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**Language rights:
A welfare-economics approach**

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Language rights: A welfare-economics approach*

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Abstract

Distributions of language rights in multilingual settings are analyzed from a normative viewpoint in this chapter. If the cost structure of providing rights is concave in the number of beneficiaries, then a critical-mass criterion for the determination of an optimal rights structure results. It is further shown that an efficiency analysis based on a ‘naive’ cost-benefit calculation has to be augmented in various ways if rights influence the status of a language, which in turn influences the preferences for language rights. Also the inter-generational transfer of language repertoires to the next generation leads to an endogeneity of preferences. The endogeneity of preferences in turn can make the cost-benefit analysis contradictory. In a welfare-maximizing approach, redistribution goals further modify the analysis.

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