

Developments Concerning Indigenous Linguistic Minorities in a Globalized Society

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In this paper I should like to touch upon two aspects concerning indigenous linguistic minorities, both of which may well have a bearing on the future of our society.

The increasing globalization world wide has in the course of time led to various reactions. One such reaction about the beginning of the 1970's was originally concerned with the question of human rights where various underprivileged sections of society began to protest against a tradition of oppression. One example were the indigenous linguistic minorities in Europe who demanded the recognition of their languages and the right to use them in all societal domains. This went hand in hand with an increase in regionalism, or perhaps even nationalism, where particular regions, including language communities, are seeking more autonomy if not some form of independence, resulting in a number of albeit highly heterogeneous regional movements. Reactions against globalization, which might be seen as the revolt of the neglected, have, however, now gone beyond pure regionalism as Brexit, for example, would seem to indicate. Thus the question is what role indigenous linguistic minorities and regionalism might play within broader geopolitical developments in a possible restructuring of Europe.

The second aspect to be looked at is the idea that every language is a window to the world. It is generally accepted that every language gives a different perspective on the world or “reality”, which is one valid argument for preserving languages as part of the genius of mankind. The question is, however, to what extent this still holds true. Due to globalization and the increase in language-contact situations, minority languages seem to be tending to adapt to the majority languages in a process of levelling or attrition, hence (partly) losing their unique individuality.