Introduction
Muslim Mobilities

A translocal ethnography of Tajik migrants' engagement with Muslim piety and belonging in Dubai, this book begins with the story of Karim, a young Muslim in his late twenties whom I met on a warm late summer evening in 2011 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital city. Busy with final preparations for a trip to Dubai where he planned to work as a tour guide for Russian tourists, Karim proposed to meet in a fancy restaurant in the outer city, where families and youngsters came to consume the capital city's new modern lifestyle in form of a mix of Turkish-European-style food and global pop music. Finding ourselves in a noisy dining room equipped with several screens showing flickering pop music videos, we escaped to the dim terrace at the back of the restaurant, where, after ordering two soft drinks, our conversation ran its course. I wanted Karim to tell me about his Islamic studies at Cairo's al-Azhar University. But while listening to his story of how he came to embrace what he called in Tajik *isloh* (Arabic *ʾiṣlāḥ*)[1], Islamic reform, becoming a Muslim who pursued a pure Islamic lifestyle, I began to realize that his study trip formed part of a much broader moral geography that included other forms of travel and other places besides Cairo. Moreover, his Islamic studies at al-Azhar University grounded in an "ethics of leaving and dwelling" (Fadil, Moors, and Arnaut 2021) embedded in and shaped by transregional forms of Muslim mobility and connectivity linking Karim to people, places, and ideas across Tajikistan, wider Central and Eurasia, and the Middle East. In this moral geography, Dubai stands out as a Muslim place of meaning.

Karim's decision to study Islam in Cairo was driven by his desire to overcome his ignorance about his religion and to improve his knowledge about what during our conversation he repeatedly stressed as 'real', 'true', or 'pure Islam' (*islomi haqiqī, islomi toza*). Strikingly, for Karim 'real Islam' was something he did not think could be found in his home country. Unlike other Muslims in Tajikistan who became engaged in Islamic renewal in the 1990s and early 2000s, for him, 'true Islam' could only be found abroad (*dar khorija).* Raised in a family without any religious background or proficiency in Islamic knowledge, Karim's interest in religion had been awakened during his several stays in Dubai, where he worked as a seasonal tour guide for Russian tourists between 2006 and 2008. In Dubai, he be-

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1 Tajik terms used by my research partners are shown in italics and in brackets. Relevant Islamic terms are given in Arabic the first time they are mentioned and labelled accordingly. Russian words used in Tajik are also labelled as such.

came enthusiastic about the religious educational services offered by the emirate's many AWQAF[2] charity institutions. It was also in Dubai that a fellow countryman recommended Cairo's al-Azhar University to him, above all as an appropriate place to find the 'authentic' Islamic knowledge he was seeking, as a viable path to becoming an 'Islamic person' (*odami islomī*). In autumn 2008, Karim arrived in Cairo with the plan to study Islamic jurisprudence (Arabic *fiqh*). Some years before, he had completed a law degree at the National University in Dushanbe with the highest possible grade (*diplomai surkh*). With books about Islam and an Arabic dictionary in his pocket, he went to al-Azhar's international student services to enroll but was sent to one of the many Arabic learning centers in the city that offer language courses to foreign students. Karim started a private beginner's course on the Quran and prepared for the entrance exam to the *sharī'ah* department. His contacts with other Tajik Azharites and Tajiks living in Cairo's Nasr City helped Karim to quickly settle in. During his studies in Cairo, he was inspired by scriptural knowledge-oriented interpretations of Islam. Eventually, Karim became what he called *qur'onparast*[3], a committed follower of the Quran. Just half a year later, his parents pushed him into marriage with a Tajik girl from his neighborhood. After some negotiation, Karim convinced them to bring his bride to Cairo, where he married her in the presence of his mother. He started a family, managed to get a scholarship and accommodation for his young family from a pious endowment in Cairo (Arabic *waqf*), and continued his studies at al-Azhar, while his young wife attended private courses in Quranic recitation. In retrospect, Karim summed up over his soft drink, in Cairo he lived a "good Muslim life in a Muslim-friendly country" (*zindagii khub dar mamlakati islomī*). This period, however, ended abruptly in 2010, when Tajikistan's president Rahmon launched a media campaign to call back students from al-Azhar and other universities in the Middle East living abroad for their Islamic studies without official permission. In winter 2010, after local policemen visited his parents and urged them to bring their son home, the couple broke off their studies and returned to Dushanbe.

Switching back to an earlier stage in his spatial biography, Karim's route into Dubai's then-booming tourism business was smoothed for him in Moscow, again through the help of other Tajiks whom he had worked with for several years in

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2 *Awqāf,* the plural of the Arabic term *waqf,* designates charitable endowments that operate under Islamic law. While Gulf charities cover a wide range of philanthropic activities run by a multitude of state- and non-state organisations and private actors, the majority of charitable endowments Tajik migrant visit in Dubai are assigned to *The General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments* (GAIAE), a legal authority close to the government. The emirate of Dubai alone actually runs 700 registered *awqāf*-centres.

3 Literally, the Tajik term *qur'onparast* refers to a person who 'worships the Quran'.

construction. His migration to Moscow, and later Dubai, was preceded by a long period of unemployment and frustrated quests to become a lawyer in the public sector. But he also felt stuck in Moscow. There was no personal advancement (*peshraftī*) for him there, only injustice, deceit, hatred, and violence. When we met, Karim had a temporary job at a Turkish construction company in Dushanbe but was otherwise very busy finding a way to leave home again. Like many other returnees from al-Azhar and other Islamic universities in the Middle East, Karim felt stuck at home and put effort into returning to Dubai, not only to earn money. He dreamt of continuing the good Muslim life he led in Cairo and could not realize at home.

Like Karim, many young, university-trained, and religiously aspiring Muslim men and women traveled to places in the Middle East in the late 1990s and early-2000s to gain proper knowledge about Islam, driven by the wish to remake their pious Muslim selves and to pursue the Islamic way of life guided by the ethical principles of purist Islam (Stephan-Emmrich 2017; Abramson 2010).[4] In the course of their travels, many of them, above all men, had temporary stops in Dubai, where they turned from students of Islam into street dealers, traders, freelancers or became middlemen in Dubai's multiple business worlds. Others found their way into an Islamic education institution in the Middle East through a work and business stay in Dubai. Still others were inspired to take an Islamic study trip to Cairo or elsewhere in the Middle East, or to move to Dubai after working as migrant workers in Russia. Tracing how these study and work trajectories became entangled in Dubai's fur and tourism business, and mapping these mobile trajectories onto larger geographies of Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging across Central Asia, Eurasia and the Middle East, this book was inspired by the question of why in the late 1990s and early 2000s so many young, well-educated, and reli-

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4 Reliable figures are difficult to find because most Islamic students from Tajikistan traveled without official registration and by private means. Online analyses speak of around 1,400 Tajiks studying Islam abroad in 2010, while elsewhere there is talk of 4,000 Tajik Islamic students in Pakistan alone (https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-dushanbe-forcing-students-abroad-to-return-home, last check: December 4, 2023). David Abramson gives the following estimates for 2009: Egypt 500 – 1,000 Tajik students, Saudi Arabia 350 – 700, Iran 330+, and Pakistan 300+ (Abramson 2010, 47). In an online article from 2018, Eurasianet speaks of 3,400 students who returned to Tajikistan in 2010 as part of a state recall campaign (https://eurasianet.org/tajikistan-former-students-of-islam-return-to-nothing, last check: December 4, 2023). State-controlled Imam Azam Abu Hanifa Islamic Institute in Dushanbe, founded in 2007, the only higher Islamic education institution operating today in the country, had a capacity for 1,500 students interested in Islamic studies in 2007 (Abramson 2010, 37). These very limited study opportunities explain, at least in part, why many Muslims from Tajikistan with religious aspirations studied abroad to acquire Islamic knowledge in the 2010s.

giously-aspirated Tajiks left their home country to pursue hopeful futures abroad, but eventually ended up working in Dubai.

When I began my research for this book in 2012, migration to Russia was already firmly established as a livelihood strategy for most individuals and families in Tajikistan. Dubai emerged as a new destination particularly aspired to and attainable by well-educated and religiously trained Tajiks like Karim. But what exactly drove them to Dubai? What were they looking for there, how did they get there, and what resources were available to them?

The absence of former Islamic students in Dushanbe's public in the time I did my fieldwork was as striking as the strong orientation towards *elsewhere* and the urge to leave that I sensed in many conversations with Muslims in Dushanbe who were engaged in Islamic renewal. Eventually, it was Karim's remark "If you want to meet people like me, you have to go to Dubai. Most of them are there. Hardly any of us are still here!", that led me to expand what I had originally planned as a classic one-place, local research into translocal fieldwork. Having moved between Dushanbe and Dubai between 2012 and 2015, I followed the mobile trajectories of about thirty pious Tajik Muslims like Karim. In Dubai, I got to know the places where Tajiks worked, lived, and longed to dwell in. I was able to dive into their working worlds, spending the little free time they had with them learning about their experiences, dreams, and aspirations as pious Muslims engaged in Islamic reform in Dubai. Even more, I followed my research partners in Dubai back home when they visited their families in Dushanbe or the surrounding villages during the summer holidays and learned about their struggles to continue their piety projects at home. While Dubai's business world was male-dominated, I had the opportunity to visit some of the Tajik families who had settled in the Arab Emirates. I was temporally immersed in their daily lives, dwelled in their neighborhoods, took part in women's religious gatherings, and helped the women prepare family celebrations. In so doing, I temporarily adapted to the rhythm of Tajik families' everyday life in the Arab Emirates, based on Islamic principles, and was able to get a sense of what 'the good Muslim life' means to them. Being as geographically mobile as my research partners, it was also through listening to their biographical accounts that I was able to travel with them virtually to meaningful places beyond Tajikistan and the Arab Emirates, i.e., places inhabited by my interlocutors in the past or with which they associated aspirations for a better future to come (see Stephan-Emmrich 2018a). Mapping the spatial biographies of pious Tajik Muslims onto larger geographies of Muslim mobility and connectivity, this translocal ethnography also follows the stories people told me in Dushanbe about Dubai and the related traveling spatial imaginaries, which depict the emirate as a place where people 'make good money' (*puli kalon mekunand*), but also where they become 'religious' (*dindor*), 'pious' (*taqvodor*), or 'Islamic' (*islomī*).

By the end of the 1990s, the Islamic renewal in Tajikistan was no longer a rather exclusive intellectual movement (Epkenhans 2017, 176; Dudoignon 2011; Khalid 2007a, 116 – 139; Mullojonov 2001); it had taken hold of much of the Muslim population. At the time of my fieldwork in the capital city of Dushanbe, these people's quest for what they considered 'proper' Islamic education, their pursuit of piety through the observance of religious practices, and their heightened engagement with Islamic lifestyles were strongly influenced by processes of economic and cultural globalization. Migration, consumption, neoliberal capitalism, and digital media permeated all areas of everyday life. Related processes such as the transnationalization of livelihoods, the pluralization of narratives about modernity and development, and the general culturalization of identity politics were important drivers for renegotiating Muslim identity and religiosity that situated Muslims from Tajikistan in spaces of Muslim mobility and connectivity that transcended the boundaries of ethnic, local, national, and regional definitions. Thus, engagement in reformist piety served not only spiritual needs. The search for a 'pure Islam' enabled people to form and articulate moral attitudes in response to economic inequality and social injustice and the related lack of progress and future perspectives in their home country. Even more, an obvious distrust in the public Islamic education sector together with the effects of rigid state secularism in people's daily lives, and an increasingly authoritarian political elite that sought to consolidate their power through the securitization of Islam, drove religiously-aspiring Muslims like Karim to search elsewhere for what they considered moral and good (see chapter one).

This book addresses the nexus between migration, religion, and Muslim subjectivity and explores Islamic renewal in Central Asia through a Muslim mobility lens. Mobility is a human experience, and it is a relation. Mobility relates people to the world they live in (Adey 2017). In that sense, mobility shares with religion that they are both everyday practices of world-making, providing "knowledge whereby people live their lives" (Schielke and Debevec 2012, 2 – 3, with reference to Michael Jackson (1996, 2) and helping people to locate themselves in the world and to cross through it (Tweed 2006). In line with that, the book tackles Dubai migration as an existential movement infused with multiple meanings, placing the analytical focus on the situated interplay of people's experiences with various migration regimes, spatial representations, and ideas about meaningful travels (Salazar 2018, 1, 4). Thus, 'Muslim mobility' highlights those moments in Tajik Muslims' mobile lives, when religion gained significance as an "immediate practice of making sense of one's life" (Schielke and Debevec 2012, 1). Moreover, conceptualizing Islamic reform spatially and situating Dubai migration in larger geographies of Muslim piety and belonging, the book shifts the gaze "from text to territory and from theology to lived religion" (Vásquez and Dewind 2014, 255). What follows is an exploration

of Islamic reform among pious Tajik Muslims in relation to the places in their mobile everyday lives, asking how these places formed their religious lives and shaped their Muslim selves. Tracing forms, processes, and effects of translocations through space and time, the book sheds light on how mobile Tajiks tried to navigate their dreams, aspirations, and ideals of a good Muslim life with complex everyday realities at home and abroad. These everyday realities were shaped by the multiple social locations these people dwelled in and crossed through as mobile Tajiks, Muslims, migrants, men, women, sons, husbands, students, street brokers, or middlemen.

Research on Dubai migration is dominated by economic and political gazes that analyze migrant subjectivities and processes of social positioning primarily in the context of exploitative labor regimes and their mechanisms of exclusion based on racism and discrimination (Kathiravelu 2016; Buckley 2013; Mahdavi 2011; Ali 2010). Ethnographies that draw attention to everyday migrant lives in Dubai and address more existential themes such as the dreams, emotions, and fantasies that migration thrives on and which shape migrant lifeworlds both in Dubai and at home, are only just beginning to emerge (Schielke 2020). The same applies to ethnographies that deal with how Gulf migration influences migrant religiosities and shapes revivalist movements (for Muslim migrants, see Ahmad 2017; Schielke 2020; Osella and Osella 2009; for Christian migrants, see Oomen 2016). This is where this book comes in. The lived experiences of my mobile interlocutors and the way they spoke about them to me directed me to investigate how scriptural Islam-oriented pious Tajik Muslims fashioned their migration to Dubai as a religiously motivated form of travel. Collecting stories about migration as a hopeful movement, the book explores Dubai migration as an integral part of reformist Islamic life projects.

One thematic focus explores how Tajik migrants' pious endeavors were given new drive by Dubai's vibrant Islamic economy, as compelling pious neoliberalism turned the moral endeavor of Islamic reform into an aspirational social project. With Dubai, the book brings a geographical location into focus that stands for many things, such as a spectacular global and cosmopolitan urban project, an economic paradise, a symbol of borderless neoliberal capitalism, an exclusionary and exploitative migration regime, or a sinful place pious Muslims should avoid going. However, there has been little scholarship on migrant imaginaries in the construction of Dubai as an ideal Muslim place associated with a pure Islamic way of life.

A second thematic focus emphasizes the knowledge created within my interlocutors' movement, turning the prevailing analytical gaze of methodological nationalism 'inside-out' (Houben 2017; Tagliacozzo, Siu, and Perdue 2015). Reading 'abroad' (*khorija*) as a place of Muslim longing for the moral and the good, the spatial biographies assembled in this book reverse existing political narratives that

construct 'abroad' as a site for the dangerous cultural and political 'Other' situated outside the borders of the Tajikistani nation-state. While I connect the Muslim mobility gaze developed in this book to a specific Tajik perspective, this perspective cannot speak for all Tajiks. In line with Enseng Ho's (2017) 'mobile societies' approach, I deploy mobility as a method to get out of the boxing paradigm inherent to methodological nationalism that favors essentialized and spatial fixed notions of identity. Although the book's focus is on ethnic Tajiks and does not include the perspectives of other Muslims from Tajikistan who worked in Dubai business, such as Uzbeks or Ismailis[5], I approach 'Tajik' as more than a fixed ethnic or national identity. Communities, locations, and identities are not isolated, they are processes and products of interconnected relations. Accordingly, this book is told from the perspective of people who form mobile societies that, being spatially dispersed, can only be partially recognized (Ho 2017, 907, 910, 922). Notions of being 'Tajik' or 'Muslim' can, therefore, only be thought of as situated and thus relational to those entangled processes of movement, placemaking, and subjectivity that have shaped the spatial biographies of the people I met who are presented in this book.

Eventually, exploring how the Arab Emirates, Tajikistan and places in the Middle East and Eurasia became connected through larger geographies of Muslim mobility, piety and belonging, the book brings the rather compartmentalized fields of Central Asian and Gulf Studies into a fruitful conversation.

Moved by Dubai

Thirty-three years after the end of the Soviet Union, migration has become a common livelihood strategy in Central Asia. In Tajikistan, this process has been reinforced by the civil war from 1992 to 1997 and its socioeconomic aftereffects. Economic hardship, poverty, lower educational standards, poor basic medical care, and a lack of future prospects reduced people's hope for a successful transition to capitalist democracy (McBrien 2017, 5) and drove many to leave the country (Shimizutani and Yamada 2022; O'Brien 2021; Ibañez-Tirado 2015). Today, migration – particularly to Russia – has become an important pillar for Tajikistan's gross na-

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5 Turkic speaking Uzbeks constitute the largest ethnic minority in Persian-language-dominated Tajikistan. Uzbeks in Tajikistan are not a homogenous group but belong to different ethnic groups. Besides, they share with Tajik Muslims their belonging to Sunni-Hanafi branch of Islam (Elder 2016; Fumagalli 2007). The second large group of Muslims in Tajikistan is of Nizari Ismaili adherence. Belonging to the Shia branch of Islam, the majority of Ismaili Muslims in Tajikistan live in the mountainous and autonomous region of Badakhshan (GBAO) (Mastibekov 2014).

tional income[6], setting the parameters for what can be expected, dreamed of, pursued, and realized as 'a good life', and forcing people in a mode of being in the world that is less focused on the here and now than on a hoped-for or aspired-to future (Ibañez-Tirado 2018; Schielke 2015a). Russia plays an ambivalent role: Its visa-free regime makes it an easily accessible destination for labor migration, providing a sense of spatial familiarity due to the shared Soviet past and established mobility practices (and regimes) in the context of education, work, and business within former Soviet Union's territory (Kessler 2012; Kane 2012; Sahadeo 2012). On the other hand, the Soviet legacy and its associated forms of coloniality cement Tajikistan's economic (and military) dependency on Russia, which is reflected above all in the high rates of labor remittances (Ostrowski 2011) and provides ground for growing structural racism against Tajik, and other Central Asian, labor migrants in Russian society and on the labor market (Habeck and Schröder 2016, 7–8, 10–14; Sahadeo 2012; Roche 2018b; Urinboyev 2017, 124–125).

But with Tajikistan's participation in the globalized economy, other destinations for migration have appeared beyond the post-Soviet Eurasian space. In the early 1990s, and only for a short period of time, countries in the Middle East became hopeful places as they enabled people to imagine a better future in relation to a 'Muslim elsewhere'. While Turkey served as an attractive model for a Muslim modernity in its secular form, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India became interesting destinations in the context of cultural and academic exchange, but also in relation to work and study migration. This shifting orientation towards the Persianate Islamic world in the 1990s resonated with enthusiastic attempts by cultural and political elites to reconnect to and revitalize a shared Persian cultural and moral heritage across borders (Ahmadi 2019, 107, 108, 110). Articulations of a shared Persian identity strongly supported the state-led 'cultural reconstruction' (*bozsozii farhang*) of society after the end of the civil war that aimed to legitimize a secular statehood (*davlatdorī*), a national literary tradition (*adabī*), and a value system (*odobu akhloq*) without adding Islam as a basic ingredient (Epkenhans 2017, 191, 187). However, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Iran's adherence to Shia-Islam hampered the development of longer-term binational collaborations in the cultural, educational, and economic sphere, while growing Turkish nationalism together with the spread of Turkish Islam via Turkish foreign policy and the educational activities of the Fetullah Gülen network (Balci 2018, 43–61) proved incompatible with the construction of a Tajik national culture, which in the late 1990s

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6 According to World Bank data, in 2020 remittances from migrant workers accounted for more than 25 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. See: https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/86656.html.

was also characterized by strong isolation and political tensions between Tajikistan and its Turkic-speaking neighbors in Central Asia. The Arab countries of the Middle East, however, were ambivalent from the outset. The Hejaz as the cradle of Islam, with the 'spiritual magnetism' (Preston 1992) of its sacred sites, Mecca and Medina, made this part of the Arab peninsula a religious place of longing for Muslims in Tajikistan. Also, students from what was then the Islamic University in Dushanbe were sent to study abroad in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Syria by the government to increase the level of Islamic education in the country. At the same time, the Arab world, but also Pakistan and the Sunni-dominated regions in Iran (Baluchistan) served the government as a political projection to incite fear of the influence of radical and extremist Islam and of political unrest in the context of the Arab Spring (see in detail chapter one).

It was in this period of disorientation that the emerging Gulf states made their impact. With their spectacular urbanization projects (Bromber et al. 2014) in tandem with a successful branding strategy that turned Dubai in particular into a hotspot of global and cosmopolitan modernity, marked by new Arab nationalism and a growing Islamic economy (Schuss 2023; Nasr 2010), the Gulf states offered a promising new horizon for Muslims in Tajikistan, and wider Central Asia, to reconceptualize modernity, development, and progress in their personal and societal contexts, in contrast to the failed promises of the Soviet and the Western models of modernity.

When I began my fieldwork in 2012, Dubai had become a prestigious, sought-after, yet exclusive destination for various forms of travel, including tourism, trade, and business trips. Moreover, Dubai was considered an attractive destination for seasonal work-based migration, a welcome albeit exclusive alternative to Russia. A veritable Dubai boom took hold of the country's capital in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Global middle-class Muslim lifestyle offerings, including Islamic fashion items, tourism advertisements, luxury perfumes, and kitchen utensils, reached urban and rural markets and city malls and circulated between households through the ritual economy and the souvenirs migrants bought home to their families and relatives. It was Dubai's exceptionality and the city's exclusive image as a modern, cosmopolitan, and global *Muslim* place that gave reformist Islam in Tajikistan new drive. People attached their pursuits of piety, moral development, and spiritual advancement to a hopeful place abroad that promised material well-being, social mobility, and success. Dubai's attractive mélange of urbanism, capitalism, and Islam traversed the mobile and religious life trajectories of young Muslims like Karim in multiple ways and eventually turned Islamic reform from a merely moral endeavor into an ambitious social project that bore the mark of the Muslim bourgeoisie. Thus, reformist piety became an important signifier of social positioning and a marker of social distinction among Muslims both in Dushanbe and Dubai. The following three ethnographic vignettes illustrate how Dubai was present and repre-

sented in Tajikistan in the early 2010s, when I did my fieldwork. The vignettes show how Dushanbe Muslims who were mobile and those who stayed at home became involved in Dubai's multiple business worlds through the work of aspiration and imagination. People were moved by Dubai[7] above all through sensational forms of material mediation and its associated ambivalent aesthetics, giving rise to the idea of an exclusive and bourgeois 'Dubai Islam', in which Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging merged with social status and economic success.

Fig. 1: "Shariʿa-compliant recreation. Elitist, child-friendly vacation and shopping tour". Dubai advertising poster of a travel agency on Aynī Street in Dushanbe. Photo: Manja Stephan, 2014.

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7 I use the term "moved by Dubai" analogously to "moved by Mecca" (see Buitelaar 2017), to highlight that emotional and affective processes shape mobility and vice versa. As the term ‚motion' is etymologically linked with 'emotion', mobility and emotions are co-constitutive. Movement expresses emotion just as emotions can mobilize people to move (Svašek 2012).

My first encounter with Dubai in Tajikistan was during an earlier research trip. I had been invited to a wedding on the eastern outskirts of Dushanbe, and expected to meet a close relative who had studied Islam in Egypt. It was in the early afternoon on a hot day in mid-September in 2010, when I entered a crowded and lively courtyard full of people, with dozens of children running noisily and excitedly among the guests. With the help of my host I escaped the exuberant festive mood into a quiet room already filled with women who, seated close together, were in the middle of a joint Quran recitation for the newlyweds. After clearing a space for me by moving closer together around the richly decked *dasturkhon*[8], the *otin*, the knowledgeable woman and female religious authority leading the session, waited patiently until I had found my place on the *kurpacha*[9] to continue her recitation. The religious session was interrupted once more when the hostess entered the room with a young man on her side whom she invited to sit at the place designated as *bolo*, located at the front of the *dasturkhon* and directly opposite the door. The young man was introduced to me as a cousin of the groom who had studied at al-Azhar in Cairo but at the time of the wedding was working in Dubai. After greeting the guest, the only man in the women's room, politely, the Quran recitation continued, and at the end of the session, he was included by the *otin* in her blessings. What struck me particularly about this scene was that the young man was offered the place of honor (*bolo*). In accordance with Muslim tradition, the most honorable place in a room is reserved for the eldest and most respected people, such as religious authorities. I was surprised that the *otin*, previously occupying this position, moved aside unbidden to make way for the young man. At least for the ethnographer in the room this was an unusual procedure, so I asked the woman sitting next to me, why the young man was given this respect. "He is a big man in business in Dubai, after all," she explained in an appreciative voice, and when I asked for clarification, she continued: "Well, his businesses abroad are going very well, and he has given a lot of money to make this wedding happen."

One year later, I again came across the figure of the 'big businessman' (*biznesmeni kalon*), when, during a stay in a village east of Dushanbe, my host and I visited a mosque known in the village as an 'Arab mosque' (*masjidi Arab*). Two things struck me: The new mosque was built directly adjacent to the older village mosque looked after by the descendant of an old-established religious family (*eshon*), who informed us that the history of the mosque was closely entwined with the vil-

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8 The term refers to Tajik hospitality (*mehmondorī*), and as such a core component of Muslim sociability in the region, which is characterized by generous hospitality and the sharing of festive food arranged on a cloth spread on the floor (*dasturkhon*) around which guests are seated.

9 A soft seat mat arranged in varying numbers around the *dasturkhon* as seating for guests.

lage history and the biography of his family. Secondly, although the new mosque was not yet completely finished, the prayer room was already equipped with a whole set of brand-new, high-quality copies of the Quran; something the old mosque did not have to offer. As we looked at the new Qurans, I asked my host why there was a second mosque in the village so close to the other one and who had donated the Qurans, the host responded: "Frankly, I don't know. But the Qurans you see are from Saudi Arabia, beautiful editions, and of good quality. A businessman brought them from Dubai. People say the guy is a big man in business, rich enough to finance the building of this mosque".

Together with the figure of the 'big man in (Dubai) business', in the early 2000s, the Dubai boom was fueled in Tajikistan's capital city in multiple other ways. It was materially tangible especially in aesthetic media images, street advertisement campaigns by tourism agencies (see Fig. 1), and luxury consumer commodities designated *dubaiskii* (Russian 'from Dubai'). The sensational way in which Dubai was present and represented in the capital city's public space provided the ingredients for displaying and longing for an expensive and exclusive Islamic lifestyle. Returned Dubai migrants became core agents in circulating such religious imaginaries, as the third ethnographic vignette illustrates. In the summer of 2015, I visited the home of Fatima and her husband Ahmad, a couple who regularly traveled back and forth between Dushanbe and the emirate because of Ahmad's involvement in Dubai's fur business. The family had spent their summer vacation in Dushanbe and was preparing to return to their other home in the Arab Emirates. Fatima invited me to join a small farewell party that close friends of her neighbors were also attending. During the gathering, not only the Arabic food (*oshi Arab*) prepared by Fatima gave away the family's involvement in the world of Dubai business. Fatima also presented the latest in Islamic fashion trends labeled as 'Arab' or 'Dubai style', crafting the family's mobile lifestyle into a signifier for an exclusive and cosmopolitan 'Dubai Islam'. "We are international (*bainalmillalī*)," Fatima said, making the Dubai image a trope for their own success while simultaneously inviting her guests to participate in the supporting narrative of modernity, social mobility, and progress (Stephan-Emmrich 2018b, 187–188). As shown elsewhere, the growing demand for fashionable Islamic clothing and other luxury commodities imported from Dubai closely corresponded with new urban planning manifested in prestigious architectural projects financed by Qatar, such as the Diyar Dushanbe complex or the Arab mosque in the Western part of the capital city. Such spectacular architecture supports the government's ambitious worlding project, branding Dushanbe as a globalizing city for the tourism and investment sector (Stephan-Emmrich and Mirzoev 2016).

However, people did not embrace representations of Dubai unquestioningly. Like elsewhere, in Dushanbe perceptions of the Gulf oscillated between "epitomiz-

ing success and progress and disgust at dominance and arrogance" (Bromber et al. 2014, 11). The aesthetics inherent to Dubai's material representations in Dushanbe's public were consumed by many Tajik Muslims in the newly built urban shopping malls in the capital city. At the same time, the religious message these representations spread was subject to controversial discussions in Dushanbe and its rural surroundings. Accusations of misconceived piety circulated as people told each other stories about businesspeople who spent their Dubai money on multiple Mecca pilgrimages to compete for social prestige and status rather than dedicating it to the welfare of the Muslim community. Spending Dubai money on the construction of new mosques was not so much welcomed as an act of charity and a contribution to the diversification of the religious landscape than it was suspected to represent an intrusive form of Islam perceived as 'not ours' (*az mardumi mo ne*), as 'foreign' (*az khorija*), as the wording 'Arab mosque' implies. So to return to my guided tour of my host's village, later in the car ride back home, my host shared his opinion about the newly built mosque. "I think this Arab mosque is just for the prestige of individuals. People in the village don't need a second mosque. But there are many businesspeople in our country nowadays. Many of them got rich in Dubai and now spend their money on religion, on the Mecca pilgrimage (Arabic *ḥajj*). Or they build mosques".

The Arab mosques emerging in the rural landscape around Dushanbe epitomized a rather ambivalent piety, mixing the public display of wealth with a sense of religious superiority and painting the money donors as *arabparast* (Tajik, literally 'people who worship Arabs'). Although their connection to Arab Islam signified a reference to religious normativity and originality that none of the Tajiks I spoke to denied because the Arab countries in the Hejaz are regarded as the cradle of Islam, they considered this form of Islam incompatible with both the locally rooted, primarily Persian-Sufi Islamic tradition and the Hanafi legal doctrine, to which Sunni Muslims, the majority in the country, feel bound. As will become apparent in the following chapters, while reform-minded Tajik Muslims had to position themselves at home between a discursively constructed 'native', i. e., Persian, and a 'foreign', i. e., Arab, Islam, in Dubai they were able to use notions of 'Persian' and 'Arab' Islam flexibly as a resource for successful economic activity in the fur and tourism industries.

Being 'Islamic' – Navigating Belonging between Ambitions and Constraints

Ambivalent perceptions of 'Dubai Islam' in Tajikistan's capital city of Dushanbe were symptomatic of the Islamic renewal that accompanied the fragmentation

of religious authority and competition over the notion of proper Muslimness. In scholarship on Islam in Central Asia, an interpretation of 'Islamic renewal' has become established that classifies the rising level of piety among large sections of the Muslim population as something other than the re-appearance or re-emergence of religious practices and beliefs disappearing during the Soviet era. Instead, research recognizes the alteration of religious practices cultivated during the Soviet period. Accordingly, scholars advocate speaking of 'Islamic renewal' in Central Asia in terms of a *transformation* rather than a *revival* (Jones 2017a, xiii). Although I agree in principle with the proposed transitional nature of Islamic renewal over notions that emphasize rupture, the term 'transformation' implies a teleological notion of progress towards an implicitly assumed final goal. The spatial biographies presented in this book tell a different story. They prompted me to think of Islamic reform as a *reconfiguration* of religious practice and identification as the effect of Tajik Muslims' multiple positionings and orientations within an emerging transregional Islamic economy, in which neoliberal capitalism, post-Soviet nation-building, and global Islamic discourses on modernity, reform, and development have meshed in dynamic, fluid, and volatile ways. Following the multiple translocations my research partners underwent within and across the Muslim worlds of Dubai business, Islamic reform occurred not as a teleological development, but as a process of becoming in an open-ended, transductive mode shaped by creativity, disruption, contingency, and transience.

From the late 1990s onwards, Muslims like Karim increasingly appeared in the region around Dushanbe. Educated at renowned Islamic universities in the Middle East, following a scripturally oriented and purist sense of religiosity accompanied by publicly displayed piety clearly expressed in dress codes and lifestyles established in Arab countries, these Muslims embodied a distinct disruption. They were different. Both a self-designation and an external attribution, the label *islomī* established itself as signifier explicitly distinguishing them from those Muslims in the country who have also 'come closer to religion' (*din-ba nazdik omadagī*), 'become religious' (*dindor shudagī*) or are 'strongly affected by' or 'attached to religion' (*din-ro sakht kapidagī*). 'Being Islamic' was an articulation of a conscious differentiation between the idea of Islam in its purest essence and an ahistorical ideal (*islom*) on the one hand, and a notion of religion (*din*, Arabic *dīn*) many Muslims in Tajikistan share on the other. Those shared notions became deeply intertwined with a sense of ethnonational belonging in the late Soviet period. Tied up with a secularized understanding of 'Muslimness' (*musulmonī*), religion was then reinterpreted as part of Tajikistan's cultural and social heritage (Khalid 2007b, 137). Later, in the post-Soviet period, religion and Muslimness became reframed by state discourses on securitization that build on notions of 'national' or 'homegrown' Islam, as opposed to a 'foreign' Islam imported from the Middle East (Lemon and Thibault

2018). These newly emerging forms of religiosity were labeled 'Salafi' or 'extremist' and constructed as 'alien' and thus incompatible with the Muslim heritage of prescribed behavior crafted around Persian literature and ethics (*odob*, Arabic *adab*), cultural traditions and customs (*urfu odatho*), spiritual knowledge based on Sufism (Arabic *taṣawwuf*) as inherited by Naqshbandiya and Qādiriya families, and Sunni-Hanafi doctrine, which most Muslims in Tajikistan adhere to. One can say that the way Karim embraced Islamic reform is consistent with what Julie McBrien has described in the context of Islamic renewal in Kyrgyzstan as an emphasis on 'belief over belonging' (McBrien 2017). Taking inspiration from Islamic discourses on reform circulating in study and migrant networks in the Muslim Middle East, the notion of 'being Islamic' accompanied the cultivation of post-national, cosmopolitan, and global orientations. Such orientations did not contain any references to the reformist approaches of religious specialists, who like Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda were influential in the 1990s and early 2000s and at the same time followed a rather normative understanding of Sunni Hanafi tradition (Epkenhans 2017, 176). Nor did reform-minded Muslims like Karim base their pious self-fashioning, their idea of 'true Islam' and their striving for a scriptural religious knowledge on the intellectual heritage of the Jadids. This modern Muslim reform movement, which appeared in the Russian empire at the turn of the twentieth century, was influential in the Central Asian region during the early Soviet period (Baldauf 2001; Khalid 1998) and overlapped in their intellectual positions with reformist currents represented by Salafism and Wahhabism (DeWeese 2016, 80–82).

Making sense of his 'otherness', Karim referred to a shift in his attitude of faith (*aqida*, Arabic *ʿaqīda*) that he experienced while studying in Cairo and working in Dubai, and which later shaped his everyday life after returning to Dushanbe. Embracing *isloh*, Karim described his 'becoming Islamic' as an 'awakening' (Arabic *aṣ-ṣaḥwa*) accompanied by a deep quest for a 'pure' and 'ideal Islam' that drove him to engage in the study of books and to pursue an Islamic way of life, carefully distinguishing between a universal 'Islamic' way as opposed to a particular, local, traditional, or secular one. This shift, in line with Schielke (2015, 14) from a relational sense of religiosity (based on a spirituality based in the veneration of saints and the local authority of religious families) to a more ideological one (based on scriptural norms), coincides with the global expansion of a purist Salafism, which also affected pious and mobile Muslims like Karim. In using the term 'purist Salafism', I follow scholars such as Henri Lauzière (2016) and Bernard Haykel (2013) who consider Salafism to be, first and foremost, an idea or concept that emerged and developed in a specific historical environment where Muslim intellectuals shaped and defended it in ways that we now take for granted (Lauzière 2016, 3). Moreover, I make a clear distinction between Salafism as an intellectual or even political endeavor, and its different resonance in modern Muslim reform

movements across the world. With their focus on what they consider 'authentic' and 'true' Islam, the latter form of purist Salafism relies more on aspects of individual piety and places a strong emphasis on converting religious purity, self-mastery, proper education, personal choice, and responsibility into multiple types of moral and social activism, that, following a specific 'method' or 'doctrine' (Arabic *manhaj*), also include the obligation to engage in *da'wa*, the spreading of knowledge about Islam within the Muslim and non-Muslim environment. In this context, Islam provided reform-minded Muslims like Karim a perfect system of moral knowledge (Schielke 2015, 24; Lapidus 2014, 522–523). It is within this purist and education-oriented environment that I place the reformist Islamic life projects to which this book is dedicated.

Turning to the performative dimension inherent to Islamic reform as an ambitious project of Muslim self-fashioning, my research partners' storytelling was driven by a wide range of expectations and agendas. Karim's question addressed to my companion after our meeting – "How was my speaking, did I convince her?" – may point to his efforts to tell a good, compelling story, meant to entertain me. But it also reveals that processes of religious transformation are often embedded in empowering narratives of change, which help to articulate pious endeavors and form religious selves (Schulz 2011; Buitelaar and Zock 2013; Asad 1996). Besides, stories like Karim's also bear an inherent missionary intent based on the duty of those who have come into the knowledge of Islam to spread that knowledge and give both Muslims and non-Muslims the opportunity to be awakened and engage in Islamic reform (*isloh*) themselves. Such narrative endeavors entangled the ethnographer with matters of morality, ethics, emotional vulnerability, and normativity, fusing intellectual and emotional processes while studying the reform-Islamic everyday practice of her interlocutors. Reflecting on how I got personally involved in my research partners' quest to convince with their piety by becoming an addressee of their *da'wa* activities, helped me understand the social pressures and high self-expectations to live up to the ideals these people had set themselves, which revealed 'being Islamic' as an ambitious and volatile moral project.

Besides, the need to 'be different' formed an existential experience characterized by discontinuities of past and present, as they manifested in an alienation from home and feelings of estrangement and dislocation. Wearing an Arabic man's robe, his beard uncut, religiously trained in an Arab country and adhering to a purist version of Islam, in both travel biography and appearance, Karim corresponded to the idea of a Muslim with deviant piety commonly labeled 'Salafi' (*salofi*) in Dushanbe. Like Karim, many followers of purist interpretations of Islam who migrated for work or study to places in the Middle East, faced rejection, hostility, discrimination, and social exclusion after returning home to their families. Fatima, whom I met by chance at Dushanbe's Kurvon bazaar and who recom-

mended educational videos about Islam to me, had been wearing a fashionable black *ʿabāya* only since her husband began taking work trips to Dubai. When we met, she complained that she had rarely left the house since the couple had returned from Dubai, as she felt no longer accepted as part of her home community. Taxi drivers wouldn't give her a lift or would call her *terroristka* (Russian a female terrorist) because of her clothes, and passers-by on the sidewalk would be afraid of her and cross the street.

While Fatima's experience of disruption and dislocation 'at home' led to depressive moods and fueled her longing to return to Dubai, other reform-oriented Muslims integrated experiences of alienation and exclusion into their cultivation of exclusive piety that built on notions of exceptionality and being chosen and subjected to divine testing (Stephan 2006). For Karim and many of his compatriots I met in Dubai, feelings of alienation and dislocation were "affective drivers" to migrate (Röttger-Rössler 2016). A strong orientation towards Muslim places elsewhere informed the cultivation of an ethics of leaving (Arabic *hijra*), in which pursuing the moral and good life abroad became an integral part of fashioning oneself into an 'Islamic person' (*odami islomī*). After some negotiations about where to meet, Karim finally suggested the stylish restaurant in outside the city center of Dushanbe, insisting on the companionship of a third person we both knew well. The restaurant's fancy ambience and stylishly dressed audience stood in sharp contrast to both his distinctive 'Islamic' appearance and his emotional narrative about his spiritual awakening (*isloh*) that mainly centered around his discomfort with Tajikistan's post-Soviet trajectory into capitalist democracy. The whole situation of our meeting felt inauthentic to me and put us both into a state of continuous uncertainty: Karim was also visibly nervous and uncomfortable about the surroundings as he opened the menu, written in both Tajik and English. After cumbersomely studying the dishes on offer, he handed it over to the person accompanying us and said, "Eh, you do it. I don't know about these things." He leaned over the table and explained me, "I have been away for too long from such places, I usually don't come here or other places in town." When I asked in surprise why he had chosen this of all places to meet, he offered: "Nobody would expect to find me here". Later the evening, I learned that by 'nobody' Karim was referring to the Tajikistani intelligence services watching him and checking his civil obedience regularly since he had returned home from Cairo.

National security discourses permeated not only the stories I heard and the ways people fashioned themselves through these stories. They also limited my access to these people. Strategies of avoidance, together with suspicions about spies are as old as anthropological fieldwork. But in my very concrete case, they not only prevented me from recording mobile life stories to secure trust. The dynamic combination of avoidance, testing, and humiliation during my fieldwork also debunked

the illusion of the anthropologist's neutral position in a highly politicized research field (de Koning, Bartels and Koning 2011, 170) and finally pushed me, like my interlocutors, to move abroad to be able to continue my research.

Finally, people's articulation of 'being Islamic' included preferences for economic environments that allowed combining work and piety. However, restrictive state secularism in Tajikistan made it difficult for Muslims who, like Karim, publicly displayed their piety to find work in the state market sector. Additionally, postsoviet capitalism (Bandelj 2016) has left its mark on the country. The introduction of global capitalist market principles, which met with pre-existing clientelist economic-cum-political networks linked to the government, led to the emergence and consolidation of an upper class close to President Rahmon consisting of the 'new rich'. Meanwhile, the political elite failed to create incentives to enable the growth and consolidation of a solid new middle class. This political-cum-economic environment fostered social inequality and fueled a sense of injustice (*beadolatī*) in the country, which made it difficult to avoid getting involved in corrupt practices (*porakhurī*). Doing business 'the Muslim way', that is adjusting economic practice to Islamic principles, was therefore only possible in the private sector (Biard 2019; Botoeva 2018). Thus, trade (*tijorat*) was favored as a particularly God-pleasing activity with reference to the Prophet Mohammad, who was a trader himself (see chapter three). However, the state's grip on the private sector was strong, especially when private enterprises not part of the political elite's patronage network were flourishing. Tajik middlemen successful in Dubai's business worlds told me that their healthy businesses and revenues back home (one ran a cement company, another a private petrol station) had been confiscated by the state under the pretext that they were financing 'Islamic fundamentalism' (*islomgaroī*). To protect their economic activities from state intervention, many economic-cum-religious entrepreneurs shifted their business activities to transregional business fields. Thus, Dubai's booming Islamic economy offered a welcome alternative space to pursue a good Muslim life allowing a combination of work and piety. Belonging to the dispossessed or "disinherited" (Biard 2019, 2) segments of society, with their economic autonomy and a cosmopolitan or global orientation critical to state corruption and intervention, the figure of Dubai businessmen embodied a form of Muslim bourgeoisie that cultivated Islamic reform as a marker of social distinction along class lines (Botoeva 2018, 249–253). In crafting pious neoliberal subjectivities (Schielke 2015a; Atia 2012) in Dubai, pious Tajik Muslims embodied the success story told in Dushanbe of compatriots who had become not only rich (*puldor*) but also religious (*dindor*) in Dubai.

Following up on my understanding of Islamic reform as a reconfiguration of being Muslim, in this book, I shall prefer the term 'belonging' over 'identity' to focus on the dynamic interplay of subjectivity, spatial agency, and performativ-

ity, and to highlight flexibility, multiplicity, and translocation over essentialized modes of thinking difference (Anthias 2006). In dealing with the question of how religious, economic, and social positions were produced, shaped, negotiated, and performed in Tajik Dubai business, and with which social and political consequences, reflections on performativity and belonging are revealing. Following Vicki Bell, for whom belonging is not simply given, but a performatively produced achievement (Bell 1999, 3), I understand the multiple self-identifications and attachments of the people I met during my research to be emotive effects of their performative positionings as Tajiks, Muslims, 'Islamic people', migrants, or businessmen engaging in the wider context of relational placemaking. In that sense, belonging is both a process and an outcome of affective interrelations (Mattes et al. 2019, 302) and thus always situated spatially and temporally. The multiplicity of religious identification is reflected in the various senses of 'Muslimness', 'Arabness', and 'Persianness' that Tajiks display at the workplace, in their leisure time, or in their residential practices. It shows how they have situated themselves in their mobile worlds, and how diversely they have related to places at home, in the host country, and to other places they have previously inhabited. As we will see, religious identifications such as 'Islamic' that were created, embodied, and performed in the entangled socioeconomic and cultural spaces of business life in Dubai have produced a wide range of openings and limitations in the context of social integration and belonging, access to business networks and national labor markets, as they have promoted the making and unmaking of difference and sameness – always in relation to shifting social, political, and other contexts. Being an 'Islamic person' has emerged as an alternative form of sociopolitical belonging that transgresses ethnic, national, or more localized forms of identification.

Performativity is intimately entwined with the politics of visibility, audibility, and articulation and at heart of the modern Muslim public spheres that have emerged on the global stage (Hirschkind 2006; Eickelman and Salvatore 2006, among others). Following the multiple ways in which the Tajiks I met in both Dubai and Dushanbe displayed their reformist piety through Islamic lifestyles, belonging also blends with acts of indexing socioeconomic and religious status. Indexing is the "stylized repetition of acts that cultivate the sign and sense of belonging" (Bell 1999, 3). It works through the following practices: i) the application of specific Islamic concepts such as *hijra, isloh,* or *kofir* (Arabic: *kāfir*) (chapter one and five), ii) the cultivation of specific notions of proper work (chapter three), iii) preferences for certain ethnic restaurants in Dubai (chapter four), and iv) multiple forms of embodiment and material mediation (e. g. in the way of cultivating religious affects and sensations, Islamic lifestyles, specific dress codes, housing practices, or the practice of renaming), as shown in chapters four and five.

Conceptualizing the multiplicity of Tajik positionality and situatedness through Bell's performative belonging also helped me clarify my position on the academic concepts that have proved relevant in writing this book, such as 'Islamic reform', 'reformist Islam', and 'Salafism'. Preferring "longing to belong" over simply being, Probyn (1996, 8) has pointed to the fragility, fluidity, elusiveness, and desire for some attachment (to certain people or places) inherent to the idea of 'truly' or 'really' belonging. I find this thought appealing because it prevents me from conceiving of Salafism, or reformist Islam, as a clear and fixed identity. Pious Muslims like Karim became involved to varying degrees in what has been largely described in scholarship as 'purist Salafism', while studying and working in the Middle East. Globally circulating Salafi thinking, lifestyles, and practices (or rather, fragments of them) became crucial to their Muslim re-fashioning, moral reasoning, business ethics, and social differentiation while in Dubai. However, not all Tajiks I met in Dubai were aware that they were dealing with ideas rooted in the ideological and theological doctrines of Salafism when using, adapting, modifying, and passing them on in their daily life at the workplace and in their migrant accommodations and family homes. Some of my conversation partners were not interested in these labels, while others deliberately claimed them for themselves. Reformist Islam and Salafism emerged as situated positionings and flexible modes of performative belonging. In that quality, both categories formed integral part of broader cultural registers that Tajiks (more or less) flexibly draw upon to find their economic position in Dubai's business fields, to negotiate their social and religious status, and to attach themselves to diverse aesthetic and discursive formations (Meyer 2009; Reichmuth 2000, 64; Wuthnow 1989, 16). These Muslim socialities created a communal space for establishing religious truth, framing religious experience, and enabling senses of belonging that were post-national, post-secular, cosmopolitan, and bourgeois in nature, and that also enabled them to make sense of precarious translocal livelihoods.

Spatializing Islamic Reform

Writing a translocal ethnography of Islamic reform and Dubai migration that links recent debates in the anthropology of Islam and Muslim piety with the broader field of mobility and migration studies and theoretical stances in New Area Studies, proved to be a challenging cross-cutting endeavor. Mapping dynamic geographies of Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging, I had to come to terms with numerous methodological and epistemological concerns that addressed the three interlacing aspects of movement, relation, and position. One concern centered around how to write a spatial analysis of Islamic reform that does justice to the transformative nature of my interlocutors' mobile endeavors, the fluidity of

their lifeworlds, and the contingency and elusiveness of migration as a moral project. Another addressed the situatedness of my translocal ethnography: How could I consider the multiplicity, historicity, and shifting cultural and social contextuality of movements, locations, and relations that shaped my research partners' mobile Muslim subjectivities? How could I locate Muslim piety and belonging in the context of spatial formations emerging through 'thick' connectivity and the sense of connectedness, while fluid and volatile in nature (Verne 2019; van Schendel 2015)? In other words: How would I be able to capture the dynamic, fluid, and transient, and write a spatially expansive and yet integrative account of pious Muslims whose shifting mobile lifeworlds transcend fixed territories and borders, like nation states (Ho 2017, 912)?

Another concern related to shifting perspectives and multiple positionings. The mobile life stories collected in this book are highly diverse in terms of itineraries and spatial trajectories. This is true for the places I met my Tajik migrant research partners as well as for the stages in their life course from which they were viewing their mobile lives, incorporating their spatial imagination and experience into various processes of narrative identification and performative self-fashioning as pious, reform-minded Muslims. So given the multiplicity in space and time and understanding the places and spaces involved in the mobile life stories as inter-relational concepts, where would I need to begin the situated analysis of Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging? Which perspective would I start with? How could I do justice to a Tajik perspective on Dubai migration, even as many of my interlocutors stressed that they no longer perceived themselves as Tajiks but simply as Muslims?

Long before the mobility turn pushed the idea of a fetishization of mobile ontologies in post-modern and post-structural science, James Clifford (1986, 22) plotted a 'tectonic' shift away from stable places such as an island or a mountaintop from where to map human life, journey out, and analyze cultural expressions and relations. As mountaintops and islands, too, are in constant motion, just like the people, things, and ideas involved in what we study as societies or cultures, the 'local' is as shifting and relational as the anthropologist's positionality; both are situated perspectives. Moreover, in what later should become a major premise in global anthropology, Clifford underlined that such situated perspectives are always embedded in global movements of difference and power. In time, I had to deal with how my translocal ethnography could define its object of study to permit "detailed, local, contextual analysis and simultaneously the portrayal of global implicating forces?" (Clifford 1986, 22; see also Hage 2005; Burawoy 2000).

Such epistemological shifts in anthropology caused by the spatial and mobility turn resonate with integrative analysis of movement, connectivity, and relation, as recently developed in New Area Studies. The pledge for thinking space as relational and not merely as a process (Verne 2019, 85) has led to a new understanding of

area as an analytical tool that allows shifting perspectives, using area as a particular "research approach that creates intermediate epistemic space" (Houben 2021, 266) as well as producing a particular kind of knowledge that favors dynamic and relational concepts of identity, society, nation, and region as not spatially fixed. Thus, the spatial agency of people, especially non-elites, the realm of the everyday, as well as the mobile biographies of material objects has moved into the focus of area studies analysis and shifted interest to alternative spatialities and how they are formed and shaped across the boundaries of academically defined areas (Marsden and Mostowlansky 2019; Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018b, 33–38; Ho 2006). In 'mobile societies', Enseng Ho introduces a spatially expansive and yet integrative approach that shifts the analytical focus from individual countries, societies, or places, to the people who inhabit, cross, and move between them (Ho 2017, 914). Such an approach favors mobility to understand locality and community, not as isolated, spatially fixed entities, but as shaped by interconnected relations. Adopting Ho's argument, following people's journeys and studying how their multiple interconnectivities localize in space, place, and time, we can grasp only partial notions of societies, communities, or ethnic groups in each location, yet still recognize the historical and social thickness of these interconnectivities (Ho 2017 and 2014).

Eventually, synthesizing all these epistemological and methodological considerations into a coherent spatial analysis of Islamic reform, 'Dubai business ', 'spatial biography', and 'translocations' proved to be helpful conceptual lenses to structure my thoughts and findings in a way that makes this translocal ethnography informative for, and connectable to, research interests informed by anthropology, migration, and new area studies.

Dubai Business

Writing this book, I was driven by my concern to undo methodological nationalism in research on Islamic reform in Tajikistan and wider Central Asia. Following Stephen J. Collier and Aihwa Ong's conceptual proposal of 'global assemblage' (2005, 4), I tried to combine all scales of analysis into a single framework that allowed me to fix the dynamic, fluid, and complex entanglements between migrant subjectivities, geographical places, national politics, global economies, and transnational religious movements. Eventually, I came up with using 'Dubai business'' as a polysemous concept to analytically grasp these entanglements and map the multiple economic, social, and religious worlds in which these entangled relationships were embedded and shaped. In this dynamic assemblage, Dubai occupied a central analytical position as a spatial node in Muslim networks and mobilities, linking the

Persophone, Arabophone, and Russophone Muslim worlds across Central Asia, Russia, the Gulf region, and the wider Middle East. While Dubai was where Muslims from Tajikistan went to work, do business (*biznes, tijorat*) and pursued reform-minded Islamic lifestyles, the term 'Dubai business' also addresses market mechanisms of place-branding that Tajik migrants both engaged in and were moved by. Doing business *in* and *with* Dubai, this translocal ethnography shifts analytical interest towards the production of places as meaningful sites of what is good and moral.

In a more metaphorical sense, I use 'Dubai business' to reconfigure a larger conceptual field that brings material, social, and mental worlds into closer conjunction (Daniels 2011). Picking up on an argument I made in a recent publication (Stephan-Emmrich 2021, 58–59), the concept of 'Dubai business' permits connecting compartmentalized fields of knowledge in area and migration studies and anthropology. A dynamic time-space configuration of material and immaterial flows, transfers, transitions, and translations, 'Dubai business' conflates work migration and continental and maritime trade in luxury goods such as fur coats with the fields of Russian middle-class tourism, Muslim pilgrimage, Islamic education and Gulf charity. In that sense, one can understand 'Dubai business' as a transregional platform of connectivity, interaction, and exchange (Ho 2014) that assembles a plurality of actors, practices, places, things, ideas, and identities across academically constructed and fixed regions such as Central Asia, Eurasia, and the Near and Middle East.

'Dubai business' conceptualized as a dynamic phenomenon of transregional connectivity and connectedness raises the question of how such an alternative spatiality is inhabited, shaped, and reshaped as a meaningful space by people dwelling in and crossing through it. Accordingly, the book invites an understanding of 'Dubai business' as a trans-region where multiple lifeworlds emerge and merge. These entangled worlds are made and re-made, inhabited, shaped, sensed, crossed, and intertwined by the mobile and spatial agency of Tajik migrants as firmly Muslim worlds. The interplay of post-Soviet politics, neoliberal capitalism, Muslim renewal, and global middle-class sensibilities have resonated in the mobile everyday lives of Muslims from Tajikistan. When traders in Dushanbe's markets do business *with* Dubai by selling and embodying a certain idea of this place inherent to both the consumer goods they advertise as *dubaiskii* ('from Dubai') and the pious habits that inform their professional business conduct (Stephan-Emmrich and Mirzoev 2016), or when Fatima shows off the latest Islamic fashion items brought from Dubai, Tajik Muslims, by engaging in transregional aesthetic formations, rework Dubai into a spatial idea for a Muslim modernity. As the book will show, Dubai and everyday Dubai business life is created by mobile and pious Tajik Muslims into a production site for their hopes, dreams, aspirations, religious ideals, emo-

tional attachment, and elusive sense of belonging. Arguably, it is in the productive context of this transregional aesthetic formation that the idea of an exclusive, bourgeois, cosmopolitan 'Dubai Islam' is fabricated. It forms an assemblage of geographical movements, social imaginaries, and spatial experiences enabling migrants from Tajikistan to re-fashion their Muslim selves along different notions of migration, work, piety, and belonging. Giving impetus to a stronger consideration of the material turn in transregional research, 'Dubai business' eventually also offers a conceptual lens to illuminate how religious imaginaries (ideas, ideals) travel in and across geographical regions and different migratory contexts (multiple Muslim worlds), and how these 'immaterialities' mesh with ideas of place, modernity, progress, and cosmopolitanism. Moreover, the concept shows how enmeshed religious and spatial ideas and imaginaries materialize in the properties of the pursuit of 'the good Muslim life'. I argue that these Muslim *matters* – accompanying the Dubai boom in Tajikistan and beyond – are crucial to understanding what moved Tajiks to go to Dubai, and why and, more importantly, how they became more pious while being there.

Spatial Biography

Spacial biographies help to trace how the relational interconnectedness of people, places, things, and ideas became inscribed in Tajik migrants' bodies; that is, how the multiple worlds of Dubai's business fields formed their imagination, experiences, and memories and thus shaped their biographies of religious becoming. There are excellent studies on spatial biographies that explore the religious becoming of specific places (Hammond 2023; Nasritdinov 2018). Differing from these studies here, I use spatial biography bio-centrically and relationally. My interest is in how Muslim subject formation and self-making processes relate to the specific places and spatial surroundings my Tajik interlocutors, the owners of these biographies, inhabited in the past, where they lived when we met, or where they longed to go in the future. Put differently, thinking biographies spatially means highlighting how humans construct their being *in relation* to movement, placemaking, and time. This makes two aspects salient: First, spatial biographies locate people in space and time, connecting multiple places and different times and crossing multiple boundaries. They are thus translocative as well as transtemporal. Second, they invite us to think of place, space, movement, and subject, not simply as processes, but as relations inscribed into people's bodies, shaping their life trajectories and their Muslim selves.

Based on these functional dimensions of spatial biographies, we can now think ahead in four directions to understand relational placemaking as a practice

of Muslim world-making. First, spatial biographies blur the boundaries between subject and place. Referring to Edward Casey's "no place without the self and no self without place" (2001, 684), the identity (and biography) of places and the people moving between them is always relational rather than fixed in an essentialist sense. It is through 'dwelling' and 'crossing' as the two core metaphors of relational placemaking borrowed from Thomas Tweed's (2006) path-breaking study of migrant religion as a practice of location, that Tajik migrants turned geographical locations into places. Lived experiences are what turn geographical locations into meaningful sites or what Willem van Schendel terms "thick places" that "enhance our sense of meaning, belonging and connectedness: they provide us with enriching experiences" (van Schendel 2015, 99–100).

Second, spatial biographies are temporal fixations of transient transregional phenomena. The life stories I collected during my research allow me to trace the material effects of the lived experience of pious Tajiks engaging in Muslim mobility, connectivity, and connectedness on their bodies, specifically their memories, emotions, habits, and linguistic repertoires.

Third, spatial biographies provide 'thick moments' that shed light on the very specific contexts in which movements and placemaking practices take place, and by which mobile Muslim subjectivities have been shaped.

Mobilities become meaningful through their embeddedness within societies, histories, and cultures. This "impacts upon what mobilities mean and how they work" and on how "illusions [and representations] of mobility and immobility are created" (Adey 2006, 83). This leads to the fourth insight: Spatial biographies are constructed narratives of the self and, as such, part of migrants' Muslim self-fashioning. Following my interlocutors' mobile live stories, I learned how they mobilized places and landscapes as sources for subject formation. Moreover, while incorporating places into Muslim self-images and narratives of personal advancement and successful becoming, my interlocutors crafted these places and their movements to be meaningful. Thinking Islamic reform through the conceptual lens of spatial biography helped me to become attentive to the very concrete everyday life contexts at work, at home, in the city space, or on the move, in which reform-minded Tajik Muslims fashioned their migration as a moral endeavor. Tim Ingold reminds us to think movement not in terms of a *transport* (carrying across) of completed being but rather as the *production* (bringing forth) of perpetual becoming (Ingold 2011, 150–151). This approach to mobility favors transductive modes of becoming as they are significant in post-structural thought to challenge modernist characteristics of identity, essence, and origin (Mackenzie 2002). Differing from linear, teleological notions of becoming, transduction depicts a coming into being or "in-becoming of something" (Adey 2006, 79) through dynamic and open-ended processes of relational connectedness as they unfold, for example, in the multiple

worlds of Dubai business. That reading permits the transformative moments in the migration of Tajiks to and from Dubai that are explored in this book to be seen as a mode of transductive becoming. Such an open-ended understanding of becoming allows Islamic reform, like Dubai migration itself, to be approached as a highly contingent project. Following up on these conceptual thoughts, how did the contingency of Tajik migrant moral and social endeavors play into the processes of their self-fashioning? Taking spatial biographies as ethnographic facts, the book sheds light on how the Tajiks with whom I talked tried to come to terms with the inconsistencies and ruptures that shaped their pious mobile endeavors by narrating Dubai migration into a coherent story of moral and religious becoming.

Thinking Muslim subjectivity through processes of mobile subject formation, the elusive nature of Islamic reform and Dubai migration can be best illustrated linguistically though expressions such as the Tajik term *harakat.* Depicting geographical movement, the semantic meaning of the word also includes a metaphorical movement towards a set goal or formulated ideal, thus putting emphasis on the investments and efforts involved in this process. Talking with me about their piety, reform-oriented Tajiks very often used the phrase 'I strive' (*man harakat mekunam, man mekūsham*) to describe their commitment to reforming their Muslim selves. In their introduction to everyday religion as a fruitful concept for tackling the complex duality of religion as an everyday practice and a normative doctrine that reveals itself at best in moments of contradiction and constraint, Schielke and Debevec argue that "people may refer to such perfectionist ideals not in order to reach them, but in order to make at least some sense of the imperfections and complexities of their lived experience" (Schielke & Debevec 2012, 7, see also Beekers and Kloos 2017 in relation to failure and ethical formation, and Pelkmans 2013b in relation to articulating doubt*).* A reading of piety that attaches importance to the moments in which imperfection in everyday life stimulates the quest for religious ideals is reasonable when related to the co-constitutive relationship between movement, place, and (Muslim) subjectivity. Again, linguistic concepts are illuminating here. My research partners sometimes used the Tajik terms *musofir* ('traveler', 'wayfarer', from Arabic *safar*, 'travel') and *muhojir* ('migrant', 'refugee', or 'emigrant', from Arabic *hājara,* 'to emigrate') to describe how they sensed their being in the world as people constantly on the move. Thus, references were made to the Islamic doctrine of seeking and spreading knowledge about Islam and deepening personal faith through travel, while simultaneously highlighting the risks and hardships of travel. Evoking a semantics rooted in Muslim concepts of travel, place, and space, my research partners attached a deeper meaning to Dubai migration as an aspirational project of pious and moral becoming, embracing both the hope to progress and the imponderables and uncertainties that mobile life trajectories entail (Urinboyev 2017, 131).

Transregionality, Translocality, and Translocations

As a translocal ethnography, this book combines my interest in Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging with my many years of intensive academic research into transregionality as a leading concept in the theory and methodology of new area studies. A very abstract concept, transregionality is an ambitious epistemological project that engages shifting epistemologies and reversed perspectives to de-center knowledge orders and their colonial and orientalist legacy in spatially organizing the world we live in (Derichs 2015). Emphasizing movement, connectivity, and transience of fixity, transregionality is a critical response to analytical nationalism and regionalism. The concept also provides an epistemological anchor to counter metageographies that cater for geopolitical interests more than they take account of the realities of people's lived realities and lifeworlds that tend to transcend the borders of areas constructed and spatially fixed by academia (Mielke and Hornidge 2017; van Schendel 2005; Lewis and Wigen 1997).

What permitted me to put transregionality to work in this book was the concept of translocality. This concept helped me to break down an epistemological endeavor into methodologically graspable social realities, to understand how these social realities were produced and shaped by 'everyday actors', and to recognize the co-constitutive relationship between movement and placemaking in migratory contexts that traverse political and other boundaries (Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018a). The fascinating thing about translocality, however, is its integrative potential: The concept depicts processes of traversing and connecting and its transitive effects; it points to the relationality of space, place, and movement and enables new approaches to regions; it helps to re-territorialize religious, political and other imaginaries by tracing the trajectories and networks of partial societies; finally, it provides an attribute to describe how processes of relational placemaking unfold at different scales.

With all these benefits, translocality is a fruitful analytical concept to depict a specific condition and modality of acting and being. In that sense, the geographies of Muslim mobility, piety, and belonging mapped in this book can be read as meaningful translocal formations. But how to study the effects of the conditions and modalities of the spatial actions (movement and placemaking) that shape these translocal and transregional formations? What do processes of connecting and traversing do with the people involved in them? How do they shape their mobile subjectivities?

In line with Muslim mobility as an existential approach, this book seeks to understand how geographies of piety and belonging in Dubai business life unfold as lived realities and lifeworlds inhabited and shaped by Tajik Muslim migrants' multiple locations and movements. Following Tajik Muslims' journeys through space

and time and examining how these journeys shaped their pious and moral Muslim selves, I prefer the term *translocation* (from the verb *to translocate*) over *translocality* to highlight my interlocutors' spatial agency in processes of relational place-making. Thus, the focus is on how Tajik migrants crafted their spatial biographies through multiple translocations within and across various and shifting religious, economic, social, and political contexts. Moreover, using Thomas Tweed's two spatial metaphors 'dwelling' and 'crossing' throughout this book, I will depict the interrelatedness of Muslim piety and belonging with movement, place-, and space-making through practices and processes of translocation. Both dwelling and crossing highlight migrants' spatial agency. Location is the effect of human existence in the world, which is directly related to the practice of *dwelling*, i. e., placing oneself in space. For Tweed, dwelling does provide spatial agency. Through processes of mapping and building, migrants transform their environment and inhabit the world they construct (Tweed 2006, 82). So, dwelling is homemaking, orienting migrants in time and space. As homemaking creates meaning, dwelling turns migration into a meaningful movement and geographical locations into meaningful sites, i. e., "thick places" (van Schendel 2015).

With *crossing*, emphasis shifts to boundaries and how people cross them by movements that can be prescribed and proscribed by religion (Tweed 2006, 123). All three forms of crossing that Tweed introduces – terrestrial, corporeal, and cosmic – are about crossing over one's horizon and shifting a personal limit or a social boundary. In that sense, crossing is also about connecting. It links religion (Muslim piety and belonging) with other lived realities: While political and economic causes can trigger migration, migrants imagine their crossings, and dwellings, by using religious tropes (Tweed 2006, 131). Finally, while dwelling emphasizes the locative power of religion, crossing puts the focus on *transport* (a change in location), *transition* (a gradual process of re-orientation that aims to cope with and make sense of changing conditions) and *transformation* (a fundamental change from one state or passage to another, e. g., in the life-cycle).

Translocation is not the same as relocation. Not only replacement and emplacement mattered in my interlocutors' spatial biographies, but also interconnectedness and relationality. Engaging in the translocative practices of dwelling and crossing, mobile Tajik Muslims connected places, people, things, and ideas; the past with the present and future; and the moral with social, spiritual, economic, and cultural worlds. It was through their multiple dwellings and crossings that Tajik migrants fashioned pious and moral Muslim selves, felt a sense of belonging, and turned their migration to Dubai into meaningful movements and the geographical locations in the Middle East into meaningful places. In addition, considering relational placemaking only in terms of being 'in place' or 'making a place' would obscure its opposite: displacement. With the concept of translocations, the

book highlights the significance of space, place, and its spatial representations (proper Muslim places abroad) in Tajik migrants' biographical narratives, as well as addressing the social relations, religious formations, and identity politics emerging in the larger context of Dubai migration. Accordingly, translocative practices not only signify spatial relations, but simultaneously depict related social positions and positionings, as they are determined by age, gender, race, class, religion, and stage in the life-cycle. In line with Anthias (2006, 21), uncertainty, disconnection, and alienation make people more obsessed with finding and fixing a place where they feel at home or a sense of belonging. If feelings of displacement are a driving force for movement, Tajik migrants' multiple dwellings and crossings in Dubai's business worlds must be read in relation to how they have experienced social and political inclusion and exclusion in particular places. Following Anthias further, we should think of belonging in terms, not merely of cultural identification, but also of existing "preconditions of quality of life" (Anthias 2006, 20), including the range of social experience from enablement (self-fulfillment, progress) to impediment (feeling stuck). Thus, two things become salient: Muslim belonging is a relational category that highlights location and position, and, secondly, translocative practices do not only have a spatial dimension, but are also of social, emotional, and affective significance. Starting from these considerations, this spatial analysis of Islamic reform examines how Tajik migrants' pious and moral selves and their senses of belonging were shaped in geographically expanded social worlds determined by difference and hierarchy. Take the meaning of 'abroad': The Tajik term *khorija* means not simply the opposite of 'home' (*vatan, zodgoh*). Rather, 'abroad' designates a relation, a position, and a shifting perspective relative to what is imagined, articulated, and experienced as home, or being at home. This also includes experiences of uncertainty, anxiety, or marginalization that have led to feelings of alienation from home. Returning once again to mobility as a lived relation, an "orientation towards oneself, to others and to the world" (Adey 2017, XV), with its meaning 'away' or 'outside of,' *abroad* emphasizes both absence or (internal) displacement from home and emplacement somewhere else. This relation becames imbued with meaning when the Tajiks I met fashioned the places they migrated to as ideal, far-off 'Muslim places' (*joihoi musulmonī, mamlakathoi islomī*). Taking Tajikistan's transition into a capitalist democracy that in the late 1990s and early 2000s was accompanied by instability, corruption, nepotism, and the securitization of Islam, the term 'abroad' refers also to a specific moral, social, and political positioning, based on what in the book will be identified as post-national and cosmopolitan orientations.

Chapter Outline

The structure of the book largely follows the course of my research. It begins with the place where my fieldwork started; the place the people I met had left, whether temporarily, long- or short-term, or intentionally forever; the place to which they returned again and again and with which they remained deeply connected despite their attempts to detach themselves; the place that remained the central reference in their mobile and reform-oriented Islamic life projects: their birthplace, Dushanbe, and in a wider sense, Tajikistan. Accordingly, the first chapter assembles testimonials by former students of Islam who left and returned to their homeland in their youth and eventually moved further to immerse themselves in Dubai's multiple business worlds. The subsequent chapters then address Tajiks' everyday lives in the Arab Emirates, where they find themselves, not only economic actors, but also adults responsible for the families they left behind or took abroad. In that sense, the book's structure also follows my research partners' movements through their life-cycle, thus mapping the intersection of their professional, religious, and social trajectories onto larger geographies of Muslim mobility and connectivity. Following the people and their biographies, the book structure runs the danger of constructing, yet enshrining, an apparent linearity and consistency in their mobile lives that would not do justice to their more contingent mode of religious becoming. Such linearity would obscure the existing ruptures, ambivalences, and contradictions, as well as the multiple crossings, overlaps, and interlaces of multiple movements, localizations, and temporalities that form their migratory experience and shape their lifeworlds and livelihoods.

Chapter one examines the reconfiguration of Tajik Muslim mobilities across Central Asia, Eurasia, and the Middle East in the intersecting context of secular nation-state politics related to the securitization of Islam in Tajikistan and the strong attraction of the booming Islamic Gulf economy. The focus is on how mobile Tajiks engaged the three entangled forms of Muslim travel, namely *riḥla* (travel in search of knowledge), *hijra* (Muslim emigration), and *ḥajj* and *'umrah* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and the related ethics of dwelling and leaving to fashion their migration to places in the Arab Middle East as meaningful movements that promised spiritual and moral advancement, social mobility and economic well-being. Mapping the religious economy of Tajik Dubai business onto larger moral and emotional geographies in which mobile Tajiks situated their personal projects of Islamic reform, the chapter illustrates how imagination, morality, emotion, and embodiment mattered in the relational, intertwined, meaningful processes of Muslim place- and self-making.

Chapter two traces the transition of former students of Islam, most of them alumni from Cairo's al-Azhar university, into street brokers and business middle-

men. Both the male-dominated work fields in Dubai's trading and tourism business sectors and the multi-ethnic and culturally diverse migrant accommodations where Tajiks resided serve as a spatial lens to examine how religiously trained young Tajiks, by drawing on their travel knowledge, religious authority, multiple language proficiencies, and on a broad repertoire of urban skills, coped with precarity and temporariness in Dubai's informal and formal economic sector. At the same time, this broad cultural repertoire fostered a wide range of translocative practices through which Tajik street brokers and middlemen flexibly traversed and connected the hierarchical economic and religious worlds of Afghan traders, Iranian businessmen, and Arab sponsors. Following performative practices of migrant self-fashioning, the chapter concludes by illustrating how Tajik middlemen upgraded their informal migrant status in Dubai and used their cosmopolitan and pious Muslim businessman identities to signify an exclusive socioeconomic position in the hierarchical field of Asian migrant workers in Dubai.

Chapter three zooms in on the religious economy of Dubai's fur business. Drawing on the growing body of anthropological studies on 'neoliberal piety' or 'pious neoliberalism', the chapter explores how Tajiks combining work and piety engaged in reformist Islam as an all-encompassing way of life to secure economic prosperity, and to make sense of both economic success and failure. This involves Tajik Muslims' engagement in godly, i. e., Shariʿa (Arabic *sharīʿah*) conform work. This chapter reveals how Tajiks situated their Muslimness in a field of competing discourses related to 'correct' work practices and business ethics, as circulated and cultivated in Dubai's reformist Muslim business networks. Arguably, a heightened mobility within and across different Islamic traditions enabled Tajiks to flexibly combine the moral heritage of Persian Sufi Islam with the entrepreneurial spirit and purist piety of their Salafi-minded Dubai business partners. By drawing on the various logics of dwelling and crossing as translocations in economic, social and religious terms (covering multiple positionings and translations), this chapter illustrates that while Tajiks connected themselves to the cosmopolitan heritage of Muslim trading worlds in and across the 'Persian Gulf' and Eurasia, they simultaneously longed for the aspirational political project of the 'Arabian Gulf'.

In the following two chapters, the focus shifts to practices and processes of migrant placemaking outside the workplace. Mapping the moral and emotional geographies of everyday migrant life in Dubai, the second part of the book explores how Tajiks engaged in spatial politics of Muslim piety and belonging in an urban environment shaped by diversity, difference, and ambivalent cosmopolitanism, providing some opportunities and limiting others. *Chapter four* provides a spatial analysis of how Tajiks engaged in processes of embodied placemaking through a wide range of leisure activities conducted in Dubai's city space. The chapter explores how the mutually constitutive relationship between migrant bodies and

urban space produced a specific sense of Dubai as a 'good Muslim place' that is set in relation to circulating social imaginaries about the city as a place where people become pious. With a focus on visiting spectacular mosques as both cosmopolitan places of worship and iconic tourist sites, on selective practices of eating out in ethnic restaurants, as well as on the practice of adopting Arab names, the chapter illuminates the complex relationship between place, space, and Muslim subjectivity. As will be shown, Tajik migrants incorporated the powerful religious and political ideologies of the urban places they inhabited as they simultaneously envisioned and made these places meaningful in relation to their former spatial experiences as migrant workers in Russia or deviant Muslims at home (instead of passively adapting to the reigning spatial regimes of national politics of identity and belonging). Tackling reformist Islam through translocative practices that situated Tajiks in the moral geography of Dubai's urban space, the chapter unfolds the argument that the realm of leisure provided a crucial space in addition to the workplace that allowed Tajiks to craft moral Muslim selves and to sense alternative forms of sociopolitical belonging to Dubai despite an exclusive citizenship and migration regime.

Shifting to the lifeworlds of Tajik women accompanying their husbands to Dubai, *chapter five* explores how the organization of work in the fur business together with related work ethics and professional identities tied to notions of Muslimness closely resonated with Tajik migrants' residential practices and family lifestyles in the United Arab Emirates, mainly in the neighboring emirate of Sharjah. Arguably, housing preferences, home-making practices, and neighborly cohabitations were closely intertwined with the social integration into and cultivation of business networks, the formation of pious subjectivities, and the fashioning of migrant identities. This observation places Tajik women and their embodied religious placemaking at the center of this chapter. Two findings are guiding: Firstly, migrant women's worlds were not limited to the private space of the home. Instead, Tajik women actively participated in and shaped the urban public through involvement in the aesthetics and ethics of self-organized neighborhood sociabilities, as they emerged around religious infrastructures like neighborhood mosques and Quranic recitation courses. Thus, Tajik women's religious placemaking intertwined the domestic, family, and neighborhood space in Sharjah (i.e., the women's world) with the realm of work and business in Dubai (i.e., the men's world). Secondly, circulating migrant stories about Tajik women who transformed into 'Islamic women' in Dubai relate their religious self-fashioning to cosmopolitan moments of shared neighborly sociabilities in which reformist Muslim piety was also reconfigured as a signifier for middle-class belonging.

The *Conclusion* reprises the major themes of this translocal ethnography and reflects on the epistemological, methodological, and conceptual gains of the

'Dubai business' and 'Muslim mobility' lenses deployed in the book. This last chapter highlights the book's contribution to an anthropology of Muslim mobility and transregional Islam. A final reflection on religion as a practice of translocation in migratory contexts determined by volatility, unevenness, and contingency aims to achieve a synthesis by discussing four analytically relevant aspects and their inter-relatedness: temporality, flexibility, positionality, and connectivity.