Jewish identities today are facing a wide range of challenges defined by complex and sometimes contradictory processes, and yet very enriching ones. Their historical complexity certainly relies on the new scenarios that globalization poses to individual as well as to collective identities within a social paradigm defined by cultural diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism and contesting identity referents. Globalization processes are not uniform, as they take place in a differentiated manner in time and place, with territorial and sector inequalities. They are certainly contradictory, as these processes can be intentional and reflexive, though simultaneously not intentional, and of international as well as regional, national or local scope. Thus, globalization confronts traditional and modern forms of social and political organization as well as identity building processes, compelling social theory to discuss the very foundations on which these systems have been built. Its diverse nature, while enhancing individualization and personal autonomy, have given rise to new identities, global in character, and have renewed the importance of primordial identities in the shaping and reordering of social and even geopolitical spaces.

*Vis-à-vis* these changes and new trends, Jewish life is defined by unprecedented challenges and opportunities. The multidimensional character of globalization questions the unity and the bases of cohesion and solidarity of the historical continuum of shared memory, ideas, tradition, loyalty, religion and nationalism—be it spiritual, cultural, territorial or political—that we name *Klal Yisrael*, the worldwide ‘Commonwealth’ of the Jewish people. Simultaneously, it opens new venues for building identification referents through previously unknown channels and forms of interaction. Contradictions as well as opportunities are to be searched in the diversification of the Jewish experience in many ‘plurals’ expressed through different ways of understanding and embodying the ‘Jewish Self’, both individually and collectively: from the religious to the secular, from the orthodox to the liberal, from the national to the
diasporic, from the inclusive to the exclusive, from support to critical distance, from solidarity to abandonment of the real or imagined Jewish community.

Framed in an intricate interplay of continuities and ruptures, unity and diversity, Jewish life is opened to new questions as well as to the possibility of radical changes in the answers to old ones. The known and not known what, how, what for, why and where to contribute to enrich the experience of being and belonging to Klal Yisrael.

Surrounded by a multicultural world in which identities claim for a recognized distinctive presence in the public spheres and there are expectations and demands for cultural rights and differentiated citizenship, Jewish identities oscillate between the legacy of their historical struggle for equality and the current visibility of ethnic diversity and cultural multiplicity. Old and new referents interact.

If the diasporic experience and the existence of the idea-reality of a center have always nurtured Jewish history and imaginary, nowadays the global condition allows new possible interactions between uniqueness and difference, the particular and universality. While recognizing the singularity of Jewish history—past and present—the intrinsic diversity of its various patterns of identification and multiple forms of organizing and existing in different socio-historical settings remain a fruitful domain for Jewish unfolding experiences.

It is in this framework that Latin America—which is the focus of this volume—constitutes a singular case that epitomizes the contemporary character of Jewish life, in which unity and continuity are extraordinarily interwoven with pluralizing and fragmentation of identities, institutional forms, values and ascriptions and self-ascriptions. In the region diverse historical times converge; the sustained will and hard struggle to fully enter into Modernity is in fact confronted by a reality of an already radicalized Modernity that is at times gradually shifting into the Postmodern.

Latin America, with its ‘mausoleum of modernities’ (Whithead, 2005), has been a constitutive segment of a global challenge either to weaken or revitalize Jewish identities. Through the diverse historical phases, Western modernity became a reference, though a contested and ambivalent one. The cultural program of Modernity, which entailed ‘promissory notes’ (Witrock, 2000) that sought to define in new terms the meaning of human agency and its role in building social and political orders, acted permanently as a critical orientation. Its principles of freedom, equality and individual autonomy as substratum for association