The Gaeltacht as a type of Community

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"Community" as a man-made rather than natural phenomenon.

Role of communication in establishing comunity:

Benedict Anderson (<u>Imagined Communities</u>)

The nation as a new type of human community
Nation is a modern invention
Nations, publics: things which are created rather than "natural" or given

Importance of the media (e.g., newspapers) in this process

A person recognises himself/herself as a member of a wider collectivity "of strangers"

 Nations are abstract entities

Michael Warner (<u>Publics and Counterpublics</u>) Publics are "called into being" through the circulation of discourse; we recognise ourselves as an addressee (in common with unknown others).

Necessities of the State: geographical / territorial definitions of the nation, the region, of localities

State + Nation: that the boundaries of the nation, ethnic group and language (should) coincide.
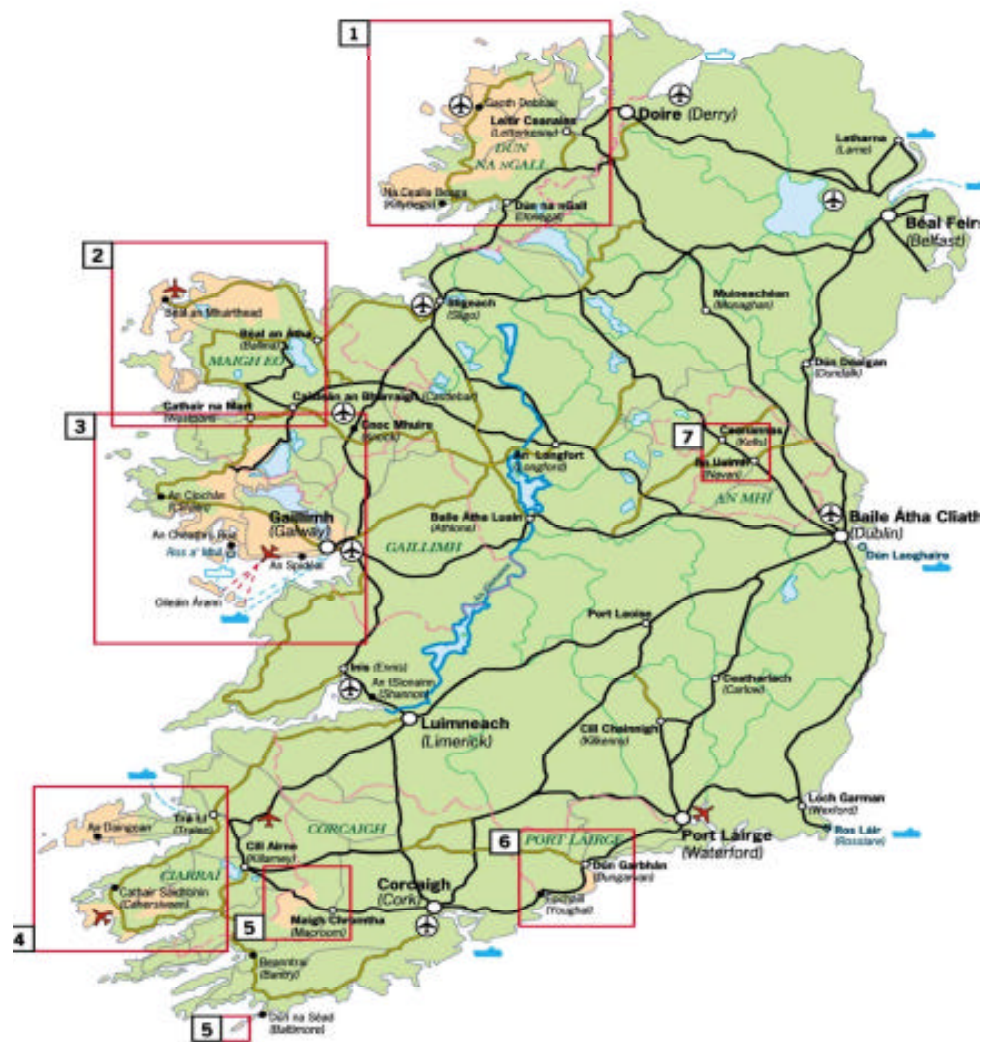
Contradiction in Ireland between Irish as a means of communication versus as a symbol of the nation.

Role of *Gaeltacht* ("Irish-speaking district") as a *symbolic* ground of national identity

"Geographic Fallacy" (Eamon Ó Ciosáin, *Buried Alive*) - to neglect *social* as well as economic aspects of life for native speakers of Irish.
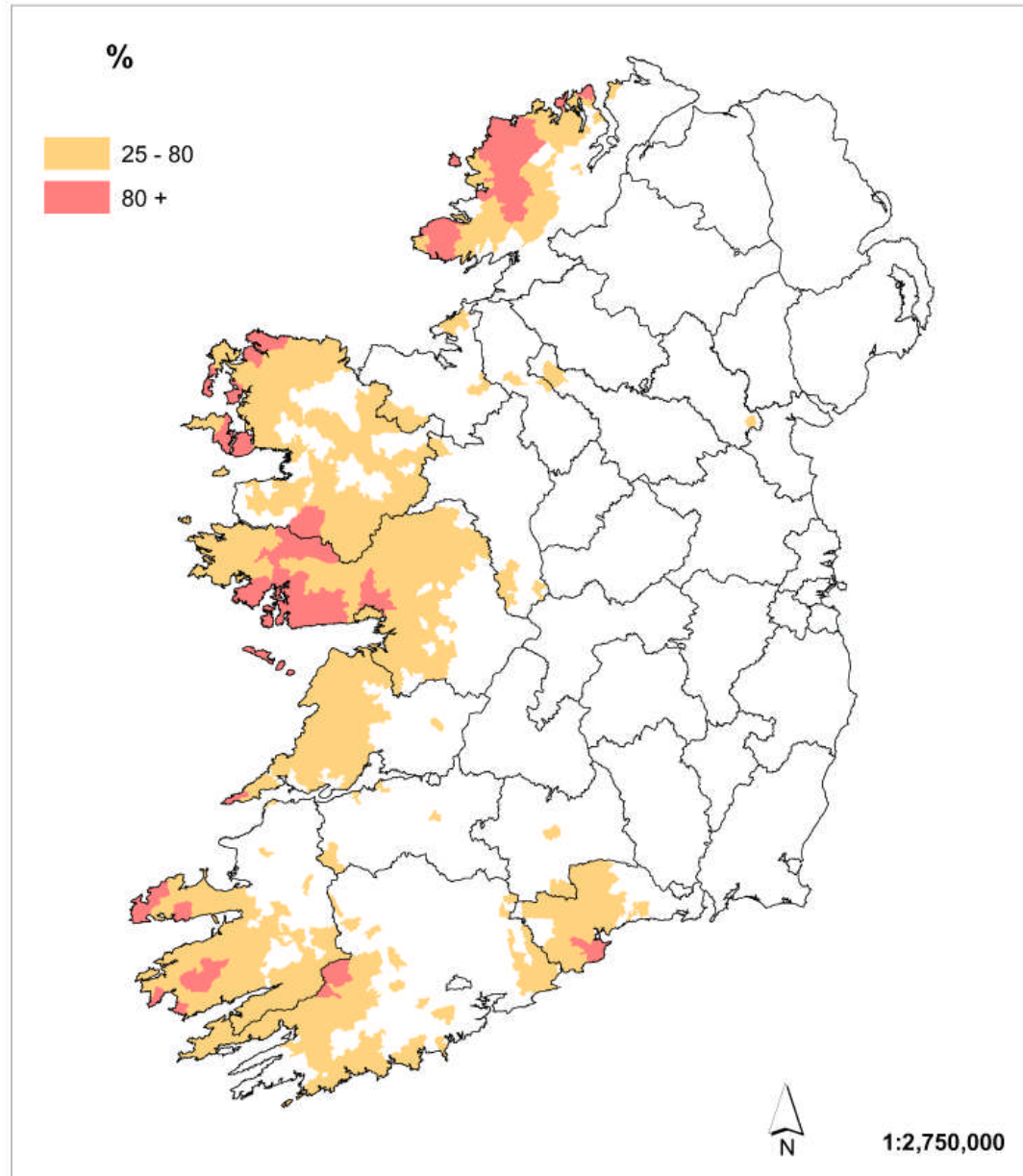
"Irish-speaking districts"

Foinse: *Údarás na Gaeltachta*

An Ghaeltacht anois
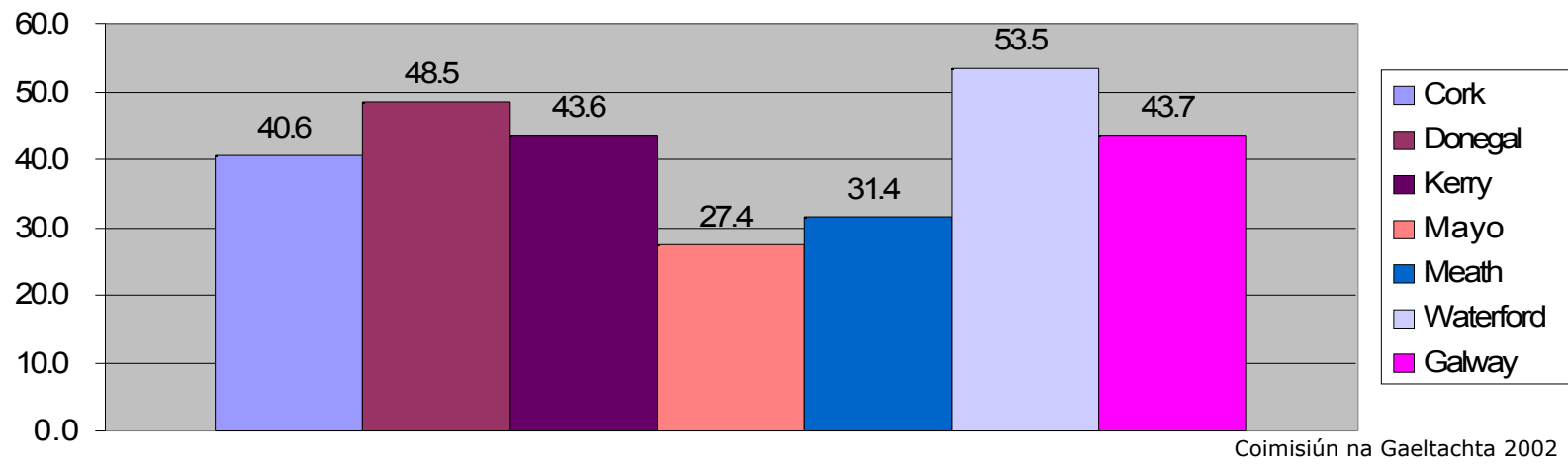
Percentages of Irish-Speakers (25% and above)

%

25 - 80
80 +

1:2,750,000
N

LÉARSCAIL 1.1: **TOGHRANNA AR CHAINTEOIRÍ GAEILGE NÍOS MÓ NÁ 25% DÁ NDAONRA DE RÉIR CHRITÉIR AGUS DHAONÁIREAMH 1926.**

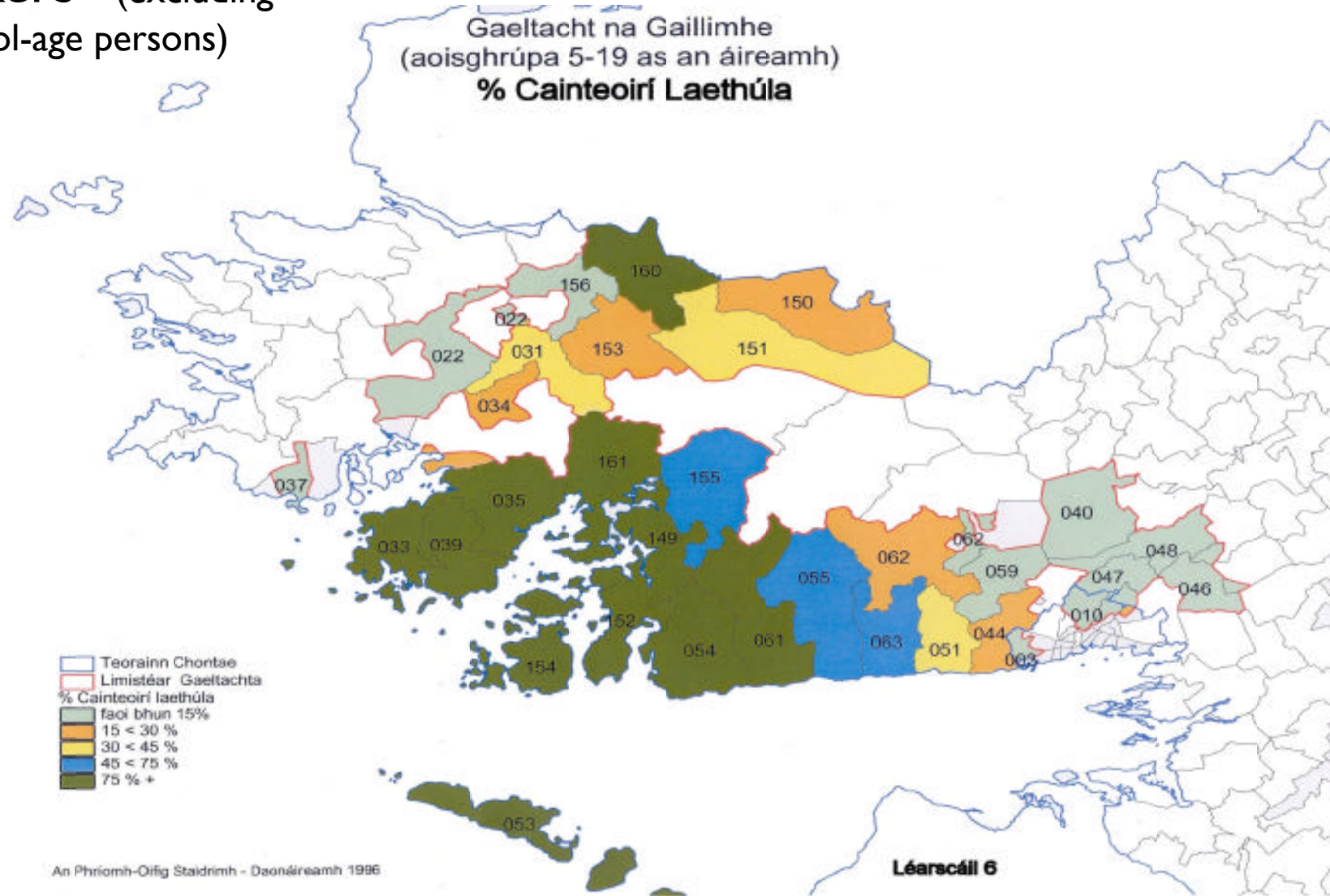Ó Giollagáin, et. al.. 2007   Staidéar Cuimsitheach Teangeolaíoch Ar Úsáid Na Gaeilge Sa Ghaeltacht

Realities of language use and bilingualism in the Gaeltacht

Figure 3 Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht who speak Irish on a daily basis as a percentge of the population, 1996

- Cork — 40.6
- Donegal — 48.5
- Kerry — 43.6
- Mayo — 27.4
- Meath — 31.4
- Waterford — 53.5
- Galway — 43.7

Coimisiún na Gaeltachta 2002

Conamara Gaeltacht: Percentages of "daily speakers" (excluding school-age persons)

Gaeltacht na Gaillimhe
(aoisghrúpa 5-19 as an áireamh)
% Cainteoirí Laethúla

Teorainn Chontae
Limistéar Gaeltachta
% Cainteoirí laethúla
faoi bhun 15%
15 < 30 %
30 < 45 %
45 < 75 %
75 % +

An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh - Daonáireamh 1996

Léarscáil 6

Coimisiún na Gaeltachta 2002

language community:
group of people sharing a common normative grammar

speech community:
group of people sharing norms for language-use-in-context

"speech communities are frequently plurilingual, that is, they encompass speakers who belong to more than one language community" (Silverstein 1998:407)

Speech community as *Sprechbund*

Just as adjacent languages may belong to a common **linguistic area** (*Sprachbund*) through **sharing of common features** irrespective of genetic relationship, so adjacent communities may belong to a common **speech area** (*Sprechbund*) through **sharing of common patterns of speaking**, irrespective of code relationships. [...]

Where speech areas exist, speakers of different dialects or languages share understandings as to what is to be said, as to what to say or expect to be said next. [...]

Some speakers of Czech feel themselves to share a common "speech area" with Hungarians, Poles, and Germans, but not with the English, quite apart from knowledge of the respective national codes. (Hymes 1967:16)

Ireland as a whole features "plurilingual speech communities" identifiable by "regularities of discursive interaction" *across* languages

Impossible to understand linguistic situation of the Gaeltacht without understanding the social contexts of language use in Ireland as a whole.

ongoing series of refunctionalizations of Irish: decline in use of Irish as primary vehicle for socialization (in the family) but an increase in use of Irish as a medium of education, also a relatively strong literary culture (writing, publishing and reading).

Role of "language testing" in State policy towards Gaeltacht:

speech community vs. linguistic community

Joe Steve Ó Neachtain "*Ar Thóir Deontais*" (Looking for a Grant)

[civil servant]:
Dúirt mise— 'Cad is ainm duit?'
Is níor fhreagair sé in aon chor!

I said— 'What is your name?'
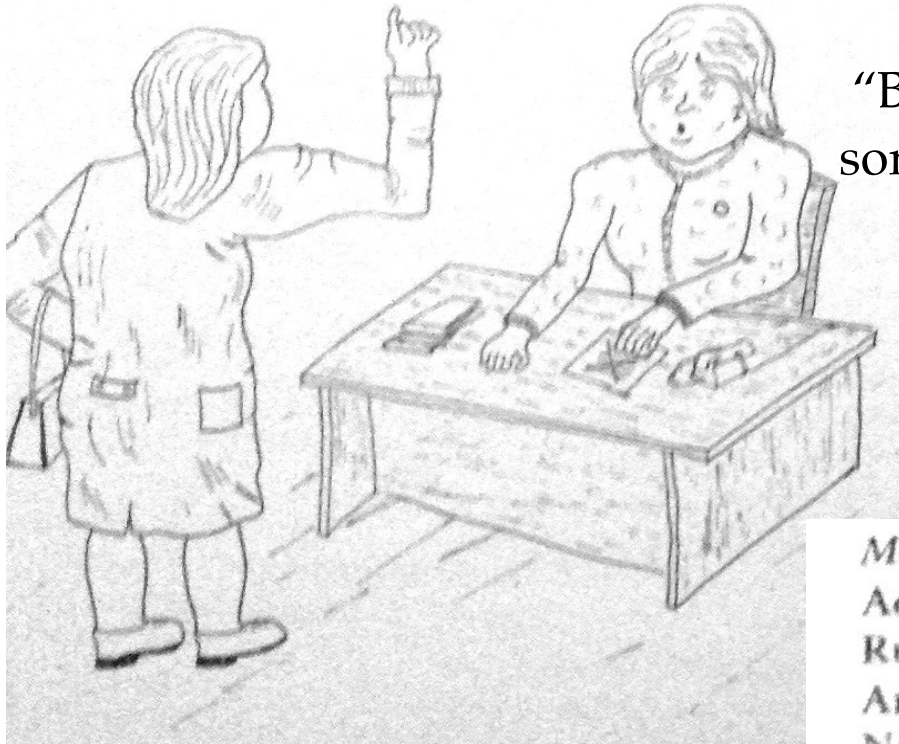And he [the son] didn't answer me at all!

[mother]:
A dhiabhail, ní Cod *is ainm dó!*
Baisteadh chomh maith leat féin é.

O devil, his name isn't *Cod*!
He was baptized just like you were.

"But I have standard [Irish] and grammar, something that doesn't exist in the Gaeltacht"

Mairéad:
Ach tá caighdeán agam is gramadach,
Rud nach bhfuil sa nGaeltacht.
Ar ndóigh, níl Gaeilge cheart ag ceachtar dhíbh —
Nach labhraíonn sibh leath Béarla —
Mo *thea-pot* is mo *bhicycle*,
Mo *thoothbrush* is mo *nail file*.
Tá sibh ag *wonder*áil is ag *wander*áil
Is ag *slaughter*áil na Gaeltacht'.

Aisling:
A dhiabhail, nach tú atá *smart*áilte,
Ag magadh fúinn sa nGaeltacht.
Ach murach pái mhaith bheith sa job seo a'd,
Ní labharfá mórán Gaeilge.
Ná bí ag déanamh gaisce liom le —
'Cod as duit' nó 'Cod é sin'.
Céard é sin ach *codology* a bhfaighimse boladh bréan air.

The conflict in Ó Neachtain's dialogue contrasts two attitudes to bilingualism.

The mother, by her own reckoning, speaks "Irish" all the time, but has no problem with lacing her speech with unassimilated as well as assimilated loanwords from English. The civil servant, on the other hand, stands for a "bilingualism" where a pristine but artificial form of Irish is spoken, and where "standard [Irish] and grammar" are objects of value in an English-speaking world.

This is a conflict over possession. Ó Neachtain suggests that the discourse of the civil servant, by recognising as genuine "language" only that which is regimented and formalised as "standard and grammar," dispossesses Gaeltacht people.

Changes in state attitude towards Irish:

1921 to 1980s — official view of Irish as "everyone's" language
(seeing Ireland as a unified, bilingual speech community)
    cf. "Irish isn't a minority language, it's *my* language!" - statement by
     a non-Irish-speaker

1990's - present (post-Maastricht?) – move towards a minority rights
framework (seeing Ireland as comprising two linguistic communities)

(post-) "Celtic Tiger" period – seeing "language" "culture" etc.
primarily as commodities. "Brand," "cultural tourism" etc.

Bille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla
(Comhionannas), 2002

Official Languages (Equality) Bill,
2002

Anthropological view:

"community" = a collectivity based on particular types of social interaction (local cooperation in farm labour, evening gatherings in houses or pubs, shared resources such as common-lands, participation in systems of exchange

Arjun Appadurai: "Locality" is "produced" through human interaction; much of what anthropologists describe as "culture" consists of activities which have as their primary or secondary functions the production or demarcation of "locality"

 Notice that "locality" goes beyond simply "a sense of collectivity"

Irish-language concept of "nádúr" ("nature") = a particular and distinctive human quality of sociality

"Culture" = symbolic processes located in particular communities and discourses

Ceantar na nOileáin,
Conamara Theas

Ráth Cairn,
Co. na Mí

Conflicts between State and social movements:1934

Máirtín Ó Cadhain ag tabhairt a óráid 'Claidhe na Muice Duibhe...' ag oscailt Fheis na Ceathrún Rua, 19ú Lúnasa 1934

Claí na Muice Duibhe on the People of the Gaeltacht

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Emancipation from Cromwell's Curse
The Language Question and the Land Question

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Below is the speech that Máirtín Ó Cadhain gave at Feis Iar-Chonnacht in An Ceathrú Rua on Sunday, the 19th of August

Excerpt:

"The Black Pig's Dike

Many of these things no government could change. They say God helps those who helps themselves. The energy and courage are lacking. Irish will survive in the Gaeltacht to the degree that it succeeds in the Galltacht.

We, the people of the Gaeltacht, are not willing to be made into a separate people or to have any Black Pig's Dike put around us to entrap us."

SCENE FROM THE RATHCARNE GAELTACHT

Peapann Muinnteap na Salltacta fíop-páilte
poim Muinntip na Saedealtacta do Macaipd
   Bpeášta Ríošda na Mide.

The People of Meath accord
a hearty welcome to the
Gaeltacht Colonists

By the much appreciated
courtesy of the *Irish Press*

Human "nature"(*nádúr*) and the "nature" of the locality

"An Coiste Cosanta" 1964

Ráth Cairn, County Meath is a true Gaeltacht community [pobal Fíor-Ghaeltacht]. The people came from Connemara thirty years ago and many had little or no English. They never heard the Word of God in Irish in Ráth Cairn—except in the school. [...] Even if we are Irish-speakers that is no reason for us to be second-class citizens in the Kingdom of God. God is not an English-speaking God to us. It is not to an English-speaking God that the little children of Ráth Cairn should be expected to confide the loneliest secrets of their (Ó Conghaile 1986:150-51).

By opening up closed networks of both community and governance, Gaeltacht activism has in effect pointed the way for the reduced role of the postmodern Irish state in its Celtic Tiger phase. 'The crucible of Irish postmodernity' (Kiberd 2001), the Gaeltacht has become the state's testing ground for decentralisation and local governance, as well as [creating a process for] recognition of linguistic and cultural minority rights.

DINGLE DUMPED OFF MAP

Name replaced by Irish translation

THE name of one of the country's top tourist towns is to be wiped off the face of the earth, it was revealed yesterday.

Dingle in Co Kerry, made famous by the movie Ryan's Daughter and Fungi the dolphin, is to be taken off all maps and road signs.

Local people are furious over the decision to change its name to An Daingean because it lies in West Kerry Gaeltacht.

One American in Killarney, who was planning a trip to Dingle, said: "I thought it was a joke? Travel to it? I can't even say it."

Fine Gael councillor Seamus Cosai Fitzgerald, a native Irish speaker:

"Dingle is a brand name known all over the world, which people have built up for over 30 years ever since Ryan's Daughter."

"We must write to Minister O'Cuiv and tell him foreigners do not understand the Irish language."

But Gaeltacht Minister Eamon O'Cuiv has ruled out a U-turn and is adamant the new name is here to stay.

He added: "The days of walking both sides of the street are over. It's a nonsense not having linguistic criterion in the Gaeltacht. If you are in the Gaeltacht, one would naturally imagine the first brand you would sell is the Irish language. **The Irish language brand is the brand.**"

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