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## INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME III

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### **Is language endangerment and extinction natural? Is it rational?**

The latest *Ethnologue* ([www.ethnologue.org](http://www.ethnologue.org)) lists 7,102 ‘living languages’ and 367 ‘recently extinct’ ones. These have ‘gone out of use since the *Ethnologue* research project began in the early 1950’s’ (ibid.). The ‘extinct, ancient, and classical languages’ are not listed (ibid.), and there are many. Human languages become endangered, and eventually extinct, when they are not used. There are a number of ways of assessing endangerment.<sup>1</sup>

Many people have suggested that it is ‘just natural’ that most small ITM languages disappear. Just like flowering plants, they are born, they flower, and they die, because of old age. Or, in more evolution-is-adaptation terms, they die because they are not fit for a postmodern digitalised age – they have not been able to ‘develop’. Or they disappear because people opt out of them ‘voluntarily’. This is the *language death* paradigm. Sudden disappearance, rupture, can also happen, for instance, through wars or forced relocation. But languages do not ‘just’ disappear by themselves. Many states ‘let languages die’ (attrition, see Lo Bianco Ch. 59; see also Cobarrubias’ taxonomy in Vol. I, C), or they are actively seeking to eliminate minority languages. This is the *linguicide* paradigm (see Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

When languages are endangered, they need revitalisation if one believes that it is important that all languages have value and a right to ‘live’. If endangerment comes about as a result of a state’s actions, for instance, through forced assimilation in formal education (see Volume II), then the state is accountable and should be induced to support revitalisation efforts maximally and, of course, prevent endangerment by granting linguistic human rights (LHRs) to all, also in education. In addition, it seems less rational to first kill off languages and then use masses of energy and effort, in the best cases also financially, to revitalise them. Language policies have been and are more emotional and political than rational: many state language policies are based on ignorance of not only extensive high-quality research in this field but also often on false logic. It is not rational to continue educational language policies that solid research has shown as not reaching the results that educational authorities claim they want to reach, policies that are known to harm children.

But do we really need linguistic diversity, with all the small languages? Is it positive for the world? Would things not be better if we had only one or a few big languages? And is it not ‘natural’ that languages disappear? We will start with a few thoughts about these significant issues, before presenting and contextualising the texts in this volume. Nearly all the texts represent support for the right of users of all languages to maintain and develop their languages; this presupposes LHRs. Some texts in this volume also present arguments against claims such as Salikoko Mufwene’s that ‘there are no valid reasons for language maintenance’ (2010: 927). In what follows we show that this kind of claims are completely invalid.

We now return to the assertion of the ‘naturalness’ and ‘rationality’ of linguisticide. This is of major importance for ensuring a liveable future for humankind. It is important to be aware of the interconnections between linguistic and cultural diversity and biodiversity.<sup>2</sup> In nature (according to Greer 2009, chapter 2), plant and animal species replace each other in *succession* (in what ecologists call ‘seres’). There may be several cycles, where a new cycle starts again from the beginning, after major external catastrophes, earthquakes, fires, ice ages, etc. The start, for instance in covering an ‘empty’ area of land, is often undertaken by generalist plants (‘weeds’) and animals (e.g. field mice). They grow fast, spread and reproduce rapidly, and maximise their use of resources, but inefficiently, with a lot of waste. They are then replaced by other species, either when the initial abundant resources that made their rapid growth possible in the first place run short after overuse, or when other slower growing species, better adapted to the area, outcompete them. In the later stages of a cycle, slow-growing species take over. They take years to reach maturity and maximise their efficiency in using resources. They produce resources themselves, accept the ecological limits (e.g. the scarcity or quality of biomass, like in tropical forests), and do not overuse resources. These ‘climax communities’ have reached a relatively stable sere in a mature ecosystem. If undisturbed, these species (e.g. hardwood trees in temperate zones) can endure for many centuries or even longer.

‘Human beings are among Earth’s most successful generalist species, and the flexibility of human culture [and this includes linguistic behaviour even if Greer does not mention languages] means that selection takes place on the level of behavior more often than that of genetics’ (2009: 22–23). ITM parents decide, within the sociopolitical and cultural context (environment) where they live, which language(s) to use with their children; mother tongues are not genetically determined. Educational authorities decide to what extent children learn the more advanced aspects of their mother tongues. Greer traces equivalent seres in the development of humans within their environments, ecosystems, from hunter-gatherers via small-scale agriculture, and up to now, industrial agriculture. He shows that ‘the same evolutionary patterns, however, still apply: human communities compete with one another for resources . . . The industrial economies of the present . . . maximise production at the expense of sustainability; like weeds, they spread fast, use resources recklessly, overshoot the carrying capacity of their environment and perish . . . The successful human ecologies of the future, in a world without today’s cheap abundant energy, will need to maximize sustainability instead’ (ibid.: 23).

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We can now apply Greer and other ecologists to the endangerment and extinction of languages and cultures. Many users of ITM languages, and many small local communities had been through many seres and had reached ‘a relatively stable sere in a mature ecosystem’. Two possible misunderstandings have to be mentioned. ‘Stable’ does *not* mean that these communities and their languages and cultures would not change—they do. But the changes have often, until recently, supported a sustainable way of life. If they don’t, then these communities and cultures destroy themselves. Jared Diamond (e.g. 2005, 2012) and many others document examples of communities, even large ones (such as the ancient Maya, and Vikings in Greenland) that completely ruined their possibility of ecological survival, through reckless overuse of some of their resources. We also need to stress that this story of nature and humans is not romanticising; we are not working within a false ‘noble savage’ ideology. Many ITMs have also ruined their environments, and tribal communities have been involved in much warfare against each other.

In the cases that Jared Diamond describes (2005), the representatives of the disappeared cultures did not see in time that their behaviour was leading to catastrophe: they refused to learn from experience. We are in a better position today. We have more knowledge. But we seem to ignore this knowledge. Fossil fuels will finish at some point. ‘Conventional petroleum production has already peaked<sup>3</sup> [around 2005], natural gas is expected to peak around 2030, and by 2040, according to several cogent studies, coal production will have peaked as well. By 2100, then, consumption of all fossil fuels put together will be a very modest fraction of today’s levels, because there will be very little in the way of fossil fuels available’ (Greer 2009: 51). ‘Those cultural traditions and practices that foster survival will endure; those that do not will vanish’, Greer states (p. 50). If the excesses of industrialised humanity continue to live unsustainably, our grandchildren will face what Greer describes as an age of ‘scarcity industrialism’ (pp. 67–70). Tourism will be one of the first fuel-hungry areas that will be drastically cut back for more basic needs. States need to become more self-sufficient in terms of food. Their grandchildren will maybe live in a ‘salvage society’, reusing what they can from the ruins of the industrial society. Their greatgrandchildren will live in some kind of deindustrialised societies. Greer describes them vividly: with few transport means that need fuels (what can be used for food cannot be burnt for cars, trucks, or ocean-going ships), dependent on food, clothing etc. produced in their close vicinity. Imagine the helplessness of today’s average city-dweller in that environment. The new learning needed is massive.

Much of the knowledge about how to live sustainably, gathered by Indigenous/tribal peoples and local communities over hundreds (or even thousands) of years, exists today but is on the verge of disappearing. Much of this vital knowledge for the deindustrial societies that we will face is encoded in their demographically small languages (as described in Vol. II, Ch. 21, section 5.2.4). The International Council of Science (ICSU) ([www.icsu.org](http://www.icsu.org)) admitted in their 2002 report, that indigenous/tribal Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is often much more

accurate and nuanced than western scientific knowledge. ICSU is worried about the transmission of this knowledge to the coming generations. They blame schools for participating in blocking the transmission by implying that TEK is less valid than ‘scientific’ knowledge. They recommend: ‘Actions are urgently needed to enhance the intergenerational transmission of local and indigenous knowledge. [...] Traditional knowledge conservation therefore must pass through the pathways of conserving language (as language is an essential tool for culturally-appropriate encoding of knowledge)’. Revitalising endangered languages as energetically as possible is one of the musts, part of the necessary (but of course not sufficient) preparations for future. Humanity is at a point where choices must be made, as the American poet Diane Ackerman so succinctly puts it (1997: xviii–xix):

AQ: “Diane, 1997” has not been listed in the references. Please check.

We are among the rarest of the rare not because of our numbers, but because of the unlikeliness of our being here at all, the pace of our evolution, our powerful grip on the whole planet, and the precariousness of our future. We are evolutionary whiz kids who are better able to transform the world than to understand it. Other animals cannot evolve fast enough to cope with us. It is possible that we may also become extinct, and if we do, we will not be the only species that sabotaged itself, merely the only one that could have prevented it.

### Presenting and contextualising the texts in Volume III

All the texts included in Chapter 43 are results of an Endangered Languages Symposium that the Linguistic Society of America organised. They were published in *Language* in 1992. Among them is the much-quoted piece by *Michael Krauss* where he presents a worrying estimate of the future of the world’s languages. We have also chosen three other texts from the Symposium, expressing the same worry but illustrating it from other angles (*Nora England*, *Ken Hale*’s two texts, and *Lucille Watahomigie* and *Akira Yamamoto*). These authors are experienced field linguists who know that language loss represents the much larger loss of cultural and intellectual diversity in parallel with the reduction of biological diversity. The articles stress documentation of language loss and the response of the communities most directly affected. The thrust of the articles is summarised in Hale’s introduction. There is an impressive amount of detail in the texts, which describe diverse contexts of loss and resistance to it. There is also reflection on the functions and obligations involved in doing research in this area. The final text, by *Peter Ladefoged*, is a frontal attack on the content of the symposium by a field linguist who believes that choice to stop using a language is the sovereign privilege of those who choose to do so. He regards the task of the linguist as purely to identify and record micro-linguistic figures of language. It is revealing that he considers his colleagues as writing ‘opinion’ pieces rather than reporting research. He writes that ‘human societies are not like animal species’, which seems to indicate that humans are not animals or part of the wider ecology.

See also Simons and Lewis' recent updating of Krauss' figures, based on their data from *The Ethnologue*, in the Introduction to Volume II and in Lo Bianco Ch. 59.

*Brent Henderson, Peter Rohloff and Robert Henderson* (Ch. 46) have worked for many years to improve the health of Indigenous peoples in a binational (US/Guatemala) project. A precondition for such work to be effective is for outsiders to speak the local Maya language as well as Spanish. The article stresses that to achieve the project goal of change, a wide professional and disciplinary base is needed. The authors aim at ensuring that projects to strengthen a local language are integrated with vital socio-economic activity, such as health, agriculture or infrastructure. They present a step-by-step model for how this can be achieved successfully. They argue convincingly that a focus on language revitalisation alone is doomed, even when a language has until recently had a large number of speakers, because pragmatic pressures affect their daily lives and are definitely resulting in a destruction of the local language ecology and in language shift. It is vital therefore that any project identifies all the causes of language shift and linguicide as well as being multi-dimensional. The mushrooming in the modern world of NGOs of dubious quality and limited local integration too often results in them doing 'good' in such contexts badly. The 'development' goals that they espouse have been inadequately formulated and people in this 'development' business remain ignorant of the causes of this failure.

These arguments apply very widely in relation to much Western foreign 'aid' activity of the past half-century. It is definitely true of work in applied linguistics and in the promotion of English internationally. The role of foreign 'aid' bodies in promoting the interests of the funding country, and the dubious effect that their projects have on strengthening English learning in East Asian countries, is analysed in an Australian study (Widin 2010). Such projects are 'illegitimate'. They are part and parcel of the 'web of deceit' (Curtis 2003) that characterises the foreign policy of Western governments. For examples of failed or suspect language projects, and for the root cause of such failures, see Phillipson 1992, Rapatahana and Bunce 2012, and for reviews of books that present such 'development' projects, Phillipson 2010, 2014.

The interlocking of the language ecology with political, economic, and social factors is likewise clearly demonstrated in *Peter Mühlhäusler's* article (Ch. 48), a study of the condition of thousands of languages in the Pacific region. He presents a broad set of striking and thought-provoking generalisations about the impact of literacy, followed by case studies of Māori and the languages of New Guinea, and the role of missionaries. One consequence of literacy in a single language is the marginalisation of related spoken languages. (Deaf people experience a similar problem when only one Sign language is chosen, at the expense of the others, if a state decides to grant official status to a Sign language). A second is the transfer of literacy skills to other languages, typically European ones. This has a massive impact on the status, functions, and value of existing belief systems, and their various forms of articulation, and their 'truth value' due to the 'reduction' of a selection of linguistic forms into writing. Vernacular literacy is thus 'an agent of linguistic, religious,

and social change' and generally has a destructive impact on traditional values and identity and the entire cosmology. In essence therefore, literacy involves dispossession, and linguists, often in the employ of Christian missionary bodies such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics, are doing far more than merely converting a spoken form into a written one. Literacy should therefore be radically re-thought.<sup>4</sup> This is a challenge for efforts to ensure language rights for a vast number of orate peoples and maintenance of their values.

Reducing languages to writing is often undertaken by Bible translation organisations based in the West with multiple agendas, overt and covert. Their aim is to Christianise the entire world as part of the globalisation of commercial, political, and cultural spheres of interest. They are often active in basic education.<sup>5</sup>

The description and analysis of the lack of LHRs in the USA and Canada (*Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, Andrea Bear Nicholas and Jon Reyhner*, Ch. 47) states that all Indigenous/tribal/First Nations languages are seriously endangered, with the possible exception of Inuit in Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland in North America. Educationists, including representatives of the churches which organised most First Nations education, often in residential schools, have known about the disastrous consequences of forced linguistic and cultural assimilation since at least the middle of the eighteenth century, as exemplified in the article. Even so, residential schools and other educational institutions have continued with subtractive education through a dominant language, English or French. The criteria for genocide, as required in the UN Genocide Convention, including that the states have had the 'intent' to harm children and forcibly move them to the dominant group, are fulfilled in this education. Language rights in the USA and Canada are presented. The article ends by asking why the USA and Canada have not advanced further in granting even basic language rights to Indigenous peoples.

*Ulla Aikio-Puoskari/Gáppe Pjera Jovvna Ulla* (the second is her Saami name, identifying her—maternal—ancestry) (Ch. 52) presents in this article the most comprehensive, detailed, and up-to-date account that exists on Saami education in comprehensive schooling (grades 1–9) in the three Nordic countries, Norway, Finland and Sweden. This includes the Indigenous Saami in both the administrative areas where they have more linguistic and other rights, and in the more southern areas outside these, with few language rights, most in Norway, least in Sweden. Numbers are small. The Saami are the only Indigenous people in the European Union, in addition to those Deaf people who come from families that have been Deaf for generations—they also see themselves as indigenous. The Saami have, despite many problems and challenges, more LHRs in education than almost any other Indigenous people in the world. The author relearned Saami herself as an adult and has been a key actor in the revitalisation, in her capacity as the Education and Information Secretary of the Saami Parliament in Finland (see dozens of her publications in this capacity).<sup>6</sup> She has been a driving force, also as a collector of local history. Her two grandchildren have learned their Saami from their áhkku, grandmother Ulla.

The book by *Marja-Liisa Olthuis, Suvi Kivelä and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas* (Ch. 58) tells an encouraging story about the phenomenal revitalisation of one of

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the smallest Indigenous Saami languages, Aanaar Saami (under 400 speakers), in the Finnish part of Sápmi, the land of the Saami. Some thirty years ago, only three native speakers of the language were under the age of twenty; the rest were mostly over fifty. Not even all of these older native speakers used the language with each other, and certainly not with any children. Inspired by the Kōhanga Reo language nests of the Māori in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and the Pūnana Leo in Hawai'i, the Aanaar Saami started first their own language nest, and then a school class, through the medium of Saami. The problem that needed addressing was that the generations between the children and old people were not proficient in the language. The book shows in detail how these now Saami-speaking generations were recreated, with Marja-Liisa Olthuis, an Aanaar Saami herself, as the main agent, along with the three existing native speakers, their parents, and others. Now Saami is used in several language nests, in primary school up to grade 9, and by teachers, pre-school teachers, nurses, a journalist (Suvi Kivelä), a priest, etc. The community has created new life in associations, choirs, poets, and manifold activities, all in Aanaar Saami. This success story shows how language rights can be activated and achieved by committed individuals despite a daunting starting point. The extracts in Ch. 58 come from the Introduction and an Info Box with advice from Hawaiian programmes to other Indigenous people in the book describing how this achievement came about.

The Organisation for African Unity (OAU) funded a small InterAfrican Bureau of Languages for several years from 1980. It collapsed for lack of funding, but language policy had never been a priority concern in the OAU. Various initiatives to strengthen African languages are now coordinated by a small African Academy of Languages ([www.acalan.org](http://www.acalan.org)), started with support from the African Union (which has existed since 2000) and has a number of language planning and policy projects. There have been several declarations on language policy in Africa, but little follow-up. African heads of state have approved the policy of mother tongue based multilingual education. There are no rights to this anywhere on the African continent. Neville Alexander, the key architect of post-apartheid South African language policy (who spent years on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela) wrote in 2007: 'Everywhere in the world people use the mother tongue to teach their children. It is only in post-colonial Africa and a few other countries in Southeast Asia and Eastern Europe that people use a foreign language to teach their children, and as a result we have the terrible drop-out rates, repeater rates and failure rates that we know so well. This paralysing practice, more than any other, explains the fundamental mediocrity of intellectual production on the continent of Africa' (Alexander 2007: 34). A review of achievements in Africa concludes '[W]e are not making any progress at all' (Alexander 2006: 9); 'most conference resolutions were no more than a recycling exercise' (Bamgbose 2001, quoted in Alexander 2006: 10); 'these propositions had been enunciated in one conference after another since the early 1980s' (2006: 11); 'since the adoption of the OAU Charter in 1963, every major conference of African cultural experts and political leaders had solemnly intoned the commitment of the political leadership of the

continent to the development and powerful use of the African languages without any serious attempt at implementing the relevant resolutions' (2006: 11). This has led to 'the palpable failure of virtually all post-colonial educational systems on the continent' (2006: 16).

Elites throughout Africa are in power in part due to their competence in a European language. They also tend to send their children to schools that reproduce this societal advantage. There are however efforts in several countries to establish more diverse and locally appropriate language in education policies,<sup>7</sup> and to define criteria for elaborating policies for a diversity of languages to be used in education, and public services at the regional or local level (e.g. Derso 2012: 141–146).

*Kahombo Mateene* was the director of the small language policy and planning InterAfrican Bureau (see above) in the 1980s. His article (Ch. 49) is a vigorous denunciation of the retention of former colonial languages as official languages in virtually all former colonies, and a plea for the upgrading of African languages. He criticises the way elites use French or English in the home, and the cultural cringe of African users of these languages. These policies have major negative consequences for the vast population that are kept marginal through lack of proficiency in a European language, and for attitudes to African languages, which Alexander criticised above. Mateene ironically queries whether postcolonial education is African at all. He stipulates the criteria for widely spoken African languages to be declared official, and the many advantages that would flow from this. He advocates linguistic decolonisation so that Africans can reclaim their 'denied linguistic rights' (p. 27).

*Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o* has been writing about decolonising the mind since the 1980s (see Vol. IV, Ch. 91) and in his own work chose to switch from writing novels and plays in English to writing in Gikũyũ<sup>8</sup> (and also in Swahili), so as to reach a Kenyan readership, as well as an international readership in translation. In Chapter 50 he uses his creative writer talents to pronounce on the role of the writer in empowering people and resisting state oppression, in strengthening civil society, in warning against escapist postmodernism and a world in which freedom of speech and 'democratic freedoms are equated with freedom of finance capital' (p. 116). His 'dreaming to change the world' contributes to the task of creating a world in which all human rights are fully respected. In the second section of his text he describes the purposes behind a novel and a journal in African languages, and reflects on how some languages are thriving in processes that prove the equal worth of all languages. 'In a sense there is no such things as a small and a big language' (p. 119), the difference only being in the number of speakers. All languages should enjoy full rights.

Some influential linguists argue that 'small' languages should be ignored (see Ladefoged in Ch. 44). Salikoko Mufwene, like Mateene from the former Belgian Congo, and now in Chicago and an expert on language ecology, disputes the very existence of language rights. He considers that minority language speakers face a straight choice between language maintenance and job

prospects: ‘... the ideal world in which (rich) linguistic diversity can be sustained is far from being ours. There are really no language rights. Many people who are struggling to improve their living conditions in the current ever-changing socio-economic ecologies are not concerned with maintaining languages and heritages, which are more properly archived in libraries and museums. The archiving is (to be) done by experts or some nonprofessional “glossophiles” (if I may suggest the term)’ (Mufwene 2010: 927). Christina Bratt Paulston (1981) has written in a similar vein about a necessity to choose between an identity and a job, claiming that all immigrant minorities in Sweden (except maybe the Finns and the Finnish Roma) would assimilate within a generation if they were allowed to do so. This either/or thinking is exemplified in the text by Jan Blommaert (Vol. IV, Ch. 83), which we comment on in the Introduction to Volume IV.

Such professional irresponsibility assists politicians who make incorrect statements about language rights or language policy. An example of this: in Arizona, prejudiced politicians have banned the use of many books in schools without troubling to find out what is in them, as reported in *The Guardian* under the heading ‘Anti-intellectualism is taking over the US. The rise in academic book bannings and firings is compounded by the US’s growing disregard for scholarship itself’.<sup>9</sup>

*Ismail Beşikçi* (Ch. 56), a well-known Turkish sociologist, human rights activist, and the first non-Kurd to defend the rights of Kurds, has served 17 years in prison on propaganda charges stemming from his writings about Kurds in Turkey. As a result of publishing his book *The Order of East Anatolia* in 1969, he lost his job as an assistant professor at Atatürk University. He was put on trial for ‘communist and anti-national propaganda’ and has been repeatedly sentenced to imprisonment for violating the indivisibility of the Turkish nation. He never found academic employment again but continues his struggle as an independent scholar and activist. Even today there are several ongoing court cases against him. The article here was written specifically for this volume. It analyses the Turkish state’s official ideology and policy vis-à-vis Kurds and the Kurdish language, and reasons for it, historically and today. It describes in detail the legal norms and the Kurdish resistance against the brutal deprivation of most human rights, especially language rights. The Kurdish historical resistance against the lack of language rights has not been described in such detail earlier; much of it is new for Kurds themselves. The article has been translated from Turkish by Zeri İnanç. See also the Introduction in Volume II.

*Derya Bayir* (Ch. 57) discusses the Kurdish situation in Turkey from a legal point of view. Despite the fact that Turkey has signed and ratified many international and even Council of Europe conventions, the Kurds have not succeeded in achieving even basic human rights in most areas. An example of the appalling conditions in Turkish Kurdistan is that health care in the early 2000s was worse than in most African countries, as Kristiina Koivunen showed (2002). Promises of greater autonomy and self-determination were made to the Kurds by the ‘great powers’ before the First World War and during the peace negotiations following it: none have been redeemed. In international law, the concept of self-determination has evolved over

time: there is an external dimension, often associated with secession (something that the Kurdish freedom movement, PKK, has renounced), and an internal dimension, entailing participatory democracy, minority protection in the context of pluralist co-existence within the territory of a state (which is what most Kurds want).

Bayir examines the interpretation of self-determination by the Constitutional Court of Turkey. This shows that the Court has repeatedly endorsed the former, conservative viewpoint, which reinforces Turkey's militantly nationalist democracy. Her article explains the development of the right to self-determination in international law and examines the Turkish Constitutional Court's case law in that light. The article evaluates to what extent the Constitutional Court's archaic and anti-democratic interpretation of the law on party closures has created a form of legality that undermines the ethno-cultural and political demands for the rights of Kurds in Turkey. One can easily imagine that the Constitutional Court's interpretation, if persisted in, might force the Kurds to develop towards demanding full secession, independence, as the only alternative.

*Minglang Zhou* and *Heidi Ross* (Ch. 53) relate reflections on the rights of minority groups in either democratic or totalitarian states to the People's Republic of China. Their short text summarises articles in a book on language policy in China published in 2004. It covers very diverse languages, writing systems, contexts, and degrees of penetration by Chinese: Tibetan, Zhuang, Yi, Bai, Mongol, and Korean. All these cases have been described by a scholar from the minority language community in the book: they report considerable support for these languages but a serious risk of their attrition.

*Minglang Zhou* (Ch. 54), in his article from this book, reviews the literature on language rights as a prelude to investigating the positive and negative features of minority language policy in China. There is a comprehensive historical review of minority rights in the Constitution and in directives. Minority language rights are strongly promotion-oriented, though not connected to the human rights instruments that China has ratified. Individual rights have no counterpart obligations on the state. Putonghua is supreme, while minority languages are all 'equal'. This is in effect a policy of one national language, and regional or local languages ordered hierarchically, which constrains their use. The status of some minority languages has been recognised for strategic reasons, and others ignored when writing systems were officialised. Zhou provides detailed examples of the unequal use of languages in civil administration, and in language planning activities of standardisation and graphisation. Government service by Han officials in Chinese is a cause of local conflicts, as are education policies that marginalise minority languages, and their use in the media. Zhou also analyses the reasons for the mismatch between rights in official documents and the reality on the ground. In an update, Zhou expresses concern about China moving into a melting pot language policy internally, with grave consequences for minorities. He also has reservations about the export of Chinese worldwide in Confucius Institutes.

Zhou mentions the Tibetans and the Uyghurs several times in his article. As we know from a professional visit to China in 2015, discussion of the failure to

accord Tibetan and Uyghur speakers the language rights that they are entitled to under Chinese law is fraught with problems. *Fernand de Varennes* (Ch. 55) definitely acknowledges the ‘substantial economic and educational progress being made’ in China, also in areas where Tibetans and Uyghurs live. However he presents some of the ways in which Tibetans are ‘disproportionally excluded’. The same is true for Uyghurs, whose attempts to achieve linguistic and other human rights are seen as a threat by the Chinese government. For their predicament, which is not discussed by de Varennes, see <http://uyghuramerican.org/uaa-and-uhrp-reports> for the Uyghur educational human rights situation; see also Example 16 in Vol. II, Ch. 21). The growing numbers of student demonstrations, some listed by de Varennes in his Table 1, are also symptomatic of how Tibetan students’ lack of native competence in Chinese is unfairly used to legitimate excluding them from jobs, even when many of them may have near-native competence. This is even more true for Uyghurs, who earlier had complete Uyghur-medium education (of course with Chinese as a foreign language subject), including at university level, but where most of the education is now in Chinese. Just as was the case in the Baltic countries in Soviet times (see Druviete, Ch. 51), an increasing move of people from the dominant nationality (Han Chinese in the Tibetan and Uyghur case, Russian speakers in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) means that the original inhabitants are a minority in terms of power and increasingly so demographically in their own territories, with grave consequences for their languages and cultures. De Varennes shows how the implementation of the Chinese minority legislation (which on paper seems very positive towards minorities) violates international human rights standards, in ways that the Dalai Lama, legitimately, has called cultural genocide.

One might think that a language that is neither Indigenous nor a minority language in its own country is an unlikely candidate for endangerment. *Ina Druviete*<sup>10</sup> (Ch. 51) explains why this is the case for Latvian. Latvia, like Estonia and Lithuania, was occupied by Soviet Union until 1991. Russian-speaking immigrants became demographically prevalent in these Baltic states in Soviet times, Latvian became a small minority language in the Soviet Union, and Russian was the dominant language in Latvia. Speakers of the titular languages thus became minoritised language groups in their own countries, in the same way as Tibetans and Uyghurs are becoming in China. After regaining independence in 1991, the challenge for Latvia has been to ensure that Latvian is a language which all residents are competent in, while the rights of speakers of Russian and other minority groups are respected. This has been a delicate balancing act, which Druviete describes in detail. Her update, written 16 years later, confirms the relative success of the policy, and describes a wide range of language use and language learning in education. Despite the measures undertaken to ensure competence in Latvian, and its use in key contexts, Russian is still the preferred language in much informal and some formal communication, especially in commerce. Efforts by Russian-speakers to have Russian accepted as a second official language have failed, as has any acceptance of Russian in the EU system, which Latvia joined in 2004. Human rights principles are generally based on the principle of a

minority language being vulnerable, and in consequence, stronger language rights are needed for them. This template did not fit post-communist Latvia, where the titular language has needed maximal support and still does.

A comprehensive book on the minority languages of the USA (Wiley et al., eds., 2014) has a section on 'Native American Languages'. The section introduction written by Teresa McCarty states that 'all chapters speak to Indigenous language revitalization as decolonizing and nation-building, undertaken against a backdrop of federally attempted genocide, linguicide, and ethnocide' (p. 190). The activities reported in the articles demonstrate that 'Native American language revitalization is part of a global movement to reclaim and develop ancestral tongues—not as fixed and unchanging artifacts of the past, but as ever-evolving, living systems that bind together those who claim these languages as they construct their present lives and plan for future generations' (p. 191). This constitutes a necessary break with the violence of the past, physical and symbolic, as a foundation for more just societies and language rights.

The article that we have selected from this book (*Joseph Lo Bianco*, Ch. 59) deals with the documentation of language endangerment and ways of counteracting it. He reports on several systems for categorizing threatened languages in Australia, on worldwide surveys commissioned by UNESCO, and the need to be aware of the context in all cases, with a distinction between loss by rupture or by attrition, and between countries of European settlement, exploitation or trade. UNESCO's work to maintain the world's cultural heritage now means that reversing language shift is a global heritage management question. More sophisticated typologies for classifying endangered languages have been evolved by UNESCO expert groups, with nine distinct variables of language vitality. Variables for revitalization, Capacity, Opportunity, and Desire are identified.<sup>11</sup> It seems to us that language rights are a dimension of each of these, whereas this is not the case with the steps of reversing language shift to the same extent. Other measures of language vitality and loss are presented, with analysis of empirical data, and of the validity of statistical projections, produced in an expanding field where the gravity of the problems identified requires a continued effort to document the challenges and to devise ways of maintaining language diversity and the important connection of this to cultural and biological diversity.

The second selection of texts in Volume III contains some key texts that enact language rights or attempt to influence their improvement. The first (Ch. 60) consists of extracts from selected UN and regional documents covering LHRs, proposals for such, and resolutions on language rights, compiled in 1994. Further texts are proposals for strengthening language rights in Africa (Ch. 61 and Ch. 62), minority rights in EU member states (Ch. 63 and Ch. 65), the rights of the Deaf (Ch. 69 and Ch. 70), the elderly (Ch. 71), and press freedom (Ch. 73). The Declaration on a Nordic Language Policy (Ch. 64) has the official backing of five governments. It was published in eight Nordic languages and English, and includes a section on the linguistic rights of Nordic residents (i.e. not only citizens). These rights are not complemented by any duty of the five states to implement the statements of

principle. All five states do invest heavily in the learning of the dominant national language and in the learning of English. The picture otherwise is mixed and far from ideal, both as regards other ‘languages of international importance’, immigrant minority languages, autochthonous minority languages, and Indigenous languages (but see Aikio-Puoskari, Ch. 52, and Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas, Ch. 58 on the Saami). Implementation of recommendations for strengthening language rights in Africa and Europe is also very uneven. Chapters 66 and 67 are sets of detailed recommendations (‘The Hague’ and ‘Oslo’ Recommendations), issued by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities. They build on years of experience in negotiations with national governments, and input from lawyers and educational linguists.

The draft Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights (Ch. 68) marked an important step in the recognition of language rights when it was submitted to UNESCO, but, as we explain in our General Introduction, in its current form it has not been and will not be ‘universally’ accepted. It needs a major overhaul to have a chance of being accepted as a realistic starting point for further work.

Some of the documents in this section have been subjected to detailed critical scrutiny (e.g. Caruso and Hoffman 2015, Eide 1997, Malloy and Caruso 2013, Thornberry 1995). The recent Brill/Nijhoff book series *Studies in International Minority and Group Rights*, edited by Gudmundur Alfredsson and Kristin Henrard, elaborates understanding of this whole area.

The need for revitalisation is a direct consequence of lack of language rights. Many of today’s revitalisers do not dwell on past injustices. They work positively towards more LHRs in practice, in addition to theory. *Leanne Hinton*’s work with the Master-Apprentice model, originally developed in California together with Indigenous Californians, has spread widely (see Hinton 2002, 2013; see also Hinton and Hale 2001). *Leena Huss* in Sweden has similarly worked for decades with various Indigenous Saami on revitalisation, and with many minority groups on both language maintenance and revitalisation (e.g. 1999, 2000, 2003, Huss and Lindgren 2005). Hinton, Huss and Roche (forthcoming) are presently editing a large *Handbook of Language Revitalization* covering dozens of revitalising languages, in addition to theoretical, methodological and practical issues. *Teresa McCarty* has worked with Indigenous communities and schools throughout North America on their language education and reclamation efforts, including work with native American youth. The most comprehensive account of these efforts can be found in McCarty 2013; see especially chapter 5, ‘Language Regeneration in Practice’; see also Wyman, McCarty and Nicholas (2014), and Coronel-Molinas and McCarty (2016). *Miryam Yataco* in Peru has concentrated on preconditions for legal changes.

Increasing numbers of organisations, institutions and individuals worldwide work for endangered languages together with their users, often with limited funding. Of the many committed to this cause, just a few can be named here: Mark Turin (<http://anth.ubc.ca/faculty/mark-turin/>, <http://fnel.arts.ubc.ca/>); Stefano Keller (<http://www.linguistic-rights.org/>); Gregory D. Anderson

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(<http://livingtongues.org/>); Matthias Brenzinger (<http://www.caldi.uct.ac.za/people/matthias-brenzinger/>); Ajit Mohanty and Minati Panda ([http://nmrc-jnu.com/nmrc\\_about\\_us.html](http://nmrc-jnu.com/nmrc_about_us.html)); Ofelia Zepeda and the American Indian Language Development Institute at the University of Arizona, USA (<http://www.aildi.arizona.edu>; [www.facebook.com/COE.AILDI](http://www.facebook.com/COE.AILDI)). Without their efforts, the fate of humans in times of future scarcity and deindustrial societies will be even worse.

### Notes

AQ: "Maffi and Rapport, forthcoming" has not been listed in the reference list. Please check.

AQ: "Greer, 2012" has not been listed in the references. Please check.

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1. In addition to Lo Bianco's (Ch. 59) impressive coverage of categorisations of both endangerment and revitalisation one could mention Ehala 2012 and ELDIA ([www.eldia-project.org](http://www.eldia-project.org)), summarised in Laakso et al., in press.
2. This is an extensive recent research area. See [www.terralingua.org](http://www.terralingua.org); also Harmon 2002, Maffi 2001, Maffi and Woodley 2010, Skutnabb-Kangas, Maffi and Harmon 2003, Maffi and Rapport, forthcoming.
3. Peaking is the point 'at which roughly half the world's conventional petroleum reserves have been pumped out of the ground and production worldwide begins to decline' (Greer 2012: 9). The same applies to natural gas and coal and other fossil fuels.
4. See also the oracy-literacy discussion in Nurmela, Awasthi and Skutnabb-Kangas 2011.
5. Parts of the bible exist in 2,500 languages. The United Bible Society with 146 national branches operates in over 200 countries and territories ([www.unitedbiblesocieties.org](http://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org)). Missionaries are active within the global English teaching business, see Wong and Canagarajah 2009.
6. See a list at <http://www.tove-skutnabb-kangas.org/en/Tove-Skutnabb-Kangas-Bibliography.html>.
7. See Alidou et al. 2006, Benson et al., 2010, Benson and Kosonen 2011, 2012; see also Walter and Benson 2012, Walter and Chuo 2013.
8. *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o* has been shortlisted for the Nobel Prize for Literature several times. He has also been imprisoned for his struggle for LHRs.
9. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/may/18/anti-intellectualism-us-book-banning?CMP=EMCNEWEML661912>.
10. Ina Druviete is a sociolinguist, a politician, and a former minister of education.
11. These concepts were originally developed by François Grin.

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