

When someone mentions ‘An Ghaeltacht’, most people automatically think of isolated rural areas on the West coast of Ireland. Most Gaeltacht experiences come from time spent in summer colleges.

However, in recent years, much more focus has been on the ‘urban Gaeltacht’ such as Belfast’s Gaeltacht Quarter. The area, with An Chultúrlann as it’s hub, has been growing for a number of years.

Many businesses in the Gaeltacht Quarter have Irish language signage and employ Irish speakers. It is also home to Gaelscoil na bhFál and to Coláiste Feirste, the biggest Irish medium school in Ireland.

Although traditional Gaeltacht areas are an undoubted source of rich culture and language, socio-economic issues have dictated that much more Irish speakers now live outside of these areas.

We can’t forget the history and traditions of the Gaeltachts but the wave of excitement regarding the Irish language in towns and cities throughout the country can’t be ignored.

Suggested translation

Nuair a luaitear ‘An Ghaeltacht’, de ghnáth, smaoiníonn daoine ar áiteanna iargúlta tuaithe in iarthar na hÉireann. De ghnáth, is ó na coláistí samhraidh a fhaightear taithí ar an Ghaeltacht.

Le blianta beaga anuas, áfach, tá níos mó béime ar na ‘Gaeltachtaí uirbeacha’ cosúil leis ‘An Cheathrú Ghaeltachta’ i mBéal Feirste. Tá fás as cuimse tagtha ar an cheantar seo le tamall anuas, agus An Chultúrlann i gcroílár an cheantair.

Tá go leor comharthaíocht Ghaeilge ar na gnólachtaí sa Cheathrú Ghaeltachta agus fostaítear cainteoirí Gaeilge fosta. Tá Gaelscoil na bhFál agus Coláiste Feirste, an Gaelcholaiste is mó in Éirinn, ansin fosta.

Cé nach bhfuil amhras ar bith ann faoin tsaibhreas cultúrtha agus teanga sna Gaeltachtaí traidisiúnta, de bharr saincheistanna socheacnamaíocha, tá i bhfad níos mó Gaeilgeoirí ina gcónaí anois taobh amuigh de na ceantair seo.

Ní féidir dearmad a dhéanamh ar stair agus ar thraidisiúin na nGaeltachtaí ach ní féidir neamhaird a thabhairt ar an ghluaiseacht spreagúil Gaeilge atá i mbailte agus i gcathracha ar fud na tíre ach oiread.