Conclusion
On Temporality, Flexibility, Positionality, and Connectivity

Investigating how Dubai migration entangled with individual and aspirational projects of Islamic reform and shaped mobile Muslim subjectivities, this book ultimately dealt with the much broader question of how Tajik Muslims positioned themselves in the world by perfecting their piety and performing multiple belonging in processes of Muslim migration and relational placemaking. Based on the spatial biographies of pious and Islamic educated Tajiks like Karim, Fazliddin, Saidullah and Mehrigul, this book explored the meaningful role Dubai migration, with its accompanying possibilities and constraints, played in the pursuit of a good Muslim life by Tajiks almost fifteen years after the end of the Soviet Union. Having traced Tajiks' multiple translocations within and across Dubai's entangled business worlds, this book has considered migration as an existential experience and as a form of relatedness to the world. Accordingly, it has explored what it has meant to live a mobile life as reform-minded pious Muslims in a time marked by rapid political and economic transition and experiences of precariousness, dislocation, and estrangement. The book has sought to understand how Tajik Muslims' Islamic life projects have intertwined with the unpredictability of their mobile life trajectories and the volatility of the future they imagined and tried to realize, at home and abroad.

After my meeting with Karim, I expanded my fieldwork to Dubai to look more deeply into the moral geographies of Dubai migration. By then, the Dubai boom had already peaked. As chapter two and three have shown, Tajiks well established in Dubai's fur trade were struggling with the increasing influx of unskilled compatriots and other Central Asian migrants arriving from Russia. Often poorly trained and lacking key business skills and work ethics, these rural youngsters jeopardized both the trustworthiness and exclusivity of the Tajik fur business. Dubai's last debt crisis and the related decline in property prices in 2009; increased deportations of undocumented migrant workers, especially from Central Asia and the Caucasus; the economic recession in Russia between 2008–2009 and the ensuing significant decline of Russian tourists in the Arab Emirates; together, these economic developments overshadowed the alluring image of Dubai as an economic paradise. Many of the Tajiks I met in Dubai were therefore thinking about alternative destinations for work. Apart from the volatility of an economic sector heavily dependent on global capitalist market dynamics; it was also the obvious socioeconomic precarity Tajiks faced in Dubai that revealed the elusiveness (or fakeness) of circulating mi-

grant stories about Dubai as an ideal Muslim place for spiritual and material prog-ress. These narratives obscured everyday manifestations of social difference, polar-ization, and a racialized structural inequality dominant in Dubai's multiple busi-ness worlds in the early 2010s (Elsheshtawy 2010; Mahdavi 2011). This book identified the striking gap between hopeful spatial imagination and expectation re-garding the good elsewhere and migrants' everyday experiences of being 'there', and investigated how Tajik Muslims navigated their pious endeavors through busi-ness worlds that promised much but delivered highly contingent, unpredictable, and transient results. The multiple translocations addressed in this book can be read as both embedded in and responding to these transient Muslim worlds: Re-sulting from unevenness and contingency, they served to cushion these experien-ces, even as they sometimes also reinforced them. Dubai's volatile business worlds created the context for processes of mobile Muslim subject formation. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that the Islamic reform projects of pious Tajiks proved to be just as contingent, volatile, and uneven as the multiple business worlds of Dubai themselves.

In a final reflection on religion as a practice of translocation in migratory con-texts determined by volatility, unevenness, and contingency, I will now attempt to synthesize four interrelated aspects that proved relevant in methodological and epistemological terms for the spatial analysis of Islamic reform among mobile Tajik Muslims: i. e., temporality, flexibility, positionality, and connectivity.

On Temporality: Spatial Moments

Throughout the chapters of this book, this translocal ethnography has highlighted the spatial over the temporal dimension of Islamic reform. Coming back to a state-ment in the introduction, with reference to Julia Verne I argued that the spatial biographies assembled in this book do the work of both spatially *and* temporally fixing forms of transregional connectivity and connectedness, which tend to be dy-namic, unstable, changeable and therefore slip from the analytical gaze (Verne 2019, 85). I have further argued that spatial biographies provide 'thick moments' that shed light on the very specific space-time contexts in which Muslim mobilities, and the related movements and placemaking practices, took place and were im-bued with meaning through connectivity and connectedness, shaping mobile Mus-lim subjectivities. Finally, with its bio-centric approach, the book follows up on an argument made in an earlier publication about time as being an integral part of translocality as a lived reality. According to Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder (2018b, 43), memories, dreams, and illusions, like the virtual sharing of spectacular ḥajj stories or chains of Islamic knowledge transmission (Arabic *isnād*), fixate tem-

poral translocalities. Transtemporalities emerge from "movements that cross and connect times on different, yet 'jumping scales'" (Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018b, 43), as they are shaped by "both sequences of experience in time, as well as from techniques that bring multiple moments together in consciousness" (Light 2018, 18). Focusing on moments that are spatially and temporally 'thick' and bring to light existing connectivities and their historical dimension with the senses of connectedness they generate, I argue, provides a fresh stimulus to re-think the meaning of 'thick description' in translocal ethnographies like the one presented in this book.

An attempt to determine 'context' in Tajik's mobility practices and their mobile lifeworlds, the spatial biographies unfolded here have highlighted, not only how religious subject formation was linked to relational placemaking in larger geographies of Muslim mobility, but also how spatial biographies draw attention to those moments in fieldwork, making the connectivity between subject, place, and mobility apparent and the senses of connectedness tangible. Moments that were fleeting, yet thick, i.e., 'spatial moments', as van Schendel (2015) calls them, approach histories of placemaking by exploring how people turn a location into a place through social action and relation (including religious practice), and by drawing attention to the spatiality of social relations (and religious practices) (van Schendel 2015, 98, 100). In addition, the bio-centric[79] approach in this book's spatial analysis has connected mobile actors (pious Tajik Muslims) with historical dynamics (the religious economy of Dubai business) on multiple scales, while tracing how these historical dynamics shaped life trajectories and were inscribed into bodies through experience and memory, all in relation to the places Tajik migrants dwelled in and crossed through.

But the benefits of drawing attention to spatial moments go much further. Providing a fruitful epistemological anchor, moments connect anthropology and new area studies in critical attempts by the two disciplines to decenter knowledge orders that build on methodological nationalism and favor static, essentialist, Eurocentric, and Orientalist approaches in studies, not only on Islam in Central Asia, but also on Islam and Muslims in general. A focus on moments that highlight the

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79 With 'bio-centric', I emphasize the book's approach that takes processes of subject formation through spatial processes of dwelling and crossing through multiple Muslim worlds as the point of departure. Inspired by, but different from Vincent Houben's pledge for a 'pericentric perspective' that, "staring from a particular place and proceeds to look laterally in all directions across scales" focuses on historical actors as relevant brokers between multiple historical trajectories on multiple scales (Houben 2021, 13), the spatial biographies collected in this book fix, at least temporarily, how transient space-time configurations like Dubai business created the context for mobile Muslim subject formation.

transformative (transductive) character of connectivity and connectedness as proposed in this work, I argue, prompts us to gaze beyond the existence and persistence of networks (as economic, social, or cultural infrastructures) across space, place, and time, and to explore how networks, and the connectivity they effect, shape subjects and make places and movements meaningful by binding its members effectively to discursive and aesthetic formations that transcend the power of the nation state as an imagined community, as revealed in chapter three and five. The moments captured in the presented spatial biographies have served to contextualize Tajik migrants' Muslim sentiments, sensibilities, and existential questions, not only in space, but also in time.

A focus on moments helped me to situate everyday religious practices and experiences in migratory contexts at "the confluence" of multiple "transregional processes [...] that cross-cut and knit together" hitherto separated regional entities (Ahmad 2017, 31), like Central Asia, Russia, the Gulf, and the wider Middle East. Moments thus allowed me to fix spatially and temporally what seemed unfixable, volatile, and transient. My focus on moments also allowed me to situate my fieldwork in the dynamic geographies of Muslim mobility and connectivity I investigated in a "punctuated form" (Ahmad 2017, 32). Thus, migrant stories proved to be a good place to start. An emerging concept in anthropological research about morality and ethical self-formation, and beyond, narratives are seen as a fundamental way in which people give meaning to experience, produce identity, and realize the good (MacIntyre 1981; Ricoeur 1992; Zigon 2012). As shown in chapter one, in Tajikistan, narratives about Muslim travel and the related mobile experiences co-produce spatial imaginaries about the moral and the good elsewhere, which have become a driving force in the institutionalization of a Muslim ethics of leaving for the Middle East. At the same time, the book has carved out that migrant stories are an empowering cultural resource that mobilize people to engage in pious self-fashioning and moral improvement through migration.

Beginning this book with Karim's story, I could also have started with another case study and a different perspective on Dubai migration, but eventually decided to highlight the processual character of this translocal ethnography. Not only was Karim the first student returnee from al-Azhar university who agreed to meet and tell me his life story, he also paved the way for the transformation of my research into a multi-sited ethnography by advising me to go to Dubai to meet more people like him. Karim's story itself resulted from a specific moment of ethnographic encounter, which was curious in many ways and made me reflect on the pathways I was able to take through a transregional research field as shaped by "the art of making an unsought finding" (Rivoal and Salazar 2013, 178; McAdams 2011). Serendipity characterized key moments of my ethnographic fieldwork that often centered around the stories I was listening to and that helped me to understand that

mobile Tajiks' Islamic life projects were just as volatile and elusive as Dubai's fur business itself. In that sense, serendipity also let me experience the agency of the research field in terms of what we can know at all (Tilche and Simpson 2017).

But the curious circumstances in which I met Karim also helped me to understand how place mattered in the geographies of Muslim piety and belonging mapped here. By place, I meant more than the physical settings where I learned about Karim's and other mobile Tajiks' life stories. The spatial analysis developed in this book approaches place above all as a site that, with all its interlacing material and immaterial properties and power relations, had a great impact on how stories were told and made sense of as an intersubjective ethical endeavor of those involved (Zigon 2012; Crapanzano 2012).

Eventually, considering my translocal ethnography 'punctuated' by moments enabled me to understand transformation to be decentered and fluid rather than linear, accounting "for the reconfiguration of what are always a dynamic and shifting constellation of factors" (Ahmad 2017, 32). Ahmad's considerations clearly resonate with an understanding of the transformative nature of connectivity as transduction (Adey 2017), as discussed in the introduction to this book. In that sense, moments provided an approach that, again referring to Attiya Ahmad, helped me to highlight human agency and creativity as moments that illustrate that experiences, situations and encounters are not only structured by discursive traditions, disciplinary practices and political-economic relationships. These moments in ethnographic fieldwork also represent examples of "newly discovered possibilities that have only just been glimpsed or barely grasped" (Ahmad 2017, 33). Paying attention to both possibility and contingency proved to be a helpful epistemological anchor that enabled me to make processes of connectivity visible and experiences of connectedness graspable, to "account for the novel forms of subjectivity and belonging that are being configured by transnational processes today" and "that might otherwise elude, or be elided by, our scholarship" (Ahmad 2017, 33).

On Flexibility

Moments that permit the reader or listener to pay attention to both possibility and contingency evoke the discussion in chapters two and five on precarity as the constant condition experienced by my mobile research partners as they engaged in processes of relational placemaking and the associated spatial practices of dwelling and crossing in Dubai's business worlds. Precarity, taken as a human experience, arises from volatility and transience as well as from heightened uncertainty of working conditions. As Richard Sennett has argued in his now classical work on the effects of flexible capitalism in the USA, driven by the corporate maxims of ar-

bitrariness and speed, people are expected to be able to constantly adapt to new circumstances and working conditions. In due course, flexibility has become a necessary skill in the capitalist economy, together with a tolerance for fragmentation. This was associated by Sennett with the evaporation of community and dissolution of long-term relationships like the family (Sennett 1998, 20, 22, 24). Sennett's analysis is strong in illustrating how short-term, fragmented, and flexible capitalist working conditions result in the corrosion of character through emotional inner-life drift inscribed into individual work histories, (post-) migrant family biographies, and people's sense of being in the world. By contrast, Aihwa Ong's transnational ethnography of globalization in the Asia-Pacific region reverses that gaze to carve out the cultural logics that shape uneven global capitalist development and illustrate that global capitalist conditions can tighten social bonds through spatially expanding families and communities in the context of migration (see also Saxer 2023). Illuminating the complex relationship between state, society, and capital, Ong introduced 'flexible citizenship' as a concept to tackle a new "logic of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically" to changing economic, social and political situations (Ong 1999, 6). This response, however, is not an individual one, but part of a family strategy. Thinking flexibility (and adding multiplicity) as a product and condition of global capitalism with both Sennett and Ong helps to understand the engagement of Tajiks in multiple forms of belonging and to reconfigure Muslim mobilities from Central Asia in the wider context of uneven participation in processes of economic and religious globalization that transcend the realm of Dubai business life. Tajiks thus were able to mitigate against economic and political uncertainty. But flexibility simultaneously allowed them to pursue less tangible life goals related to the enhancement of pious lifestyles, religious identities, personal growth, or moral and material well-being, including both individual and family, or community interests (Studemeyer 2015; Lin 2012). But mobility as flexibility was not without unforeseeable consequences. What role did religion play here?

The Islamic reform projects Tajiks engaged with in the context of their Dubai migration has illuminated how culture (here: religion) can give meaning to (here: economic) action, and in the wider sense existential concerns. But the trajectories of the pious endeavors of mobile Tajiks also reflected how the 'cultural logic' behind the transregionalization of religion, family, and Muslim travel were reworked about the intertwining of capitalism and state power (Ong 1999, 240, 243). I argue that we need to see Tajiks' Dubai migration as embedded in larger spatial strategies of flexible belonging, which include citizenship as both a legal category and an ideal (Studemeyer 2015, 567). Russian citizenship, for example, could, and still can, be acquired by Tajiks through marriage. Emirati citizenship, by contrast, remains an unfulfilled wish due to the country's exclusive citizenship regime. That

is compensated, as Tajiks' engagement in religiously-driven relational placemaking has shown, by other forms of belonging such as adopting Arab names and clothing styles, or cultivating work ethics based on a purist version of Islam. However, Tajiks' flexible handling of notions of Muslimness, Arabness, or Persianness also reflects the post-national sentiments promoted by global Islam (and the idea of a global *ummah*), which force us to understand citizenship (as a form of belonging) in a global and globalizing world in more flexible ways.

Eventually, the translocations and related forms of multiple positioning, by which Tajiks engaged and pervaded various regimes of regulating both movement and dwelling, produced a more complex view of religious and moral subject making (Ong 1999, 243). This book challenges essentializing narratives of difference rooting in methodological nationalism produced and reproduced in circulating political discourses of fear and disorder that fuel Islamophobia in the home country and beyond and that dismantle Tajik Muslim travelers returning from their Islamic studies in the Middle East as deviant adherents of a 'foreign' and dangerous Arab Salafi Islam.

Following Ong's cultural logic of flexible citizenship, religion (religious knowledge, piety, and belonging) as a translocative practice proved to be a resource for successful economic action and for progress. But such an interpretation would obscure what Thomas Tweed has described with his spatial metaphor of 'crossing' as the ambivalent ability of religion to fix a horizon for mobility. Religion both prescribes and proscribes movements across boundaries while simultaneously employing tropes, codes, institutions, and norms to set and mark boundaries (Tweed 2006, 123). Following Tweed further, religion shares with economy, society, and politics that they are "transfluvial currents, transverse flows that cross and thereby impel new cultural streams". In other words, political and economic causes can trigger migration, but migrants imagine their crossings and dwellings by using religious tropes (Tweed 2006, 131).

The concept of 'mobilizing religion' introduced by Conermann and Smolarz (2015) is similarly fruitful as a conceptual lens on the entangled relationship between mobility and religion. This relationship becomes traceable in relation to precarity as a major condition and experience shaping the everyday life of Tajiks, not only in post-civil war Tajikistan, but also in other migrant destinations. As the spatial biographies in this book have revealed, Tajiks' striving for pious self-making and belonging abroad was embedded in mobility projects that were themselves highly precarious. As an exit option, religiously motivated migration emerged from a precarious moral or emotional condition, even as it was followed by unexpected consequences that created new forms of precarity (economic uncertainty, political surveillance, and social marginalization). These reflections underline once again the aim of this book not to celebrate Gulf migration as simply a success

story, unlike what the many migrant accounts I collected during my fieldwork suggested. While engaging in alternative futures abroad, Tajiks could become very successful economic, spiritual, and moral actors. But given a piety that does not conform with Tajikistani state-promoted national Islam and differentiates pious Muslims from the religious orientation of the majority of Muslims in the country, they always run the risk of political discrimination, social marginality, and therefore economic uncertainty at home. At the same time, and turning to everyday migrant life in Dubai itself, Tajik's business activities were framed by a restrictive labor and residence law regime, which added volatility and elusiveness to the economic and social progress they aspired to and achieved.

Finally, the contingency of Islamic reform projects abroad was also fed by family and emotional crises, which often resulted in an unplanned return home. One of the main reasons for this was childlessness. Nura, a friend of Fatima's whom we met with her husband Ahmad in the introduction to this book, was not able to become pregnant abroad. She therefore returned home with her husband, who had successfully established himself as a middleman in Dubai's fur business. Although Nura became pregnant shortly after the couple's return home and gave birth to a son, she began to suffer from depression. She explained to me that it was caused by the lack of opportunities at home to continue her religious studies and pass on her knowledge by teaching young girls and neighboring women in Quran recitation (*tajwīd*) while in Sharjah, just as she had practiced Quranic teaching in Yemen, where she had studied Islamic subjects with her husband and with Fatima and Ahmad. But Nura also suffered from the rejection she experienced from her neighbors due to her reformist piety, which she expressed through an Arab-oriented style of Islamic dressing. When I once met her in Fatima's house, she was initially wearing a fashionable black female dress (Arabic *ʿabāya*), a shiny dark blue *hijab* with a face veil (Arabic *niqāb*), and gloves with glittering stones, just like the Tajik women I met in Sharjah did. But later, she took off her stylish Arab dress when other women from the neighborhood joined us for tea. With the colorful flowered wide national dress, she wore under her Arabic dress, Nura differed only slightly from the other women present. When I later asked her about her change of dress, she replied, at first surprised, "I thought you wanted to see an Islamic woman!" but then explained how difficult it was for her to maintain her Islamic lifestyle, cultivated in Yemen and then in Sharjah, in the hostile environment of her neighborhood on the outskirts of Dushanbe. Partly because of this weakness (*zaify*), Nura reflected, she became depressed and longed nostalgically for the good Muslim life in Sharjah the couple had given up because of her desire to have children. This episode is telling in many respects. It points to the diverse expectations to which reform-oriented Muslims expose themselves: their own, those of like-minded Muslims, and those anticipated in a researcher from Germany interested

in Muslim piety and Dubai migration. The episode also shows the multiplicity of religious experiences in the context of translocal Islamic lifestyles, illustrating how Muslim piety and belonging have been shaped by the experienced limitations of flexible action and the resulting emotional crisis in mobile life contexts. Both volatility and elusiveness have shaped the flexible engagement of pious Tajik Muslims in multiple belongings. This invites reflection on their positionality within the geographies of Muslim piety and belonging as investigated in this book.

On Positionality: A Peripheral Cosmopolitanism

Globalization is inescapable and pervasive. Along with the overwhelmingly precarious involvement of Tajikistan's youth in the global economy through labor migration and international study trips, this book has illustrated how post-cold war globalization has intensified an ongoing and striking religious renewal in Tajikistan and wider Central Asia described as a re-configuration, re-evaluation and re-positioning of Tajiks' Muslim identity and belonging in the dynamic, entangled worlds of the global *ummah.* Such an understanding of Islamic renewal resonates with what Beck has termed as "cosmopolitanization," a dynamic that derives from the interplay of global risks, migration, cultural consumption and media impacts, and that has led to a "growing awareness of relativity of one's own position and culture in a global arena" (Beck 2016, 27).[80] Following this argument, I tackled 'Muslim', 'Salafi', or 'reform', not as fixed categories of identity and belonging, but as related socio-spatial locations and positionings or translocations (Anthias 2006). In this quality, 'Muslim', 'Salafi', and the other categories used in the book situated Tajik Muslims in larger, flexible, and multiple contexts of discursive and aesthetic formations, thus drawing attention to the material dimension of how Tajik Muslims were bound to imagined communities beyond the nation-state (Meyer 2009, 6). Likewise, 'Tajik' proved to be, not simply a territory-fix category for 'the local', but a relational position shaped by what I have described in chapter two as 'peripheral cosmopolitanism', through which Tajiks positioned themselves within Dubai's multiple business worlds, while simultaneously connecting them.

As argued in an earlier article (Stephan-Emmrich 2021, 71), globalization has revitalized the idea of the community of Muslim believers (Arabic *ummah*) as a postcolonial form of Muslim imagination, not only, but particularly in migrant

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80 Although this book put focus on Tajik Muslims' engagement in post-national sensibilities abroad, a cosmopolitanization and globalization of citizenship occurred also as part of the state-promoted projects of post-Western modernity (Heathershaw 2011; Adams 2010).

and diasporic contexts. Through narratives of the *ummah* as Dubai business community, Tajik migrants created moments of cultural and religious nestedness, solidarity, and affirmation and sensed a belonging to something larger that transcended established notions of 'Tajikness' and 'Muslimness' and fueled postnational sensibilities and cosmopolitan positions. I see here a clear confirmation of Appadurai's observation that "imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only [for] escape" (Appadurai 1996, 7). The book has also shown that different conceptions of the *ummah* were developed when Tajiks formed and engaged in various Muslim sociabilities at their workplaces and in their migrant accommodations in Dubai, or in their new homes in Sharjah. Engaging in a wide range of discursive and aesthetic formations, Tajiks experienced diversity while also coping with difference and fragmentation and negotiating prevailing notions of 'center' and 'periphery'.

When positioning themselves economically, socially, culturally, and morally within the community of Muslim believers (Arabic *ummah*), Tajiks sensed their 'peripheral' status. Produced at the meeting point of multiple intersectional positions, this sense of peripherality has shaped Tajiks' multiple translocations in their spatial biographies: as labor migrants in Russia facing structural racial discrimination, as Muslims from former Soviet Central Asia isolated from Islamic knowledge circuits, as deviant pious Muslims under state surveillance at home, or as people from the dissident Gharm region in Tajikistan. Fashioning an exclusive migrant identity as Muslim businesspeople cushioned my research partners' peripheral status as Tajiks and enabled them to articulate belonging outside ethnic, regional, and national concepts of being Tajik.

Their peripheral status did not constitute a passive mode of being; instead, it designated their cultural and political situatedness. In his ethnography on coastal Muslims in Kenia and their double peripheral position in the Muslim world, Kai Kresse (2013, 80–82) illustrates how peripherality favors Muslim cosmopolitanism grounded in flexibility, openness, adaptability, and creativity to engage in multiple discourses, debates, and cultures on different scales. In other words, people act in concrete personal contexts of everyday life shaped by postcolonial nation-states, while "having the wider [Muslim] world in mind" (Kresse 2013, 80). My argument here is similar. The peripheral cosmopolitanism Tajik Muslims became involved in during their Dubai migration is not only an effect of intensified globalization. My research partners' capacity, competence, and skill to draw flexibly from diverse registers of knowledge, language, education, cultural openness, and historical experience to navigate the world (Kresse 2013, 82, 95–96) is grounded in a sense of Muslim connectedness associated with a kind of historical knowledge based on travel, shared intellectual currents, and an ambivalent border position "simultaneously inside and outside the Muslim world". This mode of being in the world

has shaped Muslim identity and subjectivity in the region in complex processes of historical entanglement and intense transculturation (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012, 88). And as depicted in chapter one, instead of cementing belonging to a particular national culture, a certain "mediating function between different worlds" (Tlostanova and Mignolo 2012, 89) has mobilized Tajiks to turn to destinations abroad, "as long as there is a Muslim there". This mediating role has privileged Tajik migrants to become middlemen in Dubai's mutiple business worlds, as shown in chapter two.

Both "As long as there is a Muslim there" and "We Tajiks are everywhere" were frequent responses given by my research partners when asked what had motivated them to migrate. What struck me most was that these statements seemed to posit such spaces as morally safe, familiar Muslim spaces in terms of both ethnic and religious networks, as little more than a geographical extension of home (Stephan 2013; Saxer 2023). However, the stories assembled in this book speak a very different language, revealing that foreign lands and certain far-off places were assessed as safer, more familiar, and more promising than the Tajikistani homeland. This was related to a territorial shift or translocation of home and community to places elsewhere. In his work on waiting and hope in Iran, Sharom Khosravi (2017, 5) connects social precarity, which he understands as de-securitization of one's life conditions, with a growing sense of disconnectedness to and exile from home (or the homeland) while at home (see also Ahmed 1999). In this sense, for many Tajiks migration has become linked with a 'homing desire', a longing to find a home elsewhere (Brah 1996). Peripheral and simultaneously cosmopolitan, this longing describes a sensibility that marks a certain positionality and way of relating to the wider world that also grounds in the collective memories of Tajik families involved in various kinds of mobility throughout history, covering diplomatic journeys, work migration to Russia, civil war displacement to Afghanistan, cross-border trade, pilgrimage, and diaspora belonging.

Such a Muslim cosmopolitan sensibility or globality (Crews 2015), as elaborated here, is nested primarily in the Persian-Islamicate world. Organized around linguistic, ethnic, and religious communities, in the past this Muslim cosmopolitanism has traversed and connected the territories of the Ottoman, Russian, Moghul, and British Empires (Green 2019; Marsden 2016b; Kane 2015; Burton 1997) and today links Tajikistan's Muslims via Dubai's business worlds with Afghan and Iranian trading networks spanning the Indian Ocean, Eurasia, and the Middle East. During the Soviet period, the cosmopolitanism of Central Asian Muslims coalesced with a new semantic framework when socialist internationalism (Russian *internatsionalizm*) as both ideology and practice became an important aspect of urbanism and progress, including different forms of travel within and across the borders of the Soviet Union (Grant 2010, 127–133; Humphrey 2004). As discussed with refer-

ence to leisure activities, urban mobilities, and Muslim neighborhood sociabilities, when Tajiks cultivate cosmopolitan sensibilities in Dubai as both an economic strategy and a form of religious placemaking, they draw on cultural capital that, combining education and multilingualism with urban competences and intellectual currents, has also privileged and signified Soviet urban middle classes (Humphrey 2004). But Soviet ideology also has clear restrictive effects on contemporary migration to the Middle East. Consider the stigmatization of Muslims who, like Karim, engaged in unregistered forms of Muslim travel to the Middle East. The negative image inherent in the concept of cosmopolitanism (Russian *kosmopolitizm*) during the Soviet period (Grant 2010; Humphrey 2004) still resonates in the state's attempt to securitize its citizens' Muslim mobility through a regime of normativity that frames the transgression of national borders as an act of deviant citizenship. As further elaborated in chapter three, the Islamic reform projects Karim and his compatriots engaged in while in Dubai were flexible in nature, combining ethical positions drawing on purist Salafism, Sufi ethics, and the Persianate Islamic tradition prevailing at home in Tajikistan. However, following Beck's (2016, 27) notion of cosmopolitanization as an unintended, forced process, cosmopolitan religious practice involves individuals with limited choices, and the production of new socio-religious arrangements in these cosmopolitan settings does not occur in an "unbridled horizon of cultural appropriation and enactment" (Vertovec 2010, 66).

Academic work and media coverage have reproduced orientalist images of Tajikistan and Central Asia in general as 'in-between' or 'transit space', as the 'peripheral Other', contributing to a 'discursive marginalization', not only of Tajikistan, but of wider Central Asia (Kirmse 2020, 21–23, 26). Phrases such as 'with its southernmost position in Central Asia' surely refer to a geographical or geopolitical position, but they also evoke images of Tajikistan as remote, mountainous, and poorly urbanized – a marginalized place that only peripherally participated in the Soviet modernization project, and later in globalization (Kirmse 2020; Mostowlansky 2017). At the same time, Tajikistan is almost instantly associated with its civil war (1992–1997) and its lasting socioeconomic and political aftereffects, reducing its perception to that of a place where poverty and political fragility meet religious radicalization. The ascription of peripherality to Tajikistan and its people and their subjectivities produces a powerful political and cultural discourse that frames how Tajiks feel about and describe themselves in relation to the wider world. Whether as the only Persian-speaking nation in Central Asia, as discriminated-against labor migrants in Russia, as members of a young generation prevented from political and social participation, or as Tajik citizens without access to lucrative jobs in the public sector or on the market due to their 'wrong' regional background, the stories assembled in this book have much to tell about the multiple settings and situations in which Tajiks have related themselves to their envi-

ronment as 'second-class citizens' or 'second-class migrants'. Such self-attribution also includes their position as Muslims on multiple scales: as ignorant former Soviet Muslims cut off from Islamic knowledge and discourses, as Persian-speaking Muslims cut off from their intellectual and cultural home in Bukhara and Samarkand (the two historical cultural and religious centers of Persianate Central Asia that today belong to the territory of Uzbekistan), and as deviant Muslim migrants in the Middle East, prone to becoming radicalized abroad. While in Dubai, Tajiks tried to divest themselves of their multiple peripheral positions by refashioning themselves as cosmopolitan Muslim businesspeople. Acknowledging the dynamic relation between cosmopolitan and peripheral sensibilities, I argue, is an important precondition to understanding the geographies of Muslim piety and belonging mapped out in this book. The spatial biographies collected here have illustrated the ambivalent relationship to Russia characterized by economic symbiosis and an interplay of desired distance and sought-after closeness which has bound Tajiks to Russia even in Dubai and continues to bind them to this day. With Dubai as a new migration destination, there was an obvious opportunity to overcome old Soviet dependencies on Russia. But having arrived there, Tajiks realized that the existing uneven power relations had merely undergone a spatial shift and thus an expansion into Dubai's fur business, confirming the peripheral status felt by Tajiks, but in a different spatial context. Symptomatic of this déjà vu is the rather elusive longing of Tajik Muslims to be part of the Arab Muslim world in Dubai business life.

On Connectivity: 'Dubai Islam'

What a transregional perspective allows us to see that we would otherwise have missed can be answered with reference to the three conceptual lenses deployed in this book. Transversal and multi-perspectival, the book has used 'Muslim mobility', 'Dubai business', and 'translocation' to transcend taken-for-granted spatial orders and conventional unitary area frames such as 'Central Asia', 'the Middle East', or 'the Gulf'. It has connected previously compartmentalized fields of research, such as Central Asian and Gulf Studies, Religious Studies and Economics, and the anthropology of Islam and Muslims, with studies on mobility and migration and Area Studies. These conceptual lenses help turn the analytical gaze to dynamic processes related to *connectivity* (and senses of *connectedness*) to emphasize transgression and transition over stasis and fixity, and to overcome essentializing container cultures in studies of Muslims, Islam, and migration, as they are enforced by methodological nationalism or regionalism.

The dynamic and multi-layered interconnectedness of Muslim travel, work migration, trading, tourism, and reform-minded Islamic life projects has prompted me to approach 'Dubai business' as a dynamic transregional platform of material and immaterial exchange and circulation that connects, creates, and forms multiple entangled Muslim worlds. As shown, these worlds were appropriated, inhabited, shaped, and experienced by Tajik Muslims in multiple ways. The intertwinings of economic, social, and religious life and the fusion of Persophone, Arabophone, and Russophone Muslim worlds in Dubai's multiple business fields through Tajik migrants engaging in the processes of dwelling, crossing, and relational placemaking, mark fascinating moments of interconnectivity in the translocal ethnography presented in this book.

With *connectivity,* Brosius and Pfaff-Czarnecka (2019, 5) suggest a convincing dynamic concept to denote a focus on "transgressive formations and their inter-relations," as well as to challenge prevailing globalization studies perspectives by highlighting "vernacular qualities of connection-making or breaking". Much more than connection, which designates a result of dynamic processes, connectivity directs our gaze to the dynamic relations and processes that connect people, geographical sites, social realms, or cultural repertoires with each other. Having traced multiple processes of connectivity between Islamic knowledge, work, piety, and belonging; between Islamic reform and global economy, between different cosmopolitan traditions; between different forms of Muslim travel; and between different national and transnational politics concerning nationalism, labor migration regimes, and the securitization of Islam, this book has also explored how processes of connectivity and and senses of connectedness transformed what was being connected (Brosius and Pfaff-Czarnecka 2019, 5). As a result, the book has brought those actors into view that have dwelled in and crossed through these spaces of connectivity and connectedness, exploring how these actors (reform-minded Tajik Muslims) as Islamic knowledge seekers, migrants, economic middlemen, cultural brokers or social intermediaries, shaped and were shaped (their Muslim subjectivities) by these connectivities (Brosius and Pfaff-Czarnecka 2019, 5).

As a major finding of this book, it was through multiple translocations within and across Dubai's business worlds (e. g., in working, engaging in leisure practices like eating out or visiting spectacular mosques, adopting Arab names, or in their housing practices) that Tajik Muslims as pious-cum-economic agents contributed to both the formation and circulation of a Dubai Islam. Cosmopolitan, post-national, and bourgeois in nature, this Dubai Islam can be best characterized as an Islam shaped by middlemen. Emerging in Tajik Muslims' flexible social, economic, and cultural positionings and by a cultural brokerage situated in a peripheral and rooted cosmopolitanism and its associated processes of relational placemaking, Dubai

Islam emerged as dynamic and transgressive formation from multiple cultural translations. Accordingly, Dubai Islam is not simply a ready-made product to be labeled as 'Arab', or 'Middle Eastern' and imported to Tajikistan and thus alien to the local Islam tradition. It is a process and product of connectivity and connectedness. As such, Dubai Islam integrates multiple traditions of Islam and notions of Muslimness. In addition to that, Dubai Islam produces rather flexible positionings and situated forms of belonging. Accordingly, 'Persian', 'Arab', 'Sufi', and 'Salafi' were shaped as cultural repertories of multiple belonging rather than as fixed identities or affiliations.

As a second finding, Dubai Islam formed both a moral resource and a social register that allowed Tajiks to position themselves in Dubai's uneven, precarious, and volatile business worlds, and to make sense of their contingent life trajectories. As the chapters in this book have illustrated, Gulf urbanism and the related political narratives had left a deep footprint in the transregional business worlds in which Tajiks moved. Thus, Dubai migration played a crucial role in fashioning an exclusive 'bourgeois Islam'. An aspirational migrant project oriented towards moral self-development, material well-being, social mobility, and middle-class lifestyles, the notion of 'bourgeois Islam' turned out as inseparable from Dubai as a brand that epitomizes progress and success in the context of both a highly exclusive hypermodernity and a vibrant Islamic economy. Through immersion into Dubai's uneven business worlds, Dubai Islam itself turned into a form of socioeconomic location, becoming a signifier for an exclusive piety associated with new global middle-class lifestyles and aspirations.

In these qualities, Dubai Islam poses a challenge to the applicability of prevailing political narratives diagnosing an Arabization of Islam in Tajikistan that accompanies the alienation of Muslims from a so-called 'homegrown' Islamic tradition and their transformation into radicalized subjects.

Returning to the question of the knowledge gained from the transregionality approach used in this book, considering Dubai Islam as a material effect of transregional interconnectivity based on Muslim mobility that links continental Eurasia with maritime Indian Ocean prompts a critical examination of the prevailing political narrative of an ongoing Arabization of Islam in Tajikistan: does it apply here at all? The narrative resonates with an understanding of religious transregionalization processes based on clearly defined and recognizable ready-made religious imports, here from the so-called 'Arab world', into the territory of Tajikistan and wider Central Asia. Such space-fixing and boxing-paradigm-based explanations become complicated if we look at the large proportion of the non-Emirati

population in Dubai[81], at the striking superdiversity that forms the social land-scape of the emirate in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, and, finally, at the transregional cosmopolitan past of Dubai. Accordingly, how 'Arabic' is Dubai anyway?

The discussion gets another twist if we reverse the gaze and ask how much of 'Tajik' or Central Asia is in transregional Islam in Dubai? This question shifts the emphasis to the multi-directional processes of flow and impact that shaped Dubai Islam. Accordingly, connectivity as a dynamic concept challenges the prevailing assumption of cultural and religious globalization as a unidirectional, hierarchical process from center towards periphery and points to the agency of *all* people in-volved to shape these processes on the ground. Besides, connectivity prompts scru-tiny of essentializing readings within a rather monolithic and fixed container of 'the Arabic' that level out existing diversity and difference in Dubai and the wider Gulf.

Doing justice to the book's spatial-analytical approach, by means of which an attempt was made to de-center knowledge production about Islam, Muslim piety, and belonging in Central Asia by decoupling processes of Islamic reform from methodological nationalism, it seems more appropriate to frame the processes of transregionalization discussed here as the 'Dubaization of Islam' rather than as Arabization. I am not referring here exclusively to the phenomenon of spectac-ular development through megaprojects reconfiguring cities in the Middle East and Asia to cater for global capital and investment interests, as the growing corpus of Gulf Studies suggests (Bromber et al. 2014, 10; Elsheshtawy 2010, 256). My under-standing of 'Dubaization' is much broader. Referring back to the co-constitutive re-lationship between movement, place, and subject explored in this book, 'Dubaiza-tion of Islam' highlights the entangled dynamics of how Dubai as a Muslim place, with all its material properties, contested narratives of the city's past, its spectac-ular representations and migrant sociabilities has inscribed itself into Tajik mi-grant bodies and formed Muslim subjectivities, and further, how the everyday practices of Tajik migrants in dwelling and crossing (embodiments) have made Dubai a Muslim place.

A traversal lens itself, Dubai Islam puts the focus on the discursive and aesthetic formations that emerged from multiple forms of transductive connectivity between places, people, practices, things, and ideas. Those binding styles have worked in mul-tiple ways: i.e., integrative, transgressive, and transformative. Thus, the book has

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81 In 2023, the number of Emirati citizens was only 11.9 % compared to 88.1 % of people with tem-porary residences (non-Emirati people including immigrants, migrant workers, expatriates an oth-ers), see https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/united-arab-emirates/, page last updated January 02, 2024.

shown that Dubai migration did not produce Arabized Muslim subjects prone to radicalization; rather migration has contributed to the Dubaization of Islam largely driven by processes of cultural translation. Tajiks' multiple translocations within geographies of Muslim mobility and connectivity have shown their ability to engage in migrant brokerage and middleman-ness in multiple, flexible, yet uneven ways. Following the spatial biographies assembled in this book, cultural translation based on multilingualism, urban skills, and a specific mobility knowledge thus proved to be a prerequisite for successful translocal livelihoods, not only in economic but also in social, religious, and moral terms. Following an anthropological reading of translation in line with Stanley Tambiah (1985), translation can be described as a "process of transporting specific understandings of reality across boundaries of time, place, and culture" (Stephan-Emmrich and Schröder 2018b, 47). This process involves practices of "shifting into a different system of meaning" (Houben 2017, 206). Mobile Tajik Muslims shaped Dubai Islam above all through translations accompanied by spatial practices of crossing. These crossings, as we have seen, were not unlimited, occurring against a "bounded horizon of possible choice" (Conway 2012, 21) and embedded in a cosmopolitanism that was both peripheral and rooted and built on the individual's capacity, and their limitations, to be open for cultural and religious diversity and to cope with difference and hierarchical relations. The spatial identity of Dubai as 'Arabic', 'Persian', or 'Muslim' can therefore discussed here only in relation to Tajik migrants' experiences of dwelling and crossing through Dubai's multiple business worlds. In this book, the relationship between spatial imagination and lived reality has been discussed in two ways: as shaped by a fault line and by multiplicity.

While Persian as the spoken language served as a crucial resource to gain entry into Dubai business, it was not only a transregional contact language (Fragner 1999), or *lingua franca,* among multilingual Asian people, that served as medium of information, knowledge exchange, and understanding to enable doing business successfully. Socio-linguistic commons through spoken Persian, as I argue, promoted a cultural nestedness and stimulated a sense of 'Persianness' that was shared across ethnic and national divides (Tajik, Afghan, Iranian, Baluch identity), and across different regional belongings (Tajiks from Gharm, Dushanbe, Kulob). This Persianness was inclusive, affirmative, and affective. The often-heard statement, 'we go everywhere [to do business], as long as there is a Tajik, or a Muslim', together with migrants' references to belonging to the group of Persian-speakers (*farsi-gūyon*), marked a sense of dwelling in a larger 'home-space', i. e., a sense of globality inherent to Muslim subjectivity and belonging to the world which predates the emergence of the Tajik nation-state and places Tajik Muslims historically within the Persianate world (Green 2019). This rather 'natural' belonging to Dubai as part of the Persianate world resonated the way Tajiks who stayed behind rather

than migrating articulated their belonging in the world. When Fazliddin's father told me the history of his family, which belongs to the Sufi brotherhood of Qādir-īya, he pointed out: "We are Farsi-speaking people (*mardumi farsigūyoni mo*), we lived all over the world long before the Soviets came and divided us. We were one big and widely dispersed family." Family stories like that form the foundation on which his son Fazliddin and his *kamak* friends were able to connect easily with Dubai's transregional cosmopolitan past – especially, as the latter was also shaped by the long history of Persian-speaking population in Dubai, the result of its trading and social connections across the strait of Hormuz (Glioti 2018; Ahmad 2012b, 30–32), as well as by a strong presence of Persian-speaking people in the Dubai economy since the oil boom (Kanna 2011, 58–59; Thomas 2006). Making the cosmopolitan history of Dubai their own through a shared Persianness, Tajiks' rejection of identifying as migrants in Dubai, emphasizing instead that they were Muslim businesspeople, underlined an exclusive and superior position they assigned to themselves within the strongly hierarchical Dubai migrant working world.

At the same time, the stories in this book have clearly carved out the 'social frontiers' and 'fault lines' (Green 2019, 1, 2) of this Persianate space in the business worlds of Dubai and highlighted their ambivalent character. Dwelling in the Persianate space, a decidedly Muslim world, was not without limitations. Power relations shaped by cultural hegemony and social limits, linguistic frontiers and religious fault lines were at work when Tajiks avoided doing business with Turkish-speaking neighbors from Central Asia or Shia Muslims, or when they exposed themselves to the cultural and religious superiority of their Iranian business partners. The strict creed of 'no business with non-Muslims', however, did not work where Russian customers in the fur business were concerned. There, strikingly, the Soviet legacy has also shaped economic dependencies in Dubai business life. The role of hegemony, hierarchy, and competition clearly shows that there is no reason to celebrate a 'Persian cosmopolitanism' (Green 2019, 2). On the contrary, Tajiks sensed their role in Dubai to be peripheral despite their exclusive position as street brokers and middlemen, which reflected their generally perceived peripheral position in the world as Muslims from Tajikistan. The limits of the Persianate space also became apparent when Tajiks tried to gain access to Arab business worlds. With their display of 'Arabness', e. g., through Arabic dress codes or adopting Arab names while in Dubai, they articulated a strong longing for attachment to the more prestigious, but exclusive, Arab world of business, commerce, and religious hegemony.

The Muslim worlds that Tajik migrants inhabited in Dubai were simultaneously real, experienced, and sensed, and thus materially existing *and* imagined. These worlds were simultaneously intertwined and clearly separated from each other and yet became contested through polarising nationalist narratives that defined Dubai's transregional history as either 'Persian', or 'Iranian', or 'Arabic'. Tajiks sit-

uated themselves flexibly inside the current political and cultural discourses on regional supremacy: in the Persian Gulf, with its historically grown cosmopolitan trading culture, and simultaneously in the Arabian Gulf, as a political project promoting Arab nationalism and overwriting the cosmopolitan and transcultural heritage of long-established economic and cultural interconnectivity across the Indian Ocean. Thus, belonging to the Arab world occurred as a highly elusive and temporally limited endeavor and nurtured a notion of elitism shaped by religious hegemony, exclusive citizenship, the strategic communication of Dubai's place branding, and the hierarchical conditions of the *kafāla* system that created new economic dependencies. It is precisely along this fault line where we can pinpoint attempts to 'Arabicize' both Islam and Dubai's religious economy, not only by the emirate's political elite, but also by Dubai migrants. Privileging Emirati (Arabic *khalyji*) identity and the homogenous Emirate cultural heritage in Dubai within the politically forced formation of the Arab Gulf is only one development within the Dubaization of Islam described here. This development conflates with other dynamics into wider processes of entangled religious and economic globalization, which, as has been shown, were also shaped by mobile, pious, socially aspiring and well-educated Tajik Muslims in their search to find their place in the world.