

<b>Institution:</b> University of Oxford		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26B Linguistics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Linguistic archiving and collective memory: building the Bocchigliero project		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012-2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Chiara Cappellaro	Post-doctoral Research Assistant in Romance Linguistics and Research Fellow in Linguistics	2011-Present
Prof. Martin Maiden	Professor of the Romance Languages	1996-Present
Prof. John Charles Smith	Faculty Lecturer in French Linguistics	1997-2017
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2016 - 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>During a Leverhulme-funded research project, the team spotted a remarkable grammatical phenomenon in the language of a small village in southern Italy. This observation stimulated deeper examination of the underlying (socio-)linguistic system. The team's interest, and the relationship established with local authorities, led to the community becoming much more curious and enthusiastic about its own cultural heritage. Local authorities embraced with enthusiasm Cappellaro's proposal to collaborate with them on a heritage project on the language and culture of the village. Cappellaro's involvement further stimulated local administrators to apply, with Cappellaro's assistance, for public funding for EUR950,000 in connexion with the project.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>For over twenty years, research in Romance linguistics at the University of Oxford has focused particularly on the structural evolution of the morphological system of the Romance languages; it has also paid particular attention to 'minor' and endangered varieties of these languages. The particular spark for the Bocchigliero project occurred in the course of Leverhulme-funded research on the morphology of plural formation in Romance languages (grant details in Section 3), when Cappellaro detected a highly unusual grammatical phenomenon in the language of Bocchigliero (a remote village of some 1,200 people in Calabria, Italy). This involved a class of nouns which had feminine gender in their singular, yet changed to masculine gender in their plural. In discussion with Maiden and Smith, as PI and co-investigator respectively of the Leverhulme project, the analysis was found to be sound, and the theoretical significance of this finding for wider theory of morphological number- and gender-marking was identified. The phenomenon constitutes a novel manifestation of a historical tendency found elsewhere in Romance languages: the biunique association of the grammatical endings of nouns with one value for gender (+number). The resultant linking of the plural ending -i with masculine gender regardless of the gender of the corresponding singular creates cases such as feminine singular <i>cruce</i> vs masculine plural <i>cruci</i> 'cross'. The biunique association between</p>		

plural desinence -i and masculine gender was discovered to be exceptionless and affected even words referring to females, so that even a feminine noun such as *mugliera* 'wife' had a masculine plural *muglieri* 'wives'.

Under Maiden's direction, Cappellaro then undertook fieldwork in Bocchigliero to deepen the research team's understanding of this phenomenon. The enquiry was conducted primarily through interviews with video-recording, which involved intense social engagement by Cappellaro with local community members. This research collaboration inspired a wider interest on Cappellaro's part in the description of the linguistic system more broadly, and raised awareness among the community of the value of their linguistic heritage. This, in turn, enthused both researcher and the community to work together on the local heritage project *Mnemoteca Silana* (a 'repository of memories' from the Sila region - a museum of language and culture created on the basis of a Sociolinguistic Archive to be established in parallel). In particular, Cappellaro's expertise, coupled with her Italian research network and knowledge of other regional heritage projects (e.g., the similar heritage project *Mnemoteche Campane* run by the University of Naples Federico II and the Museum of the Calabro-Greek Language in the town of Bova) resulted in an Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH) Knowledge Exchange partnership between 2016 and 2018 with the aim of designing a permanent exhibition and a sociolinguistic archive devoted to the Bocchigliere language and culture.

The research outputs to date are three published articles [R1-3]. There have also been three conference papers on the research findings, one of them jointly presented by Cappellaro, Maiden, and Smith. A full descriptive grammar of the Bocchigliere dialect is in progress.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- R1.** [Journal Article] Cappellaro, C. 2015. 'Plurality and gender in a central Calabrian dialect. The emergence of an innovative type of *Romance genus alternans* in Bocchigliere'. *Archivio glottologico italiano* 100(2): 208-231. Available at: <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:3ac1c826-332a-4892-bc3d-4aeeb8ff85f0>
- R2.** [Working Paper] Cappellaro, C. 2018. 'Why is Ladin 'lazy agreement' a feminine gender issue?'. In Acquaviva, P. (ed.) *UCD Working papers in Italian Studies*, vol. 1. University College Dublin. 4-20. Available at: [https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Foundation for Italian Studies %20Working Papers2.pdf](https://www.ucd.ie/t4cms/Foundation%20for%20Italian%20Studies%20Working%20Papers2.pdf)
- R3.** [Journal Article, listed in REF2] Maiden, M. 2016. 'The Romanian alternating gender in diachrony and synchrony'. *Folia Linguistica Historica* 37(1): 111-144. DOI: [0.1515/flih-2016-0004](https://doi.org/10.1515/flih-2016-0004)

### Research Grant

2011-2012: Maiden, M. (PI) Leverhulme Trust Research Grant *The Romance Noun: a comparative-historical study of plural formation* Award of GBP50,246 (Grant number RPG-229)

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

#### Stimulated the community's awareness of their unique cultural and linguistic heritage and their desire to celebrate it.

The interest generated by the research project in the language and culture of this small, isolated, community, and Cappellaro's engagement with that community, have contributed to an increased appreciation and celebration of local traditions and the desire to pass them on to future generations. A collaboration on a local museum of language and culture was welcomed by the Bocchigliero administration. The Mayor says: "The realisation of this project marks the attainment of a prestigious goal: it promotes the true value of the culture of a people and a region which is otherwise at risk of completely forgetting centuries-old, multi-generational, traditions, who through the synergy of peasant culture with the culture of aristocrats and landowners have produced writings and books of immense historical value" [E4].

To present the *Mnemoteca* project and its potential for sustained economic development and tourism, the administration organised a well-attended public event (approx. 60 people, or 5% of the population) in July 2017. The deputy-mayor called the project a "highway to planning

our future” [E11], and Cappellaro was invited to speak about the Bocchigliere language and the ideas behind a museum of Bocchigliere language and culture [R1]. The *Quotidiano del Sud* newspaper (average daily circulation of over 7,000 copies in 2016 [E10]) published an article on the event: “The true traditions of a people are to be found nestling within their language. Behind words, there are habits, customs, and ancient traditions that geographical isolation has also reinforced over time” [E5]. The project is: “a challenge that – even in this part of the world – it is possible to meet in order to save the Calabrian interior from depopulation”. The Chair at the event called the project: “A real shot in the arm: a community long used to dreary isolation has been shaken awake from sleepy resignation. It has regained the joyful hope that its little village may not be doomed to suffer the curse of oblivion” [E12].

### **Facilitated better access to financial opportunities stimulating ambition and vision in the region**

Research work on the dialect [R1] and the resulting involvement with the local community was a major stimulus for the Mayor of Bocchigliero to broaden the scope of the initial idea and to apply in September 2017 for public funding (over EUR950,000) to create the museum (from refurbishment of premises to purchase of media hardware, [E3]) but also to restore an astronomical observatory and link it to the museum. The Mayor says: “The astronomical observatory is a tool for the cultural enrichment of the local population and an institution for the dissemination of astronomy and related sciences that lets us enhance the cultural scene of the town, and not just of the town.” At present, there is no such structure in the area, and it would make Bocchigliero a focal point for dissemination of knowledge. The Mayor states, “[t]he renovation and completion of several infrastructures (such as the Museum) would have an impact at the social level. [...] The presence of an astronomical and meteorological observatory could contribute, in synergy, to the development of the area. [...] The observatory could be connected online to the Museum and to the other structures [e.g. the library] and [...] could boost the value of the library itself” [E2].

The mayor further comments on the role of the research in stimulating his administration to rethink and extend the scope of the initial project by applying for public funds: “The *Mnemosyne* project proposed by Dr Cappellaro has had a fundamental role in our decision to apply for the grant: it has given us the benefit of being able to work with a very high level professional specialist in the field [...] Speaking purely personally, I might add that this project, while still held up in the long-winded bureaucratic processes typical of this country, is a feather in the cap of my administrative term” [E4].

The research and expertise were crucial in the writing-up of funding applications: the description of the *Mnemosyne* [E3] was drafted by Cappellaro at the request of the Mayor, and the involvement of the University of Oxford in the scientific research and data collection is clearly stated in the application [E3]. Unfortunately, the process of obtaining the grant and therefore of carrying forward the project has been severely hampered by the Covid-19 crisis and its effect on Italian local and national administration.

### **Created fruitful opportunities for collaboration**

As a professional linguist active within a well-connected network, Cappellaro initiated contact between Bocchigliero’s Mayor and the director of the Bova Museum of the Calabro-Greek Language [E6], dedicated to the linguist Gerhard Rohlfs, which opened in 2016 (Bova is another Calabrian village which has recently experienced cultural and economic renaissance [E7]). This contact resulted in discussions of a partnership between the villages based on the common link with Rohlfs’ research. The Mayor underlines how “thanks to the intermediacy of Dr. Cappellaro, the Municipality of Bocchigliero reached out to the Municipality of Bova in the province of Reggio Calabria, and agreed with Prof. Pasquale Faenza and with the Mayor of Bova the possibility of a fruitful collaboration that will lead to twinning between the two towns” [E1].

Bocchigliero was soon included within larger local heritage projects. One of the Mayor’s collaborators writes that “Bocchigliero has been made part of the La via del pane (‘the bread trail’) [...] Consequently we have been invited, as the commune of Bova, to participate in the festa del pane (‘festival of bread’) which will be held in Altomonte on Saturday 20th of May” [E8]. He adds in a blog that this festival can “act as a showcase to promote the region and the identity

of its local communities, while also offering paths to sustainable tourism by enhancing awareness of the outstanding aspects of local cultural traditions (...)" [E9].

Moreover, Bova's successful example and the emerging awareness of the economic and social benefits that derive from investing in the local cultural heritage reinforced the administration's willingness to embrace the ambitious museum-plus-astronomical observatory project. A newspaper article [E7] describes Bova as having "undergone a genuine cultural and tourist renaissance". [...] "In 2000 there were no bars or restaurants here. A lady would prepare homemade sandwiches for anyone who turned up in the village. [...] Today Bova is one of the prettiest places in Italy, with nice restaurants, B&B and eateries. It used to be a village deeply affected by depopulation, but we have turned this tendency round." The Mayor of Bocchigliero writes: "The fact that I have come to learn and directly experience for myself what has already been achieved in Bova has confirmed the intellectual soundness of the intuition behind this project" [E4].

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- E1.** Report from the Mayor of Bocchigliero's office confirming the local authority's willingness to participate, stating the benefits to the community and Cappellaro's role in the project, and setting out detailed plans for the projected museum (in Italian) [28/08/2018].
- E2.** Formal bid by local authority requesting EUR433,936 for restoration of an existing astronomical observatory as a teaching and meeting space which can be connected to and used by the museum (in Italian) [31/08/2017], together with associated correspondence (in Italian) [07/09/2017].
- E3.** Formal bid by local authority requesting EUR518,924 for funds to adapt and appropriately equip premises for the planned museum (in Italian) [31/08/2017], together with correspondence confirming that the bid has been sent to the appropriate authority (in Italian) [07/09/2017].
- E4.** Written testimonial from the Mayor of Bocchigliero for Cappellaro received on 14/07/2020 (in Italian; English translation also provided).
- E5.** Article in the newspaper *Il Quotidiano del Sud* published on 22/07/2017 (in Italian).
- E6.** Website of the Gerhard Rohlfs museum of the Calabro-Greek language in Bova (in Italian). <http://calabriagreca.it/blog/risorse/museo-della-lingua-greco-calabra-gerhard-rohlfs/>
- E7.** Article in the national newspaper *La Repubblica* published on 08/04/2016 (in Italian). [https://www.repubblica.it/viaggi/2016/04/08/news/calabria\\_greca\\_da\\_scoprire-137182038/](https://www.repubblica.it/viaggi/2016/04/08/news/calabria_greca_da_scoprire-137182038/)
- E8.** E-mail from a collaborator of the mayor to Cappellaro received on 06/05/2017 (in Italian).
- E9.** Blog by a collaborator of the mayor posted on 08/05/2017 (in Italian).
- E10.** Yearly report for 2017 containing data on Italian newspaper sales (in Italian).
- E11.** Blog by a collaborator of the mayor posted on 28/07/2017 (in Italian).
- E12.** Comments by chair of the Bocchigliero event on 22/07/17 published in a blog by a collaborator of the mayor posted on 28/07/2017 (in Italian).