

One Year On: The Gaelic Crisis in the Vernacular Community

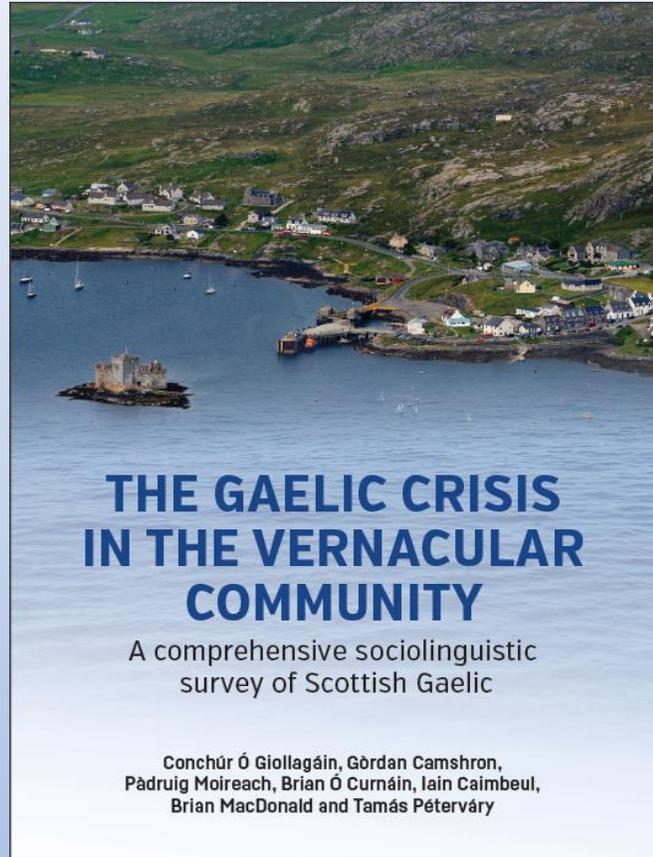
The Edge Seminar Series
HARC/SILK UHI: LSI Panel
Discussion

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SOILLSE



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd
agus nan Eilean



Government/State systems

- **Significant amount of consultation**
- **Natural anxiety: departing from current approaches**
- **Ongoing challenges:**
 - **Consultation without progress**
 - **Containment of public debate by emphasising existing agendas**
 - **Obvious need to move beyond non-optimal aspects of policy – *Misdiagnosis* of language promotion without protection**
 - **Idée fixe of bureaucratic language plans:**
 - **Official *stasis* arising from defensiveness of public bodies**
 - ***Impasse* between Gaelic official bodies and communities**



Bòrd na Gàidhlig

- **Disengaged from crisis: Level of response – undermining credibility, loss of confidence**
- **Financial response rather than strategic**
- **Ongoing challenges:**
 - **No direct consultation with authors of Gaelic Crisis study**
 - **Killing reform with kindness – dispersal of finances, obfuscation**
 - **Minimalisation of community challenges**
 - **Lacking clarity but seeking to control public debate – controlling without accepting responsibility**



Gaelic Public Bodies/Existing Clients

- **Silent or deferential to BnaG's stance**
- **Natural tendency to protect existing advantage**
- **Ongoing challenges:**
 - **Limited, contained nature of public debate**
 - **Deflecting attention from crisis to maintain focus on current priorities**
 - **Acquiescence to non-optimal policies**
 - **Lack of dynamic response to new challenges**
 - **Need for empathy for those who feel excluded from current approach**



Academia / Research Institutions

- High profile debate
- Plurality of perspectives
- Natural tendency to protect existing discourses
- Ongoing challenges:
 - Potential problem of academic institutions aligning too closely with existing structures
 - Closed, circular debate informed by status quo reasoning
 - Risk of public policy and aligned academics in group-think mode
 - Need to act positively to break impasse rather than seeking institutional advantage



Context for Consultation

- **Clarity:** Recognition of Crisis; Admission of need for change
- **Inclusion:** Include different voices and Plurality of perspectives
- **Status:** Parity of esteem for participants; No privileged positions
- **Open debate:** Free exchange of ideas; No detriment to critical voices

→ *Break the impasse and move on from stasis through enhancing Gaelic democracy*



Consultation with Progress

- **New Process:** Sincere consultation + strategic preparation for reform of existing structures
- **Dialogue:** to inform new initiatives:
 - *Civic Forum to consult on Gaelic strategy in the Islands*
 - *New Strategic Process: Working group to explore way ahead – community representatives, public servants and academics*
- **Aim:** Seek acceptable **accommodation** between different Gaelic constituencies:
 - Vernacular community in crisis in the Islands
 - Vestigial Gaelic vernacular networks of the Highlands and Islands
 - Gaelic (urban) networks
 - Gaelic learners