



Language Politics in Latvia: the Role of Formal and Informal Norms

"Interdisciplinarity and the future of multilingualism research" Berlin, 28-29 August 2018 Panel: Language, politics and society

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- Introduction
- Theoretical Framework
- Policies Regulating the Language Use in Public Space
- First results





- MIME: identity-building processes in three settings of complex linguistic diversity: Barcelona, Luxembourg City, Riga
- In the Latvian case: Sharp contrasts between official monolingualism and societal multilingualism
- Latvia as case of a post-Soviet context with only one official language (Latvian) but large Russian – speaking minority





- Analytical distinction between the level of system integration and the level of social integration (Lockwood 1964; Mouzelis 1974)
- System integration: How do institutions influence the behaviour of (collective) actors?
- Social integration: How do (collective) actors manipulate the institutions?







- Example for formal norm:
 - Language Law, art. 6 and 8: Employees, officials or members of companies or organisations have to speak Latvian and provide information in Latvian "if their activities affect the lawful interests of the public"
 - Compulsory language skills for employees in the public sector
 - Monitored and controlled by State Language Center

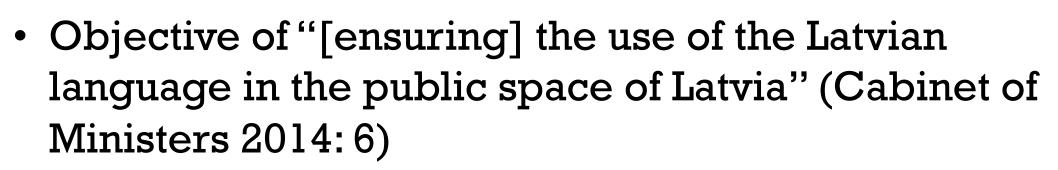




• Example for informal norm:

- Cleavage between pro-Russian and pro-Latvian parties
- Latvian parties exclude pro-Russian parties from government coalitions
- Language policies only represent position of ethnic-Latvian parties





 Language Policy Guidelines 2015-2020: new emphasis on controlling what languages are used in public



Analysis: The implementation of policies relating to the use of Latvian in public contexts (2)



Illustration: increase of budget of the State Language
Center

	2004	2015
State budget allocated to the State Language Center	68 298,27 €	785 541 €
Number of controls of the language use in institutions and companies	1 931	5 781

(data: yearly reports by State Language Centre, available online: http://vvc.gov.lv/index.php?route=product/category&path=65_73)





- Conflict on the level of system integration: Enforcement of Latvian by state vs. Russiandominated local political elite and (parts of) labour market: lack of incentives for the Russian-speaking population to use Latvian
- Conflict on the level of social integration: Municipal government introduced own language policies which are undermining state policies





Thank you for your attention!



The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 613344 (Project MIME).