Gaelic in the past are thus very unlikely to change their attitude in the future. This lack of a rights-based approach also applies to Gaelic education. Further, several important fields of language planning remain untouched, e.g. the use of Gaelic broadcasting. As a whole, the Language Act is a step forward, but as it stands, its impact on helping the language to survive will be limited. Table 2 summarizes major events in Gaelic policy from 2000 to 2005:

Table 2. Major events in Gaelic policy 2000–2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gaelic Policy Event</th>
<th>Result/Evaluation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Debate on the role of Gaelic in the Education Act</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory: No right to Gaelic-medium education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Gaelic Task Force Report</td>
<td>Account of the sad state of affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Gaelic Broadcasting Report</td>
<td>Some, but not sufficient commitment to Gaelic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Report “A Fresh Start for Gaelic” and the “National Plan for Gaelic”</td>
<td>Suggestions for a possible kick-off with little follow-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Establishment of the Gaelic Language Board</td>
<td>Only restricted powers granted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Private Member's Bill in 2002</td>
<td>Rejected by the Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 - 2004</td>
<td>The 2003 Bill by the Scottish Executive</td>
<td>A step into the right direction, but lacking ultimate dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Gaelic Language Act passed in April</td>
<td>An important step forward, but too weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All in all, we find that Gaelic has indeed become a much more important part of the agenda of public bodies through the impact of the Scottish Parliament, albeit to varying degrees. The Scottish Executive has established a policy that supports Gaelic to a degree formerly unknown in the UK, and attention towards Gaelic and the steps taken have improved its situation. The existence of the Scottish Parliament has led to more pressure being exerted and has generally increased the amount of attention being focused on Gaelic. Most activists agree that it is very doubtful that the responsible political authorities would have given so much attention to Gaelic issues
without the Scottish Parliament. The symbolic presence of the language in the Parliament supports the awareness of the Gaelic heritage in Scotland, and Gaelic speakers may now feel represented at the highest level of politics in democracy. The recent establishment of the Gaelic Language Board points in a direction which might result in a coherent policy.

However, this careful and positive approach is undermined by a number of disappointments. Bòrd na Gàidhlig’s role could still be strengthened. The Gaelic Bill introduced by the opposition was rejected by the government. Despite the general consensus that the Executive Bill will give Gaelic a certain degree of official recognition, the proposal has met considerable disappointment. Many Gaelic activists feel that much of the policy of the new administration only constitutes lip service. Many parts of Gaelic policy would need to be framed in terms of obligation instead of mere recommendation. Policies have to be much more binding for authorities. The position of Gaelic is still far from safe and its decline is unlikely to be stopped by the measures introduced. As a whole, despite some positive changes, views among activists on language maintenance still only range from pessimistic to very sceptically optimistic.

4. The Sameting in Norway: Its impact on Sámi language policy

Let us now move to the second case study, the Sámi language in Norway. The position of the Sámi language is similar to the position of Gaelic, in particular concerning its century-long suppression and a revival of interest in the language in the past decades. Also the number of speakers is similar; estimations suggest roughly 30 to 40,000 speakers. Sápmi, the traditional settlement area of the Sámi, is spread over four countries, namely Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The largest Sámi group by far lives in Norway, and we will therefore look at the situation in Norway as a case study (cf. Magga 1995). It will soon become clear that the Sámi situation in many respects is a model to follow, especially when looking at Arctic neighbours outside Scandinavia.

Norway, in the past years, has also seen a political decentralization, at least with regard to the Sámi. If we look at the position of Sámi issues in the Norwegian political system, we again see that a number of different political levels are involved. Figure 2 displays Sámi issues in the system, similar to the corresponding figure relating to Scotland. Also similarly to the situation in Scotland, Sámi plays a varying role in several of the numerous local
and regional bodies, in the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting, and the Norwegian government’s departments. In addition to the familiar system of political stratification, however, there is the Sameting, the Sámi Parliament, as a body elected by the Sámi population and dealing with Sámi issues only. The Sameting is outside the traditional system, and it cooperates with political institutions at all levels.

Ending a decade-long process of minority rights debates in Norway, the Sameting was opened as a body of political representation for the Sámi population in 1989. Here, Sámi demands are democratically legitimized and centrally administered. It thus empowers Sámi speakers by giving them an institutionalized voice (Figure 2). The chances of choosing to use Sámi in public institutions have thus increased – and the Sameting itself coined the phrase “to manage in Sámi” in any context as an aim of a normalizing language policy.

Figure 2. The position of Sámi issues in the Norwegian political structure

Yet, there is also a fundamental difference with regard to the impact of constitutional changes in Norway to those in Scotland. The composition of the government in Norway remains unaffected by the Sameting. The Sameting is similar to the Scottish Parliament in its democratic representations and
closer responsiveness to people’s demands. Concerning the legislative function, those who eventually take the fundamental decisions (i.e. the Scottish and Norwegian governments) are influenced in very different ways: directly by the Scottish Parliament which elects the Scottish Executive, but only very indirectly by the Sameting, which has only gained influence as an institutionalized and democratically legitimized channel of lobbying.

As one of its first major political projects, the Sameting helped the Storting to develop a Sámi Language Act which came into force in 1992. Through coordinated decision-making in the Sameting, Sámi speakers have thus been empowered by gaining influence on the shaping of fundamental linguistic rights, most notably through the establishment of six municipalities in the core Sámi area as the Sámi Administrative Area, where Sámi is co-official with Norwegian (cf. Sara 2002).

Given that the Sameting and a detailed Sámi language policy have existed around ten years longer than such a Gaelic policy in Scotland, it is not surprising that the fundamental parameters of this policy were fixed several years earlier, most remarkably by the Sámi Language Act. Current language policy displays both political functions which contribute, among others, to legislation, and administrative functions which are in line with the expenditure function in the Hague/Harrop list. Two recent examples of how the Sameting deals with language will demonstrate these differing functions. The first example is a meeting of the Sameting’s plenum in February 2003. The topic under discussion was the extension of the Sámi administrative area to cover one additional municipality. The proceedings were conducted as in any other parliamentary body: A motion was introduced to the plenum, and then subsequently debated, amended and finally approved. The next step, however, was to “ask the (Norwegian) government to introduce to the Storting an amendment to the Sámi language Act to make the changes as agreed in Sameting”. Here, we clearly see the limits of the Sameting within the system: The Sámi have been given a coordinated body which fulfils the responsive and representative functions of parliaments. Once a decision has been taken, however, it depends on negotiations with the Norwegian government to decide if this decision is implemented as a binding policy.

A second example of how the Sameting deals with language planning is the Sameting’s Language Department’s leadership meeting in March 2002. It discussed mainly core language planning issues: The creation of a language prize, the demand that Sámi be used on the products of the state dairy company, the plea for language cooperation with the Sámi outside Norway, and several terminology issues ranging from IT to administration, and those
concerning reindeer farming. Here again, Sámi language policy was directly in Sámi hands. Through a budgetary competence assigned to it by the Norwegian government, it is able to authorize expenditure on various aspects of language policy.

Thus, the main importance of the Sameting concerning language is that it is able to carry out administrative tasks fairly independently of other bodies. In areas where the Sameting administers a budget for funding language planning projects, the empowerment of Sámi through the Sameting as a body responding directly to the Sámi population's needs becomes obvious. In those cases where the Sameting can only suggest policy and legislation to the government, empowerment in the strict sense is not given – although the Sameting, as an institutionalized body, is much more likely to succeed than a less coordinated approach of lobbying would be. Sámi efforts regarding language planning have thus been centralized and are in Sámi hands to a much higher degree than they used to be before the Sameting's establishment. Additionally, the Sameting's symbolic function contributes to self-awareness, political organization and determination in putting forward the cause of the Sámi language to a degree which is entirely out of reach for the function of the Scottish Parliament for Gaelic. As a consequence, initiatives to support the Sámi language are regular, and they are targeted at numerous aspects of language policy, from highly political to mainly administrative, from core status questions to down-to-earth corpus planning. The Sameting is also consistently striving for more influence. Negotiations with the government, e.g., on financing more Sámi language projects, show that pressure may be exerted and often proves to be successful.

Despite some rights and budgetary guarantees, however, Sámi language policy still depends on the financial and legal goodwill of the Norwegian authorities, and on the cooperation of the state, county and municipality authorities involved.

5. Conclusion: Can parliaments contribute to the empowerment of minority languages speakers?

To conclude, let us now go back to the question raised at the beginning: How can parliaments contribute to the empowerment of minority language speakers?

By presenting two quite different examples of decentralized parliamentary institutions, it has been my intention to point out the different roles
such a body can play. In both cases, the decentralization of parliamentary power has resulted in an increase in language policy initiatives. It can be concluded that the existence of these two parliaments makes a difference. The establishment of both parliaments has directly resulted in official legislation for the languages.

However, there are distinctions between the two parliaments. Considerably more lobbying is needed in Scotland for Gaelic to become part of the agenda there. Political measures usually do not go as far as desired by many activists. If a policy receives parliamentary support, however, a great deal of the political process has been shortened; implementation is controlled by the highest political bodies and is thus much more likely to succeed. In the Sameting, on the other hand, there is much more devotion to language issues than in the Scottish Parliament. But after a decision is taken by the Sameting, implementation, at least for far-reaching issues, still depends on negotiation with the Norwegian government.

Concerning the relation of parliaments and linguistic minorities, we may deduce that the answer, from the evidence presented, to the question whether parliaments may contribute to the empowerment of minority language speakers is a very careful Yes - within clear limits. Of the two broad functions of parliaments for minority language speakers, the function of representation and creating awareness has substantially increased. In relation to the second function, the chance to carry out language planning, decentralization of parliaments has brought minority language speakers closer to decision-making. Choosing between Gaelic or Sámí does not automatically signify the restriction of finding oneself within less powerful domains any longer. Language policy has been enhanced for the benefit of minority languages under a certain participation of their speakers. Parliamentary bodies may thus indeed serve the empowerment of minority language speakers and ensure participation of these groups in mainstream decision-making, with increased chances of a real language choice.

Both symbolism and representation on the one hand, and decision-making, legislating and the impact on expenditure, on the other, have thus been seized to improve participation of Gaelic and Sámí speakers. Similarly, regarding demands, legitimization and institutionalization are also fulfilled to a certain degree. The Scottish Parliament and the Sameting have both contributed to multicultural (in the form of multilingual) awareness on the difficult path to normalization - which is indeed a term regularly referred to by politicians in both countries. The Scottish Parliament provides the chance of representing multilingual rights and showing awareness for
these within the existing framework. The Sameting, on the other hand, allows for a limited degree of self-government.

In the Fishman model, we have today come closer to the following situation.

P Gaelic/English, Sámi/Norwegian
n-P : -------------------------------

Gaelic, Sámi

This seems to be the present relationship of Gaelic and Sámi to powerful and less powerful domains. Gaelic and Sámi can be used in at least some political bodies. Policy initiatives are now taken on behalf of Gaelic/Sámi speakers in a representative parliamentary way. And yet, the impact of the parliaments on empowerment is clearly limited. Decisions ultimately still depend on the majority population, and positive changes so far have been restricted, either to certain domains of language use (Gaelic), or geographically (Sámi).

As a whole, both cases show that the status of minority languages and the rights of their speakers continue to be subject to the political goodwill of the majority. Implementation and interpretation – despite some structural improvements and legal guarantees – still depend on negotiation with political bodies dominated by the majority population. Ultimate power is still with mainstream society. The two parliaments have created more control mechanisms and structural chances to empower minorities. But if the majority wishes to ignore these demands, it is still able to do so. The example of the limited strength of the Gaelic Act shows that much more could be achieved.

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SÅMI POLICY OF THE NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENT:  
http://odin.dep.no/krd/norsk/tema/same/bn.html

THE GOVERNMENT OF NUNAVUT LANGUAGE POLICY:  
http://www.gov.nu.ca/cley/English/language.htm

THE SAMETING: http://www.samediggi.no

THE SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE: http://www.scotland.gov.uk

THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk