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Preface

When Oxford University Press first contacted us about a handbook of language policy and planning (LPP), we wondered “why do we need another handbook?” Later, potential authors asked the same question. Although the proliferation of handbooks in language studies in recent years has created a library of high quality material, handbooks require enormous effort, and the authors’ time required to produce these hefty manuscripts can crowd out basic research that is the foundation for any scholarly discipline. If we were to go ahead with this project, we wanted to offer a different type of handbook, one that is not primarily a retrospective summary of the history of sub-fields within LPP – though such retrospectives are important – but instead one that looks forward, in an effort to articulate and confront important issues underlying the transformations currently taking place in LPP and the social sciences more broadly. Accordingly, this is what we wrote to potential authors:

Our motivation for this effort is to articulate and provide direction for the current theoretical and methodological turmoil in LPP associated with the socio-economic, institutional and discursive processes of change taking place under the conditions of Late Modernity. As an academic discipline in the social sciences, language policy is fraught with tensions between these processes of change and the still-powerful ideological framework of modern nationalism. We believe this is a thrilling time in LPP studies, and we want this project to reflect that excitement. We intend The Oxford Handbook of Language Policy and Planning to be a dialogue between the two major historical trends in LPP associated with processes linked to Modernity and Late Modernity: the focus on continuity behind the institutional policies of the modern-nation state, and the attention to local processes of uncertainty, reorganization and
instability derived from the above-mentioned conditions of change. This dialogue is also aimed at overcoming the long-standing division between ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ analysis in LPP research, and at providing direction for theoretical and methodological innovation in LPP studies.

To our great satisfaction, the response to our call was enthusiastic across the board, and all of our contributors have responded to this challenge with great care and deep professional commitment.

As editors, we divided responsibility for the chapters according to our interests, experience, and expertise, each of us shepherding through the review process about half of the total number of chapters in the volume. Although we divided chapters in this way for administrative purposes, both of us read and fully edited every chapter, at each stage of revision. We also shared equal responsibility for writing the introductory and concluding chapters. This Handbook, therefore, is the result of our extensive collaboration during every phase of the project.

Many people helped us to produce this volume, above all the contributors, who responded to our multiple and repeated requests for clarification and revision as we worked to shape the volume into a coherent whole. We would also like to thank our students in our postgraduate class, Introduction to Sociolinguistics, which we co-taught at the University of Hong Kong in 2014. It was in this class that we began to elaborate our understanding of the tensions, paradoxes and contradictions in LPP research and practice, in a context in which traditional institutional bodies reposition themselves as other regional and transnational actors, both governmental and non-governmental, gain greater influence in language policy making.
We are grateful as well for the support of our home institutions, including The University of Hong Kong, where we worked together at the time this project was initiated, and our current workplaces: the Department of English at the University of Washington, and UCL Institute of Education at University College London. We also thank Hallie Stebbens and Hannah Doyle, our editors at Oxford University Press, who patiently guided this project to its completion.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the extraordinary formative impact of our academic mentors. For Jim, they included, at Stanford University: Gilbert Ansre, Eve V. Clark, Joseph H. Greenberg, Eduardo Hernandez-Chavez, Beatriz Lavandera, and especially Charles A. Ferguson. For Miguel, Luisa Martín Rojo (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid), Monica Heller (University of Toronto), Ben Rampton (King’s College London), and Angel Lin (The University of Hong Kong).

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David Gegeo, originally from the Solomon Islands, undertook university studies in the United States, graduating with a B.A in Anthropology, an M.Ss in Mass Communication and Public Relations, and a PhD in Political Science/Political Philosophy. He has taught at the university level in the United States, New Zealand and Fiji in the South Pacific. His research has been mostly on his own Kwara‘ae culture in the Solomon Islands, where for three decades he and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo have studied children's language acquisition, the impact of colonization on indigenous culture and languages, development, education and
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