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Globalisation and linguistic rights

Towards a universal framework of linguistic sustainability¹

Like many others, Mexican society and Catalan society, both of them engaged in the task of conserving their linguistic diversity in today's changing world, are united in their concerns about the evolution and future prospects of linguistic diversity in the world.

Their agreement on this was already evident throughout the process of preparing the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, which was proclaimed in Barcelona in 1996². Of great importance, too, was the Mexican participation in the World Congress on Language Policies³ organised by Linguapax⁴ in Barcelona in April 2002, and in the recent Dialogue on Language Diversity, Sustainability and Peace⁵, which took place as the 10th Linguapax Congress under the auspices of the Universal Forum of Cultures, held in Barcelona in May 2004.

■ ¹ Inaugural lecture at the *XIV Seminario de la Enseñanza de Lenguas Extranjeras, 'La diversidad lingüística en el contexto de la globalización'* (14th Seminar on Foreign Language Teaching, "Linguistic Diversity in the Context of Globalisation"), an academic function held in parallel to the XVIII Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara (28th Guadalajara International Book Fair-Jalisco, Mexico) on 1-2 December 2004.

² It is possible to consult the text (also available in English) of the Declaration, the process of its preparation and its subsequent international diffusion at the website <http://www.linguistic-declaration.org> (accessed in 2004).

³ See <http://www.linguapax.org/congres/indexcast.html> (accessed in 2004).

⁴ See <http://www.linguapax.org/> (accessed in 2004).

⁵ See <http://www.linguapax.org/congreso4/indexcast.html> (accessed in 2004).

This latter Congress confirmed, in lectures given by the world's leading experts, the immense importance of the present if we are to act to conserve the planet's linguistic diversity, while also confirming international recognition of the reference-point roles that Barcelona and Catalonia have come to play in this world-wide debate.

In his inaugural lecture⁶, Professor David Crystal emphasised the timeliness of such a Congress, devoted as it was to the sustainability of linguistic diversity, precisely a decade after the crisis of the linguistic heritage of our planet had come to have universal resonance. Since the early 1990s, in fact, numerous well-qualified voices have been raised to warn of the threat of extinction that hovers over a considerable part of humanity's languages. The 15th International Congress of Linguists in Quebec in 1992 alerted UNESCO to the threat; the following year (1993), the UNESCO General Assembly initiated a project⁷ and produced the *Red Book on Endangered Languages*⁸; in 1995 the International Clearing House for Endangered Languages was created in the University of Tokyo⁹; in the United States, the Endangered Language Fund¹⁰ was created; and in the United Kingdom a Foundation for Endangered Languages was established¹¹. At least among academic specialists, the evidence was spreading that, unless there were radical changes in the present model of globalisation, perhaps 90% of the world's spoken languages would disappear in the 21st century, with the tremendous paradox that it is precisely now that humanity has more means than ever to assure the future of all languages!

The 66 NGOs, the 44 PEN Centres and 61 experts from some ninety countries around the World who took part in producing the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in Barcelona (1996) trusted that growing sensibility around the world to this enormous crisis of linguistic diversity and having the support of the UNESCO Director-General, Federico Mayor Zaragoza would enable them to achieve United Nations backing for an initiative of this kind. This hope was bolstered by numerous declarations of support from well-known personalities around the world. I believe that today it is appropriate to recall that among them were Homero Aridjis, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Octavio Paz and Rigoberta Menchú.

However, the UNESCO General Conference of 1997 did not take the Declaration into account, and neither did the UNESCO Executive Council deem it appropriate in the spring of 1998 to adopt as a starting point a second version of the Declaration that was briefer and more focused on individual rights, although we had drafted this version according to suggestions made by Federico Mayor Zaragoza himself. The impressions gleaned by the Declaration Follow-up Committee in a long series of contacts with numerous State representatives in UNESCO confirmed that a declaration of this kind —affirming equality among all languages without exception and both the individual and collective nature of linguistic rights— was disturbing for State powers-that-be, which, after all, would have to agree to its processing and official proclamation.

Subsequent events did not contradict this interpretation. UNESCO dissolved its Languages Division and focused on a generic defence of cultural diversity. In 2000 its World Culture Report was devoted to the subject of *Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism*¹², while, in November 2001, it adopted a Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity¹³, with references that were not very relevant to the linguistic dimension of diversity.

One of the most significant new features of this Declaration appears in Article 8, which states that “cultural goods and services [...], as vectors of identity, values and meaning, must not be treated as mere commodities or consumer goods”.

With this, UNESCO picked up the debate concerning cultural diversity in the world market, a question that had already been analysed in the World Culture Report of 1998, which was concerned with the theme of “Culture, Creativity and Markets” (Paris, 1999)¹⁴.

Deregulation and liberalisation of the world market and the consequences of this for cultural diversity are, it would seem, the main concern of the States and of UNESCO itself. As will be recalled, at the end of the negotiations of the Uruguay Round in 1993 that would give rise the following year to the World Trade Organisation (WTO)¹⁵, the concept of cultural *exception* emerged, according to which the liberalisation of world trade must not be applied indiscriminately to cultural products and exchanges. Advocates of this principle today have adopted the term *cultural diversity*, which is doubtless more appropriate because the previous version seemed to establish the “normality” of total deregulation, and give the idea that it was exceptional to determine specific treatment for cultural products in international trade.

Defending the specificity of cultural products and services on the World market was a cause initially promoted by France and the Francophone countries which, by 1998, had created a working group to promote an international legal instrument that would guarantee to States the power to regulate quotas of diffusion in the linguistic domain or for internal cultural production, and to establish compensatory systems of financing or public subsidies for their cultural products and services.

There is no doubt that the adoption by UNESCO of these principles in Article 8 of the 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity represented influential support for these initiatives and, not long afterwards, the States of other linguistic and cultural spaces have come out in defence of cultural diversity in the market. In 2003, a joint organisation called Three Linguistic Spaces was formed of Francophone, Hispanophone and Lusophone countries¹⁶, and contacts with Arabic-, Russian-, Chinese- and Japanese-speaking countries are gradually being made.

According to present information, the UNESCO General Conference is soon to examine a *Draft Convention on the protection of the diversity of cultural content and artistic expression*¹⁷ which is now in an advanced phase of preparation and negotiation. This international treaty could represent a major breakthrough in the development and application of the principle of cultural diversity in the market, which had only been enunciated in the 2001 UNESCO Declaration.

■ ⁶ See <http://www.linguapax.org/congreso4/pdf/crystal.pdf> (accessed in 2004).

⁷ See http://portal.unesco.org/culture/es/ev.php-URL_ID=8270&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed in 2004).

⁸ See <http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Redbook/index.html> (accessed in 2004).

⁹ See <http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/ichel/ichel.html> (accessed in 2004).

¹⁰ See <http://sapisr.ling.yale.edu/~elf/> (accessed in 2004).

¹¹ See <http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm> (accessed in 2004).

¹² See http://www.unesco.org/culture/worldreport/html_index_sp.shtml (accessed in 2004).

¹³ This may be consulted at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001271/127160m.pdf> (accessed in 2004).

¹⁴ See <http://www.crim.unam.mx/cultura/informe/default.htm> (accessed in 2004).

¹⁵ See <http://www.wto.org/indexsp.htm> (accessed in 2004).

¹⁶ See <http://www.3el.org/> (accessed in 2004). Its second Congress was held in Mexico in April and the minutes may be consulted at http://www.3el.org/IMG/pdf/Actes_mexico_es.pdf (accessed in 2004).

¹⁷ This may be consulted at: http://portal.unesco.org/culture/es/file_download.php6232bc25499910544b1855bfaa523186Spa-AnteproyectoConv-conf201-2.pdf (accessed in 2004).

Nonetheless, I think it is very clear why this approximation to a defence of cultural diversity —markedly economist and focused at State level— has merited growing interest from the international organisms while linguistic diversity has remained in the background or, at best, in a very secondary position in this period. The exceptional

“Equal treatment for all cultural communities would require that the Convention establishes official hearing mechanisms through which public institutions or organisations of civil society could bring their demands for protection”

significance of commercial transactions in the cultural and media markets and the extraordinary predominance on the global market of some twenty huge corporations, mainly based in the United States, have given rise to a clear strategic confluence of the cultural industries of many countries with their respective States, since it is the latter that are able to defend their interests on the world market. State powers, in turn, seeing their sovereignty shrinking in economic and military terms, tend to tighten their control over their own symbolic and cultural space.

Market interests and the national interests of States have been mobilised for a common objective. But who cares about protecting languages and cultures at the sub-State level when they do not represent a significant proportion of the culture trade or enjoy support on any egalitarian basis within their own States?

It is still revealing that the *Draft Convention* that is to be presented to the UNESCO General Conference only refers to language on one single occasion (in Article 6.2.a), when it proposes State measures “which in an appropriate manner reserve a certain space for domestic cultural goods and services among all those available within the national territory, in order to ensure opportunities for their production, distribution, dissemination and consumption, and include, where appropriate, provisions relating to the language used for the above-mentioned goods”. It is surprising that such a relevant dimension of cultural diversity as the languages of cultural expression should merit just this one reference in the entire text of the Draft.

Much more revealing —and worrying from our point of view— is that the political objections that are envisaged with regard to some articles of this Draft are going to focus precisely on the points where the signatory States would have taken on the commitment of actively protecting their internal cultural diversity. Such is the case of point 1 of Article 6, to which I have just referred, establishing in its present form that, “each State Party will adopt measures, especially regulatory and financial measures, aimed at protecting and promoting the diversity of cultural expressions within its territory, particularly in cases where such expressions are threatened or in a situation of vulnerability”. This formulation, it seems, has given rise to numerous reserves because it implies excessive obligations for States, and it is possible that the first sentence will be modified so that the

original formulation of “each State Party **will adopt** measures” will be reduced to the mere possibility of adopting them with “each State Party **may adopt** measures...”¹⁸.

Such a decision would confirm that, in fact, the main aim of this Convention is not to protect cultural diversity —and, in particular, what is in most need of protection— but simply to protect the national cultural industries on the world market.

Again, if we bear in mind that the main objection to our proposal of a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights was its consideration of the collective —and not merely individual— nature of linguistic rights, there is a contradiction in the fact that the present Draft Convention is based on the right —unquestionably collective— of States to regulate the cultural market, as the Preamble acknowledges in the following formulation: “Recognizing the fundamental right of social groups and societies, in particular of members of minorities and indigenous peoples, to create, disseminate and distribute their cultural goods and services ...”. It also includes among its principles the equal dignity of all cultures (Principle 4) and constantly invokes the twofold individual and collective dimension of the cultural expressions it wishes to protect.

If this is really the aim of the Convention and of UNESCO, they should, I believe, reinforce and not reduce the commitments of each State to protect its internal diversity. One of the positive points of the Draft is that it envisages that States with limited resources can turn to international systems of support for producing appropriate policies in order to protect their cultures (Article 8). We understand, then, that equal treatment for all cultural communities would require that the Convention establish official hearing mechanisms through which public institutions or organisations of civil society in an endangered cultural community could bring their demands for protection before the Convention’s Intergovernmental Committee (envisaged in Article 21), or at least before the Advisory Group as defined in Article 22 so that these organisms work towards positive measures being taken in favour of these cultures by the States concerned.

In brief, we cannot deny the potential interest of these international measures as a guarantee of State cultures, but what is not evident is their applicability to the numerous cultural communities that are neglected or pushed into the background, when not actively undermined by the cultural policies of many States that do not promote internal equality among the cultures within their boundaries.

With regard to our specific interest in protecting linguistic diversity and linguistic rights, the present provisions of these international legal instruments are, by any reckoning, inadequate.

In this context, which is not very encouraging for any progress in international recognition of the importance of linguistic diversity, it has been gratifying to confirm that the United Nations Human Development Report 2004, entitled “Cultural Liberty in Today’s Diverse World”¹⁹, clearly tackles the linguistic dimension of world diversity and

■ ¹⁸ This was the impression given by the document of Professor Ivan Bernier, *Avant-projet de convention sur la protection de la diversité des contenus culturels et des expressions artistiques. Analyse et commentaire*. This may be consulted at http://agence.francophonie.org/diversiteculturelle/fichiers/aif_bernier_aout2004.pdf (accessed in 2004). Indeed, the change has now come about as can be seen in the Spanish version cited in footnote 17 and the English version, which

may be found at: http://66.102.9.104/search?q=cache:Vo4MS26gSuwJ:www.folklife.si.edu/resources/center/cultural_policy/pdf/UNESCO_Draft.pdf+UNESCO+CLT/CPD/2004/CONF.201/2&hl=en

¹⁹ Published by the United Nations Development (UNDP) in its Spanish version by Ediciones Mundi-Prensa 2004. See <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/espanol/> (accessed in 2004).





Creu marró (Brown Cross), Antoni Tàpies (2005)
paint and collage on paper
50 x 64 cm

Antoni Tàpies

repeatedly suggests that States need to adopt multicultural and multilingual policies that respect their internal diversity. The worldwide scope of this need is immense, as the Report states, since there are thousands of linguistic, cultural and ethnic communities that come under some two hundred States. Almost all the world's States, then, contain multilingual and multicultural societies.

It is also reassuring that this United Nations Report should affirm the specific nature of linguistic diversity and hence the specific treatment this requires from the State powers-that-be, thereby clearly contradicting the attempted application of the liberal rule of benign neglect or non-intervention by the State with regard to linguistic diversity: "While it is possible and even desirable for a State to remain 'neutral' on ethnicity and religion, this is impractical for language" (p.59).

One should also recognise, as the Report does, that for multilingual States, "While the ability to use one's mother tongue in public as well as private life is important, this does not make the use of multiple languages in government, the courts and education easy or practical" (p. 33). Policies are therefore suggested in order to accommodate —and not to put in opposition— "the twin objectives of unity and diversity by adopting two or three languages, recognizing a unifying national language as well as local languages" (p.9). UNESCO itself, the Report recalls, has recommended a three-language formula, bringing together— in both individual linguistic spheres and social usage —an international language, a lingua franca or "local link language" and the mother tongue of each group (p. 60).

However, with respect to specifically linguistic rights, the Report's position is not very receptive, asserting, "There is no universal 'right to language'. But there are human rights with an implicit linguistic content that multilingual States must acknowledge in order to comply with their international obligations under such instruments as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Especially important are the rights to freedom of expression and equality" (p. 60).

I confess that we are not satisfied with such a reluctant position when it comes to recognising specifically linguistic rights, but still less satisfactory, I feel, is the fact that, having noted the worldwide importance of the linguistic dimension of human rights, the United Nations organisms should be so lacking in diligence in that they do not offer explicit formulation of these issues by means of adequate legal instruments and developing international protection mechanisms.

We still understand and maintain that, as stated in the Barcelona Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996), "All languages are collectively constituted and are made available within a community for individual use as tools of cohesion, identification, communication and creative expression" (Article 7.2). The linguistic freedom and equality of each person depend on and are inseparable from the linguistic options offered by the society in which he or she lives, and it is precisely within one's own linguistic community and one's own territorial space where every person must enjoy the full range of linguistic rights. This is expressed in Article 1.2. of the Barcelona Declaration, which states that, "[it] takes as its point of departure the principle that linguistic rights are individual and collective at one and the same time. In defining the full range of linguistic rights, it adopts as its referent the case of a historical language community within its own territorial space, this space being understood, not only as the geographical area where the community lives, but also as the social and functional space vital to the full development of the language".

Hence the task that began in 1996 with the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights in Barcelona still requires our renewed and intensified efforts. Yet, as Professor Crystal asked at the Barcelona Conference in the Universal Form of Cultures (May 2004), can researchers and academics all around the world really modify the present trends of globalisation? The answer is obvious: not by themselves, not without consciousness raising and a wider mobilisation of society as a whole.

As David Crystal proposed, in order to achieve this general mobilisation, we should take our inspiration from the process the ecologist movement went through until it achieved a considerable degree of awareness all around the world about preserving the natural environment. It is necessary to reach the mass media, schools and inside every home. This does not only mean using strategies analogous to those used by ecologist movements. Indeed, we can and should act together given that biodiversity and linguistic and cultural diversity are closely interconnected in reality, as shown in studies done by the organisation Terralingua²⁰. The planet's biological diversity and linguistic diversity are concentrated in the same spaces, in a number of specific States, and their preservation should be approached together as a joint endeavour in which the whole of humanity is involved and to which it is committed.

Again, we must not overlook the fact that globalisation also represents, along with far-reaching transformations that affect linguistic, cultural and biological diversity, new possibilities for coordinating and acting on a planetary scale. Constructing worldwide networks to cooperate in this huge task of preserving diversity is one of our best hopes. We must not let this chance slip through our fingers.

One of the first and foremost tasks of worldwide mobilisation for linguistic diversity must be disseminating a correct interpretation or representation of the linguistic consequences of globalisation. All too often, simplistic and stereotyped conceptions of the world's linguistic diversity and its supposedly inexorable evolution towards monolingualism constitute the fictitious basis for a massive abandonment of options and demands for linguistic equality.

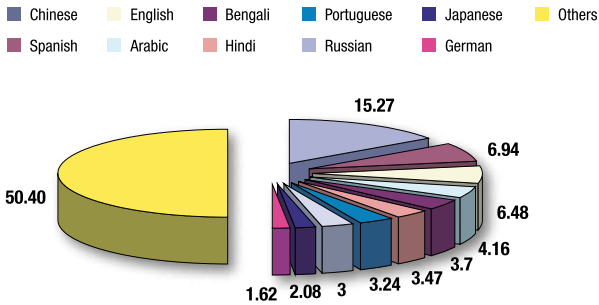
It is true, as Abram de Swaan²¹ has said, that among the 6,000 languages of the world's linguistic system those that carry out lingua franca functions in their regional settings are few. Some of these languages —like Arabic, Malay, Hindi, Russian or Chinese— are not expanding in their use at present. Others, however, continue to enjoy considerable transcontinental diffusion and these, significantly, are the languages of the old European colonial powers: Portuguese, French, Spanish and, in particular, English, which occupies the central place in the world's linguistic system as the lingua franca *par excellence*.

Nonetheless, we must not overvalue this relative ascendancy. We cannot ignore the fact that the native populations of the ten most spoken languages of the world taken together only represent half of the world's population. If we add up all the people with Chinese, Spanish, English, Arabic, Bengali, Hindi, Portuguese, Russian, Japanese or German as their first language, they do not constitute a majority in humanity taken as a whole (See Graph 1).

■ ²⁰ See <http://www.terralingua.org> (accessed in 2004).

²¹ *Words of the World: The Global Language System*.
Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001.

GRAPH 1:
Percentage of the 10 most spoken languages in the total of languages spoken



* The list of most-spoken languages is (moving clockwise from the 12 o'clock position) Chinese (15.27%), Spanish (6.94%), English (6.48%), Arabic (4.16%), Bengali (3.7%), Hindi (3.47%), Portuguese (3.24%), Russian (3%), Japanese (2.08%), German (1.62%), Others (50.04%).

In other words, all the world's languages are minority languages although some aim to be regarded—and frequently are regarded—as hegemonic or majority languages on the world scale. If we could all learn to see ourselves as we really are, as members of bigger or smaller linguistic minorities, perhaps understanding among the languages of the world would be less difficult.

The distinguished sociolinguist Joshua Fishman alerts us also to other characteristics of the world's new linguistic

order that should not be overlooked either²²: along with the process of the spread of a worldwide *interlingua*, globalisation is accompanied by other processes of consolidation of regional and local languages. Fishman notes there were never as many standardised languages as there are today, these amounting to some 1,200. Local languages, in many cases, maintain a great vitality and functional utility because they are so deep-rooted in their immediate natural and social surroundings. Many regional languages constitute more effective international vehicles of communication than English in numerous forms of interaction that are important for both individuals and organisations. Globalisation, regionalisation and localisation are simultaneously spreading and are processes that can complement each other in a balanced fashion, fostering a gradual multilingualism or polyglotism among groups of people, in keeping with the new settings in which we must interrelate.

As for the set of principles upon which a new worldwide linguistic order could be founded, I think particular attention should be paid to the approach of the Catalan sociolinguist Albert Bastardas²³.

Bastardas considers that the spread of multilingual contacts and the demand in a globalised world for personal multilingual skills in an increasing number of linguistic communities that have hitherto been monolingual have created an increasingly favourable context for fostering a generalised awareness among the peoples of the world concerning the linguistic minorisation that many communities, including our own, have historically undergone to a greater or lesser degree. It is foreseeable, then, that there could be greater comprehension of situations of minorisation by more extensive and minorising linguistic groups. New possibilities open up, in this situation, for a profound rethinking of the principles of humanity's linguistic organisation and it is also a chance for attaining a more just and equitable politico-linguistic order.

Though these predictions of Bastardas may seem somewhat optimistic, I do not believe that we can completely rule them out. For the moment, it does not seem that there is

any detectable large-scale process in humanity as a whole of growing empathy with the situation of minority languages, even in the cases of those that are most endangered. However, in my view, it is probable that gradual verification of the tragic disappearance of linguistic and cultural groups will reach such a point of worldwide consternation that it will oblige reconsideration of the linguistic and cultural —and ecological in general— consequences of today's prevailing economicist model of globalisation. Again, as Bastardas also notes, the global dimensions of massive human migrations also entail the pressing need for almost all the societies in the world to establish equitable principles of intercultural coexistence that would give linguistic precision to the concept of reasonable accommodation to diversity in the most immediate and local contexts of social relations.

The authorities can no longer disregard this pressing demand without defining some principles of coexistence in linguistic diversity on all scales and levels, from the most local, to the State and through to the worldwide dimensions.

Bastardas has therefore been working on the idea of complementary —instead of contradictory— compatibility between two simultaneous demands: the continuity of linguistic diversity and essential, functional intercommunication at all levels. We should firmly and definitively reject the conflicting and dichotomic view that has prevailed until today in most linguistic policies that are designed to impose a single language on all the collectives in a particular political space and, at the opposite end of the scale, the claim to monolingual self-sufficiency that sometimes appears in the statements of hegemonic linguistic communities and even in demands for recognition by some minority linguistic communities.

Moreover, at this point, linguistic diversity offers particular differences and opportunities that do not appear in other spheres of diversity: indeed, any person can adopt and use a number of languages in a compatible and complementary fashion, which cannot be said of his or her gender condition, race or even religious choice. The coexistence of several languages in one person or society is not just a possibility, but it is also backed by numerous valid —though there is room for improvement— historical experiences. The approach, then, should not be that there is a *disjunction* in the form of an opposition between linguistic diversity **or** intercomprehension on a world scale, but to see that there is a *conjunction* between the two terms: linguistic diversity **and** intercomprehension on a world scale.

Neither can we ignore the risk that a situation of social bilingualism on the broad scale can evolve towards the displacement and general substitution of one language by another. This threat of linguistic substitution that hovers over minorised communities must be removed because their fears are frequently very well founded in the political frameworks of subordination and dependency in which they find themselves. However, it is also a good idea to examine situations of relatively stable diglossia that have appeared at different times and in different contexts —like the cases analysed by Charles Ferguson²⁴— and understand that complementary, equitable and stable distribution is

■ ²² *El nou ordre lingüístic*. In Digit-HVM (digital review of Humanities), N^o. 3 (2001): <http://www.uoc.edu/humfil/articles/esp/fishman/fishman.html> (accessed in 2004).

²³ Although Bastardas has produced several texts dealing with these issues, I shall mainly refer to his plenary lecture (also available in English) at the World Congress

on Language Policies, Barcelona 2002: <http://www.linguapax.org/congres/plenaries/bastardas.html> (accessed in 2004).

²⁴ Ferguson, Charles, "Diglossia", in *Word* 15, N^o 2 (August 1959), pp. 325-337.

possible between the languages that are in contact, if a political framework of equality rather than subordination is established, dissipating thus socio-cognitive interpretations of inferiority and self-denigration that constitute the basic motivation for abandoning one's own language and paving the way for the advance of linguistic substitution.

We are not unaware of the political problems raised by Bastardas' proposal which posits, as a condition for the viability of an equitable distribution of functions between languages in contact, equal political recognition of minorised individuals and linguistic communities in a clear and sincere process of developing their power or empowerment.

However, these considerations coincide at this point with a change in paradigm that is essential in many other fields for humanity: the need to abandon the coercive idea of power – according to which the attaining of powers of self-organisation by subordinate groups necessarily removes power from the dominant groups. In the linguistic field, as in many others, we should all understand power in a collaborative and additive sense: the empowerment of subordinated groups can contribute skills and new values of superior efficacy to society in general so that the whole is empowered.

As Bastardas suggests, basing himself on Edgar Morin's paradigm of complexity, our actions should be carried out in parallel on different levels: the political, that of representations or discourse on linguistic diversity, and that of the functions of intercommunication. In order to do so, it will be necessary to combine the traditional principles of the *territoriality*²⁵ and the *personality*²⁶ of linguistic rights —that can no longer have as their references strictly monolingual spaces or subjects— with new principles that are appropriate to the new sociolinguistic context that globalisation represents

First, application of the principle of *subsidiarity* —which is already widely known in the domain of structuring political and administrative powers— to the linguistic sphere should be studied. In the formula proposed by Bastardas, the principle would read as follows:

Any communicative function that can be carried out by a local language should not be conveyed by a language of regional or global reach.

This evidently means assuring the functional pre-eminence of each language within its own historically-constituted linguistic community, which is very much along the lines of the Barcelona Declaration. Extra-group languages would be used, as is logical, for increasingly frequent contacts with other collectives.

Yet this reserving of functions for local languages cannot overlook the increasingly present fact of interpenetration of linguistic groups and the existence of functional spheres that, in a local setting, entail the use of languages of regional or worldwide scope. Not only does the population become more and more bilingual, incorporating multilingual forms of communication, but each person also progressively acquires multilingual linguistic skills.

■ ²⁵ In other words, the predominance and official nature of each language in the geographic zone in which the society that speaks the language is historically settled.

²⁶ I refer to recognition of the official nature and of a pattern of individual linguistic rights independently of the zone in which each language is spoken.

Thus, in keeping with Bastardas' views, if we do not want multilingualism to shift towards linguistic substitution, we should introduce, along with the principle of subsidiarity, a new principle, that of the *functional sufficiency* of local languages.

In order to ensure that a language does not become functionally unnecessary or redundant and hence dispensable for its own speakers, it is necessary to guarantee its use in a solid and significant nucleus of social functions that all the members of a local society should perform in the local language. These functions reserved for the local language cannot be hierarchically secondary —limited, for example, to informal oral communication in societies where written and technologically mediated communication already has a considerable presence. On the contrary, it must involve, to the maximum possible extent, prestigious and innovative functions so that the psychosocial assessments associated with them favour and justify the maintenance of the local language, its transmission to new generations and its acquisition by new members joining the local society.

It will not be easy, of course, to persuade the powers-that-be that promote the functional expansion of the dominant languages to accept these principles or to get the speakers of the more widespread languages to accept with good grace the functional pre-eminence of local languages and the resulting need to learn them. Neither can we even be sure —as we very well know in the Catalan context— that the speakers of a local language will clearly decide to maintain it in certain functions when they have already learned more widely-spoken languages and have found that adopting them for these functions is not only easy but it can also involve a certain sense of superiority or identification with some kind of fashionable behaviour.

Such a wide-ranging change of mentality and behaviour requires vast, concerted, worldwide action that would be capable of achieving the support of the international organisations and their active commitment in preserving the linguistic communities that are most critically endangered, a combined action on the international scale that would make it possible to reach agreement on a number of principles of linguistic pluralism that would be appropriate for all the peoples of the planet: a universal framework of linguistic sustainability.

In his brilliant lecture at the Barcelona Congress in May 2004, David Crystal proposed ten specific measures for achieving this essential involvement of society as a whole. I feel it is worth repeating them to close my lecture today:

- 1 **Use Internet** and the information and communication technologies to promote linguistic diversity.
- 2 **Involve young people** in movements in favour of linguistic diversity, taking their interests into account and respecting their non-academic cultural and linguistic forms because the future of our languages is in their hands.
- 3 **Make sure that linguistic diversity** is visible on every screen and in all kinds of multimedia communication.
- 4 **Promote all kinds of artistic creation** on the theme of linguistic diversity because the communicative, emotional and symbolic effectiveness of works of art is extraordinary.

5 Establish an annual prize for the best artistic creation on linguistic diversity (to be awarded, perhaps, on 26 September, European Day of Languages) as a way to promote consciousness-raising on these matters.

6 Place within the reach of every home the visible and attractive presence of a whole range of objects that represent linguistic diversity in order to introduce them into all the aspects of personal, everyday life.

7 Include teaching about and love of linguistic diversity in all educational curricula, from the earliest stages.

8 Foster Centres of Information and Documentation on linguistic diversity, where any interested person might easily obtain all sorts of information about this subject.

9 In addition to all of this, establish a House of Languages, a major international institution that people can visit and find detailed information about the world of language and the world's languages.

10 Mobilise whatever resources are necessary to make these goals a reality. This is not such a great effort as it may appear, compared with the efforts that go into much more dubious enterprises. And let us not forget that the costs of war are always greater than those of peace.

I am pleased to recall that Professor David Crystal's suggestions were not only very well received by the participants in the last Linguapax Congress in Barcelona, but that his request to establish a House of Languages in order to symbolise and bring together all the elements of this project of universal linguistic diversity immediately received the support of the President of the Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia, Pasqual Maragall, and of the representative of the City of Barcelona, both of whom attended the lecture. I am informed that the House of Languages project is under serious consideration in Catalonia²⁷ and I should be happy if everyone who is interested in all these issues could be sure from now on that this House of Languages will be their house in Barcelona, just as the project of universal linguistic sustainability will be our project.

It is true, as I said at the closing session of the Barcelona Congress that this project might seem utopian to some, but it is indubitably one of the *realistic utopias* that the great theoretician of liberalism John Rawls²⁸ considered to be essential for the future of humanity. It is a utopia worth striving for. And the most unreal utopia is, of course, to aspire to a world without diversity. This would be a world that would not be worth anything, even for those who get to dominate it ||

■ ²⁷ During the Guadalajara International Book Fair, on 30 November 2004 to be precise, the Government of Catalonia adopted an agreement to initiate the project of the House of Languages.

²⁸ In his book *The Law of Peoples* (1999).