Diaspora as translation and decolonisation
THEORY FOR A GLOBAL AGE

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Series editor’s foreword

The Theory for a Global Age series, of which this important new book is a part, is a space to rethink concepts and categories central to everyday understandings. This is done by taking seriously the experiences and knowledge of those who are rarely seen as agents in such processes. It is also done by re-examining dominant understandings through frameworks and contexts not previously considered. Diaspora as translation and decolonisation by Ipek Demir provides a brilliant new account of diaspora in just these terms. She examines the contributions made by the Kurdish diaspora, for example, as well as shifting our focus from the usual concerns of those who study diasporas – ‘static’ topics such as homeland, identity and questions of belonging – to examine how diasporic communities themselves ‘translate, intervene and decolonise’ the contexts within and across which they move.

Diasporas are often conceptualised through the politics of nation-states. They are seen to come into being as a consequence of struggles within nations and are represented as coming to reside in what are regarded as the nations of others. In this way, they are presented as having a sense of ‘home’ elsewhere than where they are. Demir sharply contests such associations. In contrast, she locates diasporas also in the historical relationships consequent to the expansion and dismantling of imperial formations. Drawing on, and extending, Sivanandan’s resonant formulation that ‘we are here because you were there’, she examines both the ‘we’ and the ‘they’ in terms of each being diasporic. In the process, she expands our understanding of the term and its associated processes.

Diaspora as translation and decolonisation offers a distinctive and innovative account of the dynamics of diaspora, of the ways in which, for example, they have been involved in processes of decolonisation, albeit rarely recognised as such. Alongside this