

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The issue of language and identity politics has reemerged in the 1990s and has since been at the core of various debates and controversies, not only in Western countries, but also at a global level. For instance, local language skills are increasingly seen as indicators for the successful integration of migrants, while increasing linguistic diversity resulting from migration is presented as a threat to national cohesion. As a result, linguistic competences have become important preconditions in citizenship attribution, and language courses are seen as compulsory for receiving residential permits. Moreover, the debate on 'global English' has become increasingly salient, touching on questions not only of language acquisition, but also of collective identity, thereby demonstrating one trend in current criticism of globalization.

Such questions continue to emerge increasingly in politics and society, and they have been at the core of my research for almost ten years now. Together with Damir Skenderovic, from the University of Fribourg, I directed – from 2006 to 2010 – the extensive research project 'Language and Identity Politics', which was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation within National Research Programme 56, 'Language Diversity and Language Competence in Switzerland'. The project's aim was to examine parliamentary debates on language issues in Switzerland since the 1960s, thus focusing on the emerging discussions concerning migrants' languages and dealing with the question of the role that should be accorded to English in comparison with the four national languages.

Curious about gaining a comparative perspective on such questions, I took the opportunity in 2008 to spend a year as a visiting scholar at the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. This research stay enabled me to expand my focus on Swiss language politics through a comparison with the debates that were going on in Canada and Québec. I am very grateful to the institute's former director, Antonia Maioni, and other col-

leagues for having provided a very stimulating intellectual climate for my research.

Living in the bilingual city of Montréal, it soon became clear that it would be an ideal place and context in which to bring together scholars of language and identity politics. From the beginning, the idea was met with great enthusiasm and support from the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the Programme d'études sur le Québec de l'Université McGill, the Centre d'Excellence sur l'Union européenne Université de Montréal/Université McGill and the Swiss National Science Foundation, McGill hosted renowned researchers from the fields of history, political science, sociolinguistics and anthropology on 11–12 June 2009. Warm thanks go to the staff of the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada for doing a fantastic job in helping me organize this initiative. I am also grateful to Isabelle Petit and Stéphane Gervais for their support.

The stimulating and fruitful discussions at McGill led to the idea of a book project, an enterprise that was met with great interest by Marion Berghahn from Berghahn Books. Many thanks go to Marion, and also to Adam Capitanio and Chris Chappell, who diligently accompanied the publication process. The publication of the book has received generous funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation, as well as from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Fribourg. David Luginbühl and Dirk Fischer helped me with the figures, and Felix Wirth with the index. As always, Duncan Brown has done excellent work in editing the final version of the book manuscript. Last but not least, I would like to thank the authors from both sides of the Atlantic for their highly valuable contributions.

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