

## 1 • Introduction

Much of the debate surrounding the appropriateness of measures to protect or promote human diversity (usually embodied in attributes like language, religion, ethnicity or culture — with a significant degree of overlap between them) revolves around the question of the costs of such measures. These costs are, in fact, remarkably little-known, a fact which does not stop many commentators from making quite self-assured claims in this regard, generally to the effect that maintaining diversity is a costly indulgence.

Perceptions of the costs of diversity maintenance may have far-reaching implications, including some that are put before us at this year's Francqui Prize Conference: if these costs are high, they further lessen the political legitimacy of a diversity which is already suspected of reducing people's willingness to finance economic solidarity.

It is therefore useful to reflect on the question of costs, both in conceptual and in empirical terms. As will be shown in this paper, available evidence indicates that the costs of diversity maintenance are lower than is commonly believed. This does not amount to an argument that the protection or promotion of cultural diversity is an appropriate goal for public policy; however, it significantly reinforces the credibility of such an argument, while pointing to some of the weaknesses of the opposite claim.

This paper is divided in three parts.

In the first part, I try to disentangle different aspects of the problem at hand: what kind of “economic solidarity” are we talking about, and how does it actually relate to diversity? I try to show that the issue is not one of diversity directly jeopardizing economic

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## On the costs of cultural diversity

François Grin<sup>1</sup>

*Université de Genève*

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Economics at the Institute of Translation and Interpretation (ETI) of the University of Geneva, and Deputy Director of the Geneva Education Research Unit (SRED). Contact: francois.grin@eti.unige.ch or francois.grin@etat.ge.ch. The author thanks Humphrey Tonkin for providing very topical information. The usual disclaimer applies.

solidarity, but one of possibly superimposed cleavages, and that this problem is itself different from the matter of the costs of diversity.

In the second part, I turn to the empirical identification and measurement of the costs of diversity maintenance. On the basis of several different studies where the costs of policy measures have been estimated, if only roughly, I show that these costs are generally low.

In the third part of the paper, I move from allocative to distributive issues, assessing the claim that the inequalities entailed by refusing to maintain cultural diversity can be significant. The paper's provisional conclusion, pending closer examination with more extensive data, is that that the transfers required to sustain ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity are, as a general rule, justified.

Being primarily intended as a basis for discussion, this paper is deliberately kept short. I therefore do not propose a review of the relevant literature, which is mainly to be found in language economics. Readers interested in the field, however, will find overviews in Vaillancourt (1985) or Grin (1999b, 2003). References covering more specific aspects of my argument are provided along the way.

## 2 • Parsing the problem: solidarity between whom?

The three questions put to us for the 2003 Francqui Prize Conference start out by formulating the presumption that ethnic, linguistic or cultural heterogeneity may lessen the prospects for economic solidarity. This assumption is general enough to raise a whole range of very topical issues, and to point in the direction of different interpretations of the ways in which differences between groups may jeopardize economic solidarity. In fact, much hinges on the definition of the groups between which such solidarity may manifest itself.

In a first interpretation, such groups are defined by socio-economic status. The latter can, in turn, be measured through standard indicators such as household income, the level of education achieved, etc. Accordingly, "economic solidarity" would refer to transfers towards people in lower income brackets, the unemployed, etc.

However, there is no logical reason why economic solidarity within society, as a general policy orientation, would be *intrinsically* antagonistic with an ethnically diverse makeup of society.<sup>2</sup> Consider a country with two groups, called A and B. It may be, of course, that

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<sup>2</sup> In what follows, I shall sometimes use the adjective "ethnic" as a shorthand to denote group features such as language, religion, various elements of cultural heritage, etc.; the underlying definition of ethnicity is that proposed by Fishman (1977). Because ethnicity is so multi-faceted, it is risky to make pronouncements about its effects in general. In fact, many of the social and political issues associated with the "diverse" character of society emerge through one specific form of diversity — most frequently language. Most of the examples used in this paper therefore concern linguistic diversity. When I move from the general plane of ethnicity to the more specific plane of language, this is explicitly mentioned in the text.

the rich in community A are less willing to support, through tax-financed subsidies, various benefits for the poor from community B (and vice-versa) than they would be to support such benefits for the poor in their own community. But in this case, the issue is not one of economic solidarity *as such*, that is, of welfare transfers from the rich to the poor, because the rich from community A are not *a priori* opposed to supporting the poor from their own community (if they were, we would have a very traditional “bourgeoisie v. working class” conflict of interest). The issue is related to ethnic division more than to some unwillingness by the rich to manifest economic solidarity towards the poor. But then again, ethnic diversity *as such* is not the issue either, because in the hypothetical case considered here, what the rich from community A resent about the poor from community B is not their ethnicity, but the fact that financial transfers are going from A to B. It is only to the extent that both cleavages coincide (that is, that the rich come mainly from community A, and the poor mainly from community B), that one can appropriately describe the problem as one where heterogeneity jeopardizes economic solidarity.

It may well be that the above interpretation does match the concerns that have guided the choice of a theme for this year’s Francqui Prize Conference, because it does resonate with Belgian reality. The internal pattern in Belgium over recent decades is one in which large tracts of public opinion in the more prosperous Flanders have expressed reluctance to finance transfers flowing mainly in the direction of Wallonia, whose economy has never quite recovered from the decline of the mining industry (Deprez, 2001). This creates a situation where an ethnic and a macroeconomic divide coincide. In this situation, however, it would be logically incorrect to blame ethnic diversity for jeopardizing solidarity; rather, it is the *superimposition* of the ethnic and macroeconomic divide that would be to blame. My reason for insisting on this distinction is that diversity as such appears to be all too often blamed for generating all sorts of societal difficulties, when in fact diversity on its own is not the problem. Difficulties arise out of a combination of features of which linguistic diversity is only one.

We could of course examine this question at closer range, and I would then suggest bringing into the discussion the case of Switzerland, where it is precisely the non-coincidence of cleavages (often referred to as “cross-cutting cleavages”) that seems to explain, in large part, the success of the Swiss model (Schoch, n.d), along with the fact that Switzerland may be the only continental European country that has not, at some point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, been confronted with “state failure” (Liebich, 2002). It is also important to dispel the erroneous notion that Switzerland harbours different “nationalities”;

in fact, the language groups represented in Switzerland do not perceive themselves as *nations*, nor is there such a thing, in Switzerland, as a “titular nation” defining a standard from which minorities differ (Grin, 2002). A potential threat to the Swiss model resides precisely in the risk that a certain degree of coincidence between some linguistic and economic divides may be emerging (Grin, 1999a).

However, this is not the question I wish to address here. Rather, I would like to turn to another possible interpretation of the conference theme. Indeed, the “theme formulation” for this year’s Francqui Prize Conference mentions, as a component of the problem at hand, the “efficiency costs of linguistic diversity”. This points in the direction of quite another interpretation of the type of economic solidarity at issue here, and of the definition of groups between which this diversity should operate. In this case, the analysis requires defining group membership primarily on the basis of ethnic affiliation (possibly reflected through an indicator like a person’s mother tongue), and economic solidarity is expressed not through classical welfare system transfers, but through the willingness of the members of a group (say, group A) to support the policy measures that are necessary for the maintenance of the language and culture of group B. We are therefore no longer talking about economic solidarity in the standard sense. The distributive issues that arise from this non-standard approach, however, are no less relevant (Van Parijs, 2001), and I shall return to them in the closing section of this paper.

Let us therefore address the question of costs — more precisely, the policy costs of protecting and maintaining linguistic diversity. For shorthand, I shall often refer here to the “costs of language policy”.

### 3 • Identifying and assessing costs

In any discussion about the costs of language policy, it is apposite to quote Jonathan Pool, who once wrote that language is an area in which people “seem to hold extraordinarily stubborn beliefs” (Pool, 1991b: 7). One such belief is that language policies are expensive, even ruinously so. It is striking, however, that such pronouncements are often made without any empirical backing. To some extent, this may be explained by the lack of data; there are, in fact, remarkably few studies about language policy costs. When such studies exist, however, they show that the costs are much lower than is commonly assumed. Before moving on to some examples, let us clarify two conceptual points. First, cost must not be confused with expenditure. Expenditure is a direct monetary outlay associated with

the *input* in a policy; cost attaches to the *output*, and it has to be evaluated by tallying up various items of expenditure, though generally not the entirety of any given item, since each of them typically serves to produce more than one output. This goes to show that short of a certain effort in data gathering and processing, it is very difficult to venture any judgement about the level of language policy costs. Second, it is important to identify the “counterfactual” properly. By “counterfactual”, I do not mean the adjective denoting something that is “contrary to fact”; in line with many authors in public policy, I use it as a noun to denote “that with which what one evaluates is being compared”. More simply, the counterfactual of a particular policy is “what would have happened if the policy had not been adopted and implemented”. These simple facts, which are standard items in policy analysis textbooks, have major implications. Consider the case of moving from a unilingual to a bilingual education system, as the Basque Autonomous Community did after the fall of fascism in Spain. It is now possible for children to enrol in three types of models: A (Spanish-medium, with Basque as a school subject), B (bilingual, with some courses taught through the medium of Basque, others through the medium of Spanish; the share of each language can vary between schools) and D (Basque-medium, with Spanish as a school subject).<sup>3</sup> It would be incorrect to compute the cost of Basque-medium education as the total expenditure on the D stream, plus part of the expenditure (say, half) on the B stream, plus a fraction (say, one tenth, if Basque as a subject makes up one tenth of the curriculum) of the expenditure on the A stream. This would be a gross overestimation, because children would have to be schooled anyway, irrespective of the languages used in the education system. Therefore, only those items of expenditure that arise over and above what would have to be spent anyway must be factored into the estimation of cost. Calculations reveal that the cost increase entailed by the bilingualisation of the Basque education system is in the region of 4.75%; interestingly, calculations carried out independently regarding the development of Maya medium education in Guatemala indicate that the added cost, to the education system, also lies around 4% to 5% (see references in Table 1). It is very difficult to offer a general perspective on language policy costs, because of the heterogeneity of situations and policies applied to those situations. Nevertheless, it may be useful to list existing results in a table for quick reference (Table 1).

Our brief overview of the costs entailed by maintaining diversity through measures protecting or promoting smaller languages suggests that the costs involved are not massive. This basic result reinforces the likelihood that if such costs must indeed be borne in order to ensure the diversity of our linguistic and cultural environ-

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<sup>3</sup> The former “X model” (Spanish-medium, without exposure to Basque even as a school subject) has been progressively phased out.

TABLE 1

**An overview of findings about language policy costs**

Figures converted in euros and cents where applicable

Language policy case	Description of measure	Key finding	Source
French Language Charter (« Bill 101 »), Québec, 1977	Set of measures to promote the use of French as the main language of the province of Québec	Total cost of Charter is between 0.28 % and 0.48 % of provincial GDP	Vaillancourt (1987)
French Language Charter (« Bill 101 »), Québec, 1977	« Francisation » of firms (firms with a staff of 50 or more must offer internal communication in French also)	Cost per employee and per firm ranges from CAD 85 to 115 (€ 57 to 77), in 1984 dollars, for the relatively costlier years of implementation ; costs expected to taper off after implementation phase	Various studies summarised by Vaillancourt (1996)
Canadian bilingualism	Total expenditure on bilingual programmes by the Canadian federal government	The provision of federal services in both official languages represents 0.03 % of the cost of all federal services. The total cost of all official languages expenditures amounts to 0.44 % of federal spending.	Heritage Canada (1991)
Bilingual road signs in Wales	Road signs in Wales give place names in Welsh and English	Bilingualism of directional and safety signs costs about 22 pence (33 cents) per resident and per year.	Grin and Vaillancourt (1999)
Sianel Pedwar Cymru (S4C)	Welsh-medium television programmes	Person-hour cost of Welsh television (Welsh programmes, Welsh-speaking audiences) stands at about 50 cents.	ibid.
Basque-medium education	Operation of A, B and D channels in the Basque education system	Extra cost is in the region of 4 % of yearly cost per student	
Protection of Maya in Guatemala	Setting up of Maya-medium education	Extra cost is in the region of 4 % to 5 % cost per student and per year	Patrinos and Velez (1996)
Euroschool	Joint summer camps for children of various minority language communities	Total cost is € 600 per participating child	Grin, Moring <i>et al.</i> (2002)

Language policy case	Description of measure	Key finding	Source
Naïonrai	Irish-medium pre-schools	Average cost (incl. parents' contribution) is € 400 per child and per year	Ibid.
Yteisradio	Swedish-language broadcasting in Finland	Average cost is 10 to 15 cents per person and per hour	Ibid.
Raidió na Gaeltachta	Irish-language radio	Average cost is 20 cents per person and per hour	Ibid.
Mentrau Iaith	Associative network supporting the use of Welsh in local community project	Average expenditure (Welsh Language Board subsidy for year 2000/01) is €2 per resident in those predominantly Welsh-speaking areas in which <i>mentrau iaith</i> have been set up	Ibid.
Euskal Telebista	Making accessible Basque television from Spain to Basque speakers in France	Cost of setting up and maintaining masts and transmitters amounts to 2.5 cents per viewer and per day.	Ibid.
EU internal communication	Maintaining 11 official languages in the EU	Average cost of translation and interpretation is €1.82 per resident and per year; translation and interpretation represent 0.8% of the EU budget.	Grin (2001) and further estimates by the author for this paper
	Applying the same rule to a 25-member EU with 20 official languages*	Average cost of translation and interpretation would rise to about € 5.24 per resident and per year**	

\*: with the titular language of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia becoming an EU working language; no additional EU working language for Cyprus.

\*\*-Additional translation directions:  $[20 \times 19 - (1 \times 10)] = 270$ ; average cost of translation direction: € 6.24; total extra cost: € 1,684.8m; total EU translation costs: € (685.9 + 1,684.8) = € 2,370.7; total resident population after enlargement: 377 + 75 = 452 million; resulting per-capita cost: € 5.24. The European commission indicates markedly lower figures (see <http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/obj/dat/2002/ce309/ce30920021212en00010001.pdf>)

ment, this may be money well spent, just like devoting resources to environmental quality is widely recognised as a sensible choice. At this time, however, we still do not have a general treatment of the costs of diversity maintenance: this is very much a work in progress, in which a theoretical perspective rooted in policy evaluation and empirical work on various specific cases is progressively coalescing into a structured perspective (Grin, 2003b).

This raises two sets of questions. The first one is located on the allocative plane, that is, it has to do with the allocation of scarce resources, and harks back to issues of efficiency. One way of characterizing the problem is to define it as one of deciding, balancing costs and benefits, how much diversity is best for society. The epistemological and ideological implications of this approach (including the array of caveats that necessarily accompany it) have been discussed elsewhere and will not be taken up again here. Suffice it to say that the policy questions are very similar to those that arise in the context of environmental policy evaluation. In particular, significant effort must be devoted to the identification and measurement of non-market effects (both costs and benefits), with the attendant conceptual and technical difficulties.

The sober calculation of benefits and costs (to the extent that data allow for such a calculation to be operationalized) cannot be expected to serve as the sole basis for policy decisions. First, from a technical standpoint, its usefulness remains limited when diametrically opposed policies are contemplated; however, it is high for the assessment of (and choice between) policy options with similar objectives. In fact, it can be said to be a necessary ingredient for well-informed democratic debate. In any case, a recent review of the interaction between language politics and language policy in transition countries (Kymlicka and Grin, 2003) indicates that other considerations (which may be given the helpfully vague label of “political”) play a much more important role in the selection of actual policies: in short, policy measures that are conducive to the maintenance of ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity will be adopted and implemented when the political powers that be decide that these measures are justified in *political* rather than *policy* terms. Justification, in turn, rests on notions of legitimacy and “rights”, themselves rooted in an ideologically shaped reading of history. Such measures will be rejected when their potential first-line beneficiaries (that is, usually, minorities) are deemed to have insufficient claims to the recognition of their language and culture.

In the last part of this paper, therefore, I turn to the second set of questions, away from matters of resource *allocation* and to resource *distribution* — that is, to questions that are explicitly related to the nor-

mative questions of legitimacy and rights. More specifically, I ask whether the refusal to cover the costs of diversity have serious distributional consequences and can give rise to situations that are contrary to equity. The implication, of course, is that if they do, then it is appropriate to implement (and finance) diversity-maintenance policies.

## 4 • Diversity and justice<sup>4</sup>

One avenue for exploring the connections between diversity and justice is to address them in terms of rights. However, much of the literature structured around rights-based approaches (whether formally legal, or hailing from the “linguistic human rights” movement), takes the legitimacy of certain rights as a foregone conclusion, thus placing several crucial issues outside of the discussion.

Addressing such issues is an enterprise pursued in normative political theory, which has given rise to a rich body of scholarship about cultural diversity (see e.g. Wieviorka & Ohana, 2001). However, for the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to establish the legitimacy of many rights linked to the maintenance of cultural diversity by using an argument developed, among others, by Stephen May (2001): majorities have no greater *a priori* legitimacy than minorities in matters of language and culture. Being born Welsh-speaking in Cardiff or Maaori-speaking in Auckland, Corsican-speaking in Corte or Kurdish-speaking in Diyarbakır (instead of English, French or Turkish-speaking respectively) is not some kind of shortcoming for which one should have to atone through a lifetime of denial of one’s identity and heritage. It follows that the very notion of “special rights”, with which many commentators describe minority rights, is logically awkward, and probably even flawed. There is nothing “special” about a provision that aims to place all citizens on an equal footing.

Let us note, at this juncture, that it is not enough to define justice in terms of equal or equitable access to a certain opportunity set (or, more directly, of access to the same opportunity set) by members of different groups. This point is best explained with reference to language and to the position of bilinguals in society. It is often true that *ceteris paribus* (especially in the absence of discrimination on the basis of one’s first language), bilinguals have more opportunities than unilinguals. This may be the case even when bilinguals are native speakers of a minority language (say, *X*) who have had to acquire the majority language (*Y*). Some may be tempted to interpret such a situation as a downright advantage accruing to bilinguals, which would therefore exempt the state from any particular obligation towards the minority language — that is, it would exempt the

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<sup>4</sup> An assumption I am making at this point is that the notion of justice is shared by the various groups in society (that is, Rawls’s “overlapping consensus” does exist). This consensus extends to the dimensions in terms of which justice is assessed — rights and liberties, opportunities and powers, income and wealth, and a social basis for self-respect (Rawls, 1971). Nevertheless, I agree that such agreement is not a foregone conclusion and that its existence is an issue deserving closer scrutiny (Van Parijs, 1991).

state from taking steps to protect or promote the minority language as an element of cultural diversity.

However, this “advantage” is usually dearly bought though various forms of financial and symbolic cost; the dominance of a language can in fact impose considerable costs on speakers of other languages, which, on balance, may more than offset the wider range of opportunities available to them. Whether we are talking, on balance, of a welfare deficit or of an opportunity deficit makes little difference from an economic (welfare theory) standpoint, although the situations are different in practice.

The issue must not necessarily be seen in terms of majorities and minorities. First, such issues may arise (as in Belgium) in contexts where the groups concerned are not of markedly different size. Second, what is usually labelled as a “minority problem” may be just as much a “majority problem”: the fact that a situation is “problematic” is logically as much the result of the imposition of majority norms as that of the protection of minorities; let us observe in passing that this confronts us once more, from a different angle, to the notion that it is logically dubious to blame “diversity” as nothing but an encumbrance inflicted on majorities by pesky minorities. Third, such inequalities can arise from other situations of linguistic and cultural dominance, for example when a particular language is elevated to the status of regional or global *lingua franca*.

Let us therefore take a closer look at the inequalities that may result from the imposition of a dominant or majority language on others. The list of sources of inequality, as well as the order of magnitude of such inequalities, depends on the type and context of language dominance considered. Keeping to a high level of generality, five main types of effects can be distinguished (mentioned here without any particular ranking in mind):

- the “privileged market effect”: native speakers of the dominant language enjoy a quasi-monopoly over the markets for translation and interpretation *into* the dominant language, the market for second language instruction above a certain level, and the market for language editing—all of which are tasks in which native-level skills are typically required;
- the “communication savings effect”: native speakers of the dominant language are spared the effort to translate messages directed to them by speakers of other languages, since the latter will have made the effort to utter them in the dominant language in the first place; reciprocally, native speakers of the dominant language do not need to translate their messages into other languages;

- the “language learning savings effect”: native speakers of the dominant language do not need to invest time and effort into learning other languages; this amounts to a considerable savings. Despite massive spending in countries that *do* teach foreign languages, foreign language education represents a total, over one’s per-university school-years, of about 1,500 to 2,000 hours of instruction and exposure (including homework); the results achieved are accordingly modest, since an estimated minimum of 12,000 hours of instruction and exposure would be needed, on average, to reach native-like (though still not perfect) fluency in a foreign language such as English (Piron, 1994);
- the “alternative human capital investment effect”: the money *not* invested in foreign language acquisition can be diverted to other forms of human capital investment and give native speakers of the dominant language an edge in other areas;
- the “legitimacy and rhetorical effect”: native speakers of the dominant language will generally have an edge in negotiations or arguments with non-native speakers, because these always take place in their language.

At this time, these various effects have not been evaluated in terms of cost. Only rough estimates and extrapolations are available; however, they suggest that the effects concerned are significant. For the purposes of this paper, I shall confine myself to just one example concerning the “language learning savings effect”, and instead of considering this effect in the context of a bi- or multilingual country in which the language of a “titular nation” enjoys a dominant position (possibly by virtue of being the only official language in the country), I shall consider the case of English as a *lingua franca*. A similar reasoning would apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to any kind of linguistic dominance.

Extrapolating from estimates made in the Swiss case (where the education system offers at least two foreign languages, for a period generally ranging, depending on the educational stream considered, from five to nine years), one can safely assume the average cost of the investment into teaching just *one* foreign language (as opposed to none or more than one) to represent between 5% and 10% of total education spending per capita (Grin and Sfreddo, 1997); let us adopt 7.5% as a sensible mid-range value, further assuming that the average number of years of foreign language study, across education streams, is equal to 7. Using on-line data from the OECD and from the US Department of Education, we can venture a very rough estimation of the savings made by the USA by confining themselves to a comparatively limited foreign language teaching effort at primary

(elementary) and secondary (intermediate and high) school levels.<sup>5</sup> Pending more detailed examination of the matter, these savings turn out to be considerable; they can be estimated at approximately USD 422 per student and per year ( $7,500 \text{ \$/year} \times 0.075 \times 0.75$ , rounded up to the nearest dollar, where the latter correction takes account of the fact that some foreign language teaching, largely optional and typically for a lower number of years, does take place nonetheless<sup>6</sup>). Given an enrolment of approximately 38m pupils in elementary and secondary schools, the savings to the US education system is a hefty \$ 16bn a year. These savings are made possible by the very fact that people in the rest of the world are willing to devote time, money and effort to learning another language — in this case, English.

This example should be enough to suggest that we cannot simply dismiss, without closer examination, the notion that the dominance of a particular language does imply considerable transfers in the direction of its native speakers. By implication, the *refusal* to endorse and maintain linguistic diversity is likely to give rise to significant inequalities which it is difficult to justify from a liberal standpoint.

The observation made earlier to the effect that we still do not have a general allocative theory of diversity management also applies to the distributive side of the matter. We can only surmise that the actual transfers become even larger when the four other effects listed above are taken into account. At the same time, the practical cases of dominance are extremely heterogeneous, which means that the precise nature of the effects in question, as well as the relative importance and order of magnitude of the transfers to which they give rise, can be accordingly different. Nevertheless, the information at hand suggests that the inequalities entailed by begrudging support for linguistic and cultural diversity involve significant and inequitable transfers. In the absence of a system of compensations, these transfers are contrary to equity. Furthermore, the notion (hinted at in the “rough formulation of the theme” for this year’s Francqui Prize Conference) that excessive support for diversity might jeopardize economic solidarity (and should perhaps be toned down for this very reason) may, in fact, worsen social inequalities, even if the groups between which inequalities can be observed are not necessarily the same.

## 5 • Conclusion

The foregoing discussion does not mean that diversity maintenance is not costly. It is in fact likely that more diversity entails both benefits and costs, both of which are of the market and non-market

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<sup>5</sup> By 2002, 41 States had no explicit mention of foreign language requirements for graduation from high school, whether in general or for a so-called standard diploma (see <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/39/22/3922.htm>).

<sup>6</sup> Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 1998 indicate that the weighted average number of years of foreign language study in the USA is 1.63, representing about 24% of our benchmark of 7 years. About 20% of high school graduates had had no foreign language at all, a little over 50% had taken “low academic coursework”, while the remaining 30% had completed “advanced” foreign language coursework, meaning 3 or 4 years of study; see <http://nces.ed.gov/>.

kind. The issue becomes an empirical one of the increasing or decreasing rate at which the benefits and costs of diversity increase; pending further examination, it is reasonable to assume that, as in the case of many other commodities, the benefits of diversity increase at a decreasing rate, while its costs increase at an increasing rate, which suggests that there is such a thing as optimal social diversity, and that this optimum is a finite positive value (Grin, 2002b, 2003b). On this view, ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity would be treated very much like environmental quality.

However, even if diversity maintenance were to be deemed a costly indulgence, and if a reluctance to maintain diversity were, for that particular reason, to emerge from a truly democratic and well-informed debate, the distributive problem would remain because diversity is a given, and being different (particularly if difference results from a non-elective trait) is not only legitimate: it is also something that, very often, cannot be privatized, and therefore needs to be accommodated in the public sphere. If so, we should turn our attention to another question, namely, that of the compensatory transfers that would, in true liberal fashion, be required to offset the inequities resulting from insufficient or inefficient support for the maintenance of diversity. This problem has been addressed long ago by Carr (1985), and more recently by Pool (1991) or Van Parijs (2001); yet it remains one that deserves attention if we are to deal seriously with the ethical implications of diversity management.

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