PART THREE

WORLDWIDE DYNAMICS
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF TRANSNATIONALISM:
THE DIVIDED HEART OF EUROPE

Miriam Ben-Rafael and Eliezer Ben-Rafael

As discussed in several chapters here, the notion of transnational diaspora is bound to the concept of globalization (Appadurai 2002). According to this view, one can see our present-day global reality as characterized by flows of resources of many kinds, and especially by worldwide waves of migration. What is unprecedented today with respect to these waves of migration is that they take place in a world of direct communication throughout the world, cheap and rapid means of international transport, and real-time omnipresent media coverage. In this context, a transnational diaspora refers to immigrant groups which, unlike the situation in the past, tend to insert themselves into new societies (“hostlands”) without disengaging emotionally, culturally, or even socially from their societies of origin (“homelands”)—or from fellow-diasporans settled elsewhere. Also taking advantage of the opportunities offered by welfare states and democratic regimes, these immigrants are able to build communities where original linguistic and cultural elements can be retained and used (Tambiah 2001). In tandem, these immigrants acquire the local language and norms with the aim of inserting themselves in society. The resulting twofold allegiance can then be described as “dual homeness” to indicate that people are able to live with two societal foci simultaneously and feel belongingness vis-à-vis both of them.

A closer scrutiny of these notions however, cannot but unveil a basic difficulty, at least at the semantic level. The notions of “homeland” and “hostland,” indeed hint at essentially distinct kinds of approaches to the countries involved. The feelings for a homeland signify a priori an unconditional commitment. This connotation does not exist with respect to the term “hostland,” that hints at a much more instrumental attitude. On the other hand, this basic differentiation tends to be